THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

From Narrative to Spectacle:
An Examination of Contemporary Theatre Performance

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, PhD

in the University of Hull

by

Katherine Adams, BA (University of Nottingham), PGCE (Institute of
Education), PGCert (University of Hull)

August 2008

Abstract

Drawing on Debord and Baudrillard, this thesis takes its starting point the shift from text to image dominated representations of the world. It argues the parallel shifts in theatre practice and reception away from work which subordinates itself to textual narrative and towards theatre with foreground the non-textual theatrical elements is becoming more defined in Britain. Within there is a concern with the relationship between narrative, the spectacle and disruptive modes of engagement, drawing out in each chapter a different aspect of the implications for creating and engaging with theatre where the spectacle of society is ubiquitous.

The introductory chapter will first outline how narrative can be defined and discuss the significance of experience of reality through spectacular representation looking at how the notion of the spectator and the experience of engagement with theatre have changed, then the following six chapters will address the relationship between the spectacle and virtuosity in performance; the implications for politics of identity and for resistance to the spectacle; the experience of immersion through participation in spectacular performance; and distance through engagement with ironic spectacle, before in the final chapter, addressing theatre which constructs itself as international through multilingualism and new media technology.

Each chapter focuses on one or two practitioners examining one of their performances in detail in relation to one of the areas outlined above. This analysis will be based on my own experience as a spectator, research into the companies, their reception in the media and academic writing, and where possible through interviews with members of the company.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Helen Iball and Dr. Keith Peacock for their support and advice which have been much appreciated. I am grateful also to The University of Hull for funding me through two years as a graduate teaching assistant and the Drama department for the constant help and support from everyone I worked with.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support throughout, and in particular, thank you to my father Dr. Richard Adams, to John Adey and to Melissa Adey for their assistance during the final stages of write up.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

'Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative', Lyotard tells us in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984: 41). Perhaps this is true in parts of the academic world, but it had not, until recently, become so in the mainstream. Now though, in daily experiences of culture, politics and personal identity, there is an awareness developing of the symptoms of the postmodern condition, if not of the prognosis. Our lifestyles are now unavoidably influenced by these conditions: the dominance of multinational corporations and global communications; the degeneration of ethical and bodily identity as coherent experience; and the blurring of boundaries between commodity and aesthetic, reality and its virtual simulacrum. In particular, our experience of the world is dominated by the mediated image, and the collage of spectacular representations that makes up the news in the West.

Where printed information had primacy in the past, film, television and the internet now dominate our access to the world and as a result, visual representation now makes up a more significant amount of the information we encounter. 'Everywhere it is confirmed that behind images we will find only other images' (Lockwood, 2005: 71). These shifts in society are defined by a discursive plurality and fragmentation which is evident in engagement with both the real and the represented, and they coincide with a shift within representation from an emphasis upon text to image.

Drawing on Guy Debord and Baudrillard's work in his chapter, 'The Teratology of the Spectacle', Lockwood suggests that reality is 'visually organized' under late capitalism (Lockwood, 2005: 74) and like them makes a case for the primacy of the image in society. This very recent discussion of the image in *The Spectacle of the Real* (Kellner

ed., 2005) amongst other texts, updates to contemporary society some of the ideas put forward by thinkers like Debord in the second half of the 20th century and makes clear the significance of the spectacle today. It is this context of an ever more dominant spectacle that will be addressed in relation to theatre as the thesis develops. The fact that this focus on the image as the defining mode of representation, corresponds to the period in which theatre shifts emphasis away from the textual or dramatic narrative as defining the medium, makes this cultural phenomenon important in framing an exploration of disruptions to narrative engagement.

This analysis, therefore, takes as a starting point these two aspects: the dissolution of narrative primacy and the rise of the spectacle. It examines a variety of theatre practitioners in relation to the shift away from narrative dominance in the *mise en scène*, towards a plurality of engagements with signifying systems within the theatre event and in relation to our engagements outside theatre with the image. The main body of the study therefore focuses on how contemporary companies make use of the *mise en scène* to create a relationship with the audience in Britain in which the coherence of the narrative experience is disrupted and within that, it explores how the spectator's experience of engaging with the spectacle underpins the ways in which that engagement manifests itself.

The central argument is that our engagements with theatre performance are palpably shaped by the influences of habitual engagements with the representations of the world that Debord terms 'the spectacle' (Debord, 1983). This does not deny the potential for political or resistant strategies in spectatorship or indeed in theatre making; rather, the practitioners addressed in each chapter raise different questions about what kinds of relationships between performance and audience are possible in the climate in which we

live. These chapters variously address the influence of popular culture, ironic playfulness, the celebration and critique of the media, and engagement with the global as a part of the impact of the spectacle.

Within these different influences on the audience's relationship to the performance, the disruption of narrative engagement is addressed beyond the actual fragmenting of a coherent representation of storyline; rather the argument moves forward from the assumption that the spectator is able to engage with an experience in multiple and often conflicting ways. The narrative is not necessarily fragmented, but in the performances discussed here, it is also not necessarily the focal point of a spectator's experience. It is one part and at times in conflict with the primary elements of a performance.

Methodology

The argument presented here requires an engagement with cultural and sociological theory and analysis, as well as with performance and performance theory. By discussing the way aspects of our everyday engagement with the world impact upon theatre, a level of analysis of the wider social landscape as well as of contemporary performance is necessitated. The literature review which follows this section outlines some of the key texts out of which this analysis has emerged and the next chapter expands upon that analysis to contextualise the chapters that follow. Alongside academic writings, the sources feeding into the argument include interviews with practitioners where appropriate, reference to their published materials and comments on their work, newspaper reviews, spectating live performance and watching recordings of performance on video or DVD. I have also used still images at times, when the argument rests significantly on the visual impact of the work. Whilst the analysis is of the live performance in these cases, the still images are intended to assist in

communicating the effect to the reader.

The central argument rests upon the spectators' experiences most significantly as it is focused towards shifting *experiences* of theatre in the society of the spectacle. However, the analysis is also informed by the comments and stated intentions of the practitioners and companies involved. Where extended analysis of a group is presented and there are not comments and descriptions of the work accessible as published materials or on the internet, I have used interviews. However, this has not been the general approach to research so has been the exception rather than the rule, because in most cases the companies discussed are very well known and make available comments on their own work as they tour it. I have drawn on an informal discussion with a member of the Blast Theory team after *Uncle Roy All Around You*, discussing how different spectators responded and a formal telephone interview with Anna Zubrzycki, one of the founders of Song of the Goat Theatre as there was little material on their work available in English at the time. The majority of the performance analysis which contributes to the argument in each chapter however is based on my own spectator experience. The bulk of this outline of the methodology therefore is focused on the modes of analysis used.

The emphasis upon spectator engagement in performance analysis throughout the thesis is based on the understanding that a performance is generated in interaction with the spectator in the moments it is performed. As Mukarovsky tells us, the theatre is an 'immaterial interplay of forces moving through time and space' (Mukarovsky in Quinn, 1995: 46). While the separation of the material and immaterial texts is put into question by the work of groups like Blast Theory, the recognition of the mutual constitution of performance text and spectator subjectivity is necessary to make any argument about the influence of the spectacle upon engagement with performance. The subject is not

merely affected by the spectacle with which it engages, but effected: constituted by and constituting the dynamic textual reality of which it is a part. Thus, it is essential that my analysis comes from a direct experience of being a spectator as well as from interviews, and research into reviews and academic writing on the practitioners in question. Where a chapter describes the experience of the spectator therefore, I am that spectator, unless otherwise indicated. Where the individual spectator or participant's experience is described the pronoun will therefore be gendered female.

What this thesis is not doing is looking at surveyed audience response. The reasons for this are rooted in the nature of the argument which is based on close performance analysis in relation to theories of narrative and spectacle. While there are a number of studies done on different aspects of spectator perception and interpretation, these are far more general studies looking overall at perceptual qualities rather than particular theatre experiences[1]. Beyond this, the majority of empirical research works to establish the cultural make up of audiences (Bennett, 1997: 95) rather than test a theoretical model. This thesis is not a study of audience in this sense; it is a study of theatre performance and as such it places emphasis on the spectator's engagement rather than the audience.

The discussion of each performance draws on a variety of different approaches to analysis. Phenomenological description, semiotic analysis and aspects of psychoanalytic film theory in combination allow a careful discussion of each piece, taking into account the bodily and sensory experience of the spectator as he or she watches or participates; the meanings generated by what is represented; and the narrative engagements of the

---

[1] Examples include Frank Coppieters' (1981) study of audience perception through written responses and interviews; Ed Tan's study of cognitive processes (Tan in Bennett, 1982:152). The most relevant work here is that of Marco De Marinis who examines the relation between competence and comprehension leading him to recognise that comprehension involves more than merely the cognitive process. De Marinis goes on to propose five levels of receptive activity: perception, interpretation, emotive and cognitive reactions, evaluation and memorialisation (1993).

work. As a subjective individual spectator at each performance discussed, the limitations of my own horizons of expectation, ideological influences and preferences will of course impact upon analysis. Where generalisations about spectatorship and trends in contemporary theatre are drawn out from this analysis, it is in terms of a collection of potential experiences seen through one person's eyes. In light of the obvious popularity of much of the work discussed, the response of reviewers and other academic writings that informs those generalisations, as well as socio-cultural analysis forming a context to the analysis, it is hoped that the limitations of this highly subjective approach to research will to some extent be tempered.

Literature review

The literature which informs this analysis is drawn from across several disciplines: sociological and cultural theory, performance theory, media theory and where appropriate writings on specific practitioners and work. In examining the place of narrative in contemporary theatre Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) has been the most significant influence on the conception of the narrative as a wider structure.

In relation to the specifics of narrative immersion and engagements within a performance text however, I have drawn on psychoanalytical theories including that of Lacan, then in psychoanalytic film and theatre theory, I have drawn on Laura Mulvey's analysis in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), Barbara Freedman's analysis of the gaze (1990), and Lapsley and Westlake's overview of the shifts in psychoanalytic film theories of spectatorship (1988). In formulating a clear sense of the process of identification, immersion and comprehension in spectatorship, their introductory text has been most useful. The work of Mark Curry in *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998) has also been significant in looking at how experiences of the

narrative have shifted in the context of a postmodern society. Despite the focus on psychoanalysis in theorising the immersion and process of identification involved in narrative engagement, the actual shifts towards narrative fragmentation are outlined most clearly in Curry's work.

The contextual material around the rise of the spectacle and its impact upon society has ranged broadly across the work of Debord, Baudrillard, and more recent cultural theorists like Geoff King, Douglas Kellner and Dean Lockwood. Their work in *The Spectacle of the Real: from Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond* (2005) reconfigures parts of Debord's theory and several chapters are used in establishing how the notion of the spectacle can be carried forward forty years to be applied to an analysis of events or performances. There is not a great deal written directly examining theatre in the light of the notion of the spectacle and what there is deals with scripts that address some of the concerns of the Situationists or deals with performance art. The approach to analysis used by Carol Becker in *Surpassing the Spectacle* (2002) has been the most useful, as she addresses the ways in which the intimacy of some live art disrupts the spectacle.

Research into spectatorship has also formed a part of the exploration of the performance experience. This has drawn widely on reception theory, and more recent examinations of audience by Susan Bennett, Herbert Blau, psychoanalytical theory and performance theory. Each of these areas - narrative, spectacle and spectatorship – is examined more fully in chapter one which outlines the theories underpinning the argument.

Each of the subsequent chapters goes on to address a different kind of performance experience. The performances examined during the course of these chapters are chosen for their relevance to the different ways our perceptual relationship with the spectacle

impacts upon our theatre experiences. Our relationship with physical/visual virtuosity for example is examined through analysis of two performances which provide a contrast between two kinds of relationship: one where the spectacle of virtuosity is the primary engagement and one where is works against emotional connection with the performers. The literature used varies considerably from chapter to chapter as a result and therefore the review of literature for each chapter is included in the chapter summaries below.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one provides a theoretical framing which underpins the subsequent analyses. It introduces how the narrative is being disrupted in our engagements with both performance and wider social discourses, and provides a more detailed analysis of the rise of the spectacle and the relevance of this theoretical framework. It contextualises the main argument within some of the recent publications on performance theory, looking at perspectives on political theatre and postmodern or 'postdramatic' theatre (Lehmann, 2006) and how far these are useful as a frame for some of the work addressed here. Finally, it clarifies how the experience of spectatorship is modelled in this discussion.

Chapter two begins the main argument of this work presenting analysis of two performances: *Chronicles: a Lamentation* (2004) by Song of the Goat Theatre and Renegade Theatre's *Rumble* (2004) and is entitled 'Narrative and the Spectacle of Skill'. It first outlines how far and in what ways these performances make use of elements of tragic and epic narrative form, and how, in different ways, engagement with the virtuosity of the performers and the allied spectacle created, displaces narrative engagement. The contrasts between the two performances then set in motion a discussion of the spectator's relationship with the performers' subjectivities on stage,

distinguishing the performer as a subject generating an intimate connection with the audience and the performer as a virtuosic objectified performing body.

Chapter two, in exploring different modes of narrative engagement, draws on literature around epic narrative including Greene's *Norms of Epic* (1961) but in dealing primarily with virtuosity and the spectacle also makes use of recently published and presented materials on virtuosity as well as key texts on the spectacle introduced earlier. Materials available online from the *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery Symposium* in 2003 particularly that of Nick Till's 'The Virtue of Virtuosity' have contributed to the discussion of the social nature of virtuosity. The chapter also draws on various writings on the work of Grotowski, and upon anthropological discussions of mourning by Jenny Hockey.

The positioning of this chapter at the beginning of the thesis acknowledges the emphasis on perceived virtuosity in performance. This mirrors the current popularity of big budget martial arts films, circus theatre, and current TV reality shows. The Reality TV contest in particular, which trains participants as dancers, singers, or circus performers, also trains its audience to evaluate the relative skills of the performers. The spectator is becoming used to making evaluative judgements of physical/kinaesthetic skills as a central focus of their spectatorship. Where character identification and immersion within a narrative world is no longer necessarily the primary engagement in theatre performance, evaluation of verisimilitude, increasingly, is being replaced by evaluation of virtuosity in physical skills such as martial arts, acrobatics, physical theatre and dance. This chapter is therefore concerned with exploring different kinds of virtuosity, but also draws attention to the relationship between virtuosity and spectacle.

In writing about the influence of the spectacle, as both the visually spectacular and the lived shifted into representation, virtuosity is a part of what constitutes the spectacle. In the first case, virtuosity is spectacular; we the audience are in awe of excellence and that is part of our engagement with the aesthetic of the piece. In the second case, virtuosity functions as a projected ideal of the world. 'The spectacle is the material reconstruction of the religious illusion' (Debord, 1983: 20) and it advertises itself as a virtuosic version of the world. Here life becomes a virtuosic performance. This sense of the spectacle as an advertisement of its own ideal world is not what is specifically addressed in the first chapter introduced here, but underlies the thesis as a whole framing the discussion. The function of the spectacular and the virtuosic within that advertisement means that the relationship the spectator has with the virtuosity of a theatre performance is also framed by the Debord's notion of the spectacle.

Chapter three is entitled 'Transgression: Staging Synchronicity and Multiple Identifications', and discusses two productions which both integrate linguistic and physical theatre within a highly visual performance text. Glyn Cannon's *On Blindness* (2003) was produced by Frantic Assembly, Graeae and Paines Plough, and *The Elephant Vanishes* (2003) an adaptation of three of Haruki Mukarami's short stories was staged by Complicité. This chapter looks at the formation of narrative through audience identification in more detail, exploring the relationship between multiple spectator identifications and synchronic engagement with the visual aspects of the *mise en scène*. Central to this exploration of the metonymic and metaphoric in this work is the discussion of transgression as an ideological force in the former and as an experience of excess within aesthetic engagement in the latter. The chapter distinguishes how ideological and aesthetic transgression manifest themselves in performance by drawing contrasts between the two pieces.

This argument is based upon the assumption that there have been significant shifts in identity politics in performance from constructing character identifications that directly challenge stereotypes about marginalised groups or create positive role models, to constructing multiple complex identifications that are more ambiguous. This less didactic approach focuses on integration and inclusion rather creating a strong position of difference from which to make an oppositional stand. This shift away from oppositional towards ambiguity and multiplicity in performed identities functions not only as part of a general shift away from overt metanarratives but also as a form of ethical spectacle undermining the reductive qualities of the spectacle. This shift from the ideologically resistant to ideologically transgressive in political theatre links in with Foucault's distinction between 'practices of freedom' and 'acts of liberation' (Foucault, 1988b: 2), which is outlined in chapter one. It is possible to see this shift in the theatre practices of different marginalised groups over the second half of the century though chapter three addresses primarily representations of disability and the gendered gaze.

The notion of aesthetic transgression in this chapter sits uneasily with the spectacle however. There is evident in this kind of transgression an appeal to excess which mirrors the form the spectacle takes. There is an assumption of virtuosity as well for the spectator to have the desire to take in an excess of sensory material, however, the fundamental difference between the kind of excess which is described in this chapter and that of the spectacle is in the proliferation of conflict and contradiction between the multiple sign systems on stage. Just as the ideologically transgressive qualities of *On Blindness* are in part defined by conflict and ambiguity within and between identifications, the aesthetically transgressive qualities of *The Elephant Vanishes* are defined by conflict between and within both metaphoric and metonymic engagements.

This chapter suggests that both these experiences of transgression are however, fundamentally shaped by both the political and aesthetic implications of the spectacle.

Here the chapter draws on psychoanalytic theories of narrative and spectator engagement, but in theorising transgression draws upon Foucault's 'A Preface to Transgression' (1977) and also Roland Barthes *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975). The scope of the word transgression is explored in the subsequent chapter as part of the underpinning theoretical models for the thesis as a whole and the appropriate literature is, at that point, introduced.

Chapter four examines the recent work of Blast Theory, and in particular *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003), and directly addresses the spectacle as a part of a discussion of participation as a function of empowerment or immersion. The chapter is entitled 'Mixing Reality: The Right to Reply' and focuses on both the rise of communications technology and Blast Theory's use of disruption to immersive illusory engagement within the piece in order to explore social habits within a society defined by telecommunications and screen culture.

There is in this work a rejection of the assumptions of naturalism which runs through the work of many political theatre practitioners of the past in which the performance experience draws attention to habitual modes of engagement or perceptions of the world and reconfigures them. While this chapter does not model the spectator's experience using Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, there is a similar kind of defamiliarisation evident, caused by the juxtaposition of conflicting spectator engagements. In the case discussed here, these conflicting engagements occur across material and virtual engagements, and

across real and fictional experience and it is this that shifts the experience beyond mixed media to mixed reality.

The chapter draws on writings around narrative immersion in virtual reality and gaming rather than theatre therefore including social commentary by authors like Jane McGonigal and Stuart Moulthrop as well as discussions by researchers experimenting with the technology in the special edition on narrative in the *Virtual Reality Journal*.

The chapter argues that the manipulation of the spectacular media within the piece serves to refocus attention upon the way live interaction in the social sphere is affected by the dominance of mediated interaction. The chapter therefore argues that this performance, in making use of the media it implicates to generate a '*reversal* of established relationships between concepts' (Debord, 1983: 206), has the potential to be experienced as '*détournement'*, a plagiaristic subversion of claims and materials that are manifested in the spectacle (Debord, 1983: 205). Beyond the potential for *détournement*, it is argued that the work can be described as ethical spectacle. Where the spectator may not experience a reversal or diversion in her own perspective, the chapter argues that still, the active participatory nature of the work combined with the emphasis on the real in the juxtaposition of virtual and real, presents an ethical spectacle.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of ironic theatricality as an appeal to a knowing spectator, setting this in the context of a culture of ironic consumption. Drawing on analysis of Improbable Theatre's *Theatre of Blood* (2005), it addresses the dynamics of narrative comprehension alongside the pleasure of knowing: of being in on the joke. Improbable Theatre has already been discussed in terms of an ironic quotation of

Victorian popular theatre in *Shockheaded Peter* (1998), where the spectator 'becomes aware of both the original form and an ironic revision of it via quotation, parody or pastiche' (Lucas, 2000: 54). However, here, the analysis moves on from this to address how this correlates with ironic consumption within the spectacle today. In addition to writings on the spectacle, the chapter draws most significantly on Linda Hutcheon, Claire Colebrook and Stuart Sim in modelling postmodern experiences of irony.

As the significance of irony to our relationship with the spectacle is addressed in this chapter, a contrast is drawn between the process of watching and imposing an ironic reading upon something – it's so bad it's good – and the process of watching something that presents a double coding itself and which presents ironic failure as an integral part of that as well as a part of a spectacular virtuosity of a different kind. The pleasures of these different processes are correlated with Barthes writerly and readerly pleasures.

Chapter six continues the exploration of participation in the fourth chapter focusing on a highly immersive participatory experience within spectacular performance in order to analyse how its dynamics function as an unfolding narrative within the piece. The chapter examines *Fuerzabruta* (2006) and Punchdrunk's *Faust* (2006), the first providing a 'club-land' performance of high energy acrobatics, dance and images, and the second presenting the story of *Faust* across a vast performance space in which spectators explore the environment and follow performers around the space to find pockets of action.

While the chapter focuses primarily on the first piece, *Faust* provides a contrast in terms of the relation between audience independence, participation and narrative development. Unlike in *Fuerzabruta*, Punchdrunk allow the audience considerable

freedom to roam and to shape the dynamics, the structure and the narrative of the piece as a whole. *Fuerzabruta* controls the audience experience throughout, moving them round the space and manipulating the way they interact. Participation, while active in the bodily sense is less so in terms of controlling movement, the duration of the experience, and the development of the dynamics.

The participatory experiences of *Fuerzabruta*, unlike Blast Theory's work, are also not trying to provide any kind of commentary through the form employed; rather the performance pushes the spectacle beyond the visual and the aural, to engage the spectator kinaesthetically in the experience. The potential for live work to generate an experience that can out-spectacular the spectacle is discussed here in reference to a piece that draws together different but highly immersive experiences in arts and entertainment, the visual spectacular of circus theatre and the bodily engagement of clubbing. Embodiment is of considerable significance to the analysis, and literature informing the chapter includes sociological/anthropological material on embodiment by Featherstone and Csordas as well as Bourdieu's habitus. Consideration of immersion into an alternative set of bodily habits is grounded in an adaptation of Turner's notion of liminoid.

There is, in each of these chapters, a discussion of the relationship between narrative and other spectator engagements whether that be with visual aesthetics, the spectacle of virtuosity, the dynamics of shifting participation or a connection with either performers or other spectators. In addition, there is an emphasis on how these elements and the media through which they are played out define a relationship with the spectacle. Finally, in approach, the subsequent chapters have in common a reading of the work through a focus on spectator engagement.

CHAPTER 1 - Underpinning Theory

Narrative

The narrative in performance studies can addressed from two different perspectives. First, there is the narrative as a telling of the story either fictional or non-fictional. This is a telling: an enunciation which contains a story that is plotted out within the telling and includes both the narrative as it is staged and as the audience generates and experiences it. The second is the narrative as a discourse, described by Lyotard as a 'meta-narrative' (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv).[2]

In their theatre and film context, traditions of narrative analysis are based around structures that drive the experience of narrative towards closure and coherence. As Metz points out 'A narrative has a *beginning and an ending*' (Metz, 1974: 17). However, in the last fifty years, experimentation with narrative and structure in theatre begins to break this mould (Shank, 1994), and in film theory, models of spectatorship shift away from seeing the desired coherence or sense of wholeness in the satisfaction of closure at the end (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988). Where the illusion of coherence is generated here through identification with a character representing the ego ideal and through the substitution of resolution in the narrative structure, more recent models assume multiple identifications which allow the spectator pleasure through multiple but distinct loci for empathy as well as a sense of mastery and comprehension, thus generating the 'fantasy' as an illusory place of omniscience. Here, the closure of narrative is never the moment of coherence it promises to be. The fantasy 'depends not on particular objects but on their setting out; and the pleasure of fantasy lies in their

---

[2] The word 'discourse' here is not used in the sense of the text to be read or communicated as it is used in some narrative theory; rather in the sense that Foucault uses the term, a system of ideas and norms which underpin the use of language, representation or behaviours in the socio-cultural sphere.

setting out, not in the having of the objects' (Lapsley & Westlake, 1988: 93) thus upon process rather than coherence in an ending[3]. The use of the term identification with reference to the spectator's relationship with characters or performers is grounded in this theoretical model. By examining the work in terms of identifications, there is a clearly set out framework for multiple relationships with characters and performers which take emotional and cognitive response into account and which allow for a sense of spectator engagement with narrative as not necessarily driven towards a clear conclusion.

Semiotics similarly theorises structural coherence as processual. Mukarovsky of the Prague School distinguishes between wholeness as closure or completeness and what he describes as 'a certain correlation of components' which 'binds the work into unity at every moment of its course (if it is a work of temporal art) or in each of its parts (if it is a work of spatial art)' (Mukarovski cited in Quinn, 1995: 17). This concept of structure is not holistic, but instead, dynamic, flexible and impermanent, coming from Jakobson's coining of the word 'structuralism', where structure has 'dynamically interrelated parts as well as an adaptability to historical change' (Quinn, 1995: 15). This makes it possible to conceive of the structure of a piece of discourse as being in a state of constant flux, while at the same time holding within it a sense of coherence: 'unity at every moment of its course' (Mukarovski cited in Quinn, 1995: 17).

Here, addressing structure rather than narrative, it is clear that a kind of alternative

---

[3] Fantasy here does not refer to the simple notion of wish-fulfilment. It is described by Lapsley & Westlake as a 'compromise formation in which the repressed ideas were given expression, but only in a distorted form, dictated by the repressing agency… it may express conflicting desire and the law in a single ensemble' (Lapsley & Westlake, 1988: 91). The fantasy partly relies on the illusion of mastery over meaning that is encouraged by the construction of the text. This sense of becoming an omniscient, omnipotent viewer appears to invoke the imaginary - the illusion of being whole - and it is partly this that makes the process of narrativisation, with its appearance of a movement towards coherence and closure, a place of fantasy.

sense of coherence between elements of a performance, which might be based in narrative as psychoanalytic film theory suggests, might equally be based in dynamics, visual structure and sound. In the former case, the narrative based fantasy is no longer defined by a linear movement towards the end. The contemporary spectator is able to deal with far more complex multiple systems of identification or comprehend a plurality of narrative fragments as is evident from the way that viewers are able to channel hop or concentrate on several inputs at once. Where the desire for coherence is addressed in performance texts outside narrative development, through visual coherence for example, audience engagement shifts dramatically, engaging through recognition, awe, metaphoric comprehension or scopophilia. Examples of contemporary performance which shift away from the linear narrative engagement, yet still flourish in more mainstream theatres include The Blue Man Group, the increasingly popular dance/theatre companies like DV8 or Stan Won't Dance and circus/theatre companies like No Fit State or Cirque de Soleil. While this is not arguing that these companies generate more complex engagements, it is suggesting that coherence is found in places other than narrative and where there is narrative, in places other than in the conclusion. The drive towards coherence therefore can be undermined by plural disparate tendencies towards coherence in different forms of engagement with one piece.

Looking to recent performance theory, Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) is a helpful approach laying out a model for theatre performance that refigures or deconstructs what Lehmann sees as still dramatic theatre in Szondi's Aristotelian versus Epic model (Lehmann, 2006). He suggests that within these traditions 'the text as an offer of meaning reigned' (Lehmann, 2006: 47) and that 'the step to postdramatic theatre is taken only when the theatrical means beyond language are positioned equally alongside the text and are systematically thinkable without it' (Lehmann, 2006: 55),

creating a 'theatre of states', not action (Lehmann, 2006: 69).

While some of the work addressed in this thesis sits within Lehmann's category, post-dramatic, much still presents a spectator experience largely shaped by action. Rather than looking solely at work in which narrative is completely displaced, here each chapter explores how an engagement with narrative elements works in relation to other forms of spectator engagement. At the same time, in Song of the Goat Theatre's *Chronicles: a Lamentation* (2004) and in *Fuerzabruta* (2006) discussed in chapters two and six respectively, the narrative is very much displaced by other forms of audience engagement. Thus, the discussion in the following chapters recognises a similar trajectory in contemporary theatre away from the dominance of 'text as an offer of meaning' (Lehmann, 2006: 47), but addresses work along the scale of this shift, from written plays through to work like that of *Fuerzabruta* with almost no spoken words at all.

From this range of different spectator experiences emerge some of the questions this thesis addresses. How does engagement with narrative through identification function where narrative truth is challenged in other ways? What other kinds of immersion are possible beyond that associated with narrative? Is there a kind of resistance possible or is this shift in form too mixed up in the spectacle through the influence of the commercial media? Many of the questions arising from these chapters, however, are only the beginnings of what needs to continue into a far wider discussion. For example, while spectator engagement with virtuosity as spectacle is addressed in the first chapter, fuller consideration of how our notions of virtuosity are changing in relation to the rise of the mass media is only begun here.

Nevertheless, if as Lyotard suggests we have indeed lost our nostalgia for the experience of narrative, there remains a question about much contemporary popular culture: the Hollywood movie, the holiday romance novel or the computer game. The narrative is still dominant in much of the mainstream and this thesis recognises that the narrative both internally in the theatrical *mise en scène*, film or novel and in terms of normative assumptions of ideology as a metanarrative is a powerful construction and significant to the way we engage with the world.

There is, inevitably, in a period of uncertainty, also a backlash against it: a cultural disavowal which in this case is causing popular culture to push itself into excess in an attempt to provide comfort and hold anxieties at bay. Every manifestation of the successful mainstream in film, TV, books or music has either multiple sequels or a series of manufactured replicas: *The Matrix* (1999), for example, is followed by *Equilibrium* (2002) and *Underworld* (2003) as well as its own sequels. In the way that imitated gestures naturally exaggerate, so do the elements that construct a particular genre. And as genres become tired, each variation within a genre becomes a model for reconstruction immediately after success.

The same is true in popular music. There is a sequel to every band and the manufacturing of image and style is no longer hidden in the music industry. The development of *Pop Idol* and its own series of replica reality shows demystify the manufacturing of a singer or band and force the consumer to recognise the music they listen to as a product with manufactured qualities. Even the Indie band has become a manufactured alternative. However, as the consumer becomes more and more a 'knowing consumer' (Paterson, 2006: 142) the narrative becomes a repetition. Perhaps it is not the narrative that people buy but the spectacle and its packaging. Whether this is

also true of theatre becomes a significant question in this thesis as it progresses, examining what resistance to this tendency there can be.

Also significant in this drive to excess is that more and more of the audience is driven towards recognition of how they are placed in relation to these media as spectators. The sharply defined genres exaggerating their own effects project a sharply defined mode of spectatorship in response: one born out of the spectacular and excess. This representation of the process visible in the music industry is not, however, a form of transparency or a 'laying bare' of devices like that of Brecht's theatre. Instead it lays bare its own working with the knowledge it no longer needs to hide it, because if everybody knows and nobody acts to change anything, the mass inaction becomes a justification for individual inaction. There is a kind of accepted despondency about the impossibility of change that the industry takes advantage of and a fall back on irony where the consumer/spectator knows too much.

This amplification of significations of narrative genre in popular entertainment is in itself evidence that there is a loss of faith in the reliability of other formal discourses and belief systems and a development in terms of the form and manner in which they are constituted. It is however not only the rise of the media and popular culture that is implicated in the shifts in contemporary theatre. The metanarrative has suffered from the doubt generated by the excess and plurality of discourses of the spectacle and a loss of faith in progress, and this doubt is enough that the metanarrative is put into question.

If the process of structuring or constituting a narrative - the process of narrativisation - is made possible only by the presence of an active subjectivity[4] then the loss of the narrative only needs to be a loss of faith in its truth. This in itself will cause the connections which draw the elements together - however dynamic and fluid they might be - to slide out of place. The same is true of the social discourse. Society, it seems, need only lose faith in the authority or truth of a discourse for its function as a discourse to be undermined, and as discourses clash and fragment, truth become less certain and the metanarrative fails.

This dissolution of the grand narrative is significant to this thesis first, because of its implications as a societal condition, and second, because of the implications for political theatre. In the first case, this is a process defined by what is termed the postmodern condition of society: the mass media, globalisation and pluralism, and in the second case, this is an intentional process of deconstruction rooted in post-structuralist thought.

Poststructuralism extends Saussure's separation of signifier and signified, so that the subject is cut off from direct access to the material world. Derrida's 'différance' (1982: 14) deconstructs the coherent experience of the world structured by linguistic signification as a linear form of representation of the world[5]. Barbara Johnson in *The Critical Difference* describes this approach as undoing the text 'by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification' (1980: 5) and it is this deconstruction which in part underpins the formulation of transgression as a concept which contrasts with the concept of resistance in framing later discussions of the political in theatre and which

---

[4] Zich, separates the physically manifested performance on stage as the 'technical phenomena' or 'stage action' (Quinn, 1995: 44) and the regeneration of that in performance within the spectator consciousness, an interaction which Mukarovski termed the 'immaterial aesthetic object' (Quinn, 1995:49). The process of narrativising here assumes the inter-related technical textual elements are engaged in an interaction with a spectator who brings his or her own individual cultural narratives into that moment of constituting meaning.

[5] Saussure states that linguistic signification is linear by its nature (Saussure, 1959: 70).

informs the work of practitioners like Heiner Műller whose work, *Hamletmachine* (1979), for example, takes a deconstructive approach to the text and myths surrounding *Hamlet* or Split Britches who deconstruct heteronormative assumptions in *Belle Reprieve* (1991).

While this theoretical model has been influential in academia and experimental theatre practice, it is the postmodern models of the contemporary societal condition in the West which emerged with post-structuralism that have had a more resonance beyond these specialist groups. Returning to the quotation from Lyotard that began the thesis[6] it is therefore worth addressing how the experiences of decentred truth and suspicion of the metanarrative or authority are manifested in cultural discourses or representations. Is the meta-narrative as something that has a sense of unity and truth, a thing of the past?

There is certainly an increasing suspicion of authority and the discourses of power which is evident in the disengagement with politics and increasingly low voting numbers in the late twentieth century. At the 2003 conference on progressive politics, Lord Philip Gould suggests this 'political disengagement' is defined by three elements of contemporary society: 'a triangle of disengaged citizens more insecure than ever; consumers more empowered than ever; and communications more contaminated than ever' (Gould, 2003: 71). There is, here, a loss of faith in the significance of political decisions and authority of those making them, partly due to globalisation and the rise of the media as an object of consumption rather than a public sphere (Habermas, 1989: 160 – 161).

---

[6]   '[M]ost people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative' (Lyotard, 1984:41).

As Gould suggests the loss of faith in politics is very much defined by a 'politics of personal destruction' in media representations, and also is part of a bigger picture, which includes our relationship with metanarratives in general: our own identities, religion, ethics, myths, and democracy in the face of imposed democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. What this speech does not address, however, is the fact that passivity is not limited to engagement with politics as a part of citizenship, but defines our engagement with the world.

Gould's running metaphor for this disengagement is telling in this respect. Throughout the first part of his speech and in the title, he describes this lack of faith in politics and thus lack of participation in terms of an 'empty stadium' and defined the relationship between politician and citizen in terms of a spectator sport. 'A goal is scored. Players celebrate, but the applause is muted, and the crowd barely hear. This is politics in 2003: the game goes on much as it has always done, but the spectators are drifting away' (Gould, 2003: 70). The metaphor describes quite aptly the lack of engagement that defines this political era, but also, as an unwitting allegory for spectacular engagement, tells of the translation of the public sphere into a consumable media product: even if the stadium were full, the construction of political processes as spectacle denies the citizen agency or the capacity for reply.

While globalisation and the plurality of discourses transforms a particular understanding of world events into a consumer choice, equally, the dual action of the proximity of different religious belief systems to each other and the secularisation of society has had a significant effect on the coherence of ethical structures (Habermas, 2003). This is evident in the everyday news: in controversy over Muslim women wearing the full veil

for example,[7] or in debates over gay adoption law and Catholic adoption agencies.[8] The lack of discursive coherence and resulting uncertainties and conflicts are it seems experienced in daily life.

Maintaining a stable political position with a utopian ideological underpinning becomes increasingly difficult in this circumstance and protest which calls for an alternate system is replaced with protest about specific issues or decisions taken within the structures already there[9]. This shift is mirrored in political theatre-making in Britain as well and is evident today. Already in the 1970s, socialist agit-prop was giving way to more complex representations of societal roles which deconstructed the relationship between society, class and the individual. By 1979, David Edgar in 'Towards a Theatre of Dynamic Ambiguities' looks back at agit-prop saying 'the politics you could get across were very crude, whereas the world about us was getting more complicated' (Edgar, 1979b: 8). Oppositional politics shifted towards dynamic plurality, towards deconstruction, towards issue politics or towards inclusion in identity politics.

Matthew Todd's feature in *The Guardian* on gay drama tells us 'it's marching into the mainstream' (Todd, 2006: npg) and the debate over the withdrawal of funding from the Westminster Theatre directly addresses perceptions of identity led theatre as encouraging ideology based ghettoes in theatre practice (Todd, 2006: npg). The notion of oppositional politics or indeed a politics based within a strong coherence community seems to have become near-impossible. Even where the experience of being

---

[7] This is a reference to the response of the media and politicians to the employment tribunal case in which a British Muslim school teacher was suspended in 2006 for refusing to uncover her face while teaching if there was a man present (Wainwright, 2006).

[8] In March 2007, regulations were passed giving gay couples the right to adopt children under the law. Catholic adoption agencies said they would have to close when the law came into force in 2008 (Wintour et al., 2007: npg).

[9] Stuart Sim in *Irony and Crisis* (2002) defines the issue of issue politics in terms of a mini-narrative (64) and provides a useful analysis of concerns about moral relativism in placing emphasis on mininarrative and Lyotard's justifications for that approach (Sim, 2002: 64-69).

marginalised is still strong as in the disabled community[10], the pressure to place emphasis upon assimilation rather than education and resistance is strong[11].

Graeae's approach to this in *On Blindness* (2003) is to bring together disabled and non-disabled performers and to combine some of the issues that they feel need to be addressed within a strong narrative intended to appeal to a mixed audience. They collaborate with other companies and mix signing with speech and physical theatre playfully, to present to their audience a theatrical language that is more inclusive. The implications for political theatre here will be discussed further in chapter three in relation to *On Blindness,* but it is worth noting the shift as a general contextual concern and also to address the shifts in political theatre in terms of form.

As Marxist, Postcolonialist and Feminist thinkers in the century made convincing critiques of the cultural discourses generally accepted as being 'true', in doing so they addressed not only the content, but the form of texts or discourses and the mode of engagement generated. Brecht's work earlier in the century had suggested that the construction of an illusory world upon the stage did not engage an audience critically with the issues or societal state presented. Brecht's V-effekt attempted to turn 'the object […] from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected' (Brecht, 1974: 143) and this approach was appropriated and refigured by later practitioners, and feminist theatre in particular.

---

[10] At present, approximately 14% of the population in Britain are disabled (Johnson, 2004: 121) and there are still significant problems in terms of access to theatre for both disabled audiences and inclusion in the industry for theatre practitioners. The BBC's report, *Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes towards disability and its portrayal on television* (2003) shows that many professionals working in television 'feel ill-equipped to discuss disability issues because they are not confident about the 'correct' or most up-to-date terminology to use, and are wary of criticism' (Sancho, 2003: 15).

[11] The BBC's report, *Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes towards disability and its portrayal on television* (2003) specifically comments upon the split between the desire to educate and deal with issues surrounding disability directly and the desire to normalise disability through inclusion.

In her essay 'Brechtian Theory / Feminist Theory: Towards a Gestic Feminist Criticism', Elin Diamond examines how Brecht's techniques can be adapted to address the construction of gender in society (Diamond, 1988)[12]. Feminist theatre theorists like Jeanie Forte also make a link made between verisimilitude and spectator immersion into a narrative world and use Laura Mulvey and Teresa De Lauretis' models for film spectatorship to critique the way that the realist performance constructs identifications and perceived truth. It has in fact been realism that has suffered most attacks for reinforcing dominant discourse about the world. Jill Dolan also states that 'the lesbian subject in realism is always singular, never adequately a site of differences between or among lesbians, never described within the divided identity of the deconstructive mode' (1990: 53).

This focus is significant because it places emphasis upon realism in its critique, not narrative itself and while it is suggested above that there is a relationship between narrative immersion, identification and verisimilitude, it is perhaps this distinction that allows a theatre of action[13] to retain its strength as a means of engaging spectators critically. The shift away from narrative dominance addressed in this thesis is inextricably linked to the ways in which the realist form has been brought into question. A shift away from realist representation shifts engagement away from identificatory immersion, and while Lehmann separates the epic from the postdramatic, citing its reliance on the text and the reign of meaning, here in discussing the spectacle, the discussion must retain an awareness of elements which are disruptive to narrative immersion as well as those that replace it.

---

[12] She believes it is possible to deconstruct the naturalised patriarchal representations of women in theatre using this approach. Later in *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997) she extends her critique of the realist form, stating that it '*produces* 'reality' by positioning its spectator to recognise and verify its truths' (Diamond, 1997: 5).

[13] This references Lehmann's distinction between Theatre of States and Theatre of Action as discussed on pages 18 and 19.

To draw these various elements together, it appears that the dissolution of the metanarrative finds its correlating shift in the move away from the realist form in political theatre rather than necessarily in a shift away from the narrative. While the focus of this thesis is not political theatre, there is inevitably, in addressing the rise of the spectacle, some focus on critiques of the 'society of the spectacle' (Debord, 1983) made within performance and an exploration of the way political theatre is able to make use of narrative and multiple identifications and engagements in today's theatre. Therefore, as the notion of political theatre itself has been reconfigured and revisioned using a variety of different terms and models, it is worth summarising the most relevant and making clear which terms are being used and why.

The Transgressive

Baz Kershaw models the contemporary political theatre in terms of a shift away from being necessarily leftwing theatre (that which I have described as oppositional above) and towards what he terms radical performance. In *The Radical in Performance* (1999) he claims a place in theatre for something ideologically transgressive, but states 'the radical has no necessary ideological tendency; hence it may be claimed […] by both Left and Right factions in contemporary politics' (Kershaw, 1999: 18). For Jan Cohen-Cruz radical performance can be understood through her definition of the radical as 'acts that question or re-envision ingrained social arrangements of power' again taking emphasis away from a particular politics and shifting it to the necessity of a questioning or re-envisioning (Cohen-Cruz 1998: 1). This mirrors the deconstructive approach to politics described as 'transgressive' by Foucault as he defines transgression in terms of a moving beyond, not in terms of an opposition.

While seeking to recognise the importance of questioning and re-envisioning as central

to political approaches in theatre performance today, this thesis favours the use of the term transgressive over radical because of the emphasis in Foucault's conception of transgression on the *approach* to material over the *content* of it. Specific to theatre, Lehmann also suggests this is a useful perspective in *Postdramatic Theatre* stating that theatre's 'political engagement does not consist in the topics but in the form of perception' which is defined by an 'aesthetic of responsibility (or response-ability)' (Lehmann, 2006: 184 - 5). If the 'response-ability' can be interpreted as the spectator's ability in engagement with a performance to make a reply, to avoid passivity in relation to the form, then Lehmann's analysis adds to the notion of transgression a direct recognition of the spectacle as a dominant force of passive engagement.

To summarise here, the notion of transgression as it is formulated for this thesis takes on the following aspects: it is trans-ideological; it is a process of questioning or re-envisioning ingrained power relations; it is rooted in form not content; and it enables a response rather than reinforcing the passive engagement of the spectacle. Within this very positive definition, there is also a limitation. In using Foucault as a model for this notion of transgression, it becomes impossible to see this transgressive approach to theatre as potentially liberating in the sense of opposing directly a dominant system.

Foucault suggests that the transgressive functions as a part of 'practices of freedom' meaning work upon the self, rather than as part of an act of liberation in which 'a colonial people tries to free itself of its colonizer' (Foucault, 1988b: 2). This definition is suggestive of how there comes about this shift in the modes of reception from one based on direct resistance to one based on transgressive practices. Free market capitalism as an economic and spectacular system is founded on a perceived freedom for the individual (Smith, 1982: 14). This appearance of freedom is based upon

consumer sovereignty and upon economic freedom where the spectacle presents choice after choice, and no choice but to choose. This suggests that as the spectacle has gained power in the west, what Marx called false consciousness is more powerful than ever. However, this totality is one based upon a conception of freedom widely accepted in the western world and so resistance seems no longer necessary. As our country shifts power further towards the market and away from the government, so our response to the world shifts from oppositional or resistant towards transgressive practices of 'freedom' [14]

This is a very different proposition to one which suggests this shift towards the transgressive allows an exploration of a far greater complexity of ideas or issues and these conflicting views reflect the two different perspectives which will be addressed in chapter two. To argue that transgressive politics is undermined by the false consciousness of the spectacle of freedom entails an assumption of the totalising power of the spectacle. However, arguing for its strength as a process of drawing out complexities and contradictory layers of meaning means engaging with the notion of the transgressive as a form which as Cohen-Cruz suggests is able to question and reconfigure power relations whether this is through drawing together layers of conflicting signification or combining critique and complicity.

Whether transgressive approaches to a critique of society are the only way of resisting the totality of the spectacle or are in fact undermined by its false consciousness of freedom, the transgressive has become the dominant form of social critique in performance. Much contemporary live art exploring identity politics has a transgressive rather than oppositional function, as the view of identity in which the subject is a

---

[14] Lindlam states that 'aside from the difference between despotic and libertarian governments, the greatest distinction between one government and another is in the degree to which market replaces government or government replaces market' (Lindlam cited in Smith, 1990: 14).

coherent site of action and (at least for men) of rationality has given way to one of identity as a dynamic social construct. Here, the subject is in constant interaction, constituting and being constituted by its environment and thus a site for contestation.[15] This experience of identity as processual allows for a deconstructive repetition which draws into view the fractures in society's identity constructs.

Bobby Baker for example inhabits the roles society generates for the housewife or mother in a staged situation and plays their excess, both celebrating the female identity and commenting upon it. Her fingers taped into position holding a teaspoon to stir while welcoming the audience with a cup of tea each in *Kitchen Show* (1991) or the semi-ironic narration of her experience of being a mother expresses this sense of identity as a site of contestation. While in work like this the potential for re-appropriation of the image by the spectacle is great, there is clearly potential for disruption as well.

Becker's analysis of 'the artist as public intellectual' in *Surpassing the Spectacle* (2002) suggests that by offering 'complexity, ambivalence, and, at times aggressive confrontations with the status quo' artists are able to 'expose society's inherent contradictions' (Becker, 2002: 17). She picks out Bobby Baker as a British example of an artist who in this way perhaps 'punctures the veil' (Becker, 2002: 5). Other international examples of practitioners or artists she gives are Ron Athey, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Karen Finley, Andres Serrano and Magdalena Abrakanowicz (Becker 2002). While the scope of this thesis does not extend to a fuller discussion of live art[16], it is worth noting the importance of this kind of work as a form of political or transgressive performance. By bringing the personal into the public and engaging the

---

[15] Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity', a model of gender identity in which gender is generated through its social performance has been influential here, as she opened up possibilities for transgression through subversive repetition and excess.

[16] The decision not to explore live art performance is primarily because Becker has already presented a thorough analysis of live art as 'surpassing the spectacle' (2002).

spectator with an intimacy, the phenomenological experience of the world can potentially regain dominance over the mediatised representations of it. In this way, work can challenge the spectacle through presenting a level of complexity and in that, contradiction, which undermines the superficial representations of the spectacle.

The Rise of the Spectacle

While in relation to the metanarrative, the politics of theatre are very significant, this work is not simply addressing the spectacle in relation to the efficacy of transgressive performance or action, but in terms of its wider influence upon the *mise en scène* and spectator experience. It is my intention to suggest that the spectacle generates a mode of engagement with representations of the world that is informed by the dominance of the image, by the spectacular, by the prioritising of choice and by the blurring of the boundaries of the real. In this sense the thesis as a whole is concerned with form not just in the chapters dealing with transgressive performance experience. This section will outline Debord's view of the Spectacle, draw comparisons with more recent theorists in the area and present an overview of some of the performance in this country that has addressed the spectacle, the media or the dominance of the image in the years since 1968.

Debord's vision of the world in 1967, in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1983) is one experienced so completely through systems of representation that in his words, 'Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation' (Debord, 1983: 1). This prioritising of representation over the 'directly lived' is not limited to the image, however the use of the term 'spectacle' and Debord's discussion throughout, places the image at the centre of his view of the world. This is a useful emphasis as more and more of our experience of the world is mediated by the image: the World

Trade Centre falling, a celebrity before and after a diet, or the image of a moment out with friends. As mobile phones allow people to photograph or video moments and send them instantaneously, the personal and intimate as much as the public has shifted towards the represented, making people 'spectators of their own lives, where even the most personal gestures are experienced at one remove' (Plant, 1992: 1). Images of the world, of celebrity or of self, friends and family become a part of what is consumed in a system of cultural consumption.   It is this element of consumer society that is particularly important to this thesis as the dynamics of cultural consumption or those which I argue have implications for theatre performance today.

Debord views the spectacle as the representational manifestation of the world dominated by consumption. 'The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world' (Debord, 1983: 42). Whether the spectacle as it functions today is entirely defined by consumerism is another debate. Giroux, for example, in *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism* (2006) suggests there is a shift in America towards a spectacle of terror which, in his view, is causing a valorising of war and military might. Nevertheless, the significance of the entertainment industry, consumable experience, knowledge and the arts in addition to consumable objects makes Debord's model a useful one. The experience economy, cultural and entertainments consumption are particularly pertinent to chapter six which discusses the popularity of highly immersive multisensory theatre experiences.

For Debord, the spectacle normalises the relationships it shapes between people; the process of consumption we are engaged in; the valorising of consumer choice as freedom; and the shaping of time as spectacular time: 'exchangeable homogenous

units' (Debord, 1983: 149). In addition it seeks to reinforce passivity on the part of its subjects; to transform them into spectators consuming an image. 'The attitude which it demands in principle is passive acceptance which in fact it already obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly of appearance' (Debord, 1983: 12).

This multiplication of representations as a tendency towards monopoly or totality is extended in Baudrillard's notion of the 'simulacrum' (Baudrillard, 1988: 168), where the copies of copies of copies become ends in themselves. However, as Megson suggests, 'in Baudrillard's view, [...] the notional interface between the hegemonic spectacle and "real life" that is symbolized in Situationist discourse by the motif of the screen' is 'no longer viable' (Megson, 2004: 17). In effect, there is no access to the real and for Baudrillard, society is now reaching a point where the simulacra exerts a power so strong that there seems little possibility of resistance. The 'terrifying aspect of such an event' he states 'is that, beyond a certain point, every effort to exorcise it, only serves to precipitate it' (Baudrillard, 2001b, 195). In this case the only form of resistance is to be silent in the face of an excess of representation, to be slow in the face of a fast moving lifestyle. Baudrillard does not see a place for Lehmann's 'response-ability' (Lehmann, 2006: 185) and thus transgression, at all.

