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University of Kent at Canterbury

POSTMODERN DRAMATURGY IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH THEATRE:
THREE COMPANIES

By

ANDREW HOUSTON

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SCHOOL OF ARTS AND IMAGE STUDIES

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Postmodern Dramaturgy in Contemporary British Theatre: Three Companies develops an analysis of performance dramaturgy in the recent work of three British companies: DV8 Physical Theatre, Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, and Brith Gof. While the devising practices of these companies are diverse, my research focuses upon spectatorship and the dramaturgical strategies which stress a performative response from an audience, in the creation of a theatre event. The concept of the 'theatre event' utilizes Jean-François Lyotard's definition of an 'event' in communication; applied to dramaturgical analysis it amounts to a means of exploring how dramaturgy may challenge the ways in which subjectivity, language, and the body are represented in theatre.

The thesis identifies, describes, and analyzes each company's approach to the development of dramaturgical strategies which subvert theatrical representation. Each company is seen to have emerged from different contexts, and to have developed divergent approaches to dramaturgy; however, despite this diversity of practice, all approaches are shown to converge in the way they pose certain unorthodox challenges for their spectators. The theatre event is seen to emerge as much between the perceptual and cognitive faculties of the spectators as in the dramaturgical strategies of the performers.

The thesis is composed of six chapters and two appendices. Chapter One outlines postmodernism as a cultural paradigm, detailing the various political and philosophical debates which problematize the relationship between representation and reality in contemporary culture. Chapter Two explores the adaptation of particular aspects of postmodern cultural theory to dramaturgical analysis. Chapter Three applies this dramaturgical analysis to DV8 Physical Theatre's productions of Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men (1988) and Enter Achilles (1995); Chapter Four is an analysis of Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative's recent work, focusing on Nights in This City (1995) and Speak Bitterness

(1995); and Chapter Five examines Brith Gof's development of a 'theatrical heterotopia' which includes an analysis of several of the company's productions, including Rhydcymerau (1984), Gododdin (1988), Haearn (Iron) (1992), and Prydain (The Impossibility of Britishness) (1996). Chapter Six concludes the study with a focus upon some of the theoretical problems posed by postmodernism to contemporary theatre practice with an examination of an ethics of spectatorship in the theatre event. Finally, the Appendices include interviews with Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment and Mike Pearson of Brith Gof; both offering an important practical perspective on the theoretical analysis proposed.

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**POSTMODERNISM:
A CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND THE LIMIT OF REPRESENTATION**

Postmodernism is an exasperating term, and so are postmodern, postmodernist, postmodernity, and whatever else one might come across in the way of derivation. In the avalanche of articles and books that have made use of the term since the late 1950s, postmodernism has been applied at different levels of conceptual abstraction to a wide range of objects and phenomena in what we used to call reality.¹

The proliferation of the term 'postmodernism' beyond its original core area of study, in the humanities, has increasingly led people to speak of the postmodern world we inhabit. This has greatly increased the already considerable confusion surrounding the term. It is not the world that is postmodern; it is rather the perspective from which that world is seen that is postmodern. The term encompasses a set of intellectual propositions that to some people make a lot more sense than they do to others. Yet the condition of postmodernity has become part and parcel of understanding what is real in our technological western world; so much so that a debate about either necessarily includes both. Consideration of the real alongside the postmodern gives aesthetics a useful role to play in this discussion, and indeed theatre is particularly well suited. The earliest origins of western theatre put at the heart of its purpose the dispute over mimetic fidelity to, and the imitation of, reality.² Distanced from such origins -- temporally, aesthetically and also in terms of reality -- the following analysis of theatre is an enquiry into postmodernism. Currently in Britain there are a number of innovative theatre companies who use performance to

¹ Hans Bartsch, The Idea of the Postmodern (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 3.

² See Bernard F. Dukore, ed. Dramatic Theory and Criticism (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974) for excerpts from Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Poetics, and the classical Greek dispute over theatre's mimetic obligation to truth and that which is considered real in substance.

open a *postmodern representational space* where reality can be explored. These artists address a reality of contemporary Britain transformed by technology, consumerism, and the cultural flux of a condition of postmodernity.

Similar to a cultural artifact, postmodernism is a representation (or, some would argue, *many* representations) of reality. In his book Constructing Postmodernism, Brian McHale proposes a multiple, overlapping and intersecting corpora of constructions. Not a construction of postmodernism, but a plurality of constructions; constructions that, while not necessarily mutually contradictory, are not fully integrated, or perhaps even integrable.³ McHale acknowledges what postmodern architect Robert Venturi has called "the obligation toward the difficult whole."⁴ This, it shall be argued, is an encounter with reality as we know it.

-- Constructions of Postmodernism:
Making Stories about (Theories of) Reality --

Adopting a constructivist approach to postmodernism allows for form to fulfil function because, as McHale confirms, there are some distinct advantages to telling a story about postmodernism. As postmodernism, postmodernity and the postmodern refer to an immense body of theory and practice, a story may endow this mass of ideas and praxis with a "certain definite semantic substance"; affording the storyteller the rhetorical means to "persuade others to understand the concept in the way he (*sic*) had come to understand it and to use the term as he used it."⁵ Acknowledging a rhetorical foundation the storyteller must thoroughly outline the discursive and constructed character of

³ Brian McHale, Constructing Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 3.

⁴ Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press, 1977)

⁵ McHale 1.

postmodernism. In addition to articulating a particular construction of postmodernism, the storyteller must preserve a sense of provisionality, the 'as if' quality, of all such constructions. McHale warns us that with all good stories, the narrator tends to become embroiled in his/her web of rhetoric, losing a characteristically postmodern self-reflexivity. With postmodern discourse there is a delicate balance to be maintained between advocating a particular version of constructed reality and entertaining a plurality of versions. This is characteristic of the diversity of theatre practice analyzed in the following chapter; which, despite this plurality of approach, maintains certain specific challenges to theatrical representation. The discussion below is intended to explore the postmodern cultural condition and offer insight into how theatre -- as a cultural practice of postmodernism -- may emerge from, yet critique, such a condition.

-- A Brief (Hi)Story --

Hans Bertens's thorough historical account, The Idea of the Postmodern, introduces the topic by demonstrating that the term 'postmodern' means several things at once. Beginning with an array of anti-modernist artistic strategies which emerged on the American art scene in the 1950s, he claims the description 'postmodern' was simultaneously used for diametrically opposed practices in different artistic disciplines, thus making accurate definition problematical right from the start.⁶ Citing numerous examples of incarnations and re-interpretations, Bertens notes that, depending on the artistic discipline, postmodernism is either a radicalization of the self-reflexive moment within modernism,⁷ a turning away from narrative and representation,

⁶ Bertens 3.

⁷ Bertens offers the example of the American modernist art critic Clement Greenburg, who defined modernism in terms of a wholly autonomous aesthetic, of a radical anti-representational self-reflexivity. As Bertens explains, for Greenburg modernism implied that first of all each artistic

or an explicit return to narrative and representation. And sometimes it is both. Moreover, to make things more complicated, there are versions of postmodernism that do not fit this neat binary analysis. Yet finally, they all have one common denominator; all postmodern theory and cultural practice

seek[s] to transcend what they [*Leslie Fielder, Douglas Crimp, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and other critics monitoring the contemporary American scene*] see as the self-imposed limitations of modernism, which in its search for autonomy and purity or for timeless, representational truth has subjected experience to unacceptable intellectualizations and reductions.⁸

But at this level Bertens again finds complications. The attempt to transcend modernism follows two main strategies, which unfortunately do not coincide with the distinction made above between a self-reflexive postmodernism and a postmodernism that reintroduces (some kind of) representation. Those who opt for the first strategy are content to question modernism's premises and its procedures from within the realm of art. Those who wish to make a more radical break with modernism do not only attack modernist art, but seek to undermine the idea of art itself. For them the idea of art, that is, art-as-institution, is a typically modernist creation, built upon the principle of art's self-sufficiency, its special -- and separate -- status within the larger world. But such an autonomy, these artists argue, is really a self-imposed exile; it means that art willingly accepts its impotence, that it accedes to its own neutralization and

discipline sought to free itself from all extraneous influence. Modernist painting had to 'purge' itself of narrative -- the presentation of biblical, classical, historical, and other such scenes -- which belonged to the literary sphere. Greenburg's modernist aesthetic had necessarily turned into a self-reflexive exploration of that which could be said to be specific to painting alone: its formal possibilities. See Bertens 3-4.

⁸ Bertens 5.

depoliticization.⁹

At a second level of conceptualization, Bertens again finds similar confusions. Here postmodernism has been defined as the 'attitude' of the 1960s counterculture, or, somewhat more restrictively, as the 'new sensibility' of the 1960s social and artistic avant-garde. Bertens reports that this new sensibility is eclectic, it is radically democratic, and it rejects what it sees as the exclusivist and repressive character of liberal humanism. Here the avant-garde attack on art-as-institution is broadened and raised to a socio-political level.

Bertens's account becomes interesting to an analysis of theatre performance when, in the course of the 1970s, postmodernism was gradually drawn into a poststructuralist orbit. In a first phase, it was primarily associated with the deconstructionist practices that took their inspiration from the poststructuralism of the later Roland Barthes and, more particularly, of Jacques Derrida. In its later stages, it drew on Michel Foucault, on Jacques Lacan's revisions of Freud, and, occasionally, on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The translation of Jean-François Lyotard's La Condition Postmoderne (1984; original edition 1979), in which Lyotard -- a prominent poststructuralist -- adopted the term postmodern, seems to Bertens to signal a fully-fledged merger between an originally American postmodernism and French poststructuralism. This merger, which has caused much confusion,¹⁰ especially because the terms are often used

⁹ See Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," New German Critique 22 (1984): 23-40.

¹⁰ Furthermore, as the Lacanian scholar, Slavoj Žižek reminds us, although 'poststructuralism' designates a strain of French theory, it is essentially an Anglo-Saxon and German invention. The term refers to the way the Anglo-Saxon world perceived and located the theories of Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, etc. -- in France itself, nobody uses the term 'poststructuralism'. Following Jacques Lacan, Žižek's view is that 'deconstructionism' (the term used by poststructuralists in France) is a modernist procedure *par excellence*; it presents perhaps the most radical version of the modernist project: the unmasking of a particular

interchangeably, is important to the following discussion because both poststructuralism and postmodernism reject the empirical idea that language can represent reality unproblematically; that the world is accessible to us through language because its objects are mirrored in the language that we use. From this empirical point of view, language is transparent, a window on the world, and knowledge arises out of our direct experience with reality, undistorted and not contaminated by language. Accepting Derrida's exposure, and rejection, of these metaphysical premises -- the transcendent signifier -- upon which such empiricism is built, postmodernism gives up on language's representational function and follows poststructuralism in the idea that language constitutes rather than reflects, the world, and that knowledge is therefore always distorted by language; that is, by the historical circumstances and the specific environment from which it arises. Under the pressure of Derrida's arguments, and of Lacan's psychoanalysis, which sees the subject as constructed in language, the autonomous subject of modernity, objectively rational and self-determined, likewise gives way to a postmodern subject which is largely other-determined; that is, determined within and constituted by language.¹¹

Bertens identifies two key moments within poststructuralist postmodernism. The first, which belongs to the later 1970s and most of the 1980s, derives from Barthes

relationship of power relations, whereby the very unity of experience of meaning is conceived as the effect of signifying mechanisms, an effect which can take place only in so far as it ignores the textual movement that produced it. For Žižek, it is only with Lacan that the 'postmodernist' break occurs, in that he thematizes a certain Real, traumatic kernel whose status remains deeply ambiguous: the Real resists symbolization, but it is at the same time its own retroactive product.

See Slavoj Žižek, Looking Awry (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press, 1991) 142-143 and See Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

¹¹ Bertens 5-6.

and Derrida and is linguistic, or textual in its orientation. Here we find an attack on foundationalist notions of language and representation. The subject is combined with a strong emphasis on what in Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" has been called 'freeplay'.¹² Freeplay, which is sometimes referred to as the "play of differences",¹³ is the extension *ad infinitum* of the 'interplay of signification' and intertextuality, in the absence of transcendent signifiers of metaphysical meaning. This deconstructionist postmodernism saw the text, in the terms made famous by Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" of 1968, as "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash"; as "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."¹⁴ Intent upon exposing the workings of language -- and especially its failure to represent anything outside itself, in other words, its self-reflexivity -- this Derridean postmodernism largely limited itself to texts and intertexts. Bertens attributes this to the firm belief of its proponents that the attack on representation was in itself an important political act. The celebration of the so-called 'death of the subject' -- and thus of the author -- paradoxically had a flip-side: the end of representation had made questions of subjectivity and authorship (redefined in postmodern terms, that is, in terms of agency) all the more relevant.¹⁵ If representations do not and cannot represent the world, then inevitably all representations are political, in that they

¹² Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970): 247-65.

¹³ Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 33.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, transl. Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977) 146.

¹⁵ Bertens 7.

cannot help but reflect the ideological frameworks within which they arise. The end of representation thus leads us back to McHale's notion of constructivism, to the question of authorship, and as Brenda Marshall has clarified, to such political questions as "Whose history gets told? In whose name? For what purpose?"¹⁶ In the absence of transcendent truth it matters, more than ever, who is speaking (or writing), and why, and to whom. Deconstructionist postmodernism largely ignored these and other political questions to which the demise of representation had given prominence. As a result, with the increasing politicization of the debate on postmodernism in the mid-1980s, its textual, self-reflexive, orientation rapidly lost its attraction.

-- Culture of Representations --

In a sociological account of postmodernism, Scott Lash speculates about a chronological increase in the pervasion of representations in society. He argues that if all the objects of significance in the social world were divided up into those which were real and those which were representations, in which the two categories are seen as mutually exclusive and exhaustive, history shows an increase of the proportion of those objects which are representations. At a certain point in historical time representations came to constitute a sufficient proportion of all objects, so that they came to be taken seriously in all their opacity and complexity; Lash argues that this point would be the advent of modernism. Moreover, if at a later historical point in time the pervasion of representations increased to a point at which real objects began to be challenged for their hegemony as objects of social significance, what might come to be problematized would be, no longer the representations, but the status of the real itself.

¹⁶ Brenda K. Marshall, Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 4.

This would be the point at which postmodernism sets in.¹⁷ Along similar -- albeit more pessimistic -- lines of analysis, Jean Baudrillard's "The Precession of Simulacra" argues that our contemporary mass media have neutralized reality by stages: first they *reflected* it; then they *masked* and *perverted* it; next they had to *mask its absence*; and finally they produced instead the *simulacrum* of the real, the destruction of meaning and of all relation to reality.¹⁸ Baudrillard's model has come under attack for the metaphysical idealism of its view of the 'real', for its nostalgia for pre-mass-media authenticity, and for its apocalyptic nihilism. But there is a more basic objection to Baudrillard's conception, posed by Linda Hutcheon, concerning his assumption that it is (or was) ever possible to have unmediated access to reality. Hutcheon inquires:

Have we ever known the 'real' except through representations? We may see, hear, feel, smell, and touch it, but do we *know* it in the sense that we can give meaning to it?¹⁹

From this perspective, the real is "*enabled to mean* through systems of signs organised into discourses on the world."²⁰ This becomes a political issue because, as Louis Althusser has demonstrated, ideology is a production of representations. Our common-sense presuppositions about the 'real' depend upon how that 'real' is described, how it is put into discourse, by whom, and how it is interpreted by us. Basically, "There is nothing natural about the 'real' and there never was -- even before the existence of mass media."²¹

¹⁷ Scott Lash Sociology of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 15.

¹⁸ Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 33.

¹⁹ Hutcheon 33.

²⁰ Lisa Tickner, "Sexuality and/in Representation: Five British Artists," Difference (1984): 19.

²¹ Hutcheon 33.

Postmodernism suggests that everything always was 'cultural', and was always mediated by representations. It suggests that notions of truth, reference, and the non-cultural real have not ceased to exist, as Baudrillard claims, but that they are no longer unproblematic issues, assumed to be self-evident and self-justifying. Postmodernism, in this sense, is not a degeneration into 'hyperreality' but a questioning of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it. It is not that representation now dominates or effaces the referent, but rather that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation -- that it interprets, in fact creates, its referent.

-- Problematization of Reality --

Lash's analysis of postmodernism in the Sociology of Postmodernism observes how cultural change has brought about new ways of seeing and experiencing reality. His observations are helpful in understanding how representations have come to 'create' the referent, and thereby significantly alter our comprehension of reality. Lash demonstrates that while modernisation was a process of cultural differentiation, postmodernisation is a process of cultural 'de-differentiation'. He identifies differentiation in modernism and de-differentiation in postmodernism using four components, They are:

- i) The relationship among types of cultural object produced - i.e. aesthetic, theoretical, ethical, etc.;
- ii) the relationship between the cultural as a whole and the social;
- iii) its 'cultural economy', whose elements in turn are conditions of production and consumption, the institutions of culture, mode of circulation, and the cultural product or good itself; and
- iv) the mode of signification: i.e. relations among signifier, signified, and referent.²²

If modernization presupposed differentiation on all of these counts, then postmodernisation witnesses de-differentiation in

²² Lash 11.

each of them.

Each of these components will contribute to an examination of postmodern dramaturgy in the next chapter, but for present purposes focus must be given to the fourth component, 'the mode of signification'. De-differentiation in the mode of signification is at issue in postmodernism's problematization of reality because representations are increasingly no longer differentiated from reality. In Lash's model, modernism is seen to clearly differentiate and autonomize the roles of signifier, signified, and referent. Postmodernism on the contrary *problematizes* these distinctions, and especially the status and relationship of signifier and referent, or, put another way, representation and reality.

Lash sees cultural production in modernization as a pursuit of 'problem solving' (an abstract learning process), in which the working out of the possibilities in the aesthetic material is the problem to be solved. Postmodernism, in contraposition to modernism, does not see the signifying process, the representation, as problematic, but reality itself. Lash explains:

[F]irst an increasing proportion of signification takes place through images and not words. This is de-differentiation in that images resemble referents to a greater degree than words. Equally, a far greater proportion of referents themselves are in fact signifiers. That is, our everyday life becomes pervaded with a reality - in TV, adverts, video, computerization, the Walkman, cassette decks in automobiles, and now CDs, CDV, and DAT - which increasingly comprise representations. This invasion of the space of the signifier by the referent, and the invasion of the place of the referent by that of the signifier, is the conscious subject of Andy Warhol's silk-screens which seem to return to realism, but in which the real object depicted is itself an image.²³

The postmodernist text itself is indeed 'closed'; it will not distantiate; it will not provoke an activist spectator *vis-a-vis* the text. But, as Lash argues, the

²³ Lash 12.

referents of these stable postmodernist signifiers are indeed another matter. Postmodernism thus can be seen as a problem-solving pursuit; that is, as a search for a working out of the permutations and implications of how our reality is transformed and indeed made feeble, given its penetration by invading images. In this light, the cultural practices of postmodernism are seen to explore effectively how postmodernisation has altered our sense of reality. If our contemporary reality has indeed become destabilized through a number of postmodern social and cultural processes, then, though it may seem meaningless to celebrate this new feebleness of reality, it would surely be a highly meaningful pursuit, either aesthetically or theoretically, to try to make some sense of it.²⁴

-- The Problematization of Reality and
the Habermas-Lyotard Debate --

There is considerable controversy among cultural theorists about how to make sense of a reality now problematized by representations; especially when these representations are in constant transformation. Examples of such transformation are numerous; some of the more prominent involve the political, economic, and cultural unification in Western Europe; the emergence of ecology as a political question; the progression of 'private sphere' issues into public concerns; and the impact of advanced technologies on everyday life. When Jean-François Lyotard defines the current "postmodern" age as "incredulity toward metanarratives,"²⁵ he is speaking about the inability of our intellectual heritage to make sense of our present circumstances. In a similar vein, Jurgen Habermas declares "[t]he paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted" and urges a shift to "the paradigm

²⁴ See Lash 13-14.

²⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, transl. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) xxiv.

of mutual understanding."²⁶ In a controversy famous for the acrimony between participants, it would seem the only thing Habermas and Lyotard can agree upon is that, given our current representational crisis, cultural theory must give new priority to language. The Habermas-Lyotard debate is significant to the discussion below because it helps to illuminate the necessity of a poststructuralist grasp of language in theorizing the postmodern condition. And, as Bertens has identified, the debate established "a kind of solid backdrop, an old-fashioned norm against which other efforts to define the postmodern or develop a postmodern politics could be measured."²⁷ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, postmodernism has increasingly become a dialogical 'space' situated at the limits of representation, and for many this space marks a tension which has defined modernism from its very beginning. On the one side, the space is intellectually bounded by Habermasian consensus -- that is, Enlightenment, universalist representationalism -- and on the other side, radical dissensus -- or anti-representationalism -- proposed by Lyotard.²⁸

Despite their philosophical complexity, the issues which divide Habermas and Lyotard can be gauged according to two chief concerns. First, the degree of viability each is willing to accord to past theoretical frameworks in dealing with the present representational crisis. Second, the need each position senses for new theoretical departures. In general Lyotard, as with most French poststructuralists, regards the Western intellectual tradition as an obstacle to understanding the present, or more accurately as a discursive structure of domination rather than a basis for a new critical standpoint, while Habermas views their point of departure as

²⁶ Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures, transl. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press) 296.

²⁷ Bertens 122.

²⁸ See Hutcheon 1-23.

a fall into irrationalism. Habermas attempts a reconstruction of historical materialism and aspires to the completion of the Enlightenment project of emancipation. Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, and other related French theorists predict the demise of humanism, and call for the deconstruction of the Western philosophical tradition. In the one case there is an effort to revise and conserve; in the other an urge to break out in new directions.

-- Habermas's Life-World --

Habermas diagnoses the present conjuncture as a mixture of serious dangers with some hope. The dangers come from the intrusion of "the system" into "the life-world"²⁹ Similar to Lash, Habermas accepts the Weberian, Lukacsian critique of modern social institutions as one of increasing differentiation of functions but also of generalized instrumentality. While the system of modern society becomes ever more complex as an articulation of specialization (Lash's differentiation in modernisation), its mode of practice, instrumental rationality, is homogeneous.³⁰ In the

²⁹ Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity -- an incomplete project," The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983) 8.

³⁰ Habermas proposes three 'cultural value spheres'; each of these spheres -- theoretical (science), the practical (morality), and the aesthetic (art) -- has its own inner logic that cannot be easily reconciled with those of the others. Contrary to the hopes of the Enlightenment, these spheres have become increasingly differentiated, to the point where they are now "separated from each other institutionally in the form of functionally specified systems of action." We are faced, therefore, with "three different forms of argumentation: namely, empirical-theoretical discourse, moral discourse, and aesthetic critique," three different "rationality complexes," that have their own, different, institutional basis and have, moreover, become virtual monopolies of experts. Far from informing and enriching everyday life, as the Enlightenment expected, they have increasingly distanced themselves from the 'life-world'. A further complication is that under the regime of 'capitalist modernisation' the empirical-theoretical, or cognitive-instrumental, rationality complex has so clearly come to dominate and marginalize other modes

corporation, the state, the military, and the schools, the process of reification, of treating human beings as things to be used efficiently for one's own ends, steadily extends the domain of its sway. Outside this system stands the life-world, the domain of the everyday where symbolic exchange operates according to a noninstrumental principle. In the life-world communicative action is based on a different principle of rationality. Symbols are exchanged without the imperatives of the system for profit, control, efficiency. Hence the opportunity for a critical use of reason in communication is possible.

The life-world, for Habermas, is the seed bed for the growth of emancipatory language use and action. All language, he thinks, contains the potential for a free society since it embodies, as a "universal pragmatic," the validity claims of truth, justice, and beauty. Communicative action contains a kind of rationality in that one may presuppose that speakers intend the truth, mean to express themselves, and are motivated by norms of justice. Even if these conditions are never met in practice, Habermas posits an "ideal speech situation" in which they may occur, a situation in which the force of the better argument, not social position or coercion in any form, alone may prevail. When these conditions are fulfilled, social interactions are governed by the autonomous, critical use of freedom by each participant.

When Habermas says that his life-world creates an 'ideal speech situation in which the force of the better argument... alone may prevail' he describes a cultural domain not unlike that of McHale's constructivist postmodernism. Similar to Habermas's communicative action, McHale proposes the freedom of an ideal speech situation where a plurality of constructions about reality exist. McHale, "insists on the multiplicity of possible or alternative or competing stories,"

of knowing. It has, moreover, progressively developed into a means-end rationalism. It is this rationalism, Habermas agrees, that fully deserves the French poststructuralists' charges, but to equate modernity with such a narrow means-end rationalism is to seriously misread its project.

and then adopts a Habermasian tone when he "seek[s] to develop criteria for distinguishing better literary-historical narratives from less good ones."³¹ The aim of determining which narrative constructions are better is echoed in Habermas's claim that the ideal speech situation contains the *telos* of consensus. Habermas develops this much further than McHale, however, when he formulates the fundamental rule of communicative rationality as the attempt of parties to reach agreement; that is, in the effort to gain unity of mind and purpose, they come to consensus over which narrative construction is best. Habermas puts great emphasis on consensus, positing the sign of consensus as a universal, necessary principle of all speech. For him the true conditions of emancipated society are fulfilled when the universal pragmatics of speech are instituted formally as a public sphere that aims at consensus. With this notion of consensus and the public sphere, essentially Habermas proposes a vision of the completion of Enlightenment rationality.

-- The Enlightenment's Legacy --

Central to Habermas's thought is that, in spite of admitted disasters, the Enlightenment, the emancipatory project of modernity, must not be abandoned. Unlike most poststructuralists, Habermas is not prepared to see a monolithic rationality as the sole cause of the ills of modernity and our contemporary reality. Like his opponents, Habermas is wary of "the snares of Western logocentrism,"³² that is, of "a foundationalism that conflicts with our consciousness of the fallibility of human knowledge,"³³ but he insists that for political reasons we cannot dispense with rationality or with a philosophy that seeks to defend (non-

³¹ McHale 7.

³² Jurgen Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," Habermas and Modernity, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press, 1985) 196.

³³ Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 193.

foundationalist) rationalism. Habermas's problem, then, is to define and argue the plausibility of a rationality that distinguishes itself from the rationality denounced by the poststructuralists and that is not transcendent in the sense that it is foundationalist. Such a rationality, although inevitably subject to change over time, must have a 'unifying power' that will enable a workable consensus. Without such a rationality, the emancipatory element that has traditionally been the essence of leftist politics becomes an illusion.

In The Theory of Communicative Action Habermas demonstrates his faith in language as the ultimate tool for emancipatory politics when he develops his concept of 'communicative reason' or 'communicative rationality'. He argues that the structure of language itself, its procedural rationality, offers us the means to arrive at communication that is not strategic, or in other words, does not serve other interests than those of perfecting itself, of creating absolutely unimpeded communication. In the imagined "ideal speech situation" of the life-world, communication will "no longer be distorted," in Christopher Norris's words, "by effects of power, self-interest or ignorance."³⁴ For Habermas, who like his opponents rejects intuition and metaphysics in defining what is reasonable, a universal rationality latently present in the procedures that structure argumentive discourse can be brought to light "through the analysis of the already operative potential for rationality contained in the everyday practices of communication."³⁵ The notion that language offers formal procedures for adjudicating differences -- that is, competing truth claims -- leads Habermas away from what he sees as a typically modernist, subjectivistic, 'philosophy of consciousness' towards a philosophy of intersubjectivity, or,

³⁴ Christopher Norris, The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory After Deconstruction (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 149.

³⁵ Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, transl. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1987) 196.

of communication and consensus (a "non-reified everyday communicative practice" which may facilitate "a form of life with structures of an undistorted intersubjectivity"³⁶). Such a consensus is of course predicated upon a general willingness to accept communicative rationality. It rests, therefore, not only on that rationality's scientific (or empirical-theoretical) status, but also on individual acts of social solidarity.

Lyotard has associated such consensus with the end of thinking, and suggests that Habermas's model becomes a deceptively hollow routine, a means of covering injustice under a veneer of justice. Lyotard has indicated that there is a "soft imperialism" at work in the drive to establish consensus between participants in a dialogue.³⁷ Despite Habermas's attempts to move beyond what he saw as a subjectivistic, 'philosophy of consciousness' (typical of high-modernism), towards a philosophy of non-reified intersubjectivity, his communicative model is contaminated by the legacy of the Enlightenment's failings. His equation of freedom with consensus invites the criticism demanded of any such totalizing model.

-- The Subject of Consciousness --

Habermas traces the emergence of the public sphere and the actualization of communicative rationality back to bourgeois efforts to resist aristocratic hegemony. In his earliest major work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962), he traces the rise of a 'public sphere' in coffee houses, salons, and lodges, relating it to the spread of print culture in newspapers. In these social spaces a type of public speech was instituted which was characterised by three qualities. One, a disregard for status; two, a pursuit of putting into question new areas of common concern;

³⁶ Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action 210.

³⁷ Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty, "Discussion", Critique, 41 (1985): 581-584.

and, three, a principle of inclusivity, that is, anyone who chose to could participate. Ironically, Habermas sets as the basic condition for this public sphere the culture of the bourgeois household. In the newly constituted "privacy" of the family, a new subject emerged which was transferred to the "public sphere" of the coffee house. The bourgeois felt himself comfortable, at ease, human, and morally affirmed in his home. In this setting a new subject was constituted that, once in the coffee houses, was autonomous, critical, free. Habermas maintains, "[t]he communication of the public that debated critically about culture remained dependent on reading pursued in the closed-off privacy of the home."³⁸ In sum, he thinks the culture of the white, male bourgeois instituted a form of communicative practice that if reinstated in the late twentieth century would provide the basis for universal freedom.

Mark Poster has criticised Habermas for continuing to stand by the above argument despite the fact that emancipatory politics of the 1970s and 1980s have concerned in good part an analysis of the limitations of bourgeois models; in particular, a critique of the position of the white, male subject and its pretensions to universality. Poster comments that

[f]eminist, anti-racist and post-colonial discourses have in many ways put into question the generalizability of the rational subject. They have shown how this universalization has worked against minority cultures, how it has served the interests of the established subject positions, how it makes Other all groups, races, and sexes that do not conform to its image of autonomous individuality.³⁹

Arjun Appadurai speaks directly to Habermas's attempt to

³⁸ Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, 1962, transl. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press, 1989) 163.

³⁹ Mark Poster, "Postmodernity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Lyotard-Habermas Debate Over Social Theory," Modern Fiction Studies, Volume 38, Number 3 (Autumn 1992): 570.

universalise the bourgeois public sphere when he writes:

The master-narrative of the Enlightenment (and its many variants in England, France, and the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation and the public sphere...⁴⁰

What Habermas sees as the completion of the Enlightenment project of emancipation, Appadurai sees as an extension of Western domination.

Appadurai argues that a new global culture is being set into place by dint of telecommunications technology and a general increase in worldwide intercourse. The incipient synergy of computers, telephone, and television produces what Poster calls "a cosmopolitan culture" in which ethnic difference is evoked and registered.⁴¹ An enormous constellation of images, narratives, and ideas is shared across the globe but made indigenous by ethnic practices and local cultures in very different ways. The key term 'democracy' translates differently in different ideological and cultural landscapes. Neither universality nor homogeneity adequately expresses the emerging global culture. Rather, as Poster, Lyotard and other poststructuralists argue, a form of cosmopolitanism captures better the mixture of shared experience and difference without denying the enormous disparity of economic well-being that exists. Habermas, on the contrary, perceives in the new communication technologies only a corruption of communicative rationality:

In comparison with printed communications the programmes sent by the new media curtail the reactions of their recipients in a peculiar way. They draw the eyes and ears of the public under their spell but at the same time, by taking away its distance, place it under 'tutelage,' which is to say they deprive it of the opportunity to say something

⁴⁰ Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," Public Culture, 2.2 (Spring 1990): 10.

⁴¹ Poster, "Postmodernity and the Politics of Multiculturalism": 570-571.

and to disagree.[...] The sounding board of an educated stratum tutored in the public use of reason has been shattered: the public is split apart into minorities of specialists who put their reason to use non-publicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical.[...] The consensus developed in rational-critical public debate has yielded to compromise fought out or simply imposed non-publicly.[...] Today conversation itself is administered.⁴²

Going to the movies, listening to radio, watching television, communicating via computer or facsimile machine, even using the telephone are all for Habermas only degradations of communicative rationality, examples of colonization of the lifeworld by the system. One of the serious limitations of the theory of communicative rationality is that it cannot articulate language differences in electronically mediated communication, perceiving only the lack of what it calls 'rationality'.

Poststructuralism offers another interpretation. In The Mode of Information Poster has studied the way subjects are constituted in these new electronically mediated language situations; looking precisely for configurations that call into question the privilege of the autonomous rational individual, not to go behind it to some 'rationalist' position but to test the possibility of emancipation in subject positions, as Appadurai suggests.⁴³ Poster borrows from the theoretical strategies of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze because they have initiated a project of examining the role of language in the constitution of subjectivity, and they have done so with an effort to move outside the parameters and constraints of the Cartesian/Enlightenment position. From Habermas's vantage point within those parameters, it appears that

⁴² Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society 170-171, 175, 179, 164.

⁴³ See Mark Poster, The Mode of Information: Post Structuralism and Social Contexts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

poststructuralists advocate irrationality; but from the vantage point of poststructuralists, the position of rationality -- with its particular relation to representation, reading, and privacy (the ideal speech situation of the coffee house) -- is itself a stumbling block to the discovery of contemporary cultural processes that promote emancipation without reproducing a dominant order.

The issue dividing Habermas and poststructuralists is the relation of language to the subject in the era of electronically mediated communication. Habermas's position has the advantage of arguing for continuity with the Enlightenment liberal tradition, asking only for an extension of democracy to institute a public sphere for the enactment of communicative rationality. The poststructuralists contend that Habermas reduces cultural or symbolic interaction to communicative action and further reduces this to the 'rationality' of validity claims. His critique of instrumental rationality in favour of communicative rationality does get to the root of the problem of modernity, of the project of Enlightenment. However, the subject for Habermas remains pre-given, pre-linguistic, and the movement of emancipation consists in removing structures of domination that have been placed on top of it. Emancipation consists in a lifting of burdens, a releasing of potentials for freedom already contained by the subject. As transcendent, universal attributes of speech, communicative rationality requires no cultural change, no re-configuration of the subject, no restructuring of language. The problem raised by Lyotard and others is not to find a defence of rationality but to enable cultural difference, what the Enlightenment theorized as 'Other', to emerge against the performative rationality of the system. From the poststructuralist perspective, the *telos* of consensus that Habermas evokes is itself a form of domination since the authority of the better argument to which all participants must submit necessarily erases the difference of subject positions and stabilizes or essentializes one subject position in particular.

The effort of poststructuralists has been to articulate the *mechanisms* through which language is more than constative, representational, univocal, the ways in which word and thing do not fuse into an eternal stability. This critique has uncovered the *figure* of the subject that stood behind such stability and the dualist metaphysics of the subject as an agent/object, like passive material that provided its foundation. The theory of writing in the work of Derrida, of the imaginary and the Real in Lacan, of power and discursive practices in Foucault, of the *hyperreal* in Baudrillard, and of the *figural* and the *differend* in Lyotard -- all of these projects problematize the paradigm of the subject and its relation to language which has dominated Western culture at least since Descartes and the Enlightenment.

-- The Event of Knowing --

Given that contemporary reality is perceived to be increasingly made up of representations, to know the real is no longer to know something stable. As a result, representational knowledge -- predicated upon a stable relation between the Subject and the object of knowledge, through a moment of recognition when the Subject of consciousness finds the comfort of Identity and Self-Sameness or familiarity in the object -- has entered into crisis.⁴⁴ Thomas Docherty demonstrates that this crisis was foreseen, long before recent debates about poststructuralism, by Immanuel Kant. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant faced up to the question of the scientificity -- by which he meant verifiability -- of knowledge about the world. He argued for the necessity of a *a priori* judgement in such matters. Moreover, he contended that an *a priori* knowledge derived from analytic methodology would simply tell us a great deal about the methodology, and not necessarily anything new about the world: it would provide only *anamnesis*, or a consciousness of the

⁴⁴ Thomas Docherty, "Postmodernism: An Introduction," Postmodernism -- A Reader, ed. Docherty (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 16.

world reduced to a 'desired' knowledge of such, and therefore incapable of *cognizing* it as anything other than that which is *recognized* in the form of its own image and correlate. To perceive the world at all, consciousness needs a form in which to comprehend it; that form -- the analytic method of perception or *anamnesis* -- serves primarily the function of self-legitimation. Kant wanted the world to be able to shock us into new knowledge; he wanted the reality of the world to serve the function of an avant-garde: that is, to be able to shock us out of the ideological conditioning of our mental structures -- those structures which, according to the romanticism of Kant's time, shape the world. He wanted, thus, what he called a *synthetic a priori*, which would exceed the *analytic a priori*. This would not only confirm the method of epistemological analysis of the world, it would also allow for the structural modification of the very analytic method itself, to account for and encompass a new given, the new and therefore unpredictable data of the world. It would thus provide not just *anamnesis*, but the actual event of knowledge.⁴⁵

In the Critique of Judgement, the third volume of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, the distinction between analytic and synthetic *a priori* parallels the distinction between determining and reflective judgement. In a determining judgement, the Subject of consciousness is not implicated in the act or event of judging at all; a method, a structure, determines the result of the judgement. In reflection, Docherty reminds us,

we have a state of affairs akin to that when we consider the aesthetically beautiful: we judge -- in what has become [Lyotard's] famous and controversial phrase -- 'without criteria'.⁴⁶

Thus, the aspect of Kant's 'Third Critique' emphasized by poststructuralism is that we must try to judge without a

⁴⁵ Docherty 24-25.

⁴⁶ Docherty 24.

predetermining theory. Judgements can then be replaced by a performative process of judging; and the form or representation of justice may give way to the event of justice.⁴⁷

In this state of affairs, the operation of reason extends itself beyond the Subject's own internally coherent framework, in an attempt to grasp that which is beyond consciousness. The extension is one in which we can begin to see a shift in emphasis away from what is conventionally called 'scientific knowledge' towards what Docherty refers to as "narrative knowledge."⁴⁸ Rather than knowing the stable essence of an object, 'narrative knowledge' is acquired in the process of telling the story of the event of judging the object; thus, in the enactment of the narrative of how the object changes consciousness, new knowledge is produced.

An application of these arguments to the sphere of theatrical analysis yields many significant findings for the practice of dramaturgy, which has traditionally made other narratives the object of its analysis. First, the practice of judgement advocates a shift in analytical focus from text to event. Second, in Lyotardian terms, the event disrupts any pre-existing referential frame within which it might be represented or understood. Dramaturgical analysis, then, must respect the radical *singularity* of happening which constitutes a given performance or theatre event, the 'it happens' as distinct from the sense of 'what is happening' or 'what happened'. It leaves us without criteria to work from, and

⁴⁷ Docherty elaborates upon this point by identifying the ways in which conventional justice works upon representational knowledge of reality. Justice -- as representation of what is just -- is that which is 'seen to be done', and is legitimised *simply because* it is 'seen', or televised (Docherty uses the example of the O.J. Simpson trial here), and this has major implications for how a subject's rights and freedoms may be *recognized* in a democracy. See Docherty 25-26.

⁴⁸ Docherty 25.

requires *indeterminate judgement*.⁴⁹

Lyotard understands this in terms of a movement away from any subscription to totality. A scientific knowledge would be one which is grounded in the totality of a governing theory; a knowledge based upon formulations and propositions which are tested 'internally', by reference to that theory itself. This is also what Lyotard describes as a "modern mood"; the postmodern, by contrast, is characterised by an "incredulity towards metanarratives"⁵⁰ or, more simply put, by a suspicion of the scientific nature of much theory. As Docherty aptly puts it: "The postmodern prefers the event of knowing to the fact of knowledge."⁵¹

-- Understanding the Event --

Lyotard's critique of the totality of governing theories has not led to any widely accepted political practice. Habermasian critics, not surprised by this deficiency, complain that poststructuralists have no political agenda, maintain no clear norms to guide practice, have no general perspective on social development and no vision of a better future.⁵² While these complaints must largely be sustained, poststructuralists reply that these are precisely the issues that must be expunged from the discourse of intellectuals. Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard strive to rid their discourse of concepts that present a closed or sutured understanding of society by which they refer to theories that totalize from one level, reduce multiplicity into unity, or organise discourse toward an end or *telos* which is usually

⁴⁹ Bill Readings, Introducing Lyotard (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) xxxi.

⁵⁰ Lyotard, Postmodern Condition xxiv.

⁵¹ Docherty 25.

⁵² Dick Hebdige characterises these standard themes as totalization, *telos*, and utopia in Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) 186-198.

utopian. Any concepts that fix identities, abstractly stabilize meanings, or resolve the nature of society are improper and politically dangerous, contend the poststructuralists.⁵³ Because of these self-imposed restrictions, poststructuralist cultural theory fails to satisfy certain assumptions about completion. The reader is often bothered by missing elements or gaps in the discourse that Habermasian writing furnishes.

For Lyotard, only if we respect -- and stress -- the heterogeneity of 'narrative knowledge' will we save the possibility of thinking. It is only through the refusal of consensus and the search for 'dissensus', that we will be able to extend thinking to allow for the shock of the new, the (chronological) postmodern. The ideal of consensus leads to a formula of arresting the flow of events, a mode whereby eventuality can be reduced to punctuality; it is a way of reducing the philosophy of Becoming to a philosophy of Being. The modernist conception of this ontology is that it is possible and indeed desirable to pass from Becoming to Being; whereas the postmodernist believes that any such move is always necessarily premature and unwarranted.⁵⁴

Politics, as it is conventionally conceived, depends upon consensus; most often such consensus justifies itself under the rubric of 'representation', in which there is first an assumed consensus between representative and represented, and then the possibility of consensus among representatives. As many political commentators have suggested of Western democracies which are based on such representational consensus, this is ineffective and false representation and is therefore hardly democratic at all. Poststructuralism proposes that in place of such a politics, it might be wiser to look for a justice. Justice is impossible under the present

⁵³ See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics, transl. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985) 93-148.

⁵⁴ Docherty 26.

bourgeois democracy which exists in Britain, for example, grounded as it is in the soft imperialism of the few who mediate the norms of social formation. Given the recent shift to an ideology of the political 'centre' in most Western 'democracies' during the 1990s, the political systems in these countries are apparently no longer capable of legislating effectively between opposing or competing political parties, let alone accommodating different political systems. As it becomes increasingly evident that significant percentages of citizens in these countries no longer subscribe to the totalizing forms which these political systems represent,⁵⁵ there is a need to explore the means of addressing political representation through a process which may facilitate events of justice.

Docherty has identified that the Subject's integrity toward events is the basis of an ethical demand in postmodernism, a demand whose philosophical roots can be found in the work of Emmanuel Levinas. For Levinas, the Subject has an obligation to judge, there is no escape from the necessity of judging in the event of interaction with the Other; yet, as with Lyotard, this process of judging must remain open-ended. Levinas urges us toward a space of indeterminacy in the time of the event of judging, in the uncertainty of discovery in "the face of the Other":

I have spoken a lot about the face of the Other as being the original site of the sensible. [...] The proximity of the Other is the face's meaning, and it means in a way that goes beyond those plastic forms which forever try to cover the face like a mask of their presence to perception. But always the face shows through these forms. Prior to any particular

⁵⁵ This has been demonstrated in the recent national elections held in the United States, Canada, and Britain by the significant percentages of people choosing not to participate in the democratic process by refusing to vote; or, more poignantly, by the growing number of people who must resort to 'direct action' in the form of protests, marches, and forcible occupations as a means of gaining political representation in a system which refuses to recognize certain political positions on issues of economic, environmental, or cultural concern.

expression and beneath all particular expressions, which cover over and protect with an immediately adopted face or countenance, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defencelessness, vulnerability itself. [...] In its expression, in its mortality, the face before me summons me, calls for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the Other, pure otherness, separated in some way, from any whole, were my business.⁵⁶

The face-to-face implicates us in a response, in an integrity toward the Other, and thereby the necessity of sociality. We must behave justly toward the face of the Other; but we cannot do that according to a predetermined system of justice, a predetermined political theory. As Docherty states:

The Other is itself always other than itself: it is not simply a displaced Identity in which we may once more recognize and reconstitute ourself. The demand is for a just relating to alterity, for a cognition of the event of alterity, and for a cognition of the event of heterogeneity. In short, therefore, we must discover -- produce -- justice. It is here that the real political burden and trajectory of postmodernism is to be found: the search for a just politics, or the search for just a politics.⁵⁷

Postmodernism becomes an ethical political practice as it ceases to be constituted as an abstract, conceptual framework of distanced routine, and becomes open to alterity: the Subject's performative act of discovery in the event.

-- Discourse/Figure --

Lyotard's understanding of aesthetics, politics, and culture generally -- in terms of its singular eventhood -- demands a great deal from the audience, the constituents, or the public of such cultural practices. In the case of aesthetics, and theatre in particular, he demands an act of cognitive invention rather than mimetic recognition from the audience. Theatre is not understood to be primarily

⁵⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, The Levinas Reader, ed, Sean Hand (Oxford and Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1989) 82-83.

⁵⁷ Docherty 26-27.

representative, but as a search for the limits of representation. In this respect, we should understand Lyotard's account of postmodern aesthetic invention as characterised by a transformative *displacement* of the field of representation rather than the imaginative conception of new modes of representation, found for example, in the theatre of practitioners such as Robert Wilson, and therefore characteristic of the modernist avant-garde.⁵⁸

Lyotard's displacement of the field of representation begins with his introduction of the *figure* into discourse. Discours, figure, Lyotard's book on the subject, explores the nature of the distinction between discursive signification (meaning) and rhetoricity (figure). The *figural* is explicitly resistant to the rule of signification, therefore trying to simply define what the terms 'mean' becomes problematic. Discourse is the name given by Lyotard to the process of *representation by concepts*. Discourse, then, organises the objects of knowledge as a system of concepts or units of meaning. Meanings are defined in terms of their position in the discursive network, by virtue of their opposition to all the other concepts or elements in the system. Discourse thus imposes a spatial arrangement upon objects which Lyotard calls 'textual', a virtual grid of oppositions.⁵⁹

For Lyotard, the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure exemplify this discursivization of textual space, reducing all effects of language to meanings produced by the play between signifiers. Language is understood by Saussure as linguistic representation, in terms of the tabular system of opposed elements which make up language. The rule of discourse is thus the claim to order reality as a structure of meanings, to identify existence with the representable by the establishment of a rule consisting of a network of oppositions between concepts or signifiers. Discursive knowledge corresponds with representational knowledge, outlined above,

⁵⁸ Readings xxiii.

⁵⁹ Readings 3.

in that it too is predicated upon a stable relation between Subject and Object of knowledge.

Against the rule of discourse in textual space, Lyotard insists upon the *figural*. It is crucial to understand that the 'figural' is not simply opposed to the discursive, as another kind of space. Lyotard is not simply making a romantic claim that irrationality is better than reason, or for example, desire is better than understanding. In Discours, figure Lyotard is concerned to attack the structuralist notion that everything is a text by insisting that the sensible field of vision functions differently. Lyotard is a 'deconstructive' thinker, although he has some severe things to say about Derrida's critical practice of deconstruction. Readings identifies Lyotard's criticism of Derrida for excessive 'textualism' as coming from "the other side of deconstruction", in its "insistence that to claim that everything is in the grip of rhetoricity by virtue of its being a text is to ignore the figural function of the non-textual."⁶⁰ Lyotard critiques what he sees as a very restricted account of textuality in order to refute the claim that everything is indifferently a matter of representation. He insists that there is always a figural other to textuality at work within and against the text. On this basis, he criticises Derrida for containing the deconstructive force of the figural by identifying it wholly with the internal problematic of linguistic signification:

One does not in the least break with metaphysics in putting language everywhere, on the contrary one fulfils metaphysics; one fulfils the repression of the sensible and of *jouissance*.⁶¹

Lyotard upholds the *opacity* of the signifier as a figural condition of its double invocation to the textual and the visual when 'read', rather than the loss or failure of meaning. Lyotard criticizes Derrida firstly for his conjecture

⁶⁰ Readings 5.

⁶¹ Jean-François Lyotard, Discours, figure (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971) 14; my translation.

that there is only language, and secondly for his thesis that the visible (perception, reference) is merely an impasse within language; the product of the uncontrollable nature of the oppositional differences by which the signifier functions, the product of the 'play of the signifier'. As Readings reminds us, the disagreement is not absolute: Lyotard argues that the clash between difference and opposition is not the product of a flaw internal to the structural functioning of language but is the effect of the figural co-presence of the incommensurable orders of the textual and the visible in language.⁶² It is not that the opposition between signifiers runs out of control in signification, as Derrida asserts in Structure, Sign and Play. Rather, according to Lyotard, language simultaneously evokes two heterogeneous negations: that of opposition (text) in signification and that of heterogeneous difference (vision) in reference.⁶³

In Discours, figure Lyotard juxtaposes the Saussurean structuralist account of linguistics with the phenomenology of vision elaborated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Lyotard attempts to deconstruct the rule of semiology by showing how vision functions as a figure -- for the structural linguistics on which semiology is based. Vision deconstructs structuralism in that it is both necessary for structuralism and absolutely heterogeneous to it. Discours, figure establishes an opposition between textual and figurative representational space, between reading and seeing, and then deconstructs that space to evoke a figurality at work within representation.

Readings effectively sums up Lyotard's concept of the figural when he states that

The figural [...] is not an alternative to textual representation by signification, not a pure anti-logocentrism (a nonsense); rather, it is the blocking together of heterogeneous spaces (such as the textual and the visual). Lyotard's version of deconstruction is an attempt to make this co-presence of radically different spaces into

⁶² Readings 6.

⁶³ Lyotard, Discours, figure 75-76.

something more than a contradiction or an impasse.⁶⁴

The opacity of the signifier is not an 'impasse', or a pure objecthood outside language, a simple beyond of representation. Rather, it is the mark that representation only functions by virtue of a necessary and impossible encounter with its other, the encounter that is the event of the figural. The figural is that which, in representation, makes us aware that there is something which cannot be represented, an Other to representation within its workings.

-- The Limit of Representation:
A Space for Transformation and Transgression --

Lyotard's work is probably best known for its resistance to the 'grand narratives' of Western politics, aesthetics, and philosophy. In relation to some of the other theories of postmodernism touched on above, the importance of Lyotard's project is in its break with any 'science' of narrative: his insistence that concepts of 'narrative form' should not be allowed to obfuscate the figural force of the pragmatics of performance immanent to narrative.⁶⁵ The determining quality of Lyotard's description of the postmodern concern with narrative is an opposition of 'little narratives' to *grand* or *metanarratives*. In short, a 'grand narrative' claims to be the story that can reveal the meaning of all stories, be it the weakness or the progress of humankind. Its 'metanarrative' status comes from the fact that it talks about the many narratives of culture so as to reveal the singular truth inherent in them. The implicit epistemological claim of a metanarrative is to put an end to narration by revealing the meaning of narratives. As Readings explains, epistemology

rests upon the assumption that the force of narratives is synonymous with the meaning that may be found in them, that narrative is to be wholly understood in terms of the production and

⁶⁴ Readings 22.

⁶⁵ Readings 62-63.

transmission of meaning, that it is a conceptual instrument of representation.⁶⁶

In Lyotard's account, 'little narratives' resist incorporation into such totalizing histories of cultural representation or projects for culture. They do this because of the way in which the *event of performance* -- "not simply the act of telling but the implicit pragmatics of narrative transmission"⁶⁷ -- functions as a figure, so as to displace or subvert the discursive claims of narrative theory. For Lyotard, 'narrative' is not a concept that allows us to unlock the meaning of culture. Rather, "it is the rhetorical figure that opens culture as a site of transformation and dispute."⁶⁸

At the limit of representation a space of transformation and dispute is opened up by the function of the figure in discourse. In this respect, the event of performance engendered by the work of the figure is akin to what Michel Foucault has called 'non-discursive language'. Foucault described the corpus of his work as an attempt to recount man's quest for self-knowledge and the price paid as a consequence of the successes of this quest.⁶⁹ In the 1960s Foucault developed the notion of 'non-discursive language', which could be used to counteract and construct resistances against discourse. It is in the 'non-discursive language' or 'counter-memory' with which Foucault identifies his own work that we can find a practice of postmodernism similar to the workings of Lyotard's figure.

'Discourse' and 'non-discursive language' are elements of a sort of 'spatial model' with which Foucault seems to have worked in the 1960s. This model can perhaps be conceived most helpfully in terms of the Same and the Other. The space of the

⁶⁶ Readings 63.

⁶⁷ Readings 63 and See Chapter Two.

⁶⁸ Readings 63.

⁶⁹ Gerard Raulet, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *Telos*, 55 (Spring 1983): 195-211.

Same is characterized by light; it is the space of discourse. The elements that characterize the space of the Other -- the realm of darkness for Foucault -- are those that have been excluded by discourse (and the Same); these are the figures of madness, sexuality, desire, death, and even other ethnic cultures. In what Foucault calls the Classical period (c. 1650-1800), signs were constituted and referents identified in the world of the Same. In the Modern period, and with Kant's aesthetic establishing the possibility and Sade the realization, a new and third world invented itself; or more appropriately it should be referred to as a new space or a new 'fold'. That is, with what Foucault called the 'birth of literature' a 'vertical' space was established at the limit where light met darkness, and this was to be a space of *liminal* presence and exploration. Foucault's fold was a space of non-discursive 'literature', where language was meant to take on an opacity, and 'ontological weight'. It is in this *pli*, this fold, where the practices of postmodernism are constituted.⁷⁰

The new language of this vertical space is able to offer a wholly new description of discourse and the Same. It can also speak about the Other in a qualitatively different way than that of which discourse is capable. From time to time figures from the Other are able to cross over into this fold and speak in the non-discursive language of the space -- sexuality and death in Sade, madness in Artaud, cultural alterity in the writing and performance of Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Postmodernism as a cultural practice of non-discursive language arises in the space between discourse and the unconscious. The figures of the unconscious through such non-discursive language then transgress the limit into the space of discourse. It should be clear then that, *pace* Habermas, what is at stake here is more than an aesthetic. Foucault has first drawn on aesthetic postmodernity as a basis for a *theoretical* intervention. When theory acts through

⁷⁰ Lash 82.

transgression on the realm of discourse it mobilizes a critique -- of discourse, of forms of subjectivity -- that is pre-eminently practical and political.

In "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?", Lyotard has said,

A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.⁷¹

In this article, Lyotard not only begins to offer a serious definition of the term, but alludes directly in the title to the history of the question. As Docherty suggests, "Lyotard's title is meant explicitly to call to mind Kant's famous piece "What is Enlightenment?".⁷² Following Lyotard's example, the aim of this chapter has been to address the postmodern as a trajectory of European philosophy with its origins in the Enlightenment. The proper sense in which the postmodern describes an 'after' of the modern is essentially derived from the discourse of sociology, described by Lash above, in which 'modernism' refers to cultural practices, whereas 'modernity' is the designation of a social period or philosophical condition.⁷³ Many of the cultural practices of postmodernism are a continuation of those devised as part of modernism, and the tension between postmodernism and modernism was in many ways a tension which defined modernism from its inception. As soon as fissures appear in the unquestionable authority of tradition, the tension between universal reason and the particular contents escaping its grasp is inevitable and irreducible.

The theatre practice examined in the following chapters cultivates a form of 'figural' signification which has emerged in the fissures, gaps, or 'plis' of a 'discursive' modernist tradition. As reality has come to be increasingly

⁷¹ Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition 79.

⁷² Docherty 36.

⁷³ See Hutcheon 23-24.

mediated and thus made absent by the representational structures of modernisation, it has become the problematized Object of knowledge for the Subject of postmodernism. The problematization of reality identified in postmodern dramaturgy means that reality as a representational referent is displayed directly, as an 'event' exposed for its indifferent and arbitrary character; a materiality which is made real by the psychical and signification investments of the Subject-as-spectator. At the limit of the representational structures defining our reality, the 'figural' signification of postmodern dramaturgy generates a space of the 'real' between the performers and spectators which constitutes the *theatre event*.

CHAPTER TWO

POSTMODERN DRAMATURGY

-- The Theatre Event --

In science, it has come to be understood that the event is the unit of things real -- that energy, not matter, is the basic datum. In the increasingly widespread perception of reality as endless process, performance, not the art object, becomes primary. The overt presence of the actor and the audience in or at the performance makes clear its nature as event rather than object.⁷⁴

In the previous chapter postmodernism was examined. An investigation was made of the various ways in which the representations of contemporary culture mediate reality. Taken in two parts, the first offered a plurality of narratives of contemporary culture, all of which are seen to be a response to the loss of metaphysical grounding in the discourses of the humanities and sciences. Here the representation of reality is no longer an unproblematic issue because each narrative questions what the *real* means, and how we can come to know it. The second part explored theories and practices which confront the limit of these representations, offering an outline of the debate concerning how such representational strategies might be subverted or transgressed and the knowledge which may be gained by the effects of such action. Taken together, this two-part analysis demonstrates that postmodernism is a paradigm of cultural practices with the primary focus of problematizing a reality in which the distinction between representations and the 'real' is obscure. Reality is seen to possess meaning for us through a system of signs, organised into discourses, and within these discourses there exists a *figural* force which is absolutely necessary to meaning yet escapes discursive explanation. It is the energy of this 'figural' force, as it is manifested in the dramaturgical strategies of a theatre event, which is the focus of this

⁷⁴ Natalie Crohn Schmitt, "Theorizing about Performance: Why Now?" New Theatre Quarterly, Volume VI, No. 23 (August 1990): 231.

chapter.

Applying Jean-François Lyotard's definition of an event in communication to an analysis of dramaturgical practice in contemporary British theatre, the following investigation will posit the concept of a *theatre event*. The 'theatre event' is "not a thing, but [...] a caesura in space-time."⁷⁵ This concept of analysis is adopted in order to elucidate dramaturgical practices which mount a challenge to the way in which we represent phenomena to ourselves, using *theatrical* representation and the conceptual categories of space and time. The action of the event disrupts any pre-existing referential frame within which it might be represented or understood. That is, "something happens which is not tautological with what has happened"⁷⁶ and therefore this phenomenon challenges our habits of conceptualizing the meaning of things which happen to us. Applied to production, the theatre event is designated by its radical singularity of happening, the 'it happens' of a live performance as distinct from the sense of 'what is happening' or 'what happened'.⁷⁷ It leaves the spectator without immediate criteria for conceptual meaning and therefore requires *indeterminate judgement*. The eventhood of the theatre event is its *force*, its energy of sheer happening. Lyotard characterises it as the 'it happens' because to try to say 'what happened' or 'what is happening' is to turn the theatre event into signification by applying a concept of meaning to it.⁷⁸ The requirement of indeterminate judgement on the part of spectators enables them to move beyond conceptions of what a theatre event means. A performativity of response is demanded, and thus the

⁷⁵ Jean-François Lyotard as quoted in Bill Readings, Introducing Lyotard (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) xxxi.

⁷⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, transl. Georges Van den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 79.

⁷⁷ Readings xxxi.

⁷⁸ Readings 43.

spectators must work to understand what a theatre event *does* to them, and in turn what they must *do* in response.

In order to understand how a notion of the theatre event emerges from postmodernity, it is important to recognize a radically different form of the postmodern than that which is temporally classified. There is a *figural force* within events which acts as an unspeakable other necessarily at work within and against the discursive means by which we represent, and therefore ascribe meaning to, the event; this 'figural force' disrupts representation of the event in time. Lyotard's account of historical events problematizes the possibility of thinking of history as a succession of moments because the figural force of the event, as it happens, disrupts the conceptual order by which history represents what happened.

Lyotard is not opposed to historical discourse, but wishes to identify the point at which the opposition by which discourse works is opened to the radical heterogeneity or *singularity* characterized by figural force.⁷⁹ The figure is the irreconcilable trace of space or time that is radically incommensurable with discursive meaning.⁸⁰ Thus, for Lyotard far from being an historical era or epoch, postmodernism is a figural force which subverts discourse, including attempts to create discourse about it. Bill Readings makes the following observation about Lyotard's distinctive understanding of postmodernity:

Lyotard is [...] opposed to the majority of writers on the postmodern for whom postmodernity appears as the contemporary critique of modernism;

⁷⁹ Lyotard defines discourse as the condition of representation to consciousness by a rational order or structure of concepts. Concepts or terms function as units oppositionally defined by their position and relation within the virtual space of a system or network, a space that Lyotard calls *textual* or *perspectival*. The calculation of such relational positions is the work of *ratio*, or reason. The condition of discourse apprehends things solely in terms of the representability by or within its system, as *meanings* or *significations* that discourse may *speak*. See Readings xxxi, 3-4, 8-10, and 23-28.

⁸⁰ Readings xxxi.

postmodernity as the negative moment of modernist self-consciousness.⁸¹

Many of the theorists referred to in Chapter One articulated a postmodernism which emerges when modernism has lost confidence in itself, causing art to take on certain formal, modernist characteristics; for example, originality becomes complicit critique and parody (Hutcheon), formal purity becomes collage/montage (Derrida), and progress becomes the cynicism of infinite deferral in simulacra (Baudrillard). For Lyotard, there are two important reservations to such attempts to determine the nature of the postmodern. First, such accounts tie postmodernism to the adoption of an attitude by a subject. The subject is not necessarily the bourgeois individual of the Enlightenment, but it may be authorial (McHale), economic (Harvey⁸² and Jameson⁸³), feminist (Owens⁸⁴), or political (Hutcheon). For Lyotard, postmodernism is an event, not a moment in the consciousness of things for the artist, for the public, or for the spirit of an age. As Readings claims,

To understand the event as if it were a state of the soul or spirit is to ignore the eventhood of the event in the interest of taking account of its meaning, to reduce figure to discourse.⁸⁵

Second, the identification of postmodernity by means of formal properties will tend to reduce what Readings calls the

⁸¹ Readings 55.

⁸² See David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989).

⁸³ See Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁸⁴ See Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983): 57-82.

⁸⁵ Readings 55.

"temporal *aporia*"⁸⁶ which the postmodern opens in representation.⁸⁷ That is, once the postmodern is formally recognizable, it is no longer opening up a hole in representation; rather than testifying to the unrepresentable, it will have presented it.

Lyotard's account implies that, if resistant to anything, postmodernism resists the assurance of a conscious stance or position of knowledge, critique, or historical survey. This seems to involve a questioning of political, economic, or any other social structure, developed through modernisation, as the 'last instance' in which the truth of all things will be revealed. The distinction of Lyotard's writings on postmodernism is that they insist on the appearance of the event as a 'figure' for modernist 'discourses', rather than a critique of them.⁸⁸ The event appears as figure under the guise of narrativity in culture, anachronism in history, paralogical experimentation in the arts and, as shall be argued, the work of spectatorship in the theatre event.

The figural excess of the event, its eventhood or its ephemeral singularity which disrupts meaning ascribed to it, is very close to Jacques Derrida's *supplement*. The 'supplement' is the 'necessary surplus' that disrupts the propriety and self-presence of logo-centric being in that it is both necessary to being and yet not a part of it. The thought of being that grounds the distinction of inside from

⁸⁶ 'Aporia' is used here to mean a paradox in the logical, chronological unfolding of events in time. This is testimony to what Lyotard calls the 'time of the event'. The time of the event marks an impasse between eventhood and the representation (e.g.: analysis) of the event. Concerning an historical event, this would amount to the blocking together of two temporalities, and allowing the incommensurability of these two events to comment on each other. The same is true of the origin and the repetition of a work of art; the representation should stand as a temporal incommensurability to the original.

⁸⁷ Readings 56.

