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Appearing Live: Spectatorship, Affect, and Liveness in Contemporary British Performance

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Abstract

The liveness of theatre is a much-debated topic in playwriting, arts policy, and performance studies. Discussions of liveness, by scholars such as Peggy Phelan, Richard Schechner, and Herbert Blau, have historically suggested that performance is an ephemeral medium, defining “liveness” as a descriptor of theatre’s transient existence, a phenomenon which disappears at the same moment it is performed. More recently, scholars such as Philip Auslander, Rebecca Schneider, and Amelia Jones have reconsidered this historical debate, suggesting that performance does not simply occur once and then disappear, but that its temporality must include repetition, reperformance, and memory. However, these approaches continue to theorize liveness in terms of its temporality. This dissertation intervenes in two ways: firstly, I reorient the definition of “liveness” away from temporality and toward affect: “liveness”, from my perspective, is a felt quality of performance, but is not restricted to the moment that performance takes place. Secondly, I analyze the relationship between the ways that affective liveness is invoked in performance and the UK’s current socio-economic and political environment to suggest that the increasing desire for experiences which feel live is an index of that country’s neoliberal context. Informing my argument are theorists such as Bergson and Derrida, as well as affect theorists such as Massumi, Bennett, and Berlant.

This dissertation addresses several case studies. Chapter one discusses playwright Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and *The City* (2008) as projections of capitalist promises and expectations of a “good life”, following Lauren Berlant. In chapter two, I analyze immersive theatre company Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More* as a bodily, but purposefully individualistic, affective experience. The third and final chapter, I discuss

several multi-form archival projects by performance collective Forced Entertainment, analyzing their attempts to make documentation live. In foregrounding their own liveness, these performances attempt to capitalize on the community feeling produced by collective experience. However, I conclude that liveness has been deployed in these performances in order to encourage a particularly neoliberal form of affective consumption, which privileges individual, entrepreneurial, and capitalistic forms of creation and spectatorship.

Key words

performance studies, affect theory, liveness, contemporary drama, immersive theatre, Martin Crimp, Punchdrunk, Forced Entertainment.

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Introduction

“it could be the dramatists who are capable of telling us, while it is happening, what it is we are thinking and feeling” - Stuart Hall

In 1996, the Arts Council of England published a policy document in which they specified that “All drama should be contemporary” (7). This desire for theatrical work that has been variously described as “contemporary”, “immediate”, “vital”, or “lively” finds its roots 40 years earlier, in John Osborne’s 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*, which became a symbol for a shift in British drama towards a particular brand of energetically life-like performance. Present day British performance continues to build upon and further the project arguably begun by Osborne to make theatre a truly “live” experience. In response to this ongoing trend, my dissertation seeks to understand the nature of the “live” as it is experienced by individual spectators of performance. Furthermore, my dissertation analyzes British theatre’s particularly persistent desire for theatre that is “live” or “contemporary”. In short, I ask: what is the nature of “liveness,”; what are its effects on performance and spectatorship; and what are the motivations behind its continued ubiquity in British theatre and performance? In this dissertation, I argue that these related descriptors— “vitality,” “liveness,” and “contemporaneity”—all attest to an affect produced by specific dramaturgies. This argument stands in contrast to previous studies of “liveness”, which focus on the concept as a temporal one. Liveness is best understood as an affect that is experienced by individual spectators and consumers.

The performances that I have chosen to study in this work are specifically related through their attempts, in various forms, to make their audiences aware of their

“liveness”. These attempts to draw conscious attention to liveness have a political purpose: publicity and advertising for such productions often suggests that the power of the theatre’s “liveness” is in its ability to form social communities. When hundreds of people gather together at the same time to watch or experience or participate in the same performance event, social links are assumed to be established. In a world that is simultaneously more connected and more isolated than ever, as a result of technological advances in telecommunications and the internet, the material connections established by in-person, collective experiences seem to create positive, community-making opportunities. Though I agree that performance can gesture towards, and even establish temporary communities, this dissertation reorients the understanding of liveness from collectivity to individuality.¹ I suggest that performances which foreground their own liveness do so in an effort to capitalize on feelings of community, but in fact, serve to perpetuate the economic value that neoliberalism places on individual experience and consumption.

I argue for a reconsideration of liveness, not as a natural quality intrinsic to performance, but rather as an affect felt on an individual level. In previous works,² liveness is understood as inextricably connected to the present moment; in shifting the focus to liveness as an individual affect, I disentangle liveness from its temporal limits, detaching it from the tyranny of the here and now. I define affect as feeling that is experienced both mentally and physically. I use affect specifically to refer to the

¹ This shift from collectivity to individuality is one that is mirrored in recent studies on spectator engagement with theatre, wherein researchers have identified a need to analyze spectatorship beyond qualitative, demographic studies, towards a focus on experience at the level of the individual (c.f. Holden 2004; Brown and Novack 2007; Belfiore and Bennett 2007).

² Such as Herbert Blau’s *Take Up the Bodies*, Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, and Philip Auslander’s *Liveness*.

confluence of these two categories of feeling; for my purposes here, the term therefore encompasses emotion, sensation, as well as less easily defined feelings such as anxiety, anticipation, dread, interest, motivation, or excitement, to name but a few. Affect is feeling that is experienced self-consciously, and acts on us when we engage with an object or person in the world. If liveness is a feeling, experienced individually, then it need not be limited by, or to, the temporal present. Building on seminal works regarding perception and memory, such as Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* and Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, and Sensation*, I suggest that the spectator's experience of live performance need not feel "live" only while it is occurring. Rather, theories of perception argue that we can never fully comprehend something "in the moment"; therefore, that which is considered "live" is always a matter of memory, and can be located beyond the temporal immediacy of the performance.