This extreme dystopian view of society, while useful in its recognition of some of the tendencies in a highly mediatised culture, causes problems for any kind of active response or agency and does not make use of what distinction still remains between the 'work' in the sense of the work of art, and the product (Lefebvre, 1991). While it may be the case that some theatre is allowing itself to become a product, something repeatable, theatre performance is still very much an art. As a result, only parts of

Baudrillard's thinking are used as the argument develops. In discussion of Blast Theory's work in which they address debates surrounding the media representations of war with reference to Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did not Take Place* (1995), there will also be more discussion of what resistance is possible in a mediatised world and of how far the complicity in working within similar modes of representation in their work dilutes that. Here again though, with the emphasis on disrupting the spectacle the chapter returns to Debord.

Debord's view, unlike Baudrillard's, remains rooted in social relations. The object of the spectator's gaze, as a desired reality to be consumed, is a justification and reason for labour as well as a product of that labour. The worker and consumer are the same individual with the roles they play conceptually and experientially separated by the structures of work and leisure.[17] The fact that this incorporates the images and engagement with them directly into a power relation means that the spectacle is pervasive. It is 'everything woven into the invisible veil that prevents us from making a clear evaluation of our situation or organizing to change it' (Becker, 2002: 2).

However, while the spectacle as both a representational and social manifestation functions as a kind of screen or 'veil' between the individual and the world, the recognition of social relations underlying the spectacle and the experience of alienation within that still implies the possibility of recognising the material conditions of existence in the real through the disruption of the spectacle. For Baudrillard, the totality

---

[17] This assimilation of what was the two class structure into a cycle of consumption and labour across class does not take into account global economic structures and labour power. While it is important to recognise that on a global level the two-class structure that Marx sees as central to a capitalist economic system is still relevant in the relationship between developed and developing countries, this thesis is focusing specifically on the cultural context for the British spectator. In this case, the division between social classes does not extend to an alignment with either production or consumption. Rather, marketing ensures that regardless of class the individual is bombarded with reasons to consume.

is complete; for Debord it was not. Debord argues for a combined theoretical and practical action, the style of which is 'negation' manifested as '*détournement*' (Debord, 1983: 204 – 210). He and the Situationists believed that a transformation of the capitalist system was possible through subversion of the existing spectacle: through 'the *reversal* of established relationships between concepts and by the diversion (or *détournement*) of all the attainments of earlier critical efforts' (Debord, 1983: 206).

Through the separation of life and its spectacular ideal - 'the material reconstruction of the religious illusion' (Debord, 1983: 20) – the subject becomes alienated from life and self 'seeking salvation and fulfilment in the spectacle' (Plant, 1992: 12) rather than in the 'directly lived' (Debord, 1983: 1). To gain access to the directly lived the veil or screen must be punctured. Thus, *détournement* is defined by 'the necessity for *distance* to be maintained toward whatever has been turned into an official verity' (Debord, 1983: 206) thereby drawing attention back to the world as it really is, the social relations underlying the spectacle. Debord considers *détournement* to be inherently plagiaristic, 'because its materials are those which already appear within the spectacle' (Plant, 1992: 86). It is subversive because 'its tactics are those of the "reversal of perspective", a challenge to meaning aimed at the context in which it arises' (Debord in Plant, 1992: 86). This notion of the plagiaristic subversion remains useful as ideological transgressive performances often work on the border of complicity and critique, using the systems they undermine.

On the other side of the Situationists' approach was the belief in 'ecstatic integration as the absolute contradiction to spectacular mediocrity and exclusion' (Plant, 1992: 39). Vaneigem who published *The Revolution of Every Day Life* in the same year, 1967, that Debord published *The Society of the Spectacle* valorised a playful and passionate

engagement with life and placed emphasis on generating moments of absolute integration and ecstasy. In this way, 'the ethic of play, adventure, and a creative, participatory life was posed as the negation of the entire spectacular perspective' (Plant, 1992: 72) In Vaneigem's words, 'Poetry is an act which engenders new realities; it is the fulfillment of radical theory, the revolutionary act par excellence' (Vaneigem, 1967: 1).

 Whilst the dominance of Baudrillard's recipe of postmodernism in cultural theory appears to undermine any kind of subversive activity today, returning to the Situationists appears useful and according to Sadie Plant, still relevant over the past twenty years. Plant cites the Festival of Plagiarism in the 1980s and the call for an art strike in 1990 as examples of continued subversion (Plant, 1992: 177/8). Looking back to the 1970s, the Situationist analysis of the spectacle, anarchist and Marxist thought, had a significant influence on a number of theatre makers in the years following 1968 (Innes, 2002; Peacock, 1991; Megson, 2004). Howard Brenton, discussing his own work, comments particularly on *Magnificence* (1973) saying 'a lot of the ideas […] came straight out of the writing of that time in Paris, and the idea of official life being like a screen' (Brenton in Innes, 2002: 208). Megson provides further commentary analysing the dominance of the screen and the influence of Debord's work on Brenton's *Fruit* (1970) and drawing attention to Brenton's *A Short Sharp Shock* (1980), Griffiths' *The Party* (1974) and Edgar's *Maydays* (1983). (Megson, 2004: 10 - 13)

Whilst in relation to 'In Yer Face' theatre, Megson's essay perhaps overstates the direct influence of Debord's work, his analysis is useful, as he points to specific theatrical manifestations of Debord's '*détournement*' (Debord, 1983: 144). Drawing on Richard Boon's analysis, he sees the *détournement* as manifested in form as well as content in

the play *Fruit*, seeking to 'disrupt its own spectacle' (Boon cited in Megson, 2004: 11), generating what is the potential for a reflexive theatrical détournement.

A considerable number of more recent works could be added to that list including Alex Martin's *Brown Dress Project* (2006), in which she wore the same dress for a year and her *Recycling Project* (2006) in which she wore only clothes she had made and only made clothes by recycling (http://www.littlebrowndress.com/). *Miss Mobile* (2005) by Emil Hrvatin performed at the ICA, is another example of critique of the spectacle, as the piece problematised the exposition of the private in public through a participatory mock chat show. Work of this kind which draws attention to the underlying relations constructed by the spectacle, will be discussed in relation to Blast Theory's work later in the thesis.

At this point, it is also worth drawing attention to what Steven Duncombe terms the 'ethical spectacle': one which is participatory, active, open-ended and transparent (Duncombe, 2007). While the work of the companies discussed subsequently inevitably functions as part of the spectacle, within that it also is able to provide an alternative to the consumerist, pacifying engagement constructed by the mass media at times. This is not making a claim for *détournement* necessarily, but it is allowing that not all works of art necessarily reinforce the pacifications of the spectacle. Duncombe's analysis allows an in between place which I would argue defines some experimental work with new media in theatre. While this kind of work does not attempt to disrupt the spectacle through its relationship with the audience, it is often more transparent as a particular medium is overtly explored in terms of its form. As an exploration of the medium it is open ended and potentially active. The work of Improbable Theatre with ironic

spectacle for example has this kind of approach to its own medium as will be discussed in chapter five.

This kind of work has its roots in the post 1968 experimental work with media as during this period, a number of groups and practitioners began to explore alternatives to the fundamentally narrative-based realist theatre integral to Britain's mainstream. The dominance of the image in a society where the screen was becoming ubiquitous was reflected in much of the experimental theatre work since the 1960s

Until then, and in the mainstream through till the latter part of the century, British theatre was predominantly text focused and realist. In 1980 still, it is suggested that British theatre's 'strengths lie mainly in the realist modes of presentation and its manipulation of the spoken word.' (Burt & Barker, 1980: 70) By the 1990s, the tone has changed a little and it is only the mainstream that is described as being 'text-bound' (Cameron, 1994:124). However, still, visually-focused theatre performance is experienced as experimental or non-mainstream.

The shift away from linear dramatic narrative in experimental or alternative theatre groups and practitioners began much earlier than is indicated in discussion of mainstream British theatre however. Brook's Theatre of Cruelty season with the RSC in 1964 brought new ways of working to the British stage and the first Happenings, which became more widespread in the latter part of the decade, took place in 1963. Already by this time the Happening was prevalent across the world as part of Fluxus Festivals, performance festivals as well as concerts. These were highly visual live events where the structures of institutionalised performance mediums were set aside in

order find a freer mode of expression[18]. There was, then, in the 1970s, a surge of visually experimental companies, influenced by the happenings of the 1960s including The People Show, Lumiere & Son and Hesitate & Demonstrate, whose work, Sobieski suggests, could be termed 'Theatre of Image' comparable, in that respect, with Robert Wilson (Marranca, cited in Sobieski, 1994: 92).

In the 1970s and early 80s there was also considerable focus on the exploration of audiovisual media. This was predominantly exploring television and video technologies, looking at how television constructs narratives differently, and in particular focusing on the idea of cutting backwards and forwards in the editing of material, and in the channel hopping that came later in the 1970s with the introduction of the remote control. The work of Impact in the early 80s intercrossed genres to expose the underlying structures of narrative and that of Dogs in Honey transferred TV imagery to stage in *Architecture for Babies* (1990). This created a sense of defamiliarisation through the change that live stage presence generates when the expectation is that it would be screened. Described as 'a fast edit satellite TV show for theatre' (Dogs in Honey, 1990) *Architecture for Babies* recreated the flicker from image to image in satellite TV channel hopping, exploring this mode of engaging with the screen. This relation between live and mediatised performance is an interesting one as the imposition of one medium on to the images or techniques of the other can potentially expose spectatorial habits and expectations through the performance experience. This approach to devising work which generates a social critique is explored more fully in chapter four in relation to Blast Theory's appropriation of game style movements through a narrative.

---

[18] Nam June Paik, for example, poured a bucket of water over himself while wearing a business suit in order to 'ridicule [...] the pretensions of the art world with deliberately absurd actions' in 1962 at the Fluxus International Festival of New Music in Weisbaden (Goldberg, 1998: 42). Examples like this serve to demonstrate the attitude towards established institutions and behaviours in the art world, mirroring the challenges to societal institutions and behaviours in the protests and political struggles of the period.

Recently, in addition, alternative experiences of the internet and virtual reality have been explored; Station House Opera for example, used a combination of live performers and their videoed virtual doubles to generate a comic confusion as they attempted to scale a wall in 1998. Likewise with their more recent *Roadmetal Sweetbread* (1998)) and *Play on Earth* (2006), they begin exploring telepresence and how an audience engages with performers working together through live and recorded performance or web streaming. In *Play on Earth* the performance takes place in sites across three continents, linked together by live web streaming. There is an interesting sense of connection across the screen between spectators on the other side of the world, as well as a struggle to engage with the fragments of story emerging in each space. This very much shifts the experience of the internet because of the presence of both live and digital performers and spectators.

While some of this work extends beyond experimentation with form, to explore ideas linked to the medium or its sociological implications, much of it is not explicitly making a critique. It potentially functions as ethical spectacle because it is open ended, active and transparent, however, it is not necessarily transgressive. These technologies are being used in the commercial entertainment and communications industries: in games, in theatre, in mobile phones and the internet so perhaps this is an alternative to these which is not immersive and passive.

Having introduced work which is potentially transgressive in relation to the spectacle and work which provides an alternative to its engagements, the final part of this section introduces spectator experiences which are complicit with or influenced by the spectacle. While separating this section from the critique or the alternative, it is

important to recognise that inevitably, theatre performance is a part of the spectacle, it is complicit and indeed influenced by the spectacular engagements; chapters which discuss transgression, therefore, will also discuss complicity or re-appropriation. However, what this section introduces is the influence upon form and spectator engagement that runs across as a theme of every chapter.

First, the influence of the spectacular image and the presentation of excess is significant upon both theatre practice and spectator engagement. The ubiquity of special effects in films, the popularity of big budget martial arts films, and the re-emergence of circus as a popular form are a testament to the importance of the spectacular to our engagement with contemporary cultural forms. In addition, the emphasis upon the spectacular image in news reporting reinforces this mode of engagement with the real as well. The perceived immediacy of the image transferred across to mediated representation has meant that the truth claim of the photographic or filmed image seems stronger than the written word and thus emerges 'society's dependence on images' (Debord, 1983: 199).

In theatre, this influence can be seen in the growing popularity of circus theatre, dance theatre including breakdance, and companies like Song of the Goat Theatre whose physical virtuosity becomes central to spectatorship. The increasing significance of visual awe to theatre spectatorship is one of the most considerable challenges to the dominance of the narrative in theatre performance. However, the spectacular in theatre is not new. The West End has never stopped being concerned with the visually spectacular. What the work discussed in this thesis demonstrates is that the spectacular is transferring across out of the West End into work which has its roots in the experimental theatre of the 1970s. This kind of theatre performance that sits on the cusp of both mainstream and experimental is theatre which appeals to a young audience,

is theatre that is, for lack of a better word, trendy. Part of the reason for the popularity of this work is the fact that it does present its audience with an experience that engages with the spectacle or spectacular modes of spectatorship. However, the other part is that it offers more than the repetitions of mainstream film. It is often still challenging the spectator, if not ideologically, then aesthetically. This kind of challenge is introduced in the third chapter in relation to Complicité's *The Elephant Vanishes* (2003), and re-emerges in chapter six as the spectacular is pushed beyond the visual to incorporate the kinaesthetic experience of the spectacle.

The spectacle is not entirely image oriented of course; also important to our mediated access to the world are sound, as films soundtrack the image and iPods soundtrack the journey to work, and increasingly kinaesthetic engagement. Computer games are now engaging the whole body in play more and more as they try to generate the total experience of immersion. In some of the chapters therefore, it is not the necessarily visual emphasis of the spectacle that is most significant. Rather the form of engagement within multisensory gaze, and its reliance upon multiplicity and excess, 'Shock and Awe', is the common thread in these analyses.

The excess in the significations of genre described earlier also has an impact upon theatre performance and spectatorship. The knowing consumer, as an ironic consumer, has made irony a part of everyday life and the 'so bad it's good' culture associated allows theatre performance to exploit spectator expertise in relation to irony as a stylistic approach to the world. The consumer relationship to the world and to culture also influences theatre performance, as the experience economy defines our experiences as a part of consumerism. While this introductory chapter has begun to suggest that theatre is not subsumed into the consumer product, the thesis as it develops also

recognises the significance of consumer choice to the way spectators engage with performance and the way theatre companies brand themselves, and present themselves to their potential audiences.

Overall, the influence of the spectacle as one of two main threads running through the thesis is significant to the way we conceive of theatre today, because for theatre to define itself as an art that is relevant to the century spectator, it must find a way of engaging an audience that consumes, that expects the spectacular, that is becoming more and more self-reflexive about its own spectatorship, yet still embraces highly immersive, narrative driven popular cultural forms. One of the questions that will be addressed in particular in the conclusions of the thesis therefore is how, given the analyses presented in the subsequent chapters, theatre is constructing its place in this world.

Spectatorship

Finally before embarking upon the central analysis, this section introduces a few key issues in the development of the thesis surrounding spectatorship. Firstly it introduces the use of Turner's theory of the liminoid to distinguish experiences of subjectivity; secondly multiple engagements in contemporary spectatorship are considered, then aspects of psychoanalytical theories of spectatorship including processes of identification, and finally, transgressive spectatorship.

The theatre is a space set aside from the real in that there is usually a time and place with clear boundaries in which a performance to take place, even where that space is not a traditional theatre building. For the spectator, there are cultural discourses which specifically frame theatre performance presenting the spectator with a particular

environment in which usual 'real life' conventions are shed and those relevant to theatre experience are taken on.

This transition from subject to spectator can be theorised using Victor Turner's reworking of Van Gennep's 'liminality' as 'liminoid', an equivalent space for post-industrial society (Turner, 1982: 24). Both liminal and liminoid are periods of time and space set outside the conventions and structures of society (Turner, 1982: 33). However, where the liminal exists as part of a transition from one state to another in the rites of passage examined as part of the anthropological study of tribal cultures, the liminoid is to be found on the margins and in the periods of leisure in modern and, as Rico Lie suggests, postmodern society (2002).

Where liminal periods are associated with the temporary inversion of social structures as part of a transition in life cycles, thus neither simply work nor play, the liminoid is also defined by the possibility for subversion and forms part of a separate play or leisure period (Turner, 1982: 33-36). (It is worth noting though that liminoid experiences do not necessarily imply subversion; they may equally reinforce through play the existing structures.) Leisure activities like theatre, carnival or computer games can be defined as liminoid because they set aside a space where behaviours and hierarchical structures are not determined by the same rules as in 'real' social circumstance. Theatre performance is a particularly clear example as there is a crossing of a threshold into another space and at the end back out of it, mirroring the three stages of the transitional rite of passage: separation, liminal and aggregation. In terms of the spectator, the expectations set up around the theatre and the process of crossing that threshold in time and space into the performance, shift the nature of engagement such that the spectator responds as a spectator, not as they might in everyday life.

This separation from a mode of interaction appropriate to the real makes it possible to argue the impact of the rise of the spectacle upon modes of spectator engagement without necessarily opening up misleading debates about the dangers of television or film violence on social behaviours. Also, this model of spectatorship is particularly significant for the argument presented in chapter three, where Blast Theory allow the spectatorial identity to break out into the real as part of a comment on the way these modes of engaging with real and illusory are becoming more blurred. This is one of the doubled or multiple engagements addressed in the thesis which is itself an issue for spectatorship in itself.

Perception through multiple engagements is the second key assumption underlying the arguments presented in the following chapters and it is based upon two things: a multiplicity within the *mise en scène*, and simultaneity in processes of perception and interpretation. The former is not hard to establish. Indeed, in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (1980), Elam speaks of a 'weave of radically differentiated modes of expression, each governed by its own selection and combination rules... [a] multilinear - but integrated - flow of information' (Elam, 1980: 44) suggesting it is this multiplicity of sign systems that defines the discourse of theatre. What is harder to delineate is the capacity for multiple simultaneous engagements on the part of the spectator.

Physiologically speaking, our senses function simultaneously, both in parallel and independently of each other (Stein and Meredith, 1993). In addition, where the spectator is not able to take in all the data, for example visual data in on two sides of the stage, they are still able to organise this into simultaneously presented information. However, there is more to the engagement of the spectator than simply simultaneous

sensory perceptions. There is, beyond this, the interpretative, the emotional and identificatory level of interaction with material. Whilst the different aspects of experience and interaction may work in conjunction to create a coherent experience, what happens where these different aspects work in conflict or collision with each other?

Jon Whitmore's argument in *Directing Postmodern Theater* is that the American spectator has been used to perceiving the simultaneous multiple systems of communication as part of a linear narrative and has found difficult a postmodern theatre which 'offers simultaneous, overlapping, interwoven, disjointed, and nonsequential experiences' (Whitmore, 1994: 205). He suggests that through habit, the multiple sign systems became part of a traditional discourse of theatre based on linearity which is easily comprehended, and that postmodern theatre began to challenge that. Evidently, our perceptual capabilities allow us to input huge amounts of very different data as we look at the world, and thirteen years after Whitmore presented this argument, the simultaneous, the overlapping or disjointed has become everyday, as the narrative has given way to the excesses of the spectacle. Already in 1994, Whitmore recognises that 'as people who were raised with MTV images and Walkman-generated music […] come into the theater, the simultaneous and disjointed visual and aural phenomena become readily accepted' (Whitmore, 1994: 206).

This thesis, therefore, places an emphasis on simultaneity in engagement as one of the fundamental influences of the rise of the spectacle but also in a different way a principle of transgressive performance. It is one thing to make sense of a performance through a linear narrative and for the multiple systems of signification to run in support of that line of development, and it is quite another to engage with multiple systems of

signification, multiple frames for that or multiple engagements with characters and performance and for those to be in conflict or tension with each other.

This distinction between integrated and conflicting simultaneity is essential, as this thesis is concerned with the combination of different modes of engagement beyond the normal experience of multiple sign systems: an experience which places emphasis on the juxtaposition of engagements or where that juxtaposition has a significant impact on the experience. This distinction underpins the arguments presented in a number of chapters. Chapter three brings together metonymic narrative engagement and metaphoric engagement with spatial coherence. It assumes also multiple rather than single figures of identification. Chapter four addresses the relationship between engagement with the fictional and the real. Chapter five addresses two different experiences of omniscience or satisfaction through comprehension and chapter six draws together engagement with narrative with a shifting dynamics of participation.

This chapter has already introduced some contextual material in relation to the narrative and picked out the notion of coherence, presenting alternative models based on metaphoric structure as well as metonymic. There is an assumption here that coherence is important, in the very notion that narrative dissolution is worth talking about and in the recognition throughout the thesis that narrative engagement still has a significant place in contemporary theatre. However, it is also worth noting here as well the significance of this element to spectator experience.

This desire for coherence according to psychoanalytic film theory is rooted in a 'lack' which defines our separation from the world through language. The illusion of wholeness, of coherence, or of comprehension through perceived omniscience

generated in narrative engagement functions as a substitute therefore, providing a series of perspectives in film from which to view the narrative (shot, reverse shot) and a series of identifications. Whether the psychoanalytical framework is valid in itself, the model of empowerment through coherence is a useful one. The seeking out of coherence and comprehension is a part of the way we organise our perceptions of the world and our relationship with the world is defined by our ability to organise and comprehend it. This is the case in the comprehension of a complex narrative but also in our organisation and grouping of visual objects. The artistic unity that can be seen in the work of groups like Complicité, who place emphasis on a moment by moment connection, is a transferral and exaggeration of the process of structuring information that is central to understanding the world. However, even where there is little evidence of a pattern, structure or narrative, our organisational processes attempt to group material and organise it. This often means that a spectator will attempt to narrativise what occurs on stage, or attempt to organise images even where, in the work of an artist like Merce Cunningham, the ordering of danced images and musical accompaniment are organised by chance.

The other element of psychoanalytical film theory drawn upon as the thesis progresses is the model of spectator identification. The shift in film theories of spectatorship away from simple identification based on the ego[19] ideal towards multiple identifications means this is a useful model for aspects of narrative immersion in theatre. The notion of multiple identifications underpins the analysis in chapter three so is outlined briefly below.

---

[19] According to Mulvey, the gaze of the spectator in film is aligned with the camera and thus with the active male hero of the film, all of which gaze at the passive female. She comments that the male subject hero is not the 'erotic object of the gaze' but instead the 'more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror' (Mulvey, 1975: 11).

This shift away from an assumed linear structure and clear resolution does not mean necessarily a shift away from narrative immersion or indeed a passive or linear engagement with the screen or stage. Rather, the model allows for a variety of different kinds of immersion or engagement with a performance and a greater complexity of identifications. This theory of identification is one rooted in the notion of 'fantasy' as a 'compromise formation' which 'may express conflicting desire and the law in a single ensemble' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988: 91) rather than closure. The fantasy partly relies on the illusion of mastery over meaning that is encouraged by the construction of the text. Because it is formed through a tension between desire and the law it is an endless process of suture and rupture, leaving the spectator unfulfilled and desiring more at the end. The closure of narrative is never, therefore, the moment of coherence it promises to be. The fantasy 'depends not on particular objects but on their setting out; and the pleasure of fantasy lies in their setting out, not in the having of the objects' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988: 93). This model by encompassing the entire process of narrativisation and the spectators illusory positioning of him/herself as omniscient narrator, allows for multiple identifications, 'occupying contradictory positions… articulating conflict in the psyche' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988: 92). It also allows for the synchronic structuring of signification through layering of different sign systems as we find in the theatre.

However the direct shaping of identification through the shot-reverse-shot system is not generally pertinent to theatre and this thesis also recognises the impact of the spectator's ideological values and horizons of expectation in shaping the way he or she identifies with characters of performers. Patrice Pavis emphasises the spectator's subjective engagement in the performance stating that '[t]he sole and narrow path available to the aesthetics of reception is that of the process of *identification* conceived of as the

spectator's *quest for identity*' (Pavis, 1982: 91). Drawing on theories of psychoanalysis and a recognition of ideology he separates analytical and ideological identity, the former representing the 'pleasure the ego finds in reliving in the other's ego representations he has repressed' (Pavis, 1982: 91): the desire to be what one cannot be or to favourably compare oneself to that other; and the latter functioning 'as the recognition of an ideology, experienced as familiar and normative' (Pavis, 1982: 91). Here, the process of identification is fundamentally linked to cultural context suggesting elements of psychoanalysis and politics are by no means incompatible. As chapter three will argue, if, within a performance, there are multiple conflicting perspectives or identifications, there is potential for the spectators to find their own perspective challenged, rather than finding an escape from responsibility in the illusions of identification.

The notion of resistant reading as an approach for the spectator to take up in engagement with a performance is also relevant here. However, for the spectator in a world defined by the spectacle, politics is about transgression rather than opposition, as laid out in pages 32 - 36 of this chapter. This means the spectator's approach is in part defined by the *détournement* as form of a diversion or disruption. To be open to the *détournement* is to allow the spectacle to speak against itself, which in turn suggests a kind of reading against the grain, as 'interpreting ideological contradictions' and 'conflicts between multiple and competing discourses' (Kotsopoulos, 2001: 1). Derrida's deconstructive approach has also been used to draw out absences, contradictions or deferred, secondary meanings within the tensions in signification as a process defined by 'différance' (Derrida, 1982: 14). As an ideologically transgressive approach, in postmodern society, deconstruction provides a way to draw issues, discourses or identifications into question and open up their complexity and contradictions rather than closing down or limiting meanings and possibilities.

Roland Barthes, Lyotard and Foucault all marry this kind of individual transgressive interaction discussed above to an ecstatic or blissful pleasure, variously termed 'jouissance' or the 'sublime'. This jouissance can be set against the pleasures associated with the pleasure principle which fit the model of psychoanalysis. The pleasure principle posits that the subject acts to avoid discomfort both physically and psychologically, whereas this notion of jouissance is set alongside neurosis.

Barthes talks about 'the deep laceration the text of bliss inflicts upon language itself' (Barthes, 1975: 12). Yet if the performance text and the spectator are engaged in a process of mutual constitution, then the site of bliss and of laceration is as much constructed in the subject as in the performance text. As Barthes points out, for the moment of *jouissance* there must be a writerly reader, who intends to seek out these collisions not just a manifestation of these collisions in a text (Barthes, 1975). Thus there is a potential for *jouissance* in the confrontation with one's own limitations as well as the limitations of discourse, which can be generated by the conflicts and tensions in the layers of signification within a text. Equally, as the spectator is engaged in constituting the text, the reverse is true and the discourse of identity construction suffers the disruption of coherence as well. What this brings to the argument is the recognition of the power of the reader or spectator to generate these conflicts, to tear themselves apart, rather than merely be torn apart by the text. Though often, a spectator may resist the potential 'writerliness' of a text just as one can resist the dominant ideologies embedded within it, the spectator who seeks out ruptures in his/her discourse, through the text has access to form of transgressive pleasure and a form of agency in relation to a text, one's own identity, or the ideologies and discourses of the world.

As suggested by his own extension of the concepts, phenotext and genotext, to musical and embodied performance discussed above, this kind of transgressive pleasure can be generated in interaction with live performance and in the multiplicity of synchronic signifying systems is in fact particularly pertinent to discussion of spectatorial pleasure as well as transgression.

Proceeding to the analysis, it is worth noting that this kind of transgressive approach to material relies on the individual spectator and what he or she brings to the moments of engagement with a piece. In consequence, the aspects of transgressive engagement discussed in the chapters three and four are informed by my own experience of the performances and my own desire to find these moments and potentialities in the work I see. Without finding those moments, it would not be possible to see where they might lie. In respect to other spectators who have seen the work I discuss, my assumption would be that their experience may well be very different. However, what I am seeking to address is not just the individual experience of a piece of work, but the *possibilities* for engagement with performance within the context of early century British society and theatre experience.

CHAPTER 2 - Narrative and the Spectacle of Skill

Introduction

The spectacle of skill is not a new phenomenon, however in contemporary western society, the ubiquity of the spectacle in mediatised culture is shifting the relationship of the audience with the skilled performer towards one defined by awe and the objectification of the virtuosic body.   There is also a shift into the mainstream of non-narrative forms which have, until the past twenty years been considered *avant garde* or experimental theatre performance.   In particular, what Christopher Innes calls the primitivist thread in *avant garde* theatre (2002) is shifting in the theatre of today, like much non-narrative theatre, towards a more mainstream audience in Britain.   It is consequentially becoming diluted by immersion in a society of spectacle which, according to this thesis, shapes the gaze of our culture. Chapter two looks specifically at the impact of this shift in the gaze upon this kind of theatre and argues that there is an increasing emphasis on the skill of performers and the virtuosity of performance which places these elements in a more central position in the relationship with the audience. The engagement, shaped in this way so significantly by the spectacle, is termed here spectacular engagement.

This chapter explores two recent performances, *Chronicles: A Lamentation* (2004) by Polish Theatre company, Song of the Goat Theatre (Teatr Piesn Kozla) and *Rumble* (2004) by the German company, Renegade Theatre. Both display a level of physical virtuosity on the part of the performers and yet, have very different relationships with the spectacular gaze. *Chronicles: A Lamentation* has its roots in traditional Eastern European lamentations and in a system of physical and vocal training very much influenced by the work of Grotowski. The piece tells the myth of Gilgamesh through a

performance combining polyphonic song and movement. In contrast, *Rumble* by Renegade Theatre, is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* which transfers the story into the world of break-dance and street culture. The primary focus of the chapter is Song of the Goat Theatre, as the conflicts between intimacy, catharsis and spectacle are key in the shift into the mainstream of work with primitivist *avant-garde* roots. However, *Rumble* provides a counterpoint as an example of spectacular performance celebrating its own spectacle.

After contextualising the two companies' work in relation to other companies working in similar ways across Europe and in relation to British discourses surrounding physical theatre, and after laying out how the discourse of skill has developed recently in theatre, popular culture and academia, the chapter engages in a closer analysis of these two performances. Analysis first focuses on how the performances shift audience experience away from linear narrative engagement, then addresses how the place of virtuosity in the performances works in interaction with other elements of the audience engagement with *mise en scène*. Additionally, there is discussion of how an experience of access is created to something that has been perceived as authentically resistant in the past: in the use of breakdance originally from the ghettos of the Bronx and in the revisiting of primitivist *avant-garde* approaches that emerged over the last century.

Although these two performances both have their roots in counterculture, they otherwise come from culturally very different backgrounds. *Chronicles: A Lamentation,* the main focus of this discussion was created by a company who have worked from within a tradition of Polish theatre rooted in the work of Grotowski, and

Rumble is performed by breakdancers from the Ruhr Valley area in Germany.[20] Both the performance of *Chronicles: A Lamentation* and *Rumble* came to the Aurora Nova venue at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2004 and have subsequently toured across the UK. The Aurora Nova mini-festival at St Stephen's has itself become something of a name at the Fringe, as Komedia, the organising company, has been accorded recognition as a group which brings high quality international work to the Fringe while avoiding the homogenising process which globalisation of a commodity can bring about. Concerns surrounding homogeneity in international theatre in reference to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival are discussed by Jen Harvie, in *Staging the UK*. She addresses the kinds of theatre being produced and the environment at the festival created by the need to break even, and in fact, she singles out the Aurora Nova venue in particular as avoiding the 'McDonaldization' of the fringe (Harvie, 2005: 87).

This notion of homogenisation is central to the experience of the world as a global spectacle because while there may be very diverse expressions within international theatre, the mode of spectatorship that is generated by the spectacle has a homogenising effect. What is meant here is that the norm for a mode of engagement is generated by what an audience is accustomed to watching: Hollywood film effects and spectacular images in international news for example, play a large part in creating a heightened representation of the world. The spectacle thus, on some level, trains and draws its audience into this engagement with spectacle and excess. Nevertheless, the theatre itself often works against this by trying to create work which is innovative or in which audience engagement works against the spectacle.

---

[20]While breakdancing began in the USA, it quickly spread across to Europe's urban culture in the 1980s. The Ruhr Valley Area, in which the company is based, is a culturally-mixed urban sprawl with a history of B-boying.

The two companies discussed in this chapter bring a certain level of heterogeneity to the fringe because they present their shows in their own languages and in the case of Song of the Goat Theatre, they bring a style and form in their performance which is not generally familiar to a British audience. It is my intention therefore to consider whether they resist or reinforce the increasingly homogenised spectacular engagement of culture today.

Before proceeding with this however, it is also worth examining how Song of the Goat Theatre fits into the other more recent offshoots from the primitivist thread of *avant garde* art. Though there are several companies internationally who have been influenced by the work of Grotowski, (the Slava School in Sweden; The Living Theatre and Pillary Theatre in America; and Gardzienice and Song of the Goat Theatre in Poland) each draws from different aspects of his work and moves forward in its own ways, and so retains its individual identity beyond his influence.

Nevertheless there is enough cross-over between some groups today that the relatively new company, Song of the Goat Theatre is influenced through previous training by Gardzienice and on some level, the Slava School. The artistic director Grzegorz Bral and cofounder Anna Zubrzycki, trained and worked with Gardzienice, a company formed by Staniewski and considerably influenced by Grotowski's explorations in paratheatre, before forming The Song of the Goat Theatre. Of the other performers several likewise trained with Gardzienice and a few moved across from Sweden and the Slava School. Anna Zubrzycki also had direct involvement with Theatre Laboratory workshops before joining Gardzienice.

These two training environments outside of the company itself - Gardzienice and Slava School – have considerable similarities to Song of the Goat Theatre. They all have in common musical/vocal and physical training to high level and, like Grotowski, combine these with psychological/spiritual influences. Additionally, there is a similarity in the sources from which they draw their research and performance material, often focusing on eastern European folk culture. Like *Gardzienice*, 'The Song of the Goat develops its unique theatrical pieces from painstaking research into the music, dance, and rites of provincial places and ancient times' (Polish Culture Website). However, Gardzienice and Slava both draw predominantly on folk tales: in Gardzienice's case, going out into villages in remote parts of the country and performing with artists in the area, making an exchange of their art and the traditional folk art of the village.

Song of Goat Theatre on the other hand has drawn on traditional lamentations from Albania and before that, Greek chorus, researching different musical forms internationally to find a suitable mode of expression for the piece in progress. For their work on *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, they had originally been researching Syrian music, but it 'wasn't striking a chord' (Zubrzycki, 2006: npg). In describing this process of discovering the right form, Anna Zubrzycki states 'It did not open anything in our hearts' whereas the Albanian lamentation felt right (Zubrzycki, 2006: npg). These sources are environments where the material taken out of that culture for performance would otherwise be integral to the lives of people in that community: they are part of what creates a sense of community.

It is evident from Zubrzycki's words that while the form is removed from its original community in performance, the connection between the performers and the form they work in is very important. It appears that the ritualistic elements of Song of the Goat

Theatre's work do not emerge through the creation of ongoing connections with groups of people in the way of Gardzienice. Rather, the ritualism forms part of an aesthetic and comes from the training itself. This is a more similar approach to Grotowski's earlier work which places more emphasis on performance and it moves away from the influences of paratheatre on Gardzienice.

It is evident from this discussion of companies working in this tradition that though performers may move between the companies and find that the training and experience in one is appropriate to work in another, there are distinguishable qualities which set each company apart from the others. For Song of the Goat Theatre this is partly their focus on drawing from international sources to develop a particular form: the lamentation. The company takes its name, Song of the Goat (Teatr Piesn Kozla in Polish) from the literal meaning of the word tragedy in ancient Greek (Polish Culture Website). This focus on the lamentation sets the company apart from the other groups emerging from the primitivist tradition in *avant-garde* performance, while retaining the focus on rites of passages that is seen in the work of Grotowski.

For a British audience, the kind of performance Song of the Goat Theatre is bringing to us is both familiar and unfamiliar. It is part of a tradition of theatre training which is internationally renowned and British audiences are familiar with dance theatre and acrobatic movement, but it presents, in the lamentation form, something socially unfamiliar in our culture, and also unfamiliar in theatre performance. Certainly it does not seem to conform to a homogenising process in terms of the work it presents.

The international theatre which is brought across to England tends very much to be physical or visual work, and Song of the Goat Theatre fits very much into this category.

Recent work touring in Britain particularly from Eastern Europe and Russia tends to follow this mould, though the styles are very different. AKHE Theatre, for example, performing *Wet Wedding* (2005) at the Riverside Studios, as part of the New Russian Arts program, creates an entire world that draws people, materials, space and ritual into a surreal whole. By replacing verbal communication with a symbolic visual and emotional language in this performance, as they reject culturally specific metaphors, they are able to draw an audience into their metaphoric world across language and to a large extent, across cultural barriers.

Derevo have also visited several venues in Britain as part of their world tour of *Islands in the Stream* (2004) which performs the sea as a series of fragmented experiences through physical theatre, dance and visual imagery. And from Poland, Teatr Porywacze Cial (Body Snatchers Theatre) and Teatr Usta Usta have both brought performances over to the Leeds Open Wide Festival. *Test* (2005) by Teatr Porywacze Cial makes use of mimicry and gesture, rejecting verbal sign systems completely, and Teatr Usta Usta also makes use of projection and movement as part of the largely visual theatre of *Ambrose* (2005). The growth of international festivals like the Open Wide Festival, the Mime Festival in London and Brighton's Festival of International Visual Performance place the focus on physical and visual theatre and thus creates a sense that international theatre is often physical or visual.

Despite the expansion of home grown visual and physical theatre aesthetics (Improbable Theatre's ironic spectacle, Horse + Bamboo Theatre's riotous combination of mask, mime, puppetry and music, Kneehigh Theatre's physical fooling, Andrew Dawson's explorations of physical and virtual presence in *Absence and Presence* and Faulty Optic and Blind Summit's puppetry are just a few examples) there is still remaining an

expectation that it is in imported theatre that British audiences find experimentation. This is changing as companies and practitioners based in Britain become better known but the perception of our own theatre as text-based and theatre from the European continent as experimental, visual and physical is one which has continued to persist.

Physical skill has in this way developed an association with 'otherness', making it, to some extent, an object to be looked upon as outside our own experience and culture. In this chapter one of the key arguments is, therefore, that the combination of this perception and the spectacular relationship with the world that our society has developed through mass media creates a particular way of watching. Despite the ways in which a company might have a culturally specific or very distinctive style, on some level British spectatorship can reduce that by engaging more significantly with the spectacle of skill.

With reference to Song of the Goat Theatre, the perception of virtuosic skill in physical performance as something entering the UK from outside is rooted in this tradition of language as the primary focus in British theatre in the past. Though there are now many theatre companies combining dance and theatre or creating physical styles of their own in Britain, this interest has developed more slowly than in many countries. The practitioners moving away from a traditional enactment of a text who have become influences upon theatre makers in this country have been from France (Copeau, Artaud and Lecoq, for example), Poland (Grotowski), Germany (Wagner) or Russia (Meyerhold). Skilled performance has been recognised most significantly in the discourse surrounding mimetic acting in this country rather than focusing on physical virtuosity. The discourses of evaluation have, in the past, also been limited in general to theatre reviews and newspaper articles. Academia has not until recently paid much

attention to the analysis and discussion of skill in performance. This notion of expertise however, has recently been becoming more important in academic discussion.

Consideration of how to begin to discuss virtuosity has emerged in conferences across the country and internationally. Susan Melrose for example has paid particular attention to skill and virtuosity in papers given at various conferences. At *Towards Tomorrow: An International Gathering* at the Centre for Performance Research, Aberystwyth, 2005, she presented '"Words fail me": dancing with the other's familiar', a paper addressing expertise and reflecting upon how it is possible for the academic to approach physical expertise through linguistic analysis and discussion. Her publications over the last few years reflect this interest and include a chapter on Theatre du Soleil addressing "Writing Professional or Expert Performance Practices" in Kelleher and Ridout's *Contemporary Theatres in Europe*; and a chapter in *A Performance Cosmology* (Gough et al. (eds), 2006) called 'Who knows - and who cares - about performance mastery?'.

The wide variety of contributors to Middlesex University's two day symposium in 2003 on Virtuosity and Performance Mastery also signals the rising interest in developing a discourse on virtuosity in performance in this country. Particularly pertinent to this thesis in attempting to develop ideas about how virtuosity is judged and perceived in today's western society have been Richard Gough's paper on the dynamic presence of the virtuoso in his or her relationship with the spectator and Nick Till's paper on the shifting perception of virtuosic performance in reference to Baroque music. However, the overall trends at this symposium indicate that academic discussion tends toward consideration of the nature of virtuosity itself including analyses of what elements of a society influence the construction of perceived virtuosity; of characteristics of virtuosity in particular periods and places; or of process in conversation with practitioners. Of

these approaches to virtuosity, this argument positions itself within the discussion of the first, exploring how British society constructs its perception of virtuosity, but then it also extends discussion to analyse how this affects overall engagement with particular performances.

This focus on performance skill also coincides with the recent focus on 'performance' as a word used to describe efficiency or achievement. John McKenzie's *Perform or Else* recognises this shift in the denotational meaning of the word performance to refer to a measuring of efficiency, success or capacity which propels society towards evaluation through measured 'performance'. He distinguishes between 'cultural performance', (McKenzie, 2001: 7) as that which includes theatre, ritual, political demonstration, dance etc; 'organisational performance', (McKenzie, 2001: 5) which is evaluative term used to describe the profit, efficiency and efficacy of an organisation or individual within it; and 'technological performance' (McKenzie, 2001: 9) which describes the capacity or efficiency of machinery or technology.

This focus on performance as a capacity or measurable achievement is reflected in popular culture as well. There has been, since international coverage of sport was made possible, more access to the spectacle of high performance manifested in the human body. International athletics, gymnastics or ice skating for example all present British audiences with the chance to engage with the performance of skill as something set outside their own community and recently this kind of vicarious enjoyment has begun to be exploited in popular entertainment. The current fashion in televised 'real' experience is to present for the audience the spectacle of learning a skill. Shows like *Pop Idol, X Factor, Strictly Come Dancing, Dancing on Ice* and *Cirque de Celebrity* allow the

television audience to watch as people perform or else are eliminated for failing to reach the desired standard.

The spectacle is partly the display of skill itself but also partly the process of evaluation that follows. Though theatre audiences will have often relied on the theatre review in order to decide what to see in a big city with lots of choices, this shift of evaluation into fashionable popular entertainment and the recognition of the importance of expertise in academic discourses suggests a greater emphasis now on engagement with articulation of a skilful performance than there has been in the past. Theatre's efficacy, thus, is judged less by its capacity to perform a social function and more by its capacity to present a skilful performance. To be commercially successful: to perform with the constant threat of 'or else' in theatre today, is beginning to necessitate a display or spectacle of skill or at least is increasing the tendency in the spectator to engage with the skill of the performer as a spectacle in audience's today.

McKenzie also notes the emphasis placed on counterculture within cultural performance; he states that 'while performance's efficacy to reaffirm existing structures and console or heal peoples has been recognised, it is its transgressive or resistant potential that has come to dominate the study of cultural performance' (McKenzie 2001: 30). While he places emphasis on transgression or resistance over healing and reaffirmation of structures, and indeed there is a parallel focus on transgression in the development of this thesis, this chapter explores to some extent a nostalgia for that communal or healing experience of performance.

Overall though, there is a conflict between the emphasis on cultural performance as entertainment or commercial enterprise which necessitates a high level of skill in

today's society, and the place of resistance and indeed healing, both social functions, within cultural performance. This tension is one which runs through the experience of watching the work of Song of the Goat Theatre in *Chronicles: A Lamentation*. As a work of physical and vocal virtuosity, the spectacle of skills is a key element drawing in audiences and positive reviews. However, the notion of authenticity, immediacy and presence is central to their performance and is rooted in the influence of primitivism running through Grotowski's early performance work and then subsequently sustained in offshoot companies and those he influenced.

The earlier work of Grotowski places emphasis on the intensive training of a group of performers and on the attempt to create a connection with the spectators through the intimacy of their relationship as witnesses of the performers' experience. Grotowski describes the kind of connection he is trying to generate as an 'actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion' (Grotowski in Schechner and Wolford, 1997: 29) which means that the spectator must feel that he or she is standing alongside the performers not staring at them. The notion of communion here is similar to that of Victor Turner's which he calls 'communitas' (Turner, 1982: 44). Communitas means a relationship between people going through a ritual transition of some kind. It allows, according to Turner, 'the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses' (Turner, 1982: 44) and thus it is a moment of intimacy that transcends the barriers of social relations.

It is this kind of intimacy that Grotowski's theatre laboratory worked to create, but within moments of communitas that emerge, not in the traditional way that Turner's anthropological studies point to, but through a system of training and work on the self in

which the performers attempt to create a sense of authenticity. Grotowski describes it as a 'stripping down', a 'laying bare of one's own intimacy' integrating 'psychic and bodily powers' (Grotowski 1975: 16). However, he specifically states that this 'tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorizing oneself' is not done in order to 'show oneself off for that would be exhibitionism. It is a serious and sincere revelation' (Grotowski, 1975: 210). In relation to the performance of *Chronicles: A Lamentation* this rejection of exhibitionism is important and represents one of the fundamental differences between their performance and that of Renegade Theatre's discussed below. The intention presented on stage is not to exhibit. Inevitably however, by placing actions upon the stage on some level the audience is justified in interpreting what is shown as a spectacular display, particularly in a society which places so much focus on image and spectacle.

The careful negotiation of the relationship with the audience or 'witnesses' is also very significant in Grotowski's work. He states 'the actor must not have the audience as a point of orientation, but at the same time he must not neglect the fact of its presence' (Grotowski, 1975: 213). The audience is therefore both part of and not part of the events that take place on stage. In a sense, while Song of the Goat Theatre do not have the same focus on an intended effect on the audience when they create their work, the interaction in the moments of performance has a similar quality. They include the audience and create a strong bond with them but do not have them as the focus of all their energies (Zubrzycki 2006: npg). There is a communion amongst the performers and an invitation to the spectator to engage with that communion though not an attempt to draw them into becoming a part of it themselves.

These ideas of presence as immediacy and communion with the self and the environment on stage have also become a more significant focus in recent discussions of acting as well. In particular, Phillip Zarrilli's discussion of the embodiment of the actor on stage (Zarrilli, 2004) and his edited collection *Acting (Re)Considered* (2002) has placed more emphasis on influences from different cultures and the place of the body in performance. This is becoming a more important part of contemporary training as well, as Suzuki's training has spread across the world and traditional forms like Kabuki are becoming better known. Suzuki in particular teaches the performer to draw on a relationship between the body and the ground, creating energy by sending it down into the ground and creating a hyperawareness and control of the body in performance. Meditatory practices like yoga and Tai chi are also becoming more important in creating focus in body and mind for the performer (Zarrilli, 2004). This emphasis on presence and embodiment with its association with an immediacy and authentic connection with the space in which the performer interacts, seems to work in absolute contrast to the ubiquitous illusion of the spectacle as described above.

However, though many techniques have made their way over to Britain, the associated overall practices based in ritual have not made it into the mainstream. This kind of approach to resisting the social alienation of a mediatised experience of the world is about creating connections that are live and feel authentic in a way that is not possible in engagement with the virtual presence of screened images or communications. Thus, the kinds of engagement created by this kind of theatre are in some ways unfamiliar in Britain where many companies work through ironic complicity and or excess, in effect performing the spectacle rather than trying to engage its opposite in a drive towards authenticity.

Before analysing this conflict between the authentic, the intimate or the present and the spectacular, however, the strength of spectacular engagement with virtuosic performance and its relationship with narrative engagement is established drawing on a comparison of the two performances. First, the nature of narrative engagement is discussed in order to draw out the level of synchronic versus diachronic engagement before going on to examine the nature of these synchronic modes of engagement. *Chronicles: A Lamentation* is discussed first with a comparison with *Rumble* following, then a final section addressing the potential for emotional participation in the relationship with the audience, intimacy and virtuosity in relation to emotional connection and expression.

Though both pieces have elements of both tragic and epic form in performance there is a dominance of the epic in *Chronicles* and tragic in *Rumble* because of the original texts from which the companies worked. *Chronicles: A Lamentation* is based on the Mesopotamian epic poem, *Gilgamesh,* and therefore carries elements of the engagement constructed by the epic form into the performance, whereas *Rumble* will carry into its performance elements of the tragic form, specifically the love tragedy as it is based on the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. However, the blurring of boundaries between these two forms emerges in the style in which each piece is presented: the lamentation brings choral performance associated with tragedy to *Chronicles: A Lamentation* and the structure emerging from the adaptation to breakdance in *Rumble* fragments the tragic structure to create an episodic realisation of the story.

This first part of each analysis which addresses the nature of the epic and its relevance to *The Chronicles: A Lamentation,* and the shift away from tragic form in *Rumble* draws on Greene's *The Norms of Epic* (1961) in order to show how the episodic structure of

Rumble affects engagement with the story of Romeo and Juliet, and in *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, how far the poem and this performance of it follow the epic form and how that again affects spectator engagement. The most significant element for this chapter in Greene's article is the way he uses the distinction, drawn from Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction,* between 'panoramic' and 'scenic' narrative. (Greene, 1961: 202) The panoramic narrative, linking together and forming an overall plot line is described as the narrative which 'surveys plot development from above... over a length of time', is secondary in the epic to the scenic narrative, which focuses on individual incidents 'at a given hour or place' (Greene, 1961: 202). This definition is useful in its reference to plot development over time in the panoramic view as opposed to the experience at a given moment in the scenic, as it parallels the focus on diachronic and synchronic engagement respectively.

Chronicles: A Lamentation, Narrative Engagement and Virtuosity

Even beginning to look at *Chronicles: A Lamentation* in terms of narrative, as a British spectator, seems incongruous with the experience of seeing it. It was a powerfully emotional performance which brought together choral song and dance to present a series of moments which varied considerably in terms of the level of comprehension possible. While it was important to me to have some engagement with what they were representing as well as how, the experience is considerably affected by the language difference as the story upon which the piece is based – *The Epic of Gilgamesh* - is relatively unknown.

Nevertheless, the focus on the scenic narrative in epic makes the use of an epic poem particularly appropriate to a piece which tours to international audiences and needs to develop an engagement with the audience without access to an understanding of the

linear progression of the narrative. Where in other instances the scenic structure might reduce the intensity of narrative engagement, here it is what makes possible some engagement with narrative. The focus is primarily on individual events in the poem with only simple links between them and this makes it possible to engage with these events in a performance without as much sense of disorientation through lack of understanding. The elements of the scenic narrative of *Gilgamesh* which can be physically enacted on stage, are represented as action through dance and physical enactment in combination with the chanted or sung narrative, and the other elements remain sung or chanted alone, without physical enactment. The part played by visualisation through linguistic imagery in the epic poem is thus transferred into the visual spectacle on stage retaining the epic structural features.