⁸⁸ Readings 56-58.

outside, presence from absence, itself relies on an excess that blurs this boundary. The supplement deconstructs the assured self-presence of being that grounds metaphysics.⁸⁹ This process is elaborated more comprehensively below as part of the dramaturgical strategies identified in the creation of a theatre event, but what is significant to the discussion at this point is the necessity of the completion of the presence of being as it is presented in performance and completed outside itself in spectatorship. There can be no plenitude to being in performance, as either origin or finality, since that plenitude is fissured by its reliance on something that is exterior to it. In the 'work' of the spectators, as the performance effects them, there is a *différance* which flaws the identity performed, and thereby dispels any possibility of a complete being of illusion in performance.

-- Spectatorship and the Theatre Event --

The theatre's raw material is not the actor, nor the space, nor the text, but the attention, the seeing, the hearing, the mind of the spectator. Theatre is the art of the spectator.⁹⁰

The theatre event is best understood in terms of the radical demands it makes upon its audience. The spectators' understanding of their experience here is no longer to be

⁸⁹ Derrida's concept of the supplement has its origins in the process of '*sous rature*', or 'under erasure'. To put a word *sous rature* is to write it down and then cross it out, with the intension of leaving both word and deletion. The idea here is that a given word is inadequate to fully convey an intended meaning, and yet this word is left to stand, albeit crossed out, because it is necessary to approach meaning. Once a term is under *sous rature* its meaning or essence is said to be supplemented by that which escapes the term employed. As Sarup explains, "Derrida has a mistrust of metaphysical language but accepts the necessity to work within that language."

See Madan Sarup, An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism, 2nd edn. (London, New York, Toronto: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 38-39.

⁹⁰ Eugenio Barba, The Paper Canoe, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 39.

found 'behind' or 'within' a text; rather the notion of text becomes an indeterminate productivity of contact and interaction between spectators and performers. In this respect the theatre event problematizes the notion of what it is to be a spectator; as the "transactional and interactional conventions"⁹¹ of a live performance are rendered problematic, the role of spectatorship becomes increasingly important.

An examination of the practice of spectatorship inevitably becomes an account of the cultural role of theatre in society. The role of the spectators is played between the cultural practice of the theatre event and its relationship to society as a whole. Walter Benjamin's work on the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and the significance of art in modern society is a suitable starting point for a discussion of contemporary concerns on this matter. Benjamin's view was that the social effect of a work of art cannot simply be gauged by considering the work itself but that it is decisively determined by the institution within which the work functions.⁹² It is theatre as an institution-in-society which determines the measure of political effect contemporary work may have, and which too often demonstrates that theatre in a bourgeois society continues to operate in a realm distinct from the everyday practices of peoples' lives. Implicit in the present study is a critique of theatre practice in contemporary Britain; with particular reference to how as a cultural institution it has for the most part ceased to have any profound effect on the ways in which its audience makes meaning in their lives. It is timely to look toward dramaturgical practice which may move beyond questions of form and content in theatre, to more intrinsic questions of the theatre as a cultural practice, especially as this may involve a re-consideration of spectatorship.

Lyotard's repudiation of totalizing narratives, in

⁹¹ Keir Elam, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (London and New York: Routledge, 1980) 87.

⁹² Sarup 149.

particular the meta-narratives of Marx and Freud, stems from his understanding that no one narrative can grasp what is going on in society as a whole. This rejection of totality has Lyotard and other postmodern theorists stressing the fragmentation of narratives, time, space, and society. Rejection of organic unity and the espousal of the fragmentary is a perspective postmodernism shares with the historic avant-garde movements.⁹³ Walter Benjamin's concept of *allegory* has often been used as an aid to understanding avant-gardiste (non-organic) works of art, and is cited by several theorists as offering insight into the multi-narrative fragmentation of the postmodern condition. Benjamin's allegorist pulls images and narrative elements out of the everyday, isolates them, and then joins them as obviously incongruous fragments. The juxtaposing of these fragments allows the allegorist to make meaning from their arrangement not organic to their original context.⁹⁴ Madan Sarup notes that

these elements of Benjamin's concept of allegory accord with what is called montage, the fundamental principle of avant-garde art. Montage presupposes the fragmentation of reality; it breaks through the appearance of totality and calls attention to the fact that it is made up of reality fragments.⁹⁵

The montage *challenges* people to make it an integrated part of their reality and to relate it to their experience. An excellent example of this principle is found in Brechtian theatre. As Benjamin indicates, Brecht's dramaturgy is intent upon challenging its audience through mimetic interruptions and juxtapositions which 'make strange' and disrupt conventional expectations and promote critical speculation in the audience.⁹⁶

⁹³ Sarup 147-148.

⁹⁴ Sarup 148.

⁹⁵ Sarup 148.

⁹⁶ See Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?", *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, transl. H. Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973): 144-151.

Lyotard's interest in avant-garde montage parallels Benjamin and Brecht's juxtaposing of imagery and the challenge it poses to an audience's relationship to the performance; his perspective, however, takes this challenge a stage further. An approach to spectatorship can be developed from Lyotard's understanding of what it is to be an 'active' reader, or more generally a receiver of a text. This amounts to a demand for extreme scepticism of representational knowledge on the part of the reader; not only of the text's representational grasp of a given reality, but also of the reader's representational grasp of what the text means. Lyotard identifies representational knowledge as an object of possession; so a book which someone has read, for instance, becomes something which is not just in their possession as a physical object, but more importantly as a mental representation. Thus, the *meaning* of the book is possessed by analogy with a commodity in so far as it is made an object of a mental representation.⁹⁷ This relates to both theatrical representation and the audience because spectators also possess a mental representation of their experience of a performance in the way they make meaning from this experience. Lyotard's critique is useful for the purposes of examining spectatorship because it problematizes the habitual ways in which spectatorship generates conceptual meaning from theatrical representation.

In *Des Dispositifs pulsionnels* Lyotard elaborates upon what he calls the "theatrical-representational apparatus"⁹⁸ by comparing it to the perspectival painting of the *costruzione legittima* from the Italian Renaissance. In this analogy, the theatre consists of three closed spaces linked together: the support, the image or the stage, and the viewer. In painting, these would correspond to the surface and technology of painting (the medium), the image, and the

⁹⁷ Readings xvii.

⁹⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *Des Dispositifs pulsionnels*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1983) 255; my translation.

position prescribed for the viewer by the vanishing point of perspectival construction. In the theatre itself, the three spaces are respectively the backstage apparatus (wings and machinery, etc.), the stage, and the auditorium. These three closed spaces locate themselves in opposition to a fourth, open, one -- the space of the real, of the world outside the theatre. In this structure there are three limits or divisions: stage from backstage, stage from auditorium, and theatre from world.⁹⁹ Lyotard calls this proscenium stage space a *dispositif*, or 'set-up'.

Three significant observations about this apparatus have to be made. First, Lyotard's description of how the apparatus works is similar to his definition of discourse, and thus a comparison can be made between how a subject makes meaning in each. The condition of representation to consciousness in both occurs through a predominantly rational order or structure of concepts. These concepts function as units oppositionally defined (e.g.: character conflict) by their position and relation within the virtual space (staging) of a system or network (play text); a space which Lyotard calls *textual* or *perspectival* (staged play text). The subject/spectator calculates the relational positions of these concepts by the work of *ratio*, or reason. The application of discourse conceptualizes things solely in terms of their representability by or within this system, as meanings or significations that discourse may speak.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the theatrical-representational apparatus, like discourse, can only comprehend phenomena as it becomes the representable content of this closed system. The system is either ambivalent to, or rejects, that which does not work within the rational order or its structure of concepts.

Second, the theatrical-representational apparatus positions its viewing subject *inside* the system. Third, the effect is not one of illusion, but of seduction. Lyotard

⁹⁹ Readings 93-94.

¹⁰⁰ Readings xxxi.

explains:

I should say seduction rather than illusion because the subject who looks into [Brunelleschi's] box, if he is not mad, knows very well that he is not looking at the Baptistery itself. For those who sit in the theatre it is the same.... This representation is not *trompe l'œil* and it is not even illusion, it is seduction in the proper sense of the term: one is divided from oneself [Lat. *seducere*], there is a scission.¹⁰¹

This is important to the consideration of postmodern dramaturgy because Lyotard's analysis of representation does not consist in decrying its (ideological) falsity, but in considering its *performance* as an apparatus. Bill Readings suggests that much of the difficulty in understanding what Lyotard is trying to do stems from the tendency in analysis of his work to fall back upon the concept of illusion in thinking about representation; this is precisely the kind of conceptualization Lyotard is trying to avoid.¹⁰² Lyotard is not concerned with issues of falsity, rather he questions the potential of performance to subvert the discursive structure of the theatrical-representational apparatus, acknowledging the seductive nature of discursive meaning. This distinguishes him from radical dramatists like Brecht for whom the above apparatus provided the means for ideological critique. For Brecht it was enough to work within an apparatus in which the limit between stage (performers) and auditorium (spectators) is breached so that the spectators may ask 'who speaks?' or where the limit between stage and backstage is breached to show the apparatus by which the image is constructed. Brecht's practice corresponds to the classical moves of an ideological critique by which the spectators and the image are referred back to the mechanism by which they are constructed and positioned. In each case, however, the limit that separates the 'de-realized' space of the theatrical apparatus from the

¹⁰¹ Lyotard as quoted in Readings 94.

¹⁰² Readings 94.

outside is preserved.¹⁰³ Lyotard claims that contemporary capitalism has developed to the point where it can itself make profit from breaching the limits inside the theatrical apparatus:

¹⁰³ Philip Auslander's analysis of acting techniques, "'Just Be Your Self': Logocentrism and difference in performance theory," offers a deconstruction of Brecht's alienation effect ("A-effect") and *gestus* relevant to Lyotard's use of the theatrical-representational apparatus as a critique of discourse. Brecht developed both techniques in order to prevent an audience from emotionally identifying with a play in such a way which might interfere with their powers of critical judgement. Briefly, he proposed the A-effect as an approach to performing characters which might prevent the actor from becoming completely transformed by the character. This estrangement between actor and character meant that an actor could present an interpretation of a character in a given situation which might encompass a variety of alternatives; that every gesture signifies a decision to be observed and considered. Using the technique of *gestus* an actor could make use of physical attitude, tone of voice and facial expression to consciously comment on a character's social relations with others. Rather than embodying the character in the manner of classic realism, the actor/subject could use Brecht's techniques to offer a 'reading' of a particular character for the audience's critical discernment.

While Brecht's techniques succeed in making visible certain social forces in society for the critical observation of an audience, his Epic theatre still falls prey to a theological aspect of theatrical representation in that it strives for a presence of the actor/subject which is beyond representation as posited within the theatrical-representational apparatus. Here there is a metaphysical assumption made about the actor/subject as a transcendental presence, a political agent, which acts as a seductive illusion for the audience in the way this actor/subject may stand outside representation in order to act on it. Auslander's conclusion is useful to the present analysis because he identifies a process of striving for presence on the part of the practitioner which differs from its conventional metaphysical application. He suggests how the search for presence in the theatre might be more fruitfully pursued in the 'play' of forces between performers and spectators in the event of live performance.

See Philip Auslander, "'Just Be Your Self': Logocentrism and difference in performance theory," Acting (Re)Considered, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 59-70.

We have the advantage over Adorno that we live in a capitalism that is more cynical, more energetic, less tragic. It places everything (including the backstage apparatus of 'exploitation') in representation, representation is self-reflexive (as in Brecht) and presents itself.... The walls, the entry, the exit, remain.¹⁰⁴

As Readings points out, Lyotard's use of the theatrical-representational apparatus demonstrates that "capitalism has caught up with Brecht, as it were."¹⁰⁵

Lyotard's critique of theatrical representation is significant for spectatorship of the theatre event because it demonstrates the limits of representational concepts and shows how even when a radical ideology like Brecht's is applied to this apparatus, the prevailing conceptual *dispositif* remains unchallenged. Lyotard likens this unchallenged limit of political space to that of the walls of a museum on art: "the putting aside of effects and the privileging of concepts as extraterritorial; the setting aside of intensities and their weakening by means of their staging."¹⁰⁶ For Lyotard, the theatrical-representational apparatus demonstrates the discursive limitation on our experience and understanding of reality. As it relates to our logical understanding of the world, the spectators' experience in the theatre becomes similar to other forms of conceptual 'staging' in society. This comparison is based upon two processes. First, staged representation occurs within clearly demarcated limits: an 'inside' of the theatre of representation which is quite distinct from the reality 'outside', and the business of the theatre. "To stage is to institute this limit, this frame, to circumscribe this region."¹⁰⁷ Thus, culture is inside 'nature' representing it, politics inside 'society', for example. At the same time, however, this representation that

¹⁰⁴ Lyotard, Des Dispositifs pulsionnels 111; my translation.

¹⁰⁵ Readings 95.

¹⁰⁶ Lyotard, Des Dispositifs pulsionnels 291; my translation.

¹⁰⁷ Lyotard, Des Dispositifs pulsionnels 59; my translation.

copies reality imposes its rule on 'reality', reduces the real to 'that which can be represented'. Hence, the second process: what is explicitly 'off-stage', outside, is staged in that it can only be thought in terms of its potential representation on stage, as the referent of a discourse. The real is the representable, and therefore reduced to the absent object of representation. This is what Lyotard means by calling representation a "placing outside [that which takes place] on the inside."¹⁰⁸ The theatre of representation produces this effect of 'de-realization' (the reduction of the real to a representation for a subject / the spectator) by making everything within it a matter of conceptual representation. This is a process which Lyotard characterizes as 'theological' in that the outside, the 'reality' which the theatre proposes to represent is kept outside, excluded, and appears on the inside of the theatre only as the absent meaning of the representation, the dead God, the 'Great Zero' as Lyotard calls it. Thus, the process which appears to denigrate representation as secondary to the real is in fact the establishment of the rule of representation, by which the real is merely the absent original of a representation. In philosophical terms, this method of representation is called logocentrism, and has its origins with Plato; logocentrism will receive further explication in the discussion of mimesis below.

-- Frames of Reference:
Spectatorship, Cognition and Reality --

Lyotard's theatrical-representational apparatus allows us to see an important intertextual relationship between the spectators in theatre and citizens in society. It demonstrates how conceptual methods of representing phenomena can seduce spectators into a particular method of developing knowledge, and thereby a way of 'experiencing' and understanding reality. Focus should now be given to how methods of analyzing the

¹⁰⁸ Lyotard, Des Dispositifs pulsionnels 291; my translation.

spectators' role in the theatre event may make use of Lyotard's admonition. Given the ubiquity of particular practices of spectatorship engendered by the metaphysical means of the theatrical-representational apparatus, we may now consider how the problematization of these practices promotes the (re)consideration¹⁰⁹ of spectatorship in the creation of a theatre event.

In Theatre Audiences, Susan Bennett advances a theory of production and reception for audiences of contemporary western theatre which provides a useful starting-point for (re)considering how the practices of spectatorship work to create a theatre event. Bennett develops a model for her analysis which features an inner and outer frame. The outer frame is concerned with the theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the practitioner's approach to production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance. The inner frame contains the event itself and, in particular, the spectators' experience of a fictional or 'staged' world -- based upon a text, score, or plan -- and from which the live performance develops. This second frame encompasses dramaturgical strategies, ideological overcoding, and the material conditions of performance. The intersection of the two frames forms the spectators' cultural understanding and experience of theatre.¹¹⁰ Bennett's model augments the theatrical-representational apparatus through its use of an outer frame of audience reception. Its consideration of strategies which affect the condition of the spectators is the beginning of breaching the limits interior to the theatrical apparatus. Moreover, it provides a means of identifying how theatre might serve as a vital cultural institution in society, offering insight into how cultural

¹⁰⁹ I use (re)consider to mark clearly the implicitly processual nature of 'considering'. This view invites the consideration that both society and theatre practice are performative, and therefore always already processually under construction. See Zarrilli 1.

¹¹⁰ Susan Bennett, Theatre Audiences (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 1-2.

assumptions affect performances and performances re-write cultural assumptions.¹¹¹

Bennett's frames of audience reception are an advancement upon the semiotic analysis of audience reception made by Keir Elam. For Bennett and Elam, these frames are conceptual or cognitive structures to the extent that they are applied by participants and observers to make sense of a given 'form' of behaviour (e.g., live performance), but are derived from the conventional principles through which behaviour itself is organised (e.g., theatre productions performed at theatre institutions). Elam explains the general pattern of behaviour upon which the model is developed:

Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organisational premises -- sustained both in the mind and in activity -- I call the frame of the activity.¹¹²

Elam extends this frame of the activity to a concept of a theatrical frame -- not unlike Bennett's outer frame -- which is the product of a set of transactional conventions governing the participants' expectations and their understanding of reality in the performance.¹¹³ Bennett and Elam agree that the spectators' cognitive hold on the theatrical frame, their knowledge of texts, textual laws and conventions, together with their general cultural preparation and the influence of critics, community, and so forth, make up what is identified as the *horizon of expectations*.¹¹⁴

When Bennett and Elam speak of the audience's horizon of expectations they are identifying the point at which the dramaturgy of a theatre event may begin to radically undermine the semiotic -- that is to say, structuralist -- conception of

¹¹¹ Bennett 1-2.

¹¹² Elam 87-88.

¹¹³ Elam 88.

¹¹⁴ Elam 94, Bennett 52-4.

the role of spectatorship. In relation to reception, an audience's horizon of expectations usually implies an 'aesthetic distance' created by the performance, which through its innovations and modification to future expectations is measured.¹¹⁵ The dramaturgical strategies which give rise to a theatre event work to create a singularity of the live performance experience which subverts the spectators' determinate, cognitive expectations. The practitioner of the theatre event attempts to create a horizon of expectation for the spectators which is indeterminate. Dramaturgical strategies are meant to create a representational excess to the conceptual frames by which they are understood, and thus the spectators' experience of the event should also extend into an experience in excess of the referential frames used to determine it. Bennett's framework of audience reception, as a model of cognitive expectation, is displaced through the occurrence of a theatre event. Consequently, while Bennett's analysis provides a useful beginning to the present examination of spectatorship, the unpredictable happening of the theatre event problematizes any such analysis which elevates 'form' at the expense of indeterminate 'force'. The force of sheer happening in performance is meant to challenge the spectators' appreciation of what goes on *within* and *beyond* cognitive methods of comprehension.

The theatre event offers the opportunity to experience spectatorship in such a way that puts predetermined conceptions of the role of the spectator at risk. The theatre event does not mark a distinct other to the frames established by Bennett and Elam or the theatrical-representational apparatus described by Lyotard. Theatre practice can never simply transgress the outer limit of the theatre of representation. Lyotard acknowledges the necessity to represent, but he recognizes that representation -- in performance and spectatorship -- must testify to the eventhood that representation suppresses. This requires experimental

¹¹⁵ Elam 94-95.

judgement beyond the cognitive frame, apparatuses, or other criteria of representation. In cognition, or determinate judgement, a subject 'knows' by applying a pre-existing concept to an object in order to determine its nature, for example, 'this space is a "theatre"'. Indeterminate judgement is judgement to which one cannot apply a pre-existing concept. In the theatre event, something happens which disrupts the pre-existent frame of reference, so that the spectator does not 'know' how to understand it, at the time. Indeterminate judgement is required, in which the imagination experiments, inventing ways of understanding the event. It is therefore judgement which takes place in the explicit absence of criteria. Indeterminate judgement deals with the 'it is happening', not with the 'what is happening', with the event rather than with its constative content.¹¹⁶

The judgement required of spectators by a theatre event, has its origins in the radical experimentation of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement. Lyotard chose to develop the third of Kant's Critiques because for him it marked the point where Kant "cures himself of the disease of knowledge and rules in passing to the paganism of art and nature."¹¹⁷ Kant's inquiry confronts the question of scientificity -- by which he meant verifiability -- of knowledge about the world. He explores the workings of cognition and perception and what these mental processes tell us about the subject of consciousness and the object of

¹¹⁶ Readings 105-106.

¹¹⁷ The experience is somewhat akin to Lyotard's solution to the limits of contemporary painting; where he entreats the viewer to "explode this limit and take art out of the museums, even out of inhabited places; to paint walls, mountains, bodies, the sand." As the audience becomes a participant in the performance process, their role should be to "transform the energies which the (performers) put into play," not into a theoretical dispositive, "but into a sort of liquification, a sort of aleatory production." Thus, the theoretical question of performance may be dissolved, and the 'reality' of the experience addressed.

See Lyotard as quoted in Readings 106.

knowledge. As mentioned in Chapter One, there are many parallels between the romanticism of Kant's time and our condition of postmodernity; his thesis is instructive concerning the process of indeterminate judgement in both the theatre event and contemporary reality.

Kant makes a fundamental distinction within subjectivity between a 'transcendental logic', which contains *inter alia* the categories of understanding, and the 'transcendental aesthetic' which contains the categories of time and space. Perception of phenomena, Kant claims, takes place through the transcendental aesthetic's categories of time and space, while cognition or knowledge is conditional upon the operation of the logical categories.¹¹⁸ Both the sciences, in the broadest sense, and the arts are dependent on some admixture of cognition and perception, in which, in the sciences, cognition plays the greater role, while, in the arts, Kant's transcendental aesthetic, or perception, has a relatively more important part.

Scott Lash, among other theorists, has borrowed significantly from Kant when he hypothesizes that the changes in perception associated with modernization have sensitized the subject to the reception of particular cultural forms in the arts. One instance in modernism of this change in perception was that associated with the rise of the great city, and its concomitant disordering/reordering of the subject's perception of time and space, which then in turn was problematized in modernist cultural forms. In postmodernism the change is not so much in the way the subject perceives time and space as in terms of *what* the subject is perceiving. Lash explains:

What we are perceiving, in TV, in video, in the spread of information technology, on the walkman, on the cassettes or CDs we listen to in our cars, in advertisements, in the huge increase in popular magazines we look at, are representations, are mostly images. We are living in a society in which

¹¹⁸ W. H. Walsh, Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975) 55.

our perception is directed almost as often to representations as it is to 'reality'.¹¹⁹

Applied to our contemporary cultural condition, Kant's thesis raises interesting questions concerning the way in which the subject makes meaning from reality. In turn, this raises questions concerning perception and cognition in spectatorship.

One aspect of Lash's analysis needs further elaboration in terms of Kant's dualism of cognition and perception. In principle, perception -- though it operates through the categories of time and space -- is immediate. Cognition on the other hand is mediated by representation, be they concepts or propositions. Perception is concrete, cognition is abstract. Perception is variously seen as operating through sensation, or as in Kant, a matter of 'intuition'. Cognition is contingent upon abstract categories or logic, on abstract classification. To represent, either in science or in art is to operate in the realm of the subject. Both science and art operate through representations, not in the realm of the object but in that of subjectivity. In modernism, then, though both perception and representation are made problematic, there persists the Kantian dualism of subject and object. Here the changes in perception in everyday life bring about a disordering of our notions of time and space which are then reproduced in art in the realm of representation. In postmodernism it is the status of the two separate realms which are rendered problematic. As Lash says,

what is key here is that it is representations themselves which become objects of perception. That is, already abstract entities which previously were integral to subjectivity come to enter into the wholly unreflexive realm of the object itself.¹²⁰

In Kant's dualism, culture and its representations in the sciences and arts are somehow reflexive, somehow rational.

¹¹⁹ Scott Lash, Sociology of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 23-24.

¹²⁰ Lash 24.

They, for example, are able to operate reflexively in relation to the world of sensation and the object. In this rational world of culture, representations take sensations in the realm of perception as their object. In postmodernism all this is inverted, as unreflexive sensation takes representations themselves as its own object.

In Chapter One, Kant's Critique of Judgement was seen to have become significant to theorizing about postmodernism because it posits the possibility of reality possessing a kind of 'other' to the 'self'-legitimized object of reality conceived by the Subject. Thomas Docherty demonstrated that Kant's principal intention was to find the means by which the observation of reality would be able to shock the observer into new knowledge; and that such a shock to the Subject's sense of identity and practice of observation was reminiscent of the avant-garde. Kant wanted what he called a *synthetic a priori*, which would confirm but then exceed the *analytic a priori* of epistemological analysis of the world by allowing for the structural modification of the very analytic method itself to account for and encompass a new given, the unpredictable data of the world.¹²¹ As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the difference between analytic and synthetic *a priori* is analogous to that between determining and reflective (indeterminate or experimental) judgement. In a determining judgement, the subject of consciousness is not implicated in the act or event of judging at all: a method, a structure, determines the result of the judgement. In reflection, the Subject must rely more upon sensory perception as judgement must occur indeterminately, or, as Lyotard maintains, "without criteria."¹²² Judgements are then replaced by judging, and the *form* of judgement by the event of

¹²¹ See Chapter One and Thomas Docherty, "Postmodernism: An Introduction," Postmodernism -- A Reader, ed. Docherty (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 24-25.

¹²² Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, Just Gaming, transl. Wlad Godzich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985 [1979]) 6.

judging.

In the event of judging, the subject is compelled to extend the operation of reason beyond its own internally coherent framework in an attempt to grasp a 'new', indeterminate, and indeed ever-changing reality. If, as Lash suggests, the essence of the postmodern condition is that abstract representations once integral to subjectivity have become the 'objects' which make up reality, then such a practice of judging would seem essential to understanding contemporary reality. This is where there begins a shift in emphasis away from what Docherty calls 'scientific knowledge' towards what should properly be considered as a form of 'narrative knowledge'.¹²³ That is, rather than knowing the stable essence of an object, the subject begins to tell the story of the event of judging it, and to enact the narrative of how it changes consciousness and thus produces a new knowledge. Just as the subject may develop this practice of narrative knowledge in relationship to reality, so too may the spectator develop such a relationship to live performance in the theatre event. There is no longer an attempt to view the performance as an 'object' or text awaiting analysis, rather it is experienced as an event.

-- Dramaturgical Strategies of The Theatre Event --

Having established an understanding of what is at stake for the spectators of a theatre event, and given the importance of their role in the creation of this event, consideration must now be given to the implements of live performance which provide the impetus for the spectators' involvement. This requires a dramaturgical analysis which is

¹²³ I am using the term 'narrative' here in the way in which Lyotard uses it. He sees narrative less for its conventional value -- as a means of unlocking the meaning of culture -- and more for its disruptive value -- as a rhetorical *figure* which may open up culture as a site of transformation and dispute. See Chapter Four for how this revision of narrative becomes a dramaturgical strategy in the theatre of Forced Entertainment. See Docherty 25.

capable of coming to terms with the effects of a live performance. That is, how does the transmission of a narrative in live performance draw upon particular dramaturgical strategies which create a 'performative'¹²⁴ response from spectators? Given that such a response is engendered by an active experience of an event, not an object, how may the event encourage critical acts as performance -- "as indeterminate signifying 'play' or as self-reflexive, non-referential 'scenes' of writing?"¹²⁵ The figural disruption to theoretical discourse about what the performance means is inherent to how the theatre event works. In the following section, an introduction will be given to how such dramaturgical strategies may be performatively 'written'; resulting in a detailed analysis in the ensuing three chapters.

¹²⁴ It is important to distinguish how the term 'performativity' is used differently between postmodern and post-structuralist discourse. In theories of postmodernism it is often used as the criterion by which knowledge ought to be organised and produced. Thus, it has become as Elin Diamond states,

a way for sceptics of postmodernism to excoriate what Raymond Williams has called our 'dramatized' society, in which the world, via electronics, is recreated as a seamlessly produced performance.

In post-structuralism it is often used to designate the vehicle for deconstructing logocentric texts and propositions of classic realism, as well as the positivist theology such texts support.

It is the post-structuralist reading of the term which is supported in this study, and thus performativity is an essential characteristic of a dramaturgy which is not grounded in the distinction between a truthful reality and fictional representations upon the stage, but rather in the many "different ways of knowing and representing this reality which are constitutively heterogeneous, contingent, and risky."

See Elin Diamond, "Introduction", Performance & Cultural Politics, ed. Diamond (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 1-3.

¹²⁵ Diamond 2.

In Susan Bennett's model of audience reception, the inner frame delineates a fictional or 'staged' world -- based upon a text, score, or plan -- and from which the live performance develops. The narrative that generates the inner frame -- be it a text, score, or plan -- gives rise to another 'narrative' in the form of a live performance. In fact, this 'narrative' of live performance, or 'performance text' involves a combination of the first encoded narrative and the narrative of its presentation. The performance text has historically given semioticians trouble because, as Ian Watson suggests, it defies the conceptual reduction afforded by semiotics:

The performance text is a slippery customer, which even semioticians have difficulties in grasping firmly. Pavis, for instance, defines it as 'the *mise en scène* of a reading and any possible account made of this reading by the spectator'.¹²⁶

Watson identifies the first part of Pavis's account as a metaphorical equivalent of the physical text in literature, of which there is but one (or, more accurately, many copies of a single, master text). The second refers to each individual's reading of this text.¹²⁷ He then confines his analysis to the first part of Pavis's definition, in order to "avoid the pitfalls of [his] own observations", and because the latter part acknowledges that there are "as many readings as there are spectators watching the performance."¹²⁸ In contrast to Watson's approach, the theatre event encourages a plurality of reading, prioritizing as it does the implicit pragmatics of narrative transmission. The performance text of the theatre event functions as a *figure* to the narrative upon which it is based, and thus the performance text displaces the kind of discursive totalizing demanded by Watson.

¹²⁶ Ian Watson, "'Reading' the Actor: Performance, Presence, and the Synesthetic," New Theatre Quarterly, Volume XI, Number 42 (May 1995): 136.

¹²⁷ Watson: 136.

¹²⁸ Watson: 136.

The theatre event can be seen as an instability forced into being -- within a narrative structure -- by a dramaturgical strategy which challenges or upsets the totalising capacity of this structure as a representation of reality. Nick Kaye identifies this effect as a performative or theatrical 'occurrence' within narrative representation. Such strategies are best conceived as something which *happens*, because as he explains:

postmodern 'theatricality'... is not something, but is an effect, and an ephemeral one at that. It is in terms of this instability, of this excess produced by the figures in play, that one might then speak of a moment which is both 'theatrical' or 'performative' and properly *postmodern*.¹²⁹

The dramaturgy of the theatre event emphasizes an occurrence which vacillates between presence and absence, between displacement and reinstatement. It is for precisely these reasons that the theatre event can be seen to be resistant to discursive accounts like that of semiotics, and indeed, can be seen to effect a corruption of a semiotic ideal.

The dramaturgical strategies identified below will demonstrate what Peggy Phelan has said is characteristic of representation, that is: "it always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing."¹³⁰ The postmodern dramaturgy seen at work in the theatre event exists in the suspension between the "real" physical matter of "the performing body" and the psychic experience of what it is to be em-bodied. Like an energy circuit, sometimes over-powering, sometimes barely intelligible, the theatre event keeps contact with the corporeal (the body real) at one end of the circuit and the psychic Real¹³¹ at the other. In this energized,

¹²⁹ Nick Kaye, Postmodernism and Performance (London: The Macmillan Press, 1994) 23.

¹³⁰ Peggy Phelan, Unmarked (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 2.

¹³¹ In referring to the 'psychic Real' I am citing Lacan's use of the term, which shall be distinguished from other versions of the real by use of the upper-case R.

unpredictable space between the idea and actuality of the event there exists potential, a force which powers a confrontation between performer and spectator, and a hope for insight into the relationship between self and other and thus the reality of our world.

-- Mimesis and Representational Excess --

In an analysis of performance and representation of the real, Phelan has suggested that "[w]ithin the history of theatre the real is what theatre defines itself against, even while reduplicating its effects."¹³² Representations -- be they linguistic, photographic, legal, political, or whatever -- rely upon and produce a specific logic of the real; this logical real promotes its own representation. Thus, the real partakes of and generates different imagistic and discursive paradigms. Phelan uses quantum physics as an example:

Within the physical universe, the real of the quantum is established through a negotiation with the limits of the representational possibilities of measuring time and space. To measure motion that is not predictable requires that one consider the uncertainty of both the means of measurement and the energy that one wants to measure.¹³³

This raises two concerns relevant to dramaturgy. The first questions the relationship between the dramaturgical strategies of the theatre event and how they may be performatively written or understood. The second stems from a need to historicise the representation of reality in western theatre, and most notably the concept of mimesis. Dealing with mimesis first, it will be possible to contextualise questions which pertain to the former. A deconstruction of the conventional conception of mimesis will demonstrate that the process -- the action -- of representing reality should be the initial concern in identifying dramaturgical strategies which work to create the theatre event.

¹³² Phelan 3.

¹³³ Phelan 2-3.

In Book X of The Republic, Plato attacks the arts, when he states: "The tragic poet, too, is an artist who represents things; so this will apply to him: he and all other artists are, as it were, third in succession from the throne of truth."¹³⁴ Art is an imitation of life and life merely a shadow of the ideal forms. Thus "the work of the artist is at a third remove from the essential nature of the thing."¹³⁵ Plato's translator, Francis Cornford, comments that

the view that a work of art is an image of likeness (*eikon*) of some original, or holds up a mirror to nature, became prominent towards the end of the fifth century together with the realistic drama of Euripides and the illusionistic painting of Zeuxis. Plato's attack adopts this theory.¹³⁶

Aristotle, who was Plato's student, agrees that art is mimetic but asks precisely what does art imitate and how? Art does not imitate things or even experience, but "action". Action, through many centuries of interpretation of Aristotle's text, has proved a problematic idea; at best, theorists may only sketch an interpretation of what Aristotle might have meant. Richard Schechner claims that for Aristotle,

Art imitates patterns, rhythms, and developments. In art, as in nature, things are born, they grow, they flourish, they decline, they die. Form, which is crystalline in Plato, is fluid in Aristotle.¹³⁷

Historically, however, interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the stage, as it is laid out in the Poetics, is not nearly as 'fluid' as Schechner's interpretation suggests. Augusto Boal argues that the development of western theatre, from Aristotle to the present, has been creatively hampered -- not to mention ideologically encoded -- by a reduction of mimesis to the

¹³⁴ Plato, The Republic of Plato, transl. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1945) 327.

¹³⁵ Plato, The Republic 327.

¹³⁶ Plato, The Republic 323-4.

¹³⁷ Richard Schechner, Performance Theory, 2nd edn. (New York and London: Routledge, 1988) 37.

level of mere imitation. The word 'imitate' has been interpreted as meaning to make a more or less perfect copy of an original model. For Boal, then, it follows that if theatre is to be a copy of nature, and 'nature' means the whole of created things, then theatre is meant to be a copy of created things. Thus, stage and reality correspond to the same rigid relationship as word and thing, passive to a putative mimetic structure. Boal's challenge has its origins in his own re-interpretation of Aristotle, wherein he claims that the act of imitation (mimesis) has nothing to do with copying an exterior model, but rather entails a re-creative process, as he explains:

'Mimesis' means rather a 're-creation'. And nature is not the whole of created things but rather the creative principle itself. Thus when Aristotle says that art imitates nature, we must understand that this statement, which can be found in any modern version of the Poetics, is due to a bad translation, which in turn stems from an isolated interpretation of that text. 'Art imitates nature' actually means: 'Art re-creates the creative principle of created things.'¹³⁸

Boal's reclamation of Aristotle's mimesis is significant to an understanding of the theatre event because in the action of a continual re-invention of representational tools of communicating between performer and spectator there exists an excess to the conventional understanding of mimesis as imitation. This amounts to a deconstruction of mimesis as imitation because (considering that signifiers and representation are synonymous) as a signifier of a referent (reality), imitation must have a fixed one-to-one correspondence with its referent, which is not the case. For Jacques Derrida, like Schechner and Boal, the description of representation in the theatre as 'imitation' is (in Derrida's terms) *sous rature*, or under erasure since the word is used but is inadequate and inaccurate. Derrida's method of

¹³⁸ Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, transl. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985) 1.

critically reading such signification is critical of it as a metaphysical thought system; that is, a signifier wholly dependant upon a foundation, a presence or first principle, which in this case is the reality being imitated. In language, first principles are often determined by what they exclude, by a sort of 'binary opposition' to other concepts, or in this case the concept which is its signifier (e.g.: reality / imitation). Derrida claims that the structure of a signifier like mimesis is determined by a trace or shadow of the other (reality) which under this binary opposition is absent. Derrida, like Boal and Schechner, suggests that we should try to break down such binaries and see, for example, that there is a reality which is just as real on stage, just a *different* reality. Indeed, the British theatre practitioners examined in this study explore how stage language may move beyond the metaphysical mimesis of Aristotle and develop into an exploration of performance as process endowed with a para-reality of risk, indeterminacy, and discovery, for performer and spectator alike. As Boal has said, "[t]heatre is change and not simple presentation of what exists: it is becoming and not being."¹³⁹

In relating Derridean deconstruction of metaphysical mimesis to an understanding of the theatre event, there is an important advance to be made upon Derrida's critique which comes from Lyotard. In Of Grammatology, Derrida develops his notion of deconstruction, rejecting the attack on writing which says it is a mere appendage to speech; here writing/speech is a binary opposition which can be deconstructed in the same way that reality/imitation was above. *Différance* works to set up a disturbance -- not unlike the energy of the event -- at the level of the signifier (created by the anomalous spelling) which graphically resists the reduction of concepts into binary opposition. Its sense remains suspended between the two French verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer', both of which contribute to its textual force but

¹³⁹ Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed 28.

neither of which can fully capture its meaning. Language depends on 'difference' since, as Ferdinand de Saussure clearly demonstrated, it consists in the structure of distinctive opposition which makes up its basic economy. Where Derrida breaks new ground, and where Of Grammatology takes its cue, is in the extent to which 'differ' shades into 'defer'. This involves the idea that meaning is always deferred, perhaps to the point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification. *Différance* not only designates this theme but offers in its own unstable meaning a graphic example of the process at work.¹⁴⁰

Another term used by Derrida to avoid the conceptual closure of logocentrism -- or reduction to an ultimate meaning which otherwise might threaten his texts -- is that of 'supplement'. Here a word itself may be bound up in a supplementary play of meaning which defies semantic reduction. This term is used above to describe the necessity of completion of the presence of being, in the live performance of a theatre event, by the spectator.¹⁴¹ For Derrida, logocentrism is a problematic property internal to linguistic representation's attempt to account for itself and the world;

¹⁴⁰ See Christopher Norris, Deconstruction (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 32-33.

¹⁴¹ A key example of the use of 'supplement' by Derrida is in his critique of Rousseau's Essay on the Origin of Languages. Rousseau, for instance, treats writing as the supplement of spoken language, existing in a secondary relation to speech just as speech itself -- by the same token -- is at one remove from whatever it depicts. According to Christopher Norris, such arguments have a long history in western thought. Like Plato's mystical doctrine of forms, the effect is to devalue the activities of art and writing by constant appeal to a pure metaphysics of presence, their distance from which condemns them to an endless play of deceitful imitation. For Derrida, the 'supplementarity' of writing is indeed the root of the matter, but not in the derogatory sense that Rousseau intended. Writing is the example *par excellence* of a supplement which enters into the heart of all intelligible discourse and comes to define its very nature and condition. That is, all communication is 'written' in that it demonstrates this phenomena of supplementation to the presence (essence) of thought.

it is a metaphysics of representation which works on other fields by analogy. For Lyotard, however, the rule of the linguistic analogy is itself logocentric, participating in Saussure's meta-narrative of a 'general semiology'. Derrida's elaboration of *différance* has been an attempt to uphold the supplementary trace of radical difference which separates the terms of an opposition, and which is foreign to both: "'the bar'¹⁴² that falls between presence and absence, evoking a difference uncontainable within the terms of that binary opposition."¹⁴³ Lyotard's disagreement has been to refuse to accept that this supplementary trace is written or linguistic. For Lyotard, writing is *par excellence* the reduction of difference to opposition, the flattening of space into an abstracted system of recognizable opposition between units which owe their differential value to opposition rather than motivation.¹⁴⁴ Although Lyotard's corrective to the rule of linguistic analogy emerges more from a definition of it at odds with the figural than from a detailed tracing of the writing-effect in the history of western discourse, it is useful as a reminder that there is a figural force at work in language which might best be explored spatially as textually, through phenomenology rather than semiology, and in the theatre event, this is the domain of action.

¹⁴² Lyotard defines 'the bar' as a space of slowing down on the libidinal band which allows the drives/*pulsions* and intensities of the libido to be arrested and given a designation and signification. It is through procedures of exclusion (notably negation and exteriorization) that the bar gives birth to the conceptual process, twisting the band into what Lyotard calls the theatrical 'volume'.

See Jean-François Lyotard, The Libidinal Economy, transl. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Athlone Press, 1993) iix.

¹⁴³ Readings 41.

¹⁴⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, "The Dream-Work Does Not Think," The Lyotard Reader, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford, UK. and Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1989): 27.

-- Synesthetic Effects of Action in the Theatre Event --

Perhaps the most significant insight to be gained from a deconstruction of the metaphysics of mimesis is that the representational excess born of the theatre event occurs through action. In order to best understand how action works as representational excess, a dramaturgical analysis which fully addresses action and its effects in live performance is essential. Eugenio Barba has made a considerable study of the various levels of conscious and unconscious energy generated in live performance. His work has been developed using styles of acting from around the world, and offers significant insight into how action and performer-energy can have *synesthetic* effects upon the spectator. *Synesthesia* refers to a sensation felt in one part of the body when another part is stimulated. Barba refers to 'synesthesia' in live performance as

those levels of communication between actors and audience which defy signification: the way in which an actor's body tension affects the audience; the 'feel' of a particular scene; or the actor's longed-for declaration, 'It's a good house tonight', by which s/he means there is a special sense of communion between the performers and their audience.

The synesthetic level of communication depends little upon the actor's score, which is the world of the role or the represented other. This is the semiotic universe. The synesthetic is rooted squarely in the actor's realm, in how s/he does what s/he does.¹⁴⁵

The theatre event emerges when communication between the actors and spectators defies signification; moving, as Barba suggests, to a level of contact beyond the realm of semiotics. Performativity of response on the part of the spectators occurs through their encounter with the effects generated by synesthetics in a performance text. An understanding of the dramaturgy of the theatre event, then, becomes a process of examining how the effects of synesthetic action are tangible

¹⁴⁵ Eugenio Barba, "The Fiction of Duality," New Theatre Quarterly, Volume V, Number 20 (November 1989): 312.

in the perception of the spectators. It is the corporeality of these effects which gives the spectators' an experience of material specificity; the pragmatic quality of which renders partial the abstract analysis of semiotics.¹⁴⁶

The tangible impact upon the spectators' perception brought about by the synesthetic effects of action are best examined through a dramaturgical analysis which fully comes to terms with action. To this end, it will be helpful to adopt another of Barba's approaches to theatre practice -- his particular development of 'dramaturgy'. Barba likens dramaturgy to an analysis of actions at work. He explains:

The word text, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant 'a weaving together'. In this sense, there is no performance which does not have 'text'.

That which concerns the text (the weave) of the performance can be defined as 'dramaturgy', that is *drama-ergon*, the 'work of the actions' in the performance.¹⁴⁷

Dramaturgical analysis of the theatre event, then, becomes an account of how actions 'work', through the performance text, between performers and spectators.

Barba's concept of dramaturgy illuminates two processes crucial to the understanding of how actions work in the theatre event. First, the weave of actions which makes up the performance text opens up associative links between each

¹⁴⁶ In semiotics, it is always important to be able to discover a kind of equivalence between ostensibly different signs; this is, in fact, the principle of decoding or translating itself. But as Adorno and Horkheimer have indicated, it is bourgeois society which is ruled by such equivalence, making dissimilar entities comparable by reducing them to abstract qualities. Docherty links the abstraction of semiotics with the Enlightenment project, demonstrating that the former is the heir to the latter in that its philosophy of identity negates material and historical reality in the interests of constructing a recognisable subject of consciousness as a self-identical entity. See Docherty 9.

¹⁴⁷ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, The Secret Art of the Performer, ed. Richard Gough, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 68.

action (as signifier), its (signified) meaning, and those of other actions and their meanings; these associative openings offer a plurality of readings for the spectator; problematizing the reduction of their associative 'weave' to a linear concept of meaning. The arbitrary associations here are the focus of semiotic analysis, the examination of equivalence between various signs. To this, however, is added the synesthetic effect of these signs -- because they are actions.

Second, as the synesthetic effect of each action in the 'weave' corporeally involves the spectators, what the performance text 'does' to the spectators becomes increasingly important. The co-presence of these two processes in the performance text facilitates meaning at a further conceptual level because the epistemological condition of the first is 'woven' into the ontological condition of the second. Where epistemology encounters ontology in spectatorship, and meaning becomes more a concern of what effect a text has upon the spectator, the process of making meaning becomes more a practice -- an action in itself -- on the part of the spectator. As was suggested above in the examination of spectatorship, this is an action of judging.

The relation between the realm of language and the realm of being is where the theatre event negotiates a gap in semiotics, which is found in the arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified. By inserting the synesthetic activity of a 'real historical' spectator between a text and its epistemological content, there is an attempt to circumvent the threatened split between, on the one hand, the structure of consciousness (i.e. the conceptual forms in which a consciousness appropriates the world for meaning) and, on the other, history (the material content of a text which may disturb such formal semiotic structures). This ontological condition of ephemerality is what the theatre event shares with the performative speech act. Describing the resistance to reproduction in performance, Phelan has said:

Being an individual and historical act, a

performative utterance cannot be repeated. Each reproduction is a new act performed by someone who is qualified. Otherwise, the reproduction of the performative utterance by someone else necessarily transforms it into a constative utterance.¹⁴⁸

The distinction between performative and constative utterances was proposed by J. L. Austin in How To Do Things With Words. Austin argued that speech had both a constative element (describing things in the world) and a performative element (to say something is to do or make something, e.g. "I promise," "I bet," "I beg"). Performative speech acts refer only to themselves, they enact the activity the speech signifies. The theatre event's challenge to the spectator is that his or her experience of the event will become a performative utterance, rather than a constative utterance.

The challenge to dramaturgy and spectatorship offered by the work of the theatre companies examined in the next three chapters is to embrace the event of knowing in the theatre practices they cultivate with the performative involvement of their audiences. This chapter has attempted to act as a point of focus whereby the various cultural formations and debates explored in the previous chapter may inform the dramaturgical analysis in the three chapters to follow. Having established an outline of the theatre event, its relationship to postmodernism, its demands upon the spectator, and the representational excess of its dramaturgy, the analysis to follow will offer specific examples of how the theatre event is created in practice.

¹⁴⁸ Phelan 149.

CHAPTER THREE

DV8 PHYSICAL THEATRE

Risking Confrontation with the Other: Body, Gaze, and 'Ex-stasis'

There are people in the dance world who believe audiences need to be educated about dance. I feel exactly the opposite. Most dance people need to be educated in the ways of normal living and learn what body movements mean to other people, both consciously and subconsciously. When the average person on the street watches a dance performance in which women fling their legs wide open, for the dancer it's just a technical event, but for the person watching it, it can have immense emotional, sexual and psychological implications. We shouldn't deny this -- nor should we pander to their values alone: art is about challenging. However, we should be aware of the divide and understand what we do and what that difference in perception means.¹⁴⁹

DV8 Physical Theatre makes use of the performer's body to pose questions concerning the objectification of the self in a reality now entirely made up by representations. In showing the relationship between the self and what it is to be, DV8's performance exposes a constant Other within the Being of identity; this represents a certain loss, a death of ignorance in Being, which is the cost of knowing one's identity. Confrontation with this Other is an act of openness to the sensations and perceptions which bring about such knowledge in the performers and spectators of the theatre event.

The relationship between the performers and spectators begins in the psyche of the performers, and through an 'inscription' of their psychical energy in the performance text, a *potential* for this energy's transfer to the spectators is created. This transfer depends upon the openness of the spectators to the effects of this psychical energy; thus, the following analysis depends upon an operative understanding of the word 'potential'. In terms of energy, potential means

¹⁴⁹ Lloyd Newson, "Dance about something," Enter Achilles Performance Programme (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1995).

'potent' and 'powerful'. In quantum theory since Heisenberg, it "introduces something standing in the middle between the idea of an event and the actual event, a strange kind of physical reality just in the middle between possibility and reality."¹⁵⁰ David George and Richard Schechner, among other theorists, assert that the theatre is just such a *liminal* realm, and thereby well suited to the energies of an unstable, relational experience of discovery for both performers and spectators. In the suspension between the idea and the actuality of theatre, potential also entails the risk to change; to lose the idea of self in search of alterity, the Other. While the performer's role in this realm between imaginative possibility and reality has received considerable dramaturgical attention, the dramaturgical strategies at work in DV8's physical theatre demand that this analysis be extended to the spectators, to how they may share in the risk and challenge of the search for identity proposed by the work. Risk is seen to occur as spectators confront their potential to (re)consider¹⁵¹ subjectivity and the Real,¹⁵² in their

¹⁵⁰ Werner Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy (London, 1959) 42, quoted in David E.R. George, "Quantum Theatre -- Potential Theatre: a New Paradigm?", New Theatre Quarterly, Volume V, No. 18 (May 1989): 178.

¹⁵¹ Similar to its use in Chapter Three, the term '(re)consider' is used here to mark the implicitly processual nature of 'considering'. In terms of subjectivity, performative spectatorship initiates the process of (re)considering in the subject-as-spectator.

¹⁵² Throughout this chapter, the Lacanian Real shall be distinguished from other versions of the real by use of the upper-case R. According to Slavoj Zizek, the Lacanian Real is impossible to define exhaustively, as he explains:

The Real is therefore simultaneously both the hard, impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization and a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency...[T]he Real is the rock upon which every attempt at symbolization stumbles, the hard core which remains the same in all possible worlds (symbolic universes); but at the same time its status is thoroughly precarious; it is something

experience of theatre. For Sergei Eisenstein, this is a process which he has called *ex-stasis* or, "to go out of oneself." He says:

It is not the actor who must enter ecstasy, but the spectator who must 'go out of himself', who must, that is, transcend the limits of the direct and literal perception of what the actor is doing in order 'to see' behind the screen of the obvious and the known.¹⁵³

If the body is the medium by which psychical energy is generated by the performers in physical theatre, the gaze of the spectators is the medium by which this energy is transferred. This energy has the potential to empower the process of *ex-stasis*, and therefore risk on the part of the spectators to think beyond that which is known, and to confront that which is Other within Being.

DV8's dramaturgical strategies create the psychical energy potential for *ex-stasis* in the spectators. When this transmission of energy from the performers' bodies connects with the gaze of the spectators, the performer's body is said to be *dilated*. A performer's body can be 'dilated' in more than one respect, as Eugenio Barba explains,

It is a dilated body, not only because it dilates its energies, but because it dilates the spectator's *synesthetic* perception, composing a new architecture of muscular tones which do not respect the economy and functionality of daily behaviour.¹⁵⁴

As was discussed in Chapter Two, it is the *synesthesia* of the

that persists only as failed, missed, in a shadow, and dissolves itself as soon as we try to grasp it in its positive nature. (Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 169)

An excellent discussion of the Lacanian Real can be found in Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (London and New York: Verso, 1989) 153-200. Also see October 58: "Rendering the Real A Special Issue," guest editor Parveen Adams (Fall 1991).

¹⁵³ Sergei Eisenstein quoted in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, The Secret Art of the Performer, ed. Richard Gough, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge) 58.

Fiction of Duality", New Theatre
20 (November 1989): 312.

performers' dilated bodies which defies signification. While 'synesthetic' perception of the performers' bodies is significant to a semiotic analysis of the spectators' experience of performance, the effects these dilated bodies have on the spectators' psyche cannot be fully accounted for by semiotics. The spectators' synesthetic perception is the result of the successful transmission of potential psychical energy, from the performers' bodies through the gaze of spectators, where it may effect the psyche. In the previous chapter the effects of such perception, created in the performance text, were seen to generate potential for a performative response from the spectators, establishing what was called the 'theatre event'. In order to understand how DV8's dramaturgical strategies create a theatre event, examination must be made of how the spectators' gaze on the performers' bodies becomes synesthetic perception of dilated bodies.

Given that this dilation is in part due to the spectators' perception, the present analysis will begin with Jacques Lacan's insistence that perception is not just an issue of vision, but an issue of desire.¹⁵⁵ The desiring gaze of Lacanian psychoanalysis offers an understanding of how the transfer of psychic energy is *stimulated* in the spectators; thus providing an initial framework of synesthetic perception in the theatre event. Once the spectators become psychically engaged, however, it is the further effects of dramaturgical strategies in DV8's physical theatre which subvert this engagement. The spectators' desiring gaze is used for deeper psychical impact when confronted with the lack of Being as full presence promised by the performers' bodies. As their desiring gaze becomes de-centred or detached by the effects of dramaturgy, the supplemental role played by the spectators' gaze in creating the illusion of presence in the performers' bodies is recognized, and thus their identity in relation to

¹⁵⁵ Parveen Adams, The Emptiness of the Image (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 111.

the Other may be confronted.¹⁵⁶ In exploring the representational limit of images made by sexually and politically encoded bodies, DV8 demonstrates the capacity of this imagery to frame the lack of Being in the performers' dilated bodies. DV8's physical theatre confronts its spectators by challenging their habits of visual reception, their desire for the pleasure of resemblance and repetition in the image of the body; producing both psychic assurance and political fetishization of identity. In the psychical experience of the spectators, this amounts to a confrontation with such representation, and a critique of that which reproduces the Other as the Same.¹⁵⁷

-- The Other within Being of Identity --

DV8's dramaturgical strategies facilitate the spectators' confrontation with the Other in two stages. First, there is the establishment of the spectators' psychical investment in the imagery of the performers' dilated bodies. This is a function of the spectators' desire for both psychic assurance and their fetishization of a body 'language' which gives them libidinal pleasure, and an understanding of what the body represents. Second, dramaturgical strategies disrupt this imagery and its psychic and representational assurances

¹⁵⁶ Assessing the role of the spectator in the theatre event here is essentially an analysis of the status of the subject in relation to the Other in the process of subjectivization. Zizek illuminates this process when he says,

perhaps the role of the subject [re: spectator] may be the answer, the answer of the Real to the question asked by the big Other, the symbolic order. It is not the subject which is asking the question; the subject is the void of the impossibility of answering the question of the Other.

See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 178.

¹⁵⁷ When representation produces an experience of pleasure in the spectator, generated through resemblance and repetition, it is said to be reproducing the Other as the Same. See Chapter Two.

for the spectator. This occurs in the way Lacan envisioned it, the desiring gaze of spectators fails to secure the psychical fulfilment of what this body represents, but it also occurs at the limits of Lacan's regime of representation.¹⁵⁸ Parveen Adams characterizes this regime by the way "it ties together [the spectators'] wish to see and what is presented, [creating] a unity of the scopic field and the spectator."¹⁵⁹ When the spectators' gaze becomes "detached from this scene", a gap of indeterminate perception is opened up. This gap is what initiates synesthetic perception on the part of the spectators; as will be explored below, such perception is the basis of a performative response from the spectators.

According to Lacan, identity allows a Being to remain the same, eternally identical to itself and different from others. The knowledge gained from the process of negation or 'negativity', however, means that an identical Being can overcome its identity with itself and become other than it is, even its own opposite. Identity and negativity do not exist in isolation, in the ontological totality of the Subject they are complementary aspects of a single Being.¹⁶⁰ In the act of negating the given, negativity is the negation of identity, and thus, as Madan Sarup explains, "[h]uman beings are truly free or really human only in and by effective negation of the given real. Negativity, then, is nothing other than human freedom."¹⁶¹ This is unquestionably a process of freedom for

¹⁵⁸ It is important to note that the Lacanian 'regime of representation' cited here is from Lacan's writing in the 1950s. It is cited in this instance through the work of Adams and below by Reid Gilbert, but in the examination of Enter Achilles to follow, a vastly different Lacanian perspective on representation (from his writings in the 1970s) will be supported by writings of Peggy Phelan and Žižek among others.

¹⁵⁹ Adams 114.

¹⁶⁰ Madan Sarup, An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism, 2nd edn. (London, New York and Toronto: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 19.

¹⁶¹ Sarup 19.

the performers, who undergo a similar development in the creation of a role;¹⁶² for the spectators it may be realized in (re)consideration of identity through their performative involvement in the making of the theatre event. In an act of overcoming the desiring gaze of the given, to envisage what does not (yet) exist, the spectator may confront the 'Other within Being' of identity. Peggy Phelan describes the process in the following way:

Identity cannot, then, reside in the name you can say or the body you can see... Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly. Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other -- which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other,

¹⁶² Eugenio Barba describes two such processes of 'negativity' in the performer's development of a role or character. The first, *perpeteias*, he defines as

leaps of thought...sometimes called vicissitudes. A *perpeteia* is an interweaving of events which causes an action to develop in unexpected ways or to conclude in a way which is opposite to how it began.

Barba mentions that the ease with which we may identify such leaps of thought in famous art is equally matched by our difficulty in being open to such a process in our present thinking. The second is entitled the *negation principle*. Of this Barba says,

there is a rule which performers know well: 'begin an action in the direction opposite to that to which the action will finally be directed.' The *negation principle* becomes an formalistic void if its soul -- that is, its organic quality or its *force* -- is lost. Often in the theatrical and non-theatrical use of trivial declamation, the *negation principle* becomes... in fact, a dilated action.

Barba goes on to synthesize the two processes in his citation of Arthur Koestler's *The Sleepwalkers*, identifying that every creative act begins with its negation, which prepares the way for the 'leap' to its result.

See Barba and Savarese 56-58.

declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet remaining dependent on that other for self-seeing, self-being.¹⁶³

The spectators' search for identity in the theatre event brings about the risk of a confrontation with its negation, which is the Other within Being. DV8 initiate the potential risk of such confrontation in the spectators' psychical relationship with the performer -- as Other -- and thus a mutual search for identity in the theatre event becomes a process negotiated between performers and spectators.

-- Identity and the Theatre Event --

Identity in physical theatre is promised in the pronounced visibility of the performer's body, and is therefore in jeopardy of the false visual and metaphysical presence this promise entails. The process of discovering identity in the theatre event, on the part of both performer and spectator, is seen to be completed outside either party in the role of the Other. There can be no plenitude to Being in performance through the body since that plenitude is psychically fissured by its reliance on something that is exterior to it. Phelan reinforces the necessity for dramaturgical analysis to consider this gap between the psychical and physical aspects of the spectators' perception of the performers' bodies when she compares such analysis to the failure in physics to secure an empirical understanding of quantum reality. The measurement of the quantum's action in time and space cannot be securely repeated within the logic of empirical representation.¹⁶⁴ For Phelan, performance occurs in the suspension between the 'real' physical matter of 'the performing body' and the psychic effect upon the spectator of

¹⁶³ Peggy Phelan, Unmarked (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 13.

¹⁶⁴ Phelan 167.

what it is to experience this em-bodiment. She says:

Like a rickety bridge swaying under too much weight, performance keeps one anchor on the side of the corporeal (the body Real) and one on the side of the psychic Real. Performance boldly and precariously declares that Being is performed (and made temporarily visible) in that suspended in-between.¹⁶⁵

If Phelan's 'rickety bridge' is the live event of performance negotiated by both the performers and spectators, then in the risk of venturing out on to this bridge the image of potential again emerges. The challenge to the present dramaturgical analysis of DV8's physical theatre is to take account from both sides of the bridge's suspension between the psyche and the body, the idea and reality of the theatre event. In the suspension between 'the body Real' and the 'psychic Real' of identity, spectators and performers meet in the risk of confronting the Other.

-- DV8's Dilated Bodies and Male Identity --

The two productions examined in this chapter deal with men. Analysis of how the performers' bodies initiate the spectators' desiring gaze will ultimately focus upon how this process illuminates male identity. Examination will be made of the company's most renowned live -- and video -- production, Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men (1988), and one of their most recent works, Enter Achilles (1995). On the surface, the two works appear to investigate contrasting aspects of male identity: the first explores homosexual male behaviour, the second, heterosexual. The former explores the life of Dennis Nilsen, the notorious serial killer, and the gay male urban world he terrorized; while the latter is a glimpse 'of the lad next door' -- albeit in his darkest, most aggressive moments of insecurity. While the one production draws from the extreme example of a mass murderer, the other is a study of the everyday. Despite these divergent qualities, it is Artistic Director, Lloyd Newson's insight into male identity in both

¹⁶⁵ Phelan 167.

which makes their effect on the spectator similar. The two works merge in their presentation of violence in the male psyche which arises from a fear of vulnerability and truly intimate contact between men. As the dramaturgy of each piece resists a direct narration or illustration of this violence, working instead through the performers' dilated bodies, the spectators experience a sensation of this violence as it affects their psyche.

A theatre event is created as DV8 explore the violence of male identity in such a way that the spectators must confront a violence of sensation rather than a sensation of violence. Instead of creating theatre which is a representation of the lamentable violence of men in our age, DV8's dramaturgy explores violence which, as Adams suggests, "concerns a certain experience of the body and something to do with the horror of a too close presence."¹⁶⁶ In both productions examined, the spectators achieve psychical 'proximity' to violent sensations through their desiring gaze of the performers' dilated bodies. The eventual subversion of this gaze occurs through dramaturgical strategies which present glimpses of the performers' personal struggle *anamorphically* with the violence of the performance's content. In this 'anamorphic' moment for the spectator, 'seeing' and 'the gaze with which they are attracted' are different. The spectators' gaze and the performers' bodies have become 'detached' in action which collapses the spectators' desiring distance. As will be demonstrated in detail below, *anamorphosis* subverts the certainties which are induced by the illusionistic space of theatrical representation; especially the *logos* which grounds the spectators' relationship to this space, or the order of meaning which lends it a transcendent conception of truth.¹⁶⁷ 'Anamorphosis' subverts the

¹⁶⁶ Adams 118.

¹⁶⁷ Following Jacques Derrida, Philip Auslander makes the point that the purpose of signification in the theatre should be that it produces its own significance; there is no transcendent *logos*, no order of meaning which grounds the

theatrical-representational apparatus because it exposes the *figural* quality¹⁶⁸ -- in the desiring gaze -- by which this representational space operates, yet cannot be accounted for within its workings. As Adams explains:

At issue, in an analogic or anamorphic form, is the effort to point once again to the fact that what we seek in the illusion is something in which the illusion as such in some way transcends itself, destroys itself, by demonstrating that it is only there as signifier.¹⁶⁹

Newson's dramaturgical strategies disrupt the visual and metaphysical certainties which are induced by the illusionistic space of the theatrical-representational apparatus; thereby the performers' bodies do not signify a presence which transcends interaction with the spectators. Rather than offering a seductive conception of male identity in the dialated bodies of his performers, Newson creates an event where the search for insight of identity is risked between performers and spectators.

Newson's innovative approach to content in physical theatre is often associated with the pioneering developments of Pina Bausch's Wuppertal Tanztheater in the early 1970s. Newson follows Bausch in his attempt to invest the content of

activity of signification, no presence behind the sign lending it authority. He notes that, on the contrary, performance theorists often treat acting as philosophers treat language -- as a transparent medium which provides access to truth, *logos* or a grounding concept which functions as a definable meaning within a particular production. He identifies the following grounding concepts: the playwright's vision, the director's concept, and the actor's self.

See Auslander, "'Just Be Your Self'," Acting (Re)Considered, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 59-68. See Chapter Two.

¹⁶⁸ Jean-François Lyotard uses the term *figural* to describe the disruptions and distortions to the ordered representations of consciousness like those upon which the theatrical-representational apparatus is based. See Chapters One and Two.