Reorienting our understanding of liveness away from temporality and ephemerality, and towards affect opens up several important avenues of inquiry. This dissertation notes a trend in contemporary performance, particularly in Britain, towards a purposeful deployment of liveness, a strategy which I argue is an attempt to appear community-oriented, while actually sustaining and even advancing specific neoliberal ideals, such as the economization of daily life, affective experience, practices of consumption, and the valuation of the individual. Under the guise of a turn away from the ravages of neoliberalism in a post-Thatcher era, the performances I study embody and even promote neoliberalism. Liveness, when it is actively deployed in performances, purports to produce a sense of social community, and gestures towards connection. However, the ontological economy of liveness as an affect suggests that the experience of performance is far more individual than its advertising would like us to believe. My

conceptualization of liveness as an affect rather than a temporal state allows for a clearer understanding of the ways in which performances have commodified their production of feeling. To this consumerist end, if liveness is a feeling, then it is possible to produce a “live” experience in any space or time, opening up distributive channels for theatre beyond the in-person. This potential for the mass distribution of affect is a phenomenon I discuss at length in my second and third chapters. Affect is mobilized in each of the works I discuss in order to allow performances and spectators to maintain the pretense of community, while simultaneously turning inwards to impart value on the self as an individual. The invocation of the live in contemporary performance has another effect: while theatre which focuses on the live as a temporal state might encourage its spectators to live in the present moment, when liveness becomes an affect, spectators are also encouraged to live in their individual moment. A performance experience which capitalizes on individual feeling not only provokes a turn away from history, but also a turning inwards, which closes one off from experiences other to their own. When contemporary performances deploy liveness, they foreground experience of the individual, a strategy which not only responds to consumer desires for unique experiences, but also mirrors the neoliberal preoccupations of their environments.

i. Neoliberalism and the UK

Over the course of this dissertation, I use the term “neoliberal” in several contexts; this being the case, it would be prudent to offer some defining comments at the outset, before I proceed to discuss how neoliberal thought has influenced both art and politics in the UK. Neoliberalism is primarily a political and economic ideology; however, the

concept's foundational principles have been abstracted and internalized, and as a result, have come to exert a significant amount of influence over the cultural practices and everyday lives of those who live in many Western nations, and specifically in the UK. By way of definition, David Harvey states that, "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism* 2). However, neoliberalism has not remained an approach to economics, but has instead infiltrated the quotidian. The ideology's foundational principles have been translated from their strictly political context to the day-to-day practices of a nation's citizens. Neoliberalism has a long history, which Harvey describes as formally beginning in 1947 with the founding of the Mont Pelerin Society by Friedrich von Hayek (12-13). As Harvey states, "The group's members depicted themselves as 'liberals'...because of their fundamental commitment to ideals of personal freedom. The neoliberal label signalled their adherence to those free market principles of neoclassical economics that had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century" (13). While the Mont Pelerin group "garnered political and financial support", Milton Friedman, one of the group's members, was responsible for the ideology's "growing influence within the academy, particularly at the University of Chicago", where he taught economic theory (22). Neoliberalism became popular among "a powerful group of wealthy individuals and corporate leaders who were viscerally opposed to all forms of state intervention and regulation" (21); however, the philosophy did not see practical application until the mid 1970s. Then, as Wendy Brown puts it, "neoliberalism was an 'experiment' imposed on Chile by Augusto Pinochet and the

Chilean economists known as ‘the Chicago Boys’ after their 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende” (20).³ Subsequently, the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher to the British government and the 1981 election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. President indicated “the dramatic consolidation of neoliberalism as a new economic orthodoxy regulating public policy at the state level in the advanced capitalist world” (Harvey 22). Harvey argues that many of the “advocates of the neoliberal way” now hold positions of power in places like “education (the universities and many ‘think tanks’), in the media, in corporate boardrooms and financial institutions, in key state institutions (treasury departments, the central banks), and also in those international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that regulate global finance and trade” (3). Thus, he proposes that neoliberalism has “become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (3). The neoliberal ideology “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market” (3). Harvey conceptualizes neoliberalism as a utopic way of thinking, which at first seems to emphasize a democratization of potential success for all individuals (19). However, in reality, the neoliberal ideology “has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of an economic elite” (19). Harvey suggests that “The theoretical utopianism of the neoliberal argument has... primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this

³ Harvey also identifies Pinochet’s government as the first practical application of neoliberal policies on a large scale (*Brief History* 7-8).

goal” (19). While neoliberalism’s commitment to individual freedom seems appealing, its realities are often isolating and stratifying.

These effects became especially clear in the UK when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, and began instituting a series of neoliberal reforms. In a September 1987 interview with *Woman’s Own*, Thatcher famously asserted, “There is no such thing as society.” Instead, as she specifies, “There are individual men and women.” Thatcher’s particular brand of neoliberalism, which incorporated a radical individualist philosophy into her political and economic decisions, crippled several “indigenous nationalized UK” industries, such as the steel industry in Sheffield, shipbuilding in Glasgow, and the automotive industry (Harvey 59). Her intentions, as Harvey describes them, were that “All forms of social solidarity...be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values” (23). Thatcherism therefore attacked not only the idea that Britain ought to have a sense of society, but it also targeted industries which were essential aspects of Britain’s history and identity, allowing cheaper international manufacturing to flood the British market. I take up neoliberalism in the context of this dissertation both as an important contextual touchstone for the era in which I situate my analysis, and also as a larger cultural phenomenon. On the one hand, neoliberalism is a political and economic ideology which provided the basis for Thatcher’s policies, which included,

attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility (such as those expressed through municipal governance, and including the power of many professionals and their associations), dismantling or rolling back the commitments of the welfare state, the privatization of public enterprises (including social housing), reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurial initiative,

and creating a favourable business climate to induce a strong inflow of foreign investment. (Harvey 23)

However, neoliberalism's effects are not limited to the political: Thatcher's infamous comment that "There is no such thing as society" (*Woman's Own*) represents her recognition, and perhaps desire, that neoliberal logic infiltrates the social and cultural, as well as the political. In its cultural manifestations, neoliberalism specifically influences the ways that subjects conceive of themselves and their connections to the world around them: a lack of support for social and welfare programs by a neoliberal government might be translated into the culture through an increased focus on the self alone, rather than the collective. Moreover, Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism is not only defined by its extreme focus on the individual; the neoliberal philosophy also "configures all aspects of existence in economic terms" (17). Neoliberalism's economization of the world similarly acts on both political and cultural spheres, and therefore is experienced by subjects via government policy as well as being internalized through day-to-day interactions. To this end, Brown does not argue that under neoliberalism, "markets and money are corrupting or degrading democracy" (17). Rather, she suggests that neoliberalism reframes the way subjects conceptualize their lives: "neoliberal rationality disseminates the model of the market to all domains and activities—even where money is not at issue—and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors" (30-31). As a result of the economization that Brown highlights, the subject has "been significantly reshaped as financialized human capital: its project is to selfinvest in ways that enhance its value or to attract investors through constant attention to its actual or figurative credit rating, and to do this across every sphere of its existence" (32-33). The economization of the self is also a feature of neoliberalism's rampant individualization, as this model necessitates self-