This is most significant in the first half of the performance after Enkidu is created as a companion to equal Gilgamesh. The battle between them that cements their friendship is played out in acrobatic dance and their later confrontation with Humbaba with dance and fire. Likewise the sexual encounter between Enkidu and the Harlot is realised on stage in an erotically charged duet between a male and female performer, throwing, catching and manipulating a wooden staff. Each of these moments can be grasped to some extent as independent incidents without any recourse to an overall narrative and thus can be performed with the assumption that the audience can engage with the emotional charge and the imagery created. The piece does not, however, support linear narrative engagement for a Britain audience. The myth of Gilgamesh is not widely known in this country and, though we recognise and engage with some of these narrative moments, it is difficult to create a coherent sense of individual characters' experiences and relations, which means that any attempts to engage with narrative in this fashion become frustrating.

Nevertheless, emotional engagement with narrative, and even characters to some extent, is still possible, and here it is necessary to look more closely at the structuring of narrative elements before addressing the transferral of elements of content into form. Addressing what narrative engagement is possible, it is likely that the individual interpretation of a particular scene does not significantly affect what panoramic engagement the piece provides. There is very limited interaction between panoramic and scenic elements of the narrative. Though this appears contradictory given that the panoramic engagement is partly defined by its capacity to create links between scenes, this is the effect created. This is because the panoramic narrative is itself very limited and only deals with the universal themes which significantly affect the experience of the performers' emotional investment. There are a few words spoken in English communicating the insult to Ishtar and her revenge, and communicating the theme of the deterioration of youthfulness, recognising the strength of Gilgamesh and Enkidu as destined to fade and be extinguished by their mortality. In terms of form, the structure, and the framing of the piece within the lamentation that begins and ends it, also contributes to overall understanding. These are enough to engage emotionally with the performance and to grasp that the lament is one for the mortality of a man that surpasses normal human capacities. This theme of mortality is central to the traditional representation of the epic hero and the structuring of the piece as a whole.

The epic hero is one who as described above, exceeds man's capabilities, yet faces the mortality of the human being, making the epic narrative 'a series of adjustments between the hero's capacities and his limitation' (Greene, 1961: 199). In the case of the epic of *Gilgamesh* this balance structures the poem into two halves. The first, partially described above, presents the wildness of Gilgamesh and the Gods' decision to create a

being to equal him and distract him, preventing him from killing and raping the inhabitants of his own country. Enkidu is drawn away from his life with the animals in the wild by the harlot and after she tells him of Gilgamesh, he seeks him out, equals him in battle and becomes his friend. Their adventures, tracking and killing Humbaba and taking the Cedar for the city wall, then fighting the Bull of Heaven sent down as revenge for Gilgamesh's insult to Ishtar along with Gilgamesh's nightmare's leading up to each event, generate increasing tension up to the point where Enkidu becomes ill and dies. At this point, the focus shifts from emphasising their strength to drawing attention to their mortality, which Gilgamesh must then face: Enkidu's and his own when he fails in his quest for immortality.

However, this conflict between the power to act and the inevitable limitation of mortality evidently cannot be communicated through the language of the poem in a performance to a British audience, because it is in Polish. Instead, they are reflected in the form of the piece and through virtuosity of the performance. The exceptional physical and acrobatic skill of the performers reflects the heroic capacities of Gilgamesh and comes to its climax in the mourning of Enkido which combines dance and lamentation and the emotional engagement of the choral lament juxtaposed with that virtuosity communicates the recognition of mortality that limits those capacities. Though there are many possible sections that could be used as examples for analysis here, it will suffice to address just a couple to show how virtuosity in performance is made manifest: the mourning of Enkidu and the Great Goddess giving birth.

Image 1: from Teatr Piesn Kozla Website.

The first of these, shown in image one, takes place just after the death of Endiku. The mourning is presented in two parts; the physical mourning over his displayed body and the lament in which Rafał Habel, playing Gilgamesh performs a heightened lament over the top of the other voices. Discussion of this part of the performance will focus firstly on the physical performance, describing this scene in the context of the whole performance and also bearing in mind that this separation of physical and vocal performance is one imposed upon the performance text for the purpose of clarity in discussion of these different elements. The form the training takes is in fact about bringing together voice and body and later in the discussion this unity of vocal and physical expression will be explored in more detail.

The mourning of Endiku is the most significant display of acrobatic skill in the performance as three performers dance and leap over and round the table on which Endiku has been laid out. The image above makes clear how small the space in which they are moving is though it shows a moment after the body has been lifted off. In the

main part of this dance, the body remains on the table while three other performers launch themselves up into the air around him in very close proximity. Their bodies are in constant contact with the table but at no point touch the corpse in a dance that sustains a consistent dynamic throughout. The connection between the performers as they move is perfect as the slightest shift out of that physical communion would throw the dance into chaos. A significant part of this connection and constant dynamic comes from the phrasing of breath in the chorus of voices that is counterpart to the dance. This phrasing shapes the movement as well as the phrasing of the song. It is this unity of breath that draws the performers together both within the trio, and between the dancers and the chorus narrating the action.

The other consequence of the phrasing of movement with breath is a high level of control in both vocal and physical performance. This is evident throughout the performance, but, in terms of physical control, particularly so in the mourning of Enkidu's death. The precision of movement required in these circumstances is equally impressive and the high level of training within the company is made manifest in the slow consistent pace of the movements, the precision and the control necessary to make every landing silent.

However, all of these descriptions of technical ability still do not do the performance justice; there is something more that creates an ethereal quality to this part of the performance. The silence of their hands and feet falling upon the table and floor, and the apparent lightness of their bodies as they float over Endiku makes them seem spirit like. Described as a 'ballet in the air' by Polish poet and critic Dobrowolski, they go 'beyond the laws of nature to which we humans are bound' (Dobrowolski, 2002: npg).

Again in the lamentation there is an ethereal or unearthly quality and this runs through all the lamentations, not just this one at the climactic point of the play. As in the physical performance elements, this is a performance of many as one, because of the incredible togetherness or oneness of the performers. The polyphonic lamentation has its roots in Albania and combines four voices: 'the voice that weaves (or perches), the voice that cuts, the voice that takes, and the drone (the voice that gives)' (Teatr Piesn Kozla in Polish Culture Website). For a western spectator without any familiarity with the form, it is the voice that perches which draws the most attention to itself as it rises above the others. This natural attention to the voice that weaves mirrors the way the company parallels the narrative of the poem in the form: divisions of the voices can be seen to correspond to the dramatic function of each actor-singer. For example the 'weaver' and 'taker' can correspond to the protagonist and antagonist. These songs are like the warp on a loom, on which the narration and 'pattern' of the story emerges' (Teatr Piesn Kozla Website).

Here, it is Gilgamesh who becomes the voice that weaves as it is he that leads the mourning of his friend. The choral lament as a significantly aural experience for the audience creates a more emotional engagement and the performers' emotional investment in its expression is central to that. Gilgamesh's lament at the climax of the piece rises up above the others both in terms of pitch and position on stage. The performer is separated from the others standing on a platform above and to the side of the stage area: Gilgamesh separated from living society as he mourns his friend. His voice spans an impressive range as he sings and he makes considerable use of its highest reaches. Whilst the skill of a performance like this is clearly recognisable it is interesting that where the focus is on the choral lament, the engagement of the spectator is with the emotional investment of the performer and in particular the performer who

takes the voice that weaves. This voice seems to take advantage of the breaks in the voice as well as the smooth regions between, and appears freer and still more like a cry of grief than the other voices accompanying. Perhaps this engagement with the protagonist is also due to cultural association; in much western music, often the highest part of a harmony is played as the melody, but it certainly draws the audience into the performance and perhaps away from the tendency towards spectacular visual engagement. In order to address the unity of body, voice and emotional investment, now, the discussion will focus in on one performer in particular.
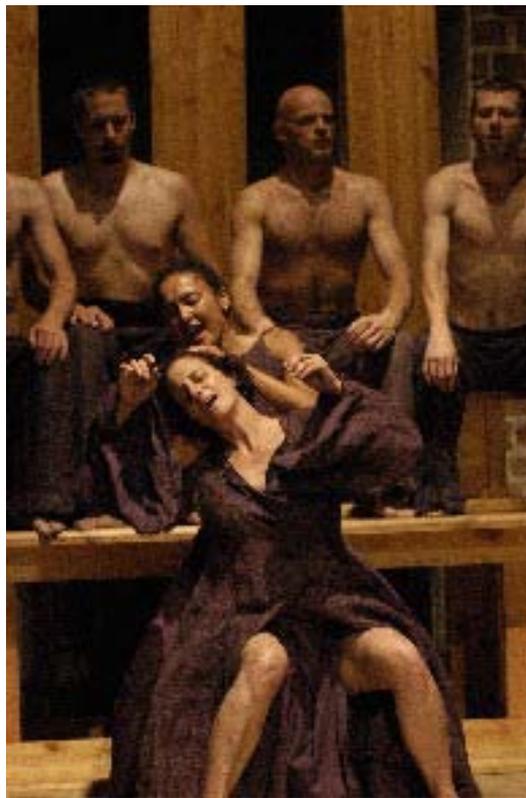

Image 2: from Teatr Piesn Kozla Website

Above, in image 2 is a moment in the passage leading up to the birth. Anna Zubrzycki in the foreground of the picture performs one aspect of the great goddess: the 'woman dragon representing the instinctive subconscious' who 'give[s] birth and kill[s]' (Dobrowolski, 2002: npg). The representation of the birth is powerful as is Zubrzycki's

performance as a whole. She also performs the first lamentation as the mother of Gilgamesh at the beginning of the performance, directing it up and out to both the audience and the performers around her. Zubrzycki's song seems to vibrate through her whole body in the lament and here in performing the birth this seems to be reversed, her body pushing up through her voice to create an expression which is beyond singing, and certainly beyond acting.

There is, despite the sense of communion between the performers, also a sense of individual style in the way that the body and voice are brought together. This discussion focuses in on Zubrzycki in particular because her performance was exceptional. It was in her performance that the sense of internal connection seemed to manifest itself most fully. The Song of the Goat theatre performance style has been described as creating a '"singing body" - the body as melodic and rhythmical vibration' and this is evident in every movement of the body in the birth scene in the performance (Polish Culture Website). Whilst Zubrzycki's body undisputedly presents a birth scene, every movement seems to be necessary for the sound of her voice to be possible. Earlier in the first lamentation Zubrzycki's movements are visibly integral to the breath and the sound that emanates from her body. It is again the whole body in unity with the self in performance. In examining these two small parts of the performance, it is evident that there is, through the harmony of breath, both a unity of body and voice and of internal and external awareness. This is relevant for discussion in the final parts of the chapter about authenticity and the possibility of a synchronic engagement that challenges the spectacle.

This unity between the internal and external is emphasised in the writings of Grotowski in terms of immediacy, as 'freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and

outer reaction' (Grotowski in Schechner and Wolford, 1997: 16). The importance of this unity of self for the performer is also described in by Phillip Zarrilli's article, 'Towards a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience'. He distinguishes between 'an aesthetic "inner" bodymind discovered and shaped through long-term, extra-daily modes of practice, and an aesthetic "outer" body constituted by the actions/tasks of a performance score—that body offered for the abstractive gaze of the spectator' (Zarrilli, 2004: 655). It is this sense of connection to oneself that enables the performer to maintain a relationship, within collaborative physical expression, with other performers.

As with physical movement, the skill of singing can be categorised in terms of the precision, the control and the stamina required and it can also be discussed in terms of range and power of the voice and skills in harmony or polyphony, but again there is something more. This transcendence of skill comes out of the overwhelming combination of all these characteristics and the integrity between physical and vocal expression, and between this perfectly controlled expression and the emotional investment that is presented on the stage. Here virtuosity is about coming as close to integrity as possible.

It is this transcendence of technical skill or ability according to Richard Gough which defines virtuosity. It is 'a surpassing of technique, the attainment of skills and then the *surpassing* of those skills, a curious act of devotion and denial' (Gough, 2003: npg). After discussion of the physical mourning of Enkidu and the performance of the birth and lamentations, view seems entirely appropriate to a performance like *The Chronicles: A Lamentation*, which places such an emphasis on ritual.

Richard Gough also places emphasis on the staging and presence of energy describing 'energy spent, burnt, carved in time, used excessively, uneconomically; purposefully inefficient - yet never wasteful; efficacious through extra-ordinary technique – incandescent' (Gough, 2003: npg). This reflects the power that transcends normal human capacities in the epic hero and specifically in Gilgamesh, one third human and two thirds a god. In the engagement with the physical elements of the performance that leads up to this incredible expression of grief in the lament for Enkidu, the focus is thus on the godlike capacities of Gilgamesh. In the lamentations that accompany it and follow, drawing the piece to a close the form places the focus on unavoidable mortality.

The elements of the narrative of *Gilgamesh* that are made clear in the brief sections in English support engagement with this second part as it relies less on visual enactment and is therefore harder to grasp without a knowledge of Polish. These few words are necessary to an understanding of the emotional experience presented on stage and are therefore fundamental to the way an audience engages with the performers themselves. The words drawing attention to the deterioration of youth and strength give the spectator an understanding of the lament for Enkido, but also put the rest of the performance within that context. The shift in the dynamic of the performance from very high energy physical acrobatic dance to more intimate storytelling style and in places passionate lament creates a constant process of movement in the spectator's engagement. The lament for mortality, while still presenting a tension between celebration of the performance and emotional engagement with what is performed, places the focus on the latter.

The physical acrobatics of performers, even in mourning, create a celebratory engagement first and foremost. This is partly because acrobatic skill is familiar and

partly because of the way that physical skill is valorised in our society at the moment. Our engagements with the piece are unavoidably spectacular, in that the physical virtuosity presented on the stage, generates a sense of awe. However, the integration of vocal and physical performance throughout, prevents total immersion in the visual spectacle despite its dominance over narrative.

Rumble: epic, tragic and spectacular

Considering Renegade Theatre's work now, it is that dominance of the spectacular and indeed the celebration of the virtuosic as spectacular that needs to be addressed. For Renegade theatre, this shift in emphasis from narrative towards spectacle in audience engagement works in conjunction with the intended relationship with the audience because breakdance constructs a lifestyle around the display of skill. The roots of the form and experience of it on the streets is not in conflict with entertainment and engagement with spectacular skill.

Breakdance has been an international phenomenon since the early 1980s when the moves were first commercialised through the films like *Flashdance* featuring the Rocksteady Crew and the music video *Buffalo Gals* (Breakdance Website) and through the pop artists like Michael Jackson taking on the moves. Having waned in popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s owing to overexposure, it has regained popularity in the last ten years with international championships being televised and breakdancing being featured in music video, film, and theatre as well as in the streets from which it comes.

The shift into the mainstream does not seem to be a problem for the performers themselves because as performer Denis Kuhnert says, 'If you work your butt off, you

want fame' (Dance touring Partnership Website). For the breakdancer, the whole point is to show off the moves and the skill, and so to make a name for himself. However, there is an interesting distance when examining audience engagement with the performance because culturally the spectator may have no connection with the lifestyle. For the audience it becomes simply a spectacle and perhaps easy access to a counterculture without the risk of the street that usually comes with it. The reputation of hip hop as an integral part of urban gang culture makes breakdancing with its echoes of street violence in the moves feel like immediate access to the subversive streets, to something authentic.

The performers in *Rumble* are, in the majority, breakdancers who have their own crews in Germany or across Europe and whose credentials are their wins in battles both nationally and internationally and their success in getting commercial commissions to dance. Silke Grabinger (playing Ann) from Austria founded the first European b-girl crew, called Female Artistics, and is part of the show team for Tribal, a US company selling hip hop gear. The producer, Zekai Fenerci is described as the godfather of hip hop in the Ruhr Valley area and runs the Ruhrpott battle every year. Choreographer Lorca Renoux and composer, cellist and beatboxer Alexandru Catona both have a background in the hip hop scene and have co founded Les Petits Poissons, an international performance group with performers from all backgrounds from circus and graffiti spraying to dance or mime.

While two of the female performers in Renegade theatre are trained at the Folkwang School in Essen and the choreographer combined with his background in spraying has danced for Pina Bausch, the majority of the company come straight from breakdancing

on to the stage. It is the director who brings experience of theatre, a history in mime, circus and mask performance, and acting as well as directing.

There is a displayed authenticity in what is being presented which appeals to an audience who have a very different experience of the world. The spectator is given the appearance of access to authentic breakdancers with moves that come straight from the city streets. Breakdancing is embodied expression that comes out of the real relations between people within a community and connects them to it as they reconstruct city spaces as their own. It is an authentic expression of a particular community of young people which, before it makes the transition to the stage, the film or the 'Breakdance Step by Step' DVD (Breakdance Website), exists as part of a lifestyle, not as an entertainment, set outside the real relations from which it comes.

Here in *Rumble*, however, this shift away from its community is evident because, while the performers are in the majority authentic breakdancers, the dance background of the choreographer and the theatre background of the director bring a cleaner aesthetic to the performance and in the end the story is that of *Romeo and Juliet*. The breakdance and its culture is framed within a narrative that is safe and traditional in this country. The audience can engage with the spectacle of visual images and high energy acrobatic dance while retaining a distance from the streets from which they come.

The story of Romeo and Juliet in this country is extremely well known. Study in schools is very common and a large number of theatre goers may also have had access to the play through seeing a theatre performance or a film adaptation. In particular, it is likely that Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film release alone will have significantly increased the exposure to *Romeo and Juliet* in the younger generations of theatregoers. The basic

narrative plot has in a sense therefore, become a cultural reference point through the multiple means of access to the story in Britain. This means that in *Rumble*, the fact that much of the dialogue is in German does not really inhibit understanding. Most of the audience will be able to enjoy the way each moment has been adapted and displayed on stage without worrying about trying to understand the narrative.

Nevertheless, there is a focus on individual episodes in the narrative of *Rumble*, cutting out the panoramic narrative elements that would usually be central to constructing the bounded world in which the tragedy exists. Instead, more attention is paid to constructing an environment specific to the two gangs and generating an atmosphere that reflects their lifestyle and the sense of conflict between them. This is done through the scaffolding set in which the gangs hang out and the spectacular physical displays of breakdance and acrobatics in battles between the members of the two gangs. This sense of conflict is also set against the playfulness of scenes like the breakdance basketball game and the back flipping of graffiti on to the screen. As the piece begins to progress through the main parts of the narrative of *Romeo and Juliet*, it then becomes very much more episodic presenting the party, the meeting of the lovers, the death of Mercutio and the suicide dances very soon after Tybalt is killed.

Because the audience in Britain is likely to know the main events of the narrative, these episodes will be placed in the moments of reception within a rough structure of the development of the tragic scenario. It is possible to argue that the identification with characters that become fairly well defined in the piece might at times outweigh engagement with the performers. However, that does not necessarily imply a linear engagement and sense of projecting forward in anticipation, partly because of the changes in the balance of the structure. The shift towards the tragic discourse triggered

by Mercutio's death only occurs very late in the performance because the focus is so significantly on the setting and the life style of the characters. The death of Mercutio does not take place in *Rumble* until at least three quarters of the way through the performance.

This scene is central to making a transition in the original text according to Brooke, who states in *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies*, that 'The shock of this scene is used to precipitate a change of key in the play: it becomes immediately more serious, and decisively tragic where before it had been predominantly comic' (Brooke, 1963: 83). Likewise in *Rumble* the atmosphere changes here and the playful comic presence on stage is transformed into the sense of tragic foreboding an audience would expect. However the speed at which the events of the story are covered increases dramatically at this point, placing more emphasis on the comic that came before. This affects considerably the kind of engagement the spectator has with the narrative, reducing the relationship with the tragic form that would be foremost in a more conventional staging of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The climactic deaths in the play remain a significant moment in audience engagement but the denouement that follows as the families reject their conflict is not forthcoming. The more traditional closure which closes off the chaos or disruption that brought about the tragic circumstances is left open again, removing an element of the linear structure of tragic form. The scene of their deaths remains an event that stands alone. Here the suffering of the hero and heroine is not 'positive, creative' and it does not lead to a 'reordering of old values and establishing of new' as it would in a more linear tragic narrative (Sewall, 1980: 48).

Instead, after the suicide dances of Romeo and Juliet the performance draws to a close and the epilogue, a spectacular display of breaks and acrobatics, draws our attention back to the performers rather than to the fates of other characters. The focus on the episodic presentation and the exclusion of panoramic narrative elements in the experience of this production means that the audience is left at the end of the piece with the consequences of the disruptive forces of the gangland conflicts, but not the order that would be brought out of it in the conventional tragedy.

It could be argued that in the tragedy of love it is this very juxtaposition of comic and tragic elements that generates a powerful tragic engagement. According to Catherine Bates, the tragedy of love juxtaposes comic and tragic elements by engaging the audience with the comic then reversing the order imposed by a comic ending. She states '[t]ragedies of love can leave us with a sense of generic outrage, as if something deep in the order of things has gone wrong and the comedic will towards forgiveness and redemption has been diabolically reversed' (Bates, 2002: 182). Indeed, in *Rumble* that juxtaposition of comic and tragic is maintained as the comic elements that are expressed in the original text through linguistic playfulness are translated into physical play, and the structure retains the powerful shift from comic to tragic in Mercutio's death.

However, the greater weight placed upon the comic elements, in both the amount of time the performance allows to the tragic vision of the play and in the return to engage with the spectacle of the performers' skill after the narrative has drawn to a close, means that the reversal of comic conventions does not have as significant an impact. This epilogue of spectacular breakdancing in particular, undermines the usual emphasis on the tragic conclusion because as the performers gather themselves around a space in

which each displays some of their most impressive moves, the focus is back on the breakdancing. The exhilaration of the audience is in response to the competition between performers to impress, and the story while moving, retreats into the background.

In relation to the linear engagement with *Rumble*, it can be concluded that the linear tragic narrative is not the dominant mode of engagement. Whether the tragic engagement is conceived of as drawing the audience towards a reversal of redemptive order or framing it within the establishment of a new order, *Rumble* downplays the tragic and instead, plays for immediacy, comic physical playfulness and spectacle, drawing the audience into a more synchronic engagement with its performance.

Though less pronounced than in the case of *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, there is a tension between spectacular skill and emotional engagement in the audience experience. The following more detailed account of the way virtuosity manifests itself in Renegade's performance serves to show how the playful and competitive qualities of the display of skill are so integral to the first half. It draws comparisons between the two performances and also addresses how emotional engagement plays a part in the audience experience of these sections.
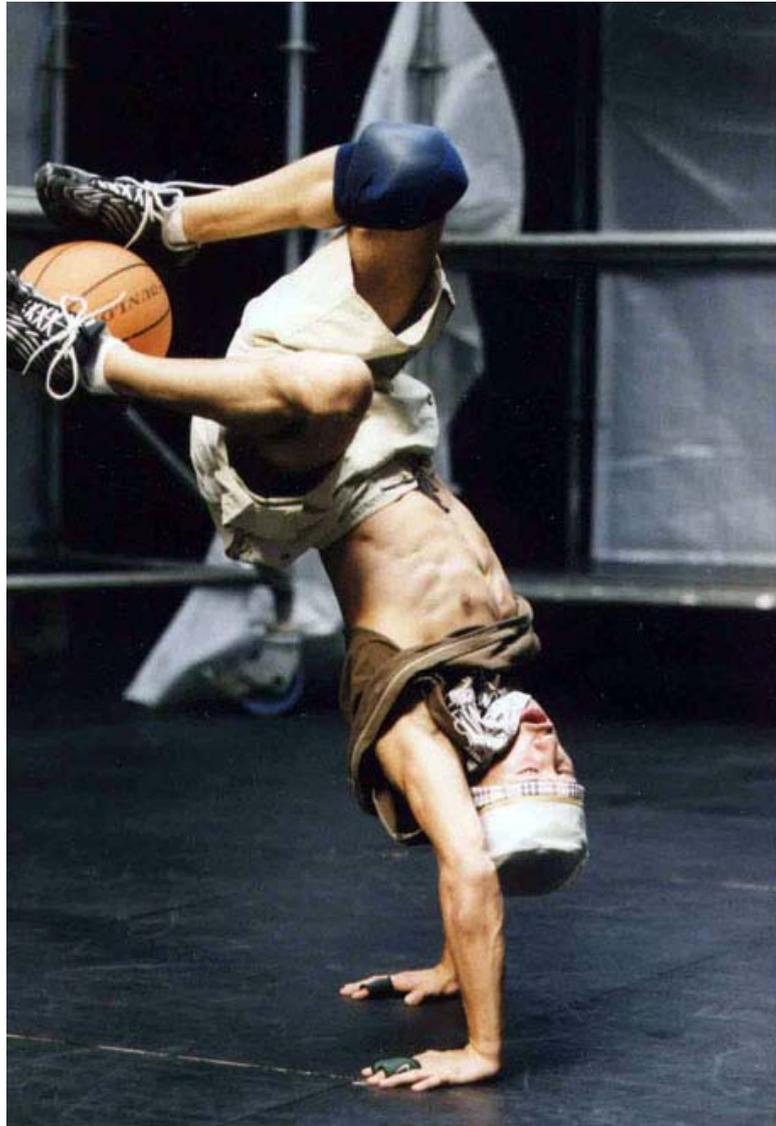
Image 3: from Rumbletours Website

The basketball game played near the beginning of the piece is performed almost entirely within breakdance improvisation, manipulating the ball with the feet as much as the hands and maintaining seamlessly the continuity of movement in the breakdancing as well as in the basketball game. Image 3 above shows a moment of this scene where one of the performers catches the ball between his feet while flipped over on to his hands. At this stage in the performance, the characterisation has not been developed because the narrative has not moved beyond setting the scene and creating a sense of the lifestyle and environment, therefore this display sits on the line between engagement with character and performer. The spectator engages with the performance with a sense

that these are characters being presented on stage but also that the playfulness and skill of playing the game is both the characters' and the performers'. This playfulness creates a sense of immediacy and draws the spectator into the synchronic moment by moment experience of the piece. The notion in Gaulier's training, of placing 'the character we are playing on top of our pleasure to be playing, never to kill this pleasure but on the contrary increase it by searching for connivance (complicité) and jokes with our partner' (Gaulier School website), would not be out of place in describing the presence projected by the performers of *Rumble*.

The idea of playing a game like the breakdancing basketball, not competitively, but more for the playfulness of engaging the body in aesthetic and challenging ways involves a level of complicity and playfulness that exists in the communion necessary to play. As in *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, there is a unity between the focus inward and the focus outwards in performance. However, here, it is not through a formal training. Song of the Goat Theatre's training involves the studied control of breath found in systems of training for martial arts, yoga or voice work to generate this unity. Rather, the training is part of a lifestyle in which competition drives the breakdancers on. They train constantly, perfecting moves and style but there is no system of exercises and no philosophical base for the work, so the atmosphere of performance is completely different. The energy even of acrobatics which involve similar physical strengths has a different kind of energy. Where the performers in *Chronicles: A Lamentation* carry on to the stage a stillness even in the most energetic movements, in *Rumble* there is a wild playfulness in the performers' presence. The sense of presence and immediacy made manifest through this ability to draw together the inward and outward gaze of the body still generates a virtuosic body on stage, but the spectator's engagement with it is on another emotional level. Despite the deaths of the protagonists at the end, there is a

different kind of celebration of skill. It is more like a crazy party and less like an act of devotion.

There is, however, in the breakdancing that plays out the conflicts between the gangs, a level of connection between performers and of control that is similar to that of the battle between Gilgamesh and Enkidu in *Chronicles: A Lamentation.* The performers move around each other without making any contact as they would in a breakdancing competition (if you touch your opponent, you lose). As much of the dance is very fast moving and takes place on the performers hands or involves making transitions between complex balances, the level of precision and control is exceptional and the double awareness of internal, 'recessive body' and of the external world with which it interacts is essential for the performers to work as a unit (Zarrilli, 2004: 655).

The playfulness of the basketball game and the later party scene shifts with the shift in the narrative structure after Mercutio's death discussed earlier. The dance style becomes more emotionally expressive and encourages a more obviously character based identification. The performance from this point becomes less about display and spectacle than about the narrative story of Romeo and Juliet. This is not to say the skill of the performances is any less, merely that the level on which it is displayed shifts. The suicide dances of Romeo and Juliet become a climax of the emotional narrative engagement and are driven in choreography by emotional gesture in a way that the earlier, purer breakdancing was not. Juliet's dance, while retaining much of the high risk breakdancing techniques, integrates this into a style which is more similar to contemporary dance and has a greater focus on continuity of emotion and thus characterisation, rather than the almost entirely aesthetic visual continuity and performer demonstrations of physical skill.

There are evidently some significant similarities in the physical skills utilised in the two performances in terms of the acrobatic elements of each dance style, but also in the sense of connection between the performers: the unity of internal and external awareness. However, the forms of virtuosity in performance also differ in the two productions, in the simple fact that *Rumble* is focused almost entirely on physical expression whereas in *The Chronicles: A Lamentation*, it is the polyphonic choral work that is a constant throughout. Also, there is a considerable difference in the level of focus on emotional engagement. In *Rumble*, though it is more so in the latter parts, this is not the primary engagement, and where it is foregrounded, it is as part of a narrative engagement with character based identifications.

Most importantly, in terms of spectacular virtuosity, there is a substantial difference between *Rumble* and *Chronicles: A Lamentation* as well, in the level and the way which the spectacular gaze is engaged. Renegade's *Rumble* engages its audience directly with a display of its own virtuosity whereas The Song of the Goat Theatre seek a more intimate empathic connection with the spectator, yet it could be argued, cannot avoid becoming a spectacle of virtuosity even in presenting the intimacy of the performance itself.

In *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, the main focus of the piece is the lamentation: a ritualistic and therefore heightened expression of grief. This emotional expression is also more performer-centred and thus is a more intimate personal investment in the performance on the performer's part. It is here that the chapter extends the discussion of The Song of the Goat Theatre a little further than will be the case with Renegade Theatre's *Rumble*. This is because, having addressed how the spectacle of skill is

integral to the performance style of *Rumble* there is little conflict between the intentions of the company and the way through cultural norms, a British audience is familiar with watching.

Staging Authenticity in a Spectacular Society

Thus far, the chapter has analysed the shift away from diachronic engagement and drawn attention to a tension between the spectacular gaze of the contemporary audience which focuses on the display of skill, and the desire to create an authenticity of experience and intimacy in performance. This tension between two synchronic modes of engagement: one founded on spectacle, which still maintains an objectifying gaze and one founded on an attempt to find a way of creating moments of communion depends also on the foundations of the connection that is being made with the audience. The last section of this chapter will therefore examine the *Chronicles: A Lamentation* in the context of the spectacle then explore the place of ritual, myth and communitas in this performance and the importance of rituals surrounding death in our own society in order to establish a sense of the cultural connections or disconnections for a British audience.

This notion of staging authenticity is in direct contrast to much of our popular cultural response to the spectacle. In chapter five, playful and political ironic responses to the theatrical excesses of the spectacle are explored in some detail as the ironic stages the illusory in such a way that it is made visible. However, where the ironic use of theatricality encourages self awareness and self conscious watching, Song of the Goat encourages its audience to watch in a way that works against 'falseness' of the illusion and attempts to generate a space for spectatorship aside from it. Whether the

spectacular vision of the world can be set aside at all will be subject of the discussion following.

It is this kind of view of the spectacle as something illusory, but also ubiquitous, that makes up Debord's notion of the Society of Spectacle. The gap between the real and the illusory, which Song of the Goat Theatre try to close by tearing down facades and attempting to present something authentic, and which Improbable Theatre emphasise and play with, is the gap Debord theorises on a societal level between the spectacle and the real. 'Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation' (Debord 1983: 1). While he speaks of the whole of society here, he could equally be referring to the transferral of the lamentation or breakdancing on to the stage.

He sees the spectacle as a set of relations projected into a unified illusory spectacular version of the world with which our civilisation relates. He also compares this to the version of the world we inhabit as constructed by a religious system, stating that 'spectacular technology has not dispelled the religious clouds where men had placed their own powers detached from themselves; it has only tied them to an earthly base… It no longer projects into the sky but shelters within itself its absolute denial, its fallacious paradise' (Debord, 1983: 20). The spectacle takes the place of the real in society's view of itself as people see a selective mediatised vision of the international community. It is a shinier version of the world with more extremes of everything, giving the spectator's perception of the world something that amazes and delights twentyfour hours a day.

The connection between this kind of spectacle, as a heightened, illusory version of the world, and the use of the term spectacle in popular expression and experience comes in

reference to the split between what is perceived as excessive and/or simulated, and what is perceived as authentic. 'The theatrical, then, as it invades our daily lives', says Barish 'becomes a substitution of what is arresting and exciting for what is true' (Barish: 1981: 475). Song of the Goat Theatre attempts to set itself at odds with this objectifying process that places the real within a frame of the spectacle or within a frame of what is considered theatrical. 'We may fulfil ourselves either authentically or inauthentically' where 'to behave authentically is to perform "acts," to invent ourselves from nothing, neither shamed nor frozen into ineffectuality by the sea of faces that surrounds us' (Barish: 1981: 476).

Within the context of a society overwhelmed by the spectacular, where a spectator expects the unexpected and the incredible to be available for consumption whenever they choose, it is difficult for a theatre company to bring something unexpected and incredible to the stage without being complicit with this mode of engagement. The virtuosic performance of *Rumble* is easy to integrate into that spectacle and as breakdance is, perhaps one of the most suitable expressions of a countercultural community to become a part of this engagement because of the skill, the aesthetic beauty and energy of the form. *Chronicles: A Lamentation* shows some resistance to this kind of engagement because it undermines a sense of engagement purely with the visual display or through simple character based identification. Rather the piece attempts to share a kind of intimacy, creating an authentic shared emotional experience.

Certainly, the authentic connection with a spectator is still something that is important to the company. In interview, Grzegorz Bral, the artistic director asks 'How many people cried because they remembered something? For how many people did theatre become, once again, a healing process' (Bral, 2004: npg)? He also describes the

experience of the performers as they researched into the lamentation form saying, 'During our search for lamentation we touched on something which could be called the 'physiology' of singing. If we assume that one of the functions of lament is to cleanse through weeping, it seems that lamentations are an extraordinarily cleansing tool' (Culture Website).

This very personal and intimate connection that they are trying to generate seems to be similar to that of Grotowski: for him, when you strip away the social, what is left is both highly intimate but also archetypal and universal. However Grotowski also recognised that 'group identification with myth – the equation of the personal, individual truth with universal truth – is virtually impossible today'. He therefore attempts 'confrontation with myth rather than identification' (Grotowski 1975: 23).

The universal experience of the myth of Gilgamesh is not problematised in this way within the performance and is not set against a contemporary experience of the world in the way the Theatre Laboratory's work does. If this piece is contrasted with their production of *Akropolis* for example, which brought into confrontation the heroic myth and the horror of humanity's worst in Auschwitz, it seems that the company has set aside this kind of relationship with myth and ritual. For Grotowski it is this juxtaposition that has become a point of connection which creates a sense of communitas: disillusionment in reference to mythic celebration of humanity.

Merback suggests that there was in medieval society a clearer sense of empathic experience in the spectacle of punishment. Because pain was 'a powerful emblem of intersubjective experience; it actuated empathic bonds between people'. 'Suffering as spectacle could become… a form of what anthropologists call communitas' (Merback,

1999: 21). Could then a spectacle of lamentation create a similar effect and would it be effective in this society? It requires an active identification which recognises what the spectacle presents as being one's own.

Song of the Goat Theatre's performance in contrast with Grotowski's work, does attempt to create a level of identification, though not necessarily with the experience of the mythic character. Instead there is an identification with the performers' experience of performing which is substantially stronger. For the audience going into a performance of *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, the brutal confrontation with human mortality through a form as powerful as the lamentation, might have considerable cathartic effect on a spectator, if the identification is with the emotional engagement is with the performer.

However, the lamentation that has been transferred across to a stage in this country comes from a remote part of Albania and is not a form of grieving that is a part of this culture. Though a spectator can engage with the force of the emotional investment of the performers and indeed be overwhelmed by it, the expression of grief is, in many cultures in Britain, a private and more reserved experience and the idea of a communal or formal expression of grief of the kind Song of the Goat Theatre present is very alien to many British spectators. Rituals no longer function on a communal level and death is distinguished by the process of separation rather than transition. The dying are separated from the living before death through 'denial and associated medicalisation of our understanding of death-related issues' and thus associated displays of mourning are placed outside living society (Hockey, 1993: 69). With a few rare exceptions where a whole community is affected by disaster, mourning is in general a private and silent process in this society due to the 'cultural ideal of a discrete and emotionally low-key

death' (Hockey, 1993: 130). Where expressions of grief have become public it has been very much a mediatised spectacle because of the size of communication networks as happened in response to the death of Princess Diana in 1997.

In an article that makes a comparison between the grieving for Princess Diana and for her friend the anthropologist Diana Forsyth, Robin Ruth Linden talks about the experience of vicarious grief. She makes use of Milan Kundera's distinction between 'the first tear' which expresses one's own emotion and 'the second tear' which is described as 'a "meta-tear", the tear we shed from solidarity with the collective feelings of the group we belong to at the sight of the first tear. It is a manifestation of vicarious sentiment: it does not come out of the person's direct involvement with the object of feeling but rather out of a derivative excitement that comes with reflection. It is a passive emotion that replaces direct emotional involvement' (Margalit cited in Linden, 1999: 142). This second tear is the grief for someone else's suffering and is the kind that a spectator might experience as they watch a performance like *Chronicles: A Lamentation.*

The transition that Grotowski seemed to be attempting to make was from engaging with the performance with a second tear to a first tear. The spectator should participate, rather than experience vicariously the confrontation that a performance generated. In *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, likewise, the desire for a similar transition is suggested in the artistic director's desire for the audience to cry or 'remember something' for theatre to become 'a healing process' (Bral, 2004: npg). However, it is difficult to make a transition from what is a passive emotion to an actively involved emotional engagement firstly because of the physical passivity of the spectator. What is experienced on stage by the performer, is not what the spectator experiences. The lamentation performed is very much an embodied expression of emotion. Drawing on Zarrilli's description of

Leder's 'absent body', it is possible to distinguish the presence of the performers from a sense of absence in the spectators' experience of their own bodies. Leder characterises this absence as follows:

> While in one sense the body is the most abiding and inescapable presence in our lives, it is also essentially characterized by absence. That is, one's own body is rarely the thematic object of experience. When reading a book or lost in thought, my own bodily state may be the farthest thing from my awareness (Leder in Zarrilli, 2004: npg).

The spectator, while watching the lamentation performed on stage is cut off from complete engagement with the expression of the lament because so much of the experience of the lamentation for the performer is the physical sensation of it. It is vocalising the lament and feeling the vibration of it through the body that makes it more than simply a symbol of lamentation. The enactment of it brings it closer to the ritual and therefore it is possible that cleansing is made real for the performers. The ritual, according to Victor Turner 'is a mobilization of energies as well as messages. In this respect, the objects and activities in point are not merely things that stand for other things or something abstract, they participate in the powers and virtues they represent' (Turner, 1972: 103). The spectator engaging with a staging of ritual can only engage fully with the message or the representation. The participation in the lament alone is what takes an individual through a process in a more direct way, because the British spectator does not have the cultural connection to that form of expressing emotion and therefore cannot re-experience through it the same process.

The lament once separated and objictified, could become a spectacle of lamentation and therefore also becomes a part of the spectacle of performance skill that the internationally renowned performance companies touring to Britain find it difficult to avoid. Nick Till, suggests that across different periods and eras 'we evaluate artistic

techne, a Greek term that comprises skill, judgement, know-how, in the same terms as moral worth' and he draws attention to the nature of Baroque virtuosity in music, which its industry, at precisely that historical moment in which *labour* is being valued as the source of all wealth' (Till, 2003: npg). Looking to our own society for a moral equivalent, it seems that as Zarilli and Leder suggest, what our society lacks is a coherence of embodied self that brings together bodily, social and spiritual experience of the world; we lack communion. If virtuousity is something more than merely technical skill, perhaps in our society it is the ability to create in oneself this more unified experience of the world that brings internal physical awareness and external experience together and places it within a system that is psycho-spiritual on some level. The popularity of martial arts films like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or *The Hero*, which retain a sense of the authentic spirituality behind the art as well as the actual physical ability are a testament to this perception. There is a sense of nostalgia for the authentic in a society where the copy or simulacrum prevails.

If it can be argued that what is brought to the stage is a spectacle of virtuosic performance without the community from which the style emerged, the spectator in this country at times cannot avoid being part of the objectifying relation generated by the norms of engagement with the spectacle. Nevertheless, in *Chronicles: A Lamentation*, it is also clear that many people engage with the performance on a very intimate level. While many of the reviews of the company's work focus on the aesthetics or the skill of the performance, many also comment on the emotional power of the piece, describing it as 'a cathartic outpouring of energies' (Brennan, 2004 in Piesn Kozla Website); or suggesting that 'through their lamentations, you yourself undergo catharsis' (Molik, 2002 in Piesn Kozla Website). If the British audience cannot feel a part of the lament that grieves our mortality, perhaps we lament what our culture no longer has in terms of

a feeling of authenticity, communion and in particular communal expression of intense emotion.

Finally, putting this in the context of theatre as it stands in relation to society in Britain, the seriousness of the theatre as it is envisaged by Song of the Goat theatre is at odds with its place as a commercial enterprise and a mode of entertainment. Anna Zubrzycki described the hardest performance of this piece as being one starting at half past ten in the evening at Sydney Opera House after people had dinner and drinks. She explained that the audience came into the theatre seeking entertainment not serious theatre and as a result did not connect with a community on stage and contrasted this with the intimacy of a small venue they played in Brighton where she described the audience as being 'open to this kind of theatre… not elitist' (Zubrzycki, 2006: npg).

This focus on the seriousness and the function of theatre within society is what distinguishes most definitively the two performances discussed in this chapter. *Rumble* is a performance which embraces the spectacle and the entertainment of theatre, where *Chronicles: A Lamentation* seeks to rekindle a connection between the performer and spectator which functions as a moment of seriousness and resists the spectacle and the commercialism of consumable entertainment. The importance of elitism here is that in Poland, Zubzycki explained, the theatre is still significant in everyday life. Everyone goes and so it has not become entertainment for the elites and is therefore not something to be consumed in that way (Zubzycki , 2006: npg). This distinction between the culture of Poland and that of Britain draws attention to one of the defining factors affecting the way British audiences engage with theatre: we consume.

CHAPTER 3 - Transgression: Staging Synchronicity and Multiple Identifications

Introduction

This chapter further explores elements of the narrative and non-narrative engagements of an audience discussed previously. Like Song of the Goat Theatre and Renegade Theatre, the companies discussed here exhibit physical virtuosity on stage. Here, however, two pieces where the narrative remains a more significant part of audience engagement have been chosen in order to present a close analysis of the relationship between the metonymic engagement with narrative and the metaphoric engagement with physical performance and visual coherence on stage. Within this, the chapter specifically addresses aesthetic and ideological transgression through an excess of conflicting layers of engagement and considers how this functions in a spectacular world defined by excess.

The chapter examines two recent productions: *The Elephant Vanishes* (2004), an adaptation by Complicite of three of Haruki Murakami's short stories, and *On Blindness* (2004) written by Glyn Canon and produced by Frantic Assembly, Graeae and Paines Plough. Both were developed through a collaborative devising process and are part of an emergence into the mainstream of 'dance theatre' a genre which plays on the margins between theatre and dance.

As the previous chapter suggests, the century mainstream in British theatre has been defined by a focus on the textual and the narrative-led theatre performance. To a large extent, theatre in Britain in the century has therefore categorised the non-linear narrative and non-mimetic as experimental, political or international theatre. Though more experimental approaches to text like that of Peter Brook began to reach larger

theatres in London in the 1960s and 70s, it is only recently that the term 'dance theatre' has been so frequently used in reviewing popular productions.

Lyn Gardner's description of recent work by the new company Stan Won't Dance as 'a glimpse into the new face of British dance theatre' (Gardner, 2004a: npg), however, makes the assumption that this collision of text, visual theatre and dance is now becoming a well established form in Britain and both productions discussed in this chapter loosely fit into this category. Complicite have been working in this way for at least fifteen years and the production *The Elephant Vanishes* discussed here is no exception. The emphasis of both these productions is more firmly on the experience of a theatre production than that of dance and there is a strong sense of the tension of narrative development and identification with characters and situations brought to life on stage. They therefore also offer the spectator through narrative a familiar means of engaging with what is presented on stage, thereby working well within the 'horizons of expectations' (Jauss, 1982: 24)[21] of the majority of British spectators as well as challenging them to engage beyond simple narrative identification.

It is, in fact, the form through which they present narrative which is most significant in the comparison of these productions. They both take a text *already written* and work this combination of physical theatre, multimedia and bilingual texts into and around it to create the performance text. These multiple systems of signification are, in both, presented simultaneously on stage to move beyond conventional horizons of expectation in terms of the spectatorial relationship with the stage. There is an interaction founded in a heightened tension between metonymic and metaphoric modes

---

[21]   The horizon of expectation is a term is dependent partly on the socio-cultural circumstances of individual spectators and is also partly constructed by the work that has been accessible in previous years.

of reception: the metonymic as that of logical extension and linear comprehension of narrative, and the metaphoric as that of aesthetic and connotative simultaneity.

At the same time, both these productions are working within fairly mainstream spaces. *The Elephant Vanishes* toured internationally and was performed at two successive BITE festivals at the Barbican and *On Blindness* toured the country, playing at The Soho Theatre in London, the Birmingham Rep and the West Yorkshire Playhouse. This presence in mainstream theatres suggests perhaps that some of these 'transgressive' qualities within a postmodern aesthetic are no longer as transgressive as they once were or are being subsumed within a spectacular or narrative engagement with more popular appeal. If this is the case, the political bite of disruptive experimental techniques, it appears, may be no more desirable or mainstream than it has been in the past.

Nevertheless, on some level, theatre audiences in this country are now seeking a more challenging or at least richer spectatorial relationship with theatre. The way that this has been made accessible is through productions with multiple sign systems, identifications or realities, but which still have a familiar mode of engagement. '[A]udiences are hungry for outsize experiences' says Billington in the *Guardian* 'something in which language, music, movement, images coalesce to produce an event that works simultaneously on ears, eyes and emotions' (Billington, 2001: npg). These performances create an excess of simultaneous often conflicting engagements with the stage, yet it could be argued do not cause the kind of discomfort that, on a fundamental level, confronts or threatens the spectator's expectations. The experience of the excess as spectacle has already been given some consideration in the previous chapter, however, as this chapter progresses it will return to this issue in relation to the transgressive.

This chapter explores the balance between security and disorientation of expectations in relation to the potential of these two productions to generate transgressive relationships with the performance text. It argues that although both productions on the surface make use of a similar aesthetic, *On Blindness* places the tension between metaphoric and metonymic modes of engagement within a primarily diachronic drive towards comprehension. Beyond the narrative engagement and entertainment, the emphasis is on exploration and disruption of ideological discourses through its transgressive and in places resistant aesthetic; whereas *The Elephant Vanishes* is more focused on presenting a theatrical experience which challenges the spectator in regard to the aesthetic engagement with the stage.

The aesthetic of *The Elephant Vanishes* is particular to the way in which Complicite works in general, as their work draws on European, as well as in this case Japanese, influences. The performers in this production brought a mixture of training to the performances: in contemporary dance; in mime, through Company Mine Han and Ecole Jacques Lecoq; in Japanese dance at the Hanayagi School; in Butoh with Yukio Waguri; and in experimental and physical performance at the Shuji Terayama Theatre Laboratory. Jay Rubin describes the piece as 'less a mimetic dramatization than an imaginatively stylised yet minimalistic visual and vocal illustration of Murakami's text' (Rubin, 2004: npg), and compares it in style to that of Noh.

For British audiences, physical or non-mimetic theatre has had associations with fringe and experimental theatre forms, or European and Oriental theatre and Complicité's style evidently makes use of these associations despite being a British company and no

longer working on the fringe. As discussed in chapter one[22], Jon Whitmore draws an interesting comparison between American spectator response to oriental theatre and postmodern theatre. He states that 'It is problematic […] to construct meanings from Asian or postmodern productions that resist linear and logocentric readings' and later describes them as offering 'simultaneous, overlapping, interwoven, disjointed, and nonsequential experiences that defy simple narrative reading' (Whitmore, 1994: 205). While this experience of the simultaneous and disjointed in postmodern or oriental theatre has indeed been challenging to narrative reading and thus problematic for traditional narrative-led spectatorship, in Britain this has certainly now begun to change.

What has in the past been seen as inaccessible is now, fifteen years later, moving within the horizons of expectation for a larger majority of audiences. In the case of Complicite there is a focus on the immediate synchronic engagement of the audience which creates a sense of the chaotic century that we live in and this works in opposition to still strong sense of linear development. This focus on visual synchronic engagement is more accessible due to the wider experience of fragmentation and simultaneity in popular entertainment. It echoes popular culture in its use of combined music and video images reminiscent of the music video and appeals to a young audience. The company locates itself thus in the experimental mainstream: challenging enough to be trendy but accessible enough to draw in large audiences.

Frantic Assembly, who contribute much of their physical style to the devising and choreography of *On Blindness* are likewise producing an aesthetic which breaks down what young people might perceive to be conventional theatre while appealing to their interests by generating a performance atmosphere which reflects the world in which

---

[22] See page 50 for further discussion of this perspective in relation to postmodern theatre.

they live. This is achieved through the combination of strong engagement with a developing story, simultaneity and excess of stimuli. The high pace in Frantic Assembly's style echoes that of other Western dance theatre groups like DV8, and Stan Won't Dance and similarly reflects the acceleration of moving images seen in the fast cutting of spectacular Hollywood film editing. Complicite in contrast, though reflecting a chaotic world through the experience of the *mise en scène* at certain points, also has the influence of the very different and considerably slower pace of Japanese training on the physical style.