¹⁶⁹ Adams 112.

dance with the personal and political concerns of the performer. The content of both practitioners' work offers a deconstruction of social patterns, cultural codes and gender stereo-typing.¹⁷⁰ Newson's aim to "reinvest dance with meaning" has meant that concerns of content are adeptly merged with those of form; thus physical risk in performance becomes the embodiment of the performer's personal risk with content. Meaning is "communicated as effectively through gesture and image as through the spoken word."¹⁷¹ This axiomatic link between image, action, and word is important to an analysis of DV8's dramaturgy because the performer's body is the site of the signifier. Indeed, as Susan Melrose reminds us,

the body is marked by a flux of many signifiers, assembled, energized and mediated by the *mise en scène*, and, both in anticipation and in turn, by the spectating presence and function.¹⁷²

In order to address the several associative elements communicated through the performers' bodies, and the spectators' 'function' in reception of these, the present use of Lacan's theory of perception in the desiring gaze of the spectator will need modification.

Judith Butler shares Phelan's analysis of the emptiness of the body's image, and takes up the difficulty this poses for gender identity, when she says,

the body is not a 'being' but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated (representationally regulated -- to appear and disappear), a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory

¹⁷⁰ See Johannes Odenthal, "Tendencies in European Dance", Performance Research, Volume 1, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 108-110; Fiona Buckland, "Towards a Language of the Stage: the Work of DV8 Physical Theatre", New Theatre Quarterly, Volume XI, No. 44 (November 1995): 371-380.

¹⁷¹ Lloyd Newson, DV8 Physical Theatre, *Promotional Booklet* (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1993).

¹⁷² Susan Melrose, A Semiotics of the Dramatic Text (London: MacMillan Press, 1994) 156.

heterosexuality.¹⁷³

The ontological emptiness of the body's image plays an important part in the present analysis because it is a reminder that the search for identity exists at the limit of imagery; the subject searches for identity in continual relationality with others, using various signifying practices and the variable boundaries the body offers. According to Roland Barthes, at the limit of the image, the lure of seeing opens up a conceptual pathway to the synesthesia of bodily experience for the spectator. For Barthes, sight itself has a 'reach' which includes a much wider range of somatic experience:

As signifying site, the gaze provokes a synesthesia, an in-division of (physiological) meanings which share their impressions, so that we can attribute to one, poetically, what happens to another...hence, all the senses can 'gaze' and, conversely, the gaze can smell, listen, grope, etc. Goethe: 'The hands want to see, the eyes want to caress.'¹⁷⁴

At the limit of imagery, the bodies of the performers open up the sensual terrain for identity's complex bodywork. In order to understand how dramaturgy engages with the sensory potential between performers and spectators, the exploration of identity in the theatre event must be addressed as a 'felt' experience. The question of whether or not it is ever possible for a heterosexual to know -- in his/her body -- what it feels like to be homosexual in a homophobic culture is significant to spectatorship of DV8's Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men.

¹⁷³ Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 139.

¹⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, The Responsibility of Forms, transl. R. Howard (London and Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1986) 239.

Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men

-- Dead Bodies and Homosexual Male Identity --

Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men was commissioned by Third Eye, Glasgow, and first performed there in October 5, 1988. It later transferred to the ICA, London, as part of Dance Umbrella in November of that year. The work is based on the life of the allegedly homosexual serial killer, Dennis Nilsen, who was convicted of killing and dismembering the bodies of 15 men whom he lured back to his flats in Cricklewood and Muswell Hill. Lloyd Newson was inspired to create the work by the account of Nilsen and the murders given in Brian Masters's book, *Killing for Company*. When the work was subsequently filmed and broadcast for London Weekend Television's South Bank Show, its presentation of sex, death, and the dark forces which led Nilsen to blend the two, made front-page tabloid news.

Ironically, Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men was an attempt to explore the isolating phenomena of homophobia engendered by that same popular media, both in the sensational accounts of the Nilsen murders and the rampant AIDS paranoia, which was at its height in newspapers at this time. Critic Keith Watson has said,

Dead Dreams served both as an epitaph for a clubland lifestyle past its sell-by-date and a forceful plea for humanity in a dehumanising world. At its core lay the conviction that societal homophobia, which intimidates same sex lovers from sharing a kiss in the street, repressing spontaneous feeling -- is bound to result in tragic consequences. The name just happened to be Dennis Nilsen.¹⁷⁵

For Newson the process of making Dead Dreams seems to be a declaration of identity in the face of a homophobic society. Newson's work has received much attention for its aesthetic and political daring, but what has received significantly less attention is the psychoanalytic quality of DV8's physical

¹⁷⁵ Keith Watson, "Dance & The Body Politic," DV8 Physical Theatre, Promotional Booklet (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1992).

theatre; the level at which Newson's innovation has its most profound effect upon the spectator. Newson both directs and performs in Dead Dreams, and his exploration of the psyche of Dennis Nilsen is fundamental to his declaration of identity in this work. For Newson, Nilsen is both the Other and the *objet petit a*.¹⁷⁶ Nilsen is the Other represented in Newson's devising, direction, and choreography of the performance's body-language, the site of the signifier in physical theatre. Newson's attempt to explore Nilsen -- as Other -- through physical theatre is a process of constituting subjectivity, of defining identity. While Newson's attempt at embodiment of Nilsen in the 'Symbolic order' of a physical theatre production explores identity -- in a 'Know thyself' sense -- it is crucial for an understanding of Newson's dramaturgy that

¹⁷⁶ Lacan distinguishes between the Other (*Autre*) with a capital 'O' and the other with a small 'o'. The notion of the Other/other (*objet petit a*) takes on many different significations in Lacan's texts. The most important usages of the Other are those in which the Other represents language, the site of the signifier, the Symbolic Order or any third party in a triangular structure. In other words, the Other is the locus of the constitution of the subject or the significational structure that produces the subject. In another formulation, however, the Other is the differential structure of language and of the social relations that constitute the subject in the first place and in which it (the subject) must take up its place.

It is the entry into the Symbolic Order that opens up the unconscious, and this means that it is the primary repression of the desire for symbiotic unity with the mother that creates the unconscious. That is, the unconscious emerges as the result of the repression of desire. In one sense the unconscious is desire. Lacan's famous statement 'the unconscious is structured like a language' contains an important insight into the nature of desire. For Lacan, desire 'behaves' in precisely the same way as language: it moves ceaselessly on from object to object or from signifier to signifier, and will never find full and present satisfaction just as meaning can never be seized as full presence. Lacan calls the various objects we invest with our desire (in the symbolic order) *objet a* ('*objet petit a*' -- 'a' here standing for the other (*autre*) with a small 'a'). There can be no final satisfaction of our desire since there is no final signifier or object that can be that which has been lost forever (the imaginary harmony with the mother and the world).

this embodiment of the Other happens through the alterity of Nilsen -- in an 'Acknowledge the unknowability of the Other' sense.¹⁷⁷ In this respect, the desire to know what can never fully be known about Nilsen makes him the *objet a*.

Nilsen's identity, that of a killer of homosexual men, is seemingly pure alterity for the cast of Dead Dreams, who are all gay men. The performers' exploration of Nilsen as Other through their bodies in physical theatre becomes a process of exploring the Other within Being; and here the Other of Lacan's 'Symbolic order' collapses into the other of the *objet a*. Furthermore, Nilsen is the *objet a* because he is the object of the performers' inquiry in the creation of this theatre piece, and he can never be satisfactorily known. For homosexual men this search for identity through the risk of exploring the negativity of Nilsen becomes a process of freedom through confrontation with alterity. Such risk is the antithesis of the popular media's depiction of the gay community as victims, and the reinforcement of homophobia which their treatment of Nilsen's actions engendered at the time.

Newson creates theatre only when he feels there is a need to address a certain issue. He assembles different performers for every production, chosen according to their skills and -- equally important -- ideas about the given issue. His process of developing Dead Dreams, as with most of his work, involved a lot of improvisation around emerging themes. Performer, Russell Maliphant describes one such improvisation:

We did a lot of improvisation with 'dead' bodies, like, "You can do whatever you want with this 'corpse' of another dancer for forty minutes" and then we'd discuss what worked and what didn't.¹⁷⁸

A significant part of the devising process used for Dead

¹⁷⁷ See Thomas Docherty, "Postmodernism: An Introduction", Postmodernism -- A Reader, ed. Docherty (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 17.

¹⁷⁸ Buckland: 373.

Dreams involved each performer's personal response to the issues explored in the work. Newson wanted to create an environment where self-revelation accompanied improvisation. He works only with performers prepared to reveal themselves in the rehearsal process; to the point where there is a direct connection between what they think and feel about these issues and what they show in performance. Newson comments:

we felt angry, we showed anger immediately. And it got to a point where we burned ourselves out with that directness. We were always very much ourselves, what you saw on stage was always exactly who we were.¹⁷⁹

Newson had set up a process where the performance became a parallel life for the performers. The emotional and psychological risk reached a near intolerable level: "we were all learning things about ourselves and each other that you don't usually have to face up to."¹⁸⁰

The intensity of commitment demonstrated by DV8's performers in devising and performing Dead Dreams is testimony to their psychological risk in exploring the work's content. Concerning the potential transfer of this risk to the spectators, the process begins with the psychical energy transfer of the spectators' desiring gaze. The spectators' desire for the *objet a* can be examined on two fronts, first, there is the lure to know more about Nilsen; second, there is the libidinal lure of the performers' dilated bodies. Newson's dramaturgy establishes both channels of desire only to disrupt each through action which juxtaposes desired objects; the result creates an anamorphic distortion in the spectators' perception of each. Anamorphosis in the spectators' perception brings about the synesthetic effect of the 'weave' and 'work' of actions in dramaturgy, described in Chapter Two. The creation of anamorphosis in the dramaturgy of Dead Dreams will

¹⁷⁹ Nadine Meisner, "Strange Fish," Dance and Dancers (Summer 1992): 12.

¹⁸⁰ Keith Watson, "Searching For An Emotional Rescue," Hamstead and Highgate Express (28 October 1988): 101.

receive further exploration below, after the two channels of desire have been established.

Concerning the first channel of desire, not unlike the performers, for the spectators Nilsen has the psychic lure of the *objet a*; if only because his extreme behaviour is a mystery, they look to the performance to understand. Barthes postulates the spectators' desiring gaze upon the *objet a* in terms of scientific inquiry when he says:

Science interprets the gaze in three (combinable) ways: in terms of information (the gaze informs), in terms of relation (gazes are exchanged), in terms of possession (by the gaze, I touch, I attain, I seize, I am seized): three functions: optical, linguistic, haptic. But always the gaze seeks: something, someone. It is an anxious sign: singular dynamics for a sign: its power overflows it.¹⁸¹

The 'haptic' function of the gaze is useful here because it accurately describes the impulse of the spectators' desire to 'touch' and to 'attain' an understanding of the identity of Nilsen.

The second channel of desire is a consideration of that which lures the spectators' gaze to the performers' bodies. Reid Gilbert's use of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as it relates to gender and the male body in theatre will be helpful in demonstrating how Newson establishes -- then problematizes -- this desire for the spectators.¹⁸² Gilbert's

¹⁸¹ Barthes 237.

¹⁸² Gilbert is critical of a few celebrated examples of North American gay male theatre for the way in which they perpetuate a collective desire for images of the ideal masculine body. Focusing on plays which feature gay male protagonists, Gilbert's concern is with how their bodies become a composite of desire and self-mutilation; "texts upon which a culturally induced masculinity is written."

See Reid Gilbert, "'That's Why I Go to the Gym': Sexual Identity and the Body of the Male Performer," Theatre Journal 46 (1994): 488.

analysis demonstrates the importance of the body to gay male identity, and how the spectators' search for identity in the theatre can be significantly influenced by the performers' bodies. In considering how too often gay male theatre avoids addressing the "constricting armour" it has created in the image of the muscle-bound physique, he aptly demonstrates how this kind of theatrical spectacle can lead to a dramaturgical fixation on a single body-type designed to "achieve a vital identity with a particular projection of a gendered object or -- more powerfully -- a sharing of that object."¹⁸³ While Newson's dramaturgy has its foundation in the muscular, agile bodies of his male performers, demonstrating a particular 'projection of a gendered object' for the spectators' collective desire, he does so deliberately, and in Dead Dreams his approach is a corrective to Gilbert's complaint. As the title suggests, Newson's dramaturgy explores a kind of death of masculinity defined by the two-dimensional fantasies and bodies of 'monochrome men'. Indeed, it is the juxtaposition of psychical potential in the spectators' desire to know about Nilsen, and their perceptual lure to the performers' bodies, where Newson's dramaturgy creates a crisis in the psyche about death and sexuality in male identity. Gilbert's analysis is useful here, however, for its demonstration of how the spectators' desiring gaze becomes a dramaturgical element that Newson puts to work.

In Gilbert's examination of the spectators' desiring gaze of the performers' bodies, he weaves together several psychoanalytic theorists; some of whom also pursue a theatrical paradigm in their analysis. He begins with The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, wherein Lacan suggests that at the centre of the unconscious being is the *je*, devoid of form and object. Applied to theatre, Gilbert suggests that the spectators and performers alike seek a *je* through fantasy which finds a form as it is projected onto a *moi*, a "fictive object for a fundamentally

¹⁸³ Gilbert: 478.

aobjectal desire."¹⁸⁴ Essentially the *moi* amounts to the projection of our own bodily image, and as Kaja Silverman sums up the concept,

it is only in the guise of the ego that the subject can lay claim to a 'presence';[...] the *mise-en-scène* of desire can only be staged [...] by drawing upon the images through which the self is constituted.¹⁸⁵

The body of the performer, then, conveys identity by which the inner subject seeks to objectify itself in order to behold itself. The audience participates with the ego of the performers, and through the various elements of the performance (i.e.: the 'characters', indeed, the ego of the characters) achieve a sense of "being there," by becoming a collective ego engaged in a representation, or a dream. Participation in the collective dream of the performance fills the void in each spectator's *je* by substituting a sort of collective *nous* (Gilbert's term) which parallels the character's *moi* -- and is just as illusory.¹⁸⁶ Herbert Blau supports Gilbert's assessment of the 'collective ego' of an audience engaged in theatrical representation, but suggests that psychically this collectivity only represents one side of theatre's ritual: "The very nature of theatre reminds us somehow of the original unity even as it implicates us in the common experience of fracture."¹⁸⁷ Blau's concern is with an actor-spectator relationship as an enactment of rupture that is still haunted by the ghost of this primal unity. In this process, the body of the actor projects this object into reality so that the spectators can also view "him" or "her."

This, then, further clarifies the distinction between the two channels of potential psychical energy transfer in

¹⁸⁴ Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 4.

¹⁸⁵ Silverman 5.

¹⁸⁶ Gilbert: 479.

¹⁸⁷ Herbert Blau, The Audience (London and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 10.

Dead Dreams. In the first, the psychic projection of the *objet a* by the performers connects with the spectators' haptic desire to possess an understanding of the *objet a*, creating a collectivity -- a collective ego -- engaged in a representation, a dream, of Dennis Nilsen. Gilbert's examination of gay male theatre places the performers' bodies, undistinguished from character, within this illusional space of *aobjectal* desire from the spectators. By way of contrast, Newson deliberately obscures characterization so that the second channel of desire, that of the spectators' potential desire for the performers' bodies, begins as a process of *je/moi* but is problematized as the performers' identities emerge as a response to their exploration of Nilsen. As the performers' actions become a demonstration of a desire to understand Nilsen, characterization gives way to a physical theatre which directly addresses a deathly Other to the libidinal bodies of these homosexual male performers.

The opening scene of Dead Dreams is a presentation of four lonely men (Newson, Nigel Charnock, Russell Maliphant, and Douglas Wright). They are four muscular male bodies as anonymous as 14 of the 15 Nilsen victims, who were never reported missing. The setting is an equally anonymous gay dance club -- Nilsen's hunting ground -- complete with pounding music and pulsing lights. The stylization of Newson's choreography, rich in libidinal energy, is juxtaposed by the stagnant, routine, and realistic club behaviour of the other performers; their hard-man exterior is made all the more into a kind of advertising imagery by the camera flash pulsation of the lighting. Newson wants the audience to have a clear picture of how the reality of this club culture is made up of deadening, 'monochrome' representations. Here we have a reality penetrated by a homophobic lack of intimacy, macho masculine physicality, and a numbness of sight and sound. The sensation is that of a battle ground, and it sets the tone for a theatre event where chaos, instability, and eventually catastrophe constitute reality itself.

The dance club sequence culminates in a surreal

juxtaposing of three separate actions. The actions of the four men up to this point have been a series of manoeuvres, through gaze or physical contact, toward fulfilment of desire. It is understood that in this environment, the body is the place of *cathexis*, of libidinal investment, and therefore the body exists only as a place of desire. The first action sequence begins with one man's attempts to seduce another through sexual contact and ends with him developing this contact against a chalked outline of a male body on the wall. The initial object/subject of his desire slips away unnoticed in pursuit of the object of his libidinal investment, which has been reciprocated, through a returned gaze. Their interaction develops but not before we register a fourth man whose uncomfortable movement builds to an enactment of a silent scream. Two heterogeneous spaces of desire are established, the first, a man's desire for sexual intimacy with an Other (a subject) is enacted with an other (object), the chalked outline; the second, a man's desire to scream in outrage becomes a slow, silent collapse to the floor. The interaction of the other two men constitutes the third space, situated between the other two spaces. This interaction is a series of gradually developed sequences of sexual dominance: first the dominated man is caressed, then stripped to his underpants, then blindfolded. At the moment when he is physically most vulnerable, the domineering man reverses roles placing the near naked, blindfolded man's foot on his face and curling into a submissive foetal position under his foot.

Dramaturgical analysis of this sequence must take into account that it begins with a relatively realistic portrayal of a dance club. Newson's use of actions and juxtaposed imagery gradually moves from the 'factual' to that which is deeply suggestive; on a perceptual level, this is meant to unlock areas of sensation in the spectators through a 'enactment' of subconscious energies at work in the initial *mise en scène*. An understanding of the imagery of the male body in this sequence is suggested by Gilbert's approach to the effect this 'subconscious energy' has on the spectators'

perceptions. He notes that in contemporary media -- from advertising to pornography -- the male body is often displayed as an icon of sexual power. Like the four men depicted at the dance club, "the body is read as desirable but in control."¹⁸⁸ This is the *je* of the heterosexual male dominant ideology, and for spectators of theatre as well as other media its *moi* is a powerful "collective make believe" which says that "'exemplary' male subjectivity cannot be thought apart from [this] ideology."¹⁸⁹ Newson's *mise en scène* of the dance club shows how this violent, essentially homophobic, dominant fiction about men permeates interaction between gay men. With the creation of a gay club haunted by a dominant heterosexual *je*, Newson establishes the environment in which Nilsen thrived; where violence could feed on anonymity and fear, and vulnerability is intolerable.

For the spectators, perception of juxtaposed realities creates a '*decentring*' to their gaze. Indeed, as Melrose has noted, this decentring is made all the more complex considering the gaze between 'characters', which the spectators then see, and this adds to the many psychical layers in the perceptual field of the performance text. The "[spectator's] eye has no [single] fixed point on which to rest,"¹⁹⁰ but can follow a range of different paths to obtain its complex desiring. One way of looking at how the juxtaposition of actions in the dance club sequence affects the spectators' gaze is to consider the way in which their cumulative force undercuts the Lacanian regime of representation. Adams reminds us that for the spectator this regime can be described as that which "ties together my wish to see and what is presented to me, a unity of the scopic field and the spectator."¹⁹¹ When the juxtaposition of action

¹⁸⁸ Gilbert: 482.

¹⁸⁹ Gilbert: 483.

¹⁹⁰ Melrose 165.

¹⁹¹ Adams 114.

disrupts the image upon which the gaze is fixed, the gaze is said to become detached and a decentring of the spectator's perspective occurs. For Adams this detachment of the gaze produces an instance of anamorphosis, a "perceptual gap" opening up between the spectators' gaze upon one action in relation to other actions; which disrupts the spectators' wish to see.¹⁹² This occurs when the enactment of sexual dominance examined above is seen in light of the full dance club *mise en scène* because the influence of 'wholeness' creates the illusion of a heterosexual male *moi* which becomes 'castrated' in the disruption of the two juxtaposed action sequences. This castration is an eruption within our wish to see, within the Lacanian scopic field.

The experience of anamorphosis in perception should act as a 'shock' of sensual enlightenment to the spectators' habits of observation in the theatre. Adams describes this effect in terms comparable to quantum theory when she says:

[it] is to discover that what we take as 'reality' is based upon a trick, a trick of light. One experiences a momentary headiness, a sudden capacity to think. In going beyond the signifier the subject gains a certain leeway.¹⁹³

Indeed, in the video production, it is like a 'trick of light' in which a man's (Newson) attempts to seduce another (Maliphant) become an elaborate sexual encounter with the chalked outline of a male body on a wall. Newson is the tough-looking sexual predator, the male body displayed as an icon of sexual power who, in the flash of the light is shunned by Maliphant, and ends up enacting this power against an outline. The thematic demonstration of a 'monochrome' man here is obvious, but the way in which this action is juxtaposed with the sequence of sexual domination, is more to the point: a glimpse of the two-dimensional illusion that makes up aggressive males' sexual power, at root of the heterosexual cultural *moi*.

¹⁹² Adams 111-112.

¹⁹³ Adams 112.

Further subversion of the Lacanian scopic field, of which the desiring gaze is a part, is also realized here through a 'perceptual gap' opened up by sensory confusion. Considering the third action of the dance club *mise en scène*, there is a juxtaposition of a man's (Nigel Charnock) silent scream with the action cited above. For the spectators this action creates a moment of anamorphosis which specifically relates to the senses; that is, a perceptual gap is created by means of an indeterminate relation between hearing and seeing. Commenting upon this effect in the paintings of Francis Bacon, Adams says:

For while we use our eyes, we hear the [man] with them. The scream effects what [Gilles] Deleuze calls 'the confusion of the scene'. It is the heard scream (which is nevertheless 'seen') which marks the detachment of the gaze. It seems that one of the features of the anamorphic moment is that the confidence in how we sense is shaken and a synesthetic mobility is introduced. Above all, the day-to-day fluency of the world and our place in it is radically overthrown.¹⁹⁴

The juxtaposing of the three action sequences of the dance club *mise en scène* creates a kind of sensual excess beyond 'the day-to-day fluency' of images in which the world is represented. The detachment of the spectators' gaze constitutes the performers' bodies as objects of loss; a kind of loss that is the very function of representation of the dominant heterosexual *je* to deny. The dramaturgical strategies at work in Dead Dreams create an 'excess' to the concept of the Lacanian gaze as the performers' bodies create an orientation to the spectators' wandering gaze which disrupts their desiring investment in the *objet a* of the performers' bodies. Anamorphosis here opens up the gaze of the spectators to a synesthesia of the senses in response to the indeterminate nature of the performers actions.¹⁹⁵ It is in

¹⁹⁴ Adams 115.

¹⁹⁵ The effect of anamorphosis upon the spectators' senses is remarkably similar to what Barthes has referred to as "the halo" of perception; which takes the form of a kind of

this complex of sensual relating, this openness to the Other of the performers, that a spectator's risk of confronting the Other in Being of identity is brought about.

Newson devotes a series of scenes to the power struggles inherent in the anonymous urban clubland where the sensations of libidinal desire and violence merge. In one such scene, Maliphant has remained in his underpants from the earlier sequence, and so is exposed. Again a homosexual *je* is created in the display of a male body as a sexual object; no matter how muscular and well formed, the *moi* created is that of doom and destruction. He performs a routine of purposeful self-display; standing atop a chest of drawers, he slowly moves through a sequence of poses reminiscent of a body builder. Yet throughout this presentation of male muscularity, an overwhelming sense of vulnerability lingers. His white 'y-front' underpants and an upward gaze, suggesting an inability to stare-down his spectators, combine to create an image of innocence, and that of a 'victim' in the given environment. Moving out from this central image, Newson uses the *mise en scène* to create a kind of synesthetic visual field. The spectators' gaze upon Maliphant's poses are disrupted by the

sensual excess or overflow of vision, and cannot be accounted for by signification. Barthes attempts to advance Lacan's conception that the gaze is a product of the observer's desire for a solidity, mediated by fear of entropy (or disorder in the Other). The power of the gaze to spectatorship, then, is where it confronts indeterminacy and disorder in the Other. Barthes develops Lacan's analysis to a point at which the workings of the gaze are ineffable, and the core of the gaze becomes surrounded by a kind of psycho-somatic 'halo':

a field of infinite expansion in which meaning *overflows*, is diffused without losing its *impress* (action of impressing itself); and this is in fact what happens when we hear music or look at a picture. The mystery of the gaze, the disturbance which constitutes it, is obviously situated in this 'overflow' zone. Here, then, is an object (or an entity) whose being inheres in its 'excess'.

presence of a mirror, which collapses into a window to reveal observers. The spectators' gaze is de-centred by the occurrence of contiguous action, moreover it becomes detached in the self-consciousness of being a voyeur of Maliphant because the spectators' relationship to his body is interrupted by the other 'spectators'. Other readings are possible, but the addition of a third action amounts to a further de-centring of the spectators' gaze and the anamorphosis which leads to a synesthetic 'reading' is introduced. A man (Wright) with his trousers to his ankles, labours to carry another man (Charnock), clinging to his upper body. His journey makes a slow circle around Maliphant's poses, as if around a statue on a pedestal. Gradually the visibly labouring man collapses.

The spectator is presented with a composite of actions, signifying sexuality, desire, and physical strength. The anamorphic co-existence of each action creates a simultaneous presence of the physical real and the imaginary. The psychical effects of posed masculine strength are juxtaposed with the *actual* physical strain of a man being worn down by his labours to carry a body, with his legs restricted. As the imaginary borders reality, we have both sensations and thoughts about what we are experiencing, but what is important here is that our sensations problematize our thoughts by the way they are co-present. We perceive the exhaustion of the man's encumbered journey, his actual strain in evidence, and we perceive sensations from the poses of the other man; both can be interpreted in terms of punishment, but as the instant of perceiving these different sensations is indeterminate, their energies will affect different spectators in different ways. Interpretation of these actions cannot claim to find their putative meaning because the indeterminacy of their relationship frustrates any such 'possession' of understanding. Melrose sees the frustration of the discourses of meaning in performance -- especially as they relate to Lacan's "specular metaphor" -- as an opening up of a complex

bodywork of sensory response for the spectators.¹⁹⁶

An openness to psycho-somatic response is where risk emerges for the spectators in the theatre event. In the immediate instance of perceiving these juxtaposed actions we confront the limit of understanding of what has happened. It is in the recognition of an excess to understanding, that the spectator-as-subject begins to risk the sensations and thoughts of an alterity to the known. The spectators risk a kind of 'dream' of encounter with the Other in their experience of Dead Dreams because the actions of the work, their physical and psychic energy, make us question what it is to be a subject which knows -- about reality and how it is represented in theatre; about seeing and the given to be seen; and thus about the self and how the self represents, sees, and has an experience of the Other.

Consideration of the psycho-somatic effects of dramaturgical strategies upon the spectators' role in the theatre event, brings the present analysis to Jean-François Lyotard, and his incorporation of phenomenology into the work of the unconscious. Lyotard opposes Lacan's importation of Saussurean linguistics to the structure and operations of the unconscious. For Lyotard, the unconscious does not speak, it works; the dreamwork is a matter for rhetorical analysis, not for accounting in terms of structural linguistics.¹⁹⁷ When Lyotard claims that the unconscious escapes discursive conceptualization, his concern arises out of thinking about perception in communication; his focus on perception in the unconscious comes from the influence of Maurice Merleau-

¹⁹⁶ Melrose suggests a "break from the thrall of the specular metaphor, for the purposes of an analysis based on the feel and taste and the bite of writing in and between bodies." She outlines a theory of energy in spectatorship, in which the "feel in the mouth and the bite involved in/as the articulation of words or clauses" works through a synesthetic interaction between performers and spectators. See Melrose 216-217.

¹⁹⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, "The Dream-Work Does Not Think," The Lyotard Reader, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989) 24-25.

Ponty's phenomenology. Here the secondary process (consciousness and the Freudian reality principle) operates through discourse, and it is also structured like discourse; while the primary process (dreams and the Freudian pleasure principle) does not only discharge energy through the use of perceptual memories (visual images), it is structured like a "perceptual field".¹⁹⁸ This perceptual field is a space where the unhindered mobility of the eye over the "continuous and asymmetrical visual field" resembles the "unhindered mobility of cathexis" in Freud's primary process.¹⁹⁹ Accordingly, the perceptual field can be seen as a kind of performance space, upon which the unhindered gaze of the spectators works through an investment of their libido in the subjects/objects observed.

In considering the spectators' experience of action in such a perceptual field, it is important to appreciate the difference between perception and cognition, touched on in Chapter Two. Bearing in mind Kant's dualism, perception is, in principle, immediate (even if it operates through the categories of space and time). Cognition on the other hand is mediated by representation, be it by concept or proposition. Perception is concrete, cognition is abstract. Perception is variously seen as operating through sensation, or as in Kant, a matter of 'intuition'. Cognition is contingent upon abstract categories or logic, on abstract classification.²⁰⁰ Given, then, that the spectator's perception of action is immediate, involving an exchange of energy through space, it is difficult not to draw a parallel here with quantum mechanics; noted here by Phelan:

The attempt to measure quantum energy with macroscopic instruments transforms and 'contaminates' the form of that energy. Observation and measurement themselves both absorb and emit

¹⁹⁸ Lash 178.

¹⁹⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Driftworks*, ed. Roger McKeon (New York: Semiotext(e), 1984) 58.

²⁰⁰ Lash 24.

energy; thus the act of observation transforms the activity observed.²⁰¹

An understanding of how the performers' action is perceived, then, reveals quantum theory as the transition from 'objective' measurement to 'uncertainty,' from deterministic rules and models to the probability and chance of *relationality*. This is created in the theatre event through the juxtaposition of actions, whose anamorphic effect upon the spectators' perception generates a synesthetic relationality in their experience of what the event means. The application of quantum theory to the spectators' process of perception and judging in the theatre event takes understanding of how spectatorship works a step further. The physical risk in the action of DV8's performers has a penetrating effect because of its unpredictable physical -- that is also to say, psychical -- perception on the part of the spectators. Such moments of uncertainty are necessary for the awareness expressed in Eisenstein's *ex-stasis*, because in order to 'go out of oneself', to question subjectivity, and risk the confrontation with that which is beyond the known, one must recognize the value of uncertainty in perception.

In Dead Dreams there are various scenes where despite each man's attempts to maintain physical control of the other, interaction gives rise to uncertainty, and the 'characters' must confront this lack of control. In these scenes, Newson deliberately equates an openness to uncertainty in relationships with vulnerability, and this in turn is conveyed to the spectator through action which demands a quantum reception. The most poignant examples involve Maliphant and Charnock. There is a progression of three scenes between these two performers that has its origin in a disclosure of desire that Maliphant makes to Charnock. It should be noted that this is the only verbal form of expression in the work, and the scene in which the disclosure occurs -- like those discussed above -- creates an anamorphic co-presence between Maliphant

²⁰¹ Phelan 116.

and Charnock, so the link between the performers, although open for multiple readings, possesses a certain sensual tension for the spectators. Maliphant offers an apparently sincere expression of his desire, he is still in vulnerable attire (his underpants), seated upon the chest of drawers on which he was previously posing. Charnock appears physically transfixed in a narrow shaft of light behind Maliphant. He does not verbally respond but rather becomes increasingly agitated, within the confines of this shaft of light. His contorted thrashings reach their climax when he can no longer be 'contained' by the beam of light, and moves to escape.

The first of three scenes, depicting the various stages of Charnock's refusal of the intimate gestures of Maliphant, begins when his escape is cut off by Maliphant. Maliphant's embrace is met with a stiff refusal as Charnock seems unwilling, almost unable, to return this emotional offering. Given Charnock's response, Maliphant's desire for intimacy and mutual vulnerability can be perceived alternately by the spectator as an act of entrapment. One reality is shadowed by the other -- its alternative -- and this is the way the 'quantum' potential of the spectator's perception receives it.

The second scene is again a kind of embattled embrace, but now the perceptual 'force field' between the men has opened up somewhat. The interaction here is more a suspension between actions, and an exposure of forces which bring about the will and energy to act. Initially Maliphant tries to embrace Charnock, who evades, and then as Maliphant's movements gradually become more subtle Charnock's responses paradoxically become more extreme, to near seizures which collapse him to the floor. In the moment of potential between each action the spectator experiences what Barba describes as *sats*, or a pre-condition to action which is an 'action' in itself because it is in this instant that the performer's entire being is energizing to act.²⁰² In relating this to the

²⁰² Eugenio Barba, The Paper Canoe, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 55-57.

spectator, Barba adds:

to find the life of the sats, the performer must play with the spectators' kinesthetic sense and prevent them from foreseeing what is about to happen. The action must surprise the spectators.²⁰³

The suspense of sheer physical indeterminacy between performers attracts the spectators' attention, but what is even more captivating is how our senses are involved in the space between the performers, in a complex feedback process whose final result is to actually create what is there.²⁰⁴

The third scene expands the space between Maliphant and Charnock further. Beginning with an embrace, Charnock pulls away and moves to a ladder, Maliphant follows, and then Charnock proceeds to climb. He climbs a few feet, turns, and then jumps landing so as to make contact with Maliphant, whose posture is receptive and willing to catch his partner. The contact knocks Maliphant over, but the returned energy sends Charnock back up the ladder -- two more times -- to higher and higher positions. The third climb takes Charnock to about three metres above the stage floor; having just picked himself up from the last contact, to this challenge, Maliphant declines leaving Charnock to lunge for the top of a nearby wall and hang, precariously high and alone. As with the other scenes, the action here is replete with uncertainty; the increased physical risk to the performers serves to make an even more graphic illustration of the point. Parallel to this reality of physical forces can be seen the forces of libidinal investment and denial, also making an energy field 'visible' between the performers. The spectator is perceptually drawn to the forces at work through the interaction between these performers because the forces themselves appear to have a 'material' quality.

Quantum theory helps the spectators to 'see' forces within the perceptual space which now constitutes the stage.

²⁰³ Barba, The Paper Canoe 57.

²⁰⁴ See George: 173.

Michel Foucault has outlined a theory of the body in terms of 'phantasms' and 'events' which may further clarify this point.²⁰⁵ Foucault's phantasms are 'figures' on the surface of human bodies which arise between their surfaces and constitute a sort of 'incorporeal materiality'; they can only be characterized 'quantitatively' by a multiplicity of points of given intensities.²⁰⁶ The term 'phantasm' comes from Freud's analysis of fantasy, yet phantasms are neither Freudian images nor Lacanian signifiers. For Foucault, they are real and material.²⁰⁷ Newson's use of action creates the visibility of such forces and intensities produced from bodies colliding, mingling, separating; emerging from both within and on the surface. Through the indeterminacy of quantum reception of these actions, the spectator is drawn into the balance between these psychical and physical forces in the performer.

The second half of Dead Dreams leaves the battlefield of the club scene and moves into a more private space; this is a space with more domestic familiarity, including a bathroom and a bedroom with a record player, a lamp and chair. The action soon subverts any expectations that this private and familiar setting might yield more vulnerable, intimate behaviour between the men; it shockingly reveals the opposite. Part Two of Dead Dreams, explores a series of actions between an animate body and a 'dead' body; a living self and a dead Other.

In the title of Brian Masters's book about the Nilsen murders, 'Killing For Company', he offers us a reason why Nilsen killed the men he brought back to his flat after picking them up in clubs. Fiona Buckland formulates this

²⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, transl. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 148, 154-5.

²⁰⁶ Michel Foucault, "Theatre Philosophicum," Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, transl. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 169-72. Also see Lash 62-3.

²⁰⁷ Foucault, "Theatre Philosophicum" 177.

paradox the following way:

The corpses in Dead Dreams have not been transformed into that state to destroy the individual, to make him absent, but (perhaps even more chillingly) to make him eternally present, to stop him from leaving.²⁰⁸

One such action sequence between a live and 'dead' body begins before a mirror, two men standing in intimate embrace, taking in this reflection of themselves. This potentially erotic embrace becomes morbid as movement between the two reveals that one is a 'corpse'. The following action sequence is sublime for its poignant choreography of loss.

Contemplating the spectators' relationship to loss and subjectivity in representation, Phelan cites a psychic and aesthetic economy in contemporary western culture, whose demand for reproduction and exchange, has brought about representational *cyphers* for the looking self. In order to overturn this economy the failure of the inward gaze to produce self-seeing must be acknowledged. She suggests the following perspective:

All seeing is hooded with loss -- the loss of self-seeing. In looking at the other (animate or inanimate) the subject seeks to see itself. Seeing is an exchange of gazes between a mirror (the image seen which reflects the looker looking) and a screen (the laws of the symbolic which define subject and object positions within language). Looking, then, both obscures and reveals the looker.²⁰⁹

In theatre, for the spectators there is often a desire for a response through the performance. The possibility for a responding eye, like the yearning for a responsive voice, informs the desire to see the self through the performance of the Other which conventional theatrical representation exploits. Dead Dreams demonstrates an awareness of the spectators' desire for solidity; an arrangement mediated by fear of entropy (or disorder) in the Other. But if Quantum

²⁰⁸ Buckland: 375.

²⁰⁹ Phelan 16.

theory has taught us that the world is a game of chance, and irrespective of whether we consider ourselves spectators of this process or not, we are in fact among the players,²¹⁰ how might this risk of involvement in action open up an even more penetrating risk in confrontation with other players? And what might such confrontation reveal about each player's self?

As Dead Dreams moves towards its disturbing conclusion, that of one man alive and the rest, dead bodies on the floor, for the spectator there is the painful awareness that the hope of being valued and desired by the Other has prompted sacrifices from which the lone man will never escape. This is a particularly unbearable moment because the action, between live and 'dead' bodies, which leads up to this scene has made effective use of metonymy. There are many instances in Dead Dreams where a scene of aggressive action has caused a performer to be in pain, break out in a sweat, or be out of breath. The scene following such exertion will make use of the performer's exhaustion. This is emphasized in the video production through the use of close-ups, and the sound of breathing. Newson's dramaturgy demonstrates the power of metonymy over the more commonly used practice of metaphor. Metaphor signifies hierarchically, by erasing dissimilarity, negating difference, and in theatre it can turn performer and character into one. In terms of gender, metaphorical signification works by upholding a heterosexual male hierarchy of value; capable of reproducing this phallic metaphor of valuation through the spectators' perception. Dramaturgical strategies which reproduce the phallic metaphor also prioritize visual sensation; upholding what Melrose calls a "specular metaphor" and to which she proposes a more associative sensory response, comparable to synesthesia in the spectators.

In contrast to the workings of metaphor, metonymy in the performers' practice upholds additive and associative elements, working to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity

²¹⁰ George: 172.

and displacement in terms of the performers' identity and characterization. In Dead Dreams, the performer's body is metonymic of the performer's self, and of its various roles in theatre and reality. However, beginning with the plenitude of the dilated performing body -- in all its visibility and availability -- the self of the performer actually disappears. As theatrical representation takes on a kind of 'reality' itself, the self of the performer is obscured because the spectators' gaze is fixed on the object of performance, the character which the self has metaphorically become. This metaphorical body is the *objet a* of the spectators' gaze; the object of the spectators' desire and as such, as Gilbert has suggested, it becomes a sex object. According to a phallic metaphor of valuation, this body is displayed for reproduction, exchange, for sale or abuse; it is the dramaturgical strategies of DV8's physical theatre which ultimately subvert this reception for the spectators. Dramaturgical strategies which use the body metonymically do so through a weave of actions which simultaneously make visible the body of the performer's self and the body in theatrical representation.

Offering, as one critic put it, "bodies fly[ing] across the stage, propelled by lust and brutality"²¹¹ Dead Dreams features choreography which stunned audiences and critics alike with its agility and risk. For the performers, the physical toll of these scenes is augmented by the psychological risk near the performance's end when, as the same critic reports, the spectators are presented with a "macabre image of a near-naked man, close to exhaustion, slumped in a bathtub, while another watches his partner dangle upside down from a rope, the pulsating veins in his forehead visible from the back row of the theatre."²¹² The violence of sensation in the spectators is brought about by the metonymic

²¹¹ Oonagh Duckworth, "Stepping Out," Gentleman's Quarterly (June 1990): 57.

²¹² Duckworth: 57.

presence of Maliphant's physiological strain in performing the role. The 'pulsating veins in his forehead' are a representational excess in the way that the spectators' perception of this phenomenon disrupts the theatrical-representational apparatus, which otherwise would have signified the violence of this *mise en scène*. Moving from the representation of violence to its metonymic presentation, a synesthetic sensation of violence affects the spectators.

The dramaturgical strategies of Dead Dreams offer the spectators an experience which exists in the uncertainty between the 'real' physical matter of the performer's body and the psychical experience of what it is to be embodied. This is an experience which finds its equivalent in quantum physics and psychoanalysis because, on the part of the observer, it requires a reflexivity into an understanding of what it is to be a spectator that becomes an explicit moment of the spectating process. The self-reflective qualities of the propositions of spectatorship in the theatre event are analogous to the knowledges of quantum physics and psychoanalysis because all three conceive of themselves not as neutral adequate descriptions of their respective objects but as embracing the *potential* for intervention in the object's creation. The spectators acknowledge that the gap of perceptual indeterminacy is not something which hinges on the inherent limitation of the observer and/or his or her 'measuring instruments' -- as was commonly assumed with Heisenberg's infamous 'uncertainty principle' in quantum physics. Rather, a perceptual openness to indeterminacy yields farther reaching knowledge, based upon the performative involvement of the spectators.

The dramaturgical strategies of Dead Dreams present the spectators with a least two associative links significant to their active involvement in the performance. The first is the metonymy of the performers' bodies with their roles in the performance text, and the second is the juxtaposition of separate action sequences in the *mise en scène*. Each offer the spectators a *complementarity* in observation which obliges them

to choose. That is, as the spectators choose to observe a particular element of these dramaturgical associations, these elements ultimately do not complement each other, and indeed they become exclusive figures out of place with each other and against their background. As these dramaturgical strategies develop in Dead Dreams, the spectators' forced choice of observation is shadowed by the acceptance of a certain fundamental loss or impossibility. What is confirmed in the spectators' choice, and that is to say their active involvement in the performance, is the discord between knowledge and Being: knowledge always involves some loss of Being and, vice versa, every Being is always grounded upon some ignorance.²¹³ Dead Dreams obliges the spectators to risk the death of ignorance in their Being in order to discover knowledge of the Other within their identity.

ENTER ACHILLES

-- Unspeakable Violence and Heterosexual Male Identity --

Dead Dreams examines how Denis Nilsen's fantasies became blurred with reality, hence the allusion to 'dreams' in the title. Newson's intensive involvement as both director and performer engendered an intimate relationship to the obsessions of Nilsen, and what drove him to extremes of behaviour. Acknowledging a mutual desire to control his environment, and a frustration in the face of a homophobic society unwilling to accept openly intimate contact between men, Newson saw the parallels between himself and Nilsen. Newson acknowledges his empathy for Nilsen's outsider status, when he says:

I've had my work in which to exorcize my fantasy life...It's been hard, but through working on this [Dead Dreams] I understand much more about myself and the work I'm doing. I've never had to stop and

²¹³ Slavoj Zizek, The Indivisible Remainder (London and New York: Verso, 1996) 222-228.

question what I was about before and it pulls you up to discover that, after all, you are weak and vulnerable.²¹⁴

There are some specific parallels concerning Newson's desire to understand masculinity which are carried through from Dead Dreams into the creation of Enter Achilles. Although the experience of making Enter Achilles was not as traumatic as Dead Dreams, for Newson or for his performers,²¹⁵ both productions were born out of a need to deal with a personal crisis for Newson. The idea to create a performance which would explicitly explore masculinity came to Newson during the time he spent in hospital with a serious achilles tendon injury. While confined to a hospital bed, he discovered a disturbing lack of compassion from some of his male friends; as he says of this time:

My women friends came, my gay friends came, but where were my straight friends? Nowhere in sight. I had to wonder whether that friendship was just based on doing things like going to the pub, and they couldn't handle it when I turned out to be vulnerable.²¹⁶

In a time of vulnerability, Newson wondered why it was so difficult for his heterosexual male friends to accept this from him; indeed, why their avoidance of his vulnerability seemed to be an avoidance of this quality in themselves. From this experience, questions about masculinity multiplied: What

²¹⁴ Watson, "Searching For An Emotional Rescue": 101.

²¹⁵ It must be said here that Dead Dreams was the last DV8 performance that Newson performed in. In an interview with Nadine Meisner he admits that there is an enormous "toll in doing work like [Dead Dreams]", and that "you get to a point where you have to decide, do I keep going on or do I blow myself out? Performing and creating became unhealthy to a degree." See Meisner: 12-14.

The psychological toll of the work is registered here, in Maliphant's comment: "...some of the company had to undergo recuperative psychotherapy afterwards." See Maliphant quoted in Buckland: 373.

²¹⁶ Keith Watson, "Straight and Narrow-minded," The Observer (10 September 1995): 11.

does it mean to be 'a man'? If certain feelings, thoughts, and actions are deemed 'unmanly' and hidden by men, what compensating actions do men take? Why is 'unmanly' behaviour considered threatening, and treated with abhorrence and fear?²¹⁷

Newson and a company of eight performers made up mostly of heterosexual men²¹⁸ would pursue these questions in a period of research lasting several months in pubs, observing how groups of 'straight' men behave. Newson was shocked by the high level of violence he encountered compared with the gay pubs he was used to. Underneath a surface of camaraderie among drinking men, he felt there existed an undercurrent of paranoia and insecurity that clearly could only find an outlet in violence. Newson comments:

Men can start fights over somebody just moving their pint! The violence was like a volcano which could explode at any moment...It all seemed like massive denial brought on by the straitjacket of what's deemed to be masculine behaviour. How many men can dare to be outrageous? And what men won't allow themselves to do, they won't tolerate in others.²¹⁹

Recalling Gilbert's analysis of male identity and the body cited above, it would appear that the vast majority of heterosexual men Newson encountered were essentially 'performing' their part in the dominant collective make-believe of heterosexual male superiority. In this respect the psychoanalytic theory Gilbert uses seems to be as well-suited to its application in theatre as to an analysis of 'theatrical' behaviour in the everyday; as such, the macho posturing of men in pubs must have given Newson the raw material -- if not the finished product -- for physical theatre about masculinity. Each man's *je* locates itself as

²¹⁷ DV8 Physical Theatre, *Press Release* (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1995).

²¹⁸ Despite all efforts to recruit an entirely heterosexual cast, the final gender breakdown was five heterosexual to three homosexual performers.

²¹⁹ Watson, "Straight and Narrow-minded": 11.

subservient to the 'dominant fiction' of the *moi* 'staged' each night in the pub. This culturally induced *moi* is a variation of the *moi* based on the male body described above in that it no longer requires a display of bodily strength, rather it is the replacement of this strength with violent behaviour.

A theatrical exploration of this dominant fictional identity, requires an understanding of how the 'collective ego' generated by this identity in reality is created in the theatre through its effect on the spectators. The spectators participate with the ego of the performers and, through the various elements of a physical theatre production (e.g.: movement, theme, setting), aim to achieve a sense of 'being there', by becoming a part of this collective ego as it is engaged in theatrical representation. In Enter Achilles Newson's dramaturgy makes use of the spectators' involvement in the collective ego of theatrical representation in order to examine society's participation in the fiction of the dominant heterosexual male *moi* in reality; he does so by merging the operation of these two illusional models. As Gilbert has suggested, in theatrical representations of masculinity, it is possible for the performers to embody the capital I of identification of the ego ideal. Newson's use of this collectivity between the performers and spectators demonstrates how in the theatre, as in society, collective identity offers tremendous pleasure and reassurance, but it can also become a dangerously insecure collusion of denial. The attempt of each spectator to fulfil their psychic void in the *je* occurs through a desiring investment in an illusory *moi* (or 'collective nous', as Gilbert calls it), and thus their psychic dependency makes the lure of this *moi* powerful. When a representation of a masculine ideal becomes a kind of Freudian 'loved object', as in the case of the *moi*, an overestimation of this object has occurred; especially in the sense that it yields the subject a narcissist satisfaction. Concerning this relationship, Adams explains:

Now to say that the loved object is overestimated is to say that it is put in the place of the ego ideal, that place where the subject is mapped in an ideal

signifier. This ego ideal is necessarily involved in narcissism because the ego ideal is the point from which the subject feels himself to be satisfactory and loved.²²⁰

As with Dead Dreams, in Enter Achilles Newson's dramaturgy offers the spectators the bodies of men, sinuously entering the psycho-somatic perceptual field of the spectators' gaze. Collectively the performers seek a *moi* to view in the literal and psychological mirrors held up to the collective ego of the spectators.

The spectators' desiring gaze is initiated by the performers' dilated bodies; their mastery of physical expression effects the spectators' perception in that it lures them into the perceptual field of the Other/performer. This lure is analogous to the seduction of the theatrical-representational apparatus. Newson's dramaturgy problematizes this seduction by 'breaking' the psychical link between the performers' bodies and the spectators' gaze; for Lacan this amounts to "breaking the grip of the signifier".²²¹ In his investigations into the relationship between the analyst and the analysand in psychoanalysis, Lacan aligns breaking the grip of the signifier with the 'separation' of the *objet a* -- that which is desired by the analysand -- from the analyst. In other words, the analyst falls from a position of idealisation to become the support of the *objet a* in this admission of lack. This relationship materializes in Newson's dramaturgy in so far as the spectators are liberated from the seduction of the performers' dilated body, like the analysand who is no longer held by the mastery of the analyst. Moreover, the performers become a support of the *objet a* of masculinity as the spectators are able to identify their own lack²²² with

²²⁰ Adams 77.

²²¹ Adams 78.

²²² Concerning the desire of the spectators, the term 'lack' can be aligned with that of 'void' because in either case of desiring a discontinuity opens up in reality by the emergence of the signifier.

that of the performers/Other. The spectators' separation from a kind of psychical alienation in the mastery of the performers/Other breaks the seductive grip of the performers' dilated bodies in the theatrical-representational apparatus.

As the performers endeavour to risk confrontation with the questions of masculinity, the spectators collectively participate, and both parties share a desire for the *objet a*: knowledge of masculinity. The performers' lack of mastery of the *objet a* in the eyes of the spectators means that they also vacate any pretence toward possessing a transcendental presence; on the contrary they become more fully engaged with the *objet a*. Speculating about ways in which an analyst conveys lack concerning the *objet a*, Adams identifies *silence* as a key communicator. Newson creates an equivalent of 'silence', a 'massive and enigmatic presence'²²³ through the action of the performers. As the Enter Achilles programme promises: "In men's silence there is always the possibility of violence...what men will not allow in themselves they must deny in others."²²⁴

In Newson's dramaturgy, the action of the performers' dilated bodies creates an excess to signification; to the point where the body becomes something radically heterogeneous to the signifier. Adams suggests that some art offers the

²²³ Adams offers the following quote from Michel Silvester concerning the power of silence in the analyst:

Certainly not conventional silence, for it is indeed necessary to be silent in order to hear the other who speaks, but the refusal to respond there where the analyst would have something to say, but the leaden silence which comes to redouble that of the analysand, but again the question, anguished echo of the limit of the Other's knowledge. The being of the analyst is silent, through which he makes himself a massive and enigmatic presence.

See Adams 79.

²²⁴ DV8 Physical Theatre, Enter Achilles, *Performance Programme* (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1995).

observer images, which as signifiers become objects of desire, while some art works at the limit of the image; the actions of the dilated bodies in Newson's dramaturgy move beyond the signifying chain in that they exist at the limit of the image. In Dead Dreams the representation of Dennis Nilsen's reality was placed at the limit of the image in the enactment of his dead victims; Enter Achilles places the violence of masculinity at this limit. Adams suggests that the limit of the image essentially means at the limit of Lacan's Symbolic Order, and that this limit is best understood through the idea of an apparition. She explains:

An apparition is both sublime and horrible; an apparition is *silent*, being outside signification. Lacan can be credited with foreseeing the notion of an apparition when he speaks about the *toi* that comes to the lips of a subject in an attempt to find the signifier of the remainder, that which cannot be signified.²²⁵

The *toi* is a reference to the Other of *jouissance*, a primal Other, a pre-symbolic Other -- a very different Other from the Other of language, outlined above. Now this Other of *jouissance* is precisely a reference to *objet a*, the lack in the Other of language, the object which figures in DV8's exploration of Nilsen and the dark side of masculinity. In the *toi* the spectators witness the pre-symbolic Other in the 'enjoyment' of violence; that is, the symptom of enjoyment which constitutes a sublime apparition to acts of violence, recognisable in either Nilsen or the men of Enter Achilles. Confrontation with this Other for the spectators emerges in their shock at the materialization of a terrifying, impossible *jouissance* in the embodiment of violence in the performers' actions, and a confrontation with their own corresponding potential for pleasure in how they perceive the sensations of such violence.

For Newson and his all-male cast, the pursuit of knowledge about masculinity concerns the most intimate, traumatic Being of the subject: knowledge about the particular

²²⁵ Adams 83-84.

logic of their own deeply personal forms of enjoyment. Following the discoveries made in Dead Dreams, the psychoanalytic approach to knowledge is marked by a profound dimension of risk: the subject pays for this approach with his own Being. Essentially this means to abolish, to dissolve, the 'substance' which stands as a form of ignorance or misrecognition which gets in the way of knowledge, and this substance, according to Lacan, is enjoyment (*jouissance*). If access to knowledge is paid with the loss of enjoyment, and the psychical enjoyment of *jouissance* is possible only on the basis of certain non-knowledge, or ignorance; it becomes clear how a process of confrontation with *jouissance* is carried out at great risk to the subject. Evidence of such risk in Newson's work with his performers comes from comments about how his efforts to devise Enter Achilles from "real-life experiences" of his cast members occasionally met with resistance. He says,

what amazed me was how uncomfortable so many straight men are when it comes to opening up about themselves. You'd get comments like 'I don't want to sit around talking about my father, I just want to have a good time and get out of it'. I had to use all that stuff in the piece.²²⁶

Newson's dramaturgy draws on the psychical energy created by the risk to each performer's Being and attempts to transfer it to the spectators. For the spectators the psychical energy created by the performers' struggle in this 'self-fissure' between substance and subject creates a space for their own subjectivity, where their decision is reached in the undecidable terrain of the theatre event. In this respect, Newson's task again takes on the quality of an analyst, who first confronts the performers and then the spectators with a process of risking knowledge through ontological uncertainty. Frequently such an endeavour is met with resistance: as the analysand is pushed toward knowledge about his desire, paranoia can arise with the fear that the analyst is trying to

²²⁶ Watson, "Straight and Narrow-Minded": 11.

steal from him his most intimate treasure, the kernel of his enjoyment.²²⁷

After a successful tour of several festivals on the European continent, Enter Achilles was performed throughout Britain in the autumn of 1995, culminating in four days of performances for the Dance Umbrella at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. The staging for the London performances took full advantage of the Queen Elizabeth Hall's wide stage space with a *mise en scène* which continually offered juxtaposed sequences of action. As the performance begins, the stage's vast 'perceptual field' is introduced by a segment of slow-motion movement of four performers, whose spot-lit figures emerge high above the stage floor. The dream-like appearance of these bare-chested men is accompanied by the sound of a crowd's roar; here is a kind of menacing collage of movement, suggesting the aggression of athletes and warriors. The cheers of thousands of desiring fans fill the theatre and then gradually subsides to a sound emerging from a clock-radio in a bedroom at the front of the stage. A man (Ross Hounslow) is asleep here and as the sound of the crowd's roar awakens him, the dance of the four men disappears. Upon waking, Hounslow performs a short, sensual 'duet' with a blow-up female doll, and the visual impact of this scene is vocally juxtaposed by the sound of a woman trying to reach Hounslow via an answering machine, which he ignores.

In these early moments, Newson establishes a tension between the psychical layers of masculine identity. First there is a dream of masculine power and bodily strength; an ego ideal, especially as it is celebrated by a cheering crowd. The image of the modern male warrior is exemplified by the sports hero, and here is a 'slow motion replay' of such a masculine icon. This is an important beginning because it resonates on a *Zeitgeist* of cultural transition concerning masculinity in contemporary Britain. From government legislation, shifts in corporate needs and hiring practices,

²²⁷ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 68-69.

to public condemnation of hostile male behaviour, 'manly virtues' which were once taken as evidence of a healthy natural order in Britain are now seen as inherently pathological conditions.²²⁸ One of the many social scientists to endorse this perspective is R. Horrocks, who argues that men, as much as women, are victims of the pernicious imposition of masculine values upon them. Society's expectations of men to behave in a masculine way have become an onerous burden, leaving men insecure about their ability to measure up to the ideal. He says,

in becoming accomplices and agents of the patriarchal oppression of women, men are themselves mutilated psychologically. The militant form of masculinity represents a considerable self-abuse and self-destruction by men. In hating women the male hates himself.²²⁹

Newson's approach to masculinity begins from just such an insight; however in Enter Achilles, his portrayal of men's struggle with patriarchal oppression moves to the heart of the *symptom* of this oppression. Recent scholarship offers a masculine identity afflicted by a dialectic of modification for the future, on the one hand, and simultaneous retroactive modification of the past, on the other. The result of this analysis seems to indicate a misrecognition of male identity as an ontological dimension; that is, what it means to Be a man seems to be stuck on what Slavoj Zizek calls "the rock of

²²⁸ Current media concern over the plight of working-class white males is at an all time high. In the summer of 1996 television and radio programmes abound on the financial and social insecurity of a growing percentage of men. Also, there has been considerable current concern in academic circles. See R. Horrocks, Masculinity in Crisis (London: Macmillan); R.W. Connell, Masculinities (London: Polity Press); T. Newburn & E.A. Stanko, eds. Just Boys Doing Business? Men, Masculinities and Crime (London and New York: Routledge); I.M. Harris, Messages Men Hear: Constructing Masculinities (London: Taylor & Francis).

²²⁹ R. Harrocks cited in Linda Ryan, "The Trouble With Men," Living Marxism, No. 90 (May 1996): 43.

the Real, that which resists symbolization."²³⁰ 'The rock of the Real' of masculinity can be seen as a traumatic point of identity, which in its historical, political, economic, or other cultural diagnosis is misrecognized, and thus continually returns. Despite attempts to neutralize it, to integrate it into the symbolic order through anything from social programming to conceptual meaning, it persists as a surplus. In the perspective of the last stage of Lacanian teaching, the Real which resists symbolization in the form of explanation or meaning is the 'symptom'. With respect to many male subjects, this symptom materializes through acts of violence.

In the bedroom below the towering image of menacing masculine power that begins Enter Achilles, there is something far more disturbing in the 'love scene' with a blow-up doll. The elegant and tender way in which Hounslow manipulates the movements of the doll to match those of his own body are of sublime interest as dramaturgy, especially how such interaction raises a complex response from the audience. There is humour in the way the doll's features so ridiculously caricature those of a woman; there is horror, given Hounslow's obvious libidinal investment in this ridiculous Thing; and there is sadness, given the juxtaposing of Hounslow's relationship with the doll to the real voice of the woman on the phone. The effect on the spectators of this duet cannot be explained by conventional means, by the metaphorical meaning of masculine identity: this *mise en scène* is not a matter of representation -- of a man's relationship to a woman -- but that of a certain inert presence. The female blow-up doll's relationship to the heterosexual male subject is that of the 'Thing' in the Lacanian sense; a material object elevated to the status of the impossible Thing in its relation to Hounslow. Newson's dramaturgical arrangement of a man making love to a doll is the materialization of the sublime,

²³⁰ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 69.

impossible *jouissance*.²³¹ By watching this act, the spectators gain insight into a forbidden domain, into a space that should be left unseen. From the spectators' point of view, the effort to articulate the metaphorical meaning of the doll can be seen as an escape from the terrifying impact of the Thing; an attempt to domesticate the Thing by reducing it to its symbolic status, by providing it with meaning. Hounslow's pleasurable interaction with the doll is established as a kernel of the *jouissance* of masculinity; its presence in the symptom of violence becomes clearer as the production unfolds.

Toward the end of Hounslow's duet with the doll, Adrian Johnston's score offers a version of *Can't Take My Eyes Off You*, which accompanies the *mise en scène* change to another performer (Liam Steel) getting himself ready to go out for a night at the pub. Following the duet this grooming scene is also meant to demonstrate a moment of pleasure, and the two scenes happen in quick succession so the spectators can make this link. The choreography of Steel's grooming reaches its climax when *Can't Take My Eyes Off You* fades into a karaoke version with Steel first singing it in narcissistic enjoyment of himself in a mirror and then as a 'performance' to the audience. He is now fully prepared to play the role of 'dominant heterosexual male' for his 'audience' at the pub.

As the *mise en scène* changes to the pub setting, the spectators witness seven other performers gradually getting themselves ready, in manner and appearance remarkably similar to that of Steel. In turns they all greet one another, drink pints of beer; at various times they all converge around a television set broadcasting sporting events, and otherwise enjoy their night out -- all in dance. Newson's choreography conveys a humorous sense of enjoyment among these men; much of the physical contact involves practical jokes and visual gags. The performers present a series of duets which occasionally merge with other performers to create larger orchestrations of

²³¹ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 71.

movement. In each interaction there is a poignant balance between vulnerability and aggression, as the contact between performers undulates through a series of lifts, rolls, and other forms of movement which physicalizes the tension between them. The atmosphere of merriment is infused with a kind of physical anxiety which makes each joke appear as though it may turn into a fight. This tension finds its epitome in the numerous pint glasses of beer around the pub, and often it is the object around which much of the men's movement is centred. The balance and release of interaction allows each man to protect his glass of beer and keep it from spilling, or being taken by any of the others. Newson's research in pubs gave him the idea of how a pint of beer, shared between men, could become "a metaphor for bodily fluids/[a man's] life source, and how the qualities of the glass (the pint) can represent [a man's] rigidity, fragility and transparency."²³² The clash of enjoyment and violence here also makes for a dramaturgical examination of the *jouissance* of violence between these men, and shows how it may be transferred to the spectators.

In puzzling over the concept of the symptom in the main stages of Lacan's theoretical development, Žižek traces its transformation from a signifying formation, a coded message or a kind of cypher to something which is closer to "the symptom as real", or that which cannot be symbolized; which exists at the limit of the classic Lacanian thesis that the unconscious is structured like a language. The shift from the earlier interpretation to the latter seems to have developed from a dilemma inherent to the relationship between the analyst and analysand. Initially it was thought that the symptom arises in the analysand where the word failed, where the circuit of symbolic communication failed, and the repressed word articulates itself in a coded, cyphered form. Therefore, the symptom cannot only be interpreted but is apparently already formed with the expectation of interpretation: it is addressed from the analysand to the

²³² Lloyd Newson quoted in DV8 Physical Theatre, Enter Achilles Press Release (London: ARTSADMIN Project, 1995).

analyst/Other who will presumably confer its true meaning. That is, there is no symptom without its addressee; equally there is no symptom without transference, without the position of some subject presumed to know its meaning. Zizek sums up this early definition of the symptom in Lacanian psychoanalysis as follows:

Precisely as an enigma, the symptom, so to speak, announces its dissolution through interpretation: the aim of psychoanalysis is to re-establish the broken network of communication by allowing the patient to verbalize the meaning of his symptom: through this verbalization, the symptom is automatically dissolved. This, then, is the basic point: in its very constitution, the symptom implies the field of the big Other as consistent, complete, because its very formation is an appeal to the Other which contains its meaning.²³³

This was where the troubles with Lacan's early theory of the symptom began. In spite of interpretation by the analyst, the symptom did not dissolve. Lacan's response to this was 'enjoyment'. The symptom was not only a cyphered message, it was a way in which the subject could organise enjoyment; that was why even after the analyst had made an interpretation the subject was not prepared to renounce the symptom. In Zizek's words, "he loves his symptom more than himself."²³⁴

In locating enjoyment in the symptom, Lacan proceeded in two ways: first he tried to isolate the enjoyment as fantasy, in an attempt to separate it from symptom. Confronted with an analysand's symptoms, the analyst must first cut through to the kernel of enjoyment which is blocking the further movement of interpretation; then take on the crucial step of going through the fantasy, of obtaining distance from it, of experiencing how the fantasy-formation just masks, fills out a certain void, lack, empty space in the Other. The trouble with this procedure gave rise to the second. Under the first, Lacan could not account for a growing number of patients who, despite having gone through their fantasy and gained the

²³³ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 73-74.