interest and promotion for success. Neoliberal logic, which is to say the individualization and economization of human beings, is present in each of the case studies discussed in this dissertation. I discuss the ways in which Crimp's plays, as well as Punchdrunk and Forced Entertainment's performances emphasize the individual over the collective, and provide opportunities for both creator and consumer to have an affective experience which lends perceived value to one's life. The ways in which spectators engage affectively with each of these performances demonstrates audiences' perception of themselves as economic actors, as well as a desire, both internalized by spectators and encouraged by the performances they attend, to fulfill the neoliberal expectations outlined by Brown, namely to "selfinvest" and "enhance [their] value" (32-33). Affect is a tool that can be deployed by performances and spectators alike to achieve specific neoliberal ends. For many, the theatre grants an opportunity for our very existence to be shaped as valuable through our consumption of experiences which affect us, in turn making us intimately aware of our capacities to perceive, think, and feel in relation to the world around us.

While this project's theatrical origins lie with John Osborne's 1956 *Look Back in Anger*, a work I discuss in some detail in the following section, the political and social context for this project is the mid-1990s, and more specifically, 1996. That year saw the beginning of several significant conversations about the necessity of bringing "life" into the UK. Politically, in the mid-1990s, the Labour Party rebranded themselves as "New Labour" under the leadership of Tony Blair, and in 1996, the party published a manifesto entitled, "New Labour: New Life for Britain". Rife with language of renewal and rebuilding, and professing a particular focus on community, the manifesto made clear connections between the concept of life and vitality, and the necessity for Britain to both

modernize and reorient its priorities.⁴ These themes were also clearly associated with the project of undoing the damage to the country's social fabric that resulted from the previous Conservative government's neoliberal bent.⁵ In 1997, New Labour won the general election, ending 18 years of Conservative rule, which began in 1979 with Margaret Thatcher. In more recent years, the political tide has again shifted, with the Labour Party losing the 2010 General Election. In that year, the Conservative and Liberal-Democrat parties formed a coalition government, and in 2015, the Conservatives secured a majority government. This shifting political climate is an important backdrop for my analysis of the ways in which "liveness" has been invoked in works since 1996. I argue that "life", and its adjectival counterpart "liveness", are conjured as an attempt to reject the isolating individuality of Thatcher's neoliberal England. As liveness is typically understood as a temporal state, it implies the collective and unifying feature of a shared experience. Thus, liveness is called upon in 1996 in an effort to repair the damage done by a staunchly neoliberal government, to restore a community-oriented feeling to the country, not only in the political sphere, but also in the theatres, which the government regarded as a key space for negotiating and staging British national identity.⁶

⁴ Examples of this include statements like, "I want a Britain that does not shuffle into the new millennium afraid of the future, but strides into it with confidence"; "Britain can and must be better: better schools, better hospitals, better ways of tackling crime, of building a modern welfare state, of equipping ourselves for a new world economy"; "politics in Britain will gain a new lease of life"; and "The vision is one of national renewal, a country with drive, purpose and energy".

⁵ In their manifesto, the New Labour party stated, "New Labour is the political arm of none other than the British people as a whole. Our values are the same: the equal worth of all, with no one cast aside; fairness and justice within strong communities... New Labour believes in a society where we do not simply pursue our own individual aims but where we hold many aims in common and work together to achieve them".

⁶ This sentiment is expressed in statement such as ACE's claim that "For 500 years, drama has been at the heart of England's creative life, its identity shaped by the outstanding talent of its playwrights and performers, its directors, designers and technicians" (*1996 Report on Drama* i). ACE repeats the connection between the legacy of dramatic tradition in the UK and national identity in their further statement that "From Medieval mystery plays to contemporary community productions, from Gorboduc to Godber,

The 1996 Arts Council document referenced at the beginning of this introduction was written in response to “a widespread recognition that drama in England [was] in crisis” (2) as a result of a funding model which did not sufficiently foster the continued development of the dramatic arts in England. The report, therefore, established several goals for drama and its funding in the years going forward. One of these goals was that “All drama should be contemporary, whether it is new, recently created, or established work from the classical repertoire that speaks to audiences of today” (7).⁷ The report begins with the observation that “For 500 years, drama has been at the heart of England's creative life, its identity shaped by the outstanding talent of its playwrights and performers, its directors, designers and technicians” (i). The Arts Council’s aim here, as becomes clear throughout the rest of the report, is to continue a tradition of establishing a sense of British social identity that has “been shaped by its playwrights and performers” (1). As the 1996 report proclaims, theatre is “one of the centrepieces of social communication, a forum in which communities can meet, debate vital issues and enjoy themselves...part of the social ‘glue’ that binds people together and enables them to establish a shared identity” (1). Indeed, the 1996 report’s claims of the theatre’s central

Shakespeare to Stoppard, the country's identity has, in many ways, been shaped by its playwrights and performers” (1).

⁷ Playwright David Edgar views this use of “contemporary”—meaning “‘lively’ or ‘immediate’” (Edgar, *State of Play* 4)—as “[denying] the existence of a category of drama written, performed and set now” (4). However, the 1996 report expresses a desire to support new writing, even dedicating a section of the report to this goal specifically: “The presentation of new work and new writing is a priority of the funding system and should be a part of the programme of work of all companies” (16). Edgar’s definition of “contemporary” writing seems to be limited to works that look like Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, as he states that “since the opening of *Look Back in Anger* on 8 May 1956 at the Royal Court, it has been generally if intermittently accepted that contemporary work *in this sense* has been central to the project of the British theatre” (4, emp. mine). However, the Arts Council’s expansion of the definition of “contemporary” to include all dramatic writing, new and old, suggests an innovation in the Arts Council’s thinking about what it means to be British in a contemporary age. This report seems to suggest that there is, and can be, no singular representation of contemporary life in Britain—if the theatre is truly going to “[speak] to audiences of today” (7), it must do so through a variety of representations of the contemporary.

role in developing and sustaining a cohesive British national identity mirrors Jen Harvie's assertion that "national identities are neither biologically nor territorially given; rather, they are creatively produced or staged" (*Staging 2*). National identity, as Harvie points out, is performative: publicly displaying your country's flag on your house, car or backpack, loudly supporting your national team during a global sporting event, or otherwise participating in national cultural events are all ways in which we perform our national identities. Furthermore, Harvie states, "The arts are called on to support national brand identity and its dissemination in the global market, for example during the enormous Cultural Olympiad" (*Fair Play 184*).⁸ In emphasizing the centrality of drama to British national identity, the Arts Council takes this notion of performativity a step further, seeking to establish and codify a specific sense of national identity by formally staging it.