Politics, Play and Collaboration

For Complicite, the focus on a more aesthetically challenging approach is also based on the emphasis of the original training from which the company began. This combined the influences of Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier, foregrounding physical expression and collaboration. The company states in their website that there is no Complicité method, there is collaboration: 'A collaboration between individuals to establish an ensemble with a common physical and imaginative language' (Complicite Website). There is a sense of complicity between the performers which creates a sense of one body moving on stage. This idea of 'complicité' from which their name comes is based on elements of the founder's training at the Gaulier School which teaches that there is a connection between performers and a pleasure in the game or playing of performance:

> We learn in the workshop on the "Jeu" to place the character we are playing on top of our pleasure to be playing, never to kill this pleasure but on the contrary increase it by searching for connivance (complicité) and jokes with our partner. Never should an actor playing a melancholy character be melancholy. (Gaulier school website)

In Complicite's work this complicity or connivance extends to everyone involved in creating the performance text: the performers, director, designer and audience, and there

is no attempt to remove the awareness of the moment of creating from the experience by hiding in pure mimesis. This means the multiple signifying systems and all the elements on stage are to an extent drawn together aesthetically. 'We all start from nothing', says Michael Levine the set designer, 'The energy comes from people all working in the same room, behaving a little like members of a jazz band' (Michael Levine cited in Napoleon, 2005: npg).

There are two kinds of performance text constructed here if we return to Zich's immaterial and technical texts discussed in the introductory chapter, and both are being constructed through this sense of complicity between the participants. The rehearsal and development process involves the entire company in producing the technical text and the performers create a sense of complicity between themselves on stage and in interaction with the spectator in the immaterial text. It is significant that the connection between the performers is also included as part of the immaterial text which exists in interaction with the spectatorial identity[23] in the moment of performance. This is because although the complicity between performers is a part of a training system and is manifested in the technical text, the enjoyment of playing is extended to the audience as well. There are two kinds of synchronic engagement generated through this complicity: the first is the connection between participants' experience in the immediate moment of engagement and the second is the engagement with a drive towards *aesthetic* coherence.

In addition however, the second, this engagement with the drive towards aesthetic coherences can be both synchronic and diachronic; the arrangement of shapes, colour, rhythm and shape of movement can be distinguished as synchronic or diachronic just as

---

[23]See page 44 - 46 for an explanation of the conception of spectatorial identity in relation to the liminoid.

the arrangement of notes is both harmonic and melodic. There is a tendency therefore with this aesthetic arrangement, as with structuring of narrative, for the spectator to draw elements into a coherent form, but here in both synchronic and diachronic structures. However, the emphasis is very different from that of narrative comprehension. In the diachronic movement towards narrative comprehension, the connotative metaphoric elements of language are disruptive and secondary to the engagement. In contrast, there is no prioritising of the diachronic over synchronic in aesthetic comprehension. The emphasis on the synchronic here is also enhanced by the complicity of performers in performance (the connection in the immediate moment of performance) and the company's collaborative approach.

Their collaborations are based on skills specific to the aesthetic of the company as well as the piece and there is a high level of equality in the working process: 'Everyone […] contributes openly and vitally' (Phillipe Setzer in the Complicite Website). Yet it is Complicite's established way of working and their aesthetic that has primacy. In relation to Frantic Assembly's development of their physical style, there is in contrast, a stronger emphasis on incorporating the influences of their collaborators. They say they are 'keen to work with different choreographers, new writers, etc. in constantly developing the Frantic style' (Frantic Assembly Website). Where the direction of *The Elephant Vanishes* is McBurney's, *On Blindness* is a production realised through directorial collaboration and places more emphasis on the challenge to ideological engagements than Complicité's recent work. The production brings together input from the artistic directors of the three companies involved: Paines Plough's Vicky Featherstone, Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham from Frantic Assembly and Jenny Sealey from Graeae, all of whom bring to the process different intentions and modes of working.

Paines Plough are concerned with developing the work of new writers and *On Blindness,* written by Glyn Cannon, emerged from a commission following the performance of a shorter version at Paines Plough's Wild Lunch season in 2002. Paines Plough had worked the year before with Frantic Assembly in a similar way on Abi Morgan's play *Tiny Dynamite* and the way they combine the inputs of the directors involved is very much influenced by the individual concerns of the two companies. Maddy Costa, after speaking with the group and attending rehearsals, states that 'Featherstone is largely in charge of the overall shape of the show; Hoggett and Graham focus on choreography; Sealey on directing the disabled actors. But ultimately, nothing in the rehearsal room is that clear-cut: all share an equal interest in each other's department' (Costa, 2004: npg).

In terms of the ideological engagements specific to the piece, it is Graeae that has the strongest political focus of the three. They are a company of disabled theatre practitioners who describe their aim as being 'to redress the exclusion of people with physical and sensory impairments from performance' while being 'concerned with genuinely pioneering theatre in both its aesthetic and content' (Graeae Website). Jenny Sealey gives a strong impression here of being part of a company whose politics are not didactic, but are focused towards inclusion. Mat Fraser who plays the artist Gaetano in *On Blindness* comments, 'the disability politics part of me doesn't think there should be all-disabled plays or all non-disabled plays. We are the world: we should mix it up on stage as well as on the street (Mat Fraser in Logan, 2004: npg).

Although Complicite's work has a strong current of aesthetic experimentation, there is, in contrast, a much weaker focus on political engagement. Janelle Reinelt suggests that

'complicity has a negative connotation which might be seen to be a tacit agreement between performers and audience not to challenge seriously their comfort levels' (Reinelt, 2001: 374). It is true that *The Elephant Vanishes, The Noise of Time* (2005) and *Strange Poetry* (2004), though aesthetically striking, do not challenge our view of the world. Even their recent production of *Measure for Measure* (2006) though engaging with contemporary issues did not move beyond easy political references. It does appear that there is, in the popularising of previously experimental styles, a dispersion of the associated politics, and as this chapter will outline in the analysis of the piece, a strong sense of linearity is retained despite its playful disruption.

Nevertheless, *On Blindness*, although dealing with more ideologically challenging material also received criticism for not directly addressing political issues. Charles Spencer, reviewing for the *Daily Telegraph* comments that 'the play mysteriously ducks the very issues it ought to be exploring – the problems those with disabilities face when it comes to sexual relationships, and the chasm that exists between the able-bodied and the disabled' (Spencer 2004: npg). This criticism is founded in the fact that the play does not directly address disability as an issue. Whether or not the boy Greg is deaf is not made immediately clear and the issue of Gaetano's truncated arms is never brought up in the dialogue of the play. However, if as Mat Fraser suggests, the world and therefore the stage should 'mix it up', the play does not 'duck' the issues; it presents them partly from a perspective where they are not issues at all, just part of the world.   It is very clearly, in its content, a play addressing only indirectly issues of disability. It is a play 'on perception, objectification and lust' says Graeae in its website.

This very much reflects the postmodern shift from larger ideological meta-narratives towards more provisional political identities in postmodern culture and theatre. The

comments of Charles Spencer however, demonstrate that disability politics is not an area where a consensus has been reached that it is the right time to make a shift away from issue-driven politically resistant work. This uncertainty is supported by a BBC study in which a number of participants saw normalising disability through incidental inclusion into programs as tokenistic because it does not directly educate viewers about the issues (Sancho, 2003). The political, according to this view, becomes apolitical and personal or individual in an attempt to move from a politics of opposition to a politics of inclusion.

The notion of collaboration therefore works differently here from in the political theatre that emerged from the late 1960s. The politics of group dynamics in postmodern collaboration are about generating differences and divergences within a working group rather than setting up a community that lends strength to a particular political viewpoint. There is more division of labour with different contributors taking different roles rather than the politically rooted democratic style that marked the devising processes of strongly political groups in 20th-century British political theatre. Frantic Assembly describe 'a collaborative working process where writers will be expected to work with choreographers, lighting designers give direction to the performers, and performers work with the lights' (Frantic Assembly Website).

Therefore, although both in this collaboration and that of Complicite with the Setagaya theatre performers, there is a sense of creative openness and exchange, it is an aesthetic rather than political decision. This means that it is now possible to find companies with different aims and concerns brought together on one project. Where Graeae have specific political concerns feeding into the piece, Frantic Assembly's interest is primarily in making theatre they themselves would find appealing:

> We are about making theatre accessible to people like ourselves, people who may not normally choose to go to the theatre… We are not an outwardly political company… Our aim is to make intelligent, thought provoking theatre that is most importantly accessible and entertaining. (Frantic Assembly Website)

Though they explicitly state that they are not 'an outwardly political company' they emphasise accessibility as being important to them and also imply here a desire to be challenging or 'thought provoking' at the same time. Grand narratives are left well alone, while at the same time there is a desire to create new challenging theatre.

There is, then, a sense of these productions being a part of two threads within the shift towards more mainstream postmodern performance. In the *Elephant Vanishes* Complicite draw on influences from outside Britain, both in their own training and in collaboration with the Setagaya Theatre to create a particular visual aesthetic. The company is part of an increasing influx into British theatres of European and Eastern influences, notably, however, not contemporary experimental work. What was experimental in Europe thirty years ago is only now a significant influence and it is the more traditional forms from companies like Japanese that generally have an impact: Noh, Butoh or Suzuki. *On Blindness* however has its roots more firmly in Britain and as a result there is more focus on addressing ideological issues relevant to our culture specifically and the collaborative approach, though now very different, has its roots in British political theatre as well. Graeae are formed out of a marginalised community with a specific political intent and though they are 'mixing it up' in collaboration and in representations on the stage (Mat Fraser in Logan, 2004: npg), it is reminiscent of British political theatre of the past perhaps partly because the level of exclusion is still so much higher than in other minority groups in contemporary society. The project set out from the beginning with a commission for Glyn Cannon 'to explore the different

possibilities of theatrical language, signing and voice' (Frantic Assembly Website), and has a clear political intention behind this exploration of how signing can be integrated effectively into theatrical language.

Nevertheless, *On Blindness*, the production emerging from this collaboration engages the audience in strong identifications and narrative development. It charts the passage of a weekend for two couples as the way they relate to each other reaches a crisis point and their sexual insecurities are exposed. In one sense the narrative structure of the piece is very traditional in that it follows to some extent the Scribean formula in its presentation of an introductory scene, a complication and development, climax and then denouement (Carlson, 1996).

Narrative structure, balance and rupture

The first scene of *On Blindness* introduces the characters and sets up strong identifications with Shona and Edward through intimate disclosures and insights into Edward's sexual insecurities in particular. It also introduces the themes of sexual communication, language and inclusion: Edward is writing an audio-description for *Basic Instinct* as the play starts and the entire scene is signed as well as spoken throughout. The following scenes then go on to show the characters' respective weekends along side each other on stage, building up to a climax in both where the characters are forced to confront the situations they are in and the conflicts between them. The subsequent sex scene between Edward and Maria, set against the frustrations of their lack of communication and Maria's repeated and failed attempts to seduce him, releases the tension and energy that frustration has generated, before a return to conversation in the workplace between Shona and Edward. This final scene thus provides a denouement drawing together the narrative. Despite the considerable

simplification in applying this model to a structure which presents simultaneous and overlapping worlds and media on stage, it is a useful exercise in drawing attention to the strength of linearity in developing narrative tension in the piece.

In terms of overall narrative structure, as Complicite's *The Elephant Vanishes* is a sequence of three stories, it does not therefore have the same development of narrative tension towards a climax that is evident in *On Blindness*. The stories develop a narrative individually, but as a whole they are structured round an exploration of balance and disruption. This disturbance is manifested in the content of each story in the interposition of some kind of event or moment of surreality into the habitual routines of life, interrupting its balance and the sense of coherence and comprehension that goes with that. 'Within all of these tales is a sense of rupture' states McBurney, 'as if somewhere the order of things has been disturbed. The strange event is not the rupture. The rupture is what the strange event reveals' (McBurney, 2004: npg).

The first story, *The Elephant Vanishes,* describes the mysterious disappearance of the town elephant and its keeper. The narrator, convinced he saw a shift in the balance of size between them on the night they disappeared, is set at odds with his own life by both the impossibility of what he saw and the knowledge that the elephant vanished without any plausible explanation. In *The Second Bakery Attack,* a couple suffer bizarre pangs of hunger and emptiness caused by a curse the husband has brought upon them through his partial robbery of a bakery as a student. His willingness to listen to Wagner in exchange for the bread meant that the action was not complete. The couple can only allay the inexplicable pangs of emptiness by holding up a McDonalds to complete the robbery. There is a sense of inevitability and loss of control over choices, in this pull towards a completed action. This is set against the desire for coherence in the first story

in the news reporters covering the elephant's disappearance and the narrator's resistance to those explanations. This inevitability suggests the presence of an external pull towards coherence, echoing or echoed by, that of the individual psyche presented in each story.

This exploration of the pull of unity and the implications of its disruption on both an internal individual level and societal level means that though in the individual stories the structure of the narrative is primarily linear, in the piece as a whole, the structure is almost circular, spiralling around itself. On the simplest level, this contributes to the overall sense of coherence in the piece as the production takes advantage of the natural break in the first story to split it and frame the performance within a direct address on the drive towards unity. The story of the elephant and the narrator's experience of the media coverage are at the beginning of the piece and the subsequent upsets to his life and his direct consideration of the pull of unity conclude it.

Nevertheless, this return to the first story does not provide neat closure. The narrator's words as the production draws to a close, 'people are looking for a kind of unity… Unity of design. Unity of color. Unity of function' are set against his refusal to accept the media attempts to explain what happened (Murakami, 1993: 327). This desire for unity and coherence is associated with consumerism and implicitly undermined throughout. Thus the very structural unity that provides the spectator with a sense of closure also undermines that desire in the content of the stories. This recognition of a conflict is enhanced by the alignment of the spectator with the narrator as he watches the news.

Image 4: *The Elephant Vanishes* from Complicité Website

The presence of the television screen on stage gives the narrator and the spectator a focal point for a common gaze and the combination of this and the background presence of journalists as he describes the circumstances of the disappearance, mean that the spectator watches alongside him in equal disbelief as the media attempts to find a satisfactory story to explain the impossible:

> You could see how the reporter had struggled to find clever ways round the absurdity in order to write a "normal" article. But the struggle had only driven his confusion and bewilderment to a hopeless extreme. (Murakami, 1993: 314)

The return to the first story recognises a conflict between balance and disruption which remained unresolved throughout the performance, and raises the question of how desirable or unavoidable that drive towards coherence is. There is, in the echoes between the three stories, also a reinforcement of the ambiguity surrounding this conflict: how far balance and unity are something sought internally by the individual

and imposed upon the world or something external which cannot be controlled, as suggested in *Sleep* and *The Second Bakery Attack*.

Within the individual stories themselves, in particular in *Sleep,* there is a stronger sense of linear movement however, as the narrative is clearly moving towards an event. The two previous stories, having set up this sense of an unavoidable drive towards unity, leave the spectator with the expectation that the narrator in *Sleep* cannot be left as she is. Despite the fact that she uses the time stolen back from her mechanical routines through sleepless nights to live a life that is more real, she recognises that there may be consequences, saying 'maybe life will try to collect on the expanded part – this "advance" it is paying me now… it feels right to me some how… the balance sheet of borrowed time will even out' (Murakami, 1993: 100). Because of this expectation set up through the narrative, the audience is drawn on towards potential coherence at the end in a way that does not occur so much in the other stories. There is also the strongest sense of identification in this story because of the level of intimate disclosure by the character. The narrator speaks into and from a video diary as the audience watches and describes her life, her experiences and her feelings for her family. The spectator in this story has the strongest sense of the character's desire to live and experience more than she has.

Image 5: *Sleep* from Complicité Website

Image five above shows the three performers playing the narrator and also the text of *Anna Karenina* written across the stage and the character's bodies in Japanese. In the front of the image the video camera is visible which throughout the story records and plays back her narration in close up on a larger screen. This, combined with the almost imperceptible shift from live narration to voice over as she drives out at night, creates a sense of what is being enacted in the present tense already having been decided, echoing the sense of inevitability in being pushed towards a redressing of balance. This realisation of the chaos of incongruous realities on stage: fictional virtual and real; past, present and future in the end takes away any sense of choice or control over events and thus reinforces the linear development of narrative towards the character's inescapable fate.

Although, as she becomes aware of her life as a set of mechanical routines, the body of identity representing her is split amongst several performers, for the spectator, empathy with the character's experience remains intact. There is an increased connection with

the performers in the moment of creating, because of a heightened awareness of their bodies aesthetically, but there is also an appeal to identification with the character's situation. The split of the physical body of identity on stage makes it possible to create a sequence of choreographed repetitions in which the performers enact the repetitious nature of the routines of her life. The sequence is pushed further and further into repetition drawing the representation of that part of her life further away from reality and increasing identification with the desire for something more. The linear progression of time is disrupted and the bleak meaninglessness of her life becomes more obvious as her life loses its sense of the real. She has no single reality to believe in entirely, existing simultaneously instead, in the mechanical reality of family life, the fictional reality of Anna Karenina and the reality of her night time life in borrowed hours. However, at the same time the construction of the image draws the audience into this synchronic engagement with the movement towards aesthetic coherence and into engagement with the performers.

The still images of Complicite's productions show the construction of heightened synchronic coherence which runs through the temporal development of the piece. Looking at figure three below, the precise choreography of space and bodies is very much in evidence: there are vertical lines moving down the view of the stage in the screens and the multiple bodies of the character, set against the curve to the top left that passes over the chair and the characters' heads and encircles the striking bright red set against the white of the nightshirts and the darkness surrounding.

Image 6: *Sleep* from Complicité Website.

This element of the construction of stage space has no significatory purpose beyond the statement that this is beautiful. This control over the shapes being created by the bodies of the performers comes out of both the complicity on stage, the design of the stage space and bodies in rehearsal, and the result is evident in the experience of watching, as well as in the fact that still images of the performance are so powerful. There is a desire in the spectator to construct these images in a way that draws all the elements together in one picture in the moment of looking upon it. This gaze is more comparable to that which is addressed to photography, painting or sculpture yet because it is caught up in a temporal art is itself frustrated by the transience of the images engaged with. This sense of aesthetic coherence on the level of the technical performance text, of course, moves both synchronically and diachronically. The curve described in the still image above could as easily model the rhythm of shapes and colour moving through time in a particular sequence. As suggested earlier in the chapter, this aesthetic might be better compared to that of music where the melody and the harmony work in conjunction: the movement through time of visual images still working in a way which is disruptive to

the identifications and objectifying gaze of linear comprehension of narrative because it is a part of the response to an aesthetic not intellectual cohesion and also a part of the creative process of the performers. In *Sleep*, it appears that where identification with the character is strongest, so too is awareness of the performers presenting it. Where tension in narrative development has strongest linear pull, so does the disruption and simultaneity become more chaotic and integral to that narrativity.

Narrative, Identification and Simultaneity

The staging of *On Blindness* has in common with *Sleep* this aesthetic which not only combines strong identificatory engagement with disruption, but makes use of the chaos of simultaneities to enhance the build up of tension. After introducing Shona and Edward and introducing identification with their very different characters, the two parallel evenings both have long sections without as much overlap or interruption in which the audience is introduced to the other characters, and as the evenings unfold the catalysts for the development of their situations emerge. Edward sees Greg masturbating in front of Maria who is blind and through embarrassment lies about what has happened, and it becomes clear that Shona has not told her boyfriend Dan about the nude Gaetano has painted of her. In this way the expectation of conflicts and subsequent crises in these scenes is set up very quickly, and the audience is drawn into a desire to move forward through the narrative towards the climax. As the narrative moves closer to that climax, the intervals between the switches from scene to scene on stage become smaller however, and the playing out of the narratives more chaotic.

Nevertheless, as in *Sleep*, this simultaneity of narrative worlds on stage does not here interrupt linear engagement. The overlapping and echoing of words as the spectator is

switched backwards and forwards between the scenes at an increasing pace instead pushes both narratives towards climax by adding to the intensity of the arguments.

> **Edward** Have you been sleeping with him?
>
> > **Dan**   *(simultaneously)* Have you been fucking him then?
> > **Shona** You what?
>
> **Maria** Having sex with him?
>
> > **Dan**   Is that it? You're fucking him?
>
> (Cannon, 2004: 64)

Simultaneity in this instance contributes to engagement in linear development of the play because the scenes develop in parallel, the intensity of it is appropriate to the atmosphere and the mode of spectatorship is the same in each scene.

Despite the similarity between this scene and that of *Sleep* in the incorporation of simultaneity into the development of powerful linear narrative tension, they are fundamentally different in the way they engage the spectators' identifications. In *On Blindness*, though there are echoes across dialogue and overlaps in use of space, two separate scenes are being presented, set in different places with different characters. This means that identification is split between multiple characters within the two scenes and also across them. In *Sleep*, it is the subjectivity of one character that is split and spread across the stage. This is one of the most significant differences in the ways these productions use simultaneity to construct and disrupt networks of identification throughout. *The Elephant Vanishes* is focused on the representation of fragmentation and the split self as a part of the exploration of balance and rupture. *On Blindness* constructs multiple character identifications in order to stage desire and the reciprocation of gaze on stage.

To appeal to the sensibilities of a contemporary postmodern audience, it is essential that this network of identities does not submerge the spectator in the traditional structure of the gaze. To do this it uses the shifts in perspective in order to explore sexual communication and dynamics rather than simply indulge in the voyeuristic experience of it through identification. In the date scene, although spectatorial identification is with the male character there is a shift initiated at the moment Edward walks in and sees Greg masturbating while Maria talks to him, apparently oblivious. The natural identification with the male character's gaze upon the woman is interrupted because identification is with Edward and not Greg. Edward's desire is superfluous as he is a third person intruding on the scene, and the audience is drawn with him. The male sexual gaze is displaced, increasing Edward's insecurity but also ensuring that the experience of the audience is not an indulgent one because the spectator observes the voyeuristic gaze from the outside while retaining strong engagement in the scene through identification with Edward.

The other shift in the balance of identification and engagement in the date scene is due to Maria's strong subjective presence. She is positioned as the active character in terms of the development of their relationship; it is she who makes every sexual advance and also leads the conversation. Edward, on the other hand, out of nervousness keeps compulsively returning to the subject of Greg every time she makes an advance and the situation becomes more and more awkward. This equality of identification with the two characters comes about here because the overall structure of the scenes – introducing Edward first – implies he is the main focus for identification, but the relationship between the two characters in the following scene shifts this as Maria is in control of what is taking place. She uses Edward's confusion and persistently teases him, using

her pretence of not knowing about Greg and also mocking him for his thinly veiled discomfort with her blindness. The combination of this and her ownership of the incident with Greg strengthens identification with her as the active character, and by laughing at Edward's over-anxious attitude about not taking advantage of her, the spectator's concerns about their own voyeurism are also pre-empted.

The exploration of gaze is, however, more complex than a simple critique of the male objectification of women. It generates dynamics between characters and thus spectatorial identifications which are working in a manner which assumes already that the gaze is not always male, yet also takes into account the cultural importance of the nature of gaze by pre-empting discomfort surrounding it; it neither reinforces nor overtly critiques inequality in the sexual dynamic between the genders. The displacement of the gaze on to a third character who then leaves the scene means there is a sense left of no single character really having complete control of that gaze, Edward least of all. Maria, despite trying to lead the conversation and progression of the date, fails to project her sexual gaze out to Edward successfully right up until the final part of the scene, because of the assumption on Edward's part that her blindness makes her unable to have one. The audience can identify with Maria's frustration and also with his discomfort but can objectify neither through those identifications.

Maria's subjective presence on stage increases as the scene progresses and its strength is partly because of her reciprocation of the gaze. By making advances on Edward and by claiming later she knew that Greg was masturbating, she becomes the subject with whom the gaze lies. She heard Greg and returned his gaze with her voice which he couldn't hear any more than she could see him watching. This transferral of the gaze into a partly aural exchange continues with Edward as the eventual sex scene develops;

he describes her body to her while she listens to him look at her and masturbate. What we call the gaze becomes dissolved into sexual communication as a whole as it is transferred first to voice and also to touch when she touches Edward's face. This use of multiple equal identifications values different modes of communication and opens up how the senses can be used within that.

The voyeuristic gaze is an imposition of sexual communication and thus excitement from one side, and where it ceases to be one sided it becomes a part of communication. Here the gaze is also exposed as an appropriation of what is only one part of that sexual communication – the exchange of looks. This production opens up the other elements of sexual communication - words, gestures and physical contact – as part of a reciprocated 'gaze'. In this, and in terms of modes of communication generally, this production extends beyond spectatorial expectations how the senses can be used and combined. The challenge to the spectator in the construction of sexual dynamics, therefore, is at least as much about disability politics as it is about gender, though it avoids confrontational politics in both. The use of multiple identifications opens up the possibility of experiencing the sexual gaze through other senses and through multiple perspectives rather than setting up conflict between subjectivities as part of a more conventional political intent to expose the spectator's own gaze.

Likewise in *The Elephant Vanishes*, though there is a heightened awareness of performer subjectivity, it is not in conflict with the spectator; it is in complicity. Returning to the quotation from Gaulier, the presence of the performer's subjectivity and body is retained on stage because the character is placed on top of the pleasure to be playing. However this pleasure to be playing is not experienced in isolation: integral to it is the connection or complicity between the individuals. The result of it therefore is

not a presence of performer subjectivities as potential opposing perspectives gazing back at the audience as Barbara Freedman suggests in *Staging the Gaze* (1990)[24]. The spectator instead views the performers as a part of one body and performer subjectivity is manifested only as an engagement and enjoyment in play. The pleasure to be playing is to be caught in the moment and so there can also be no place for a split that is political in the Brechtian sense, or a split that challenges the objectifying gaze directly. Identification with performers as well as characters is there but it is in the form of an identification and engagement with play. The network of identifications is structured very differently in *The Elephant Vanishes* and rather than opening up different perspectives for the audience through multiplicity it sets up engagement with one character, the narrator, in each story, then shifts realities and bodies around that central figure to destabilise a sense of wholeness. The split and conflict in *The Elephant Vanishes* is also not therefore between stage and spectator, but in this case between the different modes of engaging with different fragments of identity and reality realised on stage.

In *The Second Bakery Attack,* the narrator is split between two performers: the one narrating stands on the fridge and moves over and around the set while echoing the movements of the narrated, his other body, which enacts the events as if they are taking place as he speaks. Attached to wires, he is able to view the scene from a variety of different perspectives as he walks along the tops and sides of the set gazing at himself from every angle, while presenting to the audience his intimacy with himself through the reflection of movements between the narrative planes. (See image seven below.) For the audience he becomes as close to the ideal omniscient narrator as it is possible to be. This visually enhanced sense of omniscience is set against his own insistence of a lack

---

[24] Barbara Freedman suggests that the subjective presence of the performer on stage in live performance allows a return of the gaze.

of understanding throughout the narrative, reinforcing the spectator's far greater limitations. He doesn't have an explanation for why the incomplete attack would cause a curse or why attacking McDonald's will help and he doesn't understand how his wife owns all the equipment necessary for such an attack.

Image 7: *The Second Bakery Attack* from Complicité Website

> 'We're stealing bread, nothing else,' she said. The girl responded with a complicated head movement, sort of like nodding and sort of like shaking. She was probably trying to do both. I thought I had some idea how she felt. (Murakami, 1993: 48)

This doubled narration also begins the cycle of fragmented identity that runs through the production as the character is split across time and subjectivity: his 'I' and 'me' are represented separately on the stage and the split is emphasised by his lack of knowledge of himself.

This split across time, as in *Sleep*, also enhances the sense of inevitability and loss of control through the visual realisation of the simultaneity of past and present tense in the

linguistic narrative. However, the sense of inevitability here does not have the same effect as in *Sleep*: the reinforcing linear narrative tension. The story, like the overall structure of the production, is circular and the focus is on gaining and disrupting comprehension for the audience and on the loss and regaining of balance and unity within the content of the piece.

The Transgressive: Distance, Proximity and Conflict in Simultaneous engagements

In *The Elephant Vanishes,* there is an overall sense of multiple fragments of reality, of fragmented identity, of multiple media and sign systems, and finally of multiple simultaneous modes of audience engagement. However, what is most significant is the layering of conflict and the gaps between these fragments. There is a constant intercrossing of the kinds of relationships to reality being represented and the systems of signification that those relationships are represented through which generates a very powerful sense of being split and drawn in different directions and into different conflicting worlds whereas in *On Blindness* there is a sense of drawing elements together into close proximity.

As we have seen in *The Second Bakery Attack*, the narration of the piece is physically separated from the enactment to emphasise the split of subjectivity and the stage reality across past and present. In *Sleep*, the narration is split across live and mediatised on screen performance. The live version becoming the representation of the character making the diary in the past, the recorded being the playing of it after the events of the narration. This becomes more complex as multiple performers enter, presenting the world the character lives by day as she narrates how she exists in two other versions of reality at the same time.

At one point, for example, a close up of the face of the narrator on the screen is combined with the chaotic movements of live multiple performances of her life's routines in choreographed movement. The subjectivity of the character is split between her 'I' represented in close up and her 'me' represented through the performers recreating her mechanical existence. The close up encourages strong modes of identificatory engagement most commonly associated with cinema and television. Where in television or film this is a habitual mode of viewing, here it is combined with multiple performers physicalising the character's life. Although, as already established earlier in the chapter, this multiplicity of bodies and realities contributes to the linear development of the piece, the alignment of the narration and strong identificatory engagement in the close up is set against the expression of her life through gestural sequences which break down the linearity of time through repetition. The character's conflicting multiple worlds are represented simultaneously and are separated by the gaps between media, and at the same time, for the spectator, diachronic and synchronic modes of engagement are visibly split between narrating and narrated realities.

In terms of the overall production as performed for a British audience, this split between different modes of engagement must also be contextualised by the spatial separation of the written translation of the narrative which is projected on to a screen above the enactment of the stories. This frames the spectatorial experience for an English-speaking audience within a separation of linear linguistic representation and visual, gestural representation. If this chapter is proposing that *The Elephant Vanishes* sets up two conflicting drives towards coherence in order to split audience engagement with the stage, it is important to note that this is considerably enhanced by the experience of a subtitled text in this instance.

At the same time, the spoken Japanese narration is often spatially separated from visual enactment in both *Sleep* and *The Second Bakery Attack* (particularly in the metaphorical representation of the sea) and the production retains the narratives as written in their entirety rather than adapting them into dialogue-based scenes. There is a sense of layering in the way the theatrical sign systems are conjoined with the linguistic narrative. The adaptation is less about integration than it is about addition.

On Blindness, however, takes its starting point from the idea of integration of different sign systems and, as a visible reaction against the usual construction of signing as visual subtitling in the corner of the stage, brings together as closely possible, verbal and visual linguistic sign systems. There is an implicit critique of this separation which makes this clear from the very beginning as Edward attempts to translate a scene from visual images into audio description. His failure in this is that he does not retain the eroticism and thus the nature of the gaze upon the body that the film constructs. This critique is made more fully in this play as the production embeds the signing in the text, and into the language of gesture and the dynamics of the scenes themselves. 'We want to make everything absolutely integral', says Jenny Sealey (Sealey in Logan, 2004: npg).

This means that the dialogue gives all the information that is needed to understand how the scene is developing, but also that through signing, projection of text, gesture and action the scene develops itself fully enough that a deaf spectator still has equal access to the production. In terms of disability politics, this is about inclusion, but because of the way it is integrated, it is also about creating a richer theatrical aesthetic for the whole audience. The use of sign language is probably the most innovative element of the production as it is integrated into the scenes through doubling of performers and

through its embedding within the physical theatre and dance which Frantic Assembly's style brings to the piece. The scene changes are presented through interludes of dance in which the performers manipulate the set and themselves around each other and thus move fluidly into the next scene while framing the fusion of signing, emotional gesture and dance that takes place in the scenes themselves.

In the first scene, where the two characters Edward and Shona discuss the audio description and his date, in this production the scene is performed by four actors simultaneously; two speaking the lines and two signing. Again, as with the simultaneous scenes later, this does not work to interrupt identification with the characters or engagement with the development of the narrative for the spectator, because the performance of the two characters retains a level of coherence and expresses the same denotational meaning despite the split between performers and natural variety across languages.

The emotions and the physical relationship between the two speaking performers is not only mirrored by the signing performers. The placing of the performers also shifts throughout the scene so that the two interactions cross over and the movements of the performers are choreographed dance sequences in themselves. The signing performer playing Edward would switch seats with the other to face the speaking performer playing Shona and the different modes of communication were directed across to each as they danced through the changing dynamics inside the conversation. This created a very fast paced and engaging performance of the dialogue as well as a bilingual one, and it opened up different perspectives of the characters while still drawing the audience into their development.

As a member of the audience only understanding one of the languages used to perform this dialogue, the result is a combination of denoted meaning and all the additions of implied meaning that are layered in the combination of theatrical systems of signification, but also a second layering of connotation and potential meaning which cannot fully be grasped. Where this layering of ungraspable meaning cannot be felt – by the spectator who understands sign language but is not deaf - the sense of drawing an excess of connotational meaning into language is still generated in the use of signing within dance.

Frantic Assembly took signs with denotational meanings relevant to the developing scene between Maria and Edward and as he is left alone, he expresses his situation through sequences of movements based on those signs. What results for a spectator who understands signing, is a kind of sign poetry that fuses emotive dance and the meanings of the signs on which the movements are based. For the spectator who cannot sign, it works in the opposite way, placing emphasis on the emotion and atmosphere communicated in interpretative dance, but is combined with spoken dialogue.

By creating a stage language which draws together spoken and signed language through the intentional multiplication of sign systems in performance, what is achieved is a great richness in the process of narrativisation for the spectator. The simultaneous layering of another language adds to what is experienced regardless of whether that language is understood. The mode of communication ceases to be an exclusion of blind or deaf people, but rather than becoming so for sighted or hearing spectators generates a layer of connotative meaning on top for all spectators.

This creates a relationship with the audience which is transgressive in two ways. Firstly, by integrating into the form and the content of the piece the use of two languages used simultaneously, a spectator with access to only one of those modes of communication is drawn into an admission of their own lack in relation to narrativising the performance. The desired omniscience and fullness of comprehension that is sought in the experience of engaging with a play that presents a strong linear development of narrative cannot be achieved. It is here that the necessity of that traditional structure is clearest. If, in generating this sense of inclusion, the production seeks to create an awareness that there is no possible full communication, the promise and the tension of the linear structure is very important.

The production includes its whole audience in the experience of exploring the places where communication breaks down, as it does within the different couples in different ways. However there is also a celebration of the pleasures of extending modes of communication beyond expectations. The pleasure in seeing Edward and Maria finally make a connection is partly due to the build of tension preceding and the identification the spectator has with each by this time, but it is also partly due to engaging with the opening out of communication which includes Edward and the spectator aligned with him. There is a pleasure in seeing that there is more there than is comprehensible. There is a pleasure in excess which works in opposition to the pleasure of the promise of comprehension. However at the same time there is a strong sense of narrative conclusion and satisfaction as the final scene presents us with a kind of denouement.

Disruption, rather than working through reversal of spectatorial gaze or through a subversion of ideological views, functions through the interruption of the expectation of full comprehension in the moment of watching. It is in fact in respect of the synchronic

incorporation of meaning that this disruption occurs. The conventions of what systems of signification an audience is familiar with allow the simultaneous taking in of set, costume, dialogue, gesture etc. The expectation that what is presented in one moment can be grasped and structured into the ongoing interpretation of what is happening is broken in this production. The synchronic arrangement of the *mise en scène* is where there is a sense of excess. This excess of significations forced together into a claustrophobic network of signification, is what pushes transgression beyond a confrontation with lack to something ecstatic.

The potential here for moments of transgression in *On Blindness* is formed therefore through a push towards excess and a layering of connotative signification. Transgression here is about reaching out beyond the limits of discourses of signification. Returning to Foucault's notion of transgression and the pleasure of jouissance described by Barthes, there is, in watching this production, a feeling that what is presented on the stage exceeds what can be understood in the attempt at claiming ownership of the piece by the spectator. What is significant in this production is the fact that experience is not made a politically exclusive one. The exploration of communication and the insecurities surrounding it are made applicable to every spectator through the inclusion of all spectators in comprehension and its lack. *On Blindness* multiplies subjectivity and identifications but also modes of signification to create an excess. It does not, however, attempt to shatter the overall sense of coherence in the emotional, atmospheric narrative effects it generates. The exposure to the limits of comprehension is framed within the notion of communication and in particular sexual communication.

In reference to liberation and particularly in connection with the notion of transgression, Foucault distinguishes between the act of liberation by which 'a colonial people tries to free itself of its colonizer', which is 'truly an act of liberation' and the 'practices of freedom', (Foucault, 1988b: 2) which are a part of the process of maintaining constant movement in a fluid and healthy society. In general, *On Blindness* makes the assumption that freedom has to some extent already been won, and therefore, as is evident in the review from the *Daily Telegraph*, opens itself up to criticism from those who disagree.

In terms of a theatre of resistance that directly addresses issues of disability, it is what is visibly physicalised on stage that challenges ideological discourses about disability more directly. The presence of Mat Fraser on stage as the artist Gaetano makes an implied statement against narrow views of what this kind of physical disability prevents someone from being able to do. The highly physical style of performance and the danced scene changes, for example, that involve manipulating props and moving doors around the stage make a challenge to prejudices that needs no further elucidation. An incidental inclusion of a disabled character in a soap does not have a statement made integrally in the style of presentation in this way and thus is more open to criticism of tokenism but here the transgression is ideological and supported by the implicit resistance of the performance's inclusive casting.

In terms of audience response, there is, as discussed above, transgression in the ideological sense, whereby the spectator is confronted with their own lack as part of a political intention, but also, beyond that, there is the potential for moments of transgression in the Foucauldian sense: transgression not as transformation but as an affirmation of 'the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for

the first time' (Foucault, 1977: 63). Transgression is not positive or negative here, it is simply the moment of originating new discursive existence. What the spectator takes from this field of potential transgressive moments, however, will be dependent on what he or she brings into the auditorium. The exhilaration or instability of this experience as a spectator is affected by the cultural, ideological overcoding that a spectator brings to the production. The transgressive moment does not exist in itself but depends on a spectator's interaction with the ideological discourses of the piece and therefore the transgressive nature of multiple modes of simultaneous communication may be a positive or negative experience.

In *The Elephant Vanishes,* however, transgression, as Foucault describes it, is not caught up in a politicised discourse in the same way. 'Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being' states Foucault '[b]ut correspondingly, this affirmation contains nothing positive' (Foucault, 1977: 35-6). For the theatre spectator, therefore, transgression can be purely aesthetic. There is, as in *On Blindness* an excess of significatory interactions in the synchronic plane of engagement, but this excess is manifested through conflict, separation and the schism whereas the simultaneities in *On Blindness* are based in a structure of integration and inclusion. Rather than through this close proximity of an excess of denotative and connotative signification, transgression is made possible through the necessity to move between sign systems which are set apart from each other spatially in the *mise en scène* and also notionally in the formation of narrative content. However, as in the content explored in the piece, here again there is a tension between that separation and rupture, and coherence in the aesthetic and collaborative cohesion which draws them together into one piece. This draws the spectators into an attempt to launch themselves into those gaps as they tries to draw into coherence these disparate sign systems and modes of engagement. It is here that it

becomes clear why the separation of synchronic and diachronic engagement is so important, because it is the aesthetic synchronic experience of the piece which attempts to draw these elements together through complicity.

Transgression enters into existence through this separation and disconnection of sign systems; of realities on stage; of fragments of identity torn asunder; and modes of spectatorship held apart from each other through visual separation. It is therefore this movement between and across these schisms that needs to be theorised in this production rather than the level of politicality. Julia Kristeva theorises in some detail the process of movement between signifying systems within a signifying practice in her article 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (1986), and it is this that will be used to clarify the nature of transgression in this production.

The notion of 'transition' between 'thetic positions' provides a descriptive framework for the ruptures that unfold in these combinations of, and shifts between, signifying systems, and the 'genotext' describes a textual foundation which incorporates elements of the semiotic and the advent of the symbolic (Kristeva, 1986: 90-136). This notion of the genotext underpins the formation of Barthes' jouissance and correlates with the combination of signification and embodied presence beyond signification in the sign poetry in the work discussed. What is also particularly useful for the purposes of this argument is the idea of the thetic position and the difference in the way the enunciation and denotation of subject and object are constructed in different sign systems so there is a continuous process of adaptation in significatory processes. If this movement between different signifying systems which takes place as a part of the practice of theatrical signification is modelled using Kristeva's framework, it is possible to see the use of multiple systems of signification not merely as a sign which communicates the

uncertainties central to the content, but also as a means of generating a disturbance on the level of spectatorial engagement. Kristeva states:

> If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural and shattered. (Kristeva, 1986:111)

The multiple thetic positionings can never be mapped on to one another, so there is slippage, which works on a synchronic as well as diachronic level if theatrical simultaneity is taken into account as well as linguistic signification. What it is important to note, however, is that through familiarity with conventional combinations, this plurality and thus the shattering of position and coherent object is pushed from view by the movement forwards in linear engagement. In theatre we are able to assimilate costume, set and action as part of a linear narrative and the ruptures in the gaps between thetic positions are covered over. It is only where there is realisation of a separation or incongruity between sign systems within a signifying practice that this shattering is realised. In the case of *The Elephant Vanishes*, this is made possible through the use of these different signifying systems to generate intentionally conflicting simultaneities on the level of represented content and structural presentation. This idea of transition between thetic positions would also be a useful model for the interaction with the first scene of *On Blindness* were the spectator bilingual; able to engage with both the spoken representations and the signed as the scene progressed.

To conclude, this chapter does not propose that these forms of potentially trangressive relationships with a spectator are necessarily particular to the different places from which these productions emerge but that there is some connection. This notion of drawing together diversity on a collaborative level and in the staging of signification

seems integral to a postmodern exploration of cultural and political experiences of the world. It is about inclusion without appropriation or homogenisation because difference is maintained and in being forced together in close proximity, pushes the limits of discursive experience of the world. It is this sense of drawing together and inclusion which *On Blindness* exemplifies.

Complicite's work sets up two conflicting drives towards coherence: diachronic and synchronic and on the diachronic level constructs a network of disruptions and schisms through intercrossing and combining different kinds of linear engagements and through fragmentation of desired unities.   On the synchronic level these fragments are held together by the complicity created in the moment of performance and through training and rehearsal. This kind of performer relationship and the aesthetic which emerges from it must inevitably be founded on considerable training and therefore forms part of this movement which takes its influence from Europe and traditional oriental theatre training.

The relationship with an audience generated by performance groups working in visual or physical media has been discussed in chapter two in terms of the relationship between physical skill and virtuosity. Here in relation to Complicite, having discussed the formation of what are termed transgressive moments, it is worth noting that the exhilaration of this kind of chaotic and fractured performance style is no longer an experience that is specific to experimental theatre.   Interaction with complex simultaneous signifying systems is common to mainstream musical, music video, film and television. Unlike *On Blindness*, *The Elephant Vanishes* presents no challenge to the dominant discourses and modes of communication. Is it in any sense transgressive then, or is this kind of work, rather, a form of spectacular excess?

One possible answer to this lies in the pace of the work and in its roots in the minimalist aesthetic associated with the training that informs the work. While *The Elephant Vanishes* generates an excess of simultaneous and conflicting modes of engagement, it still retains a sense of stillness and minimalism in the visual aesthetic. This chapter then suggests that while the excesses and the simultaneous combination of different engagements within the dynamic of the spectacle influences our capacity to assimilate a greater quantity of diverging stimuli, theatre can appropriate these spectatorial habits to its own ends. It is possible to generate something which draws attention to or challenges these modes of engagements and experiences associated with the spectacle, while still using the habits it engenders.

CHAPTER 4 - Mixing Reality: The Right to Reply

Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the transgressive in the tension between synchronic and diachronic conflicting engagements and which laid out a distinction between the ideological transgressive and the transgressive as an aesthetic pleasure, as *jouissance*. Here, the focus for analysis is a critique of the implications of spectacular dynamics within digital communications and media. The positioning of that critique within those media examined allows this chapter to move forward the discussion beginning to open up at the end of the last chapter about the capacity to generate an alternative from within the dynamics of the spectacle.

The chapter explores the relatively new territory of mixed reality in theatre, looking in particular at the work of Blast Theory in conjunction with Nottingham University's Mixed Reality Lab. The main focus of the chapter is on *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003), placing it within the context of the following developments: Blast Theory's work over the last few years; similar kinds of experiences being developed in Europe and across the world, including other uses of virtual and mixed reality; and trends in gaming including pervasive gaming and alternative reality gaming.

The decision to focus on Blast Theory's work recognises the growing significance of computer gaming and mobile phone technology to engagements with both theatre and society in Britain. Multiplayer mobile phone gaming has become possible through Bluetooth technology and while virtual reality gaming has not yet entered our daily lives in the way that PC and console gaming has, it is becoming more and more accessible. Perhaps because virtual reality and mixed reality gaming is not yet a

familiar part of everyday life it is more suitable for an exploration of the social habits and relations new technologies are forming; it has not engendered its own as yet.

There are four pieces which recreate and comment upon the gaming experience in Blast Theory's recent work: *Desert Rain* (1999) *Can You See Me Now?* (2007), *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003) and *I Like Frank in Adelaide* (2004). While each of these pieces generates an interesting experience and raises questions about the relationship we and our technologies create in today's society, this chapter will focus primarily on *Uncle Roy All Around you*. It will also address issues raised by *Desert Rain* to some extent because it creates an enclosed game space and makes a different kind of political address. However, whereas several articles have discussed the implications of *Desert Rain* already, *Uncle Roy All Around You* has not yet been as closely examined. This decision is also grounded in the fact that unlike their earlier piece *Can You See Me Now?,* this piece allows the participant to engage in the live as well as online game play and secondly in the significance to the spectator/participants experience of its spilling into the real. The decision to leave *I Like Frank in Adelaide* is primarily due to the fact that it was created for Adelaide in Australia. It is interesting because of the introduction of 3G phone technology, replacing the hand held mapping device used for *Uncle Roy All Around You*, but the structure and game play as well as the issues raised have many similarities. Where Uncle Roy asks 'When can you begin to trust a stranger'? Frank asks 'Who do you think of when you feel alone'? (Blast Theory Website).

Uncle Roy All Around You is structured around the rules of engagement with virtual reality but projected into a real environment instead of virtual. It is this experience that will be discussed in this chapter: the mixing of spectatorial and real participation with immersion into a progressing narrative modelled on that of the virtual reality or 3D

game, but set in a live environment. In particular, the chapter addresses the construction of a potentially subversive experience through this process of narrativisation and participatory engagement and it explores the relationship between what is very much politicised performance and the use of technologies emerging from commercial media enterprise.

Virtual and Mixed Reality Research

The Mixed Reality Lab in Nottingham with whom Blast Theory worked on this project is a research laboratory with six groups addressing related research imperatives: The Communications Research Group (CRG), Virtual Reality Applications Research Team (VIRART), Centre for Research in Development, Instruction and Training (CREDIT), Institute for Occupational Ergnomics (IOE), Centre for Industrial & Medical Informatics (CIMI), and the Learning Sciences Research Institute (LSRI).

The Communications Research Group (CRG) who began collaboration with Blast Theory with *Desert Rain* (1999) are focusing on Collaborative Virtual Environments (CVEs) in particular, but more generally on 'social computing environments... including virtual reality, distributed systems and multimedia to support human communications and especially the work of physically distributed groups' (Communications Research Group Website). Their work is part of a growing body of research into design and evaluation of Virtual Environments and communications technology, and applications in industry, education, healthcare and leisure. While there is already a growing body of research and practice exploring VR for leisure, the Mixed Reality Lab in Nottingham is one of the few big projects within a British university which is exploring applications of the virtual reality environment to entertainment, or, in their collaboration with Blast Theory, to theatre.

The technology they are using – to create the interactive virtual reality environment – is based on real-time computer graphics to create a virtual world. The technology itself began to emerge in the military where it could be used to improve simulations in training which could not be easily achieved in the real world. Since then, more advanced technology has provided combined real time graphics with new ways of interacting with the images. Beyond PCs and work stations, there came head-mounted displays (HMDs) which display a digital environment directly to the eye, and Computer Automatic Virtual Environments (CAVEs), which are enclosed spaces within which you can interact with the virtual environment. In interaction through CAVEs and most HMDs, the technology cuts out the real in favour of the computer generated images, creating a level of immersion that means the user can engage thoroughly with that digitised world as if it were real. This is particularly important in designing training systems where the simulated experience needs to be a realistic as possible. Using a screen still creates an image of a three-dimensional navigable reality which, though not fully immersive has the qualities, if the technology is combined with narrative, that one might find in a computer game. Games like *Half Life 2* or *Unreal Tournament*, which replicate the physical laws that govern light and shadow, player movement and so on, use real time 3D graphics and allow the player to interact with objects in the game environment. In *Half Life 2* for example the player can move things around or pick up objects and throw them at people.

The game engines that provide the platform for the design of the game environments for these recent games exist as commodities separate from the game itself and can be used to design game levels, multiplayer games or alternative environments. This

development is particularly interesting because groups like the Alterne Consortium[25] are able to make use of either commercial or open source engines available to the public to design the 3D environments that can be explored by participants through virtual reality technology. This technology, often from a commercial root, can therefore be used to create very different kinds of experience presenting the possibility of creating resistant or alternative audience engagements through commercial technology. Blast Theory on the other hand, due to their collaboration with the Mixed Reality Lab, were able to work with the game engine designed specifically for the purpose at Nottingham University.

In terms of more general research into developing technologies, the majority of work is industry funded and aimed towards improving VR technology for use in medicine, education, training or collaborative design within industry. Virtuosi, for example, one of the main national research groups, focus their research on two specific applications: communications between cable making factories and collaboration between designers and manufacturers in the fashion industry (Virtuosi Website). Applications of VR to training processes is also significant and in these circumstances a simulated operation or emergency flight landing must be recreated as realistically as possible. It is evident that the separation from external distractions is very important here as the simulation must be as close to reality as possible so the desire to have a complete immersion in the collaborative environment is based on the need for the participants to engage fully in the work they are doing. Computer science and research projects in universities across the country, are often similarly focused towards industry or education and often working in collaboration with the national research groups.

---

[25] The Alterne Consortium is a European collaboration providing a platform for alternative reality art: 'to extend the current techniques of mixed reality to support the more advanced experimentations with reality and virtuality that are required by the process of artistic creation' (Alterne Consortium Website).

The places where leisure applications are researched tend to be in the computer games technology sections of university departments and within commercial companies producing either computer games hardware or internationally, companies producing VR equipment and systems (for example GestureTek Inc. whose Gesture Xtreme technology allows the participant to control their interaction solely through gesture). John Vincent, President of GestureTek states: 'Users do not have to wear, hold or touch anything, which leaves them free to simply step in front of the video camera and actively move about in the screen, as they use their full body to interact with the computer world' (Vincent, in GestureTek Website). Immersive games include sports games like *Virtual Hoops Jam*, a basketball game or *The Wizards Cavern*, an adventure game very similar to roleplay games usually played on a computer. The focus here is on giving participants an immersive experience which avoids at all costs the self awareness that an aesthetic gaze upon their own actions as participants would create. The computer game whether screen based or realised through virtual reality technologies is a form of escapism. The research taking place within commercial ventures is of course not shared and thus not available outside the research group working for that company.