²³⁴ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 74.

critical distance from the fantasy-framework of their reality, still would not let go of their symptoms. Lacan's response to such a pathological formation which persisted beyond its interpretation and fantasy was to conceive of symptom as *sinthome*. Zizek defines this as "a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense."²³⁵

The symptom conceived as *sinthome* offers a radical understanding of the subject's ontological status in that it becomes literally the only substance of Being; the only thing that gives consistency to the subject. As Zizek describes it,

the symptom as *sinthome*...is the way we -- the subjects -- 'avoid madness', the way we 'choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the symbolic universe)' through binding our enjoyment to a certain satisfying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world.²³⁶

Understanding the symptom conceived as *sinthome* is vital to a dramaturgical analysis of the interaction between the seven men gathered in the pub because collectively they are given consistency as subjects by a *sinthome* of violence. Moreover, Newson's dramaturgical balance between humour and aggression in the 'weave' of the men's action creates an anamorphic effect in the spectators' perception of the *mise en scène*, so the spectators' desiring gaze of the men's humour and grace of movement is -- in the blink of an eye -- disrupted by an 'enjoyment-in-sense' of its violence.

The anamorphic effect which hinges between enjoyment and violence in the spectators' perception of the pub scene is perhaps best exemplified in the seven men's confrontation with a single man (Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola) who is different. Diaz d. G. Esnaola is dressed in brighter colours than the other men and his movement becomes progressively provocative in its embellished form. In short, his clothing

²³⁵ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 75.

²³⁶ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 75.

and choreography possess an ornamentation which the other men 'will not allow in themselves', and so they cannot allow in Diaz d. G. Esnaola. Before long, this different man's free and flowing movement is hemmed in by the others, who intimidatingly crowd around him. In an attempt to continue his dance, he slips away a few times only to be encircled by the other men each time he does. Finally he succeeds in pulling away from the others and, dancing in a frenzied circle, flings off his clothes to reveal a 'Superman' outfit. The absurdity of this costume is accentuated by the fact that Diaz d. G. Esnaola is the smallest performer in the company. The others grab him, and after holding him down 'fly' him around the pub and then over the wall of the set.

Diaz d. G. Esnaola's fight to be free of the other men offers an anamorphic reading for the spectators because his actions appear to originate in a fit of frustration, but gradually become humorous. At first there is relief that the tension from this scene has not culminated in an ugly depiction of 'gay bashing' or other such bigoted violence. Its anamorphic transformation into a joke, however, demonstrates the mechanism of *transference* because Diaz d. G. Esnaola creates a fascination in being 'different', which compels the spectators and other performers to follow his actions carefully; the spectators' desire to know why he is different makes him an *objet a*. In this scene, Diaz d. G. Esnaola is the object of fantasy, the object causing desire and at the same time -- this is his paradox -- posed retroactively by this desire; in 'going through the fantasy' the spectators experience how the 'different' man -- as fantasy-object -- turns out to be Newson's joke, which materializes the void of the spectators' desire. The spectators experience how their desire was part of this joke from the beginning, how the presentation of the 'different' man was meant to capture their curiosity. Newson extends the paranoia of this clique of men to the spectators by developing a dramaturgy of secrecy around the stranger. With the visual 'punchline' of the 'Superman' costume Newson in effect announces, 'You see, now you've

discovered the real secret: within this 'different' man there is *what your desire introduces there....*' Therefore the real secret about the 'different' man, is a kind of 'reflexivity' in the spectators which cannot be reduced to philosophical reflection.²³⁷ The very feature which seems to exclude the subject from the Other (the desire of the men and the spectators to penetrate the secret of the Other -- the 'different' man) is already a 'reflexive determination' of the Other. Thus, for the spectators, it is precisely as we are excluded from the Other that we are already part of his game.

The 'Superman' character of Diaz d. G. Esnaola is not gone for long. He reappears as a sort of surreal jester, singling out some of the men to seek revenge, and essentially make fun of their macho behaviour. As the pub scene progresses, the pub appears to close for the night and the men retreat to a 'back room', to continue their party. The back room created within the set allows for partial visibility of the partying men, and thus their aggressive, progressively drunken behaviour remains a constant presence in the space. The main part of the pub setting becomes a place where each performer in turn retreats to perform a solo or duet, and these are often a choreographic commentary on masculine activities such as football or calisthenics. This part of the performance comes to a conclusion with Diaz d. G. Esnaola 'flying' in on a trapeze. At first this appears to be a kind of circus-style mockery of the men's calisthenics; while it is effective as satire, it is also a penetrating examination of how a balance of strength and vulnerability may reveal the limits of trust between men.

Perched on a trapeze, Diaz d. G. Esnaola encourages Liam Steel to climb up a rope to him. For Steel the resulting duet offers a moment where he has allowed himself to be completely vulnerable. He is pulled into a balancing act which can only be accomplished through absolute trust between the two men. The actual physical toll of this routine is a

²³⁷ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 64-66.

demonstration of the metonymy of the performers' bodies, similar to that explored in Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men. Here the body takes on the metonymic associations of character, of the performer's self, and of masculine strength. Suspended above the stage in the toil of a trapeze manoeuvre, the performers' bodies express an agonizingly present referent which resists reduction into a metaphor of trust. The presence of the performer's body -- pushed to its physical limit -- creates an indeterminacy to the spectators' reading of the visual metaphor, and thereby challenges their perceptual and imaginative capacities in deciding what the scene means. In moving from the more conventional aims of theatre, which for the spectators can be found in the pleasure of recognizable metaphors and, for the performers, in the reproduction of rehearsed scenes, Newson's dramaturgy explores that which is non-reproductive, non-metaphorical, and that which examines the body (as it is seen by the spectators) as loss. As the performers' actual pain disrupts the reading of the choreographic metaphor of trust, Newson's dramaturgy makes the spectators aware that in the performance spectacle itself there exists the projection of a scenario in which their own desire takes place. Looking reveals the looker as the spectators' gaze yearns for recognition: to see the self through the image of the Other. The instance of indeterminacy in the spectators' perception offers the awareness of how desire structures a need for predictable recognition of the Same in the perceptual space of the Other.

Steel takes on a kind of adjunct role to the spectators in that he becomes a figure who experiences two facets of masculine identity, and acts on this experience in the final scene. After his duet with Diaz d. G. Esnaola, he witnesses the *sinthome* of Ross Hounslow. Following the scene on the trapeze he looks into a large mirror on stage to find it has become a window into another 'space'. Here the mirror functions in a way that reverses the direction of the narcissistic circuit, which was established when he was grooming himself in it earlier in the performance. The

dissolving of a mirror into a window is a process where, as Adams describes it, "looking itself, not the object in front of the mirror, is reflected."²³⁸ This amounts to a disruption of the gaze for Steel and for the spectators in that the gaze becomes detached from vision, and there is a experience of a violence of sensation in the penetration of the gaze into a forbidden domain. This is the horror of too close a presence, and it marks the distinction between a performance of violence and, what is revealed here, a violence of performance. As this visual space appears through the mirror, Hounslow is seen with several blow-up dolls, and Steel and the spectators are offered insight into a space that should be left unseen. In a description of the *sinthome*, Zizek has said,

In so far as the *sinthome* is a certain signifier which is not enchained in a network but immediately filled, penetrated with enjoyment, its status is by definition 'psychosomatic', that of a terrifying bodily mark which is merely a mute attestation bearing witness to a disgusting enjoyment, without representing anything or anyone.²³⁹

The brief vision of Hounslow within this smallish space, is dominated by the several dolls which surround him; so much so that this is no longer an image representing anything or anyone, it is a coagulated remnant of *jouissance*.

The final scene of Enter Achilles returns to the pub setting. The action of the men indicates that this scene is happening toward the end of a night of heavy drinking. Surprisingly, Diaz d. G. Esnaola returns to the pub, dressed once again in his original costume of street clothes. As an indication of his insight into the 'different' man's identity, it is Steel who greets Diaz d. G. Esnaola enthusiastically, despite the uneasiness of the rest of the group toward the outcast. Steel tries to ease the tension by encouraging the group to sing along to popular tunes; he puts on some music, and before long they are all singing, dancing, and playing

²³⁸ Adams 116.

²³⁹ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 76.

air-guitar to *Summer Nights*. It is significant that the men's enjoyment here occurs in the absence of the two most hostile figures from the earlier pub scene, Robert Tannion and Ross Hounslow. When Tannion and Hounslow return to find the others having a good time, the tension mounts again. Hounslow humiliates Steel and another performer, Jeremy James, and Tannion starts to pick a fight with Diaz d. G. Esnaola. Steel leaves and then returns carrying Hounslow's blow-up doll. It is left uncertain as to whether or not this is an attack on Hounslow by Steel; perhaps a disclosure of what he has seen Hounslow do with the doll, as revenge for his humiliation by Hounslow.²⁴⁰ Ironically, the group are delighted with the doll: they kick and throw it about like a ball, not realising how upset Hounslow is becoming. Gradually it is Tannion who notices Hounslow's distress, and viciously snatches back the doll when Hounslow tries to rescue it. Finally Tannion shatters a glass, which he uses to destroy the doll, and Hounslow breaks down and cries.

The men's pleasure in their violent treatment of the doll becomes a *jouissance* of their treatment of Hounslow because he has allowed himself to be vulnerable; exposing that he is unwilling to renounce the doll, and indeed, that 'he loves his symptom more than himself'. The dramaturgy of the attack on the doll is sublime and horrible in the way that its effect upon Hounslow escapes signification. The silent apparition of this moment of violence, the *toi* as Lacan describes it, which has existed in the sub-text of the men's actions up until this point, suddenly surges forth in this scene. The mark of this violence, its stain or wound, resists definite interpretation in that its presence is absolutely necessary to an understanding of the men's actions, and yet its effect cannot be accounted for by discourse. The inert resistance to discursive interpretation of this scene is akin to Lyotard's notion of the *figural*, discussed above and in

²⁴⁰ In the video production, Steel's intention of revenge on Hounslow by exposing the doll to the other men is made absolutely clear.

Chapter Two.

In so far as the blow-up doll is Hounslow's *sinthome*, the dramaturgy of the attack upon this object demonstrates that it makes up a part of his Being which may never be surrendered. The savaged doll is an open wound for Hounslow, and in this respect the body of the doll becomes an extension of his own. Given that the wound sticks out from the symbolic reality of the performer's body, it becomes 'a little piece of the real'; made into a disgusting protuberance by virtue of the other men's violence toward it. After the attack, it cannot be integrated back into the symbolic totality of Hounslow's body. The wound is shared among these men in that it is an exposure of the totalitarian power of violence which binds the group together. The violence which has given rise to the wound is like a law which oppresses them. Indeed, it follows the pattern of totalitarian rule in that it is obscenely penetrated by an enjoyment of violence. It is precisely this kind of obscene enjoyment of violence that Newson has set out to expose in Enter Achilles.

There is an ideological *jouissance* at the heart of the 'law of masculinity' practised by the men in Enter Achilles. As is the case with any law, here we have a demand for uniformity of behaviour and, in order that such uniformity may be maintained, the law's subjects must be absolutely convinced of the truth of this law, regardless of the dubious opinions upon which it is based. Ideological adherence to such a law can be achieved only through a state of mind that is essentially a by-product; in the case of masculine ideology, the subjects must conceal from themselves the fact that it was the pain of self-doubt and vulnerability in the face of their worst fears of personal inadequacy that has determined their adherence to such a law. These men must believe that their decision is well founded, and that it will lead to the goal of a masculine ego ideal. As soon as catastrophe or personal upheaval forces confrontation with the uniformity of ideological behaviour, there is a discovery that *the real goal is the consistency of the ideological attitude itself*. By the

end of Enter Achilles the aim of male heterosexual ideology -- its real goal -- is to justify its means, violent behaviour. For a subject like Hounslow, whose violent behaviour throughout the performance demonstrates a deep investment in such a masculine ideology, the awakening to the actual aim of his ideology is self-defeating. In answering the questions, 'Why must this inversion of the relation of aim and means in ideology remain hidden, and why is its revelation self-defeating for the subject?', Zizek offers that such revelation would reveal the enjoyment which is at work in ideology. In the ideological renunciation of all that does not fit into the uniformity of male heterosexual behaviour, in the 'straight and narrow' of the means there is the enjoyment in the violence of condemning and excluding all Others. In the revelation that male heterosexual ideology serves only itself, that it does not serve anything else, there is the Lacanian definition of *jouissance*.²⁴¹

Once Hounslow's doll has been destroyed, the group of men assemble in ranks around him, and facing forward, standing at attention, like any totalitarian regime, they sing a hymn as Hounslow weeps. Hounslow starts to curse them, and then the hymn breaks down into chiding laughter, and further *jouissance* in their acts of excluding and isolating their victim in his vulnerable state. Hounslow takes what is left of the doll and stumbles back to the space that was his room at the beginning of the performance. Alone now he tries to sleep, but as he tries to do so the stage undergoes a genuine upheaval: its surface rises up to virtually a perpendicular angle, facing the spectators. Furniture, broken glass from the pub, and anything else on the stage's surface crashes down into a pit opened up before the spectators. Hounslow is left hanging precariously from the top end of the stage. Upstage, left, Diaz d. G. Esnaola appears in the 'Superman' costume, singing. While Hounslow clings for his life, the blow-up doll is re-inflated and, as if it has come to life, appears to be

²⁴¹ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 84.

reaching up for Hounslow from the pit below.

When psychoanalytic therapy is said to be complete, the patient is able to recognize that in the Real of his symptom there exists the only support of his Being. The analysand as subject must identify himself with the place where his symptom already was; in its 'pathological' particularity he must recognize the element which gives consistency to his Being. The split-focus in Newson's final *mise en scène* shows the precarious balance of Hounslow's Being. He is caught between giving in to gravity and the *sinthome* as symptom which is at the very core of his Being, and the painful climb toward knowledge -- to perhaps a better perspective of the place where his symptom resides -- and the loss of ontological consistency that such a climb entails. As with Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men, the spectators are confronted with a *forced choice* of juxtaposed action in the *mise en scène*. Here the experience of Hounslow's suspension between the *jouissance* of his self-consistency and the risk of confrontation with the Other affects the spectators in that they may play an active role in the creation of subjectivity fissured between a psychical and physical sense of themselves and the performer. The traditional debates around the empowered agency of the spectator and the production's dramaturgical structure are thus fundamentally displaced: the issue is no longer a problem of the spectators' autonomy, in which the entities of production and audience are fully constituted as 'objectivities' which mutually delineate each other. On the contrary, the spectator and performer emerge in the theatre event as subjects as a result of the failure of the psychical and physical body as substance in the process of self-constitution. The theatre event creates the *space of the subject* in revealing that it is the undecidables which form the ground on which its dramaturgical structure is based. In this respect, the subject/spectator emerges in the distance between the undecidable structure and the decision, and the exact dimensions of any decision reached on the undecidable terrain of the theatre event is the central task of a theory

of postmodern dramaturgy. The dramaturgy of DV8 Physical Theatre represents a contribution to the highest order of this challenge.

A theatre event is created by DV8's physical theatre through dramaturgical strategies which bring about a psychosomatic response in the spectators. The weave of actions created by the dilated bodies of the performers engenders a synesthesia in the spectators' perception of the event. For Lloyd Newson DV8 Physical Theatre originated from a desire to open up the minds and senses of dancers; his approach to dramaturgy has done the same for the spectators. The effect of Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men and Enter Achilles is an awareness on the part of the spectators that most of the time sensory awareness in the theatre is suppressed in the ideology of a cultural institution which celebrates the *jouissance* of a passive public.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT THEATRE CO-OPERATIVE

Sublime Narratives: A Vision of Vulnerability for 'The Three Minute Culture'

It was inevitable I suppose, that in setting off for something like paradise we ended up in somewhere more like a scribbled cartoon hell... Our protagonists are not the owners or the makers of a culture, a landscape or a language -- they are inheritors, appropriators, lost thieves -- sent on a journey to bring something back for us. And this much is worth bearing in mind -- they may have an identity crisis and a terrible place to live but they also have a passion, and a sense of truth, and bad jokes and beauty which makes them a model for survival and impossible escape.²⁴²

Forced Entertainment have developed an aesthetic out of juxtaposing realities. For well over a decade the company has cultivated what writer and director, Tim Etchells has called a "theatre beyond television":²⁴³ a meeting of "the three minute culture" with a staging of poetic intensity and sophistication. Moving from theatres to gallery spaces, from the Manchester Central Library to a coach ride around Sheffield, the company have developed a practice which weaves a complex collage of historical and contemporary narratives with popular and commercial imagery. Avoiding the conventional critique of the 'postmodern condition', and the cynical distance such a perspective entails, Forced Entertainment have developed a unique relationship to the postmodern culture in which their theatre practice thrives. In search of belief, of dreams and magic, among the inert commercialized debris of our contemporary world, the performers undergo a process of claiming intimacy and kinship with reality in its most chaotic or banal manifestations. The performers' vulnerable association with their surroundings emerges through various

²⁴² Tim Etchells, "A Note on Emanuelle Enchanted," *Performance Programme* (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Co-operative, 1992).

²⁴³ Tim Etchells, "these are a few of our (half) favourite things," City Limits (9-17 February, 1989): 16.

dramaturgical strategies in performance, and through such strategies a similar openness is attempted between the performers and the audience. The pursuit of vulnerability becomes a driving force in the company's work, and the demand it makes upon the spectator is rare in the current cultural climate. Indeed the sublime nature of this engagement is so unique that most commentary about the company's work -- even that which acknowledges its sublime quality -- misses the inherent demand posited in its dramaturgy. Existing in the agitation and impossibility between romantic transcendence and the insipid confines of "England, back end of the '90s"²⁴⁴ there is the radical invitation for the spectators to "be here"²⁴⁵ -- in the conceiving and the contact, the desiring and the obligation of a theatre event.

The company's commitment to confront the reality they inhabit infuses their practice of devising and performing. This does not translate into a painstaking realism or a concern with authenticity of form, either realistic or naturalistic. Rather it amounts to a confrontation with the unconscious illusions which structure reality; what people are *doing* and the "ideological fantasy" which structures such acts.²⁴⁶ Here an understanding of subjectivity is governed by the undecidability of these structures; as was demonstrated in the examination of DV8 Physical Theatre, the space of the subject emerges in the indeterminacy of the fissure between essence and appearance.

The analysis in Chapter Three emphasized that the dramaturgical strategies of the theatre event exist in the suspension between the 'real' physical matter of the performing body and the psychic experience of what it is to be

²⁴⁴ Tim Etchells, "A Note on Speak Bitterness," Speak Bitterness Performance Programme (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Co-operative, 1995).

²⁴⁵ See Andrew Houston, "Interview with Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment," Appendix One.

²⁴⁶ See Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (London and New York: Verso, 1989) 30-32.

embodied. Where the psychical and physical elements meet there exists energy potential: a force which empowers confrontation and vulnerability between performer and spectator. In the work of Forced Entertainment the sublime quality of this energy potential is explored.

-- The Sublime Sentiment and The Negative Aesthetic --

To appreciate how sublimity is evoked in the way Forced Entertainment create a theatre event, it is first necessary to explore the relationship of the sublime to what has been identified as a 'theatre event'. In the Critique of Judgement Immanuel Kant outlines a theory of the sublime, which has served as the basis for subsequent debates concerning the limits of the aesthetical, the subject's relationship to art, and a general -- yet necessarily open -- model for human understanding. A brief overview of Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" reveals that beauty and sublimity are opposed along the semantic axes quality/quantity, shaped/shapeless, bounded/boundless; beauty calms and comforts, while sublimity excites and agitates:

'Beauty' is the sentiment provoked when the suprasensible Idea appears in the material, sensuous medium, in its harmonious formation -- a sentiment of immediate harmony between Idea and the sensuous material of its expression; while the sentiment of Sublimity is attached to chaotic, terrifyingly limitless phenomena (rough sea, rocky mountains).²⁴⁷

Above all, however, beauty and sublimity are opposed along the lines pleasure/displeasure: to view an object of beauty offers the subject pleasure, while "the object is received as Sublime with a pleasure that is only possible through the mediation of displeasure."²⁴⁸ It is this 'mediation of displeasure', in the subject's experience of the sublime object, which brings about the sublime sentiment. The mediation of displeasure has

²⁴⁷ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 202.

²⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, transl. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1928] 1986) 109.

been the primary focus of much subsequent concern over Kant's Sublime. Its paradoxical pleasure procured by displeasure itself, has been the model for speculations about reflexive thinking in philosophy and, in psychoanalysis, it is the exact definition (one of Jacques Lacan's definitions) of enjoyment -- *jouissance*.²⁴⁹

Kant's definition of the sublime claims that we are capable of having ideas or conceptions about a sublime object in nature which are incapable of presentation:

The Sublime may be described in this way: It is an object (of nature) the representation [Vorstellung] of which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to a presentation [Darstellung] of ideas.²⁵⁰

The distance between the faculties of conception and presentation for the subject is the region of the sublime. This anticipates Lacan's insight that the determination of a sublime object is that of "an object raised to the level of the (impossible-real) Thing."²⁵¹ Through Lacan, it becomes possible to see Kant's Sublime as designating the relation of the inner-worldly, empirical, sensuous object to the transcendent, trans-phenomenal, unattainable Thing-in-Itself. So the paradox of the sublime can be presented in the following way: in principle, the gap separating phenomenal, empirical objects of experience from the Thing-in-itself is insurmountable -- that is, no empirical object, no representation of it can adequately present the Thing (the suprasensible Idea); but the sublime is an object in which we can experience this very impossibility, the permanent failure of the representation to reach after the Idea-Thing.²⁵² Thus, by means of the very failure of representation, we can have a

²⁴⁹ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 202.

²⁵⁰ Kant, Critique of Judgement 119.

²⁵¹ Jacques Lacan, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (Seminar VII) as quoted in Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 202.

²⁵² Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 202.

presentation of the true dimension of the Idea-Thing. This is also why an object evoking in us the feeling of sublime sentiment gives us simultaneous pleasure and displeasure: it gives us displeasure because of its inadequacy to the Idea-Thing, but precisely through this inadequacy it gives us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of the Idea-Thing, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience. For Kant nature -- in its most chaotic, boundless, terrifying dimension -- is best qualified to awaken in us the feeling of sublime sentiment: here, where the aesthetic imagination is strained to its utmost, where all finite determinations dissolve themselves, the failure appears at its purest.

Slavoj Zizek reminds us that Kant's theory of the Sublime marks a unique point in his system, a point at which the fissure, the gap between phenomenon and Thing-in-itself, is abolished in this negative way, because in it the phenomenon's very inability to represent the Idea-Thing adequately *is inscribed in the phenomenon itself* -- or, as Kant puts it,

even if the Ideas of reason can be in no way adequately represented [in the sensuous-phenomenal world], they can be revived and evoked in the mind by means of this very inadequacy which can be presented in a sensuous way.²⁵³

This raises a critical point of contention with Kant's theory, and Zizek makes use of G.W.F. Hegel's dialectical challenge to Kant in Lessons on the Philosophy of Religion to reexamine the way in which the sublime is applied to contemporary aesthetic issues. Contrary to what might be expected, Hegel does not try to use dialectical discourse -- a determinate, particular phenomenon -- to somehow represent Kant's suprasensible Idea.²⁵⁴ As Zizek informs us, the Hegelian criticism is much more radical: it does not affirm, in opposition to Kant, the possibility of some kind of reconciliation-mediation between

²⁵³ Kant, Critique of Judgement 127.

²⁵⁴ See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 202-205.

Idea and phenomena; the possibility of surmounting the gap which separates them, of abolishing the radical 'otherness', the radical negative relationship of the Idea-Thing to phenomena. Rather, Hegel's position is a deconstruction of Kant's; and such modification is essential to an application of the sublime to the theatre event.

Hegel is not in opposition to Kant; he too asserts an attempt to reach the Idea-Thing through the breakdown of the field of phenomena, by driving the logic of representation to its utmost. Hegel is not trying to make dialectical speculation grasp the Idea-Thing 'in itself', from itself, as its pure Beyond, without a negative reference or relationship to the field of representation. In fact, Hegel is in complete agreement with Kant's theory up to this point; he adds nothing to Kant's notion of the sublime, instead, as Žižek has identified: Hegel takes the sublime more *literally* than Kant. In retaining the basic dialectical moment of the sublime, Hegel's approach emphasizes the notion that the Idea is reached through purely negative presentation, and that the very inadequacy of the phenomenality to the Idea-Thing is the only appropriate way to present it. For Hegel there is *nothing* beyond phenomenality, beyond the field of representation. The experience of radical negativity, of the radical inadequacy of all phenomena to the Idea, the experience of the radical fissure between the two -- this is the experience of the sublime sentiment in the subject. Thus, the sublime sentiment is the *Idea itself as 'pure', radical negativity*.

Kant confines the experience of the sublime to examples from nature (rough sea, mountain precipices, and so forth). In doing so, he completely by-passes the fact that a human act can also trigger such an experience. By displacing the dominant status placed by Kant upon the sublime object to a greater emphasis upon what it is to experience the sublime -- in the sublime sentiment -- Žižek uses Hegel's modification of Kant to develop a theory of sublimity for our contemporary world. This shift in focus from object to experience, occurs with the understanding that the experience essentially remains

the same, minus its transcendent presupposition -- the presupposition that this experience indicates, in a negative way, some transcendent Thing-in-itself persisting in its positivity beyond it. This essentially means that we must limit ourselves to what is immanent to this experience, to pure negativity, to the negative self-relationship of the representation. In doing away with the presupposition of the sublime object as a positive entity beyond phenomenal representation we do away with the metaphysical dependence upon its presence outside the representational apparatus.

This is a reiteration of Jean-François Lyotard's observations about representational knowledge, cited in Chapter Two using the theatrical-representational apparatus. In Kant's theory, through the phenomenon of conceiving the sublime object, there is a theatrical-representational apparatus at work which, although it admittedly fails to represent the object, still creates a seductive illusion of an original presence in the absent object -- nature's grandeur -- despite this failure of representation. Kant's sublime object possesses the same seductive presence as Lyotard's absent referent -- the dead God, the 'Great Zero' as he calls it -- in the theatrical-representational apparatus.²⁵⁵ Here representation on the 'stage' is based on an absence which, as Geoffrey Bennington notes, is "privileged by its being placed out of reach, beyond representation as posited within representation."²⁵⁶ Lyotard follows a similar deconstruction of Kant's sublime as he applies it to his analysis of postmodernism; where representational strategies create the displacement of the sublime object from a position of exteriority to that which operates in the relationality between various frames of representation.

In "Answering The Question: What is Postmodernism?", Lyotard focuses on the sublime experience of contemplating our

²⁵⁵ See Chapter Two.

²⁵⁶ Geoffrey Bennington, Lyotard: Writing the Event (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 14.

technologically complex world when he says, "We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what it is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it."²⁵⁷ Here Lyotard is speaking about the sublime sentiment felt in the face of postmodern reality. Whereas the romantic sensibility of Kant's sublime attempts to bear witness to the inexpressibility of this reality -- through the representational *distancing* of the 'absent' object -- the 'avant-garde' quality of Lyotard's sublime posits the inexpressible in the immediacy of the present moment of confrontation, in what Lyotard defines as "the 'it happens'" of an event.²⁵⁸ The space between the subject's immanent perception of an event's occurrence is juxtaposed with the cognition of the event's criteria, occasioned by the question 'what is happening?'. For Lyotard, the location of the sublime in postmodernism is in this event: the speculative space opened up by the perception of the forces, intensities, and libidinal drives of *presentation* which effect the signifying strategies of *representation*. The subject's openness to this event of speculation, to the indeterminacy of perception here, is an openness to the vulnerability of the sublime sentiment in thinking about -- and in experiencing -- the world. Similar to the effect created in Žižek's use of Hegel to transform Kant, Lyotard's sublime opens up a space *within* the (theatrical-) representational apparatus through its attempt "to present the fact that there is an unrepresentable,"²⁵⁹ in the immanent experience of this negative self-relationship of

²⁵⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge, transl. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 78.

²⁵⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," The Lyotard Reader, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989) 199.

In The Postmodern Condition Lyotard also combines his notion of the avant-garde with the postmodernism because he sees the two as sharing a similar sensibility and critical practice within the modernist project.

²⁵⁹ Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" 206.

representation to presentation.

Lyotard refers to the speculative space opened up within representation as simply the 'negative representation' of the sublime, and he identifies that it can lead to two possible speculations: the first and lesser, which Lyotard describes as "on the side of melancholia" emphasizes "the powerlessness of the faculty of presentation", falling back on "the nostalgia for presence"²⁶⁰ of Kant's romanticism. It is a wishing back for an objectifiable reality and the recognition of loss, within modern experience, of "real unity", of "the transparent and communicable experience". It is this 'nostalgia' for a metaphysical presence of unity, and a desire for the mastery such unity is thought to provide, which brings about the kind of cynical distance expressed by much critical commentary about 'the postmodern condition'. Lyotard's second speculation on negative representation is called "novatio", and it emphasizes "the power of the faculty to conceive" -- which he distinguishes from the faculty of understanding. Here Lyotard stresses the invention of "new rules of the game", and he valorizes artists and art forms that refuse "recognisable consistency" and the reduction to the unity of the cognizant, to the nostalgia of presence. Through the invocation of pleasure and pain -- the agitation of the sublime sentiment -- Lyotard demands that the postmodern put forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself.

Lyotard's interest in the inventive potential of the 'novatio' sublime is what prevents him from articulating an 'aesthetics of the sublime' -- to do so would be to present the unrepresentable. Instead what he is proposing is, as Beardsworth calls it, a "negative aesthetic"²⁶¹ -- which alludes to what falls outside the realm of presentation through a negative presentation. For Lyotard there is a

²⁶⁰ Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition 80.

²⁶¹ Richard Beardsworth, "On the Critical 'Post': Lyotard's Agitated Judgement," Judging Lyotard, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 53.

performativity -- a putting forward -- that is implicit in this negative presentation which is grounded in the notion of 'an event'. Such 'eventhood' arises from the relinquishing of "preestablished rules" and the barring of "'familiar categories' of judgement because such 'rules and categories are what the work itself is looking for'."²⁶² The insistence on invention and experimentation precludes the insertion of the operations of critique -- interpretation, evaluation, and judgement. As Lyotard describes this "anterior future" position, the artist and writer "are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done."²⁶³ This is the radical singularity of happening of the theatre event outlined in Chapter Two; it is Lyotard's radical sublime within the theatrical-representational apparatus, subverting its representational layers as it moves "towards the infinity of plastic experiment rather than any lost absolute."²⁶⁴ The once transcendent sublime Idea-Thing is now an empty place, a void -- open for experimentation; the pure Nothing of the sublime's negative aesthetic can 'give body' to the absolute negativity of the Idea-Thing. This opens up an opportunity for the freedom of indeterminate experimentation on the part of the artist, which gives rise to an indeterminacy of speculative response in the spectator's judgement of the event. In Hegel, this takes the form of "infinite judgement," a judgement in which the subject and predicate are "radically incompatible, incomparable."²⁶⁵ In the dramaturgy of Forced Entertainment it is the juxtaposed meeting of such 'incompatible, incomparable' elements which opens up culture as a place of dispute and speculation; where 'infinite

²⁶² Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition 81.

²⁶³ Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition 81.

²⁶⁴ Lyotard as quoted in Beardsworth 69.

²⁶⁵ Hegel's 'infinite judgement' can be seen as analogous to Lyotard's concept of 'judging without criteria' -- where the subject is said to judge without a predetermined theory, or in an indeterminate manner. See Chapter Two.

judgement' demands radical vulnerability on the part of the spectators.

-- The Pragmatics of Sublime Narratives --

To examine the theatre created by Forced Entertainment over the past decade is to experience a phenomenon which is "part autobiography, part archive, part historical meditation and part theoretical speculation."²⁶⁶ While the company's practice has evolved through specific representations of the British urban culture from which it has emerged, this relationship is continuously transmuted in its negative presentation through the desires, fears, and anguish of the practitioners. These forces of negative presentation create a sublime displacement of the autobiographical, archival, and historical representation in the company's narration of their culture:

Walking in the city they'd use an almost conscious confusion -- what were they trying to solve -- the latest show or the city itself? Eating pizza after late-night rehearsals they'd see a riotous hen party -- a woman dancing on the table and pulling her tights off as she danced. They'd discover a blind man negotiating his way through the tangle of builders' scaffolding near their rehearsal space on the Wicker -- the city's most notorious has-been street. They'd ask why aren't these things represented in the show? How could a map of the country include these things? Why isn't the texture of the show as desperate and gaudy and vital as these things?²⁶⁷

The theatre event created opens up a space of speculation for the spectators in this 'texture' of juxtaposed elements -- where narrative representation meets the pragmatics of negative presentation in performance. The dramaturgical strategies which give rise to this performance text(-ure)

²⁶⁶ Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment," Performance Research, Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1996): 73.

²⁶⁷ Forced Entertainment, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment": 77-78.

create a *sublime narrative* of British urban culture. The use of the term 'narrative' differs here from its more conventional usage in that it is not a concept which promises to unlock the meaning of culture; rather, as a sublime expression of a negative aesthetic, narrative becomes a *figure* which opens up culture to speculation and transformation. As narrative representation is juxtaposed with its 'pragmatics' of negative presentation in performance, a sublime narrative is created whereby the effects of 'transmission' are both constitutive and disruptive of meaning.

The concept of narrative pragmatics has its origins in Lyotard's discontent with the cultural metanarratives used to give meaning to our contemporary world.²⁶⁸ Briefly, his interest in the pragmatics of transmission is a concern for judging narratives which can be held separate from their representational (either metaphysical or positivist) claims to truth. Narration here is not the tool that enforces a subjective perspective, since the subject that narrates is itself constituted by *being narrated*. Instilled with the inventive potential of Lyotard's 'novatio' sublime, narrative pragmatics take into account the performativity and transmissional eventhood in each attempt at narration. Indeed, the 'pragmatic' effects of the negative aesthetic in Forced Entertainment's sublime narratives demand an act of response -- a narrative in itself -- from the spectators. In this respect, the theatre event can be seen as the meeting of many narratives, the pragmatic interaction of which constitutes its eventhood: the working out and the judging of rules and categories for which the event is searching.

Sublime narratives emerge out of the dramaturgical strategies Forced Entertainment use in creating a theatre event with the spectators. In the company's history of practice, despite a diverse array of content, there are notable fascinations with certain forms these narratives can take; two such forms, significant to the creation of the

²⁶⁸ See Chapter One.

sublime, are that of confession and mapping. The company's dramaturgical process has often emphasized the exploration of both narrative techniques, and this has culminated in productions devoted to each. The confessional reaches its apex in the live art and theatre productions of Speak Bitterness (1995), while the experience of mapping is given full exploration in the retrospective, A Decade of Forced Entertainment (1994) and Nights in This City (1995). The following analysis will examine the significance of each narrative technique to the company's dramaturgical development; focus will be given to these productions as well as those which demonstrate how specific dramaturgical strategies have established a pragmatic basis for sublime narratives in the creation of a theatre event.

-- Confession as *Forced Entertainment* --

Reflecting on the influence of confession in Speak Bitterness, and how it has come to feature prominently in Forced Entertainment's more recent productions, Director Tim Etchells says,

Speak Bitterness came out of a long-standing fascination with confession. Moments or sections in other shows of ours going right back to 1985 have explored or hinted at this territory. So Speak Bitterness is in some ways the culmination of a whole strand of our work.²⁶⁹

Perhaps the most prominent examples of confession in the company's work before Speak Bitterness are found in Emanuelle Enchanted (1992) and Marina & Lee (1991). In the latter, at a particular point in the performance, the spectators are suddenly brightly lit and the performers begin a series of confessions to the now clearly visible audience, and thus the idea for Speak Bitterness was conceived. In the former, the *mise en scène* of a stage within a stage provides a space for quotation, a frame of action within a larger frame, from which

²⁶⁹ Tim Etchells, "Some Notes on Speak Bitterness," *Press Release* (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Co-operative).

confessions may be made against the confusion of the 'world' staged all around. As the notes to the text suggest, Emanuelle Enchanted is a collection of narrative fragments which present the events of a single night, "a night of crisis which is perhaps both personal and global."²⁷⁰ Within the inner frame of action, various 'scenes' are played out in a space which alternates between a television newsroom and a variety of domestic locations but, as the settings which delineate this space are nearly always in motion, the performers must maintain a continuous engagement with the chaos of the larger frame. Indeed, the narratives of confession examined in this production can only have their sublime effect when presented at the limits of the representational apparatus of the inner frame, where they may be juxtaposed with the action of the outer frame. It is therefore important to examine how the dramaturgical strategy of a two-framed *mise en scène* becomes a pragmatic device for the transmission of these narratives.

From the beginning of Emanuelle Enchanted, the *mise en scène* is energized by the comings and goings of a vast array of 'characters'. This "panoramic glimpse" of humanity, however, is costumed in clothing which has obviously come from a second-hand shop, and carries cardboard signs with hastily written identifications, such as: "Miss Deaf America, Joe Walker (Not Guilty), A Dumb Fuck With No Idea, A Telepath (Age 12), The Blonde Girl From Abba, A King (Usurped)"²⁷¹ and so forth. At times the performers' actions, costumes, and signs will seem an appropriate match, but at other times they will not; throughout the sequence, attempts to 'become' each of these cardboard-sign-characters appear committed, even if sometimes full of self-doubt. The overall impression is "a kaleidoscope of fictions in which characters displaced from a multitude of narratives appear and disappear in the space;

²⁷⁰ Tim Etchells, Emanuelle Enchanted (or A Description of This World As If It Were A Beautiful Place), unpublished (1992/3) 4.

²⁷¹ Etchells, Emanuelle Enchanted 7.

summoned up by the performers, presented and then abandoned."²⁷² The accelerated display is that of a vast, urban population. For the spectators it becomes necessary to let go of expectations of conventional character, setting, and textual structures. Performer, Richard Lowdon comments:

We like the collision of 'Elvis Presley, The Dead Singer' with 'A Till Girl With a Gun', and 'Banquo's Ghost' wandering somewhere in the background... When we decided that that section was going to go first, it felt like an extremely good way of saying to an audience, 'If you were going to be concerned about character while watching this show, forget it now. It's no use because the show's only six minutes old and you have already seen probably 150 different names and people, who may or may not be connected.'²⁷³

This challenge to audience expectations has occasionally met with hostile criticism. Writing in the pilot issue of Hybrid magazine, Deborah Levy responded to the beginning of Emanuelle Enchanted in the following way: "Thirty minutes into all this postmodern suffering and disaffection, we know exactly where we are", and then summing up for 'all' spectators she says, "we all love it and hate it. So what?"²⁷⁴ Andrew Quick identifies this as clearly a guiding sentiment in Levy's criticism of contemporary British performance and theatre, and he cites the following observation from her work entitled Walks on Water to support this assertion. Levy is quoted as saying that British avant-garde performance "has reduced itself to a flattened post-modern pastiche in which performers lament the death of everything in thin fragmented shows."²⁷⁵ At first glance, the

²⁷² Etchells, Emanuelle Enchanted 6.

²⁷³ Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, 57 Questions for Forced Entertainment, video interview (London: ICA Video, 1995).

²⁷⁴ Levy as quoted in Andrew Quick, "Searching for Redemption with Cardboard Wings: Forced Entertainment and the Sublime," Contemporary Theatre Review, Volume 2, Number 2 (1994): 26.

²⁷⁵ As quoted in Quick: 26.

cynical distance of such criticism appears to entirely miss the sublime incursion of Forced Entertainment's theatre and yet, under further scrutiny, Levy's critique is an ironic manifestation of what Lyotard has identified as the nostalgic sublime. As discussed above, such nostalgia for presence in representation is a kind of 'recognition of loss' in the aesthetic experience, and the result of a melancholic response to the sublime's negative representation. In this light, Levy's dismissal of Emanuelle Enchanted as just another example of 'flattened post-modern pastiche' is less a valid criticism of the work itself and more an example of her unwillingness to engage in the speculative response the work demands. The opportunity for speculation missed here is that in 'the death of everything', especially the death of the presupposition of some positive entity beyond phenomenal representation, there is paradoxically the experience of its beyond. It is precisely in the presentation of negativity to its notion, of the utmost inadequacy of the notion of the sublime to the spectacle of performers struggling with cardboard signs and second-hand clothes, that the spectators may speculate about the sublime experience.

Concerning the role of confession as a narrative in this sublime experience, Quick is appropriately critical of Levy's superficial dismissal and, with reference to the action of the inner frame, identifies that it is not simply "an evacuated space of quotation", but one inhabited by "a group of performers who, through a sense of compulsion and hesitancy, express both the desire and inability to describe and name those things which speak of a beyond to these limits."²⁷⁶ While this analysis convincingly places Forced Entertainment's theatre within the context of the postmodern sublime, Quick betrays the radical possibility of this analysis when, in apparent appeasement to Levy's dismissal, he upholds her nostalgia using a neo-romantic perspective of identifying the unrepresentable in presentation as a "territory

²⁷⁶ Quick: 29.

of transcendence."²⁷⁷ Despite an acknowledgement of the negative aesthetic at work in Lyotard's refiguring of the sublime, and its appropriate application to the dramaturgy of Forced Entertainment, Quick shuns the demand for speculation and vulnerability on the part of the spectators in this process and instead favours romantic transcendence:

[I]t is surprising that critics have failed or have chosen to ignore the evocations of transcendental potential and the redemptive force of romanticism existent in Forced Entertainment's work. Operating alongside and within the fractured and mediatized landscapes of their fictions, a brutality of assertion, of repetition, materializes around possibility, perfection and otherness. This eidetic repositioning of the absolute, of the transcendental, within the realm of experience but beyond description, is abandoned and forgotten by the homogenizing power of the 'postmodern' (concept or critique).²⁷⁸

Quick rightly makes use of Lyotard's sublime to explore the effects of a negative aesthetic between performer and spectator in Forced Entertainment's work; his analysis errs, however, when he posits the sublime in a neo-romantic light: in the "inexpressible/un-presentable" moments in representation which "open out [my italics] the limits of representation."²⁷⁹ In Quick's 'search for redemption' beyond the theatrical-representational apparatus, he misses the far more radical impact of Lyotard's sublime which operates *within* representation, in the presentation of the unrepresentable, and the force this negative relationship has upon the spectators in Forced Entertainment's dramaturgy.

A clear example of a sublime narrative of confession in Emanuelle Enchanted occurs during the five "Curtain Texts" spaced throughout the performance. As their title suggests, these texts are usually presented downstage of the inner frame, before the curtain, and in the style of a prologue or as

²⁷⁷ Quick: 29.

²⁷⁸ Quick: 27.

²⁷⁹ Quick: 25.

an aside to the action within the inner frame. While much of the content of the Curtain Texts, as well as their precise connection to the rest of the performance, is deliberately left up to the spectators, the staging of each text presents particular dramaturgical impulses which demand a pragmatic reading. Each text is staged at the meeting place between the inner and outer frames of the *mise en scène*, and thus they become confessions concerning the performers' relation to each frame, and a comment on the juxtapositional relationship between frames. The following excerpt, from Curtain Text Two, combines the performers' agitation in the face of the chaos of the outer frame with their struggle over the inadequate means of representation at their disposal within the inner frame:

Performers run for position as if to start a scene. Cathy closes the curtain, approaches the audience as if to speak but as she is about to do so Robin surprises her by pulling the curtain open again. Cathy shuts the curtain again, determined to say her piece. Robin opens it again, equally determined to prevent her. Cathy closes the curtain a third time and Robin again opens it, standing stage left and yanking it out of her hands. Cathy stands downstage right, angry, and waits. Robin and Richard exchange a look. Robin slowly, sheepishly shuts the curtain. Cathy smiles, a victory smile and then speaks.

Cathy: That strange night when the rain stopped we started on some magic acts to keep away the cold. It was all FRIGHTENING MAGIC and appearing and disappearing and REVELATION and LOSS for us then. It was all FOLDING and HIDING and slipping away.

This is the life that we lived then, in the city in the chaos, in the dark...

Cathy opens the curtain as if hoping to present her scene. Robin shakes his head and closes the curtain again. Cathy follows him angrily but Robin waves her back behind the curtain. Cathy departs, rolling her eyes at Robin.

Robin: The night the rain stopped was wild and cold and full of strange noises and we did magic acts and were scared for each other and ourselves. We practised CLOSING BOTH EYES TIGHT WHILST DRIVING DOWN A ROAD, we practised EXHIBITION OF DUST. We practised HAUNTED GOLF. We worked on YOU'RE GOING HOME IN A FUCKING AMBULANCE. This is the...

*Richard who has stuck his head out to watch Robin speaking gags him at this point and drags him behind the curtain.*²⁸⁰

The performers' compulsion and hesitancy, their desire yet inability to represent their experience, are the transmissional means by which the spectators are affected by these sequences.

The confessions of the Curtain Texts can be seen as creating sublime narratives on two related levels. First, the conflict in transmission -- 'staged' by the performers -- between each narrative disrupts how they are meant to be experienced as a whole; as each confession demands a singular 'reading', the more conventional structures and linkages of theatrical narrative -- premise, theme, and plot -- are abandoned. Each confession can be seen as a 'little narrative', resisting transformation into a 'grand-' or meta-narrative of meaning which might bind them into a unified interpretation. Lyotard explains this by means of a distinction between parallel and serial disposition. Grand narratives link little narratives in parallel, either around (about) a referent (as in classicism) or an original sender (as in modernism). Serial narratives, which Lyotard identifies with postmodernism, are not trying to 'add up' to a new truth; they do not promise to reveal an artist's innovative, avant-garde perspective of the world.²⁸¹ The confessions of the Curtain Texts can be seen as serial narratives in that, rather than offering an inventive, new gesture which might revive the truth of theatre, they seek to testify to a theatre event; the truth of which is in the dramaturgical force of these narratives, and their perceptual effects upon the spectators' speculation about this event.

The second level of consideration, then, emerges from the challenge to the spectators: how they are meant to come to terms with the perceptual effects of serial narratives. As the

²⁸⁰ Etchells, Emanuelle Enchanted 13.

²⁸¹ Bill Readings, Introducing Lyotard (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 72-74.

linkages between serial narratives are significantly determined by the pragmatics of transmission, the spectators' perception of their transmissional affects becomes a primary factor in a meaningful engagement with the performance. There are a number of dramaturgical strategies at work in the Curtain Texts which open up a sublime space of speculation for the spectators. As the performers vie for confession, they subvert certain expectations established within the inner frame; although each confession presents itself as a subversion of previous narratives, it is moreover an effacement of a character established previously and a presentation of the performers' uneasiness with the fictions which they take on. Instances of uncertainty, hesitation, or the privacy of refusal all work to create a synesthetic response from the spectators: where perceptual sensation affects cognition of what is happening.²⁸² Susan Melrose likens such engagement in the theatre to an intersection of electro-magnetic fields, and "something like the clash and blendings of body-heat (i.e.: 'Those two hit it off'; or, 'There's no chemistry between them'), and of the place of 'writing' in this scene."²⁸³ For Melrose, synesthesia in the spectators' experience of theatre is where semiotics refers less to decision-making among *meaningful* systemic options, and more to decision-making between *felt* and feeling-engendering options. In the spectators' reading of these confessional narratives, it is the sensation of perceived energies which synesthetically affect cognition, and this is the place of the sublime in the theatre event. The subversion of representational elements of character, language, and setting -- through the dramaturgical force of confession -- creates a synesthesia (a perceptual force) for the spectators; between the sublime Idea represented in a poetic confession about 'revelation and loss' and the actuality of its chaotic

²⁸² See Chapter Two.

²⁸³ Susan Melrose, A Semiotics of the Dramatic Text (London: Macmillan Press, 1994) 217.

presentation. The pragmatics of this transmission exist in a negative presentation of the unrepresentable sublime, which evokes the agitation of sublime sentiment in the spectators.

Forced Entertainment initiate this profound inadequacy between sensual perception and conceptual understanding through various dramaturgical strategies which 'destabilize' the spectators' response. In the confessional narratives of Emanuelle Enchanted the destabilization of the spectators' gaze takes on a further dimension in the juxtaposition of the visual and verbal elements of these narratives. The co-presence of discordant fields of verbal and visual signification further create a de-centring to the spectators' gaze; this negative relationship has the potential to create a sense of agitated speculation in the spectators, as David Gale suggests in his review of Emanuelle Enchanted:

...The person wearing the crown usually has dreadful second-hand clothes and looks ill. This is a recurring image in Forced Entertainment's work and, in the latest show, he holds a placard made from the side of a box of soap or potatoes or something. Printed on the placard, in careful schoolboy capitals, is the legend 'A King (Usurped)'... The King is such a bad actor. They all are, in fact. They don't seem to have a clue. You only really know what they are because of the placards... They don't even wear make-up. This would certainly help because they are all so pale. When they take their clothes off, which they do a lot, their bodies look like your house plants do when you get back from Spain.²⁸⁴

The severe visual presentation of the performers' bodies which look 'ill', of the 'dreadful second-hand clothes', and of the cardboard 'placard' are juxtaposed with a spoken text of poetic longing; and what Gale also describes as "lost souls on the stage, [who] despite their listlessness, are driven by a fervent desire for magic and for love."²⁸⁵ It is the discordant meeting of these verbal and visual elements in the

²⁸⁴ David Gale, "The real thing," Time Out (19-25 October 1992): 24.

²⁸⁵ Gale, "The real thing."

negative aesthetic of the confessional narratives which brings about a sublime sentiment for the spectators: an agitated speculation about their own narrative, their own subjectivity, in relation to the many juxtaposed elements of the narratives they experience in this performance.

Within the representational structures of a carefully flattened postmodern *mise en scène*: the bad acting and television scenarios of the inner frame, or the barrage of tabloid legends on cardboard signs in the outer frame, or indeed even in the lyricism of the spoken confessions, there is a failure of all these representations to signify the subjectivity of either any of the characters presented or any of the performers doing the presenting. At the limit of these many representational strategies is the inert leftover of their presentation on stage: the tangible presence of the piles of tattered cardboard, the bare ply-wood flats, the odds and ends of second-hand clothes, and the ashen bodies of the performers. This, in effect, is the subjectivity confessed to in Forced Entertainment's work, the leftover that is a 'miserable little piece of the real' which has broken off from, yet remains rattling about within, the theatrical-representational apparatus. The subject is precisely correlative of this leftover, and yet this leftover resists subjectivity, embodying the impossibility which 'is' the subject.

In Marina & Lee, the protagonist Marina Oswald 'travels' like a pantomime figure through what Quick has described as "a flickering landscape sculpted from the media's detritus -- cowboy shoot outs, opera, kung-fu fights, women with guns pleading for their lives, sex shows and product placements."²⁸⁶ Marina's journey to meet with her dead lover, Lee Harvey Oswald, is the central action of the performance and is 'enacted' in her wanderings back and forth between the curtains at the front of the stage. Similar to the staging of the Curtain Text confessions in Emanuelle Enchanted, Marina

²⁸⁶ Quick: 32.

occasionally punctuates her travels with 'Travelling Texts'; which take the form of confessed comparisons between aspects of her inward journey with acts found in her travels through 'the media's detritus', staged around her. Here she compares her situation to that of various movie heroines:

I'm on the road again. Like Claudia Cardinale [sic] in that sex film LOVE A LITTLE, DRINK A LOT I'm living on bravely after an unfortunate car crash, frightened of the future, a bit bored of the present and unable to remember the past...

My life is a shadow of one lived in the real world. Look. Just look. My name is a serious breach of copyright, or at least that's how it seems. Like Elizabeth Taylor after she had a stomach infection I'm very thin but very sexy in a white dress.²⁸⁷

Marina's journey takes her through a turbulent world not unlike that staged in Emanuelle Enchanted; for her the Travelling Texts are a way of coming to terms with the chaos which surrounds her. Etchells describes her journey:

Like the rest of us, Marina would like to have a neat and simple story but it doesn't seem possible anymore. As she journeys she is interrupted by ever more strange and chaotic actions, as though she has wandered into the wrong performance... As she walks she describes her journey through a bizarre, contradictory landscape that is part desert, part city, and part paradise.²⁸⁸

Marina's Travelling Texts demonstrate the same serial narrative quality as the confessions of the Curtain Texts in Emanuelle Enchanted; their ironic diversity, from the angelic to the banal creates a destabilization in how the spectators may 'read' her character. Moreover, as representations of how she sees herself to be, they stand in marked juxtaposition to her appearance, costumed as she is in a guise of absurd masculinity: a cowboy hat, badly painted facial hair, and a large plastic penis which hangs between her legs. When Marina says she is "like an angel in early Italian paintings -- kind

²⁸⁷ Tim Etchells, Marina & Lee unpublished (1991) 6-7.

²⁸⁸ Etchells, Marina & Lee 2.

of serene and gorgeous but depressed"²⁸⁹ the spectators are confronted with an extreme contradiction between the visual presentation and this linguistic representation of her character. As with the confessions in Emanuelle Enchanted the spectators may experience a synesthesia with this discord in visual and verbal signification, which has an effect on their speculation about Marina.

As Marina progresses through this landscape, her words are at times tentative and her gestures unsure, reflecting the half-imagined and half-acknowledged distance between what she describes and what is actually happening on the stage around her. Quick aptly identifies Claire Marshall's performance of Marina as one of "exquisite naivety". Moving from various attempts to insert herself into the landscape, participating in caricatured kung-fu fights and burlesque sex shows, she eventually meets with her dead lover Lee Harvey Oswald (Richard Lowdon). The positioning of the reunion of Marina and Lee in the final scene of the performance, seems a culmination of, as Quick describes it, "an extraordinary moment of reconciliation and an act of faith."²⁹⁰ As Lee appears on a monitor, the 'object' of Marina's bizarre journey seems to be achieved: a reunion with her lover, in the opportunity to speak with him from beyond his death via a video monitor. In this final dialogue Lee laments his death, they pledge their love for one another, and their exchange is endowed with a spirit of nostalgia and beauty, as Lee says,

I dream of you with the till-girls and the Dixon boys, walking past the last streetlamp and into the dark. They dance the smiling and the hurrying, the looking for something in the world.²⁹¹

Quick has argued that it is precisely at such "arrested moments" that nostalgia and beauty erase other "modalities and energies" in the performance. Here textual signification

²⁸⁹ Etchells, Marina & Lee 5.

²⁹⁰ Quick: 32.

²⁹¹ Etchells, Marina & Lee 19.

gathers the various performative drives into a regime of meaning; where, as he explains,

the textual acts homogeneously on the aesthetic, reining in performative differences in the name of 'nostalgia' and perhaps even the 'beautiful', however shabby their constellations.²⁹²

While this assessment is accurate concerning the signification of much of Marina's text of romantic longing, Quick's analysis omits the implications of the startling presentation of this scene: here we have an amorous tête-à-tête between a woman made up like an obscene caricature of the Marlboro Man and her partner, on a video monitor, who is wearing a false nose and glasses. The presentation of these characters in this garb subverts the immediate aesthetic experience of beauty and nostalgic transcendence, suggested by Quick, presenting instead something closer to what Hegel calls a 'speculative proposition': a proposition whose terms are incompatible, without common measure. As Hegel identifies in the Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit, to grasp the true meaning of such a proposition we must go back and read it over again, because its meaning arises from the very failure of the first, 'immediate' reading.²⁹³ The perceptual effect of a synesthetic discord between the crude visual presentation and the romantic signification of the spoken text is the creation of the sublime sentiment for the spectators. For Hegel, the discord of this synesthetic sensation, the force of its negativity coincides with a spiritual subjectivity. Rather than finding the subject's spiritual relation to some boundless, metaphysical beyond, Hegel's Spirit exists in the inert debris of the world, and the speculation of spiritual subjectivity is a process initiated by the extremely negative relation between what he distinguishes as 'the Spirit' and 'the bone'.

²⁹² Quick: 33.

²⁹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, transl. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) v-ix.

Zizek demonstrates that Hegel's speculative proposition, 'the Spirit is a bone', brings about the phenomena of sublime sentiment in the subject who contemplates the relationship between the radically discordant terms 'spirit' and 'bone'. In the theatre event this can be understood as the 'pure negative movement of the subject' in response to the 'total inertia of a rigid object' which fills out the void in representation through its presentation in the *mise en scène*. The passage from physiognomy to phrenology in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit provides the basis for Zizek's sublime adaptation of the concept of speculative proposition. For Hegel "physiognomy" is considered "the language of the body, the expression of the subject's interior in his spontaneous gestures and grimaces."²⁹⁴ Physiognomy belongs to the level of language, of signifying representation: a certain corporeal element (a gesture, a grimace) represents, signifies, the non-corporeal interior of the subject. However, as Zizek points out, the final result of physiognomy is its utter failure: every signifying representation 'betrays' the subject. This 'body language' in fact perverts or deforms what it is supposed to reveal; there is no 'proper' signifier of the subject.²⁹⁵ The passage from physiognomy to phrenology functions as the change of level from *representation* to *presence*: in opposition to gestures and grimaces, the skull is not a sign expressing an interior; it represents nothing; it is -- in its very inertia -- the immediate presence of the Spirit. To Zizek's Lacanian analysis, the phrenology of the bone, the skull, is thus an object which, by means of its presence, fills out the void, the impossibility of the signifying *representation* of the subject.

In the final scene of Marina & Lee, the presentation of her costume of absurd masculinity and his Groucho Marx disguise provides an immediate presence of inert objects which, when juxtaposed with the signification of this love

²⁹⁴ Hegel 195 and Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 208.

²⁹⁵ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 208.

scene, become objectifications of the lack in representation. The presentation of these objects generates opacities and forces in the spectators' perception of this scene which are disruptive of the theatrical-representational apparatus and its signification of an absent, unattainable Idea or Thing. A destabilization in the spectators' perception occurs as these objects become a negative presentation of a signified absence or lack in theatrical representation.²⁹⁶ Marina's male costume can be seen as the presentation of the Thing which occupies the place where the signifier of her lover, Lee, is lacking. Thus, Hegel's speculative proposition presents us with a version of the Lacanian formula of fantasy (explored in Chapter Three): the fantasy-object fills out the lack in the Other (the signifier's order). The inert object of phrenology (now the plastic phallus, painted on facial hair, and so forth) is nothing but a positive form of a certain failure: it truly embodies the ultimate failure to signify or represent the subject. It is therefore correlative to the subject in so far as the subject is *nothing but* the impossibility of its own signifying representation, while the empty place is opened up in the big Other by the failure of this representation.

Zizek's application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to Hegelian dialectics illustrates, contrary to conventional criticism, that dialectical mediation does not 'sublate' all of the inert objective leftover in signification. Rather, here the very movement of dialectics implies that there is always a certain remnant, a certain leftover, escaping the signification of subjectivity, and *the subject is precisely correlative to this leftover.*²⁹⁷ Marina's journey through

²⁹⁶ Here negative presentation is analogous with what Lyotard calls 'negative representation' in the *novatio* sublime, when there is an attempt in the representational apparatus to present the fact that there is an unrepresentable. Indeed, Beardsworth's rephrasing of Lyotard's sublime aesthetic as a 'negative aesthetic', alludes to its exploration of what falls outside the realm of presentation through a *negative presentation*.

²⁹⁷ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 208-209.

life and her attempt to represent it despite its often bizarre, chaotic dimensions is a kind of confession of the sublime impossibility of speculating about life in such a world. In this respect, she 'gives body' to such an impossibility; the leftover which resists subjectivity embodies the impossibility which 'is' the subject. Marina's subjectivity is strictly correlative to its own impossibility in that its limit is the positive condition of her presence on stage.

Even more explicit use is made of this strategy of presenting the impossibility which 'is' the subject in Marina & Lee, through two sections of confessional texts which are much like those examined in Emanuelle Enchanted. Here the four other performers (Robin Arthur, Jack Randle, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor) who have been 'dramatizing' the landscape Marina travels through, appear to drop their fictional roles for the explicit purpose of making confessions to the spectators. The following are (abridged) examples of some of the 'sins' confessed:

Robin:

We're guilty of pretend misery, fist-fucking and probably death. Never giving mercy we expect none. We have done several burglaries and in them have stolen all different kinds of things.

We confess to spring and to winter, to drowning, to desertion, to thinking better things. We're guilty of fraud and a traitor's glance, of footsteps in the dark...

Terry:

We confess to river songs, fake tv dinners, songs about the coming of the night, We've tried to fuck in the bath, We've pissed in the sink, We went on Swap Shop the same day that Edward died, We laughed when we probably should've cried...

Jack:

We confess to five hundred million pounds, to fifty dollars, to ten roubles every day for a year. We're guilty of sleeplessness, pillow talk and turning away from the wall.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ Etchells, Marina & Lee 11-12.

These confessional narratives can be 'read' in much the same way as those cited above from Emanuelle Enchanted; each signifies as its own little narrative, speaking either before or after the others -- not about them, in serial relationship. The link between narratives is left up to the individual spectator, who must come to terms with the perceptual effects of each. For the spectators, the narrative linkages are greatly determined by the pragmatics of transmission; their perception of each narrative's pragmatic effects determines a meaningful engagement with the performance. As the reading of each narrative becomes an event in itself -- a material practice, as it affects sensation -- the spectators' experience of each confession refuses interpretation into a theory or concept which may encompass a 'reading' of all the confessions. Furthermore, through these narratives, the performers' are continually repositioned in relation to the theatrical-representational apparatus, becoming actively inscribed into the indeterminacies of the performance's eventfulness, its act of creation with the spectators.

In these confessions the performers face the audience half-naked, mostly in underwear, and under lighting which has been brightened for this particular interaction. In distinct contrast to all the other seemingly tired and second-rate acts the performers have presented (the sex shows, the kung fu fights, etc.), some confessions appear to be real -- the transmission is authentic or the content banal enough to be the experience of anyone; so the spectators are left to ponder whether or not these narratives are actually the performers speaking for themselves, and where precisely this representation meets with the real. It is as if they have come downstage to confess the failure of all these acts and then finally, in the very act of this confession, they present its impossibility. Here the spectators are met with a positive embodiment of the failure of signification; indeed, all the more obviously so when Cathy's confessions progress from a faint whisper to silent mouthings. Despite encouragement from the others, much of her confession is inaudible; it is at this

limit of the theatrical-representational apparatus, that the spectators are radically destabilized as observers, where they must synesthetically rely upon other sensations in their attempts to receive and then speculate about what Cathy is communicating and what could have provoked such silence. This presentation of silence in the performer evokes the presence of a gap in representation. But what exactly is confronted in this gap, in this failure of representation? Perhaps in the presentation of the paradoxical, inaudible-speaking body the 'real' may be confronted. That is not to say 'reality', but rather something more compelling -- experienced only for an instant -- which is perhaps more real in the spectators' proximity to its perceptual effects. In these silent mouthings there is an indeterminate instant for the spectators; where the uncertainty inherent in the failure of representation binds them to this event, and they may find themselves at their sensual limits imagining what is happening. It invokes the "kind of cleavage within the subject between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented"²⁹⁹ which Lyotard demonstrates as an effect of the sublime sentiment.