Harvie's example of the Cultural Olympiad is one that I wish to dwell on briefly. In the weeks and months preceding the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, this Arts Council/IOC initiative put together an extensive programme of the UK's arts and culture, which culminated in the London 2012 Festival. Many of these artistic projects were exhibited in public spaces, and encouraged interaction with spectators. The aim of this series of artistic programmes was to foster and celebrate a national community. The secondary aim was to present Britain as a unified cultural community to the rest of the world. In advance of the opening of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, this goal seems logical. The modern Olympic Games, as they are presented to the world via mass media, are a key opportunity for the performance of national identities

⁸ A programme of cultural events designed to promote and complement the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

without much overt critical interrogation: the primary focus, particularly in mainstream Olympic media coverage, tends towards unity amongst national teams. Generally speaking, during the Olympic Games, the public is encouraged to presume national identities to be cohesive, and unified. This imperative to perform uniform national identities is particularly crucial, and the Cultural Olympiad, the London 2012 Festival, and the Opening Ceremonies are the spaces where Britain chose to perform its identity most dramatically. The stakes for countries to present themselves as unified communities is even higher when that country has recently experienced public dissent. The 2012 Olympics, Cultural Olympiad and London festival were all preceded by a particularly tumultuous 2011. Between austerity protests, and riots throughout London in the summer, it became clear that the UK was a union with some profound divisions. The 2011 riots, while ostensibly incited by the fatal police shooting of Mark Duggan on August 4th, were actually fuelled by other conditions: Jutta Kawalerowicz and Michael Biggs identify the public's tenuous relationship with police, "economic deprivation", and social disorganization or lack of cohesion as contributing factors to the riots (674). By studying the communities that rioters came from, Kawalerowicz and Biggs conclude that "rioters came from economically deprived areas and from boroughs where policing had less legitimacy" which the authors "interpret as evidence for social disorganization" (692). Duggan's death can thus be understood as the riots' catalyst, but the reasons for the week of violence and disorder in several London boroughs and across Britain are rooted in deeper social issues. The riots demonstrated the violent effects of long-term economic, institutional and social inequality, and revealed deep divisions between sectors of British society. These events made the following summer's Olympics a key opportunity for Britain to emphasize that it was, in fact, a nation united. The Olympics are, in effect, a

biennial tradition of effacing national divides in order to perform as a unified body for the rest of the world: the national team atmosphere, the matching uniforms, and Parade of Nations, in which athletes are expected to march as representatives under their country's flag, all attest to this idea. The imperative to represent one's country as strong and unified is even greater for the host country, and they present this image of a singular, cohesive national identity and history in the spectacle of the Opening Ceremonies. Thus, the Cultural Olympiad commissioned projects such as Martin Creed's *All the Bells in a Country Rung as Quickly and Loudly as Possible for Three Minutes*, which "invited everyone in the United Kingdom to ring a bell for three minutes....Its slogan was: 'Any Bell. Anyone. Anywhere'" (Harvie *Fair Play* 142). This project united reportedly 2.9 million people at 8:12am on July 27th 2012 (142), establishing a community of bell-ringers, and demonstrating to the world the country's capacity to unite for, and achieve, a singular purpose. These community-oriented art projects—another being the commission of Lone Twin's *The Boat Project*, which saw the building of a ship dubbed *Collective Spirit*, built with pieces of wood which held meaning for their owners donated by UK citizens—successfully performed the United Kingdom as a unified collective, whose national identity is in part defined by its community spirit.

Years of Thatcher's rule in the UK produced a legacy that cast citizens as individuals, rather than members of a collective society and nation. I suggest that we can understand the 2012 London Olympics (the nation's first since the 1948 Summer Olympics) as part of the country's continuing efforts to reclaim social identity in a post-Thatcher era. The UK's performance of nationality and community in the Cultural Olympiad, London Festival, and the Games themselves, represents an attempt to throw off the image of an isolated, individualistic nation that was promoted by Thatcher. By

particularly encouraging cultural projects which solicited large-group participation, or allowed participants to be spatially dispersed across the nation, the UK aimed to present themselves in opposition to the Thatcherism of the past. Rather than emphasizing the individual, these cultural projects focused on the collective. However, the Olympics stand at the crossroads of an interesting paradox, lauding the achievements of the individual athlete, while also insisting that it is the team, or the nation that truly matters. I would argue that Thatcher's legacy has resulted in a similar paradox in contemporary British society; Thatcherism is replaced now with more insidious forms of neoliberalism. As much as present day politicians preach the value of "national good" over individual interests, austerity measures put in place by the British coalition government since 2010 have led to major cuts in public spending, particularly affecting funding for the UK's social programs and welfare (Elliott and Wintour). Such funding cuts demonstrate how neoliberal policy intersects with the day-to-day: by eliminating social programs, the government both expects and necessitates that individuals will become entrepreneurial by fending for themselves in the absence of a collective social safety net. As Wendy Brown suggests, neoliberalism applies economic logic to all aspects of contemporary life, and cuts to social programming refigure the role of the citizen, such that "both individual and state become projects of management, rather than rule" (22). The result of this neoliberal perspective is that "both persons and states are expected to comport themselves in ways that maximize their capital value in the present and enhance their future value, and both persons and states do so through practices of entrepreneurialism, self-investment, and/or attracting investors" (22). The 2010 austerity measures mentioned above, as well as more

recent policies,⁹ demonstrate the UK government's desire to ensure an economization of everyday life, placing the responsibility for achieving success and value in one's life firmly in the hands of the individual. This desire to produce an entrepreneurial society—both in arts policy, as well as government funding more generally—works against the government's rhetoric which continues to emphasize the value of nation, community, and collectivity.