Where this is about developing the technology that is most likely to sell in the immediate and future market, it is in universities or widely dispersed collaborations that long term research development is shared and where many of the artistic collaborations are taking place. There is a collaboration across the country for example working on geographical dispersed collaborative virtual environments (Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham University, Manchester University, Lancaster University, Virtuosi, plus a variety of partnered companies). IPerG a European research group working on mobile and pervasive gaming have also been working on cross media games

like *Epidemic Menace* which combines mobile technology with augmented reality. The University of Bath Media Technology Research Centre are working on extending the potential for manipulating objects within an environment so all objects have physical properties. This would give participants control over how they proceed in the environment rather than being guided by the decision making of the designer. At present in VR environments and 3D gaming there are only selected objects with specific properties chosen by the designer. This increase in user autonomy is interesting from the point of view of participatory power relations and in terms of coming closer to a believable simulation of the real.

Another area of development at present is augmented reality which combines the real with virtual elements superimposed over it. Worldwide, there are groups seeking to extend augmented reality technology over wider spaces, mapping computer games on to the real in extended space. The Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Singapore has created an Augmented Reality version of *Pacman* tested recently on the university campus and the University of Southern Australia has similarly developed an Augmented Reality version of *Quake* (Sandhana, 2005). This technology, though interesting in comparison with what Blast Theory were doing in *Uncle Roy All Around You*, has not yet progressed enough to be commercially viable. However as it emerges over the next ten years it will be interesting to see how the notion of blurring reality and fiction is explored; whether the self-reflexivity of performance will be a part of the habits of engagement it creates.

Other similar kinds of mixed reality game experience are also being constructed around the world. The university of Singapore in collaboration with The University of Washington and Hiroshima City University have created a system called Touch-Space,

which provides the 'full spectrum of game interaction experience ranging from the real physical environment (human to human and human to physical world interaction), to augmented reality, to the virtual environment. It allows tangible interactions between players and virtual objects, and collaborations between players in different levels of reality' (Cheok et al., 2002: 430). Their focus is on recreating a kind of game play that is based on real world connections between participant who are physically present and they suggest hide and seek as a similar kind of experience which makes use of spatial awareness, energy and social interaction. However, again, their goal is to create a 'seamless merging' of the physical, augmented and virtual worlds (Cheok et al., 2002: 441).

Much of academic research relevant to this chapter forms a continuation of research into the effects and ethics surrounding computer games in examining the ethical issues raised by virtual reality and mixed reality in entertainment, owing to their immersive quality and the reorientation of social grouping into a virtual space. However before looking in more detail at some of these concerns, it is also useful to point to those studies which address the place of narrative in virtual reality and the modes of engagement it generates as well as its relationship to theatrical performance. The majority of this writing is split between publication specifically on virtual reality applications and developments, and performance-related journals.

Particularly relevant to this study are the special edition of the journal, *Virtual Reality* entitled 'Storytelling in Virtual Environments' (2003) and documentation of the Symposium on Designing Interactive Systems (2002) as they respectively address the nature of narrative and recently designed gaming systems. Publications specifically focused towards performance and virtual reality technologies are also emerging.

Gabrielle Giannachi's *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (2004) addresses the work of Blast Theory and introduces the different kinds of influence computer technologies are having. She addresses telepresence and virtual space along with computer art, and discusses what kind of experience they create. While other publications address internet links and live streaming or the combination of live and screened performance, Giannachi is the first to address a part of a book on theatre towards virtual reality directly. Most other discussion of this kind of work is published in article form. There are a few articles addressing the work of Blast Theory, mostly looking at *Desert Rain* as a mixed reality experience. Interestingly enough, these tend to be published in performance-oriented journals rather than computer games or Virtual reality journals. Most other research focuses on the development of technologies and improvement which make the user experience smoother in terms of avoiding interruptions to immersion and easier in terms of reducing cumbersome equipment needed.

This distinction between what is considered performance – *Desert Rain* is, but virtual reality entertainment systems are not – is interesting and worth a little more attention. David Saltz in an article on participatory interaction with computers distinguished performance through the perception on the audience's part of the event 'as an aesthetic object in its own right' (Saltz, 1997: 119). He questions, 'In participatory interactions, do the interactors perceive their own actions to be aesthetically significant? Does the audience actually become part of the work of art' (Saltz, 1997: 120)? This suggests that the self reflexivity associated with interruptions to complete immersion is a distinguishing feature of virtual or mixed reality performance as opposed to games. The game mediated through a console or PC must be immersive, through the strength of the narrative development and through the coherence of the physical laws and causality in the digital representation in which it is played, because it must grip players and draw

them into playing the game over and over again (Cairns and Cheng, 2005: 1272). This addictive and isolating quality is one which is central to debates around the social effects of these immersive computer interactions.

Immersion and Disruption in Contemporary Media

Whilst the immersion in a computer game as an experience is ubiquitous in today's society the following discussion will focus particularly on virtual reality because, in the context of game play, it takes immersion within a computer generated world a stage further than is possible in engagement with a screen. Virtual reality immersion also involves the experience of presence in the virtual environment, which can be defined as 'extent to which a person's cognitive and perceptual systems are tricked into believing they are somewhere other than their physical location' (Patrick et al., in Brown and Cairns, 2004: 2). This therefore also provides a sense of how Blast Theory's mixed reality engagements contrast with the tendencies of the medium they themselves have been working with.

What is significant in terms of constructing this immersion in virtual reality is firstly that the real is excluded from vision, and physical engagement with the real is reoriented into an interaction with the digitally constructed environment. In the cases of both 3D computer graphics for on screen games and virtual reality technology the race seems as discussed above to be towards verisimilitude, but where in computer games there is 'little physical action of any sort whilst gaming' (Brown and Cairns, 2004: 2), the virtual reality experience and, in a different way, the Mixed or Augmented reality experience engages the whole body in the world created. Brown and Cairns distinguish the different levels of immersion using the words engagement, engrossment and immersion. Engagement requires that the player engages their attention, that the game be interesting to them and accessible and engrossment requires that the game itself is

constructed in such a way that the emotions of the player are engaged. They then become less aware of their surroundings and themselves. What they describe as total immersion must involve presence: the feeling that you are there, completely unaware of your physical surroundings through empathy created and the strength of the atmosphere generated in the game and the verisimilitude (Brown and Cairns, 2004).

This highest level of immersion for participants, separating them more and more from the communities that physically surround them in the real, is considered a desirable quality in the computer game and signals the quality of the game particularly in relation to more recent 3D games. Designers of *Nautilus*, a collaborative game played in virtual space comment: 'In addition to conventional game design objectives such as identification and exaltation, the designers of new games use 3D engines and aim to strengthen the feeling of immersion by, for example, creating realistic characters, immersive playspaces and impressive scenes' (Strömberg et al. 2002: 56). This quality is however, the subject of much discussion, as while this level of immersion so integral to the experience of virtual reality is often of great value in industrial or military applications it becomes an ethical concern in repeated use for entertainment purposes. It is interesting to note the crossover, where a game like *Harpoon* comes directly to the commercial gaming market from military use as a training tool. Described by its website as being 'in use for years by various military branches around the world as a training and *what-if* simulation tool', it is a tribute to Baudrillard's discussion of the unreality of the gulf war (Baudrillard, 1995).

This is a sign of the overall sense of a blurring of the materially real and virtual or fictional. We do not (and would not want to) have access to many of the events in the world we feel we have seen happen. The spectacular versions of reality, of celebrity and

consumption place the individual in a world of unreality where excitement, dreams and fulfilment are not found in the present, here and now, but through the spectacle. There is a sense that subjective experience of the real is so eroded by ubiquity of the spectacle, the unreality, that it has become necessary to seek out other alternative worlds to escape, or in fact to justify, the reality of the one in which the subject exists materially. 'In this postmodern world' suggests Douglas Kellner, 'individuals flee from the "desert of the real" for the ecstasies of hyperreality and the new realm of computer, media and technological experience' (Kellner, 1994: 8 – 9). This opposition between the 'desert' and the 'ecstasies' of our experiences of the real and hyperreal is interesting because it denies the ecstatic pleasures of the real. The adrenaline rush of adventure or violence which can be experienced vicariously through a film or as a participatory game of the hyperreal in the computer game, is generated by the tension between feelings of vulnerability and power. While the real is not completely devoid of this kind of experience, digital simulations of extreme situations become a means to feel more real than the real allows.

The increase in the popularity of digitally mediated experience and communication means that communities are developing around fictional and virtual rather than material interaction. This can be seen clearly in the rise of gaming communities either through internet based multiplayer games or in chat surrounding popular games. In addition, the use of e-mail, social networking (for example through Facebook) and mobile phones in contemporary culture reinforces the notion that the relationship created with others through use of common physical space has lost its significance.[26]

---

[26] In the subsequent chapter about embodiment and the spectacle, a reaction to this tendency is discussed in relation to the rise of the experience economy.

Nevertheless, various researchers in the area also point to the positives in this development of online communities, owing to the element of collaboration central to much interaction within virtual reality environments. Where interaction itself is collaborative, this provides a forum for developing an active community which responds to the mediated virtuality in the immediate sense, but also, where virtual chat is possible over the internet about games and ideas surrounding them, there is the potential for a more permanent community to be formed.

Moulthrop suggests that virtual reality 'fosters empathy, the ability to engage another person's worldview in a world where views are shared and changeable' as it 'lets us share a common imaginary space', but he also points out its tendency to alienate the user from the symbolic world saying that 'it may blind us to the fact that on some level, the world is made to previous order' (Moulthrop, 1993: 83). This suggests, then, a virtual reality environment becomes a simulation which generates an illusory sense of the power of the collaborative group using it. This illusion would be enhanced in immersive virtual reality by the presence of avatars representing its users. This presence gives the illusion of intimacy and connection that is not possible through symbolic communication.

In addition, the symbolic network of signs (Virtual Reality Modelling Language or VRML) generating the experience in the case of virtual entertainment is not accessible to the user, due to the high level of expertise required to write a navigable, interactive virtual reality environment. Therefore screen based virtual environments used for computer games with real-time graphics create an environment which makes the author and means of authoring invisible. Virtual reality is '*post*-symbolic' 'it renders the symbolic secondary, silent or invisible' (Moulthrop, 1993: 79). It creates an experience

of Baudrillard's simulation. The world created is utterly separated from its contextual origins and though the interactive nature of VR leaves room for the individual's input, the interactive qualities are written in to the environment in its programming. The user is limited to the possibilities presented by that programme. It is therefore in the illusion of creating a collaborative power to act; the alienation from the real; and in the gap between invisible author and user or participant that the most significant concerns are raised. These are clearly evident in virtual entertainments today in the success of games which prioritise immersion of the player in a virtual world.

However, there are places that these experiences are being drawn into question. In virtual art, often the form is drawn into the content in work of artists like Jodi.org who creates net art through the modification of computer games like *Quake*. In the work of 0100101110101101.org, the environment is destabilised through viruses to draw attention to the fact that our unquestioning acceptance of the environment with which we are presented makes us vulnerable. Where the groups above are creating art for an audience there is however a more participatory experience in Alternate Reality Games.

Alternative Reality Games originated in the USA and also create an immersive gaming environment usually with a commercially based starting point. The players are immersed in a collaborative effort to solve clues and puzzles hidden in both the digital and the real to piece together a story. However the use of the word immersive here is not intended to mean technically creating a virtual or physical set to be the fictional space in which the game unfolds. Alternative Reality Games are set within the 'real' world but with a fictional world or scenario generated as a layer upon or along side it through digitised interaction and communication into which the subject can be submerged in an engagement which replicates that of an interaction with the real world.

In an Alternative Reality Game, 'immersion mean[s] integrating the virtual play fully into the online *and* offline lives of its players' (McGonigal, 2003: 3). This means that players might receive messages or clues through a telephone call, a faxed message or by a pointer to a particular newspaper advertisement just as easily as through the internet though the internet is the main source.

While most exist as offshoots from films and therefore indirectly advertise the film and company, one would have to be a fan in the first place to find the original clues: in *The Beast* offshoot from the Hollywood film *A.I.*, these were in numbers on the back of movie posters and in a mysterious credit on the film trailer. In contrast, the most recent game, *Perplex City*, is completely independent. However, what these all have in common is the participation in real actions engaging with a fictional world that will not admit its fictionality. The processes of decoding messages in World War II encryption or in another language, of setting up a database, and of hacking into a fictional report are all real interactions. The manipulation of a symbolic system like HTML to uncover hidden digital spaces requires a high level of expertise and the research involved in uncovering information involves collaboration on a large scale.

The Beast and subsequent games have spawned considerable communities around those processes. What is interesting for the purpose of this discussion is the level at which these groups have control over the domain being created. The websites, networks and clues are created by the 'puppet masters', but the way they are navigated and explored is very much in the hands of the players. In *The Ravenwatchers*, for example, when the puppet masters brought the game to a sudden and apparently unsatisfactory conclusion, the players took control, creating pathways forward and refusing to let the game die. At this level, participation becomes active in the sense that it no longer responds to the

requests of those controlling the game and the gap between author and participant is closed. The collaborative spirit of the game play also means that newcomers wishing to learn how to interact with an Alternative Reality Game can develop higher technical expertise with the media as they play. The skills and expertise, and the community surrounding them are real and could be seen as a threat to Baudrillard's univocal structures of communication if reapplied to the real. Jane McGonigal believes that this is a way forward for mobilising more effective political resistance. She states the following:

> The genre's repeated disavowals that 'this is not a game' is more than a catchy tag line; it is a call for further study, development and deployment of immersive gaming's experiments in collective intelligence and self-directed social networks. (McGonigal, 2003: 9)

However, the nature of the Alternative Reality Game as an immersive game encourages isolation from surrounding communities in the real: work colleagues, family and friends outside the collective playing the game. Where reapplication to the real of collective expertise occurs, it is only in extreme circumstances as in the response to 9/11 discussed by McGonigal. Here it is the puzzle format and the sense of helplessness that drew the community into discussion of solving it, but because of the full immersion within a game experienced before, the real became appropriated as a game and members of the group decided to stop the process as they began to feel they were being disrespectful. They had lost the reality of the real. This suggests that because of the high level of immersion in game play, the expertise and sense of empowerment of Alternative Reality Game communities would be difficult to divert into engagement with the real as the real begins to seem like a game due to association and familiarity with that particular mode of engagement.

McGonigal describes engagement with an Alternative Reality Game as involving 'a kind of stereoscopic vision, one that simultaneously perceived the everyday reality *and* the game structure in order to generate a single, but layered and dynamic world view' (McGonigal 2003, p.3), and on a smaller scale this is true of the experience of a live participant in *Uncle Roy All Around You.* As in Alternative Reality Games, the interactions that the live participant has with the space they inhabit are real and the communications between virtual and live players have real effects on the latter. However, the most significant differences are the time and space based limitations set around Blast Theory's work, interruption of virtual and real into each other and most significantly the direct address within the work on the effects of this experience in the real.

All of these examples begin to offer a way of finding a reply; finding a way to respond to the media in a way that challenges what Baudrillard calls the 'unilaterality of communication'. 'To make a return' he suggests, 'is to break this power relationship and to restore on the basis of an antagonistic reciprocity the circuit of exchange' (Baudrillard, 2001c: 211). However in order to make this return, rather than submit to Baudrillard's refusal to participate, the work discussed here either speaks back as in the work of jodi.org and 0100101110101101.org, or disrupts the modes of engagement set up as in Blast Theory. In Alternative Reality Games political strength lies in the fact that as a participant skills applicable to the real are developed, but something more would be needed to break out of the illusion of the game into the real.

Blast Theory's work, however, is intended to disrupt that immersion into the gaming experience. They do not merely create a gaming experience that reintegrates physical presence, but draw attention to and exposes the dispersal of social interactions across

virtual or digital space. Blast Theory, thus, speak from a critical position despite their complicity with these technologies. Before going on to examine their work, it is useful to contextualise *Uncle Roy All Around You* briefly within debates around the relevant strategies of political theatre: audience participation; the spill of theatre into the real; and critical complicity through appropriation of form or media.

Blast Theory and the Politics of Form

Participatory theatre is associated with the political because of the possibility of creating a sense of community and empowerment as the audience interacts directly with the performers and chooses the way the experience develops. However it is necessary to distinguish this experience from earlier explorations of participation through the work and international influence of Augusto Boal and through the political theatre of the West in the 1960s and early 1970s. Our experience of community is very different in today's society. The participatory engagement of forum theatre for example, creates a sense of empowerment through the enactment of possible scenarios in which the 'spectator starts acting again' (Boal, 1979: 119) becoming active rather than 'relinquishing his power of decision to the image' (Boal, 1979: 113). To create a sense of empowerment or positive communal experience, however, it is necessary to create a level of trust which in turn requires the negotiation of boundaries within the relationship between performers and participants. In a dispersed society where the audience does not already form a community, a level of trust and a negotiation of boundaries must be constructed through the interactions of the performance as it cannot be assumed.

In *Uncle Roy All Around You* it is our experience of trust that is, in part, being explored which makes any sense of community that emerges from the piece very self-reflexive. The piece addresses a society where communities are less clearly defined through their

dispersal across virtual links, telephone lines and global media; 'the game investigates some of the social changes brought about by ubiquitous mobile devices, persistent access to a network and location aware technologies' (Blast Theory website). The notion of trusting a stranger is central to the piece as the participant will, in the end be confronted with a decision whether to make a commitment to a stranger for a year. Participation here, while there is a connection created between the online and live player who remain in contact and an exploration of trust in a world where community is dispersed, is also about a confrontation with one's own behaviours and assumptions. The participants' interactions with others within the parameters of the theatrical event have real consequences in their own life outside the performance.

The purpose of political theatre must by its nature be to influence thought, beliefs or behaviours in the society it addresses, but the direct incursion of the theatrical event into the real goes further, blurring the real and the fictional engagements of the spectator through the form the work takes. In Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the invisible theatre is most famous for its intrusion into the everyday, as performers engage people in public places in scenarios that are never framed as fictional or performed. To all but the actors the situation is real. As in direct action or demonstration, the action is real, though planned in advance and performed by those with a pre-decided role. There is no threshold to be crossed before entering the world of theatre or performance here. This threshold between the real and the fictional or performed is constructed in a variety of ways, for example, through the decision to attend, the expectations associated with theatre and the division of space – the theatre stage in the theatre building. In street theatre these have less power. The decision to attend is not so marked as the passer by can have a look then walk on and the system of newspaper reviewing, recommendation etc. does not set up expectations. There is the space the performers construct, around

which spectators will gather, but it is not separated otherwise from the real. Street theatre states Cohen-Cruz in *Radical Street Performance* 'creates a bridge between imagined and real actions, often facilitated by taking place at the very sites that the performance makers want transformed' (Cohen-Cruz, 1998: 2).   This idea of creating a bridge across that gap between real and imagined can be applied in different ways to different theatre, but is extremely pertinent to the work of Blast Theory.

Blast Theory, however, set up a very clear passage from the real everyday experience into the experience of a piece. They do not hide the fictional elements of their work, and they do not present it to the unsuspecting passer by. Rather they juxtapose fiction and reality for participants who have already agreed to go into a place outside their 'real' experience. As will be discussed in more detail later, there is a clear sense of passing over a threshold despite the incursion of their work into the everyday streets of the city in *Uncle Roy All Around You*. If theatre can be theorised as a liminoid space, with a threshold to be cross to enter it, then a clear reincorporation when the spectator moves back out into the real world, as suggested in the introduction, it is the process of reincorporation that is interrupted in *Uncle Roy All Around You* rather than the threshold entering.

The piece also displays, as mentioned above, a simultaneous complicity and critique of the media and technology they are using. It engages its audience using the same media and speaks with the same modes of communication out of which the mass media are constructed. This mode of political performance recognises the fact that it is not possible to speak from outside the symbolic systems of communication that construct the world as it is experienced and so there must be an acknowledgement of this double nature of artistic expression with a resistant intention. This is also common to much

postmodern performance art in which performers both inhabit and celebrate an identity while drawing attention to the way it has been constructed by society or inhabit a mode of communication while drawing attention to the relationships it constructs.

Blast Theory have often displayed this ambiguity in their work, in their live and video based work as well as mixed reality work. As far back as 1994 they had begun representing screen style violence on a live stage, as in *Invisible Bullets* a murder is reconstructed time and time again in different styles. This representation of violence stands also as a critique and exploration of the obsession with crime reconstruction and screened violence. The voyeurism of violence is also addressed in *Choreographic Cops in a Complicated World* (2000) where the actions of Hollywood's heroes are given a dance like quality in a video collage. Recently again, *Light Square* (2004) explores the impact of film on society, setting live performers against film images which they then attempt to copy despite the editing and camera work that makes this impossible. All of these works display violent film images as part of their work, yet through use of excess in the first two and juxtaposition with live reconstruction in *Light Square*, they also create a critical exploration of that engagement. Likewise, the displacement of pornographic images into the art gallery installation in *An Explicit Volume* (2001) and *Viewfinder* (2001) generates, through context, a critical distance from the engagement those images would conventionally elicit. In the development of their mixed reality work since 2000, it is the virtual environment as a medium that is both utilised and critically explored. Blast Theory are 'looking to identify the wider repercussions of this communications infrastructure. When games, the internet and mobile phones converge' they ask, 'what new possibilities arise' (Blast Theory Website)?

One manifestation of this potential is in their use of mixed reality: a layering of two realities, real and virtual on to the same physical space. This means in its original purely technical sense that real and virtual objects exist along side each other in an environment and the user can act upon the real through virtual or real means, and upon the virtual again through virtual or real means. Extending this into theatre, the space that shares these different realities becomes the *mise en scène* and although this does not always mean virtual objects coexist with real ones in immediate interaction, the user or users may engage with both the real world and a virtual environment in its entirety, by crossing the virtual boundaries within one experience or interacting with a physical space through virtual means. Again in theatre the effects desired will be different from those in the commercial applications. Commercially, the use of mixed reality requires a smooth interaction between the user and both virtual and real objects, as switching between real and virtual objects within an environment may be central to the function of the technology, however in Blast Theory's use of mixed reality, it is the collision and conflict of these different worlds within the experience that is emphasised, to draw attention to and explore the relationship between real and virtual. This can be seen in their earlier work, *Desert Rain,* and also since then in *Can You See Me Now*, *Uncle Roy all Around You* and *I Like Frank in Adelaide*, which are a sequence of three works focusing on exploring a cultural space influenced by the rise of internet use, games, third-generation mobile phones (which provide constant internet access) and location-based services.

Desert Rain, their earlier performance and their first use of mixed reality technology, also brought all the political elements discussed above together: the participation, spill into the real and the combination of complicity and critique. It directly addressed issues surrounding the mixed reality experience encountered in the every day 'real'. It is

described by Blast Theory as attempting 'to bring visitors to a new understanding of the ways in which the virtual and the real are blurred and, in particular, the role of the mass media in distorting our appraisal of the world beyond our personal experience'(Blast Theory website). In particular, it destabilises the normative experience of both the immersive virtuality of the video game as fiction and the mediatised 'real' as real, through its use of mixed reality boundaries. The media wall that separates a viewer from the real is made liquid as what would usually be a solid screen is made a waterfall. The intentions laid out for the project included the following:

- A new relationship between performers and audience which can be experienced by the interacting audience members within a collaborative environment.
- A new form of staging that extends narrative possibilities by using virtual reality technologies combined with real theatre elements and video.
- A new, physically permeable mixed reality boundary technology by means of a rain curtain - a curtain of water spray onto which images could be projected. (Shaw et al., 2000: npg)

This experimentation, replacing the solid projection boundary with a waterfall meant that live performers could pass through that boundary from the real and interject as the participants engaged with the virtual experience. The immersion from the beginning of the experience within a virtual environment sets the parameters of an immersive game scenario in place, giving rise to the expectation of both a game style engagement and a fictional world to interact with. When a live performer steps through it is an interruption to that immersion and begins to interrupt the game being played with the seriousness of the real. This is enhanced as the participants move into the next phase, themselves passing through the permeable boundary into the 'real' where they climb over a large pile of sand then encounter videoed accounts of the first Gulf War. The 100,000 grains of sand concealed in a bag in their clothing to be found at a later date allows the experience of the game/performance to leak into the participants' lives as it is found after the experience is perceived to have ended. Set against the immersive

game style interaction, mirroring the way the war itself was 'played out' almost as a virtual war game by the west and against the videos as mediatised representations of real experience, the sand is a reminder of the real consequences the deaths of Iraqi people in the war. The reference to Baudrillard's discussion of the war as virtual in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995) is intended, with Blast Theory's website outlining its place along with Hollywood cinema and mediatised representations as a conceptual backdrop of the piece.

Baudrillard believed that the discourses which present the news constructed an image of a war that took place on one side completely virtually. The use of game like strategy systems and weapons like the smart bomb in particular placed distance and a screen between one side and the consequences for the other. Thus our only experience of it came through the television screen; it was for Baudrillard, a simulacrum of war (Baudrillard, 1995). While Baudrillard's analysis of the state of the 'real' may not have permeated the lives of many of the participants, the piece does not theorise, it plays out this image of the gulf war as a virtual game then undermines it, drawing attention back to the real consequences.

This is evidently encouraging a strongly political engagement. *Desert Rain*, described by *The Times* as 'possibly the most ambitious art installation ever made' (*The Times* in CRG Website) and by the *Sunday Times* as 'deeply challenging work' (*Sunday Times* in Blast Theory Website), makes use of popular cutting edge communications technology in the form of virtual reality to draw its audience into a critique of contemporary communications structures. In *Desert Rain*, there is however, a far stronger sense of critique overriding the accompanying complicity of the media used, while, as in their

earlier live and video work, that ambiguity is becoming stronger once again in the more recent work using mixed reality and game style theatre experience.

Uncle Roy All Around You, uses a similar structure to *Desert Rain* in that it replicates the game play phase followed by a re-emergence into the real and it also continues the experimental use of popular culture forms seen in *Desert Rain* and previous work. The experience of being a participant in this piece is one which is varied and while it would be possible to take out from my own experience the parts that are inevitably the same for each participant, part of the purpose of this piece is that for the majority of the performance, the participant is alone and makes their own experience. Because of this, before going on to analyse it in detail I will present my own experience of the performance.

It is noted here that analysis and discussion of *Uncle Roy All Around You* is based on the version presented at its début at the ICA in London. The venue is not only important in terms of establishing which of the different versions is being discussed, but also in establishing a context to the experience. By placing it in a performance and arts context, the expectation is that it is more than just a game. The reputation of the program into which the event is included suggests that it is theatre, performance or live art as well as a game. For myself, I arrived very much as a theatre goer: my own engagement was not significantly influenced by computer gaming.

My Search for Uncle Roy

At the very beginning I relinquished my mobile phone, my wallet and all its contents at the Institute for Contemporary Arts and gave Blast Theory my details. I faced the outside world with only the handheld computer Blast Theory had provided knowing

only that I had to find Uncle Roy. What followed was an exciting but disorientating journey through the surrounding streets following clues provided by both the illusive Uncle Roy and the online players. Where it seemed that Uncle Roy could be trusted, it quickly became evident that some of the online players could not. Instructions such as 'follow the man in the t-shirt at the traffic lights' for example, were clearly given for their amusement, at the expense of the live player.

Negotiating this relationship with the online players caused me a few moments of vulnerability, but then as I worked out who could be trusted, I began to feel a sense of community around the game play and began to enjoy myself. At the same time, it was never clear who was playing while you were out on the street as the teasing from the online players often gave the impression they could see you. It turned out they knew what I was wearing from the profile given to them on screen. I found the office after a few diversions and confusions along the way and entered. I was confused because there was someone else there and worried that I had come to the wrong place but he was a player like myself, just a few minutes ahead and on his way out. There was a lot to look at in the office, but fairly quickly I found a postcard on which there was a question I was told to read and answer. 'When can you begin to trust a stranger?' it asked. I wrote: 'When I know their name. When people exchange names it is a gesture of friendliness and trust'. Later when reading about the project I found out that on entering the office the live player disappeared from the virtual city and the link to them was disconnected for those online. The online players likewise, entered a virtual office and answered the same question.

The final adventure on the streets was the telephone box. I stood waiting by the designated phone feeling a little uncertain after receiving instructions and leaving the

office. After a few minutes, it rang and I found myself feeling rather like the protagonist in a spy film. The instruction to get into a white limousine down the road opposite the telephone box was unnerving and I sought reassurance from the voice on the phone line checking once more that I had the right street. As I walked away from the telephone box I worried. What if there are two white limousines? How do I know this isn't a real kidnap planned with the knowledge that vulnerable Blast Theory participants would be easy prey? Slightly paranoid, I got into the car.

At this point, I was asked a series of questions about how far I would be willing to assist a stranger in need; how easily I would trust someone; and finally, whether I would be willing to make a commitment to a stranger for a year to support and help them if I was needed. Here, I said no. I couldn't know what they might need. How could I promise to be a support to someone if I didn't know what they might need? I regretted my answer later, when I realised the question was not a theoretical one. Had I responded yes, I would have been paired up with an online player to that purpose.

Mixing realities: 'Response-ability'[27] in Uncle Roy

The game like approach to the experience described above is incongruous, when set against the normal passing of everyday life in the real space in which it takes place. There is a sense of your own theatricality as a live participant, not only in knowing that strangers watch you in the street but also that virtual players watch your progress and that the actions you inhabit are in themselves theatrical. They are signifiers of the spy film or signifiers of the computer game generating a sense of the acting subject as an object to be looked at and also drawing attention to the subject's fictionality. The live

---

[27] Lehmann's use of the term 'response-ability' (2006: 184 – 185) is introduced in chapter 1, page 29.

participants are watched by others but also watched by themselves as they move through the game.

In this sense it is mixed reality: the fictional and the real as identities existing in the same human body that inhabits the city as theatre space. While the virtual and live play are separate, there are two realities projected into one space conceptually through the interactions of a live participant who is to a large extent being guided by virtual clues through a physical space with a fictional overlay. That fictional overlay is partly set up through the expectation that the experience will be art/theatre-like due to its context at the ICA and partly through this avatar-like status of the live participant in the first part of their experience.

This performance space is liminoid, in the sense that the experience is set up as a simulation of computer game immersion, where the expectation is that the consequences of behaviour within that liminoid space will not spill into the real. To reinforce this, it also replicates the narrative model and mode of engagement of the computer game. The live participants are at first completely immersed in the game play; having left all their possessions at the ICA they exist as would an avatar, solely to reach the end of the game. The game style engagement is then reinforced by the hand-held global positioning device and simultaneous virtual play on the internet. It is these elements which make up the quasi-fictional, virtual identity of the live participant who thus begins to objectify the real world as if it is a computer game. They see strangers on the street, for example, as potential allies or enemies, when in fact they're simply tourists, and the streets become unknown because the participant is looking for different kinds of signifiers and is no longer sure for what or whose purpose they are moving in a particular direction.

There is a participatory narrativisation which moves through a linear progression towards conclusion which theorists of virtual reality terms the 'storification process' noting that a participant 'does not contemplate or watch a narrative display as a spectator does' (Aylett and Louchart, 2003: 3). They are active in the unfolding of the narrative. Aylett and Louchart propose 'Contingency, Presence, Interactivity and Narrative Representation' (Aylett and Louchart, 2003: 3) as variables in constructing a notion of engagements with narrative in comparing different media – cinema, theatre, the novel and VR. As in virtual reality, in *Uncle Roy All Around You,* the time and space of the narrative is dependent on real time and space; the spectator is present, sharing that space with the developing narrative; the engagement is interactive; and the narrative representation is visual and well as audio. In theatre the first and third of the conditions described above are not usually true. Uncle Roy is not a virtual reality Game, yet it recreates its conditions of engagement for the live participant and uses those players as avatars for the virtual players.

It is interesting that Blast Theory should choose to work in such a way, knowing well from previous work the mechanisms of the virtual reality engagement[28]. The virtual reality experience is potentially the most powerful extension of the highest levels of immersion as a feeling of actual presence in the virtual space would already be generated by the technology even before considerations of atmosphere, empathy and verisimilitude come into play. As virtual reality systems become more widely available in the market over the next few years, it is here that the greatest level of separation from the real is possible. However, Blast Theory succeed in undercutting this, in a sense

---

[28] Blast Theory's *Desert Rain* (2000) presented a mixed reality experience that took the participants into a virtual space using a screen of falling water to project the 3D images. Here again the focus was on breaking into an immersive experience in order to bring the participants to a confrontation with the media being used.

creating an experience of potential *détournement* on the level of spectator engagement, as the participants' engagement with each other and the development of the experience undergoes a reversal.

At the point where the live player disappears from the computer screens and enters Uncle Roy's office, the participatory identity of both the live and virtual players begin to shift towards the real. The connection between the two is broken and they move separately into a different stage in the game. Both remain engaged, but the experience has in a sense been compressed, because the focus shifts to individual responses to the Blast Theory performers. For the live player, first the instruction to get in the limousine allows the intrusion of the real, because it raises questions about the participant's security and trust in the company and then the questions about trust and strangers push the participant further before the final shift which takes place at the point of realisation that your answers have consequences. At this point while this can still be perceived as a game, the extended period of communication with a stranger becomes real and pushes out past the boundaries set up by the fictional space and the expectations that went with it.

This shifting level of fictionality in the participatory identity of the players draws on the notion of spectatorial identity outlined in the first chapter. The spectatorial identity is a temporary formation of identity which is constantly constructing and being constructed in interaction with the *mise en scène*. It differs from 'real' subjectivity in that the ethical and emotional boundaries shift in response to the fictional framing of theatre or film that makes it safe. What is being discussed here, the participatory identity, is a way of expressing the above distinction between subjective formations while recognising that in the case of virtual reality or similar modes of engagement, the shift in boundaries

extends to behaviours and actions due to the active status of the participant and recognises too, that in this and many other live/media arts in a postmodern society, the boundary between fiction and non-fiction is no longer clear.

However this movement from fictional and quasi-virtual to real is not one that goes unmarked in the way that it has in the spill of fiction into the real in ARG communities. *Uncle Roy All Around You* admits and in fact reinforces its fictionality and draws attention to the tendency to lose the reality of the real. There is an individual moment for each of the participants where the realisation comes that the way they have projected themselves in interaction with each other and with the company's actors will have real consequences outside the game. The realisation that these questions are real and that the participant is expected to act in accordance with what they have said will come at different point for each individual, but if the answer to the final question is yes, then the quasi-virtual existence in the first part of the game is transposed into the real by the continued interaction in the real between participants. The naturalising of the power relation between online player and avatar-like street player within the game is undercut by the interruption of the real into it and the transformation of the world the players inhabit exposes levels of distrust and alienation from others through the postmodern dispersal of communities.

But does this kind of work move its participants towards making a meaningful reply to the mass media structures of this society? Does participation constitute reciprocation in this case? Beyond the pairs brought together for a year at the end of the piece there is no sense of a powerful community being generated. However, the experience engages the participants in a series of interactions which draw attention to the normalised conceptual knowledge that communities have become dispersed and defamiliarises that

experience through the disjunction between participatory interaction within virtual/fictional and real scenarios.

There is a challenge to the alienating engagement with computer and virtual reality games, because the immersion in an alternative world is layered over the real and there are conflicts between these two coexisting realities in the same spatio-temporal world. In a computer game or virtual environment designed for entertainment, the immersion into that world works as an alienating force in relation to the relationship with the real. Usually participation and the active nature of the game played does not constitute a reciprocation because of the passive acceptance of the imagery and narrative construction of the game. This is mirrored in their form, but not in the content which draws these effects into question. The discussion of the nature of our perception of our responsibility for strangers draws this alienation into view. If Baudrillard sees the engagement with images and simulacra as having less and less relation to reality, Blast Theory are forcing reality and virtual or gaming reality into a collision in *Uncle Roy All Around You*. The fascination with the game world that has been layered over the material streets of London is constantly interrupted by the real people on those streets and by the discussion with Uncle Roy which makes manifest the importance of that material reality.

The notion of simulation assumes the disappearance of the real, but in order to find a way of reciprocating and having some level of power to act, that 'real' needs to be reclaimed on some level. Perhaps the idea of dissimulation, which assumes the real as a referential behind the systems of signs that hides it, is of more use in examining the media structures through which we see the world. Debord in *Society of the Spectacle* states that the spectacle is 'not a collection of images, but a social relation among

people, mediated by images' (Debord in Best, 1994: 57).   As Blast Theory make evident in *Desert Rain* through the 100,000 grains of sand, the Gulf War existed beyond its representation. As they show in *Uncle Roy All Around You*, the stranger on the other end of a virtual interaction is real and the people being watched or manipulated through the media are acting subjects existing in a real world. The *simulation* assumes that there is no way of subverting the univocal relationship between the media and the passive receiver; it assumes stupification in the face of an excess of communication.   If however, dissimulation is assumed as a primary state, *détournement* is still possible. Despite increasing prevalence of the simulation manifested in the excesses of the media spectacle and immersive entertainments, silence is not necessarily the only response. The disruption to that immersive dynamic denies stupification by providing the potential for a reversal.

At the same time this does not deny the importance of the tendency towards simulation in society at present.

> 'Simulation' can be critically deconstructed and resolved into (mere) 'dissimulation'. There are different realities for different social actors: what may be 'hyperreal' for one will be patently ideological for another. (Best, 1994: 58)

This means that the surface of Disneyland, for example, can be experienced as a simulation or can be interpreted ideologically as a system of power relations and consumer exploitation. The experience of the world as simulation or dissimulation is not in the end dependent simply on how much the media recycle and how much of the world is available through representation, though that does increase the sense of unreality and the loss of ideological certainty; it is partly dependent on how far those representations are allowed to create habitual relationships and 'simulated response' (Baudrillard, 2001c: 216). Baudrillard assumes the world is experienced as simulation

and so there is only simulated response possible, but if this is not the case, then work like *Uncle Roy All Around You* and *Desert Rain* becomes transgressive in that it pushes the participant beyond a simulated response.

What remains to be addressed in terms of Blast Theory's place in the relationship between simulation, mass media and resistance to its domination is whether the complicity of working with and in the structures of mass communication undermines Blast Theory's power to create or encourage a reciprocation and answer.

Their current and developing research projects open this question up yet further. It is a collaboration through IPerG, which includes various universities, Blast Theory, 'It's Alive!' a pervasive games company, the Interactive Institute (Play Studio and Zero Game Studio), Sony and Nokia. They are drawing together these various arts, education and commercial organisations and thus pooling the resources of disparate groups who might otherwise not work together, the goal of this project being to 'produce entirely new game experiences, that are tightly interwoven with our everyday lives through the items, devices and people that surround us and the places we inhabit' (IPerG website).

The research involves development, design and evaluation of systems which might include: mixed reality interaction and mixed presence for players; the inclusion of spectators to a game; and the immersion and/or interruption to play within everyday environments. It involves developing tools, research into technical support for the above, and infrastructures or 'middle-ware that provides a shared model of location and context' linking virtual to physical landscapes (IPerG Website, 2005). It also involves developing managing, organisational and business strategies. The various forms in which the research will be manifested and showcased include crossmedia games which

are played across multiple media; socially adaptable games which are attempting to develop the 'more social aspects of game play' (IPerG Website, 2005); massively multiplayer games accessed through mobile technology; enhanced reality live action role play games; and the City as Theatre showcase.

The City as Theatre project continues to develop the kind of work Blast Theory have been doing in *Uncle Roy* and *I Like Frank in Adelaide*; it focuses on creating work that sits on the margin between theatre and game, and which engages its audience or participants on a political or ethical level as well as providing entertainment and pleasure. It is intended to 'establish game structures that reflect contemporary issues concerning the relationship between pervasive technologies and society and that connect multiple cities and time-zones' and attempts to 'engage and provoke participants, building on their collaborative interactions with one another and with actors' (IperG Website). It is interesting to note that exploratory, more political engagements intended to provoke questions about the structures used are separated by the IPerG research initiative from the other commercial sections and categorised as theatre. Nevertheless, the research that feeds into the outcomes – immersive or disruptive – is collaborative and it raises the question, will the transgressive potential of mixed reality theatre be diluted by this kind of collaboration with commercial enterprises?

Given the context of the shared research, the level of complicity in developing technology and in the association through expectation due to co-presentation of showcases of present work with the communications infrastructures which are having this isolating effect, one might suggest yes. However, because of the way these groups have been brought together, perhaps a game or work like *Uncle Roy All Around You*

will gain more recognition and wider audiences. It is noted by *The Times* that even in earlier work like *Desert Rain* before the genre was better known, the mixed reality theatre game was drawing in a wider audience. '[T]raditional theatre-goers' were combined 'with mad-for-it teenagers in the audience for *Desert Rain* (*The Times* in Communications Research Group Website). Another question is of the relationship between the authors - Blast Theory, and the participants. As with any game or theatre experience, the signs are generated by one group and fundamentally received by another. And the use of technology to construct the field of interactions bars a lot of people from instigating that kind of work. However, Blast Theory in *Uncle Roy All Around You* if not so much in *Desert Rain* relinquish much of their control over how interactions develop and how the theatre space - the city - is navigated. There are clues fed in by 'Uncle Roy' to help the player reach their destination and a story is provided as they progress through, but how the participants interact with strangers in the street or over the net is under their own control, as is how they perceive those interactions. What Blast Theory do is create a space where these experiences are put into relief.

Reflecting on preceding analysis, what is important therefore in *Uncle Roy All Around You* is that it is forcing into one space a quasi-virtual and a real identity and a similar layered reality for each participant. It acts as a counterweight to the ubiquity of images and information that bears no relation to a tangible reality because it forces the real and virtual into such a tight space that they cannot avoid collision. It pulls back the dispersal of identity into mass communications by focusing attention back on to the effect on the individual and the community. As the participants re-emerge into the real, they are linked to another individual with whom the connection is the real experience and perception of the effect of a virtual link. The collaborative elements do not create an illusory sense of empowerment owing to the ability to act in a virtual environment,

they are partly founded on the admission of the limitations of that in relation to the real. Setting aside uncertainties about the future therefore, this experience can be defined in terms of its politicised response to the media wall of communications surrounding us, despite its complicity with it.

CHAPTER 5 - Double Coding the Spectacle

Panto is revolutionary, melodrama is the latest thing. (Improbable Theatre Website)

This chapter moves in the opposite direction to chapter two and indeed chapter six in its consideration of how the spectacle influences performance experiences. It explores how theatre draws on ironic engagement as an alternative to and complement to narrative engagement. It argues that the ubiquity of irony within our spectacular engagement with the world means that the experience of being a knowing spectator that sees through has become an everyday habit of spectatorship and in fact, living in the world. The chapter therefore assumes that the spectator has well-formed habits or expertise in generating ironic meaning and can apply these across a range of media.

The argument is developed in two parts: first, it is argued that there is a shift in habits of engagement to the extent that a performance can rely on irony as a primary engagement and second, that postmodern irony makes use of both stable oppositional irony and unstable ambiguous irony, with a shift of the elitism of ironic engagement across from the first to the second. The irony as opposite meaning, it can be assumed, will be understood by the majority and this can be used to ensure an audience connects with a representation or idea. The unstable ironic meanings generated by multiple layers of ironic meaning create a landscape of possible meanings and collisions opening up interpretation rather than presenting a simple opposite.

Within the analysis the chapter draws attention to irony as a political tool and irony as a means to reclaim agency in the face of the spectacle, however its primary focus is upon irony as a playful response to the decentring of truth and excesses of the postmodern

spectacular society. Each of these different manifestations of irony will be addressed through analysis of contemporary examples, but playful ironic expression will be the most significant focus, because of its place within more mainstream and increasingly popular theatre performance. Analysis of Improbable Theatre's *Theatre of Blood* (2005) will follow as an example of this kind of theatre performance that takes advantage of the expertise of the contemporary spectator in generating irony. *Theatre of Blood* is playfully ironic and draws its audience into a sense of confident knowingness. The chapter contrasts spectator experience involving this more stable experience of irony, where ironic meaning is evident with more ambiguous ironic representation in the piece and argues that the playfulness of this kind of work is located in the landscape of ambiguous ironic meanings.

Within this, the following aspects are significant: irony in relation to 1970s horror film gore and bad special effects; irony in relation to melodramatic acting, structure and characterisation; and in relation to stereotypical bad Shakespearean acting. While these very specific aspects of the performance are picked out, there is also an overall double coding beyond this, in the presentation of a group of performers creating the performance as well as the presentation of the show itself. As Improbable Theatre puts it, '[t]here are two stories in our shows: the story the performers are telling and the story of the performers putting on the show. The second story is the most important to us. If it is not present then the telling of the story will be pointless' (Improbable Theatre Website). It is in this presentation of the process of telling that the playful openness in ironic representation is possible.

Irony has 'come to dominate the cultural scene in the West' (Sim, 2002: 5), and the ironic engagement has become a familiar and even mainstream experience. It is,

therefore, an integral part of how many people engage with the spectacle and so, a considerable influence upon theatre and its spectators. Here a number of significant attributes of irony as it is manifested in contemporary society are therefore presented.

Irony

While it is a word constantly employed in every day conversation, pinning irony down to a clear definition remains difficult and the history of the term belies its stability as a clearly defined mode of expression. Even in its earliest form, there is variation in its function: Socratic irony is split between its early form in *The Dialogues*, where Socrates uses complex irony to 'question the use of a concept' (Colebrook, 2004: 27) and its later form in Plato's *Symposium*, where Socrates uses irony to arrive at truth (Colebrook, 2004: 30- 38). Where the latter has a clear unambiguous message, the former is defined by ambiguity and instability as it brings accepted concepts or truths into doubt. This contrast between the stability of ironic meaning where a message is intended and an alternative truth is claimed, and the unstable irony which is a process of questioning continues to be significant to debates about irony into the present.

Colebrook states that most of the material on irony in the twentieth century 'argued that irony reveals and reinforces shared human assumptions' (Colebrook, 2004: 41) citing Muecke, Searle and Wayne Booth as adhering to this view. According to them, irony shows just how stable linguistic communication really is, as it is a figure within an 'otherwise stable context of human sense and meaning' (Colebrook, 2004: 43) where 'the contrary meaning is clearly indicated' (Colebrook, 2004: 46). Philosophers and Literary critics such as Kierkegaard, Nehamas, Linda Hutcheon, or Candace Lang take the view, however, that irony in a postmodern world is defined by incoherence and a multiplicity of viewpoints (Colebrook, 2004: 44-5). This follows the Romantics rejection of 'the

principle of non-contradiction' (Colebrook, 2004:20), making irony a form of 'resistance to a single fixed point of view' (Colebrook, 2004: 80). Like Socratic irony, postmodern irony also emphasises 'the processes of dialogue, thinking and expression' rather than a truth that can be expressed through those processes (Colebrook, 2004: 112).

Following the assumption that there is a decentring of truth and dissolving of faith in the metanarrative as described in chapter one, this chapter makes considerable use of this postmodern and destabilising ironic form. However, rather than entering into the debate about which is the dominant form in contemporary culture, it appears more useful to explore how these two modes of ironic representation are used in complement to each other in contemporary society and theatre. This approach recognises both the desire for some kind of stability or coherence of meaning in spectator engagement but also the desire to move beyond that stability and play with multiple possibilities.

Developing this notion of the postmodern ambiguous irony as a response to an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984: x), it rejects the subject as a coherent and transcendent figure (Colebrook, 2004: 125) and is not defined by the 'universalising and de-historicising effects of romantic irony' either (Colebrook, 2004: 94). It can thus function in some sense as a mode of political expression. This incredulity towards metanarratives, as suggested in the introductory chapter, can be modelled in two ways: one has its roots in theories of postmodernity as a societal condition and the other places emphasis on postmodernism as a political rejection of grand narratives as dangerous claims to power. While these two approaches overlap and in terms of the forms that irony takes are certainly not mutually exclusive, it is useful to start here in order to develop a clearer picture of irony in today's society: what irony is and how it functions.

In describing the former, the postmodern condition, Jencks' concept of postmodern 'double coding' is particularly useful (Jencks, 1986). Jencks, in describing postmodern architecture, uses this term to define 'the postmodern appropriation of the past' (Sim, 2002: 9) in response to the feeling that everything has already been said and done. This model combines an elitism in understanding the references with an appeal to popular tastes. 'The authentic expression of ideas that took place in the past is today replaced by quotation and allusion to that authentic expression' (Belton in Sim, 2002: 229). While double coding accounts for not only irony, but also nostalgia and pastiche, it is useful to bear the term in mind in relation to *Theatre of Blood*, because of its emphasis on engagement with the past[29] and because of the way this kind of ironic doubling generates a playful relationship with its content.

This playful ironic relationship with the past can be seen manifested in postmodern literature in the work of authors like John Fowles, in film and music as well as theatre, and most prominently in individual attitudes to commodity consumption.

'Ironic consumption' (Klein, 2001: 78), which emerged as a reaction to the commercialisation of Indie in the mid-1990s became a widespread response to the commercialisation of everything. Once jeans starting appearing in Top Shop ready-ripped, young people had to find new ways to defy mass culture. However, they did this not by opting out of it which appeared to have become impossible, but by 'abandoning themselves to it entirely - but with a sly ironic twist' (Klein, 2001: 78). The fashions of

---

[29]   As Linda Hutcheon points out, irony or nostalgia are both formed from double coding and it is only the spectator who experiences it as specifically irony or nostalgia depending on whether she idealizes or questions the representations of the past she is seeing. Indeed, nostalgia itself can be approached with irony: 'the act of ironizing (while still implicitly invoking) nostalgia undermines modernist assertions of originality, authenticity, and the burden of the past, even as it acknowledges their continuing (but not paralyzing) validity as aesthetic concerns' (Hutcheon, 1998: 9).

ten years before were reintroduced to the wardrobe with irony as were the music, films or hairstyles.

Ironic consumption continues to be a mode of engaging with the spectacle in the century as people still watch so-bad-its-good films (*Showgirls* is Naomi Klein's example), or see *Spiderman 3*, hoping to see America personified as a hero raining down violence on the evil enemy. Ironic cultural consumption is not only a reaction against the commercialisation of Indie, however; it is, more generally, a means to cope with a world where spectacular and commercialised representations are inescapable. It is a way of undermining the dominant representations surrounding commodities, when we know we still have to buy things.