Lacan's definition of 'the Real' in the latter part of his career (late 1970s) increasingly approaches what he called 'the imaginary' in the 1950s. It might be said that over the course of his research, the Real can be defined by a series of oppositions between conscious and unconscious experience. Essentially, the Real is the imaginary, and so the paradox of the Lacanian Real is that it is an entity which, although it does not exist (in the sense of 'really existing', taking place in reality) it has properties which exist and exercise a certain structural causality, and it can produce certain effects in the symbolic or signified reality of subjects.³⁰⁰ Similar to the dramaturgy of Forced Entertainment, Lacan approaches the Real through a sequence of oppositions or juxtaposed signifying elements. Indeed, the coincidence of

²⁹⁹ Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde": 203.

³⁰⁰ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 163.

opposite or even contradictory determinations is what defines the Real. In his seminar entitled Encore, Lacan gives a clue to the paradoxical coincidence of opposites in the Real when he identifies that "the Real can be inscribed only through a deadlock of formalization."³⁰¹ In this respect the Real can be equated to the sublime: in a first approach, the Real is that which cannot be inscribed or represented; however, as Lacan points out, it "doesn't cease not to inscribe itself" and therefore it becomes, as Zizek says: "the rock upon which every formulation stumbles."³⁰² As identified with the sublime above, it is precisely through this failure that the Real may be dialectically (and as we have seen, theatrically) encircled, and the empty place of the Real may be located.

The Real, then, is nothing but the impossibility of inscription: the Real is not a transcendent, positive entity, or something persisting somewhere beyond signification like a hard kernel inaccessible to it -- in itself it is nothing at all, a void, an emptiness within the theatrical-representational apparatus marking some central impossibility -- and this is where its impact presents itself. The confessional narratives of Marina & Lee culminate in the presentation of such an impossibility: the incongruity of an inaudible confession, from a performer in her underwear. Here Forced Entertainment's use of confessional narratives can be seen as a way of understanding the enigmatic Lacanian phrase defining the subject as an 'answer of the Real'. The subject is an 'answer of the Real' in that the inaudible-confession represents (inscribes and encircles) the void which is the Real. Furthermore, Forced Entertainment's presentation of the Real in the half-naked body of an inaudible performer means that the spectators' speculation is not about some distant, trans-phenomenal Thing; rather, reflection must come to terms with the Thing-in-Itself created in part due to the perceptual

³⁰¹ Jacques Lacan, Encore (Seminar XX) as quoted in Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 172.

³⁰² Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 172.

effects of close proximity between the performers and spectators of the theatre event.

Just such questions of proximity, the making and breaking of eye contact, and the negotiation of openness and vulnerability with the spectators were foremost in the minds of the company in the making of Speak Bitterness. One line of exploration in the work, which arose from these initial concerns, centred on what the audience comes to see in a Forced Entertainment production. Arising from the making of Club of No Regrets (1993/94), and in particular from the scene in which two of the performers (Robin Arthur and Claire Marshall) are tied to chairs and gagged with adhesive tape, the company became curious about precisely what an audience comes to witness, and for what reasons, as Etchells explains:

[I]n Club Of No Regrets there is an element in the work which says to the audience, 'You came here, and you wanted to see something. What did you want to see?' In psychoanalytic terms, perhaps it's the desire to see pain, or the desire to see something revealed, or something private. It becomes interesting when you consider, well, how far do these desires need to go? What is truth in this situation? Are you really here as an audience, in the way you expect the performers to be here? The moments in performance that are becoming increasingly more interesting for me are those when we are effectively asking the audience, 'Are you here?'³⁰³

It is common in Forced Entertainment's devising process to use a particular idea, strategy, or textual fragment from an older work to inspire new developments; it was decided that the confessional format from Marina & Lee was the best way to ask the audience, 'Are you here?' Speak Bitterness is the company's most overt exploration of a performative relationship with its audience; in this respect, while the production continues certain aspects of this style, it is a marked departure for its consolidation of form, as Etchells suggests,

Speak Bitterness was different from our process on

³⁰³ Houston, Appendix One.

other shows mainly in so far as we restricted ourselves to the single device of the confession -- no narrative layering, channel hopping, video on-stage, etc..³⁰⁴

This singular focus on confession coincides with other means of intensifying the relationship the work creates with its audience; particular strategies also emerged around the use of text and performance space, and these owe much to the production's history as an 'installation/durational' work.

Speak Bitterness was originally commissioned by the National Review of Live Art (Glasgow, October 1994) as a 5-hour performance. The live art composition of the work brought with it unique staging arrangements that could only be approximated in the later theatrical production. Etchells describes the performance conditions in Glasgow in the following way:

The piece lasted five hours, the audience could stay for as long or as short a period of time as they liked -- often people chose to stay a while, go out for a break and then return an hour or more later. The 'audience' for the piece in Glasgow was never more than fifteen people at a time and was often as few as two or three people. They were crammed into a very small space and seated on the same kind of chairs as the performers who faced them directly over the long metal table.³⁰⁵

For the theatre production, which toured Britain in 1995, an attempt was made to maintain a small performance space where performers and spectators were both lit with roughly the same intensity, enclosed within the same blue-tarpaulin surround, and separated only by a large metal table -- on which were placed the confession texts. The company also wanted to preserve a certain durational aspect to the work, a sense of confessions happening in real time, and a sense of indeterminacy to each confession made. For many of the performers in the Glasgow performance their reading of a confession was the first time they had ever read the material

³⁰⁴ Etchells, "Some Notes on Speak Bitterness."

³⁰⁵ Etchells, "Some Notes on Speak Bitterness".

-- there was an enormous amount of text on the table. Obviously the adaptation of a 5-hour, site-specific live art performance into a 90-minute, touring theatre production meant that the work changed significantly. The difficulties of adaptation were balanced between two potential obstacles, as Etchells explains:

[W]e found ourselves either making it too theatrical and thus losing track of the intimacy and frailty of the work or else too minimal and unstructured and hence tedious beyond 30 minutes or so. We strove in this process, as in others, for a feeling of things happening as if by chance, or happening live, not for the feeling of a very dramatic, pre-scripted shape.³⁰⁶

The original approach to text had been for Etchells and some of the company to compose hundreds of confessions, record them on sheets of paper, which were then placed in piles on the metal table to be read at random in performance. In the theatre production, Etchells wanted to take these 'piles' of confessions and create more of a structuring of the text, but in an open-ended enough way so as to allow room for the performers to improvise. As with the use of confessional narratives in previous works, ultimately considerations about form and content were superseded by the production's concern for transmission:

[T]he reason why we are doing Speak Bitterness now is that we want to cut away everything else, and just say, 'Look, for this hour and forty minutes, you've got to be here. You can't be anywhere else because we're going to be looking in your eyes when we're talking, and you're going to be lit.' That's not aggressive, because from what people said about their experience of this kind of thing in Glasgow, it actually becomes a pleasurable experience. One person described it as a cross between a confessional and some kind of very weird pillow-talk. There's an openness from the performers that draws you into this very intimate relationship, and the price is that you have to be present. In this respect it's kind of strangely seductive, as well as oddly non-theatrical in that it consists of 'here we are', and in this respect it doesn't take you

³⁰⁶ Etchells, "Some Notes on Speak Bitterness".

anywhere else.³⁰⁷

A first impression of the *mise en scène* of Speak Bitterness, performed at London's ICA in December 1995, might be that of a news conference. Down-stage, centre is the large metal table with its piles of confessions on it; apart from a few chairs upstage of the table the space is empty. The performers enter the space, and stand just before the blue-tarpaulin backdrop, under big white letters which say: 'Speak Bitterness'. Here are seven characters (five company members plus Sue Marshall and Tim Hall), looking like people who have dressed formally, but are unaccustomed to doing so. This appearance is enhanced by body language which suggests they are about to perform some kind of formal, public function. There is something unmistakably ordinary and familiar about these characters; indeed, these are figures seen every day in the media, as the programme notes suggest:

Speak Bitterness [...] comes out of a culture [...] where every time there's a murder or a bombing the police get a dozen or more false calls -- from people confessing or taking the blame, from people who, when questioned, know nothing at all of the atrocities committed. It comes out of a culture where the chat shows and the radio call-ins are filling up with people spilling the beans -- weeping, laughing, stumbling for words -- telling the truth about what they saw and what they did and how they did it, and why.³⁰⁸

Straight from any newspaper or dispatch on television here we have an array of humanity performing a confessional duty; this occurs in various postures -- from confrontation to avoidance, some with something to prove and some with something to hide.

The content of the confessions are much like those of the confession texts in Marina & Lee; the spectators are directly presented with atonements for everything from acts of genocide to the reading of people's diaries. As with previous

³⁰⁷ Houston, Appendix One.

³⁰⁸ Tim Etchells, "A Note on Speak Bitterness," *Performance Programme* (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Co-operative, 1995).

productions, these confessional narratives create a 'horizon of dissensus' for the spectators. Their serial arrangement means that each confession neither adds to nor takes away from preceding or following narratives, even at the times when more than one character is confessing at once. These narratives are not arranged around any single referent or a particular sender; rather they create a situation of narration where no single narrative can exert a claim to dominate narration by standing beyond it.³⁰⁹ The confessions clash by virtue of their syntagmatic displacement, without any one claiming to replace paradigmatically all preceding ones by incorporation or negation; thus, confessional narratives can be associated metonymically rather than metaphorically. This underlines Lyotard's distinction between postmodern narratives and narratology; where, in the former metonymic displacement brings about continued experimentation in narration, and in the latter syntagmatic functioning is understood in so far as it is transformed into a metaphor for something else, which brings narration to a halt.³¹⁰ For example, it is tempting to view this production as a metaphor for mass media titillation, or a vehicle for exploring the public's voyeuristic pleasure in tabloid-style revelation, or other such contemporary concerns about media representation. In a sense all of these are represented here, however, it is a mistake to see any one interpretation as metaphorically standing in for the others; rather the meaning of each confessional narrative is meant to displace previous meaning while simultaneously creating new associations between itself and others. Furthermore, as no subject-position stands outside a given confession, the spectators are not presented with any constancy in characterization. Similar to the confessional narratives in the other productions, it is the pragmatics of transmission which involves the spectators.

³⁰⁹ Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, Just Gaming, transl. Wlad Godzich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1979] 1985) 33 and 39.

³¹⁰ Lyotard and Thébaud 39.

Examination of the pragmatics of transmission here must take into account the level of contingency at work in the process of each confession being 'read' from a page. While this does not entail the radical contingency of the installation/durational version, where confessions were often being read in performance for the first time, the structure of the theatre production did allow for openness in this respect. Etchells reports that at the end of the theatre tour, after approximately four months of performing, the production text of confessions and staging was about 60-70% set. He adds, "Our aim was for an architecture/structure in the piece that did develop -- leading you in and taking you places -- but one that seemed live, accidental, spontaneous."³¹¹ This set-up creates a radical voidance of subjectivity in the theatrical representation of these texts. There are three primary representational elements at work here: the confession texts, in script form on the table; the performers' enactments of these texts, which create confessional narratives; and the overall theatrical representation in which the performers make repeated approaches to the table where numerous confessional narratives are 'staged'. All of these elements belong to the level of language -- either in word, body, or space -- in that as signifiers they are palpable elements, either spoken or visualized, which signify a non-palpable interior of a subject or subjects. As explored above, the end result of such signified representation is its ultimate failure to signify the subject; there is no 'proper' signifier of the subject. What is intriguing in this performance, however, is how this failure occurs through a dramaturgical weave of these elements, and how the juxtaposition of representational elements created by this weave brings about an excess -- a positive presentation of representational failure -- the experience of which should generate a sublime sentiment in the spectators. The presence of confession scripts left askew on the table, indeterminate pauses, gestures and interaction

³¹¹ Etchells, "Some Notes on Speak Bitterness".

among the performers, are the inert leftovers of representational failure which create a speculative proposition for the spectators as they emerge between continued attempts at signification of subjectivity through confessional narratives. The juxtapositional arrangement of this positive presentation of a void in signification with the phenomenality of representation creates an extreme perceptual discord in the spectators, and it is through such negativity that the speculative truth of subjectivity in these confessional narratives may be understood.

The central action of Speak Bitterness is the performers' repeated advances to the downstage table, where they enact confessional narratives. This process begins with the performers positioned in a line just in front of the blue tarpaulin backdrop; gradually each crosses down to confess, and eventually they are at the table in groups of two or three while the others wait upstage. As in Marina & Lee, confessional content ranges from comical admissions about anything from being a deep sleeper to believing that 'the first cut was probably the deepest', through to more sinister acts of harming people for fun or committing crimes like arson or fraud. Unlike Marina & Lee, there is a representational layer added by the act of reading the confessions which opens up a more prominent gap in the signification of subjectivity, as questions arise for the spectators concerning authorship of the confession text, the sincerity of its performance, and so on. Here the performers' negative presentation in the space has the effect of filling these conspicuous gaps in the signification of repetitive confession. Their retreats upstage from the table, to where they wait, watch or listlessly shift around by the backdrop create a further static presence juxtaposed by yet more attempts at confession. Finally repeated attempts at confession create indeterminate actions between performers when they confess together. Here the act of holding hands, a glance upstage at the other performers waiting, stalling in mid-confession, or the interruption of other performer's confessions all create a presentation of the

subject as a remnant, a certain leftover which has escaped the workings of theatrical representation.

It is important to recognize the significance of how the *mise en scène* becomes increasingly energized by the surplus and the static of confessional representation, and less by the form of recurring confession in itself. Here the power of postmodern dramaturgy resides in the presentation of its referent directly, allowing the maximum visibility of its indifferent and arbitrary character. Žižek has described this aesthetic phenomenon as the presentation of 'the obscene object of postmodernity', and he identifies it with the emergence of the Lacanian Real in representation:

The same object can function successively as a disgusting reject and as a sublime, charismatic apparition: the difference, strictly structural, does not permit to the 'effective properties' of the object, but only to its place in the symbolic order.³¹²

The dramaturgical weave of representational elements in Speak Bitterness occasionally creates moments of indeterminate excess, where seemingly ordinary looking people, actions or things become incarnations of an emptiness, a filling out of the gap in the signification to which they have become juxtaposed. Here the everyday appearance of performers, actions, or objects take on certain qualities of the Real simply because of their place in the structure of signification. Whereas modernist theatrical representation creates an inter-subjective structure which works around a Real that is lacking, here the postmodernist reversal shows that the Real becomes a material presentation, whose indeterminate effects are at once both ordinary and sublime. These ordinary appearances become fissured by the effects of the sublime for the spectators due to their sudden and indeterminate proximity of presentation in theatrical representation; therefore, the Real comes anxiously close.

³¹² Slavoj Žižek, Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1991) 143.

The confessional narratives of Forced Entertainment's theatre make use of a pragmatics of transmission, the effects of which open up a space of sublime speculation for the spectators within theatrical representation. This space of speculation, between the Idea and actuality of presentation is the creation of the theatre event between performers and spectators. Here the Real is confronted within representation, where subjectivity is engendered by the indeterminacy of its speculative proposition in performance, in the fissure between essence and appearance. These confessional narratives lead us to that which is produced as a residue, a remnant, a leftover of every attempt to confess our true self or to dream what our world might be; at the core of the pleasure of these confessions and dreams is a force in the presentation of their opposite, a hard core embodiment of displeasure in a silence or a nightmare. It is precisely in the subjective intimacy of this event, in the pragmatic transmission of these narratives which simultaneously attract and repel, that the sublime is experienced. Here confession creates a vulnerable meeting of spectators and performers, juxtaposed between desire and shame, in the Real of the theatre event.

-- Mapping the Real --

It is difficult to separate the use of confessional narratives from that of mapping narratives in the theatre of Forced Entertainment; the two overlap in use and share many similar dramaturgical characteristics. The pragmatics of transmission in each narrative form work to create an experience for the spectators where meaning of what is happening emerges as much from interaction with the performers as from representational content of a performance text. In creating sublime narratives about British urban culture, rather than mimetically representing this environment in a performance text, they create a more profound sense of it through a theatre event wherein the spectators may experience the pragmatics of intersecting narratives and realities existing in such a place.

Mapping narratives are more concerned with developing a *performative* relationship to the reality they represent than with the kind of conceptual representation used in a conventional map. Here 'performativity' means more a coming to terms with the reproduction of effects created by this reality than with claims to representing it truthfully; this shift of emphasis is accommodated by the pragmatics of narrative transmission. In lieu of creating a theatrical representation of an absent referent, the pragmatics of narrative transmission map a reality which is experienced as integral to subjectivity. In effect, this becomes a process of taking ownership of this reality, as this passage from A Decade of Forced Entertainment suggests:

They drew a map of the country and marked on it the events of the last ten years -- the sites of political and industrial conflict, the ecological disasters, the show-biz marriages and celebrity divorces. On the same map they marked the events of their own lives -- the performances they'd given, the towns and cities where they'd stayed, the sites of injuries and fallings in or out of love.³¹³

While mapping narratives are essentially symbolic, they are Real acts in that they become the very mode in which the world may be structured.

In an attempt to represent the perceptual effects of reality for the subject, mapping narratives are an act of mapping the Real. As was explored above with confessional narratives, the Real is an entity upon which all representation 'stumbles'; existing as a shadow, or something that persists only as failed or somehow missed for representation. The Real dissolves itself as soon as we try to grasp it in its positive nature; nevertheless it exists in its perceptual effects within the subject. It can therefore only be constructed backwards from these perceptual effects, as all its affectivity exists in the distortions produced in representation, in the symbolic universe of the subject. It

³¹³ Forced Entertainment, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment": 74.

might be said, then, that in the process of representing the Real mapping narratives depict the reality of a specific place and time as it exists through the consciousness of a given subject; this is a process which opens up a sublime space of speculation for the spectators, between the perceptual effects of this reality and speculation about what this affectivity means.

The most overt example of mapping narratives in the theatre of Forced Entertainment is found in the production created to document the company's ten-year history, A Decade of Forced Entertainment. In this production a collage of practice, personal accounts, places and times emerge in a vast map of the company's history. Not unlike the serial narrative structure discussed above, the cumulative effect of these representational layers allows the spectators to speculate about where they might locate themselves in relation to the elements of personal and public narration which make up this 'map'. Indeed, the text makes continual reference to the process of mapping. Here O'Connor introduces the concept -- and the production:

Terry: We wanted to look back on the decade 1984-1994 -- the ten years in which we've been making our work -- and we knew that this looking back would have to include the things that hadn't happened as readily as those that had. We had in mind a map of the last ten years -- a haunted map -- a false map - - and yet, in some ways, an accurate map... And at some point we realized that this map-making, this charting of a time and a landscape, was what our work had often consisted of. A kind of mapping, a kind of temperature-taking.³¹⁴

Starting in Sheffield, a city new to all members of the company,³¹⁵ the process used to develop an orientation to this location was as deliberately random as the decision that brought them there. Etchells comments that the company's practice foregrounds "the inability of the performers to fully

³¹⁴ Forced Entertainment, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment": 73.

³¹⁵ See Appendix One.

inhabit the texts and gestures which they perform"³¹⁶ and it would appear that this process begins with their inhabitation of Sheffield:

Tim: Ten years of Forced Entertainment is ten years finding notes in the street. When we first got to Sheffield we didn't know anyone -- so the first months were very voyeuristic -- months spent watching, trying to pick up the patterns of the place. In this time, above all others, we found notes and photographs in the street.

There was a note to a woman at a bus stop -- along the lines of *'I see you every day but will never dare speak to you'*, there was a letter from someone in prison that had been torn into pieces as small as confetti but was reassembled by us on the Formica-topped table at 388 City Road.

There were discarded photographs, there were incomprehensible shopping lists, there was a note I found near the hi-rise flats which said *DAVE -- I HAD TO GET OUT -- THE GAS IS CUT OFF AND THE TV HAS GONE BAD -- BACK THURSDAY.*

There was a map, showing how to get to the motorway.³¹⁷

The aim of this consciously arbitrary process is to engage with the representational gaps in a city's identity -- a space which exists in the tattered remnants of its residents' lives. In focusing on these random and minute elements, Forced Entertainment situate their narration at the limits of how this location may be represented. The notes and photographs, the bits of peoples' existence, found in the street are the objects which occupy the place where signification of the city is not fully embodied. The company's use of these objects as a basis for fantasy and narration gives them a kind of significance which endeavours to present the Real experience of the city, existing in these objects, between the company and the Other (residents of the city). This is an attempt to

³¹⁶ Nick Kaye, Art into Theatre: Performance Interviews & Documents (London: Harwood Academic Press, 1996) 244.

³¹⁷ Forced Entertainment, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment": 74.

mark a certain leftover, which escapes any such appropriation; it exists in the performers' inability to fully inhabit the texts of the city, and this is the substance of subjectivity in this place.

Examination of how Forced Entertainment's dramaturgy confronts the substance of subjectivity in mapping narratives must come to terms with the *absolute subject* presented in their work. The following analysis explores how the creation of a protagonist/ absolute subject in Marina & Lee (where this strategy explicitly doubles as confessional narrative), Club of No Regrets, and Nights in This City is the means by which the substance of subjectivity emerges between performers and spectators through a mapping of the Real in the theatre event. The term 'absolute subject' comes from Hegel, who stresses that in the dialectic between form and content which make up the subject, the truth of subjectivity is found on the side of form. Hegel's thesis, explored in the Phenomenology of Spirit, is based upon the concept that before we intervene in reality by means of a *particular act*, we must accomplish the *purely formal act* of converting something which is objectively given into reality as 'affectivity', as something produced 'posited' by the subject.³¹⁸ Even in the case of inactivity on the level of positive content the subject may choose to be inactive, and perhaps even a victim of others' actions, yet this state of inactivity is the result of a choice of action -- in the perceptual field constituted by the 'conversion' of 'objective' reality into affectivity. Reality appears to Hegel's absolute subject as personal activity (or inactivity) conceived in advance as 'converted'; that is, the subject must conceive of themselves as formally responsible for -- or guilty of -- it.³¹⁹ Thus, the absolute subject can be seen to be a kind of 'author of the world' in the creation of mapping narrative; as the essence of subjectivity emerges in the very act of restructuring the objectively given world into

³¹⁸ Hegel 385.

³¹⁹ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 217-218.

a representational world, with an affectivity which is perceptually Real for the subject.

The role of the absolute subject as author of the world is appropriate to the creation of mapping narratives because it is the role of the subject to posit a presupposition of personal responsibility for the world in the act of representing it. Thus, far from the particular-empirical attempt to represent reality that ultimately ends in a conventional map, a mapping narrative's perceptual structuring of the world attempts to open a space of affectivity, of intervention and transformation, between those who make and those who 'read' this map. Hegel is clear, however, that the act by which the subject posits a presupposition to intervene in reality is of a strictly formal nature. The purely formal act of converting reality into something perceived means that the subject assumes a guilt-responsibility for this reality, but on the level of empirical reality, does absolutely nothing. The process of representation is primarily one of taking responsibility for the given state of things; that is, the subject accepts reality as "his own work" by a purely formal act: what was a moment ago perceived as substantial positivity ("reality that merely *is*") is suddenly perceived as resulting from the subject's own activity ("reality as something produced by consciousness").³²⁰ This is the heart of theatrical representation in mapping narratives, in the 'performance' of intervention on the world: a mapping narrative of the world does not actually entail an act of intervention but rather a representation of such an act. Indeed, the subject pretends that the reality which is already given in its positivity encountered in its factual substantiality, is his/her own work.

This positing presupposition of responsibility for a reality that merely *is* becomes clear in A Decade of Forces Entertainment when maps of England begin to include events:

³²⁰ Hegel as quoted in Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 218.

from around the world and throughout time:

They drew a map of the country and marked on it the events of the previous three, then four, then five hundred years. They kept on going until the beginnings of geological time. Until the map was scribbled over a thousand times -- utterly black.

They knew something strange had happened to time. They drew a map of the country and marked on it events from the rest of the world. On this map the Challenger space shuttle had blown up in Manchester in 1985. The Union Carbide Bophal chemical works which exploded late in 1984 was located in Kent. The seige of the Russian parliament building in 1991 had taken place in Liverpool. The Democratic Party's recent set-backs in the mid-term elections had been most severe in the Isle of Dogs. The 1989 fatwa on Salman Rushdie had been issued from Tunbridge Wells.³²¹

In this passage there is a symbolic shift between a reality that merely *is* to a reality as something produced by consciousness. Not unlike the examples of calamity represented here, Hegel sees the funeral ritual as an act which best exemplifies the absolute subject's presupposing responsibility over a pre-given reality. For Hegel death is a passage into pure Being; a process of indeterminate, natural disintegration taken on by the subject through symbolic repetition in the funeral rite. Even in the event of death the absolute subject attempts ownership of the act, to be the author of this unrepresentable occurrence.

Hegel's use of the natural event of death can be compared to Forced Entertainment's use of events created by humanity which, either in their catastrophic nature or indeterminate effect on peoples' lives, are considered to exist beyond the conscious control of any one subject. The two cases reiterate the comparison made at the beginning of the chapter between Kant's sublime, found in an 'object (of nature)', and that of Hegel and Lyotard which can result from human acts, existing within the phenomena of the sublime Idea's negative representation. In the funeral rite, Hegel

³²¹ Forced Entertainment, "A Decade of Forced Entertainment": 75.

initially follows Kant: the Idea of pure Being in death can only be reached through negative presentation, and the very inadequacy of this phenomenality is the only appropriate way to represent it. Through the positing proposition of the absolute subject, however, Hegel breaks from Kant in that the subject *pretends* that death is a phenomenon resulting from a conscious decision.

Hegel's position has been attacked, perhaps most notably by Martin Heidegger, who suggests that this perspective brings subjectivism to its extreme: the subject wants to dispose freely even with death, transforming this limited form of human existence into an act of free will.³²² Lacan has also criticized Hegel's position, however in doing so he offers a different approach which essentially augments Hegel's position, and is useful to the present analysis. For Lacan the funeral rite presents an act of symbolization *par excellence*; by means of a forced choice, the subject assumes and thereby repeats the act of what happened anyway. In the funeral rite, the subject confers the *form* of a free act on an 'irrational', contingent process.³²³ This is precisely the representational process at work in Forced Entertainment's mapping narratives. The absolute subject emerges in the theatrical representation of A Decade of Forced Entertainment when through an act of "pretending"³²⁴ events which have occurred throughout the world become a part of the empirical reality of England over the past ten years. Here the absolute

³²² See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 218-219.

³²³ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 219.

³²⁴ Forced Entertainment have often described their approach to acting as 'pretending', and in A Decade of Forced Entertainment Robin Arthur presents a summation of this aspect of the company's aesthetic in a lengthy list of all the various characters, famous personalities, and states of mind or body that the company have pretended to be. The scope of this concept of 'pretending' is suggested when he concludes by saying: "They pretended to tell lies, they pretended to tell the truth. And often they pretended to be themselves." See Forced Entertainment, A Decade of Forced Entertainment 81.

subject narrates 'history' through use of a purely formal, empty gesture: an act of empirically-false confession, of feigning liability for what has happened anyway, without having taken part in it much less having putatively represented it on a map. It is by means of this empty gesture that the subject takes upon him/herself the leftover which eludes his/her active intervention. This "empty gesture" receives from Lacan its proper name: "the signifier", the place in which resides the elementary, constitutive act of symbolization.³²⁵

In the mapping narratives of A Decade of Forced Entertainment the entire company sit behind a large table, each making attempts at 'drawing a map' which might signify the company's existence and practice over the past ten years. Each narrative seems to take on increasingly more phenomena, from the personal to that beyond all but an imaginary grasp. One narrative signifies "a hundred fictional events", another has "the street names they'd collected over the years, some real, some from fiction, some dreamed up just because they sounded good"; ultimately these mapping narratives become a purely symbolic, formal conversion of a great mass of information received over the decade by each company member, who, not unlike the spectators, has attempted to make meaning of it all through incorporating it into his or her life:

They said they liked the media culture, the cargo cult of TV and movie detritus, but perhaps it would be truer to say that that was the world in which they found themselves, and so, like everyone else, they did their best to make sense of it all.³²⁶

This 'formal conversion' of the world's media content into something that can be a part of the subject's conscious understanding of the world is akin to Lyotard's description of a postmodern negative representation in the 'novatio' sublime. In the face of a mediated reality so vast that it has become

³²⁵ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 221.

³²⁶ Forced Entertainment, A Decade of Forced Entertainment 80.

unobjectifiable and unmasterable, the subject embraces this fact, and in a spirit of sublime 'enthusiasm' toward this vastness, tries to conceive of how to use it; how to create and re-create a relationship with this ever-changing, immense landscape. It is the Hegelian absolute subject who acts in accordance with Lyotard's 'novatio' sublime, in that it is s/he whose action posits the presupposition of reality; rather than being bound or conditioned by the presuppositions of an external reality, the absolute subject posits them. Through the act of 'choosing what is already given', and the purely symbolic act of converting what is already in the media -- on the television, in the newspaper, etc. -- the subject in effect takes responsibility for this reality through its incorporation into a negative representation, a mapping narrative, which in itself is sublime. The act of making maps, similar to the act of making confessions, is an attempt to encompass or encircle all that which escapes the subject's active intervention. Not unlike Speak Bitterness, A Decade of Forced Entertainment puts the company before the spectators, who in turn confess to the impossible task of representation, and in this void of impossibility there emerges the Realization which each company member and each spectator faces: that in the leftover of this map, of this confession, of all media sound bites or of appearances there is the essence, the impossible embodiment that *is* the subject.

Examining how the absolute subject is constituted in this 'empty gesture', which changes nothing at the level of positive content, but must nevertheless be added for the 'content' itself to achieve its full affectivity, Žižek likens the substance of subjectivity to the last grain of sand upon a heap:

We can never be sure which grain is the last one; the only possible definition of the heap is that *even if we take away one grain, it will still be a heap*. So this 'last grain of sand' is by definition superfluous, but nonetheless necessary -- it constitutes a 'heap' by its very superfluity. This paradoxical grain materializes the agency of the signifier -- paraphrasing the Lacanian definition of the signifier (that which 'represents the subject

for another signifier'), we are even tempted to say that this last, superfluous grain represents the subject for all the other grains in the heap.³²⁷

The creation of protagonists in several of Forced Entertainment's productions confronts this paradox inherent in the substance of subjectivity. The following analysis will touch briefly on three of these: Marina in Marina & Lee, Helen X from Club of No Regrets, and Alan in Nights in This City. In each case, the absolute subject as protagonist becomes author of mapping narratives through which the substance of subjectivity emerges between performers and spectators.

As examined above, the central action in Marina & Lee is Marina's journey through 'a flickering landscape' which culminates in a meeting with Lee, her dead lover. She moves through a *mise en scène* of various enactments which represent this landscape, and her narration maps a relationship to this world. While these 'Travelling Texts', which were cited above for their confessional quality, can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with the obviously chaotic nature of the *mise en scène*, their content offers no apparent mimetic relationship between what they describe and what is actually enacted on stage. Far from offering a reliable narration of staged events -- which might be expected from a protagonist who, albeit crudely, appears to be styled on a pantomime model -- the content of these texts subverts all such expectation in the spectators, reflecting instead Marina's perceptual response to the many intersecting representational layers in the world through which she journeys. This deliberate subversion of content obliges the spectators to concentrate instead on the pragmatic transmission of these mapping narratives, as they make meaning of the events on stage. Marina's accounts are presented in a manner which suggests a sense of numbed acceptance to her obviously hostile and frenzied surroundings. Her downstage pacing resembles a trance state: her movements appear absent-minded in their detached quality and slow pace, her eyes appear to be focused on something beyond the stage,

³²⁷ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 221.

as if locating herself somewhere off in the distance. This presentation evinces the profound gap between the landscape, its inhabitants, and Marina as an absolute subject seemingly detached from it all. The content of this mapping narrative amounts to a kind of stream of consciousness response to sight, sounds, thoughts, dreams, media, history, etc.. The combination of such a vast array of content with her tentative and distant delivery creates a narration which is strictly symbolic of Marina's absolute subjectivity within the chaotic *mise en scène*. Working on a purely formal level, these texts represent her perceptual structuring of this world; while this narration indicates Marina's attempts to open a space for interaction in this world, they stand in marked contrast to the actual interaction she achieves.

In terms of characterization there is little similarity between Marina and Helen X, the protagonist from Club of No Regrets; however, a consideration of form offers insight into how each protagonist creates mapping narratives and, although they utilize different dramaturgical strategies, each production's central action concerns the development of the protagonist as an absolute subject. Whereas Marina's mapping narratives are juxtaposed with a reality staged around her, Helen X is clearly established as the 'author' of the *mise en scène*, so she emerges as a protagonist at odds with the surroundings that she herself has posited. The resultant theatrical representation is entirely taken up with the juxtaposition of opposites existing within the character of Helen X, thus the spectators witness a more penetrating exploration of an absolute subject. Here O'Connor, who created and performed the character of Helen X, compares her character to Marina:

I think in some ways Marina is about living and responding to an external reality, and Helen X is more about making something and the frustration of making something. In Club of No Regrets you don't really get a sense of an external reality that Helen X can relate to or refer to. There's 'the woods' and the idea of being lost in the woods, or 'lost in an abandoned city that looks a bit like the woods'; but these are so close to fairy tale, so close to fable

that it seems rather transparent as an invention. Marina is a stiller presence, looking out at the world around her and piecing together fragments of it in a way that is quite poetic and quite calm, very sad and very beautiful. Helen X is much more of a self-mocking attempt to show the frustrations of trying to make something: trying to make yourself.³²⁸

While Marina confronts the chaotic reality which surrounds her with a calm affectivity, Club of No Regrets fully symbolizes Helen X's chaotic response to the sublime mystery of our contemporary world.

The central action of Club of No Regrets is the creation of a play, or a series of enactments, orchestrated by Helen X. The *mise en scène* is similar in style and construction to that of Emanuelle Enchanted, consisting of a tiny box set made of untreated plywood, which divides the action into two frames. Hovering between these two frames, usually over the upstage-centre flat, perches Helen X, ordering the various scenes/enactments from a hand-held script. The play is 'enacted' by a pair of performers (Marshall and Arthur) who have apparently been captured at gun-point for the occasion. Helen X is assisted -- and sometimes hindered -- in this production by two 'stage hands' (Naden and Lowdon) with guns who, in addition to having captured the actors, proceed to bring them whatever texts or props are needed to enact the play. Within the inner frame of the box set, scenes are enacted and re-enacted many times because Helen X seems confused about their order or how they should be performed. The action in the inner frame occurs simultaneously to the occasional, seemingly random action of the stage hands, and to the reading of another text consisting of Helen X's confused narration -- part soliloquy, part stage direction, and part diary -- which she calls Club of No Regrets.

As a mapping narrative, Helen X's text aspires to piece together the 'torn pages' of a world as a means of self-

³²⁸ Forced Entertainment, 57 Questions for Forced Entertainment.

preservation and self-discovery, and as the programme suggests, this is attempted with great difficulty:

Helen's intention is always thwarted by the inadequacy of her materials and by the unsuitability of her circumstances. Her intentions, like our own, are always scrambled by memory, written over and challenged by other intentions, other scrambled desires.³²⁹

Helen X quite deliberately endeavours to use a theatrical-representational apparatus to construct a reassuring picture of the world, however her project is continually subverted by the often ironic dramaturgical elements built into this apparatus. First, the enacted drama features two people who have been made to 'perform' at gun point, spending much of the performance bound to chairs and gagged with parcel-tape. Despite Helen X's attempts to evoke poetry and even magic from her 'story to keep the night at bay', the symbolic affectivity of this text is constantly subverted by the crude actuality of its pragmatics of transmission. While she searches for the right narrative tone for her story -- "ALMOST PREGNANT, a true life story by HELEN X", followed by "The SHELL GARAGE's History of Mud, Part one in a series of eight", and "MY OFFICIAL LIFE ON THE RUN", before settling on "CLUB OF NO REGRETS"³³⁰ -- her 'stage hands' noisily go about their business. This second dramaturgical element, the action of the 'stage hands', is probably the most erratic of this theatrical-representational apparatus. During Helen X's narration they often place new and usually irrelevant props within the box set, sometimes into the hands of the two performers. It is also their job to make 'special effects' -- apparently at random -- using talcum powder for smoke and fake blood and water to represent rain and tears. The stage directions in the text suggest that at times whole scenes are

³²⁹ Tim Etchells, "A Few Thoughts About Procedure...(Notes on Club of No Regrets)," Club of No Regrets Performance Programme (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Co-operative, 1993).

³³⁰ Tim Etchells, Club of No Regrets, unpublished (1993) 6.

lost to the noise and distractions of the 'stage hands'. Third, and overall, Helen X and the stage hands move freely in, out, and all around the box set; as each of them act on this inner frame in such a way that they are sometimes located within it and the outer frame simultaneously, the spectators are frequently reminded of the purely formal -- that is to say empty -- construct this set and many of the trappings of theatrical representation have become in this production.

The overt use of the theatrical-representational apparatus to signify Helen X's affectivity lends itself to a phenomenological analysis which recognizes that we all construct and live in a variety of different realities, each one defined by certain conventions and specific cognitive assumptions.³³¹ Indeed, Helen X's objective as an absolute subject striving to create an affectivity which might serve as a mapping narrative, an identity in a chaotic world, is echoed in a phenomenological observation made by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "Everything I see is in principle within my reach, at least within reach of my sight, marked on the map of the 'I can'."³³² In our contemporary world, however, for both Helen X and the spectators, the bulk of what is seen, in fact and in principle, is no longer within reach, and even if it lies within reach of sight, it is no longer necessarily inscribed on the map of 'I can'. Here the workings of the theatrical-representational apparatus become an inert leftover of a sublime world Helen X cannot fully represent -- cannot inscribe on the map of 'I can' -- and in this lack of control, her affectivity is made up of fragmented attempts to keep it at bay. Paul Virilio describes a similar phenomenological condition called "visual dyslexia" attributable to the industrial proliferation of visual and audiovisual prostheses

³³¹ See David E.R. George, "Performance Epistemology," Performance Research, Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1996): 16-17.

³³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty as quoted in Paul Virilio, The Vision Machine, transl. Julie Rose (London and Bloomington and Indianapolis: British Film Institute and Indiana University Press, 1994) 7.

in contemporary mass media.³³³ He cites particular studies which have linked an inability of the subject to represent the world to him-/herself with a weakening of central (foveal) vision, a trait commonly associated with dyslexia. The loss of this most acute sensation is coupled with the enhancement of a more or less frantic peripheral vision, or as Virilio says:

a dissociation of sight in which the heterogeneous swamps the homogeneous. This means that, as in narcotic states, the series of visual impressions become meaningless. They no longer seem to belong to us, they just exist, as though the speed of light had won out, this time, over the totality of the message.³³⁴

This perspective is supported in the programme notes, which suggest the aim of the production is to "catch things not from the point of focus but from the corner of the eye."³³⁵ It is in this respect that a phenomenology of visual dyslexia corresponds with the experience of Helen X's role as an absolute subject.

According to the Lacanian interpretation of the absolute subject, the experience of visual dyslexia can be likened to a particular aspect of such subjectivity which Lacan refers to as the experience of the phallic signifier. In so far as the phallus is a Lacanian 'pure signifier', it is precisely a signifier of Helen X's attempted conversion of reality into theatrical representation; that is, her efforts to take control of it, make it her own work. Here the basic phallic experience of the absolute subject turned protagonist/author is summed up in the observation: "everything depends on me, but for all that I can do nothing."³³⁶ In the phallic experience of the absolute subject, the sublime chaos of 'everything' in the world meets

³³³ Virilio, The Vision Machine 8.

³³⁴ Virilio, The Vision Machine 8-9.

³³⁵ Etchells, "A Few Thoughts About Procedure...(Notes on Club of No Regrets)".

³³⁶ Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 223.

with the 'nothing' of the theatrical-representational apparatus, the inadequate materials possessed by the subject to fully represent reality. The *mise en scène*, which is often a jumble of debris -- books, leaves, guns, etc. -- covered with talc, fake blood, and water, is ultimately a negative presentation of Helen X's affectivity; a place where the stains of the play's aspirations are left to remain.

At the end of the production, Helen X announces that it is nearly midnight and accordingly time for an enactment of an 'escape routine'. During this sequence many acts of escape occur simultaneously; resembling a series of bizarre dances, several escapes are performed to a brash chaotic Rhythm and Blues soundtrack and then more slowly to a milder solo piano accompaniment. During this sequence the 'stage hands' and 'performers' have alternately been bound and gagged, then made to escape. Helen X has drawn chalk circles at the front of each side of the stage to represent her 'woods', and using a knife and hammer has enacted her escape to the music played. Finally, with a sense of a ritual having been completed, Helen X pours water on her chalk circles, erases them with her foot, walks to a downstage microphone, takes off her wig and completes her mapping narrative:

Kings, thieves, usherettes, lords, liars, gunmen and prostitutes: all those who would know magic: take this book and have it read to you:

over the BRIDGE OF KISSES
left at MURDER STREET
to the BIG STATUE OF SOMETHING RARE
through the subway near DIFFICULT HOUSE
to the END OF THE WORLD
and then, for those that find it, on foot, to CLUB
OF NO REGRETS

thank you, goodnight.³³⁷

Watched by the other performers and before a *mise en scène* littered with the objects and markings -- the leftovers -- of her ordeal, Helen X evokes a final phallic experience in the juxtaposition of her omnipotent mapping narrative and the

³³⁷ Etchells, Club of No Regrets 15.

impotence of her theatrical-representational means. The precision of the dramaturgical development of Helen X as absolute subject should not be missed here: beginning in a wig, script in hand, and perched above the box set of her symbolic world, she finishes her narrative without props -- either script or wig -- and situated among the representational excess and debris of her world. For the spectators, the appearance of this final *mise en scène* creates a profound sensation of sublime sentiment for Helen X's mapping narrative has revealed a place of sublime 'essence': the inadequacy of the appearance or representation to itself. In the dramaturgy of *Forced Entertainment* the sublime emerges from an object whose 'body' is the embodiment of a void; an object which by its very inadequacy, 'gives body' to the absolute negativity of the sublime for the spectators.

The use of the city of Sheffield as a site for the creation of Nights in This City extends many of the dramaturgical elements of the mapping narratives examined above. Here the pragmatics of narrative transmission are met with the presentation of everyday occurrences on the city's streets. The weave of a mapping narrative's affectivity with the reality it is meant to posit brings about a representational excess which is the space of the Real and inscribes the substance of subjectivity for the absolute subject. The phenomenological uncertainties of sight facilitated by the fragmentary and accidental activities of the *mise en scène* in Club of No Regrets receive further dramaturgical development in Nights in This City with the inclusion of reality as it is experienced through the windows of a coach, driving through the city. The spectators are invited to experience where the Real meets with reality, as Etchells describes:

Did you understand that the city was always about glimpsing other lives? About the strange fragments and endless possibilities of people passing each other in the street. My thought is often -- what if I went with this person or that person, what if I was that person or what if I went with them -- what would my life become?... There are these strange

intimacies in the city -- those moments on an escalator, those others in the lift, in the subway, or those moments when, stopped at the traffic lights we glance at the car opposite and are close enough to speak, even touch. The fascination of these moments is simple -- that our machines have brought us together and held us apart... The city now is full of this -- possibility, negation, guess-work.³³⁸

In Nights in This City this concept of 'machinery' which tentatively connects people to each other and their environments is explored in the bringing together of three such 'vehicles' in performance: theatrical representation, a tour coach, and phenomenological experience of the everyday. It is in this use of reality as a found object, as it indeterminately appears to each spectator through the coach's windows that an inner machinery of representation meets with an outer machinery operating in the spectators' experience of reality -- mobilised by the machinery of the coach.

Nights in This City was performed two times a night, 7 and 9 pm, from 16 to 21 May, 1995. Essentially, the dramaturgical structure and the coach route itself can be broken down into seven parts.³³⁹ First, an audience of about fifty are admitted to a tour coach by a performer-hostess (Naden on the night I attended, but played in different performances by Marshall and O'Connor), at Paternoster Row. Then Driver "Ray" (played by Coachline driver, Martin Tether) announces the coach's departure and his intention to show the spectators something before picking up the proper tour guide. While the coach fills up with spectators 'elevator' music is heard playing over the coach's speaker system; as the coach pulls away however, this drastically changes to the magical ambience of John Avery's soundtrack, which plays for the rest of the journey. The coach drives to Sky Edge, above the Manor Park Estate, from which point the spectators have a clear panoramic view of the city's centre and its vast urban and

³³⁸ Tim Etchells, Theaterschrift 10 (1996): 15.

³³⁹ See Tim Etchells, "A Note About Nights in This City," Nights in This City, unpublished (1995) 3.

suburban sprawl. Here Ray points out "the place where he lives, the place where he first worked in the city and the place where he got married 15 years ago."³⁴⁰ During Ray's introduction, a figure can be seen running up the hill toward the coach, puffing a trail of cigarette smoke. This, the spectators learn, is "Alan" (Lowdon) who will be the guide for the tour's journey. Alan, the 'professional' tour guide whose role has been described by Nick Kaye as "shift[ing] between stand-up comic, tour guide and fantasist,"³⁴¹ is the absolute subject and protagonist of the production. This third part is completed by the coach drive from Sky Edge through the centre of the city to the Town Hall. The fourth part comprises the coach journey from the Town Hall up onto West Street; the coach then makes a 'wrong turn' and, after various diversions through some of the more derelict parts of the inner city, the coach stops again in a car park by a canal near The Wicker. The fifth part includes the departure from this car park, and the drive out of the inner city to the Manor Park Estate. The coach then stops for a fourth time on the edge of a desolate hill, on the periphery of the estate, where Alan departs, apparently in search of drink. Part six begins with a second guide taking Alan's place (Naden). Under the direction of this second guide, the coach travels back to the city centre; it makes a scenic descent from the hill top, suburban estate, the city clearly visible from both sides of the coach. The coach makes its final stop at the disused Leadmill Road Bus Depot, where the spectators are instructed to disembark. This begins the eighth part of the journey, a walk through a radically altered depot. The Guide asks the spectators to make their way out through the Depot. On the floor of the garage in ten 75 metre columns they find a huge A to Z of Sheffield written out in chalk on the floor. At the far end of the space a red neon sign is suspended bearing the words: FLOATING & FALLING, and

³⁴⁰ Etchells, "A Note About Nights in This City," 3.

³⁴¹ Nick Kaye, "Site/Intermedia," Performance Research, Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1996): 64.

beneath this the location and date: SHEFFIELD 21 MAY 1995 (The date changed to correspond with the day of the actual journey).

Examination of how the meeting of an inner theatrical-representational 'vehicle' with an outer one, operating through the spectators' experience of reality outside the coach, must take into account how this meeting is affected by the tour guides. Each guide offers the spectators a mapping narrative of the world which surrounds the coach. Alan, whose mapping narrative makes up the majority of the tour, is an excellent example of an absolute subject. As with Helen X and Marina, his narrative charts a wide expanse, shifting from observations about phenomena actually occurring outside the coach to various forms of self-observation, confession, and fantasy. Also, as with the previous protagonists, the often fantastical content of Alan's narrative obliges the spectators to be more sensitive to its pragmatics of transmission. Beginning with a complete disorientation as to what city the coach is actually travelling through, the drive from Sky Edge to the Town Hall is accompanied by Alan's humorous attempts to get his bearings, as the following excerpts suggest:

I like to start this bit of the tour by saying "Welcome to Lisbon" which usually raises a bit of a chuckle because everyone knows we're in Dresden... Aloha! Aloha! Ray try and stay away from the roundabouts will yer I'm ever so dizzy tonight... Ladies and gentlemen welcome to Rome...this city is known to me for three things -- the beer, the historical buildings and something else...just there, behind these buildings, on the skyline you might just catch a glimpse of the leaning tower of Pisa...and those of you who've been to Venice before will recognise the smell. Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been drinking and I've never been that lucky...³⁴²

This drunken (dis)orientation is eventually accompanied by Alan's attempts to, on the one hand, take control of the situation in the form of assured commands to Ray and, on the other, indulge his dreams and memories about cities, as if

³⁴² Tim Etchells, *Nights in This City*, unpublished (1995) 4.

speaking to himself:

Ladies and gentlemen. (Ray you need to go right here, at the roundabout...) All the streets round here got named after various Voodoo gods and all the buildings got named after page three girls and they named the park after me dad, cos that's where he takes me, that's where he used to take me when I was a kid...³⁴³

And finally, failing familiarisation, dream, or memory, Alan's affectivity brings about a mapping narrative of fictional sensationalism:

I'm fainting. It's best not to panic. We are going down. All the streets in this district were named after the mistresses of cabinet ministers and all the alleys were named after battles in the Gulf War...

A lot of what you can see now, from here, Ladies and gentlemen, is, is um, is a film set, built for the final chase sequences of a big budget movie and then people liked the look of it all so much that they just left it in place. That's the kind of city this is. A lot of these buildings are just frontages or shells and you can't really go inside...³⁴⁴

Here the role of a 'professional' tour guide is used to optimum effect in creating the phallic signification of the absolute subject. Alan's mapping narrative converts 'objectivity', reality as it appears outside the coach, into a posited affectivity because it is the character's professional responsibility to do so. The aspects of Alan's character which distort the unproblematic fulfilment of this responsibility -- lateness, drunkenness, insecurity, etc. -- ultimately serve only to accentuate his desire to rise to the occasion: to be able to convert objective reality into accurate navigation, knowledgeable anecdote -- that is, something he has mastered. Here the point of phallic coincidence between the absolute subject's desire for mastery, the sensation of 'everything depends upon me', with total incompetence, 'but for all that I can do nothing', overlaps

³⁴³ Etchells, Nights in This City 4.

³⁴⁴ Etchells, Nights in This City 5.

with the spectators' experience of a juxtaposition between theatrical representation in the coach and the reality it is meant to posit outside. For the spectators, the appearance of the city of Sheffield through the coach's windows becomes an objectification of a certain lack: 'a positive form of the failure of the signifying representation of Alan, the absolute subject. Here, according to Lacanian theory, the substance of subjectivity is the city in that the subject is nothing but the impossibility of his own signifying representation.'³⁴⁵ The city of Sheffield becomes the empty place opened up in the big Other by the failure of representation.

Where the *mise en scène* of Emanuelle Enchanted and Club of No Regrets were split into two representational frames, in Nights in This City this split is located between the action inside and outside the bus, and it is between these two frames where the spectators may locate their experience of this event. As the coach progresses on to the fourth and fifth parts of the production, for Alan its journey becomes an increasingly unpredictable criss-crossing of the city. Through an escalating sense of disorientation, Alan becomes more resigned to the situation, and his mapping narrative becomes less an effort to maintain continuity and more a shifting depiction of longing, fear, and disappointment:

Ladies and gentlemen, [...] You should see this city in the rainy season, when the trees are in fantastic bloom and when the streets fill up with kids in masks carrying helium balloons and firecrackers, or you should see this city in June when the sun shines all day and everyone's houses are open to visitors. You should see this city at carnival when the town doesn't sleep for a week and the men and women here will grant three wishes to a stranger.

But you have come in the dry season. You have come here in the season of the dead, and all the people that you'll see here are ghosts...³⁴⁶

Here, on the level of affectivity, the absolute subject is no

³⁴⁵ See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 208-209.

³⁴⁶ Etchells, Nights in This City 10.

longer attached to some presupposed substantial contents, but posits them in substantial presuppositions. As Alan's mapping narrative becomes progressively introspective it posits an affectivity which may substantially affect the spectators' perception of reality outside the coach. His repetitive appeal for the spectators to look out at reality, coupled with his desire for what might be there, creates a synesthesia between this narration and what each spectator may actually be seeing.³⁴⁷ The emotive force of his affectivity has the potential to influence what the spectators see by what they hear; thereby the desire of Alan's mapping narrative acknowledges the potential desire in all the spectators to seek with their own gaze at the world outside. Here the theatrical-representational 'vehicle' may encourage the gaze of each spectator to reach out for the sensation of the Other, who has been brought so close; yet the contingency of this moment is just as easily dispersed as the machines of the city, both actual and representational, move its inhabitants apart again. Kaye discusses this meeting of Alan's fictions and the happenstance of the street in the following way:

In its address to site, Nights in This City prompts an attention to that which the text cannot adequately speak of. 'Alan's' injunctions to look out into the city, the repeated coincidence between the fictions of the text and the happenstance of the street, as well as the thought that amid this flow of the everyday there may be incidents constructed for us, demand that one looks for the piece outside.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Roland Barthes reminds us that as a signifying site, the gaze provokes a synesthesia, an in-division of (physiological) meanings which share their impressions so that we attribute to one, poetically, what happens to another. Thus, what the spectators hear in Alan's mapping narrative may affect what they see outside the coach.

See Chapter Three and Roland Barthes, The Responsibility of Forms, transl. R. Howard (London: Blackwell, 1986) 239.

³⁴⁸ Kaye elaborates on this observation by citing the production's use of two performers (Arthur and O'Connor in the two performances I saw) who suddenly appear on either side of the coach, while it is has stopped in a car park off

Ultimately the effect of Alan's mapping narrative upon spectatorship in Nights in This City is to introduce the possibility that fantasy is the support to what the spectators are witnessing in reality outside the coach. Indeed, it is through such fantasy that the spectators encounter the reality of Alan's desire: the city he eventually walks out into. It is perhaps fitting, then, that when Alan eventually leaves the coach he does so "on the brow of a desolate hill."³⁴⁹ Having posited all reality as his work, all the street names, as well as the identities of people, buildings and even the moon, Alan departs the coach into the city which becomes the presentation of the truth of his substance: an empty place just outside the Manor Park Estate. Alan's appeals for the spectators to look out at the city are brought to a climax as he ventures out into this barren landscape in which they must now look for him -- and, as will be discovered, where they must also look for the substance of themselves.

Alan's departure into the reality beyond the coach's windows is an act of blocking together the fabricated with the found, and this sudden juxtaposition of seemingly disparate elements creates a tension, a vacillation, in the gaze of the spectators. As the spectators' attention is now drawn fully to the city outside the window, it becomes apparent that the identity of this phenomenon can be resolved only through the spectators' performance of its terms. In this respect, the identity of the city arises in each spectator's sense of indeterminacy, of doubt, with regard to the terms and limits

the Wicker. Slowly, mirroring each other, they approach the coach until they are about 10 metres away on either side. As these performers gradually emerge from otherwise undifferentiated events, they prompt readings and re-readings of what is seen, but always in relation to fictions which cannot adequately subsume or explain the complexity of that to which the spectators are witness.

See Kaye, "Site/Intermedia": 64.

³⁴⁹ Etchells, "A Note About Nights in This City," 3.

of that which is seen.³⁵⁰ The moment in which Alan leaves the coach marks a shift in the dramaturgy of the production which foregrounds the spectators' 'performance' of the terms of the work. As the Second Guide (Naden) takes over from Alan, she speaks to us from one of the coach's front seats, relatively unseen, and uses a microphone to complete the production's mapping narration. Quite deliberately now, the Second Guide becomes a soothing voice over the coach's sound system, as the spectators' focus is now entirely upon the reality outside the coach. Textually this shift occurs in that the Second Guide only once refers to the spectators as 'Ladies and gentlemen', otherwise every address begins with 'You'. Thus, the mapping narration of the Second Guide becomes something internal to the spectators' speculation about what is happening outside the coach's windows:

You are now very far from home... You wondered what it might be like, to disappear... That's the place where you first met someone, and that's the place where you fell out of love, and that's the place where your money got stolen and that's the place where you ran for a taxi and it wasn't raining, and there's a building you slept inside, once perhaps, or many times, and isn't this a street you used to live on, and weren't you always the person staring out the car window, watching the world like the movies, and weren't you always the one who'd travelled a long way, through the day and through the night...

Your flesh is night. You're as thin as death and you're sleeping and it's time to wake up.³⁵¹

As the coach descends from Sheffield's hill-top suburbia, toward the city's centre and its final destination at the Leadmill Road Bus Depot, the effect of the Second Guide's narration is a force which stimulates each spectator to posit their own affectivity of the reality which passes by their window. The immediacy of the action of the coach and the spectators' perception of this event creates an experience of

³⁵⁰ See Kaye, "Site/Intermedia": 66-67.

³⁵¹ Etchells, Nights in This City 15.

the city which overtakes any discursive representation which may master its meaning, and thus a space for sublime reflection emerges. At the point where these representational 'vehicles' meet, the participants in this event have the power of Lyotard's *novatio* sublime, to conceive and invent 'new rules of the game'; in this meeting there is a figural excess where each of these vehicles necessarily completes the other. Thus, the potential of Realization is discovered in that both reality and the performance can only be completed outside of the other, by the participants of the theatre event which brings them together. There can be no plenitude of essence in the city, as is the case with both performance and the subject, either in origin or finality, since that plenitude is fissured by its reliance on something that is exterior to it. In the 'work' of the spectators, as the performance affects them, there is a *différance* which flaws the identity performed, and thereby dispels any possibility of an illusion of a complete essence, either in performance or reality.

The mapping narratives used by Forced Entertainment create a theatre event between performers and spectators with dramaturgical strategies which de-centre the essence of the landscape or reality to be mapped. Here a series of representations, determined as part of a process of conscious subjectivity, are experienced as inter-subjective fantasy where they become the support to what is conventionally referred to as reality. Where the psychical and physical elements meet in the theatre event, as with reality, there exists energy potential: a force which empowers confrontation, vulnerability, and speculation between performer and spectator. Forced Entertainment explore the performative quality of this energy potential; at the limits of representation, they create a theatre event between the Idea and actuality of the reality they confess to or map with sublime narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRITH GOF

Heterotopia: The Site and Time of The Theatre Event

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilisation, real places -- places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society -- which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.³⁵²

When Michel Foucault envisaged 'heterotopia' he was thinking of a colony. Contrary to the usual connotations of the term, he conceived of a colony as a site for potential perfection, as a place of possibility and promise. For Mike Pearson, Associate Artistic Director of Brith Gof, Foucault's concept of heterotopia has been inspirational to his vision of Welsh cultural identity, and to what a theatre practice which embraces the heterotopian ideal might be. Since its beginning in 1981, Brith Gof has enjoyed a relationship of evolving sophistication with Welsh nationhood; while remaining firmly rooted in Welsh language, culture, and history, the company has effectively opened a space of "public reflexivity" around these actuals of identity, prompting Welsh and international audiences to experience the *liminality* which may be activated in such customs. Victor Turner has defined 'liminality' as "being-on-a-threshold", "a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes."³⁵³ Liminality emerges as the forms and customs which constitute cultural identity become pressurized; while respecting the way in which these practices define a

³⁵² Michel Foucault as quoted by Mike Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert," Performance Research, Volume One, Number One (Spring 1996): 6.

³⁵³ Victor Turner, "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality," Performance in Postmodern Culture, ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Madison, Wisconsin: Coda Press Inc., 1977) 33.

boundary and delineate a culture's unique status, it simultaneously marks this boundary as a site of discovery. Liminality reveals that a culture's "boundary is not that at which something stops but the location from which *something begins its presencing*."³⁵⁴ Here is a site full of potency and potentiality, experiment and play; it can be a play of ideas, of words, of symbols or metaphors, but most crucially of all it is a play of temporal process: a time not controlled by the clock, a time of enchantment when anything *might*, even should, happen. Brith Gof's pursuit of theatrical heterotopia concerns the way in which dramaturgy may open up this liminal experience; a meeting of the effects and potentiality of 'experiment and play' with the 'day-to-day' activities and sites found in Welsh culture.

For Pearson the liminal potentiality of theatrical heterotopia is born of *hybridity*. He has identified three specific facets to the hybridity constituted in Brith Gof's theatre practice, and how these relate to notions of identity -- his own identity, Welsh national identity, and the identity of theatre in Wales. Concerning the first, Pearson -- as with Brith Gof's other Associate Director, Clifford McLucas -- is an English immigrant to Wales. He has become fluent in the Welsh language and works in both. Commenting on the "tensions and uncertainties" of his immigrant status in "England's first colony", Pearson sees his personal experience as one of the origins of hybridity in Brith Gof's theatre: "the conflict of past and present, of wanting both to preserve [his] history and to belong to another; the desire to accept and embrace but also to question and refute the orthodoxies of [his] chosen land."³⁵⁵ The second hybrid relates to Wales as a colonial nation:

Like all colonies, Wales has a tradition of inventing itself. The creation of identities --

³⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger as quoted in Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge: 1994) 1.

³⁵⁵ Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert": 5.

personal, communal, national -- is a complex daily endeavour of negotiation and adjustment, of making choices between traditional and contemporary, religious and secular, indigenous and imported, minor and dominant, Welsh and English....³⁵⁶

The third hybrid pertains to theatre as a cultural institution in Wales. Wales has few indigenous theatre traditions; in absence of an orthodoxy, it appears an ideal location for theatrical heterotopia. Pearson and McLucas have often defined the Welsh context as one with its options still open; especially in comparison with the dramatic literature based orthodoxy of theatre in England. Pearson considers the absence of a normative style of theatre in Wales as a source of aesthetic celebration: "'Welsh theatre' [...] can fold together action, text, music, scenography, place and public into performance forms and manifestations with no parallel in England."³⁵⁷ Brith Gof's theatre approaches the heterotopian ideal because it is infused with these three hybrids; where they overlap and inform each other can be found a "practice fractured, problematic, unauthentic",³⁵⁸ and thus free to forge an identity as a creative process, not under the assumption of a series of given states.

Brith Gof's theatrical heterotopia becomes a theatre event for its spectators because it demands that the question of identity be determined by the spectators' performance of the dramaturgical elements of the work. Similar to the performative role played by the spectators in Forced Entertainment's Nights in This City, the hybrid quality of Brith Gof's dramaturgy creates a juxtaposition, a blocking together of conflicting elements, which generate a tension, a hesitancy in looking, and thereby in the spectators' experience of coming to terms with the concerns posed by the

³⁵⁶ Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert": 5.

³⁵⁷ Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert": 5.

³⁵⁸ Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert": 6.

work.³⁵⁹ Nick Kaye compares the theatre of Brith Gof to that of Forced Entertainment in his analysis of each company's use of dramaturgy which features "intermedia", a term Kaye borrows from Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, meaning a conceptual fusion in media of conventionally distinct elements.³⁶⁰ In the dramaturgy of both companies, intermedia has been devised using the "intrusion of everyday occurrences", the "debris of the street", or the indeterminate state of *found* sites, actions, or objects, alongside the *fabricated* strategies of performance.³⁶¹ For Brith Gof the quotidian nature of these 'found' elements establishes a direct, unambiguous basis for their exploration of Welsh culture. However, when juxtaposed with the 'fabricated' -- often abstract, exotic, or technological -- dramaturgical elements in performance, two primary effects materialize. First, as was discovered in the work of Forced Entertainment, the found elements provide a resistance to the formal resolution of the fabricated; the unpredictable characteristics of the found object or site subvert the signification strategies of the fabricated, and in this disruption there is a shift from *representation* to *presence*. By means of its indeterminate presence, the found fills out the void, the impossibility, of the signifying representation of the subject, and thereby is present as an excess to the strategies of signification.³⁶² Second, as this excess escapes discursive analysis of Welsh cultural identity, yet is a positive -- in this case, dramaturgical -- element of it, it demands a *process of re-consideration* of the found, of the found's identity, and the spectators' relationship to this identity. For sixteen years Brith Gof have created "a

³⁵⁹ See Nick Kaye, "Site/Intermedia," Performance Research, Volume One, Number One (Spring 1996): 66.

³⁶⁰ Kaye 63.

³⁶¹ Kaye 63.