The theatre I discuss in this dissertation operates under a similar contradictory approach: the live, it seems, has become a guise under which neoliberalism persists. Labour's return to power coincided with particular invocations of the concept of the live, suggesting that it may restore the feeling of society lost during Thatcher's time in power. However, the Conservative party's return to power, and the events surrounding that shift in the political climate is equally instructive. While the politics have changed, and the stylistic approaches have shifted, liveness is still foregrounded as a fundamental feature

⁹ The UK's current politic climate demonstrates a number of key disconnects between utopian rhetoric and the political reality. For example, in Nigel Farage's speech to the European Parliament on June 28th 2016, shortly after the Brexit referendum, he stated that "what the little people did, what the ordinary people did – what the people who'd been oppressed over the last few years who'd seen their living standards go down did – was they rejected the multinationals, they rejected the merchant banks, they rejected big politics and they said actually, we want our country back, we want our fishing waters back, we want our borders back. We want to be an independent, self-governing, normal nation." While he seems to emphasize the re-establishing of a British national community, his comments also betray a deeply neoliberal bent, as Brexit's exclusionary politics turn away from the communitarian and towards the idea that Britain can only be successful if it operates alone. Moreover, in contrast to Farage's belief that Britain must turn its attention inwards, Theresa May's Conservative government continues to enforce budgetary cuts to social programs: Butler notes a 9% drop in spending on children's programs from 2010, Glaister states that spending on museums has "dropped 31% between 2010 and 2016", and April 2017 saw the "introduction of £30-a-week cuts to Employment and Support Allowance payments to new sick and disabled claimants who have been judged unfit to work" (Butler, "What does 2017 hold"). These are just a few examples of the ways in which the UK government's economic austerity measures continue to do the work of damaging social programs, which are often the spaces and resources which allow communities to thrive. In this way, the government demonstrates a clear disconnect between their rhetoric and their policy decisions, which in reality, continue to perpetuate a neoliberal agenda.

of contemporary performance.¹⁰ As I discuss in my first chapter, the socio-economic circumstances of the late 2000s, in particular the international economic crisis of 2008, the austerity measures which followed in the UK, and subsequent civil unrest, all of which precipitated or coincided with the return of the Conservative party as the leaders of the British Government, suggests to me that liveness does not, and perhaps never did, serve much of a stabilizing or unifying function. Instead, I argue over the course of this dissertation's three chapters that liveness is not a singular, unifying temporal state, but rather an individual feeling or affect. From a political standpoint, the concepts of the live and liveness have been repeatedly invoked in order to profess communitarian ends, while actually perpetuating the neoliberal mindset which such projects profess to resist. However, each case study offers examples of ways in which creators and spectators can frustrate, manipulate, and personalize their experiences, even as they engage in a form of consumption intended to shore up their economical potential and value.

i.ii Looking Back (In Anger, or Otherwise)

Following in the tradition of scholarly studies of post-war British theatre, I choose to begin this dissertation with John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. There are a number of crucial histories of British theatre from 1956 onwards,¹¹ and I do not wish to rehearse

¹⁰ This is the case in international contexts, as well. For example, speaking from a Canadian context, playwright Jordan Tannahill echoes the concerns circulating in the UK about needing to "enliven" theatre. In both an article entitled, "Why Live? A Question for Twenty-First Century Theatre" and in his book, *Theatre of the Unimpressed*, Tannahill discusses what he views as a "prevailing, predictable theatre that's risk averse and wary of failure" (13). By contrast, Tannahill argues for the theatre that is "predicated on risk and failure as preconditions of a transformative live event" stating that "it is the latter of these two theatres that will keep the art form vital in the twenty-first century" (13).

¹¹ Such as Michael Billington's *State of the Nation*; John Russell Taylor's *Anger and After*; Dan Rebellato's *1956 and All That*; and Stephen Lacey's *British Realist Theatre*.

their arguments at length here. Rather, what I aim to do in this section is to draw from these seminal works in order to mark a shift in and around the 1950s towards drama that focuses on “life” and “being alive,” both in form and in content.

The opening of Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* has become a mythologized moment. In *Anger and After*, John Russell Taylor famously asserts that “on 8 May 1956 came the revolution” (28), referring to the now infamous opening of Osborne’s play at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Writing in 1962, he argues that the play was “the event which marks ‘then’ off decisively from ‘now’” (9). This is an oft-repeated, and more recently, oft-revised narrative. As Dan Rebellato summarizes, this narrative suggests that “British theatre was flimsy and artificial, that serious-minded people yearned for something new, that *Look Back in Anger* ushered in a renaissance of British theatre, and that the people were grateful” (1956 2). Many contemporary critics praise Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* as a breath of fresh air in a theatre community that had become stagnant. According to theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, the 1940s featured “genteel upper-class country-house dramas, light comedies or predictable thrillers, and all written in the clipped language of the upper-middle class. This ‘glibly codified fairy-tale world’...[was] unable to reflect the fast-changing social realities of the post-war period” (Tynan qtd. in Sierz 30). This style “was, as visiting American playwright Arthur Miller said, a theatre ‘hermetically sealed against the way the society moves’” (qtd. in Sierz 30). Part of the reason for this was that the immediate post-war art scene was dominated by “an earlier generation of writers and intellectuals whose formative years, politically and intellectually, were before the war” (Lacey 22). It was precisely this slowness to adapt to a changing and progressing Britain that came to characterize *Anger*’s precursors as “hermetically sealed,” stagnant, and dead.

In actuality, it would be inaccurate to view Osborne's arrival on the scene as the sole moment of "revolution". From a practical standpoint, ascribing revolutionary status to the play's premiere on 8 May 1956 is misleading: "the play crawled through the summer and only picked up after a televised excerpt in mid-October" (Rebellato 3). Billington reiterates this point, stating, "although *Look Back in Anger* caused an initial stir in May 1956, it didn't provoke riots in the streets, lead to the instant collapse of West End theatre or even cause an immediate stampede at the box-office. It was only when Lord Harewood introduced an eighteen-minute extract from the play on BBC Television that a sluggish box office suddenly took off" (97). Similarly, several scholars have sought to revise *Anger*'s mythology, by identifying other works as beginning this shift towards modern drama in Britain: Stephen Lacey suggests that we might regard the 1955 opening of Beckett's seminal *Waiting For Godot* as an alternative "revolutionary" moment, while Michael Billington points to the 1956 "establishment of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court in April" as well as a "visit of the Berliner Ensemble¹² to the Palace Theatre in August" (93) as potential origin points.