Inevitably of course, irony has been commercialised and *Showgirls* re-released with marketing aimed towards the ironic cinema goer. There are even 'so-bad-its-good' websites reviewing films in the light of this approach (So Bad its Good Website). This kind of postmodern irony as coping mechanism and then (ironically) commercialised coping mechanism is ubiquitous now. 'Pretty much everything is ironic these days' says the *Guardian* (Williams, 2003: npg) and this is because what is ubiquitous is irony as a way of engaging with the world, not just irony as a rhetorical trope or as a specific instance. In these circumstances, irony itself becomes a norm making it more and more difficult to claim it as a mode of transgressive meaning making or as in ironic consumption a way of claiming agency. What is key here though is the fact that on the whole this kind of commercialised ironic consumption rests on simple irony: it's so bad it's good or on a superficial juxtaposition. In other political forms of ironic expression the relationship between the said and unsaid is not so simple.

The approach to postmodernism as a political and intentional rejection of grand narratives, therefore, continues to be important in terms of the use of irony in performance and or resistant action. This approach is informed by the post-structuralist view of thinkers like Derrida whose focus is upon 'the accidental, unconventional, singular or incoherent forces of a language […] what is beyond both self-conscious intention and purposive and creative life' (Colebrook, 2004: 94) In its transgressive manifestation, deconstruction becomes an intentional process however: a 'careful teasing out of warring forces of signification' (Johnson: 1980: 5) Irony in this context cannot be conceived of as rooted in a stability of communications; rather by presenting the 'simultaneous perception of more than one meaning' it generates 'a third composite (ironic) one' (Hutcheon, 1994: 60) which because it is composed only of the collision between the said and the unsaid alternative, is inherently unstable and ambiguous, drawing attention to what is 'beyond self-conscious intention' (Colebrook, 2004: 94).

It is this which is the key to defining the ambiguous unstable ironic representation. The simple rhetorical irony communicates an opposing meaning as a *real* meaning whereas the postmodern irony claims neither the said nor unsaid meaning as truth. Rather it is located on the interplay between them. As an approach which is able to destabilise and bring received discourses into question, this kind of political postmodern irony can function as both critique and complicity. According to this model, 'irony can, at one and the same time, judge the tyranny and moralism of a certain context and display its own complicity in that tyranny' (Colebrook, 2004: 120).   Transgression through the use of irony has been argued in contexts from ironic consumption, to subvertising to political theatre performance.

As mentioned above, Klein suggests that ironic consumption can function as a part of the process of reclaiming agency in relation to corporate power. This is an imposition of irony by the consumer, which can be a directly political act, similar to reading against the grain. If I watch *Spiderman 3*, I might read the moment where Spiderman bounces off the American flag to victory, not as a sign of America as a power for good, but as a representation of the simplification of good and evil that defined George Bush's attitude to terrorism. If irony is characterised by excess and a conflict with its context, the spectator/consumer provides both by bringing their own social context into the auditorium. If the ideological overcoding of a film is in conflict with the beliefs of the spectator, it is easy to see through it and if it is obvious enough to see through it is in excess. There is a second layer of interpretation added to the intended meaning with the unsaid meaning put in place by the spectator but with the film still retaining its first level of meaning as well.

The problems with claiming ironic consumption as a political act are manifold however. The commercialisation of irony means that the act of imposing alternative meanings which presents the consumer with the possibility for agency is undermined. Irony becomes just another identity to be consumed. It becomes merely 'a tone of urbane amusement' which can be marketed and catered for, and which degenerates into a 'gesture of superiority, superficially polished and civilised, but too morally irresponsible to be really so' (Dyson cited in Hutcheon, 1994: 49). *FHM* may think it's being clever, that its display of breasts is ironic, but in the end, it's just a justification for showing breasts. There is an ambiguity there in terms of interpretation, but as Williams rightly points out the ambiguity does not take us further than a denial of culpability: 'I'm not saying what you think I'm saying, but I'm not saying its opposite, either. In fact, I'm not saying anything at all. But I get to keep the tits' (Williams, 2003: npg). This kind of

ironic representation that admits it can see through its own representations, but uses this as a way to avoid questioning itself or to avoid criticism, is very common because it draws back the audience who are uncertain about the ethics of participating in that system and need a justification.

Perhaps, however, this is not ironic consumption; perhaps this is just large companies giving people an excuse for consuming. In the end, ironic consumption lies with the consumer not the company. A useful distinction to make between the supposedly ironic display of breasts in *FHM* and the process of appropriating meanings through irony is Michel de Certeau's 'strategies' and 'tactics' (de Certeau, 1984: 34). The former function within set power loci, institutions or corporations for example, while the latter are used on the fly, forming some kind of a reply to these dominant institutions. De Certeau sees these tactics in everyday actions, walking, reading, cooking and consumption. This distinction allows the separation of irony as a construction within marketing spin, from irony imposed as an act of agency.

At the same time, one cannot rub out dominant ideological overcoding just because its excess allows us to see it. For irony to be transgressive, it must often make use of the literal or initial meaning as a part of its message. An example where this kind of appropriation is particularly evident is subvertising. Subvertising plays a dangerous game; defacing or adding to advertisements is illegal so for the Space Hijackers, their website has to walk a line between irony and the serious work of subversion. Their website presents a disclaimer which tells us:

> All of the actions and projects documented in this site are fake, we are just very good at photoshop.

> Do yourself a favour, go out buy a McDonalds, wash it down with a Starbucks whilst sitting in the window seat checking out all the other people in their GAP clothes just like yours. (Space Hijackers Website)

The ironic instructions within the disclaimer very obviously undermine it, but do so implicitly through the contrast between the views the reader know the group holds and the views presented here. This is a very simple use of rhetorical irony which presents in its alternative meaning the opposite. Their projects have more complexity, as the following discussion demonstrates. Below is the sign placed by pedestrian crossing buttons by the group:

Image 8: from Space Hijackers Website

There is, of course, no department of Urban Research, but the layout of the sign with the grey strip at the bottom looks enough like a government publication that at first glance, that is what it appears to be. The irony here satirizes the government in two ways: first we can say this is ironic because it is against the war and second because it raises a question about the way the public's view has not been taken into account in relation to

the decision to go into a war. It is not an expression of simple opposite meaning, though the message is fairly unambiguous, if you 'get it'. Ironic satire of the government here uses their visual aesthetic, but because of the placing of the message, runs little risk of being mistaken for a real government survey. In the sense that there are multiple meanings here, there is ambiguity, but there is little ambiguity over whether it is a critique or a reinforcement of government policy. It uses irony to reverse perspective, even if it is not a simple opposite meaning thus functioning as Naomi Klein suggests as a kind of *détournement*. (Klein, 2001: 282). She states:

> The most sophisticated culture jams are not stand alone ad parodies but interceptions – counter-messages that hack into a corporation's own method of communication to send a message starkly at odds with the one that was intended […] A good jam […] is an X-ray of the subconscious of a campaign, uncovering not an opposite meaning but the deeper truth beneath the layers of advertising euphemism. (Klein, 2001: 281-2)

The act of placing the subvertisement is powerfully subversive for the person who does it, as he or she imposes subversive meanings upon corporate slogans, but for the passer-by also, the meanings generated by that superimposed layer of signification still retain the experience of subversion. It can generate a reconfiguration of meaning which threatens assumptions and defamiliarises them.

Irony in Political Performance

In performance, this kind of irony as *détournement* has been discussed most thoroughly in relation to performance art. The work of artists like Bobby Baker or Guillermo Gómez-Peña is very much reliant on the use of irony, but in being so, also risks complicity in a way that the subvertising rarely does, because it must itself recreate the ideological view it critiques within its own performance.

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, for example, in *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* (1992) presented themselves as 'specimens representative of the Guatinaui people' (Thompson, 1998: npg) intending an ironic comment on the objectification of 'native' culture. (Carlson, 1996: 185 – 186) However, many of the visitors to the museums who saw the performance believed that these fictitious identities were real, thus reinforcing the assumptions the piece was intended to disrupt (Carlson, 1996: 185-186). The unsaid meanings of their work relied on an understanding of a particular postcolonial critique of the objectifying gaze. However where audience members were not already self-reflexive in relation to their own gaze, they simply did not grasp that the piece was ironic and therefore critical of this kind of representation. This demonstrates the most significant problem with ironic representations as a mode of political expression: the elitism of irony means that at times it excludes those who do not already have a similar perspective as the artist. It is therefore limited in how much it can work to question the assumptions of its audience. This is not to say it *cannot* function to question and explore, simply that there are limitations.

Smaller Poorer Cheaper (2007) by Acrobat is an example of more recent work which grapples with irony in this way. It is a circus performance and is therefore a performance which is itself spectacular in nature, but draws on irony to undercut its own traditional relationship with the audience. It is my contention that the company use unstable ironic engagements in their work to explore the spectacle and identity, but that to ensure they communicate the fact that they are being ironic to the audience they make one very bold gesture which forces the audience out of their habits of circus spectatorship.

The show was performed as part of the season of circus at the Roundhouse, however it presented something more than a series of circus acts, sitting, instead, on the boundary between live art and circus performance and drawing the audience into an uncomfortable relationship with the stage, by foregrounding its own apparatus. The first section of the piece was performed almost entirely by a female performer, Jo Lancaster, with two male performers as extras supporting her performance. As a commentary on the gendered gaze upon the female body in circus or acrobatics, this could stand alone as a performance and will be discussed first before drawing it together with the rest of the performance.

To begin the performance Lancaster walked on stage naked and donned a pair of men's Y-fronts. She walked to the very front of the stage, turned her back to the audience, stuck her arse out and did the hula hoop round it. She displays the body as a site of virtuosity, but simultaneously undercuts the way skill is usually displayed in the circus. In presenting her body naked to the audience from the beginning she disrupts the desiring gaze which is based on wanting more. There is no tease, no glimpse of flesh or the shape of the body through a tight leotard. It is all there, a highly trained and efficient body, naked on stage. As she performs acrobatics up and down the stage, one might be drawn to fetishise the body, to see it only as an object performing virtuosity. However, as her performance unfolds, a strong persona develops, expressing something personal and political. She enacts a wedding, for example, after which the men leave her to vacuum up the confetti. She does so, then vacuums the veil and finally her own nipple. In performing this kind of ironic and excessive version of gender, Lancaster ceases to be 'an acrobat' and becomes an active subject on stage, with a presence more akin to a live artist than a circus performer. As a result, the trapeze performance that follows feels like

this very real person is risking her life. The virtuosic performing object of chapter two becomes an active subjective presence on stage.

This functions as the context for solos from the other two performers. Mozes gives a trapeze performance which slightly outdoes Lancaster's in terms of skill and danger. He comes to the front of the stage afterwards and bows and the audience claps. He bows more and flourishes then flourishes again and the audience claps more. So it continues until the audience realises his irony and their inability to see it, blinded by the habits of watching spectacular circus performance. This is the point of excess that makes it impossible to avoid grasping the irony. It forces a moment of seeing through. The double coding presents an experience of the piece as spectacular acrobatics and an undercutting of the assumptions that underlie that experience.

However, without the first part of the performance, defined by the strong subjective presence of Lancaster on stage, the contrast with the male figure as that virtuosic performing body would not work and the ironic display of that spectacle would be simplistic with an obvious meaning. Very easily it could become another way 'convention for establishing complicity', a 'screen for bad faith' (Lawson in Hutcheon, 1994: 28). Instead, it presents a more ambiguous ironic message; it is process of bringing into question our assumptions through a collision of meanings and, in this case, modes of engagement. It potentially asks us to consider how we construct virtuosity, how the body is objectified in circus performance, how gender is represented in circus performance, and how that representation functions within society's assumptions about gender roles more generally.

The danger of allowing the enemy to speak, in the necessary complicity involved in an ironic expression of dissent, is minimised here, but is still a very real problem which means that the male performer was forced to keep bowing and flourishing until the point was driven home to everyone. This somewhat crude insurance is not always appropriate and other performances, as discussed above, have fallen prey to the interpretation of literal meaning by the audience.

As with the subvertising, again, there is a combination of unambiguous irony here that of the repeated flourish and multiple ambiguous meanings within the irony as well. Karen Hadfield, director of the 2006 Adelaide festival, sees Lancaster vacuuming her own breast as a representation of the difficulties of motherhood. I read this as the oppressive qualities of traditional gender constructions more generally. Whichever was intended, possibly both, the performance as an opening up of meaning presents to its spectator the postmodern experience of irony, where postmodern irony is claimed as 'politically liberating; because no common ground is assumed' (Colebrook, 2004: 18).

Emerging from this analysis there is a key distinction to be made, between the oppositional stable irony, the postmodern ambiguous irony and the postmodern superficial irony as a process of seeing through which is more akin to a process of cancelling out. The sense that this superficial ironic attitude is an expression that is just not saying anything is what distinguishes it from both the rhetorical irony rooted in the stability of language and meaning, and from the ambiguous postmodern irony rooted in plurality and collision.

To clarify this, the examples discussed above demonstrate the distinction. The space hijacker's disclaimer on their website is the clearest example of irony based in the

stability of meaning. It is a clash between expressed meaning and context where the unsaid opposite meaning is the 'real' meaning. The ironic presentation of spectacle in *Smaller Poorer Cheaper* clearly demonstrates an ambiguous postmodern ironic expression where a collision of said and unsaid meanings forms a landscape of potential composite meanings or questions. Finally, Williams' example of ironic breasts in *FHM* is the definition of irony as a cancelling out of meaning. The unsaid implication that we should indulge in the display and consumption of the fetishised female body is cancelled out by the fact that this coincides with that very indulgence. Neither is the real meaning, but nor is there any further opening out of further meanings or questions. It is this kind of irony that functions as a cancelling out that has its roots in the dynamic of the spectacle. There is a version of irony displayed as part of the system of consumption, but no real ironic meanings opened up.

Theatre of Blood and Playfulness in Postmodern Irony

So what of the playfulness of irony in everyday life? Is playful irony simply superficial irony? Where there is a clear political message to be made it is easier to make this distinction: to say there is more than a superficial seeing through and cancelling out. The subsequent analysis, therefore, asks how playful irony can manifest itself without presenting only this 'superficiality of postmodernism': how the pleasures of irony work in a society of the spectacle, with the spectacle of irony functioning as a part of big business advertising.

In fact, the political use of irony *is* playful; ironic consumption can be playful because it is in the openness of postmodern irony that this playfulness can be found. However, stripping away politics, subversive statements and messages, the following analysis looks in more detail at a theatre performance which revels in irony and playfulness and

explores how it sustains what is essentially a creative force as opposed to the force of negation inherent to what I describe as the superficial irony of seeing through. While *Theatre of Blood* does not 'say something' in the sense of having a political or social message this does not mean the ironic representations presented negate themselves, rather they combine said and unsaid to open up a field of interaction and playfulness.

Theatre of Blood offers a playful engagement with spectacle and theatricality that sits in between stable and unstable ironic engagement, but which through multiple layers of irony allows this landscape of composite meanings to be made manifest. It provides stability in its characterisations, in its reference back to the melodramatic and to hammy Shakespearean acting, but is ambiguous in its message and transparent in its means. It generates a clear, comprehensible narrative but also, by engaging the audience through irony, disrupts identification and immersion in the narrative world.

Theatre of Blood tells the story of the revenge of Edward Lionheart, Shakespearean actor apparently deceased. After failing as an actor and suffering the humiliation of the critics circle's reviews, Lionheart has returned from a failed suicide to treat each critic to a Shakespearean death scene following the order of his disastrous season of plays. The first is the death of Caesar in which critic, George, is stabbed and slashed against a white curtain, slowly raised to create a huge canvas for squirty bottle blood. The second critic to go, Sally, is cast as Hector in *Troilus and Cressida* and is impaled with spears behind a curtain. These gory deaths continue throughout the play and include a re-working of Shylock's pound of flesh, the death of Clarence in a wine butt, Joan of Arc, from Henry VI, the eating of the two sons (or here dogs) as in Titus Andronicus and the death of the father and daughter in the concluding scene of King Lear. Each death is gruesome with strikingly gory stage effects. Shylock's pound of flesh is

particularly graphic as Lionheart pulls open Trevor's rib cage with a crowbar and tears out his heart, snapping off arteries as he goes.   This Grand Guignolesque violence is gory enough that it is hard to watch, despite its overt theatricality and the unconvincing Hammer horror blood.   For these reasons though it is also very engaging.

In the telling of this story is found a mixture of horror film, melodramatic and tragic elements of narrative engagement.   However, as the following analysis demonstrates, this melange of narrative elements forms only partial narrative engagement, first because of the juxtaposition of different narrative forms but second and most importantly because of the primacy of ironic engagement. Each of these narrative structural forms is presented in the piece but is itself ironised in the aesthetic associated with it.

Horror film engagements are necessarily an aspect of the audience experience as the narrative is based on the original horror film, released in 1973. The film as it is watched today is one which could easily be viewed with ironic laughter, particularly because of the way the special effects have become dated. Even in its day it was advertised as combining laughter with fright. However, in the film, there is an essential horror film fear of the villain as he works his way through the victims. To some extent, this is still there in Improbable Theatre's version, particularly when it comes to the blinding of Devlin as Gloucester in *Lear* as Devlin has been the main point of identification beyond Lionheart himself.

Nevertheless the fright of the horror film is only really nodded to in the theatre performance; it is, instead, the ironic presentation of horror film effects and structure that the audience engages with. As Lionheart separates his victims and kills them one by

one, the production follows the horror film narrative, but even the critics themselves as they realise a murder has occurred discuss the development of plot as if it must fit the genre before anything else. This ironic engagement is partly rooted in fragmentation of narrative elements across a pastiche of famous deaths from Shakespeare. In both the film and the theatre adaptation, this reference back to Shakespeare generates an awareness of the constructed nature of the narrative. We therefore watch what in a horror film would generate a build up of narrative tension with a sense of anticipation and pleasure at the quotations rather than with fright through a build up of suspense.

Another significant part of that anticipation is in relation to special effects and how each death might be realised on stage. The aesthetic of the special effects is one of the main points of ironic engagement and this references the 'it's so bad it's good' mode of engagement so familiar to film spectators of the late twentieth century. Squirty bottle blood, the colour of tomato ketchup, has had ironic status now for many years, so much so that it has become almost a cliché of ironic film spectatorship. The first death in *Theatre of Blood* with blood squirted out on to a white canvas rising behind the scene references this tradition and straight away pulls the audience into ironic engagement with horror and away from fright.

The horror film itself since the 1990s has become a genre very much defined by ironic engagement as *Scream* (1996) paved the way for the ironic horror genre. The films that followed this trend used irony to expose or display their own conventions, ironising their own narrative structure, the aesthetic and playing with false alarms to ironise the shock factor. Another approach is that of *Scary Movie* (2000) which presents an ironic pastiche of other films narratives and moments. The working titles *Last Summer I Screamed because Halloween fell on Friday the 13th* and *Scream if you know what I did*

last Halloween make this rather more explicit referencing three or four different horror films including *Scream*, the trend-setting ironic horror film itself.

Improbable Theatre draw on a number of similar devices to these various kinds of ironic horror. *Theatre of Blood* displays the conventions of horror as it uses them in presenting ironic gory blood effects as well as through the characters pointing up the conventions of the narrative form, a technique used in the *Scream* films. 'If the killer turned out to be someone we don't know, it would be a very unsatisfying denouement' says Meredith Merridew, the theatre dandy. It also uses the same kind of pastiche of other narrative moments to make up its own narrative (though formed from moments of tragic narrative rather than horror). The original *Theatre of Blood* film prefigured the use of this approach in *Scary Movie* released over twenty years earlier, but for a -century audience, this could easily read as a further ironic reference to the *Scary Movie* films. This kind of reference back to other forms or the piece's own conventions follows the model of double coding according to Jencks as well as the so-bad-its-good model which informs much popular ironic culture. There is a combination of the elitism of double coded representation in referencing Shakespeare and theatre practitioners throughout, combined with the accessibility of so-bad-its-good irony in the visual style particularly and this combination runs across the elements of the play.

The interesting thing about the pastiche of Shakespeare's deaths is that while in some ways *Theatre of Blood* follows a tragic narrative structure and inserts moments from tragic theatre into its structure, the way that tragedy is played out on stage is ironised through the acting and use of melodrama. It is here most significantly where the different forms: horror, tragedy and melodrama collide. The horror film narrative is followed in the accumulation of individual premeditated deaths at the hand of Lionheart

the villain, yet the insertion of moments of tragic performances draws the audience out of the horror film engagement as does the melodramatic characterisation and acting. In the first half, the narrative development follows the melodramatic structure most closely and throughout, the visual aesthetic is informed significantly by melodrama. However it is also the melodramatic style which contributes most significantly to ironic engagement, so this aspect is discussed in some detail below.

The melodramatic style is also particularly interesting as it has been somewhat revitalised during the late century in an attempt to 'fill the gap left by the ironic distances mapped by postmodernism cultural practices' (Sielke, 2007: 301). (It is ironic that this very desire for the melodramatic as a response to irony has now been ironised.) Arguments for melodrama as 'the fundamental mode of popular American moving pictures' (Williams in Kelleter & Mayer, 2007: 8) are underpinned by Peter Brooks' broader view of melodrama as 'vital to the modern imagination' (Brooks, 1976: xi) He seeks to define the melodramatic by reference to the 'structures and ambitions' (Brooks, 1976: xii) of the melodrama in its original context. The melodramatic for him is defined by an 'aesthetics of astonishment' (Brooks, 1976: 24) generated by 'spectacular excitement […] the hyperbolic situation […] grandiose phraseology' the focus of which is the 'admiration of virtue' (Brooks, 1976: 25).

If one looks at much of mainstream Hollywood film these features common to the melodrama re-emerge. While the conception of what defines virtue has shifted considerably in the years since the emergence of melodrama, the idea that the virtuous character suffers and needs to be saved from a villain remains, as does the use of spectacular excitement and hyperbolic situation. The narrative structure of the melodrama follows a simple pattern: 'A villain threatens the innocent heroine and puts

her through harrowing hardships until he is - most often by the saving power of the hero - brought to punishment, and a happy ending in the form of a union between the heroine and the hero becomes possible' (Herget, 2007:21). As in a horror film, it is the villain who 'propels the action and causes the sensational situations' and extravagant theatrical spectacle which define the form (Herget, 2007:21). In film, the pattern of simple identifications and linear development common to the melodrama works alongside the spectacular apparatus, as its narrative structure allows a passive and immersive engagement with the screen. As such, it can function as an escape from the fragmentary ironic engagements of postmodern culture.

While the idea that the melodramatic narrative structure re-emerges in response to the irony of postmodern culture alone is perhaps an oversimplification, looking more widely at the uncertainties of a postmodern world where the grand narrative has lost its authority, there is a backlash against the symptoms of that trend. In the easy points of identification, the simple representations of good and evil, wrong and right, and the spectacular visual engagement of the melodramatic form there is a relief from irony, from pluralism, uncertainty and fragmented subjectivity.

There is also, according to Kelleter and Mayer's analysis, an emphasis in melodrama upon on 'sensation and excess' which they describe as 'the mode of representation par excellence for the sentimentalist equation of victimhood with virtue' (Kelleter & Mayer, 2007: 12). This seems to link the form directly with the mechanisms of the spectacle, also driven by sensation and excess. The appeal to the senses and the experiential is discussed in more detail in chapter six as the experience economy takes hold across popular culture and consumerism, and the notion of excess is already explored in chapter three where multiple simultaneous stimuli it is argued generate an experience of

being overwhelmed. However, it is important to note again the place of the appeal to the senses and visual excess in popular entertainment today as the film spectator and computer gamer to some extent expect to feel themselves immersed, through these qualities, in the screen before them.

Theatre of Blood, on the other hand, presents this mode of representation again with layer of irony. It presents us with what appears to be a traditional melodramatic narrative at the beginning which breaks down as the piece develops, but also it presents to its audience a melodramatic visual aesthetic rooted in the century rather than that of the . In doing so the performance shifts engagement from a narrative to an ironic emphasis. The narrative immersion enhanced by visual spectacle described above is undermined.

In terms of narrative engagement, as *Theatre of Blood* develops, there are various aspects of the melodramatic structure in evidence, although this is not sustained beyond the first half. Peter quickly takes on the role of hero, finding the body of Sally impaled with 'weapons roundabout' (*Theatre of Blood,* 2005) and trying to protect Lionheart's daughter Miranda, thus constructing her as the 'suffering innocent' of the melodrama and potentially a victim in the story (Herget, 2007: 22 – 23). It is with Peter as audience, that the exposition of Lionheart's background takes place and it is only Peter who escapes his death scene. Lionheart, equally, presents to the audience the perfect melodramatic villain, attired in an appropriate black cape, and entering with a speech from *The Tempest* as a prologue which introduces his villainous intentions at the beginning of the play. With Miranda as a potential innocent victim and the other critics as comic characters, the stock characters for a melodrama are all present.

At first, as in a melodrama, the good and evil of the characters is clear cut. They are 'essentially whole' with no 'basic inner conflict' as found in the tragic hero (Heilman, 1968: 79). *Theatre of Blood* like the melodrama presents to us at first a clear 'dichotomy of good and bad' (Herget, 2007:2). How ever much we enjoy the scenes with Lionheart, we know he is evil and that Devlin is good (despite his job as a critic) because one states his intention to kill people and the other tries to protect them. The problems with this come later in the play, when the spectator sees what happened on the night of the Critic's Circle award. Here the audience engagement shifts away from the melodramatic towards the tragic. While Lionheart will never have the introspection of the tragic protagonist, he can gain the audience's sympathy with his circumstances.

According to Heilman, the most significant distinction 'between tragic and melodramatic heroes, is that the former are concerned with inner struggles and the latter with outer ones' (Heilman. 1968: 84). There is a beautiful irony in repeating a soliloquy which is concerned with an inner struggle like that of Hamlet, but doing so not as a reflection of that inner struggle, but as a part of an obsession with performing Shakespeare. The speech both tells of the introspection of the tragic hero and makes inescapably evident Lionheart's failure to understand and express that. He is a character type, not a complex figure and therefore cannot express Hamlet's struggle. He has no inner conflict. However, the audience at the same time does not have the certainty of clear-cut good and evil any more because we do have an insight into his suffering but at the same time that we laugh alongside the critics.

Miranda's character also undermines the melodramatic engagement in the second half of the play. According to Brooks, the melodrama is also 'about virtue made visible and acknowledged, the drama of recognition' (Brooks, 1976: 27) where the melodramatic

'moment of astonishment is a moment of ethical evidence and astonishment' (Brooks, 1976: 26).   This moment of recognition of the virtue of the suffering innocent then frames the narrative and identification with its characters.   In *Theatre of Blood*, however, this is where the form most obviously diverges from the melodrama as the moment of recognition is reversed.   Just as the heroine's virtue is unveiled in the melodrama, in *Theatre of Blood*, Miranda's part in her father's scheme is exposed.

Because of this, there is also a disruption of melodramatic narrative satisfaction at the end of the play. In the melodrama (both in the century theatre and in century film) the narrative is concluded with the villain punished, the victim saved and the hero, her saviour. Here the villain is punished – both Lionheart and his daughter Miranda die at the end, but the satisfaction is not there.   Identification with Miranda has been set up alongside identification with Peter according to the narrative structure typical to the melodrama or the mainstream American movie and this sympathy for her never disappears. As a result, her death does not feel like a just punishment. It is experienced as an echo of the death of Cordelia at the end of *King Lear*, particularly because it has been prefigured as such in an earlier scene. There is here, in the spectator's relationship with Miranda and indeed Lionheart, an engagement more similar to that of the tragedy than melodrama or horror as we pity their fate. Lionheart feels no internal conflict, it is rather the audience with a conflict between their character identifications, which in turn is reinforced by the conflict between opposing spectator engagements with narrative and irony.

Overall these narrative engagements however, are not the dominant element of the audience's experience. The playful ironic representations of the villain and the critics disrupt the processes of narrative identification and the suspense experienced when

watching the melodrama or a horror film. Lionheart is 'a champion of theatricality' according to Improbable Theatre (McDermott in Improbable Theatre Website) and the spectacle of kitsch gore he creates is celebrated by the performance. Identification with him is partly driven by his direct address to the audience and the fact he leads the narrative, but also by the enjoyment of this spectacle of death and his importance to the ironic engagement with the performance. The enjoyment of Jim Broadbent's rendering of the character in fact spills into the engagement with Lionheart as the execution of the death scenes requires considerable skill which both he and Lionheart display together.

The key element missing for this kind of narrative analysis of course is humour and playfulness. By analysing elements of narrative engagement, it is impossible to have a sense of the overall experience of the play. It is the combination of playfulness and humour that guides much of the moment by moment engagement with the play with Lionheart as a focal point for the playful irony the work creates. The ironic representation of his character is playful and humorous. His costuming, acting, make up and relationship with the audience take the 'hammy' Shakespearean actor and exaggerate it. In acting style, he is pure melodrama. For him, hyperbole is 'a "natural" form of expression' (Brooks, 1976: 40). Hauptman describes 'the great melodramatic actor' as 'an actor whose own presence overwhelms that of the mere character he inhabits' (Hauptman. 1992: 286) and this is Lionheart all over. The critics want to see 'an economy rarely seen in theatre' (*Theatre of Blood*, 2005) and he gives them excess, grandiosity and a failure to be convincing in the terms set by naturalism.

Thus melodramatic acting and visual style undermine the narrative development because a century spectator is unable to read the melodramatic visual style as anything other than ironic. According to Brook the physical style, the exaggerated 'facial

grimace' and 'artificial diction' of melodrama is 'almost inconceivable to us today' (Brooks, 1976: 47) so identification with the character is defined partly by his failure to be convincing in each of his roles. He is 'pure' camp as Susan Sontag defines it, where 'the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails' (Sontag cited in Klein, 2001: 84). This is part of what makes ironic engagement with this character's dreadful acting enjoyable. It is safe 'it's so bad it's good' irony, which gives the spectator the opportunity to position themselves hierarchically above Lionheart by reading his innocent naïve camp against their own knowledge of theatre performance and contemporary perceptions of virtuosity. Because he is a character, not the actor on stage though, the spectator does not have to suffer the embarrassment of an actor that really is bad. Unlike Devlin in the play, we do not resent him for being so dreadful; in fact, we rather like him.

 In the original film, the dynamic is not really ironic because the awareness of intentional theatricality on the part of the theatre company does not play any part. The spectator's perception of Lionheart in the film is an evaluative judgement, where the spectator sees Lionheart as a failure and a villain. He is to be feared and is not a significant point of identification. In the theatre performance, the play of irony means that while the character is a failed actor, we the audience still very much enjoy his performance. We can both laugh at him and enjoy the spectacle he creates, partly because the violence on stage is so ingenious. The transition into live performance opens up another potential layer in the audience engagement: that with the performer on stage and the company who created the effects and ideas.

The irony draws together the said and unsaid to create a third composite meaning, which is generated from the combination of the character's perception of himself, our

perception of him, but also our perception of the theatre company's creation of his character. On this level, we are also able to enjoy the references which date the piece in the 1970s: references to The Living Theatre, the critics' obsession with naturalism or to the National Theatre. If you know your theatre history, you are able to feel a smug satisfaction at getting these jokes and this adds to the ironic representation of the melodramatic villain a further irony, as the spectator is allowed to see through the critics' own attitudes as dated and old fashioned. There is a mixture of nostalgia and irony here as different perspectives are layered together across time.

Notable here is the location of irony in the response of the spectator. It is only in getting the jokes or in seeing the second layer of meaning that irony is generated: 'to call something ironic or nostalgic is, in fact, less a description of the *entity itself* than an attribution of a quality of *response'* (Hutcheon, 1998: 6, her emphasis). Using this model of layers of irony, it is possible to separate two different kinds of ironic response to the piece: one based in a sense of knowing or seeing through and one which is based on layering together and playful interaction of multiple meanings. While separating these two responses for the purpose of analysis, what this discussion is not doing however, is suggesting these are mutually exclusive or even that they must be experienced separately. The analysis as it continues, rather, locates moments of each in moments of the performance based upon my own experience of seeing it.

It is the first, the aspect of ironic engagement based upon knowingness and enjoyment of comprehension which challenges narrative engagement most significantly. The desire for comprehension and coherence in moment by moment engagement discussed in earlier chapters in relation to narrativity can be satisfied here, through the hierarchical

and evaluative aspects of irony and through the stability of meaning in simple oppositional irony.

First there is the pleasure of the interpreter as a delight in one's own interpretive virtuosity' (Hutcheon, 1994: 42). The first pleasure is in distinguishing that there is irony and *Theatre of Blood* caters well for this form of pleasure through the use of references to ironic horror, popular today, and through the use of a visual style which is so outdated that it is perceptible as ironic from the moment Lionheart speaks. Whether a spectator is well-versed in acting techniques or not, the hammy actor is a well known figure of derision. The spectator knows to find him funny. The references to Shakespeare reinforce this pleasure of being in the know. There is the assumption that the majority of the audience will have had some exposure to Shakespeare, but at the same time, the moments and the quotations chosen from Shakespeare's plays are very well known. There are few spectators who attend the theatre who would not recognise 'to be or not to be' or at least recognise the language of Shakespeare.

At the same time, there is a range of plays incorporated, some better known than others and while there are clues in each to indicate which play it is, there are also fragments which few spectators will know. There is therefore a mixture of enjoyment of recognition, but also always the feeling there is more not recognised. There are then references to theatre practitioners and century melodrama which as a theatre specialist, a spectator might pick up. Visually speaking the play introduces its appropriation of the melodramatic style in the first images on stage. The lights come up on a series of frozen images recalling the tableaux used particularly at the ends of scenes in melodrama presenting 'a visual summary of the emotional situation' (Brooks, 1976:

48). This is a clear reference to melodrama of the century. For the theatre specialist, the hammy actor takes on another layer of meaning.

There are also the references to what the critics judge to be good acting: 'an economy rarely seen in theatre' (*Theatre of Blood*, 2005) or indeed bad acting: Lionheart's theatrical floundering. No one is likely to have difficulty recognising his failure to be convincing. As Richard III for example, his hoppety skippety claw-handed Richard is so ridiculous on entrance, it goes well beyond a failure to convince. On the other hand, the irony surrounding the assumptions of naturalism is perhaps more subtle. Only as the theatre community embraces theatricality and the playfulness of its transparency, does it begin to laugh at the evaluation of performance according to the qualities expected of naturalism. Irony is 'said to disavow', to 'devalorize' because it distances its audience (Hutcheon, 1994: 14). We must look from another perspective.

In relation to the melodramatic and ironic visual aesthetic, we have been distanced from that perspective for many years. The melodramatic acting style unlike the melodramatic structure has not re-established itself in the public imagination. We no longer have any way of connecting to the devices of melodramatic emotion: 'the striking of dramatic postures, the exaggeration of facial grimace (including eye rolling and teeth gnashing), the use of an artificial diction to support a bombastic rhetoric' (Brooks, 1976: 47). To a century audience an actor like Lionheart who displays this kind of extreme heightened expression is ridiculous. The 'melodramatic verbal excess' which would have seemed natural in the nineteenth century, now 'is close to totally opaque, almost non-existent as a medium of perception' (Hauptman, 1992: 287). It is this element of *Theatre of Blood* which is most accessible as ironic representation therefore and provides the most immediate pleasure for the spectator.

To see from outside the perspective of the critics in the play again requires that distance. We must be firmly situated in the century, with its celebration of theatricality, irony and playfulness to find that distanced perspective. In doing so we position ourselves with Improbable Theatre and find a locus of ironic playfulness that moves beyond the simple hierarchical opposite. If traditional irony necessitates a position above, postmodernity denies that position, saying there are only multiple perspectives. In the postmodern context therefore '[o]ne could be ironic, not by breaking with contexts but in recognising any voice as an effect of context, and then allowing contexts to generate as much conflict, collision and contradiction as possible, thereby precluding any fixity or meta position' (Colebrook, 2004: 164).

What this means is that in Improbable Theatre, by juxtaposing the accessible ironies surrounding the melodramatic style and the references to ironic horror and Shakespeare's texts, present the audience with a traditional hierarchical ironic engagement. However, at the same time, by layering further ironic discourses onto the *mise en scène* it is possible to see those ironic engagements within the context of identification with the characters set in 1970 but from the outside. The transparency of the performance, in that the process of creating is displayed as much as the product, means that the spectator is able to identify not only with the various characters, but also with the performers making the work. This is particularly clear in the case of Lionheart, but is an overall aesthetic that can be applied to each of the characters. We see the performers in the moment of creation and so can see both the melodramatic style for example and the desire for naturalism from an ironic perspective.

What this does not do is cancel out however; the point is not to cancel out each but to celebrate and laugh playfully at both. The tone of the work can be light and playful at the same time as ironic, without losing the richness of meaning. Whatever the performance presents to us, it is celebratory but also always undercut, generating a fabric of ambiguous and often conflicting meanings and spectator engagements. This ambiguity in the ironic engagement is complemented by stability in terms of the specific ironic representations listed above and it is this combination of stability and comprehension with ambiguity and potentiality which defines a place in between commercialised irony and the transgressive use of irony in political theatre.

What is interesting here as well is that the 'immediacy and sincerity of life' which Claire Colebrook believes is destroyed by irony (Colebrook, 2004: 3) is still possible. The performance generates an experience which is, in a sense, analogous to the transgressive pleasure – to *jouissance* as discussed in the introduction and in relation to *The Elephant Vanishes* in chapter three. However, as an ironic pleasure, despite the collision of multiple meanings the transgressive potential is instead directed into humour and pleasure.

This work is in the sense in which it is discussed in the introduction, an ethical spectacle: participatory, active, open-ended and transparent (Duncombe, 2007). The spectator, as the arbiter of irony, is active in the process of meaning making and the collision of different perspectives opens up a field of potential or open-ended signification. Finally, Improbable Theatre acknowledges the presence of the audience. It is transparent in its presentation of spectacle and the theatrical, through an 'embracing of theatre as a truly 'live' medium, and as a celebration of failure – the great taboos of much contemporary theatre' (Improbable Theatre Website, 2006). Thus, because this

kind of irony is neither superficial nor necessarily judgemental, there is still the immediacy of creativity and the sincerity of each perspective is not lost in the opposition.

CHAPTER 6 - The Spectacle, Embodiment and Immersion

Introduction

In chapters two and three, in different ways, issues surrounding embodiment and multisensory perception have emerged: in relation to the problems surrounding the passive body of the spectator in chapter two[30] and in relation to a multisensory gaze in the third chapter. This chapter takes its lead from these emerging discussions as well as the analysis in chapter four of computer game immersion in which the participant was engaged in an exploration of space. However, while chapter four places emphasis on the conceptual and political aspects of the experience, here the qualities of embodiment in immersive participatory experience are explored. The motivation for linking the spectacle with the increasing focus upon embodied or phenomenological experience in theatre performance is also rooted in the rise of the experience economy as a turning point in consumer culture towards a specific appeal to the body. The chapter therefore addresses the rise of the experience economy, proposing that the circumstances of consumer culture today are having a visible impact on popular theatre aesthetics.

With the increasing popularity of this kind of theatre spectacle as a key issue in looking at the influence of spectacular excess upon theatre aesthetics, the chapter focuses in on two sell out performances: *Faust* (2006) by Punchdrunk and *Fuerzabruta* (2006), designed by director Diqui James in collaboration with Gaby Kerbel, both previously of De La Guarda. The first draws the audience into an exploratory and sensory relationship with the space and narrative, while the second sets narrative aside, to place emphasis on spectacle and multi-sensory perception, drawing the audience into interaction and participation, where touching the performers and parts of the set,

---

[30]   See pages 99 – 101.

moving around the space, and dancing generate their own kind of suspense. The intention here is to make a distinction between a narrative-led sensory engagement which to some extent mirrors the participation of pervasive gaming, and a bodily engagement which is led rather by the somatic experience itself.

The analysis of each of these two performances addresses how the spectator's body is engaged; how the dynamics of this engagement are manipulated; the relationship between this and other forms of engagement; the construction of the space as a world in its own right; and the level of spectator autonomy within that space. It is framed within contextual discussion of the relationship between embodied spectatorship and the consumption of experience as part of the society of the spectacle.

In the discussion of *Fuerzabruta*, the chapter particularly addresses how an experience of enhanced embodiment and sensory excess functions within an immersive spectacular experience and questions how far this functions to outdo the spectacle at its own game, creating an experience that mirrors the immersive and passive qualities of the spectacle. It also asks where moments of autonomy can be found in a performance which engages the whole body in an immersive experience. The reason for choosing to examine *Fuerzabruta* in particular is partly because its mode of active participation through dancing appears to generate a far less passive body in relation to the spectacle. Nevertheless, this is by no means arguing that the piece is resisting the spectacle or indeed, spectacular engagement. Instead, it argues that *Fuerzabruta* extends the visual excess of spectacular performance across the senses, creating a multisensory and embodied excess that has its roots in club culture and the rising experience economy. Within this it considers the relationship between the theatre experience and bodily 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53) established within a spectacular society.

While this section of the chapter questions how this kind of work mirrors the engagements of the now commercialised clubbing industry and the passivity of spectacular visual excess, the analysis of *Faust* presents a view of a spectator experience defined by an unusual level of autonomy, where the spectator is forced to search, explore and construct her experience of the performance. The significance of Punchdrunk's work is in the audience's freedom to interact with the space or seek out narrative moments as much or little as they wish. Like *Fuerzabruta*, the experience is one of total sensory involvement, however, in contrast to it, the nature and level of spectator engagement is not completely controlled by the company; the spectator can manipulate the level to which narrative or exploration is focus.

Consuming Experience

Beginning from the experience of consumer culture itself, the chapter assumes that the society we live in is one dominated by consumption (Baudrillard, 2001a; Featherstone, 1991; Patterson, 2006) and by the manifestation of the ideological structures that support it in the images of the spectacle (Debord, 1983). Assuming then that our relationship with this culture of consumption is one which is manifested partly through embodiment, there are two key areas which have influenced the shift towards consumption of bodily experiences. The first is the desire to escape the passive embodiment of the working body and the second is the focus upon generating desired identities through manipulation of the body in contemporary consumption.

Looking first at the labouring body, the passivity of industrial and then post-industrial labour is significant to the way individuals inhabit their bodies on a daily basis. The demise of the skilled body, as technology took its place during the industrial revolution

meant that the body became 'viewed as little more than a labouring machine' (Hancock and Tyler, 2000: 88), with embodiment defined by repetitious action and valued according to efficiency. In the century, the development of Post-Fordist modes of production, shifted attention in the West away from manufacturing towards information management, packaging, marketing and customer service and thus towards the body as either a passive tool using eyes and fingers to interact through the internet or manipulate data on a database, or as an image to be regulated. There is now a 'particular emphasis being placed by employers on the body image that workers project and the quality of embodied interactions in the working environment' (Hancock and Tyler, 2000: 86).

This mirrors the impact on the body of consumer culture. As new media took hold in the 1920s, consumer culture was aggressively established and along with it a new bodily ideal based on display rather than modesty and restraint. (Featherstone, 1991: 170 - 180). The focus upon display in advertising refocused 'consumer's critical functions ... away from the product and towards him or herself' (Jagger, 2000: 49). With the body no longer defined by learned physical skills, instead by physical passivity at work and regulated appearance, the consumer body has become a system of signification not just an experience of physical being in the world. As Featherstone suggests, in consumer culture, 'the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure: it's desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty, the higher its exchange value' (Featherstone, 1991: 177).

Increasingly, during the late century, subcultures surrounding specific leisure activities sprang up, providing alternative modes of being to that of work and mainstream consumption where '[l]eisure could provide a critical and alternative rubric for

contemporary living' (Lewis, 2004: 71). Clubbers, Skaters, breakdancers, surfers, snowboarders, became subcultural identities based upon embodied experiences which allow us 'to shake off the body of the everyday world' (Jackson, 2004: 1) whether that be the image or the physical habits imposed by the workplace.

Clubbing is particularly significant because the culture of clubbing has now become so all-pervasive and because it has been constructed as an alternative mode of being in terms of bodily and social experience. It creates, according to Jackson, 'a sensual alternative to the internal and external constrictions upon our sociality' (Jackson, 2004: 123). With this in mind the chapter as it progresses will examine the role of clubbing in society, as it comes to influence the theatre performance examined in this chapter.

There are two key issues here. The first is the way bodily 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53) is shaped by these shifts in embodiment in Western society and the second is the resulting emphasis on the experiential and the place of clubbing and other extreme activities in the rise of the experience as a consumable product. Bourdieu argues that '[t]he conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions [...] which generate and organize practices and representations' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). He sees an 'active presence of past experiences' which 'tend[s] to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54) and suggests that freedom to choose how to behave functions within the limits this entails (Bourdieu, 1990: 64).

This idea of habitus as a 'system of cognitive and motivating structures' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53) supports the notion that the body is practiced in particular ways influenced by consumerism and the spectacle. The idea that as the emphasis in the market shifts

towards exchange value through the rise of the brand, our bodies shift with it is convincing, as there is evidence that the body now functions as a means of display: displaying identity, status or sexuality. What is difficult in his approach is the sense of inevitability it can produce and the apparent stasis. There needs to be along side this model a way of describing agency in relation to these values and systems placed around the body. For the purpose of this chapter, the most useful approach to agency through the body appears to be that of the anthropologist Thomas Csordas.

In his discussion Csordas distinguishes his own approach from the anthropological gaze by focusing on embodiment rather than the body and its practices as a set of symbols to be interpreted (Csordas, 1994: 6). Here the body is considered a subjective agency itself, not merely an object on which the world gazes or indeed acts. He sees this 'distinction between representation and being-in-the-world' as 'methodologically critical' (Csordas, 1994: 10). This notion of the body itself as a subjective agency does not provide a form of disruption or resistance in any sense; what it does is allows the body to act, not merely be acted or looked upon. Where habitus, an 'embodied history' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56), places emphasis on bodily practices and thus our embodiment as structured by historical and social conditions, the notion of embodied agency suggests that this tendency towards 'correctness' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54) does not entail total conformity.

Returning to the emphasis on the experiential and the place of clubbing and other extreme activities in society, it is out of the subcultural groups that emerged in response to the social and bodily habitus described above that the commercialised experience economy has emerged. The growth of subcultural groups emerged out of a desire for agency in the face of social systems and modes of conventional behaviour, and the

groupings around activities like extreme sports or clubbing are based around bodily agency, inhabiting the body in ways which break from conventional habitus.

While the subcultural *associations* remain strong in relation to breakdancing, surfing or clubbing these activities have, however, become gradually integrated into the system. The subversive modes of embodiment have become established within wider society and have formed recognisable bodily habitus for a new generation as clubbing goes mainstream. The first implication of this process is they get caught up in the spectacular system of signification making the image as important as the activity itself: 'the intensity of belonging to a culture of extremity is repeatedly amplified through the media' (Palmer, 2004: 57). Alongside this, commercial companies begin to provide more and more experiential consumption as well, by investing in the area and by using it as a part of large scale marketing campaigns. Out of the initial desire to reinhabit the body outside the institutional habitus emerges a consumable experience, packaged and marketed to its target audience.

The consumption of experience is, in fact, the fastest growing economic sector with both employment and GDP rising more than in any other section of the economy over the last forty years (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 14 - 15). Joseph Pine and James Gilmore's *The Experience Economy* (1999) suggests this heralds a shift towards non-material commodities where experiences and sensations are sold as part of an 'experience economy'. This experience economy is a clearly distinguishable sector: the experience according to Pine and Gilmore is 'a fourth economic offering, as distinct from services as service are from goods'. A service to a customer is 'a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf'. However, if the customer pays for an experience, 'he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events ' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999: 2).

Where a commodity is extracted, goods are made and services are delivered, experiences are 'staged' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999: 6) and judged by the sensation and memories they generate (Pine and Gilmore, 1999: 12). This focus on the consumption of sensory experience and memory means that more and more, consumers expect a product to engage their whole bodies in a total experience. Pine and Gilmore also suggest that creating an experience is about engaging the customer not just entertaining (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 30). Entertainment is described as a passive engagement and they suggest that as the experience economy gains ground, 'people will look in new and different directions for more unusual experiences' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 30). This is born out by the rise of spectacular participatory theatre as well as the increasing popularity of pervasive gaming experiences similar to those discussed in the previous chapter and current shifts in computer game technology innovations.

Computer games are also now engaging the body with the release of motion-control video games. With 3D graphics and motion sensors, the computer game is certainly taking notice of this shift towards a more total experience and is breaking new ground in terms of greater immersion more akin to virtual reality or the pervasive game. Evidently, sensory or bodily engagements are important parts of this consumption of experience and expectations are changing about what the leisure and entertainments industries provide. In addition, the impact of the experience economy upon the way products and services are advertised and presented means the often spectacular images and representations of consumption reinforce the desire for particular kinds of experience. 'The consumer is the product' state Pine and Gilmore (1999: 163) making the experience economy the perfect manifestation of the spectacle whose purpose is to recreate itself (Debord, 1983).

In this context, experiential theatre performance cannot be examined purely as a moment shared with its spectator / participants, but must be examined in relation to the dynamics and engagements popularised in the experience economy today. Theatre, of course, as long as tickets have been bought and sold, has been a part of an experience economy. However, this chapter seeks to draw attention to the influence of its rapid expansion in the century opening up new experiences across society: adventure holidays, theme parks, extreme sports, computer gaming, or clubbing. Assuming that, on some level, there is an impact upon consumer cultures and identities from the ever-present images of every imaginable experience you can buy, there is something to be said for an analysis of how the body is implicated in that engagement and how the consumer is encouraged to envisage the perfect experience in the act of consuming. A brief look at experiential marketing strategies demonstrates the ways in which this discourse seeks to engage the consumers of the century and also begins to show how far the spectacle in the century is overflowing with the experiential.

Bernd H. Schmit in *Experiential marketing: how to get customers to sense, feel, think, act, and relate to your company and brands* suggests the shift from traditional to experiential marketing is a 'revolution that will change the face of marketing for ever' (Schmit, 1999: 3). The approach assumes that the experiential associations of a product outweighs the importance of its features or practical benefits and so focuses on creating an identity and an emotional/sensory engagement with a product. Schmit's intention is to provide a model for marketing managers, based very much on the perceived rise of experience economy described in Pine and Gilmore's *The Experience Economy* (1999). He describes five types of experience as a basis for marketing strategy: sense, feel, think, act and relate, encouraging the marketing manager to combine appropriate

appeals to the senses, emotions, thinking processes, bodily activities and social interactions to generate an experience led marketing campaign. The ultimate goal of the experiential marketer is of course the 'holistic experience' combining the various type of engagement in one experience (Schmit, 1999:71).

This is not merely an associative strategy however (a car advert using snowboarding as an analogy for the freedom and excitement of driving that car); experiential marketing is about providing actual experiences as well. A pertinent example is Gideon Reeling's commissions from companies like Southern Comfort, Red Bull or Google[31]. The association between the brand and that experience is based on a real experience not merely the image of one on the television and this makes for powerful marketing.