³⁶² See Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (London: Verso, 1989) 207-209.

theatre which speaks of, and for, a distinct identity",³⁶³ but for Pearson and McLucas this identity is less an object of theatrical representation and more a process, an event where subjective relationships to identity are performatively explored. Out of the locations, objects, and folklore of the Welsh people, Brith Gof have created a theatre event which is at once a vision and a construction; that offers the spectators *ex-stasis*,³⁶⁴ taking them 'beyond' the known in order to return, and in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, confront the political conditions of the present.

-- Nationhood as a Temporal Space of the People --

In the dramaturgical hybrid between the found and fabricated elements of theatrical heterotopia, the process of re-consideration demanded of the spectator in relation to the real sites and objects of cultural identity is akin to the space of spectatorship examined in the previous two chapters. In the spectator's gaze of DV8's masculine identities, between the performing body and the psychical experience of what it is to be embodied, or the sublime space between the idea and actuality of the theatre of Forced Entertainment, the dramaturgical strategies of each company have opened up a liminal space between essence and appearance in theatrical representation. Homi Bhabha echoes Brith Gof's concerns that the interstitial quality of such a space is essential for an "art of the present", capable of coming to terms with the contemporary challenges to the *imagined* and *actual* community of people we call 'a nation'. For Bhabha this temporal space opens up a theoretically innovative and politically crucial public forum when national discourse may begin to think "beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the

³⁶³ Pearson, "The Dream in the Desert": 5.

³⁶⁴ See Chapter Three.

articulation of cultural differences."³⁶⁵ These "in-between" spaces provide a

terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood -- singular or communal -- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself... It is in the emergence of the interstices -- the overlap and displacement of domains of difference -- that the intersubjective and collective experience of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.³⁶⁶

Bhabha's concern is not to create a new discourse of nationalism; rather, he explores the potentiality of a national culture, where this 'in-between' terrain may emerge, as subjects are formed in excess of the sum of the 'parts' of their difference (usually intoned as race, class, or gender).³⁶⁷ He proposes a cultural construction of nationhood as a form of social and textual affiliation, which does not deny the specific histories and particular meanings of the different subjects who participate in this construction, but rather attempts to formulate a complex strategy of cultural identification and discursive address that exists as a liminal presence in-between these subjects, and functions in the name of 'the people'.

Bhabha conceives of 'the people' as existing within a range of discourses as a "double narrative movement", between those rooted in a pedagogy of the nation as an historical and political object of cultural tradition, and those which take up a performative subjectivity to this object, reflecting the continual state of change to the nation's given circumstances. This process of "double writing" is similar to Brith Gof's concept of hybridity in that it opens up a time of public reflexivity and a re-consideration of national identity. He says:

³⁶⁵ Bhabha 1.

³⁶⁶ Bhabha 1-2.

³⁶⁷ Bhabha 2, 140.

The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address. We then have a contested conceptual territory where the nation's people must be thought in double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as *contemporaneity*: as that *sign of the 'present' through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process* [my italics].³⁶⁸

Here the liminal "space of the people" emerges in the tension between signifying the people as an *a priori* historical entity, a 'found' pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the 'fabricated' performance of narrative.³⁶⁹ The liminality of the people's identity -- their double inscription as pedagogical objects and performative subjects -- demands a 'time' of narrative that is denied in the discourse of historicism where narrative is only the agency of an historical pedagogy, or the medium of a naturalistic continuity of community or tradition. Brith Gof's theatrical heterotopia opens up this temporal 'space of the people' through dramaturgical strategies which oblige the spectators to re-create their relationship to the pedagogical object of their past. Theatrical heterotopia thereby generates the present of the people's history, a process which undermines the static principles of a culture which can hark back nostalgically to a 'true' national past, usually represented in the reified forms of stereotype. Pedagogical knowledges and continuist national narratives miss the temporal factor of the space of the people because as an event in time it exists as an unaccountable excess, and therefore an *instability* to these

³⁶⁸ Bhabha 145.

³⁶⁹ See Bhabha 146-147.

forms of cultural signification. The theatre event for the spectators is activated as the dramaturgical strategies of theatrical heterotopia signify nationhood as a fluctuating instability in time, an entity which the joint efforts of the participants in the event must give shape to in the ephemeral moment of performance.

Brith Gof's theatre practice has always pursued this moment of performative presence, a temporal space of the people, wherein the issues surrounding Welsh nationhood may be explored through theatre. Over its nearly twenty-year existence, the company has developed a theoretical sophistication toward these issues, which can be traced back through several complex yet integrated evolutions in dramaturgy. The following analysis will attempt to touch upon three such evolutionary stages. First, a brief examination of the company's formative development in rural Wales will be made; wherein the basis and orientation for pivotal developments in the use of language, space, action, and also the representation of national identity through traditional forms of Welsh culture can be found in the creation of "Theatre In A Minority".³⁷⁰ Considering the effects of global influences upon this traditional culture's identity, and the company's efforts to create an international reputation for its work, the second stage of analysis focuses upon Brith Gof's renowned "Large Scale Site Specific Theatre Works",³⁷¹ taking as examples two such works from this period. The Third stage of the analysis considers a relatively recent "proto-theatrical"³⁷² initiative in the company's practice which places specific emphasis upon performer/spectator relationships, and thereby touches upon certain energies in

³⁷⁰ Mike Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority," quoted from a paper given at the *Congrés Interacional de Teatre a Catalunya*, 1985 in Brith Gof -- A Welsh Theatre Company, First Edition, *Promotional Booklet* (1981-85) 3.

³⁷¹ Clifford McLucas, Brith Gof -- Large Scale Site Specific Theatre Works, *An Illustrated Lecture* (1993).

³⁷² See Appendix Two.

the signification of national identity distinct from any of the other work. In each of these three stages various manifestations of theatrical heterotopia are seen to emerge. With each stage, however, there is a process of further exploration into the temporal space of the people as an ambivalence of disjunctive times and meanings in the definition of Welsh nationhood through a theatrical-representational apparatus. For Frantz Fanon this performative space of the people is intrinsically ephemeral and "always contemporaneous with the act of recitation." As the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities (e.g.: modern colonial, postcolonial, aboriginal) its understanding must of necessity be in the time of its occurrence; or as Fanon maintains, "in the ephemeral temporality inhabiting the space between the 'I have heard' and 'you will hear'."³⁷³ Perhaps not surprisingly, it was with a similar sense of communal directness, that Brith Gof began their pursuit of Welsh cultural identity in 1981.

-- Theatre of a Minority Nation --

When Pearson founded Brith Gof with Lis Hughes Jones,³⁷⁴ they chose to do so in Aberystwyth, on Wales' western coastline, surrounded by towns and villages populated by the last 20% of Welsh speakers left in the country. The two performers had become disillusioned with the increasingly abstract performance methods of the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre,³⁷⁵ and the decision to leave Cardiff for rural Wales was prompted by the allure of this region's distinct folk culture. Here unique patterns of cultural life are sustained by an array of traditional forms of work, worship, and play; for a young theatre company looking for a greater sense of authenticity in their performance, these customary patterns of

³⁷³ Frantz Fanon as quoted in Bhabha 152.

³⁷⁴ Hughes Jones left the company in 1992.

³⁷⁵ See Appendix Two.

work and communal organisation were a tremendous source of inspiration. In traditional Welsh culture, language has always played an integral role in the people's way of conceiving the world. As Pearson claims, the intrinsic status of language to the people's formation of a collective identity has given them a particular relationship to the world:

the culture maintains its strength and vibrancy through the love for and constant celebration of its own language. Of course, the language enshrines a very particular way of looking at the world. Many concepts colour everyday thinking: 'y filltir sgwar' -- the square mile of one's childhood, 'y fro' -- the intimate neighbourhood, 'cymorth' -- community self-help, and 'hiraeth' -- the nostalgic longing for one's native land. The continuity of such an ancient language gives an extraordinary link with the past. The political and cultural events of Wales' history become part of a collective memory. History is experienced as contemporaneous.³⁷⁶

As Brith Gof set about developing a theatre practice in Wales, "relevant and responsive to the perceptions, experience, aspirations and concerns of this linguistic minority culture",³⁷⁷ the company's primary concern seems to have been twofold: how is the value of cultural identity constituted through the Welsh language in this performative presence, and how may this 'value' be explored and developed through theatre practice?

The first step in the company's pursuit of Welsh cultural identity brought them to the two traditional sites of its celebration through the spoken word: the chapel and the *eisteddfod*,³⁷⁸ "the twin pillars of Welsh-speaking

³⁷⁶ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

³⁷⁷ Brith Gof -- A Welsh Theatre Company, First Edition, *Promotional Booklet* (1981-85) 2.

³⁷⁸ See Richard Morgan, Brith Gof -- Y LLYFYR GLAS -- 1988-1995, *Interview with Mike Pearson and Clifford McLucas* (Cardiff: Brith Gof, 1995) 9. The following definition is offered:

Eisteddfod (pl. *eisteddfodau*) is a Welsh language cultural gathering held throughout Wales, throughout the year, and culminating

society."³⁷⁹ Both institutions have been formative in Brith Gof's creation of theatre; in the early years Pearson and Hughes Jones made effective use of not only the unique performance forms they encountered but also some of the ways in which these institutions created bonds between the people of their respective communities. As Brith Gof's first audiences covered a widely distributed population, in communities remote from the tours of regional theatre companies, often performances would occur within the context of a local religious gathering. In rural Wales the chapel is a vital community forum and foundation for the Welsh language. Thanks to the work of Sunday Schools, the translation of the Bible and related programmes, the church can be credited with a key role in preventing the extinction of the Welsh language. Indeed, over the past two centuries, this institution has been instrumental in the flowering of the language in many forms of religious singing and preaching -- all with their own distinct forms of delivery. Here Pearson offers an example of a technique called *hwyl*: "the preacher becomes deeply involved in the scripture and in his own oratory, so his voice begins to sing and the words form a pattern of music."³⁸⁰ For Brith Gof the chapel suggested a variety of techniques of oratory, from the mesmerising delivery of text, to various forms of singing and chant.

Brith Gof's earliest work was based upon Welsh myths and legends. This provided a rich body of material, popularly known through the poetry of the *eisteddfod*, to which the

in the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* -- the National *Eisteddfod* -- an itinerant festival alternating between locations in north and south Wales. The *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* is claimed to be the largest annual cultural gathering in Europe.

³⁷⁹ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

³⁸⁰ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

company could bring new techniques of animation.³⁸¹ From their tenure at the Cardiff Lab, Pearson and Hughes Jones brought the physical theatre methods of Jerzy Grotowski. Pearson envisioned a "poor theatre" -- "relying on the passion, commitment and physical and vocal resources of the actor"³⁸² -- uniting with the equally impassioned traditional culture of the Welsh linguistic minority. Indeed, in this hybrid there developed a Grotowskian physicality astutely attuned to the perceptions and experience of the audience. Performing to audiences for whom naturalistic acting conventions were of remote significance, the performers became fully three-dimensional figures; their engagement in the processes of work and the delights of play found its expression in a non-demonstrative form of performance. 'Staged' movement often resulted from patterns of work, such as sawing wood, washing shirts, or cutting stakes, which took the place of action suited to the proscenium arch. While these productions found their inspiration in the songs, music, and poetry of traditional Welsh culture, performances were the work of fabricating physical expression and visual imagery to extend the contemporaneous presence of the language to the spectators. Pearson describes the challenges of this hybrid association the following way:

We are drawn naturally to a theatre of physical expression and visual imagery. Yet the Welsh are a verbal not a visual people. To create the visual dimension in our work we have looked in two directions. On the one hand our props are the implements and simple possessions of rural peoples manipulated in unexpected ways to create strong and

³⁸¹ It is important to note here that Brith Gof's development of some of the *eisteddfod*'s forms of verbal performance through physical techniques was in part a response to the inflexibility and indeed ossified nature which has overcome these forms over many generations of competitive presentation. Although the *eisteddfod* has been an essential arena for the perpetuation of Welsh culture through performance, its competitive nature exercises a stranglehold on innovation and supports for the most part naive levels of dramaturgy.

³⁸² Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 5.

eloquent metaphors; our physical rhythms are the rhythms of work, play, and worship, mutated, given new emphasis.³⁸³

At the limits of the spectators' perception of these quotidian objects, actions, and daily rhythms, there exists an 'unexpected' mutation: a liminality where contemporaneous discoveries can be made through the play of metaphor. The liminality generated in this hybrid between verbal and visual elements invites a *synesthetic*³⁸⁴ response from the spectators. The perception of 'synesthesia' is comparable to perceiving a sensation in one part of the body when another part is stimulated; thus, the poems and songs of Welsh folklore are here meant to stimulate certain passions about the everyday objects and actions of the people.

In the hybrid between the visual and the vocal signification of Welsh cultural identity there emerges a space for public reflexivity toward the 'found' elements which make up this hybrid. The origins of Pearson's theatrical heterotopia can be seen to appear as Brith Gof's theatre practice brings together the pedagogical elements of the Welsh language, its history and folklore, with the visual familiarity of everyday physical actions and objects which become altered in the metaphorical fabrications of the performance. The meeting of the spectators' Real³⁸⁵ experiences of traditional myths and legends with the real objects, actions, and images of their daily lives opens up a performative subjectivity in their relation to both elements of this hybridity. The potential for a theatre event with the

³⁸³ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 5.

³⁸⁴ See Chapter Two.

³⁸⁵ This is a reference to Jacques Lacan's definition of the 'Real', which is identified -- as in Chapters Three and Four -- with a capital 'R'. The experience the Welsh people have of their myths and legends is Real in that although the perception of this experience may not exist as a positive entity in reality it exercises a certain structural causality which produces a series of real effects in the symbolic reality of these people.

spectators, where this performative act becomes a process of constituting cultural identity, is an extension of the performative presence Pearson discovered in the people's experience of the oratory in the chapel and at the *eisteddfod*. Indeed, the extension of this presence to the potential reinvention of the spectators' relationship to Welsh traditional culture creates a kind of excess or surplus value in the signification of cultural identity. This 'surplus value' is created when, in a time not accounted for by pedagogy or historical discourse, the fabricated hybrid of vocal and visual elements creates an unstable, *figural*³⁸⁶ effect which is necessary to, yet cannot be fully represented by the signification of cultural identity.

It was not long before Brith Gof's theatrical exploration of the Welsh heartland brought the company into contact with how this surplus value of the people's cultural identity was under threat; in many ways a threat as old as the country's identity as 'a former colony of the British Empire'.³⁸⁷ Yet, in the 1980s, Pearson found himself increasingly captivated by what he describes as "a subject to which [he was] perversely privileged to witness: the forces of cultural destruction and the loss of tradition."³⁸⁸ Pearson realised that his theatre practice could offer new insights. His understanding of the role of the people in the creation of traditional Welsh culture stimulated Brith Gof's development of a 'theatre of a minority nation' wherein the Welsh linguistic minority, feeling increasingly disenfranchised from the events in their country, were invited to play a major role.

³⁸⁶ See Chapter Two.

³⁸⁷ Stretching back for many generations are the shared beliefs in opposition to bureaucratic intervention from the country's powerful neighbour. For many years campaigns of passive resistance and civil disobedience, to preserve language rights and adequate social services, have involved substantial numbers of the population in direct forms of political action.

³⁸⁸ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

Brith Gof endeavoured to achieve greater audience involvement in their productions by two fundamental means. First, the company resolutely situated its work outside what Pearson referred to as "the 'entertainment and leisure' industry with its demands for saleable product and good seats."³⁸⁹ The company understood that its audience was "specific and finite", and for the most part attended a Brith Gof production because it was a "Welsh language event"; their attendance was clearly in "political support for the language of which the performance [was] an affirmation."³⁹⁰ The company had an intimate connection with its audiences, which often included relatives of the performers, and individuals who could remember specific events being portrayed in the performance. Audiences were of wide age span and social background, but thanks to institutions like the *eisteddfod* they possessed a certain collective consciousness about Welsh history and folklore which the company could take for granted. While this meant that productions could take advantage of a certain level of appreciation and sensitivity toward particular allusions and imagery, it also meant an expectation of "a far greater degree of criticism," as Pearson explains:

Our audiences are not faceless; we may know many of them by name. We cannot present them with abstractions and we cannot insult them. And we must be careful how we criticise our own society lest we damage it further.³⁹¹

Second, the company's experience of touring productions to remote settlements, where theatre was practically unknown, necessitated inventive and culturally perceptive alliances with the people of these settlements -- often through the environments in which they lived. Most productions before 1985 were designed with modular staging and seating units capable of fitting into a variety of venues. This meant varying

³⁸⁹ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

³⁹⁰ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

³⁹¹ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 3.

audience/performer relationships, but typically the audience encircled the performance space and this ensured an intimate relationship between performers and spectators, which was a prevailing objective of these productions. The experience of adapting the staging of numerous productions to the spatial and social criteria of chapels, town centres, barns, and cattle markets across Wales marked the beginning of a pivotal development in Brith Gof's dramaturgy and its relationship to the site of performance. The company began devising performances for special locations as a celebration of the architecture which certain 'sites' possessed, and through the performative engagement of the spectators, an attempt was made to explore the surplus value of the places where rural communities worked, played, or worshipped.

Celebrated productions of this period include: Ann Griffiths (1983-85), which was devised for rural chapels. This solo presentation by Lis Hughes Jones of the letters and poems of this young woman, swept up by the religious revival at the turn of the 18th Century, was set to the old hymn tunes and folk melodies which were so much a part of her conversion to a spiritual path, and of her symbolic significance to the devout in rural Wales. The production was performed for congregations of parishioners often over 60 years of age, and for whom the concept of theatre had little meaning. Gernika! (1983) was staged in the large open area of a modern barn in Anglesey. Based on Pablo Picasso's famous painting, the performance featured pieces of agricultural machinery used to reconstruct events of the lives of simple rural villagers, and the effect of a bombing on their community. The open areas of this space allowed the company to use procession, dances, and the mass movement of performers and group imagery as effective elements in the performance structure. Rhydcymerau (1984) was similar to Gernika! in that it made use of a playing space which was once a site of physical labour and, like the barn in Anglesey, offered the company many unorthodox options for staging and action. Rhydcymerau was devised and performed in a disused cattle market and, as Pearson comments, it was a

location appealingly "free from rules of decorum and prudence"³⁹² associated with conventional theatre spaces. For Pearson this space, its history, and the audience who would be familiar with it as a place of work, provided an opportunity to use dramaturgical strategies rarely -- if ever -- used in purpose built theatre buildings. In Rhydcymerau two carpenters worked throughout the performance, their sawing and hammering counterpointed the pattern of poems and stories told and sung about a local community killed through outside bureaucracy and the enforced buying of land for afforestation. Here there was a blurring of the distinction between work and performance: during the 60-minute performance, the two carpenters took a felled tree and made a wooden box out of it, and this turned out to be a coffin for the residents of this doomed community. The impact of such a direct dramaturgical form upon the audience is reflected in the following comments made by Dafydd Elis Thomas, M.P.³⁹³ about Brith Gof's theatre at this time:

The most political thing about their work is its form. By working in a very direct, material way, audiences are compelled to experience the events. It is not complicated symbols that they make, but clear unambiguous material signs.

They have evolved a style of working which makes them at once the most adventurous, and accessible to audiences of all alternative theatre groups working in Wales.³⁹⁴

In Rhydcymerau the direct, material effects of the use of site, tools, and actions are juxtaposed with the poems and stories of two major Welsh writers, D.J. Williams and Gwenallt. The hardship and loss at the heart of these narratives impart a figural quality of Welsh identity which cannot be justly represented by historical discourse; Brith Gof's development of a dramaturgical hybrid between these

³⁹² Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 4.

³⁹³ Now Lord Elis Thomas.

³⁹⁴ Dafydd Elis Thomas as quoted in Brith Gof -- A Welsh Theatre Company, First Edition, *Promotional Booklet* (1981-85) 1.

narratives and the elements of the spectators' everyday lives opens a liminal space of reflection demanded by this figural quality. The emotional void created by what is spoken is filled out by what Thomas describes as the 'clear unambiguous material signs' of daily existence; however, as these signs become a positivisation of the language's hardship they furthermore take on a *psychical materiality* in their effects upon the spectators. A surplus value to the signification of cultural identity is created through the spectators' performative response to the effects of this psychical materiality; the ephemerality of this response is annulled by being made an object of historical or semiotic analysis. Thus, an *incommensurability* is created between the spectators' performative response to the experience of the theatre event and any representation that might be made of it. The effects of psychical materiality extend the figural quality of Welsh identity so that it becomes radically irreducible to matters of meaning that might be *exchanged* through discursive representation. In the impact of this psychical materiality upon the spectators, activated in the ephemeral moment of the event by Brith Gof's dramaturgical hybrid, there emerges an *essence* of Welsh cultural identity in the surplus value of signification.

Between 1983 and 1985 Brith Gof's exploration into this 'essence' of Welsh cultural identity extended beyond rural Wales, and perhaps ironically beyond the borders of the Welsh nation. Through collaborative projects with theatre companies in continental Europe, Brith Gof's dramaturgy evolved to accommodate sites and audiences of other 'minority' nations, and the result stimulated strategies for how theatre practice may engage spectators in the signification of cultural identity as a regenerative process, capable of contending with the pressures of change and hardship. Joint efforts were pursued with five theatre companies, including *Farfa*, an international theatre group based in Denmark, and *Osmego Dnia* (Theatre of the Eighth Day) in Poland. These projects brought Brith Gof exposure across Europe, and the

company soon established loyal followings outside Wales, especially in Poland. Despite the presence of a growing international audience, the company continued to strive for the same intimate relationship with spectators and their environments which they had developed in rural Wales. Piotr Kuzinski, who reviewed several Brith Gof productions in Warsaw at this time, offers this insight into the company's growing appeal among other audiences in the world:

Their performances speak of the problems of disinheritance and search for one's identity in this fast changing world. They are connected also by the mythical treatment of reality which enables the Welshmen to actualise the story presented, to find continuity between today and the past. It may well be that this feature of Brith Gof's work is responsible for their popularity outside Wales. Universality conjoined with strong national feelings determine the main value of this theatre company.³⁹⁵

Kuzinski acknowledges Pearson's intention to present historical events in such a way that they may be experienced as contemporaneous by the spectators. Moreover, there is an effect generated by the directness of Brith Gof's dramaturgical use of elements from their own culture which allow for a precise treatment of feelings of anxiety and loss over change to traditional ways of life, felt by people across Europe.

In productions like Ymfudwyr (Emigrants) (1983-85) Brith Gof could explore a subject with a particular place in the history of the Welsh people: the hopes, fears, and dreams of Welsh emigrants waiting at Ellis Island for entry into the United States. Yet the company's dramaturgical form, and its emphasis upon the specific actions and objects of these displaced rural folk, found an assured resonance in other European cultures facing the same pressures. Kuzinski's review of the performance of Ymfudwyr in Warsaw describes how Brith Gof's dramaturgical strategies work from particular quotidian

³⁹⁵ Piotr Kuzinski as quoted in Brith Gof -- A Welsh Theatre Company, First Edition, *Promotional Booklet* (1981-85) 5.

elements to create a liminal space of potential recognition and engagement with the people of other 'minority' nations:

The value of Ymfudwyr lies in the fact that it is possible through listening to one of the oldest of Celtic languages, to find certain timeless figures of the human fate... The immense force of the picture, carrying the universal truths, makes the Brith Gof production comprehensible in spite of the language barrier... There is the Kodak camera that enables the family to 'immortalise' themselves in the picture, or a gramophone which in the dramatic moment of the play draws the family into a frenetic dance. And the sensual devouring of the forgotten peach when there is no food... And the selling to one another the postcards with the landscapes of their native land which turns into a kind of a passionate stock-market auction... And dividing the banknote into four useless pieces to have enough to go around... All of these scenes are extremely material in their essence, enacted with scrupulous attention paid to the reality of the props, liberating the honesty of the actors' actions...³⁹⁶

The signification of cultural identity reveals the *presencing* of a surplus value as pedagogical objects of a culture's past are acted upon in such a way as to open up their performative re-consideration by the spectators. In the creation of a theatre event with the spectators, a dimension of Welsh cultural identity is ventured which is capable of celebrating the struggles and pressures of change. The liminal space created through the fabrications of dramaturgy, at the limit of these found objects of folklore, is where the surplus value of cultural signification coincides with a dimension of performative subjectivity on the part of the people.

-- Large Scale Site Specific Theatre Events --

By the late 1980s, Brith Gof's international tours and collaborations inspired change in the company's dramaturgical approach to the actualization of theatrical heterotopia as a workable theatre practice. The company's dramaturgy could now demonstrate how traditional forms were capable of embracing

³⁹⁶ Kuzinski 8.

the exotic, provided the common roots were still evident.³⁹⁷ The found elements of traditional Welsh culture could be 'simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' with cultural elements from around the world through the fabrication of dramaturgical strategies. Brith Gof's experience abroad stimulated the need for change, a re-orientation of the company's approach toward the traditional Welsh culture from which it originated; there were two fundamental aspects to this change. The first pertained to the company's concern about the isolation of the traditional culture, and of the rural people's relationship to the rest of the world. Reinforcing Brith Gof's perceived need for greater international scope in their work at this time, Thomas describes the Welsh context from the perspective of the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl:

One of the most significant changes to have affected the Welsh in recent years has been Chernobyl. There are still Welsh farmers who cannot sell their radioactive sheep. It's brought a great awareness to Welsh consciousness that we must no longer isolate ourselves against issues. It's not enough to see ourselves as isolated.³⁹⁸

Pearson now endeavoured to develop a theatre practice in Wales which might address the negotiation of cultural identity in a world of continual technological and political change. Whereas at one time Brith Gof would have supported the passive resistance integral to this isolationism, the company's international experience had encouraged the need to explore the challenges posed by the energies of such change, and to do so in the dramaturgical form of their work.

This brings up the second aspect of Brith Gof's transformation at this time. Pearson sensed that "the 'well made' performance in a community venue had become the

³⁹⁷ Pearson, "Theatre in a Minority" 5.

³⁹⁸ Dafydd Elis Thomas as quoted in Gordon Murray, Brith Gof: Bigger Images for Minority Theatre, Diss. (King Alfred's College, 1991) 52.

beginning and end of current theatre practice"³⁹⁹ in Wales because it was becoming too parochial and too prevalent. Rather than engaging with the contemporaneous energy, which had motivated Brith Gof's theatre practice from the start, Pearson feared that Welsh theatre had become too comfortable in the pedagogical forms of folklore and tradition, and was in danger of becoming ensconced in a 'theatre of a minority nation' orthodoxy. In response to the threat of cultural isolationism and the growth of a folkloric orthodoxy in Welsh theatre, Brith Gof's dramaturgy developed a radical orientation toward "scale" in performance, as Pearson explains:

One very strong reason for trying to make a piece of work 'at scale', was simply my feeling that all of theatre practice in Wales was being defined by what you could get in the back of a Transit van! Not only was it defining the material of theatre, but also the aspirations as well. Something you could prepare in 3 hours, do it, put it all in the van and go home, which in one way is an admirable way of working in a country of scattered communities, and this is what Brith Gof did for the first 7 or 8 years of its life. [...] We were working in a political climate at that time where there were very, very few voices of resistance at any kind of scale at all.⁴⁰⁰

In terms of dramaturgical form, when Pearson refers to 'scale' he is describing the size but also the intensity of the theatre event's elements; he is referring to a scale of sound and action which have developed from a particular use of *site*. This was the beginning of Clifford McLucas's distinctive influence on the company's scenography; his innovative approach to 'site' and the effects of scale offered Brith Gof the 'space' to explore the liminal presence of identity. Coming from an architectural background, McLucas had been inspired by some of Brith Gof's earlier site-specific performances, and how the company could create a hybrid between traditional forms and "an entirely alien set of

³⁹⁹ Morgan 8.

⁴⁰⁰ Morgan 8-9.

theatrical practices."⁴⁰¹ Excited by the vitality that such a theatrical hybridity could bring to orthodox cultural forms, McLucas began to envision this hybrid "on the scale of architecture or of landscape",⁴⁰² and how such a performance might utilize resources and phenomena which would have been impossible in either conventional forms of theatre production or those of traditional Welsh culture.

McLucas's first major design⁴⁰³ for Brith Gof was Gododdin (1988), performed in a disused Rover car factory at the Cardiff docks. His formal innovations to scenography are significant for the way they generated fundamental changes in the company's dramaturgy, but also in how these innovations altered the relationship between the performance event and Welsh cultural identity. Pearson explains:

It was Cliff's arrival that gave a very, very different kind of grip on site, architecture and notion of performance in non-theatrical spaces... I think the key moment for me came with Gododdin, when Cliff produced the designs, and he'd made a formal architectural address to that site using a repertoire of materials, whereas I thought he would build dioramas, scattered around a large space upon which we would do fragments of the story of the Gododdin. He didn't do that, but built another architecture in the existing architecture, and because we were also building an architecture of sound -- because through working with Hardware House, we were able to think about sound as a dynamic medium, we could move sound across and around the space, we could place sound in different areas in the room -- then that had big repercussions for me in terms of physical action. The physical action could not just tell a story within these other formalities which were beginning to be constituted in a very different way, these were not

⁴⁰¹ Morgan 10.

⁴⁰² McLucas 1.

⁴⁰³ It should be noted that McLucas adamantly refuses to use the words 'theatre design' or 'design' to describe his scenography. His work is a deliberate attempt to break from the what he views as the stoical artifice of conventional theatre design. In his practice he has found an uneasy relationship with the production processes of conventional theatre. See Morgan 52.

the backgrounds for a theatre narrative to unfold. The physical performance therefore had to find its equivalent, perhaps much more schematic, where the audience were watching the symptoms of physical performers exposed to increasingly difficult physical conditions for instance, as opposed to watching what they chose to tell us. Beginning to understand that physical performance wasn't doing everything in this thing, equally being free to begin to use performance techniques and technologies which would be impossible, and possibly illegal within the auditorium.⁴⁰⁴

The sheer scale of the site's found elements provided a resistance to any kind of formal resolution of the fabricated. The uncertain characteristics of such a large site could be seen to subvert the signification strategies of the fabricated, and in this subversion there was a shift from representation to presence. Indeed, McLucas has suggested that the scenographic environment of a large scale site specific work maintains an identity all its own:

Pieces of work like Gododdin are operating within architectures that are not backdrops. They're not kind of 'at the service of' in any sense, in the sense of being seemly towards the performer or the story or something like that. They've got a kind of parallel identity of their own. They're real places, you know, Gododdin had real trees, real oil drums, real cars, and I think that introduces into the heart of the theatrical discourse, a whole array of questions about reality and pretence for instance, which I think theatre has big problems with.⁴⁰⁵

Following the discussion of Jean-François Lyotard's theatrical-representational apparatus in previous chapters, here McLucas's scenography calls into question the customary 'theological' quality of theatrical representation. The use of found elements such as trees, oil drums, cars, and water in a fabricated way which emphasizes their indeterminate qualities as real objects subverts theatrical representation wherein the real is reduced to a representation for a subject. The spectators of Gododdin were standing among the action, and in

⁴⁰⁴ Morgan 43-44.

⁴⁰⁵ Morgan 46.

their proximity to a space which must have felt more like a building site than a *mise en scène*; their relationship to the action and objects was real and direct, as Pearson and McLucas explain:

Pearson: In our work we always use the real thing. If it's a brick it's a brick, so if it's flying at you..., that's one of the things an audience knows and realises about our work. Curiously though at the beginning I think they didn't. Very often in Gododdin, we'd run around with a barrel, or swing a tyre on the end of a rope, and they'd think this is not a tyre...

McLucas: This isn't going to hit me.

Pearson: Because this is theatre, this isn't going to hit me, and I'm sure it comes from that sort of perception of things.

McLucas: But I think the audience does get to know very soon. I mean when that old man walked into that shed where we were doing Gododdin, he realised there was something going on here that was real, it was a lot like a building site, it was a lot like a civil engineering works, he knew the place was real and you could tell he sensed that it was a danger... he didn't come in through the door very far. Now I think that is an enormously powerful thing for an audience, when they walk into a space like that, and they think, 'this is real, it's actually cold here, I've got to come in a coat and wrap up', I think it rewrites all of the contracts in a very exciting way really.⁴⁰⁶

McLucas's scenography marks a radical departure from conventional theatre practice in many ways,⁴⁰⁷ but perhaps most significantly in that representation is not based on an absent entity, privileged, as Geoffrey Bennington observes, by "its being placed out of reach, beyond representation as

⁴⁰⁶ Morgan 53.

⁴⁰⁷ The scenography incorporated six performers (4 men, 2 women), real trees, 40 wrecked cars, 200 tons of sand, a lake, 150 fluorescent tubes, and 100 oil drums. The audience was standing and moving among the action. See Morgan 8 and 12-14.

posited within representation."⁴⁰⁸ In Gododdin the fabricated use of found objects marks an excess in theatrical representation for the spectator when the real emerges as an indeterminate 'presence' in the theatre event.

Gododdin was devised from the 6th Century Celtic poem *Y Gododdin*, which is thought to have been written by the poet Aneirin. The poem is the earliest in the Welsh language, and it tells the story of 300 Celtic warriors who mounted an attack on 100,000 Angles (the English army at this time). *Y Gododdin* records the assembly of these Celtic noblemen, their preparation for war, and their final defeat at *Catraeth* (Catterick). The poem records and celebrates an event in Celtic history which was a total disaster; "it is an elegy for slain heroes and an eulogy of their excellence and bravery as fighting men."⁴⁰⁹ The production of Gododdin was essentially an enactment of the poem, in nine stages, including: the assembly of the warriors, working themselves into a fighting fury, the journey to the enemy, the battle, a lament and epilogue. As with the poetry in Rhydcymerau, *Y Gododdin* is a narrative of devastating loss, and of heroism in the face of this defeat; the poem attempts to represent an event in Celtic history which exists as an 'excess' to historical representation. This excess exists on a psychological level with respect to Welsh identity, through the signification of *Y Gododdin*. It marks a surplus value identified by Jacques Lacan as the *objet petit a*:

we search in vain for it in positive reality because it has no positive consistency, that is, because it is just a positivisation of a void -- of a discontinuity opened in reality by the emergence of the

⁴⁰⁸ Geoffrey Bennington, Lyotard: Writing The Event (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 14.

⁴⁰⁹ Brith Gof and Test Dept., Gododdin Programme Notes (Cardiff, 1988).

signifier.⁴¹⁰

The positivisation of the *objet petit a* created by the oration of *Y Gododdin* is juxtaposed by the indeterminate materiality of the performance's physical elements; through dramaturgical fabrication, the excess of theatrical representation meets the excess of historical representation. The indeterminate materiality fills out the void which functions as the object-cause of desire in the poem, and in this respect, the physical elements of the site, and the action which goes on within it, take on a psychical materiality for the spectators. It is through the effects of this psychical materiality that the spectators may performatively experience the Real⁴¹¹ 'presence' of the battle of Gododdin. The dramaturgical hybrid between physical and psychical elements which Brith Gof use in the creation of Gododdin opens a liminal experience of this historical event for the spectators. Here the real physical materiality of this momentous incident in the history of the Welsh people takes on a psychical materiality through the ephemeral effects of the theatre event; the response of the spectators to these effects fosters a performative reconsideration of this event and its relationship to identity.

Gododdin toured across Europe. It was performed in a working sand quarry in Italy, a disused crane factory in Germany, an ice hockey stadium in the Netherlands, and a disused tram repair shed in Scotland. While the tour supported

⁴¹⁰ Jacques Lacan as quoted in Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology xiv. See the discussion of the *objet petit a* as it relates to the dramaturgy of DV8 Physical Theatre in Chapter Three.

⁴¹¹ Lacan's notion of the 'Real' is complex; here it can be considered the foundation for the process of signification. The Real precedes the symbolic order and is subsequently structured by it when it gets caught in its network of signification. According to Lacan, signification is the process which mortifies, drains off, empties, or carves the fullness of the Real. Thus, the Real can also be found in the remainder, the 'excess', which escapes signification, and is as such produced by signification itself. See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 164-169.

Brith Gof's urge to find an international voice for Welsh culture, the performance resonated in slightly different ways with each culture, and in Germany this had negative consequences. A brief examination of the performances in Glasgow and in Hamburg will show that varying audience reception can be attributed to the psychical effects of scale and site specificity. Similar to the company's earlier work, the action of Gododdin was task-based. Although at scale these tasks were performed with a greater degree of skill and sophistication, the orientation of these actions was still clear in relation to familiar practices of work and endurance. During the stages of preparation for battle, the performers would move large oil drums, or in a particular sequence of the enacted battle the performers climbed rope ladders while being sprayed by high pressure hoses. Pearson has argued that while the spectacle of danger in performing such actions does exist, this effect upon the spectators works alongside the allure of familiarity:

These actions are still identifiable, people in Glasgow who had worked with fire and water and earth were not overcome by the spectacle of seeing naked torsos next to these things, they knew it, it brought them into the action.⁴¹²

In Glasgow there were definite affinities for the spectators concerning the dignity of hard, physical labour; those who knew the heavy industry which had taken place in the site would have made this connection and been affected by the performance's psychical materiality. Moreover, at the end of the 1980s, the political contemporaneity of the battle for self-determination, the growth and celebration of native languages and culture, made for a harmony of Celtic concern in Welsh and Scottish audiences. Angus Farquhar, from the Test Department, the industrial rock band from Scotland who collaborated with Brith Gof on Gododdin, commented about the political importance of the work in the Scottish press at this time:

⁴¹² Pearson as quoted in Murray 47.

There's been a feeling that Thatcher has shifted the ground so far that you have to deal with things on her terms. Gododdin aims to show that even in defeat you can look for dignity and strength in your situation, from which to build up into the future. It's very much about confidence. In a broader sense it's about confidence in your own culture, and it's about Wales and Scotland building up their own cultural links with Europe in the run up to 1992.⁴¹³

In Glasgow and Cardiff Gododdin enjoyed a specific pedagogical context from which a liminal space was generated where the spectators could performatively confront certain real elements of their political and historical identities. Here the Real psychical elements of the battle, traditionally effaced by historical representation, could be experienced for all their intensity, and the better understanding of the event they offered. In the ephemeral moment of the theatre event, the spectators could grasp their Celtic identity -- Welsh or Scottish -- in a fluctuating process to which they had just given shape. The event opened a liminal time which problematized the teleological traditions of past and present, and the polarized historicist sensibility of the archaic and the modern. Thatcher notwithstanding, this was not simply an attempt to invert the balance of power within an unchanged order of discourse. Gododdin's theatrical heterotopia can be seen as an attempt to redefine a signification process through which the Celtic imaginary -- nation, culture, community -- becomes the subject of discourse, and the object of psychic identification.⁴¹⁴

In contrast to the performances in Cardiff and Glasgow, the production of Gododdin in Hamburg connected with a pedagogical context which was problematic for Brith Gof's

⁴¹³ Angus Farquhar as quoted in Murray 48. Farquhar's mention of '1992' is a reference to the commencement of the E.R.M., the Exchange Rate Mechanism, which was one of the more significant steps toward the planned economic and cultural unification of the European countries which make up the European Economic Community.

⁴¹⁴ See Julia Kristeva and Fanon as quoted in Bhabha 152-155.

intentions. Much of the German audience read the performance as a glorification of war, not of resistance and of the dignity in defeat. An examination of various aspects of the production's semiology demonstrates the probable cause of this antagonistic reception. Beginning with notes in the programme, Brith Gof is introduced as a company "talk[ing] in a strange language about history, about preoccupations, about an experience, about fears far from the mainstream in European culture"; offering "a theatre which uses natural materials because they are the fabric of Y FAMWLAD/THE NATIVE LAND [Brith Gof's emphasis]."⁴¹⁵ Not surprisingly, this mission statement resonated contemporaneously with the romantic addresses made to the German people in the 1930s in support of Hitler's National Socialism, and ultimately the Nazi cause; where the "mission" and "fate" of the German people was to be found in a historical quest for "the power that most deeply preserves the people's strengths, which can be tied to earth and blood."⁴¹⁶ No doubt the distressing effect of this parallel was reinforced by the performance's imagery; when, for example, the fourth stage of the narrative introduces the act of "Beserking", the process whereby the warriors "Work themselves up into a fighting fury."⁴¹⁷ While this powerfully violent choreography is based on specific evidence that Celtic

⁴¹⁵ Brith Gof and Test Dept., *Gododdin Programme Notes* (Polverigi, Hamburg, Frÿslan, Glasgow, 1989).

⁴¹⁶ This quotation has been taken from Martin Heidegger's controversial "Rectorship Address" to the University of Freiburg on May 27, 1933. The central issue of Heidegger's address concerns the interplay between the individual, particularly the teacher and student, and the historical and spiritual mission of the German people. It is generally believed that in this address Heidegger capitulated to the views of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party, and provided a necessary intellectual justification for the party's political programme, which led to the atrocities of the Nazi regime.

See Arnold I. Davidson ed., "Symposium on Heidegger and Nazism," *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (Winter 1989): 412.

⁴¹⁷ Brith Gof and Test Dept., *Gododdin Programme Notes* (1989).

warriors did in fact induce a state of fighting frenzy through self-violation, it is not surprising that in the given context these actions would have touched too raw a memory of violence and violation in the name of a national cause. Perhaps the feeling of friction between the German historical context and the performative effects of Gododdin is best summed up in the words of this English reviewer at the Hamburg performance: "the torches and nordic paganism [came] a touch too close to the Nazi summer festivals for German comfort."⁴¹⁸

Beyond the semiology of the Hamburg performance, the antagonism towards Gododdin was no less Real a response than the enthusiasm in Scotland and Wales. However negative, this audience reaction offered an important understanding to the psychical effectiveness of Brith Gof's current approach to theatrical practice. Perhaps the Hamburg performance demonstrated poor judgement on the company's part in terms of 'who' the audience should be for this production, but paradoxically it also demonstrated the power of their work. The production's friction with the historical context of its German audience offered insight into the potential effects of antagonism between participants in the theatre event. The impossibility of certain exchanges between cultures, and the very Real effects of this impossibility as it becomes 'embodied' in the cultural identity of subjects, was to emerge as an instrumental concern in Pearson's development of a proto-theatrical form in the 1990s. For McLucas Gododdin was just the beginning of his concept of large scale site specific performance; over the next three years, Brith Gof's theatre practice would develop an increasingly sophisticated address to site, and from this the spectators' existence within this site would become a more integrated part of the work's creation.

Haearn, which in English means 'iron', was produced at the site of an old British Coal iron works in Tredegar, South Wales in 1992. It was Brith Gof's third large scale site

⁴¹⁸ Mark Sinker as quoted in Murray 49.

specific work, and to date it still represents the company's most refined address to site. Whereas Gododdin featured sites which were chosen primarily for their large size, availability, and "non-theatreness", the particular building chosen for Haearn provided a site where history, location, political and industrial ownership all resonated throughout the work.⁴¹⁹ The production was commissioned as part of a cultural festival in the South Wales valleys, and it developed from a theme which emerged from the site: the creation of 'industrial' man during the industrial revolution. While working on Pax,⁴²⁰ Brith Gof's second large scale site

⁴¹⁹ Morgan 48-49.

⁴²⁰ Pax received productions at St. David's Hall, Cardiff (1990), the British Rail Station, Aberystwyth (1991), and outside Wales at the Harland and Wolff Shipbuilding shed in Glasgow, Scotland (1991). It was a piece which explored the issue of environmental degradation to the planet. While this work explored an international problem, it maintained its Welsh identity through a libretto based upon letters Lis Hughes Jones created between a Welsh astronaut, returning to Earth to see his mother. Despite the distance in years and the distance in miles an understanding grows between them as the libretto unfolds.

In each location there was a slightly different address to site. In Cardiff, scenography included a full size section of a gothic cathedral structure built in steel tubing. In Aberystwyth, two train platforms and a high glass roofed concourse were used, and the performance was timed to occur between the 8:05 pm train leaving for Birmingham and the 9:15 pm train arriving from Machynlleth. The Glasgow production was the first truly site specific staging. An orchestra was placed encircling the performing area on top of a series of scaffolding towers. The four voices of the libretto were located at the four points of the compass. A complex, amplified sound architecture surrounded the audience. The performers consisted of four angels and four ground workers. The angels were semi-naked performers suspended from the scaffolding architecture in body harnesses. The central action of the performance was their descent to the earth, which was an enactment of the libretto: the astronaut's experience of the radical degradation to his home planet, the effect of social change altering his language from his mother's, and the effect of time on their relationship. At the ground level of the site among the audience, the four ground workers created pollution using disinfectant, soil, chalk, and water. The performance's climax occurred when the angels reached the

specific work, McLucas made somewhat of a 'quantum leap' in terms of thinking about the dramaturgical 'universe' of such projects; he formulated a 'trinity' of creation in an effort to clearly characterize the performative relationships between the site, the performance, and the audience. McLucas's trinity consists of the *Host*, the site where the performance takes place; the *Ghost*, the performance itself; and the *Witness*, the audience of the performance in the given site. It is the dramaturgical weave and inter-relationship of these elements which McLucas refers to when he uses the term 'work'. Essentially this trinity of elements in the theatre work corresponds with the terminology used above in that the 'host' constitutes the 'found' elements of the theatre event, the 'ghost' is the 'fabricated' elements, and their dramaturgical association is an attempt to bring about the performative engagement of the 'witness' or spectator. McLucas's model of a work's creation is important to the following analysis of Haearn because it helps to uncover the transparent architectures which exist within the work's dramaturgical weave of immensely rich images and experience. The trinity of creation will reveal where theatrical heterotopia emerges in the hybrid of place, performance, and public through a large scale site specific work.

There are two components to the host which predate the performance, the town and the building. Haearn's host town is Tredegar, a location constituted within a complex network of socio-economic factors which are real and their existence sets the agenda for the work. McLucas has identified particular historical, political, cultural, and economic factors which were prominent influences in the case of choosing Tredegar as a site for the performance.⁴²¹ The foundry which served as

ground, and this activated four massive wind machines located at the four points of the compass.

⁴²¹ Briefly these are: *history* -- international, national, and local; *politics* -- those to do with socialism and communism on an international scale, those to do with how socialism and communism relate to Welsh nationalism; *culture* -- language, work, community; and *economics* -- the

the host building was built in 1913, the year in which the coal fields of South Wales had their greatest output. It housed Haearn in October 1992, in a week, as McLucas points out, "when the British government announced the closure of all but one of the coal mines in South Wales."⁴²² Architecturally, the host building, which has since been demolished, was a top lit, windowless brick structure approximately 90 metres in length and 20 metres wide. Perhaps its most unique feature was a 20 tonne gantry crane spanning the width of the building, and capable of running along its entire length.

For McLucas the building at the core of a site specific theatre work provides three opportunities not found in conventional theatre buildings. First, these buildings come with a number of unusual and challenging associations. The foundry which housed Haearn had particular historical associations for the majority of the audience who were either from the local community or elsewhere in South Wales; it was the task of the work's ghost to explore these associations and problematize the witnesses' identification with specific associations. Site specific buildings often have a history of specialized use and this offers various architectural formalities which may be addressed through scenography. McLucas's approach to the Tredegar foundry accommodated the building's distinctive shape, height, and proportion -- including operation of the site's gantry crane and coke beds. In addition to evoking the building's historical context and usage, Haearn attempted to activate other specific social and political affiliations the audience might have had to the building and its place in the community. The cumulative effect of such associations in the public's perception of a given site means that even before the production has begun there are certain reverberations which have already 'gone to work' on an audience.

commodities of iron, steel, and coal. See McLucas 2.

⁴²² McLucas 3.

The second opportunity concerns the audience's 'horizon of expectations'⁴²³ of the theatre event in which they are about to take part. McLucas aims to subvert the 'theatre of the mind' which audiences bring with them to a Brith Gof production. He defines the 'theatre of the mind' as a distillation of a person's previous learned contacts or experiences in theatres, and believes it creates

a certain 'seemliness' that defines a theatrical orthodoxy. This orthodoxy (which cannot be removed -- only embraced or ignored) pre-exists, and sets an inescapable agenda for, any piece of work that we might want to place there.⁴²⁴

The 'theatre of the mind' orthodoxy is analogous to Lyotard's theatrical-representational apparatus in that both outline a conceptual understanding of theatre's relationship to reality; wherein the real is reduced to an absent object through a certain 'seemliness', or decorous preoccupation, with representation. Brith Gof's use of a host site such as the foundry problematizes the conceptual core of such practice because the indeterminate presence of the host site subverts the representational apparatus of the ghost, which conventionally would have been used to represent it. As with the given architectural forms in the host site, these conceptual orthodoxies are like 'found' entities and cannot be removed from the spectators' experience. Nevertheless, it is possible, as Brith Gof have demonstrated with Haearn, to establish paradoxical architectural forms alongside the orthodox which problematize the spectators' conceptual understanding of how these forms structure their experience in the theatre.

The third opportunity created by site specific theatre practice is the necessity for the theatre practitioner to think in three dimensions, instead of two. McLucas believes that conventional theatre design diminishes the kinds of effects which may be activated through distance, space,

⁴²³ See Chapter Two.

⁴²⁴ McLucas 2.

direction, orientation, and volume in site specific work. By taking advantage of a space which is fully multi-dimensional, this approach to scenography pressurizes the orthodox relationships between performers and spectators, performers and other performers, spectators and other spectators, and all of these in relation to the space. McLucas's fuller consideration of the performance space as a theatrical volume has initiated a process of exploration into ways in which dramaturgical fabrication may transform this volume into a fully "active environment", as Pearson explains:

I've begun to think of theatre as an active environment [...] a special place, this special world, where everything comes up for questioning. What's the climate like? How does surface change? How are performers in relation to built architectures, sonic architectures. Are they in conflict with the space as [architectural theorist, Bernard] Tschumi would say? Are they in some sort of reciprocity with the situation, and how can we constantly change those two things so that the going is easy, then the going is very difficult so to speak, and how can one begin to use that in theatre, which is a very unusual thing. I don't think there are many people who work with the symptoms, the symptomatics of the performer, in terms of dealing with these difficult conditions.⁴²⁵

In Haearn McLucas realizes these three opportunities through his site specific address to the Tredegar foundry. Rather than present a synthesis of the host building's elements, as Kaye explains, "the guiding metaphor for the construction of the piece is the coexistence of distinct 'architectures' inhabiting one another without being resolved into a unified whole."⁴²⁶ It is just such a connection between elements that amplifies the fundamental relationship of the host to performance (the ghost), which McLucas distinguishes as an interpenetration of the 'found' and the 'fabricated'.

The large scale site specific performance, which became the ghost of Haearn and haunted its host, the Tredegar

⁴²⁵ Morgan 45.

⁴²⁶ Kaye: 65.

foundry, was devised as a fractured and incomplete work. As a fabricated address to site, it shifted restlessly between elements of the host, and thus the witness was continuously challenged to make a connection between the host and the ghost. In describing the ghost's relationship to its host in Haearn, McLucas has said,

Like Frankenstein's creature, it was constructed from a number of disparate vital organs and parts. Like all ghosts, Haearn's body is not solid -- the host can be seen through it. The host and the ghost, of different origins, are coexistent but, crucially, are not congruent.⁴²⁷

By separating out these parts of the ghost, seven unique, overlaid and interpenetrating 'architectures' or orders of material can be found. The first of Haearn's architectures is 'The Valley/The Mirror'. This architecture is composed of two reflecting components. At one end of the building's 90 metre length, situated in a raked seating arrangement, is the audience, most of whom are from Tredegar and South Wales. In a symmetrically opposite seating arrangement at the building's opposite end is the production's choir and band, who are also from Tredegar and South Wales. A third component exists as an amplification of this architectural arrangement: projected onto the wall behind the choir and band are edited selections of film from the British Steel Corporation's film archive of men and women at work in the steel works of South Wales. For McLucas, the indigenous nature of this first architectural ghost established its primacy: "The Valley/The Mirror marks the architectural parameters of, and contains, the work."⁴²⁸

The second of Haearn's architectures is 'The Two Women'. This is a primarily sonic architecture comprising the two prime 'solo' voices in the work. The first of these belongs to The Actress, who is situated 2 metres from the audience, for the most part upon a chair elevated several

⁴²⁷ Nick Kaye, Art into Theatre: Performance Interviews & Documents (London: Harwood Academic Press, 1996) 220.

⁴²⁸ McLucas 3.

metres by a scaffold structure. The Actress plays the part of Mary Shelley, reading materials from her diaries, letters, and journals written between 1814 and 1822. The content of these writings includes her miscarriage, the loss of her two children, and her novel *Frankenstein*. In reading segments from *Frankenstein*, the actress performs the role of both Shelley's creation, Victor Frankenstein, and that of Shelley's creation's creation, the Frankenstein creature. The second woman's voice belongs to The Singer, who was essentially out of sight for the audience as she occupies an area 80 metres from them, just in front of the Choir and Band. The Singer's libretto conveys the narratives of two Greek demigods: Hephaestus, the crippled god of the forge who cast golden women assistants, and Prometheus, the god who created man from clay. These narratives depict what is basically the central action of the work: the creation of mortal beings by each demigod, Hephaestus creates the first Woman and Prometheus creates the first Man. At times each woman's voice constitutes a solo presentation, for instance at the work's beginning theirs are the only voices the audience can hear; for a majority of the performance, however, these voices are often in juxtapositional relationship to each other, and usually interwoven into the other sonic elements of the work.

The mythical narratives of Hephaestus and Prometheus are part of a complex narrative element in the work which McLucas has identified as Haearn's third architecture. Overall there are four separate registers of narrative address, which either synthesize or supplant one another for meaning. In addition to the mythical stories of Hephaestus and Prometheus, there is 'The Historical' narrative, which consists of first person accounts from the Industrial Revolution, read by four elderly local readers; 'The Novelistic' and 'The Personal', which are made up by Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, her letters, journals, and diaries, presented by The Actress. In the creation of each of these narratives an attempt is made to establish different relationships to the host in the mind of each witness. The synchronous existence of this multi-layered

narrative address to this site creates a challenge to the witnesses in their ability to accommodate such a gesture, given their previous experiences and identification with the site.

Before outlining the fourth architecture, *The Body*, which is arguably the work's most significant, here is a brief summary of Haeearn's fifth, sixth, and seventh architectures -- whose primary purpose is to amplify the performative interaction between *The Body*'s architecture, the site, and the witnesses. The fifth architecture is *The Climate*, which consisted of three elements: One, temperature, ranging from the overall coldness of the unheated building in November to the isolated blasts of heat from the operational coke beds located throughout the space; two, precipitation in the form of rain and snow which are created by machinery positioned aloft, just in front of the audience. The third climactic element is a gale force wind, generated by wind machines in the same space as the snow and rain, and it is in this space of raging elements that the newly created man and woman are challenged for survival. The sixth architecture is *The Grid*, which serves as a blue print or map of much of the movement in the site. Here McLucas wanted to create an impression through movement in "contrast to the sophisticated and continuous three-dimensional space generated by contemporary robotics."⁴²⁹ The key mechanical components of the Industrial Age such as the wheel, the track, the pulley, and the lever are used, and the patterns of their movement are emulated in the work's action to suggest the limited and reduced operation of the industrial processes of this time: up and down, left to right, forwards and backwards. The seventh and final of Haeearn's architectures is *The Times*. In the performance there are frequent references to four distinct time scales which are either stretched or compressed to evolve during the work's 90 minute duration. First, Mary Shelley's writings occur in the period between 1814 and 1822. Second, the first hand accounts

⁴²⁹ McLucas 6.

of key developments in industrial and medical science transpire over the hundred years between 1760 and 1860. And finally there is the timeless context of the Greek myths of Hephaestus and Prometheus.

Haeearn's fourth architecture is The Body. Here the semiotic reference to the space shifts between a factory and a hospital, which allows for the parallel representation of the industrial and medical sciences during the Industrial Revolution. This architecture addresses the processes by which the body begins to be represented and reconceived in the evolution of these scientific practices, and this happens dramaturgically in two ways. First, in medical research at this time the prevailing metaphor of the human body was that of a biological machine; it was believed that an increased knowledge of the body's internal mechanisms would not only benefit medical science, but a scientific understanding of the body's mechanical processes may prove useful in the design of machinery. This twofold emphasis upon the body's architecture is explored in action which connects medical and industrial procedures to elements existing within the host site. The creation of Woman and Man by Hephaestus and Prometheus makes extensive use of found materials from the foundry which, when put to use in the 'fabrication' of these human forms, suggests the implements of industry such as pumps, hydraulics, circulatory systems, and combustion engines.

The casting of the bodies of a Woman and a Man make thorough use of the foundry's facilities, and thereby activate a second aspect of the fourth architecture: the human body as a 'work force' or 'the working classes' which, like the two human beings created in the work, are doomed to become a monolithic, unidimensional by-product of the industrial age. Where this second aspect of the architecture of The Body meets with the found elements of the site is where Haeearn presents its most radical speculative opening to the audience. In the final stages of the creation of 'Industrial' Woman and Man, there emerges an enigmatic character to this supposedly 'monolithic' commodity of the Industrial Revolution. Zizek

reminds us that for Karl Marx, for whom this issue was of primary concern, the secret to its understanding is in the *form* through which the labouring human body becomes a commodity for exchange.⁴³⁰ Marx believed it was a mistake of classical political economy to be interested only in the contents behind the commodity-form because, as Brith Gof's dramaturgy demonstrates through theatrical representation, the 'form' of representational exchange has a manifest effect upon conceptual content.

The architecture of *The Body* presents the paradoxical effect of human labour in the mechanism of industrial production because the action of the 'industrial' Woman and Man subverts the abstract idea of labour as a commodity for exchange. A brief explication of the political and historical support of this observation will reveal that the most enduring legacy to have emerged from the Industrial Revolution is the establishment of a concept of value based upon commodification and exchange in the capitalist market place. The increase of goods created by industrial production brings about the development of a market economy for exchange of these goods; as production brings about an expansion of their number and variety, a process of *abstraction* takes place in their form of exchange. The goods become commodities in a system of exchange which is *indifferent* to their individual value because it is assessed universally, based entirely upon the commodity's commensurable exchange value.

Regarding the found implements of industrial mechanization in Haeearn's site, the universal model of production is represented through the pumps, hydraulics, and engines which are used to create a progressively more efficient circulatory system of manufacture and exchange. The inherent complication with this system, however, emerges in the paradox of one of its commodities: the labouring body, the animation of this system by the working class. In this system workers are not themselves proprietors of the means of

⁴³⁰ See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 19-21.

production, and are therefore obliged to sell on the market their labour instead of the products of their labour. For Marx this situation demanded a modification to the system which would ensure the universalized egalitarian exchange for all workers; then, even those selling their labour on the market could remain the proprietors of their means of production and not be exploited.⁴³¹ In the Marxian perspective, socialism exists in the very belief that a society is possible in which the relations of exchange are universalized and production for the market predominates. Zizek suggests that this is a utopian belief in that it conveys the possibility of a

⁴³¹ As Zizek points out, however, the origins of inequality in the free market system originate not from the exploitation of the worker's means of production but from the ideological origins of any system of universal equivalent and equitable exchange. Contrary to Marx, Zizek demonstrates that the inequality which acts as a 'negation' to the system of universal, equitable exchange does not amount to its 'imperfect realization' as a universal mechanism, but rather this inequality functions as the system's constitutive moment, and therefore cannot be abolished by further development:

The crucial point not to be missed here is that this negation is strictly *internal* to [the form of] equivalent exchange, not its simple violation: the labour force is not 'exploited' in the sense that its full value is not remunerated; in principle at least, the exchange between labour and capital is wholly equivalent and equitable. The catch is that the labour force is a peculiar commodity, the use of which -- labour itself -- produces a certain surplus-value, and it is this surplus over the value of the labour force itself which is appropriated by the capitalist (Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 22).

Zizek demonstrates that when the ideological universal of equivalent and equitable exchange is put to work a particular paradoxical exchange -- that of the labour force for its wages -- functions as the very form of exploitation, despite its equivalent exchange within the system. The 'quantitative' development itself, the universalization of the production of commodities, brings about a new 'quality', and the emergence of this new commodity represents the internal negation of the universal principle of equivalent exchange of commodities.

universality without its symptom, without the point of exception functioning as its internal negation. Thus, in spite of the workers maintaining ownership over the means of production, in a universal system of exchange their labour brings about a *symptom*; which Žižek describes as "a particular element which subverts its own universal foundation, a species subverting its own genus."⁴³² The symptom of the worker's labouring body amounts to its paradox within the system of industrial production; in the respect that it is a commodity which is absolutely essential to the outcome of this system, its symptomatic quality can also be seen as a *figure* to the concept of value this system represents.

The architecture of *The Body in Haearn* presents this paradox in industrial production through the symptomatic acts of 'labour' which 'Industrial' Woman and Man perform after their creation by Hephaestus and Prometheus. With their limbs connected to a system of pulleys they are first suspended from the gantry crane and then transported along the length of the building in a sort of furious dance of work among the coke beds. This energetic choreography is supervised by their creators, Hephaestus and Prometheus, and reaches its final phase when the assistants to the demi-gods attach the workers' pulleys to opposite walls of the site in a space just before the audience. The seventh architecture informs the witnesses (the audience) that the year is 1860, while one of the narratives from the third architecture announces that "Man and Woman are worked to death" and, in the midst of a teeming downpour of 'rain' and a gale force wind from the fifth architecture, Industrial Woman and Man attempt to embrace before their fate befalls them.

In addition to the difficult conditions established by the site's 'climate' the elasticized pulleys which bind the two to their respective walls make any attempt to touch, let alone embrace, extremely difficult. In an epilogue entitled "Blind Hopelessness" Hephaestus and Prometheus place a large

⁴³² Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 21.

wheel between the two, and Industrial Woman and Man exhaustively roll the massive device between them, until their death. In the few moments that this segment lasts, the audience are witness to the kind of 'special world' which Pearson describes above, 'where everything comes up for questioning'; moreover, here the symptom of the worker's labouring body is underscored by 'the symptomatics of the performer' dealing with the work's difficult conditions. The twofold symptomatic character of this action, in its physical and psychical materiality, is far from a presentation of a working class utopia, but in its effects upon the witnesses this architecture of The Body, among all the other architectures, establishes the effects of a *heterotopia*. In the witnesses' experience of the Real effects of labour as a symptom within a system of industry's architectures, a liminal space of reconsideration of what this labour represents to the witnesses and to the witnesses' identity may emerge.

Large scale site specific works such as Haearn cannot be reduced to a central essence. Neither host, ghost, nor witness will represent the work, nor will any of the sub-systems within them, any of the seven 'architectures', the narrative texts, the performers, or theme. Instead, these works have sought to activate and celebrate what McLucas has referred to as "the symphonic possibilities"⁴³³ in the performative relationships between these elements which make up an experience of theatrical heterotopia for the spectators. From the ephemeral impact of scale to the psychical effects of site specificity, large scale site specific theatre works evolve an increasingly sophisticated address to the signification of Welsh cultural identity. The dramaturgical effects of scale and the symptomatic action of the performers create a deconstructive *figure* to the conceptual representation of identity. Rather than being an absent object of either traditional cultural practices or theatrical representation, the signification of identity becomes a

⁴³³ McLucas 9.

process of performative discovery in the theatre event.

-- Proto-Theatrical Theatre Events --

Brith Gof's aesthetic development, both theoretically and in practice, has flourished in a variety of directions in the early 1990s. While most productions during this period have incorporated the talents of both McLucas and Pearson, certain works have reflected the differing visions of these two Artistic Directors.⁴³⁴ For the most part McLucas has continued to develop theatre which furthers the concept of site specificity; while Pearson's renewed focus on the body has taken him toward solo work, duet performances with other artists, and the formation of a proto-theatrical theatre practice. The following analysis will examine how the dramaturgical strategies of proto-theatrical performance have evolved out of Brith Gof's previous theatre practice, and how, through an emphasis upon the body, proto-theatrical performance has created increasingly challenging performer/spectator relationships, which have revealed certain energies in the signification of national identity distinct from any of the other work.