These variant accounts suggest that there was no single moment of revolution, but rather, "something more complex: a perceptible shift in the balance of power and a growing tension between an entrenched conservatism and a burgeoning youth culture impatient with old forms and established institutions" (Billington 84). Ultimately, what critics regard as the New Wave of British drama appeared in the 1950s following a series of shifts, developments, and changes, perhaps culminating with *Look Back in Anger*. Though this summary serves to demythologize Osborne and *Anger*, I nonetheless choose

¹² The German theatre company established by Bertolt Brecht, which visited England shortly after the founder's death.

to begin this study with the play, not due to the work's entrenched canonicity, but rather with an eye towards its fascination with life and consciousness. In particular, the play's central character, Jimmy Porter, delivers several frustrated monologues, articulating the valorization of life and liveness that became a recurring theme in subsequent theatrical works.

Rebellato indicates that in the context of 1956, "Life is the crucial word. It is part of a cluster of terms that are distributed equally through the works of the New Left and the New Wave: the variant forms, 'live', 'living', 'alive', the antonyms, 'dead', 'death', the synonyms, 'vital' and 'vitality', and the related term 'feeling'" (21). In this moment, Rebellato makes a clear association between "life" or "living" and "feeling"; this connection is fundamental, and one which is borne out by the discourse within and surrounding both Osborne and *Look Back*. Tynan's now-famous review of *Look Back in Anger* stated that it had an "evident and blazing vitality," and that the work's protagonist Jimmy Porter was "simply and abundantly alive" (qtd. in Rebellato 21). Tynan's use of the word "alive" in reference to Jimmy Porter seems synonymous with words like "energetic," "revolutionary," "young," and implicitly, lower class.¹³

Throughout the play, Porter argues that everyone—including his wife Alison and roommate Cliff—needs to work to embrace liveness. His desire to do so comes from his

¹³ To address this latter point, the narrative of British theatre's development in the 1950s is also necessarily a class-inflected transition: even using the term "revolution" to describe this period of time gives a sense of class division, and the rise of the underclass. In its initial iterations, the "live" seemed to connote an abundance of youth and a dearth of economic privilege; however, while liveness perhaps has not entirely lost its class inflection in its contemporary invocations, theatre which is considered to give truly "live" experiences is no longer relegated to the lower classes. Indeed, with ticket prices for companies like Punchdrunk's performances often around £100, one could argue that lively, affective experiences are now reserved for the economically privileged; in reality, there now seems to be more diversity both in terms of what and who is being represented in affectively live performances, as well as in who experiences them.

recognition that the world around him lacks life and vitality, which he expresses as frustration with the homogeneity and sameness of his world. Indeed, his first lines in the play are, “Why do I do this every Sunday? Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last week’s. Different books—same reviews” (Osborne 10). He repeats this frustration later, exclaiming, “God, how I hate Sundays! It’s always so depressing, always the same. We never seem to get any further, do we? Always the same ritual” (14-15). Jimmy continues to obsess about the seeming lifelessness of the world (and those in it) around him: as Stuart Hall states, “The dead thing which drives Jimmy to distraction within Alison...is also the dead heart of England, the bloody unfeeling core” (217). The habituation that Porter rails against in the play’s opening lines is a signifier of this “deadness” of British society. Jimmy’s focus shifts from this hatred of old, repetitious habit, to what he regards as its antonym: life. “Oh heavens,” he says, “how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm...I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I’m alive!” (15). Turning his attention to his companions, Alison and Cliff, he suggests, “Why don’t we have a little game? Let’s pretend we’re human beings, and that we’re actually alive. Just for a while. What do you say? Let’s pretend we’re human” (15). Seeking to inject life into the world he perceives as “dead,” Porter at one point cruelly tells Alison, “If only something—something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep!” (37), suggesting that if Alison were to lose a child, she might wake from her habituated reverie. The violence at work in this suggestion certainly demonstrates the depth of Porter’s frustration, and though their proposed means are different, Porter and theatre scholars of the time seem to agree that society needs to be metaphorically “woken up,” shocked into consciousness by any means necessary.

Jimmy Porter's comments here are useful as the basis for my elucidation of what it means for theatre to be "live," or to experience the theatre as "live". Use of the term "live" has undergone several shifts since its invocation in reference to Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, progressing from meaning lively characters onstage who are recognizable as representations of people in the world, to making the "liveness" of theatre about not just recognizing the action and characters onstage as representations of the contemporary world—a mode which ACE lauds as making theatre "relevant" for the day's audience—but also purposefully and actively recognizing the audience as in some way involved in the performance by affecting how it occurs (whether by being the people who the work represents, or by having an active hand in the proceedings). In what follows, I will track a series of uses of the aforementioned "cluster of terms" (Rebellato 21) around the word "live" in order to forge a connection between "live" in the sense of "vital" or "alive" to "liveness" as signifying an affective phenomenon.

I begin with Porter's specific form of "life" and "vitality". Many early critics noted the curious nature of Porter's anger, as it seems to lack any specific target: "I wish I could understand who the angry young men are, how many of them there are and what they are angry about" (Hollis qtd. in Rebellato 11). However, as Rebellato argues, "The political force of *Look Back in Anger* lay not in the targets of Porter's anger, *but in the anger itself*: the experience and spectacle of someone, caring, feeling, living" (31). Feeling anger—or any strong emotional force—is intimately related to this notion of being "alive." To feel something, or to be affected (to use the terminology I will invoke most frequently over the course of this dissertation) is an experience that makes one recognize their liveness or vitality. The fundamental desire for Jimmy Porter, and for contemporary spectators, is to feel *something*, for the sake of having an experience that