What emerges from the rise of the experience economy overall is a rising expectation that entertainments today will move beyond visual spectacle. We begin to expect participatory and sensory experiences in addition to traditional spectatorship. What this chapter will now explore is how in this context theatre performance is able to present to its audience an experience which appeals to the imagination of a spectator who has grown up surrounded by an accelerating experience economy.

Diqui James from the *Fuerzabruta* project sees the process of moving away from the narrative space occupied by cinema as a necessity for the development of a successful contemporary form of theatre performance. 'In theatre, we have to accept that cinema exists,' he explains 'It's great at telling stories. It's great at character and people. Theatre needs to move somewhere else' (James in Armstrong, 2006: npg), and he sees that alternative in creating something that surprises and something that engages the body in

---

[31] Gideon Reeling is a commercial sister company to Punchdrunk which provides bespoke interactive entertainment and which hosted *Hide and Seek*, the festival of pervasive gaming in London in 2007.

response to it (Hemming, 2006b). In a sense, theatre performance is an ideal medium for the holistic experience: sense, feel, think, act, relate, and it becomes difficult to draw the line clearly between art and commercial enterprise. The fact that a group like Punchdrunk have a sister company who focus on the commercial side of the work makes the point perfectly. However at the same time the fact that they separate the two sides suggests there is something more to the aesthetic of experiential theatre than its spectacular commercial cousin. This chapter therefore goes on to explore the aesthetic of the embodied participatory theatre experience in more detail, looking at how *Fuerzabruta's* artists and Punchdrunk place emphasis in different areas to create a different aesthetic and resulting spectator engagement.

Fuerzabruta and *Faust*: An Introduction

The *Fuerzabruta* project was formed out of De La Guarda after Diqui James, the artistic director, Gaby Kerbel, the musical composer and several of the production team decided they wanted to create new work. De La Guarda began in Argentina in the 1990s and created a piece called *Villa Villa* which James wanted to be experienced 'like a rock spectacle' (James quoted in Watson, 2006). He said that after seeing San Fermin, the bull-running festival in Pamplona, he was 'drawn to the idea of public celebration in which everybody mixes - all ages, from young punks to old folks. I learnt a lot from street culture, and I still really respect it' (James quoted in Moss, 2006). The festival-performance that emerged from this desire for public celebration - *Villa Villa* - sold out for eleven months at the Roundhouse in 1999 and in New York it 'packed out' the Daryl Roth Theatre for seven years (Moss, 2006).

The aesthetic of *Fuerzabruta* is very similar to De La Guarda's performance *Villa Villa*, and it sold out just as successfully. However, the content and atmosphere are very different and appeal still more to a clubbing audience, providing an experience that

combined theatre with dancing seamlessly enough that the Sunday afternoon and Friday and Saturday night performances turned into a club night at the end of the show. The performance worked on multiple levels using the entire of the space. It made use of acrobatic skill, using performers on wires running on conveyor belts or running horizontally round the curtains above, smashing through cardboard boxes or desperately trying to put a cafe interior back together as conveyor belts whipped furniture away. The performance was presented in short sections which were linked rather by the dynamics and atmosphere of the piece than by any kind of narrative. It was very fast paced and propelled the audience from one moment to another expecting them to spot the next section emerging from a curtain or from the ceiling and, when necessary, get out of the way.

Each of these sections elicited a different level of spectator engagement and each was visually very different. The element that held the piece together most strongly was probably the music by Gaby Kerpel which accompanied the performance. Drawing on tribal electronica and world music it maintained the high level of energy generated at the beginning when the audience entered to a DJ's set. The shifts from DJ to performance to DJ again were seamless, and combined with the lighting, the crowd and the space, one could be forgiven for forgetting that this was theatre rather than clubbing.

Because of the nature of the piece, presenting an analysis of *Fuerzabruta* is no easy task, as it places emphasis on the phenomenal experience rather than narrative or representational value. As the artists state on their website, they 'want to break intellectual submission of the language... the speed of the stimuli the spectator receives, supersedes the intellectual reaction' (*Fuerzabruta* website). However to communicate here the nature of an experience of immediacy and embodiment requires that this

experience is translated into the language of scholarly writing. 'The distinction between representation and being-in-the-world is methodologically critical' suggests Csordas, 'for it is the difference between understanding culture in terms of objectified abstraction and existential immediacy' (1994: 10). Nevertheless, that experience of immediacy, while it cannot be recreated in language and expressed in such a way that the experience itself is brought back to life, can be described in such a way that some of the key elements of that experience can be considered. This examination of embodiment in the piece is therefore informed by my own personal response as well as comments by Diqui James and those of various reviewers in describing the performance.

The analysis of *Faust* is equally driven by a very personal experience of the piece and it is worth noting that no two spectators' experiences will be the same. The way each spectator interacts with the piece informs the kind of performance and spectator engagement he or she experiences. This analysis can and will only be a partial view informed by my own experience, those of my colleagues, my students and reviewers. It addresses some of the many possible experiences the piece can generate. Having said that, the performance itself does not change dramatically from night to night; there are key moments that many spectators will experience.

Punchdrunk's *Faust* is set in a five storey factory building that has been entirely transformed into a collection of settings for the story of Faust. Based on Goethe's *Faust* it presents a series of vignettes scattered across the space each repeated in a loop to give the audience the chance to catch the different moments from the narrative at different times. The detail and complexity of the set transforms the space completely, providing its audience with the smell of the pine forest as they wander through the trees, the taste

of the drinks served at the bar and the chance to rifle through the drawers of offices or turn the pages of a book left open to seek out clues to the developing story. The performance unfolds primarily through dance and physical performance with little dialogue at all. It allows the audience to wander through the building seeking out characters and settings and attempting to build a sense of the story, or indeed enjoying the moments they come across and exploring the space for its sensory impact.

Key moments in the piece that I experienced included my journey through a corridor lit only by candles, which illuminated statues of the Virgin Mary but little else. Alone, shuffling down this corridor terrified of what might emerge from the darkness, the autonomy of the spectator in exploring the space felt like a curse as much as a blessing. I had the pleasure of a private dance from what seemed to be a very aggressive witch and I encountered the corn fields without any other spectators in sight. The tendency of many to follow key characters around the building meant that there seemed always to be empty spaces in the moments between where a stray spectator had the opportunity to feel lost and alone, or to enjoy a moment of stillness. One could in the same piece of theatre experience the thrill of the chase, the stillness of an empty field, the eroticism of dance in a tiny space, or the fear of the unknown. As the analysis of these two pieces of performance develops, this variety of experiences is considered in terms of the quality of interactive experience, multisensory and bodily engagement and the immersion into the space, the narrative or in the case of *Fuerzabruta* the somatic / participatory engagement.

Narrativity in Promenade

Focusing first of all on the concerns of the thesis surrounding the shift away from an emphasis on narrative in theatre, *Fuerzabruta* is a perfect example of this shift, given its

popularity. The performance eschewed any kind of narrative engagement, presenting a sequence of unrelated installation performances which appeared in different parts of the space. The first, a man running desperately on a conveyor belt smashing his way through walls has been subject to some interpretation by reviewers and indeed Chris Moss suggests it is 'central to the show'. He describes 'a tall, wiry young man, suspended from the roof, […] dressed in a shirt and tie, like an anonymous office worker, trying to make headway in the face of all the challenges life can throw at him' (Moss, 2006: npg). Diqui James himself suggests that it is this figure that encounters all these images as dreams or experiences but also states that the images are 'as dissociated as possible' (Armstrong, 2006: npg). As the website claims, *'Fuerzabruta* doesn't have a purpose. […] It doesn't exist in the work, the concept of significance or representation' (*Fuerzabruta* Website). Despite this claim that representation does not exist in the piece, many of the images they created seemed highly symbolic and also seemed somehow to speak to a common cultural experience of some kind.

My own experience of the piece was one where engagement shifted throughout. In the early parts of the performance there was a tendency to interpret images and, like Chris Moss, I engaged with the running man as if the image were the beginning of a story, supposing that he represented life in a world of work and struggle, perhaps determination in the face of what the world throws at him. This interpretive engagement, seeking narrative in the images, disappears as the piece moves on, partly because of the dissociation of the sequence of images and partly because of the excess of stimulation through spectacle and, music, and through the desire to dance and shout.

In *Faust* the narrative engagement is much stronger. If the spectator knows the story of *Faust* going into the performance, each moment he or she encounters moving through

the space will provide a piece of a puzzle, a fragment of a narrative that is expected and anticipated. If however the spectator has little knowledge of the story and particularly if he or she misses key scenes while wandering through the building, these fragments of narrative may not form a coherent narrative any more than in *Fuerzabruta*. The difference between the two, however, is that for a spectator of *Faust* the desire to understand and piece together a story remains strong and, if that is not possible, it is potentially frustrating. Those of my students who went to see *Faust* and did not know the story found it disorientating and frustrating although they appreciated the physical dance theatre. For Lyn Gardner also 'the show can be like chasing a dream that keeps dissolving and slipping out of sight' (Gardner, 2006: npg). Where gradually, in watching *Fuerzabruta,* one realizes that the piece is not shaped by narrative, in *Faust* there is a sense of failing to grasp something in not being able to connect those fragments.

Despite this, narrative engagement within individual scenes or across a series of moments is still possible. If a spectator follows the character Faust through the space, for example, there is often a clearer sense of what is happening. However depending where the lift drops each person, it may not be easy to find or recognise the main characters until late on in the experience. I was dropped off on a floor with dimly lit corridors and no actors to be seen. With performers appearing and disappearing, it is difficult to work out who is who until a key scene is played out. Even with a good knowledge of the narrative it still took time to work out who the young Faust was. What emerges from this fragmentary narrative representation is an investigative or exploratory attitude to the piece rather than narrative immersion based on the tension of expectation and identification.

These two kinds of engagement are rooted in the autonomous movement of the spectator around the space. Both are driven by curiosity, but that curiosity works through the desire for narrative comprehension in an investigative engagement, and in the exploratory engagement, primarily through sensory stimulation. The spectator, in the course of wandering through the space, sometimes aimlessly, sometimes with purpose, engages in a very immediate way with what he or she sees, hears, smells or touches. There is the freedom to look, explore, walk, run, search for, or escape characters. 'It is incredibly liberating, not to say unusual, to feel in control of one's own theatrical consumption, to wander at liberty and to follow, or not, cast members or distant music' (Mountford, 2006: npg).

The investigative side to narrative engagement is most clear where audience members begin to have the confidence to search for information as they enter rooms: reading notes, letters or diaries, or looking through the belongings of a character to find clues about who they are and how they fit into the story. By following characters or exploring a new space the spectator is seeking out information rather than having it presented to her. For this kind of experience to work however, there needs to be enough narrative information to engage the spectator's curiosity about a character or a story. The dominance of this kind of engagement is therefore dependent on where the spectator is dropped off and how soon he or she makes contact with other characters or finds key rooms or spaces.

The exploration of the space which for many spectators forms the first part of their experience places its focus upon the space more that the narrative. Dropped off on the upper floors above where the action is taking place, a spectator might spend considerable time wandering through different spaces, getting lost, exploring new

rooms and enjoying the multisensory experience of the piece as a vast installation. One can become immersed in the process of exploration, in the atmosphere of each new space and in that sense experience the piece as focused primarily on bodily engagement where visual perception, movement through space, the smell and texture of the spaces make up the experience.

However, one can simultaneously experience the piece with an investigative and exploratory attitude, engaging the intellect and the senses to create a total experience. Josephine Machon discusses *Faust* as an example of '(syn)aesthetic' performance which 'consists of a blending of disciplines and techniques to create an interdisciplinary, inter-textual and multi-sensational work, coupled with a sensorial mode of appreciation affected within the audience resulting from exposure to such work' (Machon, 2001: para 2). According to her definition, *Faust* does indeed provide the spectator with such an experience.

Sensory Immersion in *Faust* and *Fuerzabruta*

Looking more closely at spectator embodiment in the experience, there are various aspects to consider: the engagement of multiple senses in relation to the installation space itself, embodied response to the performers and within the spectator's own participatory activity. In *Faust* the sensory relationship with the installation space or set is particularly significant to the experience. It generates an exploratory multisensory experience which focuses the spectator upon the space as a kind of multisensory spectacle. The set is spectacularly large and detailed, providing an aesthetic experience which allows the spectator a kind of awe at the expanse of it. The focus on engagement with the space itself is in a sense set in competition with the narrative development, both that which is presented in key scenes and that which is discovered through

investigation. If a spectator stays to explore a space or room and take time to enjoy the environment he or she is aware of missing moments of narrative. However, engagement with the environment as an aesthetic experience itself is strong.

To engage the spectator on this level, the set draws the senses of the body to rest on the environment as an experience in itself. Where the spectator finds it beautiful, fascinating or spectacular, the environment can become absorbing as an aesthetic experience in itself. The performance, thus, functions as an installation piece as much as a theatre experience. However, in a performance where narrative offers its pleasures as well, the impact of the aesthetics of the environment must be considerable to absorb a spectator. By taking groups up in a lift and letting individuals off on different floors, the company ensure that the majority of spectators explore part of the environment before they encounter narrative action. The process of finding your way around even one floor necessitates an active engagement with the environment as more than just a support for the playing out of a narrative. Once the audience is looking and taking notice of the environment, the potential for a focus in the experience on aesthetic appreciation is there, as the performance environment appeals to contemporary systems of aesthetic value in a number of ways.

First its use of expanses of space, where the spectators cannot see an end to the environment they enter, invites them to extend their gaze out across the set as if searching for a horizon. The pine forest or the corn field in particular give the impression of a space that extends out, beyond the building that holds it, into the distance. The spectator may not experience the same expanse as when looking out across the Grand Canyon or looking out to sea, but the aesthetic of the piece to an extent replicates thins and the multi-sensory appeal of the experience heightens this further.

You can walk amongst the pine trees, hear the crunch of your feet upon the forest floor and smell them as well as look out into the forest. The olfactory appeal particularly helps recall to the body the experience of spatial expanse.

This experience of natural beauty as expansive appears to be key to aesthetic values placed upon landscape by for example the tourist industry, by film sets, or by nature documentaries. Set in contrast to the limited spaces we humans inhabit, the natural world appears to us boundless and thus beautiful and *Faust* takes advantage of this desire for the expanse. What distinguishes our appreciation for a real landscape and one represented artificially on stage however is that as we look at a real waterfall or real mountains, we do not engage with a mode of representation or emotional expression, as the mountain or waterfall simply exists. The surprise of encountering the sensation of expanse in an enclosed space potentially reinforces engagement with the environment as an experience in itself.

The realism and the detail of the set also reinforce this engagement. Rachel Halliburton of *Time Out* describes feeling like 'you're stumbling through a horror film set' (Halliburton, 2006) and Sam Marlowe of *The Times* makes a similar comparison (Marlowe, 2006). The set is so huge and so detailed, spanning across several floors, you always feel there is more to see and notice. It is an exploration of a new world, where the rules are different from those on the outside. There is again and again a sense of amazement at what is possible in this immersive space, and this is enhanced by the use of contrast and surprise. The shift from cornfield to the erotic and violent bar scene for example is so sudden it allows both experiences to be heightened.

The exploratory engagement of the body with the environment through multisensory

perception is one of the key ways that these two performances *Faust* and *Fuerzabruta* can be distinguished. In *Fuerzabruta*, in contrast, there is no engagement through exploration. The body is engaged through multisensory perception but this is in the context of the spectacle displayed, the contact made by the performers and the experience of dancing. Only at the end does the spectator have control over where they go and when. The environment presents a multisensory experience in *Fuerzabruta* but one which is a bodily response to what the performance presents to the body: music, sprinklers, shouting. The participatory aspect of this is therefore a more direct somatic response rather than a bodily response led by mental engagement with the work.

The second aspect to be discussed in relation to the spectator's sensory engagement is the bodily response to the dance or physical performance through which the two pieces unfold. Not only is the dance performance a significant part of the multisensory stimulation in each piece, but the audience must also be kinaesthetically aware enough to respond physically to what is going on around them. In *Faust*, the performers weave round and through their audience and if surrounding spectators do not get out of the way quick enough, they get squashed, kicked, sat on or shoved as appropriate. The spectator at *Faust* must engage the body and spatial awareness constantly and this enhances sensory engagement and the sense of presence in the immediate moment rather than projecting forwards into a narrative development. The intensity and sometimes erotic charge of the dance taking place around the spectator again reinforces this immersion in the immediate moment and environment in which it takes place.

Unlike in the process of watching dance performance discussed in chapter one, here, the body is engaged actively in moving around and shaping the space for the performance. The spectator feels like a participant and despite not being a part of the danced performance can end up part of the scene created. The potential for experiencing the

environment or atmosphere directly acting upon the spectator's body is also much greater. Fear is felt not as a response to identification with a character but as a bodily response to environment and space. Response to the dance also is a more direct bodily response and while it is possible to combine that response with the evaluative or objectifying gaze, distanced objectification is less likely to dominate the engagement because of the shared space and movement in that space.

In *Fuerzabruta*, this goes much further; the response of the body to the piece is far more significant to the overall experience. There is a much stronger bodily connection or identification between the spectator and both the performers and the other members of the audience. We interact as social bodies in the experience. Thus immersion into the experience, as suggested above, is partly physical and emotional, but also it is linked to 'recognition' (Frank, 1991: 87). What is meant here is not narrative as discussed in reference to the running man scene, but is a recognition of a bodily state or experience through the 'communicative body' (Frank, 1991: 89). 'What is shared is one body's sense of another's experience, primarily its vulnerability and suffering, but also its joy and creativity' (Frank, 1991: 89).

In *Fuerzabruta*, because identification is with the performers rather than characters, the primary identificatory engagement is through this bodily recognition, engaging with the joy and creativity of each moment as it is performed. Towards the end of the performance, for example, above the audience, a screen holding a few inches of water descended into view, reaching across the entire space. The performers threw themselves on to the screen over and over, smashing them selves flat bodied on to the surface. The female performers danced in the water, first using their bodies as the moving material of the dance then manipulating the splashes and currents of the water to make it dance

around them. The 'recognition' here was not an interpretation of what this might symbolise, rather an engagement with what happened, one moment seeing the bodies of performers dance then realising the dance had shifted into the water. This is a presentation of playfulness through which the performers engage the spectator in the excitement of creating despite not directly being a part of that process.

While one could argue that *Faust* shares this kind of bodily interaction between performer and spectator, the overall bodily experience is very different from that of *Fuerzabruta* and the relationship between narrative and bodily engagement in *Faust* demonstrates this very clearly. In *Faust*, bodily engagement, through sensory perception and movement through space, functions *alongside* engagement with narrative development and comprehension. The body functions here as the tool of the investigator, travelling through space and searching for clues or characters as part of an attempt to piece together information.

Once a spectator is engaged in a chase or has a sense of the characters and some key narrative moments, the bodily experience can become dominated by this engagement. Sensory impact becomes secondary to movement through space for a particular purpose. Once a spectator has explored the space, engagement with the immediate environment loses some of its strength as the surprise and amazement has worn off. Investigation replaces exploration and more and more spectators begin to follow key characters from place to place. Once you have found the characters and begun to piece together a few moments, it feels like if you leave or lose the trail you might miss something. This focuses attention away from embodiment and sensory engagement more than anything else in the experience as you consider your choices.

The processes of thinking, considering choices about where to go and who to follow, and investigating the surroundings in the experience of *Faust* are what make the performance so different from *Fuerzabruta*, despite the spectator participation, the dance theatre spectacle and the bodily engagement in both. Where *Faust* allows its audience to make decisions and encourages spectators to explore, investigate and piece elements together like a puzzle, *Fuerzabruta* seeks to immerse its audience totally in the moment, not allowing them the opportunity to respond intellectually to the piece. 'to break intellectual submission of the language... the speed of the stimuli the spectator receives, supersedes the intellectual reaction' (*Fuerzabruta* Website).

Embodiment in club-theatre land

It is the club-like aspects of the piece in particular which immerse the spectator in a full bodily experience enhancing the sense of recognition between the spectators and performers by engaging the body actively dancing to music in a celebratory and joyful way alongside the playful creative force of the performers' bodies, but also creating a communal experience amongst the audience.

From the beginning, the performance generated a highly immersive experience with a clear shift into what Turner describes as a liminoid state. The audience entered the space and waited while DJs started up a club-like atmosphere with a set before the show. The curtains encircled the space creating another layer separating it from the outside and the audience began to look more like clubbers arriving early waiting for someone to make a move on to the dance floor. The creation of a club-like environment from the very beginning is important as the piece drew its audience from both theatre audiences and clubbers following a particular DJ to the show. For many of its spectators it appeared that the club environment was a familiar one and immersion into

the associated atmosphere an easy transition. The bodily engagement with the piece was primarily one rooted in club culture and in the immersive experience that clubbing can provide. Theorising this complete immersion in the moment in club culture the analysis draws on an adaptation of Victor Turner's model of the 'liminoid' (Turner, 1982:24) and the discussion above of habitus and the construction of the passive body in consumer society.

While Turner's conception of the liminal and liminoid is based on a symbolic system of passage between different states, Graham St John, in his study of alternative lifestyle makes use of 'liminoid embodiment' (St John, 2001: 1) a concept which allows the anthropologist to examine bodily transgression and alternative embodiment. According to this model, the mode of *embodiment* not just the social behaviours and significations shifts outside the normal social habitus by crossing into a liminoid space and time, triggered in the case of clubbing by the combination of the very intense musical experience, a separate space and the sense of shared experience and connection. The emerging rave scene in the late eighties functioned very clearly as site for a transgressive liminoid embodiment. Phil Jackson in *Inside Clubbing* (2004) explored how clubbing presented a subversive alternative experience. He states 'our bodies are always immersed in the world and that this point of immersion is structured culturally, ideologically and emotionally so that it orders and even controls our capacity to perceive and experience that world' (Jackson, 2004: 2) and argues that clubbing generates a 'disruption of the habitus' (Jackson, 2004: 119).

This disruption to bodily habitus takes place through an absolute re-engagement of the body. According to Thomas Csordas (1994: 8) our everyday experience 'is characterized by the disappearance of the body from awareness'. Yet by drawing on

club culture this performance offers an experience that is wholly embodied for the spectator allowing the experience to be an immersive celebration. The experience feels like a festival.

It is worth noting that the club culture discussed in this chapter in reference to *Fuerzabruta* is that which emerged from the illegal raves of the late 1980s. There is a distinction here to be made between club culture based on intense dance experience, music and often drugs, and the popular club culture based around the display of the woman as a sexual object, copious quantities of alcohol, and an emphasis on going out to 'pull'. Rave culture is one where appearance and display of the body shifts out of the foreground. Both men and women dance, not to display themselves but in general for the experience of being in that moment, dancing wildly to music and feeling released from their everyday life. Sheryl Garratt describes the club as 'a place where they [clubbers] could transcend everything, where they could be themselves, lose themselves' (Garratt, 1998: 12) and a part of that sense of losing yourself is generated through a shedding of habits of the body through intense dancing. 'Clubbing is a profoundly visceral and corporeal phenomenon' (Jackson, 2004: 1) which 'unleashes the Dionysian body from the Apollonian constraints imposed on it in the everyday world' (Jackson, 2004: 15).

For the spectator at *Fuerzabruta*, the build up to the final scene allowed absolute immersion into the moment of dancing. For those who came out drenched in water, covered in debris and still wanting to dance all night, the transformation was so complete that emerging from an afternoon performance was hugely disorientating. The expectation that it would be night was overwhelming. 'The audience sings, shouts, dances. They are the actors; we performers are just the instruments' (James in Moss,

2006: npg).   However, while the audience is engaged in an interactive experience throughout the performance, there is of course still a considerable separation between the performers and the audience throughout the majority of the performance.

The performers demonstrate a high level of skill, presenting a body that appears to be at risk in the performance and though the audience is moved around the space and for their own safety must comply with that, they are not taking part in performance of visual spectacle or contributing to the virtuosity that propels it. Neither are they participating in the same way as in *Villa Villa* where spectators were taken up on a wire with the performers.   There is a distinct separation between virtuoso performer of visual spectacle and spectator interacting with that.   What distinguishes this from the previous discussion of virtuosity and spectacle however, is the embodied interaction with the performance, with the performers and with the other spectators that, in this case, inform the engagement with spectacle.

While it was perhaps only towards the end that the audience surrendered completely to the music and the atmosphere of the piece and danced with everything they had, the body was engaged actively throughout, not just in a process of recognition as described above but through movement to the music and through the manipulation of dynamics of participation and proximity throughout the piece as well as through the emotional connection across the audience and performers.

Returning to the section of the performance where performers threw themselves down on a screen of water discussed above, this is also a good example of the build up of suspense through participation.   As the screen was lowered closer and closer to the audience below the build up of tension was quite amazing.   The increasing proximity

increased excitement and expectation until the point where the screens were just above the spectators' heads: close enough to run your palms over the bodies of the performers as they shot across the screen. The effect could have been hugely claustrophobic as not only did the space close in, but the very intense performance taking place above it came closer and closer. However, the desire to make contact whether by touch or eye contact was already established by this point and the overwhelming effect was to excite that desire.

This relationship between suspense and proximity is hugely significant in the performance as a whole because the structure of the piece is such that the audience is teased by the proximity of various elements of the performance. This section in which the screen is lowered over the audience's head is one example, but the piece as a whole builds up interaction and participation, drawing the audience in with water sprinklers, or the chance to mingle with the performers as they smash boxes over people's heads. The audience never get enough contact despite the way the environment created by the performance brought together the audience, performers and set. As each section of the performance appeared in a different part of the space, the opportunity for contact or touch appeared and disappeared throughout.

This tension only worked alongside the physical participation of dancing and the emotional engagement of the work however. In fact, the immersion into the music through dancing could only have taken place through the sense of a shared emotional experience. Charles Spencer writing for *The Telegraph* describes the piece as 'a celebration of the wild, the weird, the mysterious and the beautiful' (Spencer, 2006: npg) and this feeling of celebration is mentioned in almost all the reviews. Both the atmosphere of celebration and the level of audience interaction with the piece increased

over the course of the performance.

In the early parts of the piece as the man ran at breakneck speed on the conveyor belt, he was shot, he crashed through walls, and he desperately retrieved chairs and tables as they hurtled along the conveyor belt in a café. The violence of these objects hitting him, is appropriate to the name of the piece, *Fuerzabruta* - meaning 'brute force'. This sense of aggression is there in the desperate attempt of performers to reach each other on a massive spinning foil curtain and in the chase, shouting and tumbling around the curtain surrounding the audience, with all of these performed on wires high off the ground. We are amazed by what we see but also the danger, the aggression and effort triggers a release of adrenaline. When the foil curtain swept over the audience like a giant wave people jumped up, letting it run over their palms, shouting and whooping. This was a dramatic turning point in terms of spectator participation as for the first time spectators were able to touch part of the performance.

This experience of amazement, though integral to the dynamic of the spectacle in familiar engagements with film or circus, does not separate the spectator from the performer in the way that awe at the virtuosic 'othered' body usually might. Rather it enhances the bodily immersion in the piece. 'A surprise is not an effect, it is a constant and necessary state for the effectiveness of the work. For modifying profoundly the reality of the spectator' (*Fuerzabruta* website). This feeling of amazement is central to the immersive experience of *Fuerzabruta* as the immediacy of the experience necessarily relies on a spectator not being allowed to slip into a self-conscious or analytical engagement with the piece.

By the time we reached the section in which the performers smash up the room they are

dancing in, celebration, interaction and aggression had been brought together in the experience of the show. Chris Moss describes Diqui James as having bouts of 'destructive euphoria' (Moss, 2006: npg) and this dance seems to be one of these. The performers present a manic but choreographed dance to a cross between world folk and tribal dance music and as they do so, they rip down the walls leaving just the support beams standing. The wildness of the dance and destruction are celebratory however and spill into the audience. At the end of this section, spectators smashed their heads through boxes and danced with the performers as they mingled with the audience. 'The public doesn't take part, they form part. Injured. Celebrating' (*Fuerzabruta* website).

The spontaneity and the desire to participate evident in the audience, reinforced the atmosphere of a carnival or a rave. At a rave the atmosphere or vibe 'is grounded in the idea of mutual celebration' (Jackson, 2004: 104). Often where clubbers dance on podiums or 'go for it' on the dance floor apparently making a spectacle of themselves, those around them will cheer and shout encouragement, to push them further and to help them get into the moment and dance as hard as they can. As a spectator of *Fuerzabruta*, even in the early stages of the performance the emotional engagement with the piece is one of celebration, cheering for the performers in a similar way one would cheer for someone dancing at their absolute limit.

The aggressive quality of some of the earlier sections also feeds into the celebratory dynamic the piece generates. It is this emphasis on emotional engagement, in part, that drives the desire to participate and with the music, makes embodiment central to the experience of being a spectator. Lyon and Barbalet suggest that 'it is through emotion (feeling, sentiment, affect) that the links between the body and social world can be clearly drawn [...] emotion is precisely the experience of embodied sociality' (Lyon &

Barbalet, 1994: 48).

In both performances the emotional connection with the work is key in allowing the spectator to feel a response directly to the stimuli around them. Emotional engagement with both is a primary engagement not one rooted in character identification. In *Faust* it is generated through a response to the environment or bodies in that space and in *Fuerzabruta* through mutual celebration of the performers and the communal sharing of that experience as the piece progresses towards a clubbing experience.

This sense of a shared experience or communitas made possible in *Fuerzabruta* allows the spectator something experiential which they cannot necessarily access in everyday life and this works against an objectifying gaze which constructs the performers as part of a separate world. Despite the control over the audience's movements through the space the performance still constructs it as a shared space and experience: as something authentic in a world of spectacle. Nevertheless, this experiential spectacular performance at the same time integrates itself into the experience economy by its very nature. It is, like Faust, an experience to be consumed and could be said to be part of the system through which the consumer as a product emerges.

This kind of work has an aesthetics of its own, based around the dynamics of interaction and bodily engagement as much as visual beauty and virtuosity and this aesthetic is judged according to what may be considered virtues in the contemporary context: according to the desire for the authentic, according to the desire for an holistic experience, and engaging the body and emotions beyond a secondary identificatory engagement. This shift away from engagement through character identification towards immediate emotional and bodily experience and in the case of *Faust* intellectual

engagement through investigation as well as reception, is a development in our experience of performance which clearly reflects the shifting manifestation of the spectacle. However, at the same time, it out-spectaculars the spectacle. The passivity of the spectacular engagement has perhaps worn itself out and the desire for material immediate experience has emerged from that. How far that can be appropriated by the spectacle into the experience economy is debatable, if only because in the end, materially present experience can always also be created for free.

It is the intention here to make a distinction between a narrative-led sensory engagement which to some extent mirrors the participation of pervasive gaming and a bodily engagement which is led rather by the somatic experience itself. One reflects the computer game dynamic of exploration, investigation and immersion into an expansive world and narrative, and the other reflects the world of clubbing and bodily immersion. However, both provide a material experience in a world where most entertainment comes through a screen. There is a space for theatre performance to develop reconfigurations of these kinds of experience into an aesthetics based around a communal experience of an environment and performance.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER

Each of the previous chapters presents a different aspect of the influence of the spectacle upon theatre, with a focus on the spectator's experience and engagement with performance. They consider however, primarily the internal workings of those engagements rather than wider socio-political influences of the spectacle. For example, they do not address directly the ideological influence of the spectacular society as a consumer society or as a society of terror in the aftermath of 9/11, or indeed the issues arising from globalisation in terms of perceptions of difference, otherness and the objectifying gaze. Each chapter, rather, looks at the apparatus or dynamics and associated habits of engagement with the various mediated and experiential practices through which the spectacle is manifested. It is an argument primarily concerned with form rather than content.

The key conclusion this thesis draws therefore is that there exists what might be called a 'spectacular' mode of engagement, one defined by our relation to the spectacle, in a similar way that specific modes of spectatorship are formed in relation to particular media. Meike Wagner in *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (2006) describes mediality as 'transformed corporeal perception' (Wagner, 2006: 126) suggesting that mediality is not just made up of the attributes of the technological form, but also the associated mode of spectator interaction. Looking beyond individual technologies and forms, there is an equivalent relationship between the spectacle as a representational manifestation and its associated habits of engagement – a spectacular engagement. In a sense the spectacle almost functions as a kind of hypermedium, staging other media and, in a wider sense, transforming modes of perception.

Narrative in the century

The shift away from the dominance of linear narrative is one manifestation of those habits of spectatorship. It is worth noting again that the argument here is not that narrative engagement and immersion are no longer important to the theatre experience. Even where narrative development is almost entirely set aside in favour of spectacular, aesthetic or atmospheric engagement, the spectator will still seek comprehension and ask 'what does this mean?' It does, in fact, appear near impossible to set aside semiotic interpretation, as the desire to structure and project forward expectations of narrative or thematic development using those meanings is engrained in our perceptual processes.

Rather, the argument suggests that there are two key factors in a de-emphasis of narrative engagement. On one side, the repetition of simple narrative form in the film industry has generated an audience who have become bored with the traditional Hollywood plot development and on the other hand, the mechanisms of the spectacle have developed an emphasis on other ways of immersing a spectator in the screen or spectacular experience.

The study has therefore presented analyses of a range of performances with different levels and types of narrative engagement, including very pronounced narrative immersion in *On Blindness,* through to *Fuerzabruta,* in which narrative suspense is replaced with a suspense based on the interplay of intimacy, distance and participation. At the same time, analysis of other modes of engagement is presented and placed alongside narrativity in order to attempt to see the balance of engagements across a wide range of performances. Some key points can be identified here, from the analysis of narrative engagement throughout the thesis, and conclusions drawn concerning spectacular immersion and habits of engagement.

First, there is a tendency towards both plurality and fragmentation in narrative structure. This is evident in *The Elephant Vanishes,* which presents a fragmentation of narrative coherence and in *On Blindness* in which multiple narratives intercross throughout the piece. Both these effects could be said to signal the rise of the 'postdramatic' as Lehmann terms it (2006), replacing the dichotomy between epic and tragic that can be seen in the narrative development of *Rumble*. Nevertheless, the postdramatic as a 'theatre of states' (Lehmann, 2006: 69) is not a model which fits across this de-emphasis upon narrative. This thesis in contrast, suggests that the theatre of states does not necessarily replace the dramatic. Even when performance immerses the audience as completely as possible in a multisensory experience, that condition of immersion is haunted by the dramatic.

It is clear from this study that narrative engagements are shifting. In an age of computer games, pervasive and augmented reality games and virtual reality, the traditional development of narrative engagement through identification and vicarious suspense is brought into question. More and more performance groups are attempting to provide their audiences with access to a primary active engagement with an environment or experience, a participatory engagement. It is not just an issue of embodiment, as groups like Punchdrunk present highly immersive exploratory or investigative experiences based in part on narrative development. The difference is that the spectators are not passive in the development of that narrative.

Likewise, in emotional engagements with performance, the shift towards feeling a direct response is key. Song of the Goat Theatre in *Chronicles: A Lamentation,* attempts to shift the audience from what Umberto Eco terms the second tear to the first and to feel

direct emotional involvement: one's own emotions rather than emotion within identification. In both *Fuerzabruta* and *Faust*, emotions become a response to the spectator's own situation not that of the characters. In addition, by making the spectator the protagonist in the piece, Blast Theory in *Desert Rain* and in *Uncle Roy All Around You* make this transition most strongly. The spectators themselves are storified; rather than being the passive receptor of a developing narrative, each spectator makes decisions about how to progress as well as responding to the situation this creates.

Lastly, with a spectator bored with the traditional narrative structure in the Hollywood film and more able to see the mechanisms that drive it, the ironic narrative is on the rise. That Improbable Theatre is able to play with narrative structure as well as the aesthetic of melodrama, suggests that audiences today have considerable expertise in dealing with narrative as well as irony surrounding style. While not every spectator will pick up the same ironies in the work, there is a recognition that the narrative structure and engagement can exist in ironic form: there is the potential for the pleasures of irony through self-reflexive or transparent narrative development.

Spectacular Spectatorship: Spectacle, Simultaneity and Transparency

Returning to the attributes of what I term above a spectacular mode of engagement, these habits and established dynamics between spectator and performance can be located in three broad categories: the spectacular (in the traditional sense as excess), simultaneity, and (non-)transparency. These three categories, as one might imagine, are not separate experiences of the spectacle; rather they are entwined. Nevertheless, for the purposes of a clear development of an argument, there has been in the thesis, some separation of these aspects and the conclusions drawn here will similarly distinguish them.

The spectacle is, as the introduction points out, spectacular. It is big and brightly coloured; it is overwhelming in the sensory stimulation it provides; it is excessive. In the simplest sense of the word spectacular, theatre is and has been spectacular ever since it has been possible to put bright colours on a stage. This thesis does not by any means suggest this aspect of contemporary theatre experience is new or different from our experiences of theatre in the past. What is does claim, however, is that the spectacular mode of representation has spread: into the newsrooms, across every form of media and into our everyday expectations beyond the entertainment industry. In addition, it suggests it has leaked into the experiential, into the multisensory and the materially present.

The emphasis upon virtuosity at the beginning of this study is a reflection of this overall spread because the association between spectacle and virtuosity has become so ubiquitous. This expectation of visual perfection affects the popularity of visually spectacular shows like *Fuerzabruta* or *Chronicles: A Lamentation*. However, as the second chapter demonstrates, it can give rise to a battle for the performer to sustain subjective presence on stage. Where performers seek to locate an intimacy or emotionality in the performing body, technical virtuosity can work against this. The subjectivity or gaze of the performer can be lost; replaced with the virtuosic, spectacular body objectified by spectator's gaze. The audience claps for the visual impact but sacrifices a connection with that performer to the spectacle.

The consideration of this effect upon spectator experiences of physical performance allows, however, that in response to a wider sense of loss, spectators may seek out moments of communality or connection. They may, simultaneously with enjoyment of

technical virtuosity, make evaluative judgements based upon the investment of the performers in an experience of communitas with the audience, whether that be through intensity of emotional expression and connection with an audience as in *Chronicles: A Lamentation,* or through complete sensory integration into an experience as in *Fuerzabruta.*

There is a sense in both these pieces, of theatre creating an experience that cannot be replicated through mediatised representation. It is, in both cases, an immersive experience that is based on presence more than absence. Rather than immerse oneself in an *other* place, one is caught up with those performers in *that* space, and one's *own* place in the experience. In both cases as well, there is a connection with the performers themselves rather than any particular character identifications. Barbara Freedman in her work on psychoanalysis and theatre suggests that where film draws us into a fictional process of misidentification with the other, theatre breaks it by looking back and thus refusing to allow us to be drawn in. The gaze is returned (Freedman, 1990).

This potential for subjective presence and thus the return of the gaze in theatre is only realised, of course, where the conventions surrounding the relation of looks are broken or where subjective performer presence is heightened. In *Chronicles: A Lamentation* that presence is heightened through the intensity of the performers' emotional investment in the experience and through the sense of them sharing something with us. In *Fuerzabruta*, the heightened presence of the performers works partly through that sense of sharing in a similar way, but also through the bodily participation of the spectator in the piece.

This experience of the shared moment appears to be a direct challenge to the objectification of the virtuosic body as visual spectacle. It potentially holds a moment of authentic experience of the kind (or at least nearly) that we as a society seem to feel we have lost.   At the same time, it also appears that this lost sense of the authentic experience has become the most marketed commercial product of the century so far. Theatre, like clubs and snowboarding resorts, can in fact provide the very thing that through mediatised communications we can have only vicarious access to. Theatre can engage us in an experience.   In this sense, theatre can out-spectacle the spectacle. Where the spectacular has been a visual excess and perhaps an aural excess through other media, in theatre we can and do have an experience as overwhelming as the big cinema screen, but one which potentially engages all the senses.

It is interesting in the context of the experience economy that the multisensory engagement has become so significant in theatre performance today. This multisensory aspect of the work discussed earlier in the thesis is important to the overall analysis, whether that be through an exploration in the content of a play as in *On Blindness*, or in the actual experience of the spectator. It links directly to the experience of the spectacle as one of simultaneity. We assume on some level that to overwhelm a contemporary audience there need to be multiple simultaneous stimuli and that these need to function as separate engagements or need to move beyond the familiar combination of visual and aural stimuli using set, costume, sound, lighting etc, to create a coherent world. We now require projected images, lighting, acrobatics, loud music physical contact, and dialogue, each functioning simultaneously but not necessarily communicating the same coherent fictional world.

There is a contrast to be drawn here however, between the simultaneous use of systems of signification within a coherent audience engagement, and simultaneously presented *conflicting* spectator engagements. This distinction is most clear in the discussion of transgression. The former, the plurality and simultaneity of sign systems within a coherent engagement is really a part of what is described above as the spectacular – an excess of stimuli. In the work of a number of theatre companies this is manifested in the *mise en scène* in the form of multimedia representation. In *The Elephant Vanishes* we see this kind of engagement in the representation of the chaos of everyday life in the city.

However, the two forms of transgression discussed in relation to *The Elephant Vanishes* and *On Blindness* - aesthetic and ideological transgression - are rooted in the latter: simultaneous *conflicting* spectator engagements, whether those be ideological or aesthetic engagements. Where this collision generates disruptions between different perceptual dynamics, the combination of different modes of engagements becomes a significant element of the piece in itself. This experience of simultaneity as a collision is one of the key threads running throughout the thesis, arguing that in these various collisions there is, on some level, the potential for a response to the spectacle and the dynamics it creates.

The third chapter is particularly important to this argument because it presents an example of a performance where the line between spectacular excess and transgressive collisions is potentially blurred. In *An Elephant Vanishes* there are moments where the multimedia representation simply generates an excess. However, overall, the juxtaposition of synchronic and diachronic engagements and the minimalist aesthetic overrides the moments of excess to present something more challenging.

In Blast Theory's mixed reality performance, simultaneous engagements with fictional, virtual and material realities are combined through participatory experience. Here there is the potential for *détournement* as the collision of different realities forces consequences from one realm into the other. This distinction between transgression and *détournement* is significant, as the former cannot be oppositional and act as a part of a force for what Foucault terms an 'act of liberation' (Foucault, 1988b: 2), whereas the latter can. There is a tension between experiencing the collision of diachronic and synchronic engagements as another way of pushing into a spectacular excess and experiencing it as a transgressive force, in that it reaches beyond comprehension in the way Foucault describes in 'A Preface to Transgression' (1975). However, regardless of that tension, what the transgressive does not do is oppose any kind of political condition through the subversion of its values or practices. A similar collision of a plurality of engagements and perspectives occurs in *Theatre of Blood* where an open-ended ironic engagement with the spectacular generates an experience that like the transgressive, neither reinforces nor directly opposes the spectacle. Simultaneity is here an aesthetic which generates the pleasure of excess yet allows itself transparency at the same time.

Nevertheless, the social practices that are made manifest through the modes of engagement or mechanisms of the spectacle can be challenged in some instances, as the spectator is able to look at their own practices from another place, for example through an experience of mixed reality, thus creating a *détournement*. In relation to *Smaller Poorer Cheaper* (2006), the subversive potential of simultaneous conflicting engagements is evident once again as postmodern political irony can be examined in terms of *détournement* for the spectator.

What this '*reversal* of established relationships of concepts' (Debord, 1983: 206) allows in order to have a subversive power is the puncturing of the spectacle, the version of the world we see, and a questioning of the power relations underlying it. Here the idea of transparency is key. It implies a 'seeing through' which, while it has connotations of the superficiality of postmodern irony, has useful resonances as well. This is why the distinction of the superficial postmodern irony from political or playful irony is so important. By making this distinction, it becomes possible to model the way that the spectacle attempts to appropriate subversive strategies into its system. However, it is also possible to distinguish where 'seeing through' gains access to some kind of underlying socio-political complex.

Having said this, to see through does not necessarily imply that what one can see (the underlying social relations) is in any sense a coherent truth or true version of the world. It merely implies that the spectacular version that passes itself as 'real' or 'true' is shown not to be so. There is no miraculous lifting of the veil to reveal the truth. The closest to truth we can get is the question that arises from the collision of different narratives of versions of the world. There is a depth in the contradiction that goes further than superficial spectacular representations and perhaps there is the possibility of bringing the habits or dynamics underlying this 'real' world into question.

An overarching theme running throughout the thesis is the materially live, 'the uniquely present moment of current experience' (Lavender, 2006: 64) and the relationship between this aspect of performance and the habits formed in relation to the spectacle. This is by no means setting the live against the spectacular as a polar opposition. While disruptive collisions between live presence and immersive digital engagements are explored, equally, a spillage from spectacular modes of engagement located in the

entertainment industry into live performance has also been discussed. What is interesting here is how the combination of live and mediatised can be used to develop an awareness of the practices of each.

Unavoidable in concluding this argument is the admission of an evaluative stance to the material discussed. A number of performances analysed in the thesis are influenced by aspects of the spectacle potentially in a very positive way; I enjoyed the performances immensely and can see in those performances the influence of commercial experiences like clubbing or gaming. However, my own view of the rise of the spectacle and the associated practices and habits of engagement, in general, is a very critical one. Thus, despite this focus on the actual forms habitual engagements take, by using Debord's model, the exploration of these practices opens up a manifestly political analysis. While the majority of the performances discussed within the development of the arguments in this thesis are not political theatre performances as such, there is a politics underpinning the overall perspective presented. There is ongoing an implicit consideration of what kinds of experiences do present a challenge to the modes of engagement established within a society of the spectacle.

The ideologically transgressive, the *détournement*, the intimate or authentic experience all in their own ways present potential challenges. However, these different responses to the spectacle each have different limitations. The transgressive can subvert the ideological structures of the spectacle because it is a process of moving beyond or transcending, but it can simply function as a kind of *jouissance* without any political implications. As Foucault suggests 'Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being [...]but correspondingly, this affirmation contains nothing positive' (Foucault, 1977: 35-6)

Détournement, on the other hand provides a direct challenge to the spectacle. It is an intentional puncturing of the spectacle as described above. However, it has limitations like any other approach. It requires first of all that the spectator sees the contradictions. The elitism of irony is the perfect example of how the *détournement* is limited. It provides the opportunity to see through a surface and open up alternative meanings and possibilities and thus it allows a distance. Likewise the subversion in Blast Theory's work opens up a distance from the habitual, because the spectator sees their behaviour from a different reality. It is transposed into the material real, but again, it relies on the spectator experiencing that distance or process of defamiliarisation.

At the other extreme, the attempt to create an intimacy and a communal experience through performance like that of Song of the Goat Theatre also has limitations. Perhaps it is an escape for a moment from the alienation between individuals in a spectacular society, but it can be easily appropriated as virtuosic performance or as part of the experience economy.

The final area to consider in terms of a political response to the spectacle, is the wider context of a spectacular representation of the world. What this thesis does not explore (the spectacle of the global or the global gaze, the spectacle of terror, the spectacle of consumerism or the spectacle of democracy) is the actual manifestations of the spectacle itself as ideologies permeating the social. As a consideration of theatre, each of these has an effect upon the way theatre is made and the kind of theatre that is made, but that is a separate argument. The discussion of Blast Theory, because they are directly challenging the representations and mechanisms of the spectacle in some of their work, begins to touch on this kind of analysis and this would be an interesting

starting point for further development of this study. However, the case presented here is one focused upon the engagements generated in the performance itself. As Lehmann states in Postdramatic Theatre, 'political engagement does not consist in the topics but in the form of perception', which is defined by an 'aesthetic of responsibility (or response-ability)' (Lehmann, 2006: 184 - 5).

Finally, what this study makes indisputably evident is the relationship between such 'response-ability' and the pleasure of spectatorship. Much of the thesis has emphasised the pleasures of the theatre experience, whether that be the pleasure of excess, of transgressive *jouissance*, of narrative immersion or ironic comprehension. In a spectacular world of sensory stimulation and immediate gratification, in fact, the pleasure of the spectator as an embodied subjectivity is fundamental to the success of a performance. Where the pleasures of a spectacular century are those of the thrill of the chase, the ironic smile, the intense bodily communion of clubbing, or indulgence of nostalgia for community and authenticity, theatre has become a creature of many faces.

As a result, complicity for the theatre maker is no longer simply about participation within an institution or even a medium; it is about the balance between 'response-ability' and the pleasures of the spectacle. Whether the pleasures of communality or transparency outweigh those of visual spectacle or indeed hedonistic embodiment, and whether they necessarily work in opposition, is a key question for theatre of the century.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

7:84 Theatre Company (Scotland) website,
http://www.784theatre.com/index.cfm/page/2/, accessed 23/05/2006.

Aaron, Michele (2005) Looking on: Troubling Spectacles and the Complicitous
Spectator. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality
TV and Beyond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 213 – 222.

Acrobat (2007) *Smaller Poorer Cheaper*. Live performance at The Roundhouse,
London.

Adamenko, Katherine (2003) Reaction Tactics: Redefining Postmodern Spectator
Response and Expectations. In: Susan Kattwinkel (ed.) *Audience Participation: Essays
on Inclusion in Performance.* Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 15 – 23.

AKHE (2005) *Wet Wedding*. Live performance at the Riverside Studios, London.

Allain, Paul (1997) *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition.* Amsterdam: Harwood
Academic Publishers.

Allfree, Claire (2006) 'Metrolife: Fuerzabruta.' *Metro* [Online]
http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/article.html?in_article_id=14828&in_page_id=9,
accessed 07/06/2007.

Alternate Reality Gaming Network website, http://www.argn.com/, accessed
02/08/2005.

Alterne Consortium website, http://www.alterne.info/, accessed 13/06/2006.

Anon. (2006) 'Review of Fuerzabruta.' [Online]
http://www.thelondonseason.com/newvenues.htm. accessed 19/02/2007.

Armstrong, Stephen (2006) 'Be Afraid.' *The Times Online* [Online]
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article731011.ece,
accessed 19/02/2007.

Arts Council (2003) 'Promoting diversity: culturally diverse theatre companies - a
resource for programmers'. [Online]
http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/promotingdiversity_phptn73IK.p
df, accessed 10/05/2006.

Arts Council (2004) 'Disability Information Pack'. [Online]
http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/information/phpHUyrXF.pdf, accessed
10/05/2006.

Ashford, John (1980) The Jazz of Dreams: Performance Art. In: Sandy Craig (ed.)
Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain. Derbyshire: Amber Lane
Press, 95 - 104.

Augé, Marc (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity.* John Howe (trans). London: Verso.

Auslander, Philip (1997) *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism.* London: Routledge.

Auslander, Philip (1999) *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture.* London: Routledge.

Aylett, Ruth and Sandy Louchart (2003) Towards a Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality. *Virtual Reality* Vol. 7: 1, 2 – 9.