Pearson's interest in physical theatre and the body in performance dates back to the beginning of his career, and the influence of Grotowski; however, through working on the physical score⁴³⁵ of performers as an 'architecture' and as an address to site in Brith Gof's large scale site specific theatre work, his approach to the use of the body in theatre has evolved significantly alongside his company's maturing practice. The McLucas-inspired shift to scale was profoundly influential to Pearson's approach to physical score because

⁴³⁴ See Appendix Two for detailed information about Brith Gof's work in this period.

⁴³⁵ The 'physical score' is defined here as "a precise and iterable sequence of actions performed by the body or voice." See Nigel Stewart, "The Actor as Refusenik: Semiotics, Theatre Anthropology, and the Work of the Body," New Theatre Quarterly, Volume IX, Number 36 (November 1993): 379.

among other adjustments the performers had to recognize that they were not always "carrying the meaning" of the performance, but were rather a single element among many in the spectators' reading of the work. Large scale site specific theatre works helped Pearson recognize some of the more subtle relationships between the physical score of the performers and other structural relationships in the work, and this insight allowed him to explore some of the less obvious elements of physical theatre. Beginning with the company's scenography, the performers were required to work in three-dimensions with each other and with the audience. Pearson believed that if the work were to put pressure on all three of those sets of relationships -- performer to performer, performer to spectator, and spectator to spectator -- Brith Gof's theatre practice might then begin to work on what he referred to as the "under-considered elements of physical communication."⁴³⁶ While working on physical scores for McLucas's vast, site specific scenography, Pearson began to realize that beyond the elements of gesture and kinesics, most often employed by the physical movement of conventional theatre practice, performance material could be generated entirely from *proxemics*, the distances between people and *haptics*, the touch of self and others. Constituted between performers, performers and spectators, and eventually between spectators, these physical elements were part of a re-negotiation of the physical contract with an audience, as Pearson describes:

When you are sitting in your seat in the theatre you never expect to be close to a performer, to feel a performer's breath, to feel a performer sweating -- and one can generate exciting material by that. Equally to begin to work with haptics, [...] and we touch each other in all sorts of ways, and I thought we could go to work with that, once again in all those sets of relationships [performer to performer, performer to spectator, spectator to spectator] varying degrees of touch might be possible. So if we were looking for a new way of working within these active environments, then we might begin to constitute theatre within those two vectors, as well

⁴³⁶ Morgan 54.

as just gesturing.⁴³⁷

Part of the inspiration for proto-theatrical theatre practice was Pearson's interest in the way the effects of proxemics and haptics could create an engaging event for the spectators. Here the 'active environment' is no longer generated from an address to site but from an address to the body. In this respect, the architecture of the body becomes the found site, and the dramaturgical relationship between bodies, on both semiotic and somatic levels, is the fabrication which creates a performative engagement with the body in the theatre event.

The sequence of actions performed by the body or voice which make up the physical score of a proto-theatrical theatre event performatively affect the spectators on a *pre-expressive* level of communication. 'Pre-expressivity' is the principal area of study for Theatre Anthropology, and Eugenio Barba, the discipline's founder and chief proponent has described 'pre-expressivity' as

The level which deals with how to render the actor's energy scenically alive, that is, with how the actor can become a presence which immediately attracts the spectator's attention.⁴³⁸

The performer's physical score becomes 'scenically alive' as it begins to function on both semiotic and somatic levels. A physical score has a semiotic dimension in that it can be understood as "a signifier, a sign vehicle, or an expression."⁴³⁹ Following the Saussurean model, the signifier and signified constitute a sign which points to a referent -- the actuality referenced by the physical action. But this referent is also itself a sign (signifier/signified), and this opens up a dimension of *semiosis* in which a sign points to or substitutes for other signs infinitely. The physical score's

⁴³⁷ Morgan 55-56.

⁴³⁸ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, The Secret Art of the Performer, ed. Richard Gough, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 188.

⁴³⁹ Stewart: 379.

expressive capacity as a visual sign becomes pressurized toward a pre-expressive 'presence' as it begins to function somatically, as a force felt in the body. This involves a conscious physiological dimension in the roles of both performer and spectator. As the physical score develops the proxemics and haptics of the proto-theatrical theatre event, there is a shift in the "scenic bios", as Barba would say, or the energy and presence of the performer as s/he is 'felt' by the spectators. Susan Melrose has likened this shift toward the somatic in the sensorium of the performers and spectators in theatre's phenomenological field of communication to the shift in the field of electromagnetic physics between Newton and Einstein. The introduction of the somatic to the semiotic has altered the way in which the sensorium of the participants is organised to experience the event's action; in much the same way, argues Melrose, that Einstein's theory of *action by contact* in electromagnetic physics was a somatic alteration of Newton's theory of *action at a distance*:

The old 'action at a distance' theory postulated that the electrostatic field was merely a geometrical structure without physical significance, while this new experiment ('that the mutual action between two electrically charged bodies depends upon the character of the intervening medium') showed that the field had physical significance. Every charge acts first upon its immediate surroundings.⁴⁴⁰

Melrose speaks to the "unseizability" of what draws in the spectators and binds them in a to-and-fro movement between actor and character -- not unlike the metonymic associations cited in the work of DV8 and Forced Entertainment -- and this is where the Newtonian gaze meets a liminal presence in the performers' bodies of the proto-theatrical theatre event.

The way in which the dramaturgy of the physical score brings together the liminal presence of each performer's body is similar to an intersection of electromagnetic fields, or as Melrose suggests, "it is something like the clash and

⁴⁴⁰ Susan Melrose A Semiotics of The Dramatic Text (London: MacMillan, 1994) 216-217.

blendings of body-heat."⁴⁴¹ Pearson has described such a "heat of the performer" in the formation of dramaturgical strategies aimed at exploring the various levels of expression between the performer and his or her physical conditions, and this awareness has evolved primarily through his work with David Levett, a physically disabled performer. Pearson's duet with Levett, entitled In Black and White (1992)⁴⁴² was important to Brith Gof's development of the performer's symptomatic response to difficult physical conditions in Haearn and to an enriched understanding of the performer's pre-expressivity in proto-theatrical performance. Levett's influence can be seen as an important dramaturgical link in the physical score of these two phases of Brith Gof's theatre practice; Pearson's work with Levett prompted a reconsideration of what the physical performer is actually doing in performance:

I seriously do feel, do think, that we do know what Dave [Levett] means, is intending, despite the fact that he's not making conventional signs in any way at all. So I've begun to think much more, without becoming airy-fairy about it, about the attractiveness of the performer, the kind of 'heat' of the performer in a way, and really the presence of the performer. [...] In Brith Gof we do generate mature performers, you know, people who can survive whatever the conditions. That's immensely attractive, even though they might not be doing anything, the veneer of signalling is over and above that kind of presence, and I think that's what Dave has really shown me. Also that his body in many ways is 'decided', so that what he is attempting to do is always kind of symptomatic of his condition if you like. I think it's not uninteresting that in lots of our work we use restriction, that very often there's one restriction of the physicality of the performer that serves to define then what they will do, and I find that extremely useful, that everything is not

⁴⁴¹ Melrose 217.

⁴⁴² See Appendix Two for a more detailed description of Pearson's work with Levett in In Black and White (1992), and for an understanding of Levett's contribution to the Arturius Rex project (1993-1994).

possible here.⁴⁴³

In identifying the 'heat' of the performer, Pearson is describing a liminal presence opened up through dramaturgical strategies which stress the somatic qualities of the performer's body in signification. This has decisive semiotic consequences, the most important being the critical gap between the physical score (presentation) and the underscore (intention).

Nigel Stewart, who has written about Barba's development of the concept of pre-expressivity in Theatre Anthropology, has illuminated the discussion of this gap between a performer's physical score and underscore by looking at the psycho-somatic link between these two stages of signification. Stewart's analysis is useful to the present discussion because his research demonstrates how through certain restrictive, difficult, or indeterminate dramaturgical circumstances the gap between underscore and physical score is increased, and a pre-expressive "axis" of the performer's body materializes through the signification of identity. This pre-expressive axis verifies the 'heat' of the performer as a liminal presence, where the body as a found object may signify cultural identity and become a site of performative reconsideration for both the performers and spectators in the proto-theatrical theatre event. Stewart's article entitled "Actor as Refusenik: Semiotics, Theatre Anthropology, and the Work of the Body" considers some of Barba's more recent work on pre-expressivity in light of Jacques Derrida's theories of the sign.

Citing Derrida's analysis of Sigmund Freud's model of consciousness, Stewart identifies the priority of the body in conscious communication. Rather than accepting that consciousness perceives an event as it occurs and then stores it in memory, Freud theorized that an event causes an excitation in the neurological system, but the force leaves no mark on the perceptual neurones which receive it since they

⁴⁴³ Morgan 60.

offer no electro-chemical resistance. To this, Derrida postulated that

Other neurones, which would oppose contact-barriers to the quantity of excitation, would thus retain the printed trace... This is the first representation, the staging of memory... in the sense of visual depiction, and... theatrical performance.⁴⁴⁴

Derrida identifies that it is only later that these representations selectively accede to consciousness, and thus "the 'perceived' may be read only in the past, beneath perception and after it."⁴⁴⁵ In terms of our conscious awareness of the experience of an event, "we are the eternal latecomers to the 'now' of our experience."⁴⁴⁶ For Derrida, the actual physical pathway of lowered electro-chemical resistance is the signifier, and this indicates that there is force which runs throughout the mental world which may be linked to the material world.⁴⁴⁷ Stewart's point is that in the formation of a physical score, the performer will have an event 'in mind', but this event, according to Derrida, would have 'always already' been a reproduced event by the time it was perceived; therefore, this event is no more than a pretext for the body's further and unforeseeable reproduction of it to the spectator. To this, Brith Gof's theatre practice adds dramaturgical strategies devised to make performance conditions more difficult; either through the creation of elements in the performance space which restrict action such as rain, wind, and fire in *Haearn*, or which bring about the occurrence of indeterminate circumstances such as the scale of

⁴⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida as quoted in Stewart: 383.

⁴⁴⁵ Stewart: 383.

⁴⁴⁶ Derrida as quoted in Stewart: 383.

⁴⁴⁷ Stewart goes on to connect Derrida's notion of signification here with the theories of Antonin Artaud. Artaud's vision of spatial poetry was a form of writing not as written or spoken words (still less as inward signifieds willed and intended by the mind), but as non-phonetic picto-hieroglyphic marks; these supposedly would operate independently of and prior to consciousness.

the work and its proximity to the spectators in Gododdin. The resistance to formality of such performance conditions entails that the signification of the physical score becomes displaced into signifiers which begin to suggest meanings in excess of those originally intended. As in Freud's model, "meaning was 'not sent but only received'."⁴⁴⁸ Stewart contends that this process demonstrates that with "all creative work there is a psycho-somatic gap -- indeed, an *aporia* -- between what the performer *intends* and what the performer *presents*."⁴⁴⁹ By problematizing the performer's execution of an action, Brith Gof's dramaturgy increases this gap.

As Brith Gof's theatre practice problematizes the performer's physical score, a foundation of 'force' in the signification of cultural identity is made manifest. The performer's body materializes the Derridean-Freudian unconscious in a pre-expressivity which unites meaning and force in the body's 'weave of actions' and the brain's 'weave of pure traces'. Proto-theatrical theatre events begin to engage spectators in the force of pre-expressivity by bringing them actively into the performance space. There are two specific characteristics to this space; the first comes from Pearson's training in Grotowski's method of physical theatre. Pearson was inspired by the way Grotowski began each new production with an *empty space*, and he is absolutely clear about the distinction between 'space' and 'stage'.⁴⁵⁰ The proto-theatrical playing space for each new production should be capable of placing performers and spectators in an entirely unique physical relationship; moreover, as an intensification of Grotowski's model, these spatial renegotiations were to happen several times during a single production. This brings up the second condition, which comes from theoretical archaeology and lends the form its descriptive title --

⁴⁴⁸ Stewart: 383.

⁴⁴⁹ Stewart: 383.

⁴⁵⁰ See Appendix Two.

'proto-theatrical'.⁴⁵¹ Pearson, who has a considerable background in the study of archaeology, had developed research into crowd behaviour for the purpose of examining the effects of crowds upon archaeological space; he began to see ways in which the relationships between people in crowds might become fruitful, raw material for dramaturgy. He observed that as soon as an event happens in the middle of a crowd, a fight for example, the crowd forms a space for this event, and this immediately installs a theatrical contract among the participants. The establishment of this kind of *proto-playing area* was instrumental in Brith Gof's advancement of a proto-theatrical theatre practice, and here Pearson describes this process and how it became a vehicle for dramaturgical exploration in the creation of one of the company's recent works, Prydain (1996):

There are 'watchers' and those who are 'watched'; the watchers can either compress or expand the playing-area, they always take up a circle because it's the best perceived for watching, it's the most democratic shape, so it puts people equi-distant from the action, and so forth. Then, just as quickly as it started, it ends and this playing space disappears. In fact, it is this very notion, that the event creates the space, which many proto-theatrical forms go to work with. This is precisely what I am trying to explore in Prydain, that the event will create the spaces appropriate to it at any one time. So if you have a long, thin piece of action then the audience takes up a long, thin shape. In this situation the spectator experiences a variety of spatial relations to this action: you get action happening a long way away from you, action which is close up, action which is travelling to and from you, and so on. All of these spatial relationships are impossible to create within a proscenium stage space, and in this respect they are difficult to arrange formally, so I think you have to devise a kind of dramaturgy which is changing from moment to moment; incorporating strategies which will embrace the fluidity of the event.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ See Appendix Two for details of Pearson's background in this area.

⁴⁵² Andrew Houston, "Interview with Mike Pearson of Brith Gof," Appendix Two.

Prydain, subtitled *The Impossibility of Britishness*, was performed in a vacant warehouse in Cardiff. The audience boarded a bus at the Chapter Arts Centre, and were taken to the warehouse located in a anonymous looking industrial estate near the waterfront. At the entrance to the warehouse, tickets were examined to identify who had requested to be either a 'spectator' or a 'participant' -- a choice made when audience members purchased their tickets at the Chapter Centre. Those of us who had chosen to participate were given a uniform to wear: a dark blue felt 'donkey' jacket with fluorescent orange shoulder panels. These uniforms were not unlike those worn by the performers at the beginning of the performance, with the exception that the performer's jackets had fluorescent green shoulder panels. Once inside the warehouse, the audience of both spectators and participants had begun to form the 'crowd' Pearson described above. Most stayed assembled around the wall of the entrance door, unsure about the space or the nature of the event they were about to take part in. As the audience awaited the beginning of the performance, there was a unique energy in the air; here was a crowd full of expectation and uncertainty, awaiting its role in the event to come, the 'horizon of expectation' of what lay ahead was wide open.

Prydain was performed in early March, and because the warehouse which accommodated these performances was not heated, the event took place in temperatures which were just above freezing. The warehouse was about 40 metres long and about 20 metres wide. The space contained two massive scaffold-like cubes; these were separated by a metal fence about 2 metres high, which ran along the entire width of the warehouse, dividing the space in half. As in previous Brith Gof productions, the use of materials such as fences and scaffolding gave the warehouse a feeling more of a building site than a performance space. While the audience waited on one side of this fence, on the other side a utility van entered through a large doorway. Out of the van appeared a group of people who began preparing two locations for music, one for a two-piece band and one for two disc-jockeys. While

the audience watched this set up, Pearson made his way through the crowd with a portable stereo, which intermittently blasted a kind of hip-hop style of club music. He was dressed in the same donkey jacket as the performers, and as he walked through the audience, he announced: "For me, this is how it begins, with a crowd of people." He encouraged the air of uncertainty in the audience by informing us that "[we] will be at risk, but not in danger (a pause) probably. [We] will see some things fully, others half-hidden, and others still will be entirely out of view." Drawing these elements of personal risk and indeterminacy together, he commented that what we were about to encounter was "a bit like life, really."⁴⁵³

The inspiration for Prydain, which in Welsh means 'Britain', was the writings of William Blake and Iolo Morganwg.⁴⁵⁴ Pearson informed the audience that in wanting to make a performance about Britain, the company had hoped to speak with the best contemporary cultural commentators about the subject; however, he conceded, that despite a thorough search, no one they spoke to could match the vision of these authors, writing 200 years ago. He mentioned Morganwg and Blake by name, who, in confronting a Europe in similar turmoil to our own, had dared to invent nations and construct cultural utopias from the chaos surrounding them. In speaking about

⁴⁵³ Brith Gof and Reu-Vival, Prydain unpublished (Cardiff, March 1996).

⁴⁵⁴ Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826, a.k.a.: Edward Williams) is best known as a poet and antiquary. Born in Llanccarfan, Glamorganshire, he worked as a stone mason for most of his life. Deeply influenced by Antiquarian revival in Wales, he worked in London during 1770s and 1780s where he frequented radical circles and became friends with Robert Southey. In 1819 he began an event called *Gorsedd*, which was a forerunner of the *eisteddfod*. His first published poems (in Welsh) were wrongly attributed to Dafydd ap Gwylim. Written in lyric and pastoral style these poems were translated into English and published in 1794. Morganwg was one of a number of editors of a 3-volume archeology and family history of Glamorgan, and in 1829 he compiled and wrote hymns for a Welsh Unitarian hymnody. Overall Morganwg is remembered as the 'Bard of Liberty', and as a Unitarian and radical visionary for Welsh culture.

Brith Gof's process of creating a theatrical heterotopia from these utopian visions, Pearson describes the creation of proto-theatrical "form":

Instead of making a performance which is meant to be about something -- about the conflict of these many opinions and perspectives of Britain -- we decided we had to make a performance which is something, that is the experience of this situation. It occurred to me that perhaps the only way to deal with these conflicting opinions and perspectives was to try to 'embody' what is going on in Britain. That is, to create a situation where some people are willing to participate, and push things a little, and some people are more likely to watch. I'm not making a pejorative distinction between the two; what I'm thinking of is that in the reality of experiencing events, there is a multiplicity of involvement and perspective. Some things you see close up, some are far away, some are half hidden, some you see clearly but you don't know how to cope with them, and so on. In terms of exploring 'the impossibility of Britishness', ultimately we decided to go to work on the *form* of an experience rather than trying to find a line on subject matter.⁴⁵⁵

Beyond the utopian texts which inspired its creation, Prydain's dramaturgical 'form' was not a depiction of any such transcendental vision; rather, the performance became *heterotopian* by pushing its textual referent to a point where it became an event. In this respect, the heterotopian theatre event is a *deconstruction* of its textual essence, the text becomes contested and worked for in the event of its performance. As Lyotard has proposed of such deconstruction,

it is a recognition that doing justice to texts is not a matter of fidelity to their content but of listening to the points at which they are torn apart by a difference that they cannot express, yet must express... The gaps that deconstruction opens up in texts are not contradictions or failures; if they are lapses they are lapses in a Freudian sense, they arise at the site of radically heterogeneous language games or orders of phrasing.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ Houston, Appendix Two.

⁴⁵⁶ Lyotard as quoted in Readings 128.

Prydain does 'justice'⁴⁵⁷ to the vision of Blake and Morganwg as the ideal of Britain is explored as a psycho-somatic process of signification between different cultures and languages. These identities are 'simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' as the real effects of cultural signification become the pre-expressive work of the body.

True to Pearson's intention to focus upon the 'form' of an experience of Britain in Prydain, the production does not focus upon any detailed revelation of its practitioners' identities, rather it 'goes to work' on the effects of certain elements of identity purposely revealed. The primary element of identity here is language: some of the performers speak only Welsh while others speak only English. The performance included two male and three female performers, two disc jockeys, two musicians, and two lighting technicians. The lighting technicians were mobile and their portable lighting devices provided most of the illumination for the performance; the proto-playing areas were virtually opened and closed with the aid of these lights. The performance consisted of a series of proto-theatrical events evolving around antagonistic acts of signifying cultural identity. The effects of *antagonism* here were between performers speaking different languages, and represented a traumatic social division between Welsh and English culture in Britain. Zizek has described such an eruption of 'antagonism' in disputes between different cultures' signified forms of 'enjoyment' or *jouissance*, as an emergence of the Lacanian Real.⁴⁵⁸ In Prydain antagonism was based in the Other's enjoyment of identity through language, but it was primarily registered psycho-somatically, by the effects of the body. In this respect antagonism marks a certain limit which in itself has no positive consistency; it is a liminality of a Real traumatic division, which resists

⁴⁵⁷ See Chapter Two for further elaboration of Lyotard's concept of 'justice' as it may be applied to the theatre event.

⁴⁵⁸ Slavoj Zizek, Tarrying With The Negative (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 43-44.

conceptual closure in the social field. Throughout the performance, these traumatic events grew in complexity, and this was achieved primarily through the use of audience-participants in the creation of proto-theatrical events.

After Pearson's 'prologue' he called to one of the performers (John Rowley) who had been helping to set up the musicians' equipment in the warehouse beyond the fence. Rowley approached the audience from the other side of the fence and began to recite a eulogy on freedom and human rights in the vision of nationhood. The language was reminiscent of the late 18th Century, and his obviously passionate underscore began to draw the attention of the audience. By the time the audience had begun to gather around the fence to watch Rowley, the fence was removed, and at this time, some of the other performers began advancing on participant-audience members, making various gestures of camaraderie; for example, some would place their hand on your shoulder, or their arm around your shoulder, while glancing with obvious pride and approval at the eulogy. The performers in the crowd of audience seemed to be semiotically and somatically pressurizing the development of this event for the audience, and perhaps establishing a pattern for the form of events to come. Rowley continued his oration, and with the fence gone he too began to manipulate his proxemic relationship to the audience. Once a circular proto-playing space had been established, he began to take off his clothes, and having taken off his donkey jacket and boots, he began to remove his shirt and trousers using a knife. In the act of gradually exposing his flesh, Rowley continued his oration, emphasizing each passage with the ripping away of clothing.

While the near freezing temperature in the warehouse had made many of the participant-audience glad to have the warmth of an extra garment, Rowley had become entirely naked. On his body were the markings of passages from various texts; the script was ornate and appeared to have come from the text he was reciting. At this point, Pearson, who had been operating a mobile light, wrapped Rowley's head with a piece

of his torn clothing, effectively blindfolding him. Pearson then placed two open books in each of Rowley's hands, and the performer posed with his arms stretched out, balancing a book in either hand. For a brief instant, Rowley looked like a statue, but this image was rapidly activated as he began to stumble about the warehouse space. His difficult journey was made increasingly risky as Pearson set each book on fire, and continued to douse each flame with lighter fluid. Understandably, the audience gave Rowley a wide berth, and this proxemic adjustment was emphasized as he would intermittently lunge in one direction or another. Here the performer's body has been restricted in several ways: the cold temperature of the space tightened muscles and restricted the ability for movement, the blindfold removed the guidance of sight, and the combination of outstretched arms and the balancing of two flaming books had to be physically accommodated for by certain movements. While this may seem a betrayal of Rowley's physical score, in fact it encouraged a manifestation of somatic 'force', and with this force came the revelation of unconscious meaning from behind the conscious narrative of eulogy and physical anecdote. For the audience the effects of this event had as much meaning through their proxemic and haptic experience as the signifying process of Rowley's narrative. The axis is made here between a psychical and physical materiality of the 'body as vision of nationhood', and the audience must find a way to accommodate this gesture in their thinking about nationhood within Britain, and more immediately in their performative involvement with the work.

Following Rowley's address, a physical score was initiated by the other performers which took up a promenade formation, back and forth along the length of the warehouse, between the cubic structures. By this time the two-man band consisting of Slovene composer Robert Merdzo on electric bass and a German colleague on drums had made their presence heard and felt with a thunderous soundscape. Each performer had a book which at times was held overhead while marching, at times

it was slapped emphatically, and at times it would be held before the body as the performers ran. All these physical scores were completed in unison, and with varying degrees of speed and intensity. Eventually the participant-audience were given a book and brought into the promenade formation. When we received our book we were quickly shown the physical score's actions, and then we were instructed to follow the pace of the performer who had brought us into the group. In less than two traverses of the elongated proto-playing space, participant-audience members were admirably in-step with the performers; this combination of choreographic gestures, the pounding music, and the proxemic presence created by such a mass, evolving action produced a psycho-somatic 'force' with which the remaining audience were left to contend.

This promenade style of event dissolved into isolated proto-theatrical enactments 'staged' by each performer, which were not unlike Rowley's eulogy. The physical score of these events resembled a street corner sermon, as each performer with book in hand implored the nearest audience members to take a book and listen to what s/he was desperate to convey. These events were intensified in a number of ways. Often a performer would use a piece of chalk to write their message on the floor, or with the help of the participant-audience, portable risers and even ladders were used as rostrums from which orations could be made. As with Rowley's physical score, the increased difficulty of the performing conditions, in this case brought about due to precarious elevation, generated a greater psycho-somatic 'force' in the pre-expressivity of each performer's address. Similar to the promenade event, as these isolated sermons reached the farthest extent of pre-expressivity, the proto-playing space was dissolved, and another erupted elsewhere.

Both the promenade and the sermon styles of proto-playing space were repeated in varying degrees of complexity, and this served to intensify the psycho-somatic 'force' of pre-expressivity in each of these forms of address. The physical score of the promenade evolved using greater

intricacy of movement and a more intense connection between performers and participant-audience. The promenade choreography developed more stylized movement, from crawling on the floor to frozen tableaux to running with arms stretched upward; while the performers' engagement with the audience-participants became intimate to the point where participants were determined by a kiss. The sermons generated a more elaborate physical score; at times body imagery collapsed into words etched in chalk on the floor, and as performers lay literally writhing in their narratives all that remained was a smudged 'stain' of the language of nationhood -- on their bodies and on the floor.

The figural subversion of semiotic elements by psychosomatic effects in each event conveyed an *aporia* in signification in two respects. The first concerns a kind of metamorphosis of meaning which is engendered from the intersection of physical scores, and the re-location of these scores into indeterminate contexts created by audience participation. The context of any proto-playing space is determined during the course of the event, so the precise outcome of the interface between different scores is impossible to know beforehand. Within this emerging gap between intention and presentation of the performers (and audience-participants) '*aporia*' is created between the intentions of the underscore and the indeterminate experience of the physical score when juxtaposed with other physical scores within the proto-theatrical event. The second level of '*aporia*' came about within the creation of the proto-theatrical spaces in themselves. Each space was made up of physical scores which could not be reduced to a single meaning; that is, signifieds which refused a governing sense. In the proto-theatrical event, opposing significations were refused when juxtaposed in the space with others. This is a deconstruction -- a refusal -- of opposites, and thereby a refusal of these original signified meanings. Within the 'staging' of each proto-theatrical event the signified was placed in crisis, and thus a liminal space was created, not a

stopping but a starting point for another meaning, and therefore not a signified at all but another signifier. Prydain engaged the audience-participant in the performative process of conceiving Britain in this in-between space of psycho-somatic signification. Evolving from the pedagogical origins of a utopian nationhood envisioned in the writings of Blake and Morganwg, the performance facilitated the creation of proto-theatrical events where these utopian significations became psycho-somatic enactments and thereby performative experiences of theatrical heterotopia.

With the introduction of 'techno' dance music from *Reu-Vival*, featuring two disc jockeys Mark Lugg and Gareth Potter who are well known in Wales, the physical scores of the promenade events began to resemble a fashion show more than a march for nationhood, and it was precisely the deconstruction between these two forms which was suggested by the dramaturgy. Suddenly the signification of identity within Britain had erupted into the contemporary world. On a runway made up of risers which had only just been rostrums for 18th Century sermons on national identity, the performers had begun to 'charm' the audience with a physical score based on fashion imagery. Here were 'power walks', vogue poses, and the semiotics of seduction. Gradually the process became intensified, as had the other proto-theatrical events before it; the performers began running in a style more of escape than of enticement, and flirtatious gestures between performers became juxtaposed by desperate attempts to flash parts of their bodies to the audience. It was revealed that on certain parts of the performers' bodies there were written excerpts of text. As this evolution of the physical score intensified, the performers moved more quickly, intent upon flashing their bodily-text to the audience. This increasingly frantic variant on a fashion show continued until suddenly the action burst into an antagonist dispute between one performer (Richard Morgan) and the others. It was as though the language scripted on Morgan's body was rejected by the others for its signification of an identity which was alien. The performers

recruited participant-audience to hold Morgan down as they exposed his body's apparently shameful markings; once naked, he was thrust upon a crowd of audience to be supported only by the few participants who could hold him. He was then carried about on the shoulders of participant-audience members before escaping by climbing up a bar support of one of the large cube structures, to where he could descend outside the periphery of the performance space. Morgan was later to be found cowering against one of the warehouse walls, where under the intense illumination of the portable spot light swirls of steam could be seen rising from his naked body.

The pre-expressive effects of this outcast-subject acted as an inert leftover to any of the other attempts at signifying cultural identity within the following proto-theatrical events. In keeping with the increased tempo and semiotic sophistication of the promenade march-turned-fashion show, further more complex attempts at signification were made which reflected contemporary Britain. Despite the use of more complex signification -- more elaborate participant-audience involvement, physical scores which made greater use of the scaffold cubes and mobile risers as textual spaces for the writing and choreography of identity -- the inert presence of the outcast British subject remained. While the audience grappled with the psychical effects of the ostracisation they have abetted proto-theatrically, Morgan, the outcast subject, returned to the playing space where he physically embodied the role of an inert leftover of signification. As the performance reaches its height of choreographic complexity, and all of the participant-audience members are coordinated into three different proto-theatrical events of signification, Morgan, as the 'outcast', comes stumbling through the proto-playing space of each event. His material presence as a physical force of destruction within each proto-playing space is psychosomatically amplified by the effects of the psychical materiality of his earlier demise. Attempts to 'contain' or ignore Morgan's presence are marred by the effects of his revolt.

In the proto-theatrical theatre events of Prydain, meaning was neither controlled within the ever more elaborate forms of cultural signification, nor was it seen to be supplanted by the purely anarchistic fit of antagonism. Rather meaning was disseminated by an outward material and heterogeneous *somatic-semiotic process*, operating dynamically and independently beyond the authorial control of the practitioners, which transgressed the theatrical representation of 'Britain' as an unproblematic referent. This dispersal of meaning beyond the theatrical-representational apparatus can only appear, within the terms of this apparatus, as an inert leftover or, as has been demonstrated, the emergence of the Real -- impossibility of such signification. It is here that the implications of the body's manifestation of a pre-expressive 'aporia' meet with the psycho-somatic 'force' of the signification of cultural identity. If proto-theatrical theatre practice is a means of exploring the psycho-somatic body-of-identity as a way of revolt against inward law and rational principle it is perhaps equally adept at exploring revolt against the "semiotic logic of the sociality in which the (speaking, historical) subject is embedded."⁴⁵⁹ Concerning Welsh cultural identity, Prydain offered the signifying work of the body which created an *aporia*, a liminal presence, hovering between pedagogy and performative subjectivity, a site of paradox and revolt, a liminal place in which identity was lost and curiously discovered.

Brith Gof's theatrical heterotopia can be traced through three distinct stages of dramaturgical evolution. From a theatre practice which specifically engages with Welsh history and cultural customs, to one which extends this exploration to the scale of architecture and the Industrial Revolution, and then finally down to the body as a site for psycho-somatic discovery in the signification of identity; the company has demonstrated a maturation of practice which

⁴⁵⁹ Stewart: 385.

reflects an increasingly sophisticated sense of Welsh nationhood and the role theatre can play in the exploration of cultural identity. Out of the folklore, found objects and locations of the Welsh people, Brith Gof have developed a theatre event which is at once a vision and a construction; that offers the spectators *ex-stasis*, taking them 'beyond' the known in order to return, and in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, confront the political conditions of the present.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARD AN ETHICS OF SPECTATORSHIP

To attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself. Just as quantum physics discovered that macro-instruments cannot measure microscopic particles without transforming those particles, so too must performance critics realize that the labour to write about performance (and thus to "preserve" it) is also a labour that fundamentally alters the event. It does no good, however, to simply refuse to write about performance because of this inescapable transformation. The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself. The act of writing toward disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself.⁴⁶⁰

This study has presented a perspective of postmodernism as a paradigm of cultural practices which problematize the relationship between representations and reality. This perspective has its foundation in the understanding that contemporary reality has become more an experience of the technologically advanced representations of modernisation than of the real. In this respect, the theoretical position of postmodernism is in many ways the immanent obverse of that taken by modernism, and the practices of postmodernism explore tensions, fissures and gaps which have existed in the modernist project since its origins in the Enlightenment.⁴⁶¹

Perhaps the most important aspect of this perspective

⁴⁶⁰ Peggy Phelan, Unmarked (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 148.

⁴⁶¹ Zizek questions what he claims is a Habermasian imposed distinction between modernism and postmodernism, when he identifies that the tension in this distinction has defined the modernist project from its beginning. For a stimulating deconstruction of modernist and postmodernist cultural practices see: Slavoj Zizek, Looking Awry -- An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT Press, 1991) 141-142.

of postmodernism is that it problematizes the relationship between the Subject of consciousness and the Object of knowledge. Whereas the modernist project believed that 'It is by naming that we think', it has been the work of postmodernism to detect that in this act of naming, or signification, a social formation (or representation) is constructed which is eminently *re-cognisable*, and in this recognisability there lies a fundamental 'identity principle' which is inimical to thinking. In principle, representation not only 'identifies' reality as a phenomenal object, but also 'identifies' its thinker as its stable and authoritative Subject. Thomas Docherty has described this phenomenology as an "individualist identity-principle which has arrested radical thinking at least since the Enlightenment."⁴⁶² For the modern 'individualist', *alterity*, as either the Other in the discourses of the Subject's unconscious or the affectivity of the material substance of the object, is met with a rationality which belies a contemptuous distance. The postmodernism explored in this study is critical of such a phenomenology of identity, and the "psychopolitical anxiety"⁴⁶³ it affords the Subject in the face of alterity. The cultural practices which are the basis for a postmodern dramaturgy and the creation of a theatre event with the spectators are profoundly *ethical* in that they demonstrate an integrity toward alterity.

The three theatre companies examined in the previous chapters create a process of ethical relating to alterity for the spectators through a postmodern dramaturgy which questions the terms and conditions by which theatrical representation may take place. This can be seen as an enlargement on Jean-François Lyotard's thinking about the function of the postmodern in other disciplines. Postmodern painting must ask, 'What is an image?' and thereby question the form which

⁴⁶² Thomas Docherty, After theory (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996) 245.

⁴⁶³ Thomas Docherty, Alterities (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) vii.

governs its possibility; music asks 'What is sound?'; philosophy asks 'What is thought?'; and so on. As theatre practice can be seen as an amalgam of these disciplines, a postmodern theatre asks all these questions, and therefore asks, 'What is representation?' The postmodern theatre practitioner posits the question of theatrical representation, and the creation of a theatre event with the spectators is the process by which this question is examined, problematized, and the search for its reply is explored. Lyotard believes it is the postmodern artist's primary responsibility to pursue the question of representation, and what distinguishes this pursuit from its equivalent in modernism is the breadth of what is constituted as representation. In Chapter One, Scott Lash distinguishes between modernism and postmodernism based upon the former being a process of differentiation of cultural practices, while the latter is one of de-differentiation. Lash supports this observation using four main components which characterise each cultural paradigm.⁴⁶⁴ The second of these is of relevance to Lyotard's notion of artistic 'responsibility' in that, as Lash explains, the relationship between the cultural and the social becomes de-differentiated. Therefore the postmodern artist's primary 'responsibility' is not only toward the question of artistic representation, it is toward the question of social and political representation as well.

Given the de-differentiated breadth of representation in postmodernism, for Docherty the question of the artist's 'responsibility' takes an "odd turn." He explains that

Responsibility, at least understood in terms of social or political responsibility, implies an awareness of the Other, of a social formation which surrounds the responsible subject. That subject acts in a way which is 'answerable' to the prescriptions and norms which govern the society; otherwise she or he will simply be marginalized, ostracised or imprisoned, as being guilty of 'social irresponsibility'. However, this makes it perfectly

⁴⁶⁴ See Chapter One and Scott Lash, Sociology of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 11.

clear that this understanding of responsibility is instrumental in the maintenance of a principle of identity which governs the social formation. One is to be 'responsible' to an Other, certainly, but this Other is always only a displaced version of the Self or of the Same. It is only by acting in accord with social norm, known in advance, that such responsibility becomes possible. In other words, this responsibility is profoundly narcissistic and conformist in the most extreme sense of the word, for it must always assume a fundamental normativity which makes the Other the Same as the Self, the Same as the Same.⁴⁶⁵

Arguing for a postmodern "irresponsibility" to the representational norms which govern contemporary western democracies, Docherty brings together the thought of Jean Baudrillard and Lyotard in an alliance of political, social, and aesthetic practices which he calls "postmarxism."⁴⁶⁶ Here is an attempt to subvert the dominant ideologies or dogmas which have flourished in each of these social and cultural contexts through modernist differentiation. Given the development of identifiable systems of norms in each context, legitimation is defined by separate normative practices. Docherty demonstrates that each system becomes unjust and totalitarian in its ignorance of that which exists outside its representational grasp; normative practices become incapable of accommodating the ethical demands of alterity analogous to those outlined in Chapter One: an ethics of judging in Lyotard or the event of face-to-face relating in the work of Emmanuel Levinas.⁴⁶⁷

While Docherty's assertion of 'irresponsibility' as an orientation of postmodernism is appropriate as a subversive strategy for challenging some of the orthodox practices of the modernist paradigm, as a radical approach to criticism it too risks becoming a kind of orthodoxy, a *model*. In fact, Docherty admits to as much, when in the final pages of his discussion

⁴⁶⁵ Docherty, After theory 258-259.

⁴⁶⁶ See Docherty, After theory 243-261.

⁴⁶⁷ See Docherty, After theory 259.

of 'postmarxism' he acknowledges the problem of a strategy of irresponsibility which becomes yet another meta-narrative form, an orthodoxy of relativism. Furthermore, he even deconstructs the potential for such relativism in his book's title, 'After theory', when he says,

that the postmarxist does not simply take the Other of Marxism, say, as his or her model for thinking; this would simply be the replacement of one ideological frame with another, the evasion of one mode of thinking with an evasion in the terms of another. Rather, postmarxism asserts that thought is only possible at the very interface between theoretical systems. In other words, it is not so much 'after theory' as 'inter-theoretical', or 'ana-theoretical', if I may coin a phrase.⁴⁶⁸

Docherty's final orientation of postmarxism illuminates the perspective taken of postmodernism in this study. The prefix 'post-' is not a temporal classification, rather it is a disposition of *relationality*. Thus postmodernism presents an orientation towards alterity and heterogeneity in that it does not consist of how one theory replaces another; on the contrary, "the rules of theory governing one's work or thinking are precisely what the work or thinking are looking for."⁴⁶⁹ Postmodernism creates an opening for renewed thought and action by working in the gaps and fissures which mark the interface of *concepts* and ideologies.

Rather than being responsible to a 'concept' of theatrical representation, the postmodern dramaturgy employed by DV8 Physical Theatre, Forced Entertainment, and Brith Gof is responsible to a *figure* of theatrical representation. Here is an orientation of responsibility which is constant in that it maintains an openness toward alterity in the eventhood of a performance's creation. This is the basis upon which postmodern dramaturgy and the creation of the theatre event becomes a demand for the *performative* involvement of the spectators. As these practitioners construct a theatrical-

⁴⁶⁸ Docherty, After theory 260.

⁴⁶⁹ Docherty, After theory 260.

representational apparatus, and thereby signify an identity in relationship to the *object* of the performance, there is an awareness that this 'object' is not a stable entity; that its plenitude in performance is fissured by a reliance on something which extends outside of itself, as a *surplus* to representation. Postmodern dramaturgy opens up the effects of this 'surplus', as its *substance* resists the signification of identity, appropriation through technology or other such mastery. The existence of this 'substance' is essential to the creation of a theatre event; it is constituted by the *work* of the spectators.

In order to fully grasp the ethical nature of the 'work' demanded of the spectator in the theatre event, it is important to first make a brief review of the postmodern dramaturgical strategies which bring about the 'substance' of this relationship. Here postmodern dramaturgy can be seen to activate the 'effects' which constitute a surplus to theatrical representation and bring about a reconsideration of how subjectivity may be explored through theatre practice.

This study has taken Eugenio Barba's concept of dramaturgy as a foundation from which analysis of the relationship between the performance and the spectators may begin. For Barba dramaturgy, or *drama-ergon*, is the work of the actions in the performance, and a crucial aspect of this work is how these actions are 'woven' together to create a performance. In the development of the theatre event between the spectators and the performance, first, the weave of actions which makes up the performance text opens up many associative links between each action (as signifier), its (signified) meaning, and those of other actions and their meanings; these associative openings offer a plurality of readings for the spectator, problematizing the reduction of their 'weave' to a linear concept of meaning. To this is added the synesthetic effect of these signs -- because they are actions -- which brings us to a second, crucial aspect of how these actions create the potential for *work* on the part of the spectator. The synesthetic effect of each action in the

dramaturgical 'weave' corporeally involves the spectators; therefore, what the performance text 'does' to the spectators becomes increasingly important. The co-presence of these two processes facilitates meaning at a further conceptual level because the epistemological condition of the first is 'woven' into the ontological condition of the second. Where epistemology encounters ontology in spectatorship, and meaning becomes more a concern of what effect a text has upon the spectator, then this experience has the potential to provoke a process of making meaning, an action in itself, which is experienced as work on the part of the spectator.

In the creation of a theatre event with their spectators, DV8 can be seen to develop these two stages of dramaturgy through the dilated body of the performer and the gaze of the spectator. First, there is the establishment of the spectators' psychical investment in the imagery of the performers' dilated bodies. This is a function of the spectators' desire for both psychic assurance and their fetishization of a body 'language' which gives them libidinal pleasure, and an understanding of what the body represents. Second, the use of dramaturgical strategies such as movement which radically manipulates the body and the *mise en scène* are used to disrupt this libidinal imagery and the psychic and representational assurances it may have for the spectator. DV8 explore the violence of male sexual identity in such a way that the spectators must confront a violence of sensation in themselves, rather than merely a sensation of violence as it is represented on stage.

Perhaps the most significant strategy used by DV8 in both Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men and Enter Achilles to create a dramaturgical weave of action which extends to the spectators is the use of *anamorphic* staging of violence. Here, the spectators experience a psychical 'proximity' to violent sensations through their gaze on the performers' dilated bodies; however, the desire which this dilation brings about in the spectators is then subverted as they receive glimpses of the performers' personal struggle 'anamorphically' with the

violence of the performance's content. In this moment the spectators' gaze and the performers' bodies have become 'detached' in action which collapses the spectators' desiring distance. Anamorphosis subverts the certainties which are induced by the illusionistic space of theatrical representation. Anamorphosis subverts the theatrical-representational apparatus because it exposes the *figural* quality -- in the desiring gaze -- by which this representational space operates, yet cannot be accounted for within its workings. Here postmodern dramaturgy disrupts the visual and metaphysical certainties which are induced by the illusionistic space of the theatrical-representational apparatus, thereby the performers' bodies do not signify a presence which transcends interaction with the spectators. In critical response to seductively popular, metaphysical conceptions of masculine sexuality, Newson creates a theatre event where the search for this identity is risked between the performance and the spectators.

The confessional and mapping narratives of Forced Entertainment's dramaturgy also engage the spectator in a search for identity which entails risk in that the performative contract between the spectator and the performance requires a certain amount of vulnerability. Here the pragmatic effects of narrative transmission in the creation of a theatre event open up a space of sublime speculation for the spectators within theatrical representation. The sublime is brought about through the effects of a dramaturgical weave between the Idea and actuality of presentation. The former signifies identity on a metaphysical level while the latter grounds such speculation in an intimate confrontation with an inert presentation of the real; the co-presence of these two processes generates the potential for the sublime in the theatre event.

The sublime can be equated with the Lacanian Real as it is confronted within representation, where subjectivity is engendered by the indeterminacy of its speculative proposition in performance, in the fissure between essence and appearance.

The performative pragmatics of Forced Entertainment's narratives lead us to that which is produced as a residue, a remnant, a leftover of every attempt to confess our true self or to dream what our world might be; at the core of the pleasure of these confessions and dreams is a force in the presentation of their opposite, a hard core embodiment of displeasure in a silence or a nightmare. It is precisely in the subjective intimacy of this event, in the pragmatic transmission of these narratives which simultaneously attract and repel, that the sublime is experienced. Here confession creates a vulnerable meeting of spectators and performers, juxtaposed between desire and shame, in the Real of the theatre event.

Brith Gof have created a theatrical heterotopia which opens a space of 'public reflexivity' around the actuals of Welsh cultural identity. Here a dramaturgical weave between local cultural forms and remote theatrical practices creates an experience of *liminality* whereby the spectators may see themselves and their culture in a new light. The threshold experience of being between quotidian cultural activities and the indeterminacy of a theatre event is one where cultural identity becomes pressurized; while this event respects the way in which these practices define a boundary and delineate a culture's unique status, it simultaneously marks this boundary as a site of discovery. The liminality of this dramaturgical weave reveals that as the boundary of Welsh cultural identity meets with other cultural practices it is not a location where something stops, but rather it marks the location of a *heterotopian colony*, full of the creative potential of hybridity, where something begins its presencing. In this site of theatrical heterotopia a time and space of subjectivity may be found which is full of potency and potentiality, experiment and play.

Brith Gof's theatrical heterotopia shares with Forced Entertainment the use of found, quotidian elements which provide a resistance to the formal resolution of the fabricated elements of theatrical representation. The

unpredictable characteristics of the found objects or sites in either Nights in This City, Haeearn, or Goddodin subvert the signification strategies of the fabricated, and in this disruption there is a shift from *representation* to *presence*. By means of its indeterminate presence, the found fills out the void, the impossibility, of the signifying representation of the subject, and thereby is present as an excess to the strategies of signification. This 'excess', which escapes discursive analysis of Welsh cultural identity, is equivalent to the 'surplus' of theatrical representation mentioned above, yet as a positive -- in this case, dramaturgical -- element of it, it demands a *process of re-consideration* of the found, of the found's identity, and the spectators' relationship to this identity. Brith Gof have created a theatre event, at once a vision and a construction, that offers the spectators *ecstasis*, taking them 'beyond' the known in order to return, and in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, confront the political conditions of the present.

Despite the diversity of dramaturgical strategies utilized by each of the three companies in this study, there remains a similarity in how the signification of identity in relationship to the object of representation is fissured by a reliance on something which extends outside itself, a 'surplus' to representation. The postmodern dramaturgy practiced by each of these companies opens up the *effects* of this surplus, and the relationship between the spectators and these 'effects' can be seen as the 'substance' of the spectators' relationship to the object of representation in the theatre event. It is to this substance of engagement, which engenders the work of the spectator in the theatre event, to which we must now turn our attention.

The substance which exists in excess to the object of theatrical representation engages the spectators in a process of 'work' because it poses a question which aims at the heart of subjectivity. At first glance, this may seem like a conventional philosophical problem: the spectator-as-subject takes on board the question posed by the performance, and as

such enacts this critical force of negativity upon the positively given self or, in other words, embodies the question. But, on the contrary, here we have a notion of subjectivity developed by Jacques Lacan, which is the exact opposite: the subject is not a question, it is an answer, the 'answer' of the Real to the question asked by the big Other, the symbolic order or, in this case, the theatrical-representational apparatus. It is not the subject which is asking the question; the subject is the void of the impossibility of answering the question of the Other. The subject must work toward the answer of the question posed by the theatrical-representational apparatus because in a sense this question is unanswerable, yet the pursuit of the answer, the relationship created between the subject and the object of representation, which is the substance of this question, is subjectivity itself.

To explain this, we may refer to Tim Etchells' perspective of the relationship between the spectator and the development of confessional narratives in the work of *Forced Entertainment*, which he discusses in Appendix One. Etchells claims that

there is an element in the work which says to the audience, 'You came here, and you wanted to see something. What did you want to see?' In psychoanalytic terms, perhaps it's the desire to see pain, or the desire to see something revealed, or something private. It becomes interesting when you consider, well, how far do these desires need to go?⁴⁷⁰

Indeed, for the spectators this question becomes particularly interesting as they discover it is essentially up to them how far this contract with the performance needs to go. In the mapping narratives of Nights in This City there is the pivotal moment in the text when after Alan has left the coach, the second tour guide engages the spectators in a more intimate form of address, which includes questions:

⁴⁷⁰ Andrew Houston, "Interview With Tim Etchells of *Forced Entertainment*," (see Appendix One and Chapter Five).

That's the place where you first met someone and that's the place where you fell out of love, and that's the place where your money got stolen and that's the place where you ran for a taxi and it wasn't raining, and there's a building you slept inside, once perhaps, or many times, and isn't this a street you used to live on, and weren't you always the person staring out the car window, watching the world like the movies, and weren't you always the one who'd travelled a long way, through the day and into the night...[?]⁴⁷¹

Here the intimate address beginning with 'You' is followed by questions which endeavour to connect the unsignifiable substance of the spectators' subjectivity with the unsignifiable substance in the appearance of the world: the indeterminate object of knowledge, outside the coach windows.

In the dramaturgy of DV8, the approach taken toward male sexual identity aims at dividing the spectators' attraction to what they experience. The question posed to the spectators concerns their *jouissance*, their paradoxical desire and shame in relation to the object of representation. In Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men and Enter Achilles the question takes on a somewhat obscene dimension as it addresses that part of the substance or object within the subject which is fascinated with a lethal drive. Concerning male identity, these performances both ask, 'How does your attraction to this violence make it a part of you?' And the spectators must confront their subjectivity which is split on this object, this traumatic imbalance of fascination with 'nature sick unto death', with this 'death drive' of aggression.⁴⁷²

Brith Gof's exploration of Welsh national identity asks the spectators to reconsider their orientation toward the pedagogical, historical object of Welsh nationhood. Here the spectator is asked in effect, 'What constitutes your national identity?' and 'How is your desire divided over the cultural practices which constitute this identity?' As with *Forced Entertainment* and DV8, here the risk or threat of these

⁴⁷¹ Tim Etchells, Nights in This City, unpublished (1995) 15.

⁴⁷² See Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 180-181.

questions consists in their effect upon the subject. For the spectator, the answer to the question posed by the performance begins with a desire to put into words what is usually left unspoken. As theatrical representation takes on the role of the Lacanian big Other, its question aims at an answer which is not possible, where the word is lacking, where the subject is exposed to a kind of trauma about the answer.⁴⁷³

In demanding that the spectator be the subject of a question posed by the theatrical-representational apparatus, postmodern dramaturgy aims at the innermost, intimate kernel of subjectivity called *das Ding* (the Thing) by Lacan. Lacan considered this 'substance' of subjectivity, this strange body in the subject's interior to be radically interior and yet at the same time to be already exterior; and to describe this phenomenon, he coined a new word: *extime*. Slavoj Žižek places Lacan's 'extime' in an historical context when he says:

The real object of the question [posed to the subject] is what Plato, in the *Symposium*, called -- through the mouth of Alcibiades -- *agalma*, the hidden treasure, the essential object in [the subject] which cannot be objectivated, dominated.⁴⁷⁴

The Lacanian formula for this object is of course *objet petit a*, this point of Real at the very heart of the subject which cannot be symbolized, which is produced as a residue, a remnant, a leftover of every signifying operation; a hard core embodying *jouissance*, enjoyment, and as such an object which simultaneously attracts and repels us -- which *divides* our desire and thus provokes the subject to work toward a response. The subject exists only in so far as it experiences itself as some alien, positively given entity, and this experience, this *relationality* between the object of representation and the object within the subject is the effect of postmodern dramaturgy. In the face of this paradoxical effect, of the divided desire stimulated by the theatre event,

⁴⁷³ See Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 180.

⁴⁷⁴ Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology 180.

there is the potential for the subject-as-spectator to develop an ethical form of relating, an integrity toward the real, and toward the essence of subjectivity.

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APPENDIX ONE

INTERVIEW WITH TIM ETCHELLS OF *FORCED ENTERTAINMENT*

Thursday, May 18, 1995

Andrew Houston: In a prefatory note to the programme for *Emanuelle Enchanted* (1992), Andrew Quick describes the work of Forced Entertainment as possessing "a peculiar Britishness".⁴⁷⁵ How do you respond to this description in light of your most recent productions?

Tim EtcHELLS: I think that's one strand of the work which has been there for some time, but has been strengthened in the last few projects. I think one of the nicest things that anyone ever said to us about our work came from a Swiss reviewer who said that he liked what we did because it felt like it came from a specific time and place. In a time where so much avant-garde and 'experimental' performance seems to come from a sort of abstract amalgam of European cultures, with a little American influence thrown in, we are definitely fragmenting off from this. Our work does connect with this culture, and is influenced by it, but at the same time we are working from what is here in Sheffield, and with what for us constitutes a British or English cultural 'landscape'.

A.H.: I understand that you and the other company members are not from Sheffield originally, so what brought you to this place?

T.E.: It was a really random thing actually. We wanted to get out of the south-west,⁴⁷⁶ we wanted to move to a big city, and we knew we didn't want to go to London. I suppose Sheffield was attractive because in the early 1980s, when we moved, it had the sort of reputation that Manchester's enjoyed recently: as a musical city it was really thriving, you had bands like the Human League and Cabaret Voltaire, and industrial music was big here. That was exciting and something we wanted to be around. Also, Sheffield had this sort of 'People's Republic of South-Yorkshire' identity. All the bus fares in the city were 5 pence; you actually had to go an awful long way to spend £10. There were loads of events for people on the dole. It was a very economically depressed place, but from this there seemed to be a culture of creativity and an atmosphere of 'just doing things'. At the time, Sheffield just seemed like the place to be. None of us

⁴⁷⁵ Andrew Quick, "Prefatory note in *Emanuelle Enchanted*," *Performance Programme* (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, 1993).

⁴⁷⁶ Five of the company's core members (Robin Arthur, Richard Lowdon, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor, and EtcHELLS) met at Exeter University. The other core member, Claire Marshall, joined the company in 1991.

knew the city. I'd known people who had studied here, but by the time we had decided to move here all of them had left. So, we came without knowing a single person really. It's crazy, but I suppose it fits the work we do.

A.H.: Have some of these qualities -- the populism, the sense of a community in hardship -- been important influences in the company's work?

T.E.: It doesn't really feel like that much of an easy fit here. I mean 'old Labour' is the ethic of the city, which is to say the governing values here are fairly prosaic and conservative. What's interesting is that in many ways, Sheffield hasn't gotten used to being a city; it still likes to think of itself as a town. While there are some things that are quite nice about this as a place to live, there are some things -- from an artistic point of view -- that really irritate me.

A.H.: Who is your audience here?

T.E.: Well, there is an artistic community that we're involved in here. And, I suppose Sheffield is a small enough place that it's fairly easy to have regular contact with people in related arts: people doing fine art, people who are doing video, people who are doing computer stuff, etc. And there actually is a free sense of dialogue and exchange between those involved in different cultural disciplines. And this is very healthy I think. Also, there have been some specific links between what we are doing and the local music scene. So at various times we have collaborated with different musicians and bands in the city. So, I think that contact and collaboration with various parts of the artistic community has been an important part of developing our audience, and an interest in our work among these people generally.

In terms of a specific description of our audience, the majority of people coming to see our work are in their twenties; say, mostly between the ages of 18 and 25. And I've noticed that we've developed a faithful following among young people; so quite often someone will come to see us for a first time and then come back and see several shows. We get a lot of students out to see our work. Projects like the bus trip (Nights In This City) are interesting, though, because they tend to bring out a very different audience. Similar to the piece we did at the Manchester Central Library last year (Dreams Winter), the performance attracted people who were regular users of the library, plus our established Manchester audience.

A.H.: So the recent shift toward site-specific work has allowed the company to attract different audiences.

T.E.: Absolutely. For the nine-o'clock performance of Nights In This City last Tuesday we had ten pensioners in the audience. They were probably scared out of their minds on the

actual trip 'round the city, but at the end in the bus barn, I saw them looking for the street they live on, and most of them took time to ask Cathy and Claire questions at the door. So that was brilliant.

A.H.: Yes, and it strikes me that a work like Nights In This City has this terrific basis, not unlike a kind of popular theatre project, which obliges the participating spectator to re-examine themselves, and this process usually begins with the place that they live. For me this work felt very much like a process where I could reconsider the world I was seeing outside the coach, including my role in it. It was greatly affected by the way it made me see the world outside 'my window' anew.

T.E.: Yeah, and I think of the new audience this sort of project brings in maybe half of them don't like what they find, and don't want to deal with what the work offers, don't like it and never come back. But the other half -- or other third or whatever it is -- I know we will take them with us. And even those who don't come back, maybe their experience of the one show offered them at least a little twist or a little turn in the way they think about themselves or the way they think about the city. That's what we hope for really.

A.H.: In speaking with theatre students from various universities around Britain, there does seem to be a strong following for Forced Entertainment's work among these people. Their way of expressing appreciation for the company's work reminded me of fans' admiration for a rock band. What are your thoughts about this part of your audience?

T.E.: There is a part of our audience which is very committed and very 'into' the aesthetic of our work. They will often travel a long way to see every piece we do and sometimes to different locations to see how the production evolves on tour, and so on. Quite often these people have gone on to become artists, and we've managed to keep a dialogue going with them. Take, for example, James Yarker who started a company called Stan's Cafe in Birmingham. James took part in one of our residential workshops, and then he helped out in our production of Club of No Regrets, and now we have a relationship where we help each other make theatre. This can be simply a matter of exchanging advice, or to the extent of actually helping out on a production, and there are quite a few people with who we have this kind of relationship. As a well-established company we try to create a supportive relationship with new artists. We have a decent rehearsal space, for instance, and we often let people use it for very little rent, or nothing if we're not using it. And I think that the support and dialogue we have established with other artists is an important aspect of what Forced Entertainment is now.

A.H.: Is Sheffield a supportive place for the company to be located, in terms of financial and facility arrangements?

T.E.: Not really; this development (The Workstation) is very exciting, but it costs us a lot of money to be here. The local council is very supportive of our work, but their arts budget isn't very large, so we don't get very much income from there. In terms of the city as a whole, it does tend to feel like a pretty conservative place, and so a times it seems like there is nothing going on. Perhaps lately this is changing somewhat, and the city is 'on the up' as a creative place to be, but in terms of financial support things aren't very good here, and it remains to be seen if there will be any improvement in this area.

A.H.: Concerning the atmosphere in which the company works, you have said that "the work is made under the twin signs of confidence and risk"⁴⁷⁷, is this a reflection of the economic strain the company continually faces in order to exist?

T.E.: Certainly you could read that economically given our current funding battle with the Arts Council.⁴⁷⁸ But that

⁴⁷⁷ Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, "Performance Notes," Emanuelle Enchanted Performance Programme (Sheffield: Forced Entertainment Theatre Cooperative, 1993).

⁴⁷⁸ In addition to funding received at the regional level from the Sheffield City Council and the Yorkshire and Humberside Arts Board, Forced Entertainment receives its principal funding from The Arts Council of England; they have been funded through the Drama Projects Subsidy Scheme since 1986. The Scheme offers financial support to companies for a single production and all applications are assessed by a committee comprising a number of independent practitioners. The specific priorities for the Scheme are the support of new writing, culturally diverse theatre, puppetry, mime and physical theatre, arts and disability and experimental theatre.

In the autumn of 1994 The Arts Council turned down two project bids made by Forced Entertainment for 1995/96. The site-specific project which became Nights In This City was soon after approved, while the bid for Speak Bitterness was again rejected. The Arts Council based their decision on the negative written reports from four of its assessors of Hidden J, which was on a British tour at the end of 1994. The rejection for funding was particularly contentious because since 1992 Forced Entertainment have been eligible to bid for The Arts Council's three-year, comprehensive 'Franchise' form of funding, but because of concerns over the company's artistic and managerial development they have not been allowed to do so. This combined de-valuation of Forced Entertainment's work coming (as it was clearly demonstrated to me) from a small percentage of the Drama Projects and Subsidy Scheme committee incited a tremendous campaign of protest against The Arts Council's decision. Forced Entertainment's allegedly under-developed management

quote actually relates to the aesthetic and creative process of the company's work. Having been doing what we're doing for eleven years now, our process is fairly clear. We've gotten to a point where we go into that room down there (the company's Workstation rehearsal space), spend four or five months working, and despite knowing all the ways that we have done this before -- it sounds like Eliot now -- this knowledge will be of no use to us because during the process we will not know what we are going to come out with or why we are going to come out with it. So there's this tremendous risk in our process, but also a confidence. We know that somehow in the melee, the chaos and the blind lostness of that process we will find some things that excite or disturb or resonate for us, and that we will somehow find a way of orchestrating those elements into an experience that's meaningful for other people. Risk is central to our aesthetic because the process of discovery is so crucial to making the work. We're not a company that defines in advance of a project what it is, why it is, what it wants to say, or any of these parameters. We rarely talk about such things.

orchestrated a massive campaign of public awareness about The Arts Council's policy concerning non-traditional forms of theatre; including public events, hundreds of letters from the public, national and local press. Indeed, the letters of protest demonstrated not only public and professional disapproval, but even that of a significant number of advisors for the Drama Projects and Subsidy Scheme committee wrote letters of objection.

At a meeting on 26 April, 1995, the Drama Projects and Subsidy Scheme Committee considered a re-submitted application and agreed to fund a major touring project of Speak Bitterness for autumn and winter of 1995/1996. This significant victory for funding of the company was shrouded however by a sharpened awareness of the gaps in The Arts Council's current approach to funding experimental theatre. In this context the long term funding prospects for Forced Entertainment look bleaker than ever; as with other practitioners of non-mainstream, non-literary theatre. To this end, the final paragraph in a correspondence I received from the company's General Manager, Deborah Chadbourn, is telling. It reads:

It seems more important now than ever, with the recent arrival of [the] Drama [Projects and Subsidy Scheme]'s new policy Green Paper, that the constituency of audiences, venues, advisors, academics and critics who are engaged with new work keep the pressure on about the criteria and values applied to non-traditional forms of theatre, and about the need of practitioners and audiences outside the mainstream.

A.H.: Given the company's commitment to such an open process and the risk of aesthetic discovery which this entails, how do you get this process going each time? In other words, do you have a devising structure which brings about this process of discovery?

T.E.: Yeah, we have a set of strategies which we have developed over eleven years of working together. And this reminds me of something Susan Melrose helped me clarify. I used to say that we start with nothing. You know, we walk into that room and we have no agenda other than the title of the piece, and maybe something like three things written down. Basically nothing -- and then we begin. And Susan said, 'No, you already have the history; you already have all these years of experience and process which is a part of you when you start.' That's a very helpful perception because she's right, you can't just walk in there and do it. You walk in there, plugged into all the things you have done before; plugged into all the frameworks, processes, and strategies that you have used before.

Given this perception of a framework or structure, I'd still say that for us the most important part of creating the work are the really weird accidents or pieces of happenstance that come about. For instance, one night during the process of making a project you see a particular film on t.v., which has a particular scene in it, which somehow 'becomes' or influences a scene in the project. Or you happen to read a book or have a conversation with somebody during this time, and this experience completely changes the way you've been thinking about the project. Openness to these kinds of experiences are very important to us when we are making a work because of their unpredictability; the fact that whatever you browse through or encounter at this particular moment can open up a new way of seeing what you do. The trouble with this of course is that you can't really plan on it. You have to just be open to this and know, for instance, that at certain points in the process it'd be a good idea to spend the afternoon watching a film, going for a walk, or something like that.