affects. As I discuss in this dissertation, affect or feeling is valuable in and of itself, both ontologically and economically: for example, in Punchdrunk's immersive theatre, or Forced Entertainment's online streams, contemporary performance is increasingly oriented towards new forms which encourage affective connection. Eve Sedgwick suggests a similar approach when she argues that "in contrast to the instrumentality of drives and their direct orientation toward an aim different from themselves, the affects can be autotelic", meaning an end in themselves, rather than directing one towards another teleology (19). While in many instances, including the examples I mentioned above, the feeling produced for audience members will have an intended purpose—to produce an empathetic connection, for example—the simple fact of having an affective experience is the primary consumer desire.¹⁴ The desirable audience experience is less about the destination of the feeling, but rather the feeling itself. Thus, it does not matter that Jimmy's anger is directionless, because the important point is simply that he feels anger. This experience of having a feeling or an affect, for Jimmy and for my argument more broadly, is what makes someone vital and truly alive. Similarly, in chapter one, it does not matter that the characters in Crimp's plays are never fully embodied, or in chapter two, that one's experience at *Sleep No More* does not effect real change. Ultimately, what matters is the experience and continual consumption of affect itself. Thus, while Porter's aimless anger demonstrates the vagueness of his political point, his affect-without-target models the ways in which I will describe affect itself as a consumable product that becomes marketable in contemporary theatre. A significant aspect of affect's appeal, of course, is the association between affect and life: having a

¹⁴ I expand on this point in my discussion of contemporary experience economies in chapter two.

feeling connects one to their sense of being alive, and indeed, intense feeling is linked to not just life, but vitality. Porter's vague political arguments aside, I believe that what Porter truly wants is for British subjects to be a) alive, and b) conscious of their own vitality. "Live," in what I will argue to be its truest sense, means that a subject is actively conscious of his or her position as a living subject in the world. This statement seems to summarize what Jimmy Porter tries to encourage in *Look Back in Anger*, and his desire to feel carries forward into his contemporaries. Indeed, in Osborne and Porter's view, it is strong feeling which will make one awake to their own vitality. However, I argue that it is not until many years later that the conscious vitality that Porter desires is truly realized on the British stage.

From 1956 onwards, there seems to be a desire in British drama to establish a firm link between the world represented on the stage, and the world beyond the walls of the theatre. As David Greig explains, this connection between the theatrical and the real world is a particular feature of what he refers to as "English realism," which "attempts, as one of our leading playwrights put it, to 'show the nation to itself'...In English realism, the real world is brought into the theatre and plonked on the stage like a familiar old sofa" (qtd. in Sierz *Rewriting* 18). The desire to represent the world as it is, to show an audience a slice of their own experiences, is not limited to playwrights but is echoed in the Arts Council of England's policies for drama. In *The National Policy for Theatre in England*, published in 2000, the Arts Council reaffirms that "Theatre has been a living force in this country for over 500 years, shaping our cultural heritage. It challenges us, it tells us stories about our changing lives and the values that shape them...theatre should be one of England's most vital artforms" (MORI 61). Indeed, the Arts Council's language is particularly instructive here, as it asserts the necessity for British performance to continue

in a tradition of liveliness and vitality. The impetus behind ACE's desire for British theatre to remain "vital" is in this connection between the world of the theatre and the world of the audience. If these two spaces mirror one another, then the audience can recognize their own world in what is presented onstage, and vice versa. This potential that the theatre might be "recognizable" makes drama "relevant", for ACE: plays can speak to the concerns of their audiences, or reflect common interactions in order that the audience might see themselves from a different angle.

Osborne takes up the idea of relevance explicitly in his accompanying notes to a later play, *The Entertainer*, asserting a desire that the audience's contact with the play be "immediate, vital and direct" (3). This seems to indicate that Osborne wants his audience to relate to what is happening onstage. Not only does *The Entertainer* begin with Osborne's assertion of the style's immediacy, but it also emphasizes that the work's music ought to be "The latest, the loudest, the worst" (12), furthering the playwright's desire that his audiences connect directly with the work by including music that would be recognized as up-to-date, as well as encouraging future producers of the play to provoke a visceral reaction in the audience by noting that the music should also be "the worst". Indeed, the work's relevance is expected to produce a certain effect among the audience. As Stuart Hall puts it, "Osborne is constantly seeking for the moment when the audience will identify so closely with what is going on on the stage that they will rise up and lift their voices and make 'a great beautiful fuss'" (qtd. in Marowitz 218). This is yet another definition of the "vitality" of the theatre: now, the desire is for an audience that is actively involved, as a direct result of the work's perceived relevance to the audience's lives and world. The point of making a work "relevant" to its audience, therefore, is to encourage them to engage actively with the performance.

Playwrights and critics alike were inspired and influenced by this shift towards considering the self-awareness of one's liveliness as an integral part of post-war culture. By pairing this ideological message with dramaturgical choices that encourage the audience to more readily and actively connect with what they see onstage, playwrights like Osborne and Arnold Wesker (another writer whose work extolled the need for "life")¹⁵ attempt to make their audiences experience the work as "live" in its truest sense, wherein spectators are intellectually and physically conscious of their own positions as living, breathing human beings. This desire, I would argue, moves a step further, to coax audiences into recognizing themselves as not just living, but also living subjects in the world.

This process of subjectival recognition was sought after by both post-war British playwrights and the Arts Council's professed goals. The assumption that seems to be made by both groups is that when an audience recognizes what is presented onstage as familiar, they will experience the sense of self-recognition, and self-awareness that I have argued is the root of the truly "live". Arts Council of England policy therefore strongly encourages dramatists to continue to produce work that is timely and relevant, with the implicit goal that audiences will become aware of their own vitality. Furthermore, in its continued attempt to encourage art that will "show the nation to itself," the 2000 Policy emphasizes the need for theatre that represents the increasing diversity of England: "We expect the theatre community to develop work that speaks to the diverse audiences who make up this country today. This work is a priority for us" (66). Once again, the commitment to a theatre which represents the contemporary world in all its liveliness is

¹⁵ As in his Trilogy, comprised of *Chicken Soup With Barley*, *Roots*, and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem*.

clear. In the subsequent Theatre Policy, published in 2006, the Arts Council continued to emphasize the importance of theatre that is “bold, contemporary and exciting,” as well as works that have “relevance and quality,” and asserted that their support for “the development of new forms of contemporary theatre” (7). Across 10 years of funding policy for the British theatre, the Art Council maintains a focus on contemporaneity and relevance, precisely the qualities that are understood to enable theatre audiences to best connect with what they see on stage. The 2006 Policy reiterates the need for diversity, stating that “We want theatre to engage with audiences and artists from a broader, more diverse range of backgrounds,” because “This will ensure that theatre remains contemporary and in touch with our communities” (8). Again, Arts Council policies, as well as theatrical productions themselves, use a constellated set of terms to describe the expected qualities of the theatre of the past 6 decades: contemporary, lively, immediate, relevant, and vital. This use of familiar adjectives like “contemporary” represents the policy’s more recent turn towards a desire not only for relevance, but for a kind of relevance that might lead audiences to action, either by enacting political change, producing or reinforcing national identities, or forming communities among audience members.