Baker, Bobby (1988) *Drawing on a Mother's Experience.* [DVD]

Baker, Bobby (1991) *Kitchen Show.* [DVD].

Baker, Bobby (2006) *How to Live.* Live Performance at The Barbican, London.

Barish, Jonas A. (1981) *The Antitheatrical Prejudice.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barthes, Roland (1975) *The Pleasure of the Text.* Richard Miller (trans). New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Barthes, Roland (1979a) Barthes on Theatre. Peter W. Mathers (trans). *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9: 1, 25 – 29.

Barthes, Roland (1979b) Theatre and Signification. Peter W. Mathers (trans). *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9: 1, 29 – 30.

Barthes, Roland (1981) *Camera Lucida.* Richard Howard (trans). New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Barthes, Roland (1996) The Grain of the Voice. In: Huxley and Witts (ed.) *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader.* London: Routledge, 49 – 56.

Bassett, Kate (2003) 'A Great Joyride with McBurney at the Wheel'. *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1330491,00.html, accessed 09/11/2004.

Bates, Catherine (2002) Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love. In: C. McEachern (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 182 – 203.

Baudrillard, Jean (1988) *The Ecstasy of Communication.* Bernard Schutze and Caroline Schutze (trans). New York and Brooklyn: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, Jean (1994) *The Illusion of the End.* Chris Turner (trans). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Baudrillard, Jean (1995) *The Gulf War did not Take Place.* Paul Patton (trans). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Baudrillard, Jean (2001a) Simulacra and Simulations. In: Mark Poster (ed.) *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings.* Oxford: Polity Press in ass. with Basil Blackwell, 169 – 188.

Baudrillard, Jean (2001b) Fatal Strategies. In: Mark Poster (ed.) *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings.* Oxford: Polity Press in ass. with Basil Blackwell,188 – 209.

Baudrillard, Jean (2001c) The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media. In: Mark Poster (ed.) *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings.* Oxford: Polity Press in ass. With Basil Blackwell, 210 - 222.

Bauman, Zygmunt (1992) *Intimations of Postmodernity.* London: Routledge.

Bauman, Zygmunt (1998) *Globalization: The Human Consequences.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2005) *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bayon, Victor et al. (2003) Mixed Reality Storytelling Environments. *Virtual Reality* Vol. 7: 1, 54 – 63.

Becker, Carol (2002) *Surpassing the Spectacle: Global Transformations and the Changing Politics of Art.* Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Beckerman, Bernard (1990) *Theatrical Presentation.* New York: Routledge.

Bennet, Susan (1997) *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London: Routledge.

Best, Stephen (1994) The Commodification of Reality and the Reality of Commodification: Baudrillard, Debord, and Postmodern Theory. In: Douglas Kellner, (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 41 – 67.

Billington, Michael (2001) 'Whatever You Want'. *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/21stcenturyarts/story/0,,554644,00.html, accessed 18/09/2005.

Billington, Michael (2005) 'Great Expectations'. Review in *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/review/0,,1660900,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Birringer, Johannes (2000) *Performance on the Edge: Transformations of Culture*. London: The Athlone Press.

Blast Theory (1994 – 2000) *Selected Works* [video: VHS].

Blast Theory (1999) *Desert Rain* [video: VHS].

Blast Theory (2002) *An Explicit Volume.* Installation at Rootx Festival in the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull.

Blast Theory (2003) *Uncle Roy All Around You.* Live performance at the ICA, London.

Blast Theory (2006) *Soft Message*. [Participant performance with mobile phones]

Blast Theory (2007) *Can You See Me Now?* [Online Game] http://www.canyouseemenow.co.uk/preston/en/intro.php, accessed 28/07/2007.

Blast Theory website, http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/, accessed 02/08/2005.

Blau, Herbert (1990) *The Audience.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press.

Blue Man Group (2007) *The Blue Man Group*. Live performance at The New London Theatre, London.

Boal, Augusto (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed.* London: Pluto Press.

Bobby Baker's Daily Life website, http://www.bobbybakersdailylife.com/, accessed 05/06/2007.

Boenisch, Peter M. (2002) www dot theatre dot Alice Croft, or: Transforming Performance in Internet Culture. *Body Space Technology* Vol. 2: 2, [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0202/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Bonsor, Kevin (2001) 'How Augmented Reality will Work'. *Howstuffworks* [Online] http://www.howstuffworks.com/augmented-reality.htm, accessed 01/03/2006.

Booth, Michael (1996) Soldiers of the Queen: Drury Lane Imperialism. In: Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (eds) *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 3 – 20.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) *The Logic of Practice.* Richard Nice (trans). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bral, Grzegorz (2004) 'Interview'. [Online] www.visitingarts.org.uk, accessed 05/12/2005.

Brannigan, Edward (1981) The Spectator and Film Space: Two Theories. *Screen* Vol. 22: 1, 55 – 78.

Brauninger, Renate (2003) Forms of Virtuosity in Balanchine's Work and their Virtue. *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery* S*ymposium.* [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/renate/, accessed 08/11/05.

Breakdance website, www.breakdance.com, accessed 08/09/2006.

Brecht, Bertolt (1974) *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*. London: Eyre-Methuen.

Bridger, Mike (2003) Virtual Virtuosity. *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery* S*ymposium*. [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/mikebridger/, accessed 08/11/05.

Broadhurst, Susan (2001) Liminal Aesthetics. *Body Space and Technology* Vol. 1: 1. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0101/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Broadhurst, Susan (2004) The Jeremiah Project: Interaction, Reaction, and Performance. *The Drama Review* Vol. 48: 4, 47 – 57.

Brown, Emily and Paul Cairns (2004) A Grounded Investigation of Game Immersion. *ACM Conf. on Human Factors in Computing*, ACM Press, 1297-1300. [Online] http://www.uclic.ucl.ac.uk/paul/research/Immersion.pdf, accessed 27/03/06.

Brown, Peter (2005) 'Theatre of Blood'. Review in *The London Theatre Guide.* [Online] http://www.londontheatre.co.uk/peterbrown/reviews/theatre05.htm, accessed 11/08/2006.

Bull, John (1984) *New British Political Dramatists.* London: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Burt, Susan and Clive Barker (1980) IOU and the New Vocabulary of Performance Art. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 10: 37, 70 – 94.

Burzynski, Tadeusz et al. (1979) *Grotowski's Laboratory.* B. Taborski (trans). Warsaw: Interpress Publishers.

Butler, Judith (1992) Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism. In: Judith Butler and Joan Scott (ed.) *Feminists Theorise the Political.* New York: Routledge, 3 – 21.

Butler, Judith (1993) *Bodies that Matter.* New York: Routledge.

Cameron, Alasdair (1994) Experimental Theatre in Scotland. In: Theodore Shank (ed.) *Contemporary British Theatre*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 123 – 138.

Campbell, Patrick and Adrian Kear (Ed.) (2001) *Psychoanalysis and Performance.* London: Routledge.

Cannon, Glyn (2004) *On Blindness.* London: Methuen.

Cardboard Citizens website, http://www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk/, accessed 25/05/2006.

Carlson, Marvin (1996) *Performance: A Critical Introduction.* London: Routledge.

Carroll, Noel (1997) Ontology of Mass Art. *The   of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* Vol. 55: 2, 187 – 200.

Cavendish, Dominic (2005) 'Larky, Ingenious and Ambitious.' Review in *The Telegraph.* [Online] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2005/05/27/btpara27.xml, accessed 30/09/2005.

Chapple, Freda and Chiel, Kattenbelt (2006) *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi.

Chaudhuri, Una (1984) The Spectator in Drama/Drama in the Spectator. *Modern Drama* Vol. 27: 3, 281 – 298.

Cheng, Kevin & Paul Cairns (2005) Behaviour, Realism and Immersion in Games. *ACM Conf. on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, ACM Press, 1272-1275. [Online] http://www.uclic.ucl.ac.uk/paul/research/Cheng.pdf, accessed 27/03/06.

Cheok, Adrian D. et al. (2002) Touch-Space: Mixed Reality Game Space Based on Ubiquitous, Tangible, and Social Computing. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing.* Vol. 6: 5 – 6, 430 – 442. [Online] http://portal.acm.org/, accessed 05/03/06.

Cheok, Adrian D. (2006) Mixed Reality for Social and Physical Interaction and Entertainment. *CyberGames 2006.* Proceedings of the 2006 international conference on Game research and development. [Online] http://portal.acm.org/, accessed 27/08/07.

Clapp, Susannah (2004) 'It's Theatre Jim…' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1318316,00.html, accessed 09/04/2005.

Cohen-Cruz, Jan (ed.) (1998) *Radical Street Performance: an International Anthology.* London: Routledge.

Colebrook, Claire (2004) *Irony: The New Critical Idiom.* London: Routledge.

Communications Research Group website, http://www.crg.cs.nott.ac.uk, accessed 03/08/2005.

Complicite (2003) *Mnemonic.* Live performance at Riverside Studios, London.

Complicite (2003) *The Elephant Vanishes.* Live Performance at The National Theatre.

Complicite (2005) *The Noise of Time.* Live performance at The Opera Palais Garnier, Paris.

Complicite website, http://www.complicite.org, accessed 21/04/2005.

Coney (2007) *A Small Town Anywhere.* Live performance at The National Theatre Studios, London.

Cook, Deborah (1994) Symbolic Exchange in Hyperreality. In: Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 150 – 167.

Cooper, Rosie (2003) Live Art and Subversion. *Body, Space Technology* Vol. 3: 2. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0302/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Coppieters, Frank (1981) Performance and Perception. *Poetics Today* Vol. 2: 3, 35 – 38.

Corpos Informaticos website, http://www.corpos.org/, accessed 06/05/2006.

Costa, Maddy (2004a) 'Four to the Floor.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1149044,00.html, accessed 06/03/2005.

Costa, Maddy (2004b) 'Saint Nick.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1174970,00.html, accessed 14/08/2006.

Cousin, Geraldine (1994) An Interview with Mike Pearson of Brith Gof. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2, 37 – 47.

Craig, Sandy (1980a) Reflexes of the Future: The Beginnings of the Fringe. In: Sandy Craig (ed.) *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain.* Derbyshire: Amber Lane Press, 9 – 28.

Craig, Sandy (1980b) Unmasking the Lie: Political Theatre. In: Craig, Sandy (ed.) *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain.* Derbyshire: Amber Lane Press, 30 – 48.

Csordas, Thomas (1994) Introduction: the Body as Representation and being-in-the-word. In: Thomas Csordas (ed.) *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1 – 26.

Currie, Mark (1998) *Postmodern Narrative Theory.* Hampshire: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Curtis, Nick (2006) 'Sheer brutal Beauty.' *The Evening Standard.* [Online] http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/theatre/review-22800342-details/Sheer+brutal+beauty/review.do?reviewId=22800342, accessed 19/02/2007.

Dance touring Partnership website, www.dancetouringpartnership.co.uk , accessed 08/09/2006.

Davey, Anne (2006) Heroes in the Theatre of Adversity: Acrobat. *Realtime.* Issue 76, 42.

Davies, Andrew (1987) *Other Theatres: The Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain.* London: MacMillan Education Ltd.

Davis, Walter (1994) *Get the Guests: Psychoanalysis, Modern American Drama and the Audience.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Debord, Guy (1983) *The Society of the Spectacle.* The Black & Red Project (trans). Detroit: Black and Red Press.

Debord, Guy (2005) *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle.* Not Bored (trans). [Online] http://www.notbored.org/commentaires.html, accessed 25/07/2007.

De Certeau, Michel (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Steven Rendall (trans). California: University of California Press.

De Lauretis, Teresa (1984) *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

De Lauretis, Teresa (1987) *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

De Marinis, Marco (1985) Toward a Cognitive Semiotic of Theatrical Emotions. *Versus* Vol 41, 5 – 20.

De Marinis, Marco (1987) Dramaturgy of the Spectator. *The Drama Review* Vol. 31: 2, 100 – 114.

De Marinis, Marco (1993) *The Semiotics of Performance*. Áine O'Healy (trans). Bloomington: Indiana Press.

De Medeiros, Maria Beatriz (2003) Performance art and Digital Bodies (Corpos Informáticos). *Body Space and Technology* Vol. 3: 2. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0302/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Der Derian, James (1994) Simulation: The Highest Stage of Capitalism? In: Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 189 – 207.

Derevo (2004) *Islands in the Stream*. River Side Studios, London.

Derrida, Jacques (1978) *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1982) *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

De Toro, Fernando (1995) *Theatre Semiotics: Text and Staging in the Modern Theatre*. Mario Vald (trans). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

De Wit, Mara (1994) Self as Source, Part II. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2, 95 – 206.

Diamond, Elin (1988) Brechtian Theory / Feminist Theory: Towards a Gestic Feminist Criticism. *TDR* Vol. 32: 1, 82 – 94.

Diamond, Elin (1990) Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras. In: Sue-Ellen Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 273 – 286.

Diamond, Elin (1992) The Violence of "We": Politicizing Identification. In: Janelle G. Reinalt and Joseph R. Roach (eds) *Critical Theory and Performance.* USA: University of Michigan Press, 390 – 398.

Diamond, Elin (1997) *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Disability Arts Online Website, http://www.disabilityarts.com/, accessed 10/05/2006.

Dixon, Steve (2003) Absent Fiends: Internet Theatre, Posthuman Bodies and the Interactive Void. *Performance Arts International*, 'Presence' edition. [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/presencesite/html/dixonA00.html, accessed 22/09/05.

Dobrowolski, Jacek (2002) 'Review of Chronicles: A Lamentation'. [Online] http://www.polishculture-nyc.org, accessed 14/04/2005.

Dogs in Honey (1990) 'Abstract submitted for Architecture for Babies.' [Online] http://art.ntu.ac.uk/liveart/recsearch.idc?Search=1911, accessed 31/05/2006.

Dolan, Jill (1990) 'Lesbian' Subjectivity in Realism: Dragging at the Margins of Structure and Ideology. In: Sue-Ellen Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 42 – 53.

DV8 Physical Theatre (1990) *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men.* [VHS: Video] Millenium Productions.

DV8 Physical Theatre (1992) *Strange Fish.* [VHS: Video] Dance Videos.

DV8 Physical Theatre (1996) *Enter Achilles*. [VHS: Video] DV8 Films production.

DV8 Physical Theatre website, http://www.dv8.co.uk, accessed 09/04/2005.

Eco, Umberto (1998) *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality.* London: Vintage.

Edgar, David (1979a) Ten Years of Political Theatre, 1968-78. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 8: 32, 24 – 33.

Edgar, David (1979b) Towards a Theatre of Dynamic Ambiguities. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9: 33, 3 – 24.

Edwards, Barry (2001) A Tele-Presence Experiment: Optik in Sao Paulo + London. *Body Space Technology* Vol. 1: 2. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0102/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Elam, Keir (1980) *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama.* London: Methuen Ltd.

Espiner, Mark (2004) 'The National anti-theatre.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1330491,00.html, accessed 09/04/2005.

Etchells, Tim (2003) 'Interview on *Surrender Control* with Matt Locke.' [Online] http://www.test.org.uk/archives/000617.html, accessed 21/03/2006.

EyeToy website, http://www.eyetoy.com/index.asp?pageID=18, accessed 29/03/2006.

Featherstone, Mike (1991) The Body in Consumer Culture. In: Mike Featherstone et al. (ed.) *The Body, Social Process and Cultural Theory.* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 170 – 196.

Fell, John L. (1980) Melodrama, the Movies and Genre. In: Daniel Gerould (ed.) *Melodrama*. New York: New York Literary Forum, 187 – 195.

Feral, Josette (1982) Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified. *Modern Drama* Vol. 25: 1, 170 – 181.

Fischer Lichte, Erika (1992) *The Semiotics of Theater*. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (trans). Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Fischer Lichte, Erika (1994) New Concepts of Spectatorship: Towards a Postmodern Theory of Theatricality. *Semiotica* Vol. 101: 1/2, 113 – 123.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika (1995a) Introduction – Theatricality: A Key Concept in Theatre and Cultural Studies. *Theatre Research International* Vol. 20: 2, 85 – 89.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika (1995b) From Theatre to Theatricality: How to construct Reality. *Theatre Research International* Vol. 20: 2, 97 – 105.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika (1997) *The Show and Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Flatt, Kate and Bernadette Iglich (2003) 'The Space Between' Interview in *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery Symposium.* [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/flatt-iglich/, accessed 08/11/05.

Forced Entertainment (2005) Research Pack. Sheffield: Forced Entertainment.

Forced Entertainment website, www.forcedentertainment.com, accessed 06/05/2006.

Forkbeard Fantasy website, www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk, accessed 23/05/2006.

Foucault, Michel (1977) A Preface to Transgression. In: Donald F. Bouchard.(Ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (trans). New York: Cornell UP, 29 – 52.

Foucault, Michel (1986) *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. II*. Robert Hurley (trans). New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel (1988a) *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings: 1977 – 1984*. Laurence Kritzman (ed.). London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel (1988b) The Ethic of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom. [Interview] In: James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (ed.) *The Final Foucault.* J.D. Gauthier (trans). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1 – 20.

Foucault, Michel (1990) *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Vol. III.*, Robert Hurley (trans). New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel (2000a) *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 - 1984, Vol. 1*. Paul Rabinow (ed.). Robert Hurley et al. (trans). London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel (2000b) *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 2*. Paul Rabinow (ed.). Robert Hurley et al. (trans). London: Penguin.

Forte, Jeanie (1990) Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism. In: Sue-Ellen Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 251 – 267.

Forte, Jeanie (1989) Realism, Narrative and the Feminist Playwright – A Problem of Reception. *Modern Drama* Vol. 32: 1, 115 – 127.

Frank, Arthur (1991) For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review. In Mike Featherstone et al. (ed.) *The Body, Social Process and Cultural Theory.* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 36 - 102.

Frantic Assembly, Graeae and Paines Plough (2003) *On Blindness.* Live Performance at The Birmingham Rep, Birmingham.

Frantic Assembly (2005) *Hymns* (revived). Live Performance at Contact Theatre, Manchester.

Frantic Assembly website, http://www.franticassembly.co.uk/, accessed 06/03/2005.

Freedman, Barbara (1990) Frame-Up: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Theatre. In: Sue-Ellen Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 54 – 76.

Friedman, Jonathon (2000) Globalization, Class and Culture in Global Systems. *The Journal of World Systems Research* Vol. 6: 3, 636 – 657.

Freud, Sigmund (1937) Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In: John Rickman (ed.) *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, 162 - 194.

Fuerzabruta (2006) *Fuerzabruta*. Live performance at The Roundhouse, London.

Fuerzabruta website, http://www.fuerzabruta.net, accessed 12/06/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2002a) 'Raising the Roof.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/reviews/story/0,,1326956,00.html, accessed 15/08/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2002b) 'A Number.' Review in *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/reviews/story/0,,800089,00.html, accessed 26/05/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2004a) 'Sinner.' Review in *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/britishtheatre/story/0,12195,749203,00.html, accessed 19/10/2004.

Gardner, Lyn (2004b) 'Sit Back and Relax Article in Improbable Theatre's *Lifegame* program.' [Online] at http://www.improbable.co.uk/article.asp?article_id=6, accessed 11/08/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2005a) 'Just for Show.' Review in *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/review/0,,1641834,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2005b) 'Noone Wants a Ghetto.' *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/funding/story/0,,1537003,00.html, accessed 15/08/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2006a) 'The Sultan's Elephant.' Review in *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/reviews/story/0,,1769001,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2006b) 'Souterrain.' Review in *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/review/0,,1774895,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2006c) 'The Island.' Review in *The Guardian*. [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/reviews/story/0,,1770761,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2006d) 'An Offer They Can't Refuse.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1801587,00.html/, accessed 15/08/2006.

Gardner, Lyn (2006e) 'A Robot Elephant, Flying Ships and 8 Tons of Fireworks.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/feature/0,,1761590,00.html, accessed 14/08/2006.

Garratt, Sheryl (1998*) Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture*. London: Headline Book Publishing.

Gaulier School website, http://www.ecolephilippegaulier.com/, accessed 15/04/2005.

GestureTek website, www.GestureTek.com, accessed 06/08/2005.

Giannachi, Gabriella (2004) *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction.* London: Routledge.

Giesekam, Greg (1994) A View from the Edge. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2, 25 – 35.

Giroux, Henri A. (2006) *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*. Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.

Glesner, Julia. (2003) Internet Performances as Site-Specific Art. *Body Space Technology* Vol. 3, 1. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0301/index.html.

Goldberg, Roselee (1998) *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s.* London: Thames & Hudson.

Gough, Richard. (2003) Dancing with Joules: The Transformation of Performance Knowledge. in *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery* symposium [online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/richardgough/, accessed 08/11/05.

Gough, Richard et al. (eds) (2006) *A Performance Cosmology*. London: Routledge.

Gould, Philip (2003) The Empty Stadium. *Progressive Politics* Vol. 2: 3, 68 – 75.

Graeae website, http://members.lycos.co.uk/graeae/, accessed 06/03/2005.

Grau, Oliver (2003) *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. MIT Books, Cambridge.

Greene, Thomas (1961) The Norms of Epic. *Comparative Literature* Vol. 8: 3, 199 – 207.

Grimley, Terry (2005) 'Paradise reclaimed.' Review [online] http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/reviews/, accessed 30/09/2005.

Grotowski, Jerzy (1975) *Towards a Poor Theatre.* London: Methuen.

Gržinic, Marina (1999) Actions in Virtual Space. *Performance Research* Vol. 4: 2, 34 – 41.

Habermas, Jürgen (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Thomas Burger (trans). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (2003) *The Future of Human Nature*. Polity Press (trans). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hand, Richard J. and Wilson, Michael (2002) *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Harvie, Jen (2005) *Staging the UK*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hauptman, Ira (1992) Defending Melodrama. In: James Redmond (ed.)*Melodrama, Themes in Drama.* Vol 14 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 282 – 288.

Hays, Michael & Nikolopoulou, Anastasia (1996) Introduction. In: Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (eds) *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, vii – xvi.

Heathfield, Adrian (ed.) (2004) *Live: Art and Performance*. London: Tate Publishing.

Heilman, Robert B. (1968) *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Hemming, Sarah (2006a) 'Fuerzabruta, Roundhouse, London' *The Financial Times* [Online] http://www.ft.com/cms/s/781df922-f644-11da-b09f-0000779e2340.htm, accessed 19/02/2007.

Hemming, Sarah (2006b) 'The Roundhouse Comes Full Circle.' *The Financial Times* [Online] http://www.ft.com/cms/s/38a83b9c-efd0-11da-b80e-0000779e2340.html, accessed 19/02/2007.

Henderson, Signy (2003) XXX, Virtuosity and the Abject in *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery* S*ymposium*. [online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/signyhenderson/, accessed 08/11/05.

Herget, Winfried (2007) Villains for Pleasure? The Paradox of Nineteenth-Century (American) Melodrama. In: Frank Kelleter et al. (eds) *Melodrama!: The Mode of Excess from Early America to Hollywood*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER, 19 – 34.

Hockey, Jenny (1990) *Experiences of Death: An Anthropological Account*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hockey, Jenny (1993) The Acceptable face of Human Grieving? The Clergy's role in Managing Emotional Expression During Funerals. In: Clark, David (ed.) *The Sociology of Death*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers/The Sociological Review, 129 – 148.

Hodgkinson, Will. (2001) Home Entertainment: an interview with Laurie Anderson. July 20, in *The Guardian* [online] http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~jimmyd/laurie-anderson/articles/guardian.txt accessed 02/11/2005.

Holdsworth, Nadine (1997) Good Nights Out: Activating the Audience with 7:84 (England). *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9: 49, 29 – 40.

Holland, Norman (1979) 'Reading and Identity.' [Online] http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/nnh/rdgident.htm, accessed 16/02/04.

Holland, Norman (1991) 'The Trouble(s) with Lacan.' [Online] at http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/nnh/online.htm#lacan, accessed 16/02/04.

Holub, Robert C. (1984) *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction.* London: Methuen.

Hutcheon, Linda (1985) *A Theory of Parody*. London: Methuen.

Hutcheon, Linda (1994) *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London: Routledge.

Hutcheon, Linda (2000) Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern. Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory, *Studies in Comparative Literature* Vol. 30, 189 – 207.

Hutera, Donald (2004) 'Tropicana.' Review in *The Times*. [Online] http://www.shuntevents.freeuk.com/reviewtropicanatimes.htm, accessed 25/05/2006.

Ibanez, Jesús et al., (2003) Storytelling in Virtual Environments from a Virtual Guide Perspective in *Virtual Reality* Vol. 7: 1, 30 – 42.

Ilsemann, Hartmut (1996) Radicalism in the Melodrama of the Early Nineteenth Century. In: Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (eds) *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 191 – 207.

Improbable Theatre (2005) *Theatre of Blood.* Live Performance at the National Theatre.

Improbable Theatre website, http://www.improbable.co.uk/, accessed 25/05/2006.

Innes, Christopher (2002) *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

IPerG website, http://www.pervasive-gaming.org/index_swf.html, accessed 02/08/2005.

It's Alive website, http://www.itsalive.com/, accessed 02/08/2005.

Jackson, Phil (2004*) Inside Clubbing: Sensual Experiments in the Art of Being Human*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Jacoby, Jeffrey (2004) 'Carnival Tempests and Strange Showers Indeed: The Politics of Spatial Praxis in the De La Guarda Flying Machine'. Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Maryland, College Park.

Jameson, Fredric (1992) *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* London: Verso.

James, Fredric (1997) Postmodernism and Consumer Society. In: Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan (eds) *Studies in Culture: An Introductory Reader*. London: Arnold, 192 – 205.

Jameson, Fredric (1998) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. London: Verso.

Jauss, Hans Robert (1982) *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception.* Timothy Bahti (trans). Sussex: The Harvester Press.

Jencks, Charles (1986) *What is Postmodernism?* London: Academy Editions.

Jestrovic, Silvija (2001) The Performer and the Machine: Some Aspects of Laurie Anderson's Stage Work. *Body Space Technology* Vol. 1: 1. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0101/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Johnson, Barbara (1980) *The Critical Difference.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Johnson, Craig (2005) 'Pressure to Perform.' Review. [Online] http://www.spikemagazine.com/0705-fierce-festival.php, accessed 30/09/2005.

Johnson, Gill et al. (2004) 'New audiences for the arts'. The New Audiences Programme 1998-2003, Arts Council Publication. [Online] http://www.newaudiences.org.uk/resource.php?id=420, accessed 10/05/2006.

Jones, Alice (2006) 'Amato Saltone, Shunt Vaults.' Review in *The Independent.* [Online] http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/theatre/reviews/article342966.ece, accessed 25/05/2006.

Jones, Simon (1994) Some Thoughts Towards a Science of Chaos in Recent Performance. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2 49 – 59.

Kattwinkel, Susan (2003) Introduction. In: Susan Kattwinkel (ed.) *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance.* Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, ix – xviii.

Kaye, Nick (2000) *Site-specific Art. Performance, Place and Documentation*. London: Routledge.

Kelleter, Frank and Ruth Mayer (2007) The Melodramatic Mode Revisited: an iIntroduction. In: Frank Kelleter et al. (eds) *Melodrama!: The Mode of Excess from Early America to Hollywood*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER, 7 – 18.

Kellner, Douglas (1994) Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the Fin de Millennium. In: Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1 – 24.

Kellner, Douglas (2005) Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle. In: Geoff King,(ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 23 – 36.

Kershaw, Baz (1978) Theatre Art and Community Action: the Achievement of Medium Fair. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 30: 8, 64 – 91.

Kershaw, Baz (1992) *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention.* London: Routledge.

Kershaw, Baz (1999) *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard.* London: Routledge.

Kimbell, Lucy (2003) Interview on *Audit* with Matt Locke. [Online] http://www.test.org.uk/archives/000622.html accessed 21/03/2006.

King, Geoff (2005a) Introduction: The Spectacle of the Real. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond.* Bristol: Intellect Books, 13 – 22.

King, Geoff (2005b) 'Just Like a Movie'?: 9/11 and Hollywood Spectacle. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond.* Bristol: Intellect Books, 47 – 58.

Klein, Joanne (2003) Looking at Looking (at looking): Experiments in the Interrogation of Spectating. In: Susan Kattwinkel (ed.) *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance.* Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 101 – 115.

Klein, Naomi (2001) *No Logo.* London: Flamingo.

Klesen, Martin. et al. (2003) Staging Exhibitions: Methods and Tools for Modelling Narrative Structure to Produce Interactive Performances with Virtual Actors. *Virtual Reality* Vol. 7: 1, 17 – 29.

Kneehigh Theatre (2006) *Nights at the Circus.* Live Performance at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds.

Kneehigh Theatre (2006) *Tristan & Yseult.* Live Performance at The National Theatre, London.

Knott, Laura (2001) World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection Between the "Cyberplace" and the Global Landscape. *Leonardo* Vol. 34: 1, 11 – 16.

Kotsopoulo, Aspasia (2001) Reading Against the Grain Revisiting. *Jumpcut: A Review of Contemporary Media* Vol. 44. [Online] http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc44.2001/aspasia/aspasiatextonly.html, accessed 23/04/2007.

Kristeva, Julia (1986) Revolution in Poetic Language. In Toril Moi (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader.* Oxford: Blackwell, 90 – 136.

Lapsley, Robert and Michael Westlake (1988) *Film Theory: An Introduction.* Manchester: The Manchester University Press.

Lefebvre, Henri (1991) *The Critique of Everyday Life*, *Vol. 1*. John Moore (trans). London: Verso.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006) *Postdramatic Theatre*. Karen Jürs-Munby (trans). London: Routledge.

Lenoir, Nina (2003) The Audience in Cyberspace: Audience-Performer Interactivity in Online Performances. In: Susan Kattwinkel (ed.) *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 115 – 133.

Lepage, Robert (2006) *Le Projet Andersen*. Live performance at Théâtre des Célestins, Lyon, France.

Ley, Graham (1999) *From Mimesis to Interculturalism: Readings of Theatrical Theory Before and After 'Modernism'*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Lie, Rico (2002) Spaces of Intercultural Communication. The IAMCR *Conference* in Barcelona, 21 - 26 July 2002. [Online] http://www.portalcomunicacion.com/forumv/forum3/pdf/f3_eng.pdf, accessed 13/05/2006.

Linden, Ruth (1999) The Other Diana. *NWSA Journal*. [Online] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nwsa_journal/v011/11.2linden.html, accessed 05/11/05.

Littlewood, Jane (1993) The Denial of Death and Rites of Passage in Contemporary Societies. In: Clark, David (ed.) *The Sociology of Death*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers/The Sociological Review, 69 – 84.

Locke, Matt. (2003) [MEDIA_SPACE] Are You Awake? Are You In Love? *Camera Work: A Journal of Photographic Arts* Vol. 30: 2, 30 – 35.

Lockwood, Dean (2005) Teratology of the Spectacle. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 70 – 82.

Lodziak, Conrad (2002) *The Myth of Consumerism*. London: Pluto Press.

Logan Brian (2005) 'This ability that ability – Who cares as long as it works?' *The Independent*. [Online] http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/story.jsp?story=489430, accessed 06/03/2005.

Lubbock, Percy (1921) *The Craft of Fiction*. London: Jonathon Cape.

Lucas, Valerie (2000) Re-visioning the Victorian Stage: Postmodern Elements in the Work of Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott. In: NiIrene Eynot-Confino and Eva Sormova (eds) *Space and the Postmodern Stage*. Prague: Ekon, 54 – 62.

Luke, Timothy W. (1994) Aesthetic Production and Cultural Politics: Baudrillard and Contemporary Art. In: Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 209 – 226.

Lyon, Margot L. and Jack M. Barbalet (1994) Society's Body: Emotion and the "Somatization" of Social Theory. In: Thomas Csordas (ed.) *Embodiment and*

Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 48 – 68.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (trans). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois (1988) *The Differend.* G. ven den Abeele (trans). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

MacColl, Ewan (1973) The Workshop Story Part 1: Grass Roots of Theatre Workshop. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9, 58 – 68.

Machon, Josephine (2001) (Syn)aesthetics and Disturbance: A Preliminary Overview. *Body, Space & Technology V*ol 1: 2.

Machon, Josephine (2007) Space and the Senses: the (syn)aesthetics of Punchdrunk's site-sympathetic work. *Body, Space & Technology V*ol 7: 1.

Macintyre, Blair and Jay D. Bolter, (2003) Single-Narrative, Multiple Point-of-view Dramatic Experiences in Augmented Reality. *Virtual Reality* Vol. 7: 1, 10 – 16.

Mackey, Hugh (1997) Introduction. In: Hugh Mackey (ed.) *Consumption and Everyday Life.* London: Sage Publications, 1 – 12.

Mackey, Hugh (1997) Consuming Communication Technologies at Home. In: Hugh Mackey (ed.) *Consumption and Everyday Life.* London: Sage Publications, 259 – 308.

Marguerite Pepper Productions website, http://www.mpproductions.com.au/, accessed 25/08/2007.

McBurney, Simon (2004) 'The Elephant Vanishes.' In the program for *The Elephant Vanishes* for October 2004 production at The Power Center at the University of Michigan. [Online] http://www.ums.org/pdfs/programs/complicite.pdf, accessed 02/06/2005.

McDurmott, Phelim (2005) 'Instant Acting.' [Online] at http://www.improbable.co.uk/article.asp?article_id=11, accessed 08/08/2006.

McGonical, Jane (2003) This is not a Game: Immersive Aesthetics and Collective Play [Online] http://www.seanstewart.org/beast/mcgonigal/notagame/paper.pdf. Accessed 02/08/2005.

McGrath, John (1979) The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 9: 35, 43 – 54.

McKenzie, Jon (2001) *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance.* London & New York: Routledge.

McQuail, Denis (1997) *Audience Analysis.* California: Sage Publications Ltd.

Megson, Chris (2004) The Spectacle is Everywhere: Tracing the Situationist Legacy in British Playwriting since 1968. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 14: 2, 17 – 28.

Melrose, Susan. (2005) Words Fail Me: Dancing with the Other's Familiar. Paper given at *Towards Tomorrow: An International Gathering Conference* in Aberystwyth.

Melrose, Susan. (2003) Who knows – and Who Cares (About performance Mastery) *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery S*ymposium. [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/performancemastery/, accessed 08/11/05.

Merback, Mitchell. B. (1999) *The Thief the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

Metz, Christian (1974) *Film Language*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mirza, Munira (2006) 'For Arts Sake?' A feature in *The Guardian*. [Online] at http://arts.guardian.co.uk/funding/story/0,,1708718,00.html, accessed 15/08/2006.

Misopolinou, Anna. (2001) Ecstasy: A Source of Intimacy or Applications of the Dionysiac Model for Grotowski's Theatre. *Body Space and Technology* Vol. 1: 1. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0101/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Mondloch, Katie (2004) A Symphony of Sensations in the Spectator: Le Corbusier's Poème Electronique. *Leonardo*, Volume 37: 1, 57 – 61.

Moss, Chris (2006) 'Fantasy Factory' in *The Telegraph Online* at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&grid=&xml=/arts/2006/05/15/btfuerza13.xml. Accessed 19/02/2007.

Moulthrop, Stuart (1993) Writing Cyberspace: Literacy in the Age of Simulacra. In: Alan Wexelblat (ed.) *Virtual Reality: Applications and Explorations.* Cambridge MA: Academic Press Professional, 77 – 90.

Mulvey, Laura (1975) Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen* Vol. 16: 3, 6 – 18.

Mulvey Laura (1981) Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by Duel in the Sun. *Framework* Vol. 6, 15-17.

Mulvey, Laura (1989) *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press.

Munt, Sally (1998) *Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space*. London: Cassell.

Murakami, Haruki (1993) *The Elephant Vanishes*. Alfred Birnbaum and Jay Rubin (trans). London: Vintage.

Nagy, Phyllis (1998) *Weldon Rising. Plays 1*. London: Methuen.

Napoleon, Davi (2005) Designing on your Feet. *Entertainment Design* [online] at http://entertainmentdesignmag.com/mag/show_business_designing_feet/ accessed 15/04/2005.

Oberender, Thomas (2004) More Presence on Stage. Johannes Birringer (trans). *TheaterHeute* April: 19-26. [Online] http://art.ntu.ac.uk/performance_research/birringer/daplit.htm, accessed 15/07/2006.

Oborne, Peter (2002) There has been a paradigm shift in politics, but only the LibDems seem to understand the new rules. *The Spectator*. [Online] http://www.spectator.co.uk/archive/, accessed 24/07/2007.

Oddey, Alison (1994a) How to Shop – An Interview with Bobby Baker. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2, 2 pp. 85 - 93.

Olson, Christopher (2002) Theatre Audience Surveys: Towards a Semiotic Approach. *New Theatre Quarterly* 18: 3, 261 – 275.

Orlan (1998) Intervention. David Ausburg and Tanya Moos (trans). In: Phelan, Peggy. & Lane, Jill (eds) *The Ends of Performance.* New York: New York University Press.

Osborne, Peter and Lynne Segal (1993) Extracts from *Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler.* London. [Online] http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm, accessed 15/02/2007 © Radical Philosophy Ltd.

Packer, Randall & Ken, Jordan (2001) *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Palmer, Catherine (2004) Death, Danger and the Selling of Risk in Adventure Sports. In: Belinda Wheaton (ed.) *Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity and Difference*. London: Routledge, 55 – 69.

Parker Starbuck, Jennifer (2003) The Body Electric: Cathy Weis at Dance Theatre Workshop. *A Journal of Performance and Art* Vol. 25: 2, 93 – 98. [Online] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/performing_arts_journal/v025/25.2parker-starbuck.html.

Paterson, Mark (2006) *Consumption and Everyday Life*. Oxon: Routledge.

Pavis, Patrice (1982) *Languages of the Stage*. Susan Melrose (Trans). Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.

Pavis, Patrice (1992) *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture.* London: Routledge.

Peacock, D. Keith (1991) *Radical Stages: Alternative History in Modern British Drama*. London: Greenwood Press.

Perplex City website, http://www.perplexcity.com/, accessed 02/08/2005.

Phelan, Peggy (1993a) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* London: Routledge.

Phelan, Peggy (1993b) Reciting the Citation of Others; or, A Second Introduction. In: Lynda Hart, and Peggy Phelan (eds) *Acting Out: Feminist Performances.* Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 13 – 34.

Pierson, Michele (2005) A Production Designer's Cinema: Historical Authenticity in Popular Films Set in the Past. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond.* Bristol: Intellect Books, 139 – 150.

Plant, Sadie (1992) *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age.* London: Routledge.

Polish Culture website, http://www.polishculture-nyc.org, accessed 14/04/2005.

Pontbriand, Chantal (1982) The Eye Finds no Fixed Point on which to Rest… *Modern Drama* Vol. 25: 1, 154 – 62.

Poster, Mark (1994) Critical Theory and Technoculture: Habermas and Baudrillard. In: Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 68 – 87.

Postlewait, Thomas (1996) From Melodrama to Realism: The Suspect History of American Drama. In: Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (eds) *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 39 – 60.

Punchdrunk (2006) *Faust.* Live performance in association with the National Theatre at 21 Wapping Lane, London.

Punchdrunk (2007) *Masque of the Red Death.* Live performance at the Battersea Arts Centre, London.

Quick, Andrew (1994) Searching for Redemption with Cardboard Wings: Forced Entertainment and the Sublime. In *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2, 25 – 35.

Quinn, Michael (1995) *The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theater Theory*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ravenhill, Mark (2006) 'Better to risk being local than to be generalised.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1703143,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Rebellato, Dan (1999) *1956 And All That: The Making of Modern British Drama.* London: Routledge.

Reinelt, Janelle (1989) Feminist Theory and the Problem of Performance. *Modern Drama* Vol 32: 1, 48 – 57.

Reinelt, Janelle and Joseph Roach (ed.) (1992) *Critical Theory and Performance.* Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Reinelt, Janelle (2001) Performing Europe: Identity Formation for a 'New' Europe. *Theatre Journal* 53: 3, 365 – 387. [Online] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_journal/v053/53.3reinelt.html, accessed 15/04/05.

Renegade Theatre (2004) *Rumble*. Live Performance at The Aurora Nova at the Edinburgh Festival.

Richardson, Brian (1997) Beyond Poststructuralism: Theory of Character, the personae of Modern Drama and the Antinomies of Critical Theory. *Modern Drama* Vol. 40: 1, 86 – 99.

Richardson, Ingrid and Carly Harper (2002) Corporeal Virtuality: The Impossibility of a Fleshless Ontology. *Body Space and Technology* Vol. 2: 2. [Online] http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0202/index.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Rish, Michael (1999) *New Media in Late Century Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Rodney, Lee (2005) Real Time, Catastrophe, Spectacle: Reality as Fantasy in Live Media. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 37 – 46.

Rubin, Jay (2004) The Elephant's long journey. In the program for *The Elephant Vanishes* for the production at The Power Center at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. [Online] http://www.ums.org/pdfs/programs/complicite.pdf, accessed 02/06/2005.

Rumbletours website, www.Rumbletours.com, accessed 13/05/2005.

Ryan, Marie-Laure (2001) Beyond Myth and Metaphor – The Case of Narrative in Digital Media. *The International Journal of Computer Game Research* Vol 1: 1 [Online] http://ic.media.mit.edu/courses/mas878/pubs/ryan-gs01-beyond-myth-and-metaphor.pdf, accessed 01/03/2006.

Saltz, David (1997) The Art of Interaction: Interactivity, Performativity, and Computers. *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* Vol. 55: 2, 117 – 118.

Sancho, Jane (2003) 'Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes Towards Disability and its Portrayal on Television.' Report by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission. [Online] http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/diversity.shtml, accessed 13/07/2005.

Sandhana, Lakshmi (2005) 'Pacman comes to life virtually.' *BBC News* [Online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4607449.htm, accessed 01/03/06.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1959) *Course in General Linguistics*. Wade Baskin (trans). London: Owen.

Sauter, Willmar (2000) *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception.* Iowa: University of Iowa Press.

Schechner, Richard & Lisa Wolford (Eds) (1997) *The Grotowski Source Book.* London: Routledge.

Schirato, Tony and Jen Webb (2003) *Understanding Globalization*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Sewall, Richard (1980) *A Vision of Tragedy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shank, Theodore (ed.) (1994) *Contemporary British Theatre.* New York: St Martin's Press.

Shaw, Jeffrey et al. (2000) 'Staged Mixed Reality Performance *Desert Rain* by Blast Theory'. [Online] http://www.nada.kth.se/erena/pdf/D7b3K.pdf, accessed 03/08/05.

Shields, Rob (1992) The Individual, Consumption Culture and the Fate of Community. in Rob Shields (ed.) *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption.* London: Routledge, 99 – 113.

Sielke, Sabine (2007) The Movie of Manners, or: Visualizing Realism, Post- producing Melodrama. In: Frank Kelleter et al. (eds) *Melodrama!: The Mode of Excess from Early America to Hollywood*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER, 283 – 304.

Sim, Stuart (2002) *Irony and Crisis: A Critical History of Postmodern Culture.* Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd.

Simons, Jon (1995) *Foucault and the Political.* London: Routledge.

Smilie, Susan (2005) 'The Palm House Effect'. *The Guardian* [online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1600992,00.html, accessed 17/05/2006.

Smith, Adam (1982) *The Wealth of Nations: Books I – III.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Smith, Julian Maynard (1994) Station House Opera: *The Oracle*. *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 2: 2, 61 – 72.

Smith, Kathy (2005) Reframing Fantasy: September 11 and the Global Audience. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 59 – 70.

So Bad it's Good website, www.bad-good.org, accessed 25/08/2007.

Song of the Goat Theatre (2004) *Chronicles : A Lamentation.* Live performance at The Aurora Nova, Edinburgh Festival.

Song of the Goat Theatre (2005) *Chronicles : A Lamentation.* Live performance at South Hill Park Arts Centre, London.

Song of the Goat Theatre website, www.piesnkozla.pl/, accessed 23/05/2006.

Sontag, Susan (2003) *Regarding the Pain of Others.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Sorking, Michael (ed.) (1992) *Variations on a Theme Park*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Space Hijackers website, http://www.spacehijackers.co.uk/, accessed 29/08/2007.

Spencer, Charles (2004) 'Stinker of the Year?' Review of *On Blindness* in *The Telegraph*. [Online] http://www.arts.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2004/02/18/btchas18.xml&sSheet=/arts/2004/02/19/ixartleft.html, accessed 06/03/2005.

Stacey, Sean C. (2005) Touch Me, I'm Perplex City. [Online] http://www.argn.com/archive/000256touch_me_im_perplex_city.php, accessed 26/07/2005.

Stanier Phil (2001) Re:Location. The Use of Space in Contemporary British Theatre. *Body, Space & Technology* Vol. 1: 2. [Online] people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol0102/philstanier.html, accessed 19/09/05.

Stan Won't Dance (2004) *Sinner.* Live Performance at The Contact Theatre, Manchester.

Stan Won't Dance website, http://www.stanwontdance.com/sinner/, accessed 25/05/2006.

Station House Opera (1998) *Roadmetal Sweetbread*. [video: VHS].

Station House Opera (2006) *Play on Earth*. Live performance at The Guildhall, Newcastle Gateshead.

Station House Opera website, http://www.stationhouseopera.com/, accessed 17/07/2007.

Stein, Barry E. and M. Alex Meredith (1993) *The Merging of the Senses.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

St John, Graham (2001) Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body: Beyond Turner at ConFest. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology.* [Online] http://www.highbeam.com/library/docFree.asp?docid=1G1:72299821&key=0C177A56 741D156A1303001E076806087D07720D75717806700F, accessed 13/05/2006.

Storey, John (1999) *Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life.* London: Arnold.

Strömberg, Hanna et al. (2002) A Group Game Played in Interactive Virtual Space: Design and Evaluation. *Symposium on Designing Interactive Systems* [Online] http://portal.acm.org/, accessed 05/03/2006.

Svich, Caridad (ed.) (2003*) Transglobal Readings: Crossing Theatrical Boundaries*. Manchester: Manchester University press.

Terdiman, Daniel (2005) '*Perplex City* Faces Reality Check.' [online] http://www.wired.com/news/games/0,2101,68113,00.html?tw=wn_tophead_2, accessed 02/08/2005.

Thompson, John (1995) *The Media and Modernity: a Social Theory of the Media.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Thompson, Krista A. (1998) 'Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña Undiscovered Amerindians.' [Online] http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/UndiscAmerind.html, accessed 30/10/2007.

Till, Nick (2003) It's Good for You, the Virtue of Virtuosity. *Virtuosity and Performance Mastery Symposium*. [Online] http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/epai/virtuosity/nicktill/, accessed 08/11/2005.

Todd, Matthew (2006) 'I Feel Love.' *The Guardian* [Online] http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1808584,00.html, accessed 15/08/2006.

Trevisan, Daniela Gorski, et al. (2004) Conceptualising Mixed Spaces of Interaction for Designing Continuous Interaction. *Virtual Reality* Vol. 8: 2, 83 – 95.

Turner, Terence (1994) Bodies and Anti-bodies: Flesh and Fetish in Contemporary Social Theory. In: Thomas Csordas (ed.) *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 27 – 47.

Turner, Victor (1967) Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage. in *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 93 - 111.

Turner, Victor (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play.* New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications.

Twist, Jo (2005) **'**Body and brain of gamers probed.' *BBC News* [Online] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/3618320.stm, accessed 01/03/2006.

Ubersfeld, Anne (1982) The Pleasure of the Spectator. Pierre Bouilaguet and Charles Jose (trans). *Modern Drama* Vol. 25, 127 – 139.

Vaneigem, Raoul (1967) *The Revolution of Everyday Life.* [Online] http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/pub_contents/5, accessed 30/05/2006 Detroit: Black and Red.

Venning, Mike (1986) *The Peninsula Voice.* No.49. [Online] http://www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk/The_Peninsula_Voice_1986.pdf, accessed 22/05/2006.

Verma, Jatindes (2004) Asian Theatre in Britain. Historical Developments and Contemporary Identity. *Asian Theatre Conference*, Birmingham. [Online] http://www.tara-arts.com/HTML/articles/article_asian_theatre.htm, accessed 27/05/2006.

Virtuosi website, www.crg.cs.nott.ac.uk/research/projects/Virtuosi/, accessed 28/09/2007.

Vice, Sue (1997) *Introducing Bakhtin.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Vince, John (2004) *Introduction to Virtual Reality.* London: Springer-Verlag London Ltd.

Wainwright, Martin (2006) 'Tribunal Dismisses case of Muslim Woman Ordered not to Teach in the Veil.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,1927251,00.html, accessed 17/07/2007.

Wandor, Michelene (1980) The Personal in Political: Feminism and Theatre. In: Sandy Craig (ed.) *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain.* Derbyshire: Amber Lane Press.

Ward, Paul. (2005) 'I was dreaming I was awake and then I woke up and found myself asleep': Dreaming, Spectacle and Reality in Waking Life. In: Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond.* Bristol: Intellect Books, 161 – 172.

Watson, Keith (2006) 'Chasing the Rush.' *Evening Standard* [Online] http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/theatre/article-22738087-details/Chasing+the+rush/article.do, accessed 19/02/2007.

Wesker, Arnold (2003) 'The Smaller Picture.' *The Guardian.* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,914322,00.html, accessed 19/10/2004.

White, Tim (1994) The Screen: Looking through it, Walking through it. *Contemporary Theatre Review.* Vol. 2: 2, 107 – 114.

Whitmore, Jon (1994) *Directing Postmodern Theatre.* Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Willet, John (ed.) (1974) *Brecht on Theatre.* London: Eyre Methuen.

Wilson, Robert (1981) *Deafman Glance.* [Video: VHS].

Wilson, Robert (1984) *Einstein on the Beach: The Changing Face of Opera.* [Video: VHS].

Wintour, Patrick et al. (2007) 'Catholic Agencies given Deadline to Comply on Same-Sex Adoptions.' *The Guardian* [Online] http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,2001834,00.html, accessed 17/07/2007.

Worland, Rick (2007) *The Horror Film: An Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Young, Toby and Tom Vanderbilt (1994) The End of Irony? *The Modern Review* Vol. 1: 14, 6 – 7.

Zarrilli, Phillip (ed.) (2002) *Acting (Re) Considered: A Practical Guide.* London: Routledge.

Zarrilli, Phillip (2004) Towards a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience in *Theatre Journal* 56.4 [online] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_journal/v056/56.4zarrilli.html accessed 20/11/05.

Ziołkowski, Grzegorz and Paul Allain. (2005) A Short Chronology of Social and Political Events in Poland 1989–2004. *Contemporary Theatre Review* 15: 1, 8 – 16.

Zubrzycki, Anna (2006) Telephone interview with Katherine Adams on the April 2006.