A.H.: So the maturity of this company, as a collective and as individual artists, is demonstrated in the awareness of this contingency in the process of creating work, and allowing for it even in the hectic schedule of deadlines leading up to a performance.

T.E.: Yes, I think this is one of the strategies we have developed. So that now in devising a work one of us can say: 'I don't know why, but I think this is in it', or 'I don't know why but I can't do anymore work today...', and the group will respect this instinct and follow it.

A.H.: I imagine it takes an incredible amount of bravery to maintain this freedom of process in the climate created by The Arts Council, where funding is tied to notions of 'investing in innovation', 'quality assurance', and other such

conflations of economics with art. I don't want to dwell too much on finance, but isn't the gap between artistic process and economic accountability a constant obstacle for the company?

T.E.: It's not been a major concern until recently. I mean, we've always had that shit from The Arts Council concerning 'quality' that's really about taste...

A.H.: And politics...

T.E.: Yeah, and what politics is, and until recently our attitude has been that so long as we get the money, we don't really give a shit about what people like that think. If The Council's assessors are not sympathetic to innovative work, or worse still, ignorant of it, and how it might be approached critically, then we are content to 'speak' to audiences at venues that appreciate what we are trying to do because we know that there will be a genuine conversation there. So persuading a few people at The Council that this is good or bad was never really been an issue. You just think, they're not interested...However, since November of last year (1994), when we found out that they weren't going to fund our two major projects of this year, we were awakened to the power behind the paradigm of tastes and politics which these people are working in because suddenly they had the capacity to shut the company down. So now we take these people quite seriously; if we can't persuade, cajole, or twist the arms off The Council's assessors to recognize the quality in our work then we'll have to stop.

A.H.: So political poise is needed more than ever.

T.E.: It's definitely turning us into politicians. One has to take on a kind of advocacy role, and I think one of the reasons why experimental theatre in Britain is constantly under pressure is because there hasn't been a kind of lobby or collective position taken by the people in this area. We're all rather fragmented, rather individual, and rather apt to only like our own stuff and what about three other people are doing. So the idea of collectivization has always been seen as obnoxious to us. And yet, I think, if we don't somehow get together with other artists doing experimental theatre, with the people running the venues, and start saying 'this is a really important cultural sector, and you have to start listening to what we as a community need and want', then things are just going to keep getting worse. One realizes, perhaps rather late in the day, that you have to put time and energy into this kind of lobbying and campaigning, it's a high priority. We've always believed in this kind of advocacy role, but now we realize that it must be done in a much more open way -- in public, in dialogue with The Arts Council -- rather than in the more specialized atmosphere of the academic community, which we're much more used to doing. We've always been quite good at attending conferences and forums and speaking on this specialized level about what we do, and we've

really enjoyed this, but now we realize that we've got to get in there with the repertory theatres, the playwrights, mime, and start saying, 'Well, what about what we're doing...?' Now, we really do have to start attending all those boring meetings, otherwise things are going to get worse rather than better.

A.H.: So the work of Forced Entertainment is political in its practice; in the sense of keeping the cultural space open in which you may continue to create. I wonder how this political struggle to maintain performance practice invades the work's content. Do you think it does?

T.E.: Yeah, I think that the politics of practice underwrites the politics of the work in that eleven years of collective practice is reflected in the work's content. And looking to the next eleven years or so, I hope that Sheffield may be a centre of excellence in Yorkshire for experimental theatre, and we'd like this location in which we are working to develop to be a focal point nationally for experimental theatre practice.

In terms of politics in the material of our performances, I'm not sure that I know what's in the work or exactly how it operates at this level, but one of the things we're very interested in is the way people construct themselves, the way they make stories or versions of themselves and the world that they live in. And that is an incredibly empowering process. We're very interested in the relationships between -- on the one hand -- one's myths, one's versions of reality and one's other selves -- and on the other -- the reality of a city like Sheffield, the reality of living in the media culture, and peoples' everyday experiences. For us there is a dialectic between what is lived and felt, is personal and tangible, and what's around you in terms of 'culture'; that is, the material culture of the city or in terms of what comes in via satellite.

A.H.: This is something which I find very interesting in your work. When we spoke at the (Centre for Performance Research sponsored) Performance and Documentation conference at Lancaster University last year, you mentioned to me that you make a habit of carrying around a notebook in which you compile various items which come to your attention via different media, and this then becomes raw material for the writing that goes into Forced Entertainment's shows. What I think is very effective dramaturgically here, in the use of this kind of 'sampling' of various media, is that it has two simultaneous effects on the spectators. In a performance like Emanuelle Enchanted for example, the text written on the cardboard signs are recognizably 'sound bites', sort of discarded bits of media; while their incorporation into the 'weave' of action and other elements of the performance text gives them a concurrently profound affect as a glimpse of peoples' lives. In the writing of these texts, do you set out to explore the emotional limits of media that most people

dismiss as kitsch, or otherwise worthless?

T.E.: Definitely, and a good example is in A Decade of Forced Entertainment where there's almost an alchemical thing about taking distressed or degraded or forgotten or banal, everyday materials and combining them in a fairly indefinable way so that their arrangement suddenly gives them a different resonance, or makes them speak profoundly. And I think it's a lot to do with taking the elements you have-to-hand like this media language, your own physiology, and culture -- on their own they are so very inadequate -- forced together, however, in the way they work off each other, these inadequacies are put to their limits and begin to speak about something that's unspeakable; that is sublime I suppose in the way it affects you beyond articulation. This is why I think previous commentary about our work has often examined it in terms of both ethics and politics, but I think it also works on a spiritual level.

A.H.: I'd like to turn now to your role(s) in the company's process of creating theatre. As I understand it you perform the duties of what might loosely be called 'playwright' and 'director'. In other words, you tend to stand back and help to guide the others as they improvise and devise material, like a director.

T.E.: Yeah.

A.H.: And in terms of writing, is most of the material generated by the others, or do you come in with written text, what's your role with respect to writing?

T.E.: I tend to write fragments of text, and usually on sheets and sheets of paper; this is material I've written, found, or found and somewhat altered. Then these sheets of paper tend to get chucked on the floor, and scattered about the rehearsal room. Then during 'improvisations' -- although this bears very little relation to what most people would call improvisation, it's really more like messing around with music on -- people will pick up these pieces of paper and have a go at doing them. Most of what they will do will be crap, and most of what I will have collected or written will be crap, but you find that after about a couple of hours of doing this maybe someone will have found a way of doing a paragraph that seems to work. Suddenly the performance of this particular paragraph will work because of the way it emerges out of the rehearsal structure we have built; I'll see it lurching around this structure, offering this presence, and immediately I'll think 'that person, that place, that text'.

A.H.: So then you'll document that particular text as it happened, catalogue it, and then use it later as a building block to create the text of the show.

T.E.: Yeah, and there are variations of this process. For example, when we were working on Hidden J, Richard (Lowdon)

would have about ten sheets of paper that I'd written, and these sheets would contain a jumble of text fragments; Richard himself would be editing this as he would improvise his way through -- doing a line from here and a line from there, half a page from here, back to this line, and so forth. That gives you a pretty good indication of how that piece emerged and also how Terry (O'Connor) created her role in Club Of No Regrets. The company has become used to a process where there is a lot of text laying about on sheets of paper, and then the work of the performer is to shift through this text on the spot, making decisions intuitively about what to do next. Then we would video record this process and transcribe the video recordings, and that would become the working text for the piece. This is a pretty good indication of what we do in terms of spoken text, but also in terms of our movement text, action. We create a lot of videotaped footage of action, look at it, edit it, and then attempt to re-stage it.

A.H.: So video plays an important role in the process of creating a performance in that it documents what the performers come up with in rehearsals; and it gives you a medium which can be examined, edited, and used in future rehearsals.

T.E.: We use the camcorder as a permanently running note-taker. It is absolutely vital for transcribing who was where, who did what, who said what, and how did it work. For Hidden J, for Club Of No Regrets, Emanuelle Enchanted, for nearly all of our most recent work we have used video a lot in the devising process. We have boxes and boxes of tapes from these shows, nearly all the rehearsal process on tape. It's incredibly tedious. You'll get to a point, well into the development of a performance, and in working through a particular action you'll wonder, 'How did this look when we first did it?' 'Let's go back and check it out.' So you fumble through all these tapes which are usually improperly labelled, and then you eventually find the 'version' which bears some resemblance to what you think you did...

A.H.: I can imagine how it makes you question the validity of the documentation process.

T.E.: Yeah, we try to be organised about it but invariably there ends up being loads of tapes lying around, and you think, 'What in-the-fuck is on these tapes?' and 'Where is the first time we ever discovered that idea!?' Tapes become lost, and they become legendary because of what we think is on them.

A.H.: Yes, a case of 'tape as desired object'...

T.E.: Yep, and you can guarantee that on the days when the camcorder is broken or you don't have a tape, instead of sending someone into town for a replacement or a new tape, you say, 'Naw, we wont' bother taping it', and something extraordinary happens. And you never can reproduce it because nobody knows exactly what it was that happened.

A.H.: So the camcorder has become a necessary organ, if you like, of the devising process. It's like a pair of eyes or ears, or other sensory receiver that you have to have in your process of developing performance.

T.E.: Absolutely, and we used to not like that idea, but for the work we are doing now it's indispensable. It's an important way of carrying through our process because if you are interested in the accidental and the way in which mistakes can develop the work, the camcorder is an important part of layering that element into the performance text. You can 'recall' aspects of accidental staging like, for instance, while Richard was reading that speech Terry went wandering around with a hat on, or Robin (Arthur) dropped a book at a moment that punctuated what was said, etc. It helps you gather together staging that you would never think to create in a predetermined way. As lots of insane things happen simultaneously in the rehearsal process it allows you to look at the whole thing again and decide what exactly you want to keep, what works and what doesn't work.

A.H.: In terms of how this process informs the site specific nature of Nights In This City, what strikes me as particularly effective about this work is the openness of the performance text to the indeterminant developments of reality outside the coach. So, for example, as Richard is speaking about himself, his character, Sheffield, a host of other cities, and basically creating a narrative that touches on so many things real and imaginary, there emerges these many connectable moments in what he is saying with what is happening for me in the world passing by my coach window. And when this is really working for the spectators it is because they have allowed themselves to have complete trust in the chaos of what the performer is doing -- in this case the text of Alan, Richard's character, shifts all over the place -- and in trusting in the performer and the performance process suddenly there is this opening for a vulnerability of response. For me, there was this moment of personal vulnerability just after Alan left the bus. Cathy (Naden), the second tour guide, seemed to be navigating me -- personally -- back to the city's centre, because the things she was saying were matching up in precise synchronicity with events in my past and things I was seeing out the window. It was uncanny, I was suddenly very vulnerable and the things I was thinking about made me cry. It occurred to me afterwards, that this vulnerability to the performance experience is what's at stake here, for both the performers and spectators, isn't it?

T.E.: I think that's exactly right. Sometimes it feels like what we are trying to do is design a kind of Rorschach test, that psychologists use. Similar to the Rorschach ink blots, some of the work we do really does resonate on a lot of things for many in the audience, implying lots of different images and stories; also, there are people for whom our work is impenetrable, as some will look at the Rorschach and say, well, this is just an ink blot. We aim for the opposite

reaction: to design temporal and spatial events that truly work on the spectator; that have spaces they may enter, offering inspiration to explore this space and its many possible pathways to ways in which they may resonate with the experience of the performance. We try to open up a freedom for the spectator to do this.

In reference to the vulnerability that you experienced in Nights in This City, the potential for that response is deeply built into the structure of the piece. After a significant stretch of being addressed as 'Ladies and Gentlemen', there is a point where the audience is addressed as 'You', and the text beyond this point is very personal, it is very intimate. I could be wrong, but judging by the atmosphere I have experienced on the bus in the last fifteen minutes of the show, I think most people in the audience are experiencing the kind of change you spoke about. At some point in that final fifteen minutes, the experience of the work is suddenly not about fifty people larking about in a bus, but about me; me travelling, me looking out the window, and me in this experience. The structure of the work very deliberately repositions you in that way.

Also to respond to what you were saying about the spectators having confidence and being willing to risk, I think our work is becoming increasingly about making the audience *be there*. This is vital because it is much easier to be at something, but not be there. In order to experience the work in a way that it becomes worth the effort to 'be there', the audience must truly be open, to really be there in that moment. For instance, I became irritated with those people last night for talking,⁴⁷⁹ because for me what they were doing was being defensive; this is a demonstration of their incapability of being there, and is precisely the opposite of what this work demands.

A.H.: Right, I understand your response to these people now. I remember thinking last night that you were being overly hostile to that situation. The playing around of those people didn't invade my experience of the work much at all, but I now see why it angered you.

T.E.: I don't really mind it. I mean if you are going to do a

⁴⁷⁹ During the 9 pm performance, the second of the evening, on Wednesday, May 17, a group of about four people spent much of the journey playing around. They seemed to be slightly drunk, and as the beginning of the performance is chaotic and humorous, they kept this atmosphere going among themselves, and basically stopped participating as an audience after a while. Tim was furious at their disrespect. As another audience member on this particular journey, in my experience any disruptive presence they might have had faded away entirely as I became captivated by the performance.

piece on a bus, you have to take what comes along with these different circumstances. If people feel like they can 'chat' through this kind of bus ride, then that's fair enough. Once the tone of the piece had shifted, and these people were still being noisy, it was obvious that they were just showing off really. I could have done without it. However, given the framework of what we are trying to do, what they did is a given possibility and I don't criticise them in this respect. I'd only say that there is a certain level of denial in this response that bothers me.

A.H.: It's an example of what you were saying about being there without really being there, isn't it?

T.E.: Yes, and it has to do with whether or not people buy into the work or not. You always get certain people who don't. The idea of the confessional format in the new piece (Speak Bitterness), comes from a moment in Marina & Lee where the performers confess to the audience. Suddenly the lights in the space becomes very bright, and the performers switch from acting as if nobody was out there, to standing in front of the audience, making eye contact and being very exposed as they make confessions. The installation version of Speak Bitterness was five hours of this kind of exposed confessional.⁴⁸⁰ The theatre piece will only be about an hour and forty minutes, but it will be nothing but this kind of contact with the audience. The audience will be small, about a hundred, in as much of an enclosed space as we can construct, and they'll be lit -- not brightly -- but enough to know that they are not hiding in the dark. While the nature of these confessions includes everything from the intolerable to the unbelievably banal, the crux of the work is about the making and breaking of eye contact, and the negotiation of the presence of the audience with the presence of the performers.

Along the same lines, but from a slightly different perspective, in Club Of No Regrets there is an element in the work which says to the audience, 'You came here, and you wanted to see something. What did you want to see?' In psychoanalytic terms, perhaps it's the desire to see pain, or the desire to see something revealed, or something private. It becomes interesting when you consider, well, how far do these desires need to go? What is truth in this situation? Are you really here as an audience, in the way you expect the performers to be here? The moments in performance that are becoming increasingly more interesting for me are those when we are effectively asking the audience, 'Are you here?'

A.H.: Are you vulnerable?

⁴⁸⁰ Speak Bitterness was originally performed as installation/durational work, commissioned for the National Review of Live Art, and presented in Glasgow in October, 1994.

T.E.: Exactly, and the reason why we are doing Speak Bitterness now is that we want to cut away everything else, and just say, 'Look, for this hour and forty minutes, you've got to be here. You can't be anywhere else because we're going to be looking in your eyes when we're talking, and you're going to be lit.' That's not aggressive, because from what people said about their experience of this kind of thing in Glasgow, it actually becomes a pleasurable experience. One person described it as a cross between a confessional and some kind of very weird pillow-talk. There's an openness from the performers that draws you into this very intimate relationship, and the price is that you have to be present. In this respect it's kind of strangely seductive, as well as oddly non-theatrical in that it consists of 'here we are', and in this respect it doesn't take you any where else.

A.H.: This is precisely the kind of effect on spectators which the theoretical foundation of my thesis attempts to demonstrate occurs due to dramaturgical strategies in the work. I am very interested in this phenomena which occurs between the performers and spectators that has no metaphysical or transcendental meaning outside of the immediate, ephemeral interaction in the space. Given that such an experience pushes the representational limits of what either performers, spectators, or any outside documentation could say about what went on during the performance, I can see how profoundly difficult it is to establish the value of this experience outside its moment of occurrence -- as the funding bodies require you to do. And in terms of addressing a public used to purchasing cultural experiences with fairly clear representational meanings -- that is, experiences whose meanings and effects do 'take them [some]where else' -- is it not also a struggle you have with your audience? I hate to be a cynic, are people open to the kind of work and vulnerability this performance requires?

T.E.: Well, I think within the structure of the work you have a layering of different frames of representation which involve the audience in the way that they attract and then de-centre their attention. At one moment a spectator will feel like they are watching cinema and then this will dissolve into a feeling of being addressed directly. The structure of most of our more recent work jumps in such a way between these layers of representation, so that as the spectator becomes involved in each structure they are required to use different watching strategies, becoming actively involved in each as shifts of focus occur. These are strategies the audience is accustomed to using in their experience of any other cultural form but, in the way they are invited to watch our performance, the emphasis is no longer on these strategies but on the flipping between them. There is suddenly a kind of self-reflexive awareness in how these strategies are used as our work emphasizes an awareness of the changes in how the world is experienced. It is like, for example, in Night In This City when 'you' were suddenly re-positioned -- in your personal history, in your experience of the bus ride, in your

experience of Sheffield, etc. -- all in relation to your experience of these shifts in the work.

A.H.: Yes, and it is incredible how one becomes completely oblivious to these strategies because the way in which the work re-positions you brings forth sensations and unconscious responses, like -- as you have said in the press release for Club Of No Regrets -- "stories and voices that rise unbidden from the body at night." The work definitely touches off such things, and the way the strategies affect you is definitely seductive.

T.E.: Well, that was actually something I was going to take you up on concerning vulnerability in the consumption of culture. I wonder if in fact all consumption of culture is about seducing the consumer. In relating this to our work, I think there are two things I can say. First, although both a mainstream movie and our work contain seductive representational strategies, the difference here is that our work tries to open up gaps between these strategies, and thereby an awareness of how they work seductively on the spectator. Secondly, I'd say that the opening of these gaps, which brings about an awareness of them in the spectator, is actually in the interest of another kind of seduction in our work. This is a different kind of seduction than that of a movie-goer because -- to use an example I mentioned earlier -- the spectator now not only notices something in the Rorschach blot, now there is an awareness of a capacity to notice something in it, and this self-reflexive awareness is seductive in its own right. Whereas -- I guess -- the mainstream movie is a blot that seduces you into thinking about something, but doesn't try to make you reflect on your capacity to reflect.

A.H.: That's where I think trust and vulnerability are required by your work. For the spectator to be open to the seduction of a process which makes them reflect on how they think about things requires their trust. It seems like Forced Entertainment's work invites the spectators to be open to the perceptual disruptions of how they think about the work, and the world. Perhaps the way in which mainstream media representations are used in the work further allows for the spectators' openness because it operates on a level of spectacle to which people have become accustomed.

T.E.: Yeah, our work begins from the idea that after television everything changes; that television re-makes us. Television has appropriated nearly all of our reality, to the point where it's very difficult to represent much of this reality without short-circuiting back into television. I guess this is where Guy Debord's ideas are useful in that nothing is real until it becomes spectacle and as soon as it becomes spectacle it's not real anymore. So experience exists on this kind of 'event horizon' where things are real for a fraction of a second, and then they become spectacle, then they are confirmed as real, and then they aren't real anymore.

A.H.: Forced Entertainment's theatre plays on this event horizon, and given this perspective, the witnessing of the work is key to its happening.

T.E.: Witnessing, yes, and creating an experience where witnessing is thrown back on itself. For example, in Hidden J something happens in this room offstage, and the only visual access the spectators have to this room is a window, upstage, slightly off-centre. This window offers a frame for the activity so that anything which happens in this room appears as if it is occurring in a cinematic frame. And like The Club Of No Regrets, there is a load of activity which is constantly happening all around and in front of this frame; so, you've got this cinema frame for the spectators to focus on, but you've also got all this other activity happening, disrupting the spectators' focus on this frame. Presumably people just stop looking at the window, and after a while a curtain is drawn over it. Cathy is on the phone in this room, and draws the curtain so that the audience can't see her. She is speaking in this gibberish language which sounds a bit like an eastern European language, and she builds into this hysterical fit down the phone. And with the curtain drawn, the audience can't witness this hysteria, they can only see the other performers standing around, helpless. Richard finds a step-ladder and uses it to peek over the wall at what's going on, and then comes back down and acts stressed by what he's seen. This moment lasts for about 3 or 4 minutes where essentially there's nothing to see; there's just looking at something you have been prevented from looking at. For the spectator, this is an experience that really throws you back on yourself, in this void of not being allowed to witness, you become aware of what it is to witness, and of what it is to just be there. It's a moment which is defined by what you as a spectator bring to it.

A.H.: The work exists as a 'theatre event' because of what the spectators bring to it, and in this respect it differs greatly from the far more un-reflexive experience of a theatrical production of a play.

T.E.: Yeah, one of the big problems for me about plays is that almost by definition 'a play' seems to me to be *not* about, 'Are you here?', they seem to be about, 'We're over there.' We're all pretending to do this, and you are watching us.

A.H.: Yes, and this reminds me of the critiques of perspectival ideologies I have been reading lately by people like Paul Virilio and Martin Jay. In the case of Virilio's work, he often equates the problems of modern art forms with the visual habits they have inherited from the Enlightenment. I am reminded here of one such discussion where he speaks about how the workings of perspectival design in art are based on the illusion of gaining distance and therefore a kind of

time for cognition of the art for the viewer.⁴⁸¹ He connects this sort of thing with everything from battle strategies to modern architecture, where the design of representational space is meant to put distance between parties -- be it two armies, separated by a battle strategy, or bank executives separated from their customers by 60 storeys of modern architecture -- and therefore the benefit of contemplation time for the party most successful at such strategies. Anyway, although Virilio doesn't mention theatre, his discussion makes me think of the distance between the spectators and the performers which nearly always remains intact in theatrical productions of plays. For me, the theatrical-representational space is nearly always about the gaining of distance between spectators and performers so that neither party is obliged to be vulnerable to the other. This work has its presence in a metaphysical meaning and therefore strives for that which is 'out there somewhere', rather than prioritizing that which happens between the performers and spectators. Instead the 'theatrical' experience is kept at a safe distance.

T.E.: This is the amazing thing about plays, isn't it? It's amazing that this kind of theatre doesn't adopt other kinds of strategies to make you think about the predominant strategy always in use. Cinema has definitely developed this kind of sophistication, even in the mainstream.

A.H.: To sum up, I suppose the challenge for Forced Entertainment's continued existence is to constantly challenge such representational confinements, be they aesthetic or based on requirements for funding. I don't want to demand a mission statement from you here, but how would you express this challenge?

T.E.: I think the 'manifesto' is about making contact, and about providing challenges and opportunities for dialogue with people. I am not particularly bothered where or how this takes place; it could be in a theatre space, a gallery space, a library, a bus, or on the Internet. It seems to me that all of these spaces can be areas for contact, and that's what is important.

⁴⁸¹ See Paul Virilio, The Vision Machine, transl. Julie Rose (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1994) 1-18.

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE PEARSON OF BRITH GOF

Thursday, March 7, 1996

Andrew Houston: Brith Gof's latest production, Prydain (1996) is sub-titled "The Impossibility of Britishness". I wonder if we can begin by exploring what for you constitutes 'Britishness'.

Mike Pearson: I think in the experience of any small nation history tends to accrue around particular incidents; I think they become events people know about and around which people's opinion forms. Eventually these incidents generate their own histories, 'minor' histories, which tend to defy the trajectories of 'major' historical discourse conventionally used to define them. The existence of such incidents in Wales have been the source of many works for us. For example, the afforestation of large tracks of land resulted in Rhydcymerau (1984)⁴⁸², or the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley gave rise to Y Pen Bas Y Pen Dwn (1995).⁴⁸³ Even the event of

⁴⁸² This is a story of a community killed by outside bureaucracy and the enforced buying of land for afforestation. Here two performers work to cut up a tree using only basic carpentry tools; their sawing and hammering counterpoint the pattern of poems and stories from two major Welsh writers, D.J. Williams and Gwenallt, concerning rural decay. The performance reaches its poignant conclusion when the performers working with wood produce a box with their materials which becomes a coffin for the community.

⁴⁸³ This production's title can be translated as 'The Shallow End The Deep End'. Conceived along the same lines as some of Brith Gof's most ambitious projects, like Goddodin (1988-89), Pax (1990-91), and Haeearn (1992-93), it was meant to be a site-specific live performance in Liverpool with a televised production to follow. Due to funding constraints, the live performance was cancelled and it became a production for Welsh television. The work develops two narratives: one historical, the flooding of Cwm Tryweryn in North Wales by the Liverpool Corporation in the 1950s-60s; the other is fictional, Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe. Concerning the 'minor history event from which the production emerged, Associate Artistic Director, Clifford McLucas has this to say:

In December 1955 Liverpool Corporation announced a multi-million pound scheme to dam the Tryweryn Valley in Meirionydd. The first the people living in the valley knew about the reservoir scheme was when they saw it in the Liverpool newspapers. Over the following years there arose in Wales a

emigration can be seen as an incident of minor history, and we use this in Patagonia (1992).⁴⁸⁴ As a theatre company it has

unanimous opposition to the plan. And this opposition operated through all of the democratic channels. Representations to Liverpool Corporation. Lobbying of city councillors. Peaceful protests in the streets of Liverpool. But the city voted to proceed. This involved the submission of a private bill through parliament. Once again the Welsh opposed the scheme at every point in the democratic process. But the bill was passed. Democracy was seen to have failed to protect the needs of the Welsh against the desires of the English. Eventually the valley was flooded. And Tryweryn became a clear illustration of the powerlessness of the Welsh. And exposed the reality of the political system in Wales. That it was a part of England. Liverpool had as much right to Tryweryn as it might have to the River Mersey. Wales only existed in the hearts of the Welsh.

See Clifford McLucas, Y Pen Bas Y Pen Dwn, *Production Booklet* (Cardiff: Brith Gof, 1995) 3.

⁴⁸⁴ The production explores the Welsh communities of Argentina, in the Patagonia region. In 1986 the company paid two visits to these communities: in July, Lis Hughes Jones presented Ann Griffiths, a solo work on the 19th Century Welsh hymn writer, and in October, the whole company returned to present Ymfudwyr, a performance about the emigrant experience. During these visits, the company made film, video, photographic, and sound recordings of interviews with local people, chapel services and eisteddfod competitions. This material was subsequently made into a television documentary and it was later used to develop Patagonia. Patagonia explores what is considered the great Welsh adventure of the 19th Century, and what the company have described as 'the dream in the desert'. Concerning the work's inspiration, the production's notes say:

The passionate drive to create a garden of Welshness in the wilderness, requiring all the ingenuity, communal resources and pioneer spirit of a small nation, remains a source of inspiration. Its success and survival shows us a Wales unmediated by a dominant neighbour: part Victorian survival, part mirage, part theme park...

See "Background to the Performance," Patagonia Performance Programme (Cardiff: Brith Gof, 1992).

always been fruitful for us to take these inciting incidents and explore them theatrically. But there came a point where I had begun to feel that this process was becoming too easy, and that the company had run its course in exclusively focusing on the presentation of minor histories. So with Y Pen Bas Y Pen Dwn there was an attempt to develop an element of conflict between a major and minor history in the work; here the flooding of Tryweryn meets with Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe.

A.H.: So, in your experience of dealing with local incidents and their histories it eventually became necessary to frame these events in a wider context.

M.P.: Yes, it's evident that we can always make a confrontational piece about Welsh identity, nation, and Britishness by merely focusing on these incidents of minor history, but in Brith Gof's more recent work there has been an attempt to incorporate a wider context. As I say at the beginning of the performance of Prydain, we are trying to create a text from the opinions of a lot of different people about Britain: people of many different generations, ethnic backgrounds, living in various countries, of different religious persuasions, and so forth. The trouble for me with this approach, however, was that I just couldn't get a grip on it. It seemed to me like this breadth of scope was in danger of resulting in a kind of banality, in nothing but a relativism of many incidents and minor histories. So instead of making a performance which is meant to be *about* something -- about the conflict of these many opinions and perspectives of Britain -- we decided we had to make a performance which *is* something, that *is* the experience of this situation. It occurred to me that perhaps the only way to deal with these conflicting opinions and perspectives was to try to 'embody' what is going on in Britain. That is, to create a situation where some people are willing to participate, and push things a little, and some people are more likely to watch. I'm not making a pejorative distinction between the two; what I'm thinking of is that in the reality of experiencing events, there is a multiplicity of involvement and perspective. Somethings you see close up, some are far away, some are half hidden, some you see clearly but you don't know how to cope with them, and so on. In terms of exploring 'the impossibility of Britishness', ultimately we decided to go to work on the *form* of an experience rather than trying to find a line on subject matter.

A.H.: This approach to form, and the focus upon creating a particular experience for the audience, also seemed to be at the heart of the various productions which make up the Arturius Rex project.⁴⁸⁵ In both Prydain and the final

⁴⁸⁵ Arturius Rex was a project developed over a two-year period, in four parts: *Camlann* - the stirring of a nation to battle, *DOA* - the dying leader, *Cusanu Esgyrn* - the fate

production of Arturius Rex the spectators were given the choice of two kinds of involvement with the performance.⁴⁸⁶ Within these two choices, however, there were in fact many options of engagement offered. This work seems to reflect a profound reconsideration of the various orders of participation in theatre: between performers and spectators, and vice versa, as well as between the spectators themselves. What are the origins of this style of dramaturgy in your practice?

M.P.: I think they come from two precise sources. One is Grotowski, and I have always felt that the least appreciated feature of his work was the fact that he began each new production with an empty space. So the scenography for each new piece put the audience and the performers in an entirely different physical relationship. What is of vital significance for me here is that his starting point is the empty space, not the empty stage. This has always been important for me, and I have tried to maintain it in all the work Brith Gof has ever done. Patagonia is the only show we have ever performed in a theatre building, and even then we approached the theatre stage as a site.⁴⁸⁷ So the impulse to work in warehouse spaces in some of our most recent work doesn't come from some latent

of the survivors, and the culmination of these three in a fourth part entitled Arturius Rex. All four productions combine fragments of poetic and historical texts with contemporary fragments of mass media war imagery to produce an experience of conflict and war which is in part generated between the performers, the work, and the spectators.

⁴⁸⁶ In Arturius Rex we had the choice of watching from above the 'stage' space or being on the 'stage' with the performers; in Prydain the spectators and performers were all in the same space, but we had the choice of whether or not we wanted to be identified -- by wearing a specially marked coat -- as an active participant or not.

⁴⁸⁷ Describing this approach to the theatrical stage as a site used in Patagonia, Pearson has said,

In Patagonia, we had a desire, springing from somewhere, to make a piece for a stage. That was the first unusual thing for us to do and we felt we could only approach the stage as a site, as we would any other performance space, an empty factory or whatever, and the only convention that was given was that the audience would be there (in the auditorium) and the action would be here (onstage).

See Geraldine Cousin, "An Interview with Mike Pearson of Brith Gof," Contemporary Theatre Review, Volume 2, Number 2 (1994): 41.)

notion of site specifics, it comes from this very precise dramaturgical source.

The second source comes from research which has been done on proto-theatrical events. For example, I gave a paper for a theoretical archaeology conference in Durham three years ago beginning with the notion of a crowd, and how as soon as an event happens in the middle of this crowd, like a fight breaking out, the crowd withdraws and then you immediately have a theatrical contract in place. The creation of this kind of proto-playing area has been instrumental in our work lately: there are 'watchers' and those who are 'watched'; the watchers can either compress or expand the playing-area, they always take up a circle because it's the best perceived for watching, it's the most democratic shape, so it puts people equi-distant from the action, and so forth. Then, just as quickly as it started, it ends and this playing space disappears. In fact, it is this very notion, that the event creates the space, which many proto-theatrical forms go to work with. This is precisely what I am trying to explore in Prydain, that the event will create the spaces appropriate to it at any one time. So if you have a long, thin piece of action then the audience takes up a long, thin shape. In this situation the spectator experiences a variety of spatial relations to this action: you get action happening a long way away from you, action which is close up, action which is travelling to and from you, and so on. All of these spatial relationships are impossible to create within a proscenium stage space, and in this respect they are difficult to arrange formally, so I think you have to devise a kind of dramaturgy which is changing from moment to moment; incorporating strategies which will embrace the fluidity of the event.

A.H.: Reflecting on my experience as a participant-spectator in Prydain last night, I was reminded of Augusto Boal's concept of the spect-actor. That is, through my active input in the creation of the performance event I experienced an insight into what I was *doing* with the performers. The shifts allowed to the participant-spectators between acting and spectating brings about a (self-) consciousness which Boal would say is the essence of theatre: "the art of looking at ourselves."⁴⁸⁸ Moreover, the way in which the dramaturgy structured the performance into 'acts' which were open to, and in this sense relied upon, completion by the participant-spectators takes up Boal's practice of simultaneous dramaturgy.⁴⁸⁹ Of course, you're not starting with the

⁴⁸⁸ Augusto Boal, Games For Actors and Non-Actors, transl. Adrian Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) xxx.

⁴⁸⁹ Although Boal has admitted to a certain flexibility in the definition of this concept, it was originally defined as

The presentation of a play that chronicled

convention of a play text the way Boal does, but the participant-spectators are being asked by the performers to play a role in the development of actions which bring about conflict and moments of crisis.

M.P.: Yeah, I think that's a sound parallel.

A.H.: For me it's what is so engaging and exciting about this work. I appreciate the opportunity of working with the performers toward shaping an event, which at the outset is unknown. And I think part of the liberation in this for the participant-spectator comes from being able to trust in the performers and the process; as you say in the performance's 'prologue' there will be risks and danger, but for the spectators who endeavour to run the same risks as the performers a contract is made and care is taken so that no one gets hurt. Considering this quality of risk and the scale of the event in which it happens in Brith Gof's more recent work, would it be true to say that now, after a hiatus during which you have developed smaller scale solo work -- From Memory,⁴⁹⁰ for example -- the company is headed again toward work on the scale of something like Haearn (1992-93)?

a problem to which we wanted to find a solution. The play would run its course up to the moment of crisis -- the crucial point at which the protagonist had to make a decision. At this point, we would stop performing and ask the audience what the protagonist should do. Everyone would make their own suggestions. And on stage the performers would improvise each of these suggestions, till all had been exhausted.

See Augusto Boal, The Rainbow of Desire, transl. Adrian Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 3.

⁴⁹⁰ From Memory is Pearson's personal reflections on family and landscape, tradition and change. It has been described as "An intertextual ramble covering everything from archaeology to zoology, from gossip to genealogy."* It consists of three sections. The first part, presented in a circular cock-pit, explores Pearson's childhood in Lincolnshire; the second, in the tannery yard, examines the shooting of Llwyd ap Iwan in Patagonia; the third, presented in a bare room, considers the fractured nature of contemporary identity. First performed at the Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, South Wales in June 1991, the work has been developed and performed across Britain and Europe ever since.

*: See Richard Morgan, Brith Gof -- Y LLYFYR GLAS -- 1988-1995, Interview with Mike Pearson and Clifford McLucas (Cardiff: Brith Gof, 1995) 37.

M.P.: Well, I still feel personally reticent about performing in a big context, so I suppose I will continue to pursue the smaller scale work on a solo basis because I now feel it is the most appropriate for me. The bigger work does excite me, but only when we have a group that is capable of functioning theatrically on this scale with extremely small amounts of information; what this essentially means is that the work is mostly made in the process of performance. This was the case with Prydain; when the company began devising we barely knew what it was and, despite the tremendous experience level of these performers, it was an incredibly difficult task for them. The level of uncertainty was sometimes hard to bear. Even at the beginning of last week, during the first phase of performances,⁴⁹¹ despite our clarity about the work's essence being in the function of the performers and a crowd, when we didn't get a crowd there was a bit of a panic because we all had to reconsider what we were doing given these immediate set of circumstances. And I think this was a healthy creative process to have gone through because when we did eventually get a crowd the company was able to work with a very thin level of pre-set dramaturgical material and really expand upon it in working with the audience. Here the performers' relationship with one or several of the spectators is what actually constitutes the performance. On this level, I am greatly excited about making large scale work, so long as it develops into this kind of an event, and I realize that this kind of work is only possible with the solid core of performers working with the company at present.

Having said that, I'm still not entirely sure about this way of working. I suppose I owe it to my colleagues, who excel at this style of work, to continue in this way, but if I were to follow my own proclivities at the moment I would be taking things in a different direction. Indeed, if I want to continue pursuing the kind of fractured performance event I have just described, in terms of its material, its location, and its relationship to the audience, then actually we may have to do away with the pretence of 'theatre' all together. That, then, becomes very interesting to me, and I think that this is partly as a result of my relationship with archaeologists.

A.H.: I am aware that archaeology has long had an influence on the kind of content that your performances explore. How has it come to effect the form of your performances?

M.P.: Well, of late I have become involved with people working in -- I suppose what you might call -- the postmodernisation of archaeology. This practice is called 'postprocessual' in that it focuses on living processes in the past and the re-identification of motive and action. Here we have archaeologists like Michael Shanks who can barely use the word 'archaeology' to define his practice. Instead he has begun to

⁴⁹¹ Performances for Prydain were staggered into two phases: Feb. 28 to Mar. 2 and Mar. 6 to Mar. 9.

talk about the 'archaeological', emphasizing this postprocessual mode or a set of active processes in the present observer, who goes to work with things in the past. His work aims at trying to break down an orthodoxy in archaeology which seems preoccupied with the compiling of statistics about eras. In addition to the data, he's interested in identifying the kind of emotive qualities which happen to an observer in an archaeological site. The notion here that really began to interest me was the separation of the archaeological from archaeology; in terms of its postprocessual methods of investigation, the archaeological can be applied anywhere.

A.H.: It's really an matter of paying attention to performative qualities in the role of the archaeologist, isn't it?

M.P.: Absolutely, and unfortunately in the discipline of archaeology it's hard to get away with using that word.

A.H.: But I presume in the work you've done with Shanks, this is what your input as a theatre practitioner is forcing the discipline to come to terms with. Has your performative approach to the archaeological helped to illuminate this quality for Shanks?

M.P.: Yes, I think so. This work is tremendously satisfying because it has completely developed into a two-way process. In fact, we've actually got a commission to write a book together. We're both very excited about this project. What we are planning on doing is to take one set of notions about 'place'; not about 'site', in terms of site-specifics, but about place and how we might apply our various practices to that one guiding 'notion' of a particular place. I know there has been a tremendous amount of work done lately about the performative and the 'theatrical' in every day situations, and I suppose what interests me in this research is that the theatre is no longer the place to explore the 'theatrical', certainly not in the way this term is being reconsidered in recent scholarship. Lately I have been thinking about how, in terms of funding bodies, whatever you do in the theatre you cannot escape being a part of the 'entertainment business'. I think the only group of people who have been able to dislodge the theatrical from the entertainment business are those working in education. Theatre-in-education is an example of a set of practices put to an entirely different use from entertainment, and people take it as a sort of common sense now, but I don't see that there is any common sense about this relationship -- not any more than theatre and the presentation of the past -- or any other set of practices you might pair it with. So the kinds of projects that Michael Shanks and I will likely be getting to work on, that are pointedly not part of the entertainment business, are things like the theatricalization of the archaeological lecture: something that uses the practices and devices of the theatrical in such a way that you can't pretend its just entertainment.

A.H.: One thing that's interesting about Prydain, in light of your valid critique of the 'entertainment industry', and now I am thinking of this industry's relationship to young people, is that this production does an admirable job of bringing together dance club music with theatre practice.⁴⁹² The former is undoubtedly an entertainment industry, and one which many young people know well, while the latter is perhaps more grudgingly an entertainment industry, and one which young people know a lot less; but it strikes me that even though you can't shake the entertainment industry 'tag' here, the bringing together of these two diverse audiences does two very important things for the culture of theatre. First, it gets young people to attend a theatre production, which is becoming increasingly harder to do. Second, for the audiences coming to see either of these aspects of the production, their combination subverts expectation of how each might have been experienced as fairly conventional entertainment independent of the other. It strikes me that it is in the *liminality* of where these two forms of 'entertainment' meet where the audience encounters the unique effects and demands of this kind of event; where there exists a tremendous potential to reflect upon their reactions to what is happening -- what they are taking part in.

M.P.: Yeah, absolutely. There is a meeting here of people in our audience who have very different expectations when they come to the performance. That's all true and it is something I find tremendously exciting as well, but I'm really not sure how you can follow through on some of these discoveries about younger audiences; apart from getting a gig at Glastonbury, or one of the big rock festivals, and putting it all up for grabs and seeing how that goes.

A.H.: So the follow through here would probably mean taking the work into music venues: festivals, clubs, and so forth.

M.P.: Yeah, and that is an option. The Zap Club in Brighton are doing an event later in the month and they want *Reu-vival* to be a part of it, and Mark [Lugg] has requested that part of the show be performed with their set. We're probably only talking about ten minutes or so [of material from Prydain], but it's a tempting opportunity to showcase this kind of work in a club setting, and just see how it goes. I think now that the company's dramaturgical approach emphasizes the fragmentary, and the creation of proto-theatrical events, we can quite easily accept these kinds of offers. Ever since the beginning of the Arturius Rex project this approach has allowed us to slacken the 'nuts and bolts', if you like, that hold any one particular performance together. Indeed, what was exciting about the final production of the Arturius Rex (1994)

⁴⁹² Prydain featured a collaboration between Brith Gof and a highly popular Welsh dance/techno outfit called *Reu-vival*. *Reu-vival* profiles the work of two Disc-jockeys, Mark Lugg and Gareth Potter.

project was that it contained dramaturgical elements from each of the previous productions [D.O.A. (1993), Camlann (1993), and Cusanu Esqym (1994)] which, through their incorporation into the final work, became re-figured as they were re-bolted together, and this I found tremendously exciting. And I think this leads to another aspect of this way of working which is important to me: it's vital to get to a point in devising theatre where you can understand that everything you do will perhaps not always be appropriate to the given context in which it will be created, but its form becomes part of a working vocabulary which you take with you and continue to build upon.

A.H.: I wonder if we might speak a bit about content of Brith Gof's more recent work. You've just mentioned the four productions which made up the Arturius Rex project; as I understand it, it is the legend of King Arthur which thematically ties these productions together. Can you elaborate a little on Arthurian legend as a source for this work?

M.P.: The Arthurian legend comes from two impulses. One, we decided to explore an historical/mythical topic, as we have always done in Brith Gof. I thought the legend of King Arthur made for interesting theatrical material because it has always been cast in this medieval, mythical light. Indeed, most of the historical accounts we found took a sort of stock Victorian view of Arthur, not unlike a kind of standard English mythology. Whereas from an archaeological perspective, it's questionable whether or not Arthur even existed; he comes from a very blank period, the 5th Century, when the people of Britain were basically just roaming around, doing a bit of this and a bit of that. So this discrepancy was of interest to us: was he a real commander holding some sort of sub-Roman authority who became the source of myth and legend? Or was he a purely mythical figure, historicised by English monarchs to prove the length of their lineage and legitimacy?

The second impulse came from the war in Bosnia, and the televised coverage of this conflict which had begun to form a backdrop to my thinking about the Arthurian legend. For instance, we would be watching the news during some of the worst phases of this war, and I'd be listening to what various people were saying and realizing that just about every single person interviewed about this conflict was *lying*. They were standing up in front of those cameras, lying about historical facts of that situation. I became acutely aware of just how flippant the context of this conflict had become; where people's neighbours were becoming their enemies over night -- not for the racial reasons that were lied about on television, but because of an 800 year old political decision. The Muslims, of course, of the Balkans are not racially Muslim, it was the religious and political decision of their ancestry to turn to Islam 800 years ago. As always in our work I thought, alright, these two things have some sort of affinity, they can work off each other, and maybe by using the one we can think

about the other. And indeed, what I was experiencing of the Bosnian conflict on television is precisely the world of Arthur: the 'dark ages' of a time immediately following the collapse of an empire; a time of social breakdown, chaos, factional fighting, and the emergence of warlords. Arthur's post-Roman era must have felt a bit like this time of post-communism in the Balkans; you have the certainties of Roman rule for four centuries, and even if Communism only lasted for forty years, in both cases there is this drastic shift from certainty to chaos. So I suppose we tried to find the reflection of one in the other, and certainly it was a number of documentaries we collected on Bosnia which provided us with most of the text for each of the four productions.

A.H.: Then with the translation of part of this text into Welsh you bring in a third parallel between Arthur, Bosnia, and the current campaign for national identity in Wales.

M.P.: Yes. That is the context to which Brith Gof's work will always return. In the 1980s we used to do shows which were entirely spoken in Welsh; now we do them part in English, part in Welsh, and I think this is a far better reflection of the country we live in. Also, of primary interest to us here, as I mentioned concerning dramaturgical form, is what happens in performance when these two languages meet. This is another manifestation of a proto-theatrical event, between performers speaking different languages and for the spectators who must follow one or the other language, and then experience the antagonism of where these languages and cultures meet.

A.H.: There is another level at which this form of antagonism is explored in Arturius Rex which, like the issue of language and national identity, has a history in the company's work. I am speaking about the role of David Levett⁴⁹³ in this project, and where the difference of his physicality meets with the other performers. Perhaps there is a parallel here between the meeting of different identities through language, the one linguistic and the other physical, where there emerges a kind of representational excess, and this antagonism defies the representational reach of either language to contain. In

⁴⁹³ David Levett is a physically disabled performer, musician and composer who, before his involvement with Brith Gof in the Arturius Rex project, worked with Pearson in a duet entitled In Black and White (1992). In Black and White featured the physical confrontation between the physicalities of Pearson and Levett; with Levett working both in and out of wheelchair: "shadowing, imitating, mirroring, supporting, fighting, lifting, carrying..."* Set against a gridded 'Muybridge' backdrop, the work questions notions of ability and disability in performance.

*: See Morgan 59.

the past you have referred to an "underscore"⁴⁹⁴ or a pre-expressive quality of communication in your work with David, and I was wondering if you might comment a bit about that, and David's role generally in the work of the company?

M.P.: Well, first of all what's intriguing about David is that he refuses this notion of an underscore in our work together; he would deny what you have just said. And I think we are on the verge of a big argument about this. To be honest the history of my work with David doesn't come out of any deeply thought out strategy to explore physical difference. In Black and White (1992) emerged primarily out of the ambition of two male artists to work together physically, and beyond that John, Richard, and I had a strong desire to develop this work theatrically, as we did in the Arturius Rex project.

A.H.: As I understand it, this desire to develop theatrically was David's as well; wasn't he inspired to do so by his experience of Haearn?

M.P.: That's right, the desire to do this came from him as well. So we all went to work on D.O.A., the first part of Arturius Rex, which essentially is the death of Arthur in the Black Chapel. He is brought from the battlefield seriously wounded by his only two surviving companions. This arrangement fit perfectly the trio of Richard, John, and David; the prospect of David playing the wounded Arthur gave us many interesting theatrical possibilities to work with. So we went about laying down a set of conditions for the work. The first was that David's wheelchair would never be seen. David would work wherever he could, either carried, on the floor, or on the bed; with or without the physical support of Richard or John. So the loss of the wheelchair opened up innumerable physical relationships -- between performers and between performers and spectators. The second condition was that of confinement: all the action occurred within a small box space,⁴⁹⁵ so about 15 audience members who were standing in this space were in direct physical contact with the three performers, and another 45 or so looked down from above. For the audience who stood above this space, the use of the bed was instrumental because it put the action in a horizontal plane, effective from this perspective. I think both groups of

⁴⁹⁴ See Cousin: 38-39.

⁴⁹⁵ The set of the Black Chapel was created in a wooden 'room', 12' X 12', encased in a scaffolding frame which extended upwards to at least sixteen feet in height. At ground level the 'room' had four solid wooden walls, a wooden floor, and one door. All of these wooden surfaces had been scorched black. In addition to the three performers this space contained a bed, a bucket hanging from a wall, and up to 15 standing audience. At top of the wooden walls was a walkway upon which up to 45 audience could stand and look down into the roof-less room.

audience had an intimate experience of the work David did.

In retrospect, maybe the wounding of someone was too obvious a metaphor here for disability but what was intriguing for me about David's work was that semiotically you don't experience his movement as signs but as *signing*. So you will know what he means but you won't get the obvious sign of that because any physical gesture that he makes may or may not be a random approximation of the gesture he wants to make, or it may be expressed in a different part of his body from the one he had intended it to be expressed in. Working with him as a performer you can sense that his intentions are precise, and I think this can be communicated to an audience when David works with sympathetic colleagues, who perhaps subconsciously can grasp the impulse of one movement and can work with him on this to extend it or enhance it. This level of interaction is what fascinated me most about working with him, and I must say it was this kind of experience that made D.O.A. the most profound work in the Arturius Rex project; it established exceptional dynamic terms with the audience.

But getting back to the question of underscore and the pre-expressive state of an actor, my argument with [Eugenio] Barba⁴⁹⁶ is precisely what we have been talking about: Do we

⁴⁹⁶ Eugenio Barba is a director, theorist and founder of Odin Teatret, Denmark. His work as the Director of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) has made him one of the major points of reference in contemporary theatre scholarship and practice. Theatre anthropology postulates that there exists a basic level of organisation common to all performers and defines this level as *pre-expressive*. Concerning this definition, Barba has said,

The concept of pre-expressivity may appear absurd and paradoxical given that it does not take into consideration the performers' intentions, feelings, identification or non-identification with character, emotions...that is, psycho-technique. Psycho-technique has in fact dominated professional training and corresponding research into theatre and dance for at least the last two centuries.

Psycho-technique directs the performer towards a desire to express: but the desire to express does not determine what one must do. The performers' expression is in fact due -- almost in spite of them -- to their actions, to their use of their physical presence. It is the *doing* and *how the doing is done* which determine what one expresses.*

*: See Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, The Secret Art of

see the pre-expressive state fully realized in a disabled performer?⁴⁹⁷ And I proposed the idea to him of setting up an ISTA⁴⁹⁸ which would explore the disabled performer because I suspect that when we start to consider the work of disabled performers much of the theoretical foundations of Theatre Anthropology will come under pressure. This is not to deny Barba's work, but I think it might bring about a fruitful reconsideration of some of the basic assumptions he makes about the body and semiotics.

The Performer, ed. Richard Gough, transl. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 187.

⁴⁹⁷ Nigel Stewart has also questioned Barba's notion of pre-expressivity as it relates to a foundation in mental as well as sensor-motor rules integrated with the performer. In his consideration of how pre-expressive work on physical action as a physiological event affects the performer's expressive work on a physical action as a semantic event, he states that

attention to the somatic qualities of the physical score has decisive semiotic consequences, the most important of these being the critical gap between the physical score (presentation) and the underscore (intention).*

Stewart makes effective use of Derrida's theories of the sign to demonstrate that in all performance there is a gap -- indeed, an *aporia* -- between what the performer *intends* and what the performer *presents*, and that Barba fails to consider this gap in the orthodoxy by which Theatre Anthropology connects pre-expressivity and physical action with its reception by the spectators as a semantic event. Stewart charges that Barba tends to fall prey to the liberal humanist, expressive realist assumption that actions in performance are to be understood simply "in the sense of what someone means them to mean,"** and that "the spectator merely interprets what the actor intends in a hierarchy of interpretation (actor interprets director, director interprets writer).***"

*: See Nigel Stewart, "Actor as Refusenik: Semiotics, Theatre Anthropology, and the Work of the Body," New Theatre Quarterly, Volume IX, Number 36 (November 1993): 382;

** : Stewart: 383; *** : Stewart: 383-4.

⁴⁹⁸ The International School of Theatre Anthropology hold annual practical workshops and conferences, hosted by affiliated organisations all over the world. The abbreviated title for these events has become 'ISTA', usually preceded by the location of the event, for example, Brecon ISTA or Bologna ISTA.

A.H.: It certainly would. It seems to me that Barba runs into trouble here because Theatre Anthropology doesn't allow for the metonymic associations which potentially open up between a performer's physical score, his or her underscore or intentions, and the significational excess of these psychosomatic levels as they are received by the spectators. He tends to reduce the possibility for a plurality of associations on each of these levels with a hierarchy of interpretative metaphor, inherent in the model of Theatre Anthropology.

M.P.: Exactly, and when you consider the work of a disabled performer the metaphorical givens of this model come under pressure. I think this becomes clear if you take a series of basic body postures recognized by Theatre Anthropology, Noh Drama for instance, where you have this particular engagement of the body, and then you consider what happens in a situation where the body is engaged in a way that is permanent, like if you are blind, or if you are spastic. I'd like to know how the model may be adapted to address these conditions, are they like a pre-expressive body state? I think there are all kinds of interesting dimensions to explore here, but Barba completely blanked me on this. I suspect that anything that puts pressure on the model of Theatre Anthropology he doesn't want to hear about. This is not the first time he has been confronted by the issue of the disabled performer. Richard Fowler⁴⁹⁹ did work with the local disabled in Holstebro a few years ago, and from what I understand Barba's response to this project was equally dismissive because he believes that when you work with disabled performers all you see is the disability, and as an observer you can't get over feeling pity.

A.H.: That speaks volumes about where he's coming from. It's unfortunate that this kind of attitude obscures what might be of benefit to the practice of Theatre Anthropology.

M.P.: Yeah, it does. So, he won't do it, but there is hope with other people associated with ISTA. I spoke about this issue at the opening for the International Centre for Ethnoscenography in Paris, at the invitation of Jean Pradier and with the encouragement of Patrice Pavis⁵⁰⁰ and some of the other French members of ISTA, and it seems as though they are much more open to the questions raised by the work of disabled performers.

A.H.: So you spoke about your work with David on this occasion?

⁴⁹⁹ The translator of all of Barba's books and articles into English and a teacher with the International School of Theatre Anthropology.

⁵⁰⁰ Jean Pradier and Patrice Pavis are members of ISTA's Advisory Panel.

M.P.: Yes, I was part of an enormous throng of speakers, gathered together to speak about the term 'ethnoscenology'. In true French style they had come up with this term and then invited people from all over, working in various fields of practice and study, to come and define it. I wasn't really sure what I might talk about. I began with some definitions of what performance means to me now, and then I decided in terms of talking about my work I would be much more anecdotal, and I would describe my work with David. This brought up the very issue we have been speaking about, and in particular I presented my concern that if there are no means by which we can discuss and begin to work with disabled performers then our profession is so much the worse off for this omission.

A.H.: What sort of response did you receive here?

M.P.: People were receptive, but what sticks out in my mind about my presentation was this incident with a water glass. The panel I sat on was seated on this big bench, behind a massive table in front of about 200 people. I was sitting beside Grotowski's acolyte, Thomas Richards, and he spoke just before me. He was talking about the difference between animal instincts and human-conditioned instincts, using the example of how we differ from primates in the way we pick up a cup, and he used a glass of water to illustrate his point. I started to speak and I decided to show how David would pick up a glass of water, and I wish David had been there because I started up here [motioning with hand about a foot above table top], and then inadvertently my hand suddenly shot out at the glass, knocking it off the table and shattering it on the floor. It was this incredible moment.

A.H.: Brilliant. So I suppose Richards was wriggling in discomfort here with the example of his paper shattered on the floor.

M.P.: I honestly hadn't intended on doing it at all, but I think it made the point very well.

A.H.: I wonder was it also a surprise for these conference goers that you had chosen to speak about your work with David? I would have thought that they might be expecting you to speak about Welsh identity and performance.

M.P.: No, in fact, Pradier invited me to speak about my work with David, and this goes back to his chance attendance of In Black and White. For the occasion of the ISTA⁵⁰¹ workshop in Brecon in 1992, a bunch of delegates arrived a day early, so

⁵⁰¹ The 'Brecon ISTA' was held in two parts -- *Working on Performances East and West*, a practical exploration at Christ College in Brecon, Wales, from April 4 to 10, 1992, which was followed by a conference on 10 and 11 April at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, entitled *Fictive Bodies, Dilated Minds, Hidden Dances*.

they had to spend a night in Cardiff. As it happened -- completely by chance -- this was the night in which David and I did the first presentation of In Back and White. This performance was absolutely in its rawest form -- no where near the final show at all -- so we made an informal invitation to anybody who was there to come and see our work-in-progress. Pradier attended as did many of the Italian academics, and remarkably this performance seem to create a kind of... I don't know, a kind of 'atmosphere' in the conference held about a week later. Pradier, for one, was extremely taken by David's work. He is a psychiatrist by training but his recent work has taken him into psycho-physiology and psycho-somatics, so there were elements of what David's performance was doing which interested him immensely. He was extremely enthusiastic about what we did, and he was looking for a chance to bring us to Paris. So when we discussed what I might talk about at the conference, and I said I'd like to talk about David, he thought that this was precisely what I should do.

A.H.: I brought up the issue of Welsh identity because I was wondering what sort of connections you see, if any, between the content of your work with David and that of other aspects of your theatre practice. What are the origins of this kind of body work in your experience with Brith Gof?

M.P.: Well the impetus to get into body work came from Grotowski's Toward a Poor Theatre. I can remember when Methuen had just published a copy of this book, and I was part of a group which had just been thrown out of the drama society, and just when we were wondering what we were going to do with ourselves along came this book. I actually remember the January in 1970, sitting around and reading this book all night with people; sort of reading it out loud, and trying to make some sense of it. The approach Grotowski discusses in this book definitely struck a chord with us; it seemed precisely like what we wanted to do. So much of my earliest work was purely physical -- but it was always in the field of dramaturgy, and I am only now beginning to understand and articulate this context somewhat. For instance, in physical performance there are always three sets of principles operating, and they are constantly being confused, not least critically. First, I think there is 'dramaturgy', by which I mean that in some way the physical work is carrying narratives. The second is choreography, in which you can deal with the equivocal. The third is performance, which carries the principles of art, and I would argue that the physicalities of performance art are very different from those of dramaturgy and choreography. Now, this is not to seem naive because I know that most theatre will put a lot of pressure on these distinctions, but I find them useful in practice because it helps me to keep the workings of these three principles separate in my mind.

What was interesting about the beginnings of Brith Gof, in terms of body work, was that I was trying to get away from two styles of physical theatre used by companies I was a part of

in the 1970s.⁵⁰² The first was the increasingly baroque style of Cardiff Lab; here was movement which was being elaborated in wonderful ways, but to what end I wasn't really sure. Then there was the 'extreme' physical work of Rat Theatre, which in turn was a response to the style of Cardiff Lab. Rat's work was about existing in a culture of flares and tank tops, so here you had four naked guys with top-knot pony tails, abusing their bodies through physical theatre. Then finally the great thing which emerged in Brith Gof was body work which came explicitly from another culture. Suddenly a whole other range of physicality became possible. A number of things strike me about this transition; one, very definitely, was endemic movement forms: club dancing, and all the different physical states associated with forms of recitation -- from song, to poetry, to prayer. Secondly, there was the physicality of labour and how in traditional societies this had a kind of currency that we seem to have lost touch with today. So for instance in Rhydcymerau if two of us had to work bloody hard to make a coffin from a tree trunk during an hour and ten minute show then that was okay. Work could exist in a performance in the same sort of way as aesthetic action, particularly if it was good work. Third, the theatre scene in Wales was nascent enough and fragmented enough for us to ship in other physicalities, especially from exotic locations. So, for example, I could use all my Noh material in a show like Y Mabinogion,⁵⁰³ which offered a mood and feeling appropriate to the work's content, while creating an interesting sort of intertextuality between classical and traditional forms. Finally, what also began to come back to me, thanks in part to work we were doing with students from Aberystwyth, was the notion of group theatre. It seemed if you worked with any group of university students at that time [1982-83] there was this solidarity of political outlook, which meant that this kind of theatre had its own context and its own meaning. Added to which if you worked with any Welsh students at that time they could sing four-part harmony [*snaps fingers*] -- just like that; they knew which voice they were and so forth.

So the use of body work in Brith Gof developed like that, and I suppose what you see now is a kind of amalgam of all these things, each bit a little more sand-papered over with time and experience. These are the resources I call upon when we are working. I think what I have done with a project like

⁵⁰² Pearson co-founded Brith Gof with Lis Hughes Jones in 1981 after founding two other companies in the 1970s: the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre and then Rat Theatre.

⁵⁰³ The *Mabinogion* is an early medieval collection of Celtic myth and legend, in four 'branches'. Between 1981 and 1982 Brith Gof created four performances in different styles based on the four principal stories.

In All Languages⁵⁰⁴ is pull together just over twenty years of a workshop repertoire. I have always liked the workshop format, usually much more so than performing, and yet I used to find it so dispiriting to have to plod through this encyclopedia of technique every time I wanted to create a workshop representative of Brith Gof's work. So John and Richard and I decided to try to boil it down -- really boil it down -- to find a very basic physical language, but more importantly what were the various levels of articulation and mediation which we could apply to it. What I think we began to find when we started to use this language in our workshops, especially in the development of articulation and mediation, was that we were uncovering an aspect of body work normally overlooked in our previous approach. Now we were capable of working with a very simple approach to physical language, and thereby focus more intensely on the power in learning and using these approaches for the workshop participants. In terms of performance the work from In All Languages has most definitely been of use in the devising processes of much of the company's more recent performances.

A.H.: As a participant in a workshop which made use of the In All Languages approach, I was struck by how effective this process was in terms of offering people with very different language, cultural, and theatrical background a way of working together quickly which was still very intense and meaningful. It creates this reliable structure that performers can master easily, and once this happens all these fascinating gaps emerge in how this structure evolves between different performers, through improvisation as well as articulations and mediations. And in these gaps there exists this incredible process of relating to the other participants in the workshop. I was working with a Brazilian woman, a classically trained

⁵⁰⁴ In All Languages was the title of Brith Gof's week-long workshop which took place at Lancaster University in August 1994 as part of Chasing Shadows, a summer school of theatre run in cooperation with the Centre for Performance Research, Cardiff. As the workshop format of this event was intended to explore the theme of devising and documentation in performance, Pearson put to use a vocabulary of physical movement he had developed from over twenty years of theatre practice. At the time of this workshop, he had established ten phases of this language, each containing ten movements. The phases were divided into solo, duet, and group movements: three for a solo performer, three for duets, and four used with groups of three or more. Each movement in each phase could be modified using eleven different factors of mediation, including space, context, time, objects, and so on. In All Languages has become a basis for dramaturgical development in Brith Gof's subsequent work, most notably in Arturius Rex and Prydain. It has established a clear pedagogical approach to body work in a workshop format, and its simplicity and clarity of application has allowed Pearson has use it as a vehicle for audience participation.

dancer, who normally I would have had a difficult time working with given my own lack of training and different relationship to my body. Through this structure of working, however, I was amazed at the various levels of relating we were able to explore quite quickly and intensely. It surprised both of us, I think. This process was then focused outward to consider variations in space, time, contexts of where the work might occur. I saw this as a very effective way of developing insight into the content of these various relationships.

M.P.: I intend on writing a book about the idea of the two in theatre because I find the situations of 'we' very engaging. The notion of 'me' in performance fails to achieve the power of two people striking a contract between each other and agreeing to collaborate within a certain set of coded conditions. When I experience the 'we' in performance I get a sense of where the actions of these performers will work in excess of these codes and expose more of a sense of identity of these performers. This is where I think my work might offer a revision to that of Barba and Grotowski.