This focus on making drama “recognizable” or “relevant” has a consequence beyond the connection between recognition and a feeling of liveness. If art is made to reflect the lives of those who experience it, it can produce an endless cycle of reflection, recognition, and reaffirmation. Thus, if performance reflects the world in which it is produced, then contemporary British performance will inherently reflect its neoliberal context in some form. In this way, if art reflects the lives of its spectators, and the art embodies neoliberal ideals—as do several of the performances I discuss in this

dissertation—then the art can become a process of ideological perpetuation, constantly replicating neoliberal values until they become a natural part of the “cultural heritage” (MORI 61).

Indeed, these value systems are not simply passively consumed, but rather actively participated in, an aspect of contemporary theatre which also makes possible the manipulation or rejection of a given narrative or ideology. In any act of spectating, audiences can be understood as actively involved, as watching is itself an active process. As Peter Brook famously states in *The Empty Space*, “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged” (7). For Brook, the spectator plays a constitutive role in the production of theatre. Though recognizing the spectator as an active participant in the performance process is most explicit in recent participatory, immersive, and socially-turned performance pieces, all the contemporary works that this dissertation discusses address and recognize their audiences in some form. I argue that this recognition of the audience themselves defines the experience of “liveness”. Why is this type of audience recognition connected to our discussion of the “live”? I would suggest that the moment of recognition makes an audience member truly feel their own consciousness and “liveness”. Emmanuel Levinas argues that the Other is “the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself” (*Infinity* 39); in other words, being recognized by that which is other to you can provoke a feeling of self-awareness. This disruption of the self can occur in theatrical work through, for example, purposeful eye contact, physical interaction, verbal address, or even appeals to intellect and emotion. The encounter with the Other in performance has the capability of making one aware of their subjectivity by encouraging the spectator to think differently, considering alternate

perspectives. Ultimately, the theatrical/spectatorial moment of self-awareness pushes one to reflect on their position in the world in relation to others. It is in this moment of recognition and self-awareness that the spectator most clearly feels and understands his/her own life, vitality, and ultimately mortality. In its repeated use on the British stage, the term “life” or “lively” has progressed to the point that the audience is now much more like Jimmy Porter themselves. Audiences are not necessarily “lively” in the sense of “revolutionary”, but they come to embody the conscious affect of their vitality, as Porter and Beattie have encouraged. Since 1956, British theatre has experimented with various types of dramaturgies in order to make audiences consciously aware of their own vitality. However, in this dissertation, I argue that it is only in contemporary works that this goal might have been fulfilled. By making immersion, fragmentation, and improvisation central dramaturgical choices, companies such as Punchdrunk and Forced Entertainment, and playwrights like Martin Crimp, stage innovations which succeed in making their works “live.”

In a 1957 *Encore* Magazine article titled “Vital Theatre?” Lindsay Anderson asked, “What do we mean when we talk about a relationship between theatre and life?” (qtd. in Marowitz 47). Indeed, it is fine for Jimmy Porter and other on-stage characters to talk about needing to “live” and “recogniz[ing] life” (Wesker qtd. in Rebellato 21), but Anderson’s question speaks to a central problem that haunts the British stage. How are theatregoers, critics, and scholars to understand what “life” means for the theatre? In the following section, I further theorize the experiences of audiences in a “live” performance.

i.iii Theoretical Overview

This section provides an introduction to the specific theoretical context for this project, first by summarizing my engagement with performance theory's seminal debates, and secondly, by offering an overview of the theory I will use throughout this dissertation in order to explore the relationship between theatre, temporality, liveness, and affect. Ultimately, the weaving together of these theoretical approaches leads me to suggest that a reorientation of the concept of performance's liveness towards affect theory allows for the most fruitful exploration of these intricately connected aspects of theatre.

i.iii.i The Liveness Debate

Historically, questions of time, presence, and liveness have been fundamental to the study of performance. In Richard Schechner's 1965 essay "Theatre Criticism," he begins, as Rebecca Schneider describes, "to craft a definition of theatre as a tangle between permanence (drama) and ephemerality (performance)" (*Remains* 94). He speaks to a fundamental aspect of the dramatic arts, stating, "Each production...is merely one more possible embodiment of the play. The peculiar burden and problem of the theatre is that there is *no original art work at all*...we have only the shadows of Plato's cave" (Schechner "Theatre Criticism" 22). Schechner argues that one cannot concretely assert a stable centre in performance. There exists no singular origin, nor does the work exist in one place; rather, it is dispersed between text and stage, as well as across reiterations, reproductions, and re-imaginings in performance. As a result, Schechner argues that the theatre critic must attend to the fact that, rather than text, "theatre is the event" (24). He suggests that "simultaneity" is "the theatre's most definitive aspect" (22), later developing

this idea to the conclusion that “theatre is evanescent...It is an event characterized by ephemerality and immediacy” (“Critical Evaluation” 118). If, as Schechner contends, “there is *no original artwork at all*” (“Theatre Criticism” 22) when it comes to theatre, then performance exists primarily in the very moment of its being enacted. For Schechner, theatre exists in the immediate present of the performance, rather than in the play-text. By describing performance in this way—as simultaneous, evanescent, ephemeral, and immediate—Schechner generated a well-spring of criticism. Following his work, critics such as Herbert Blau, Peggy Phelan, and Philip Auslander have all variously addressed this claim that performance is a fundamentally ephemeral medium.

From Blau’s perspective, performance is “on the edge of a disappearance...always at the vanishing point” (*Theater at the Vanishing Point* 28).¹⁶ Through Blau, Schechner’s initial characterization of performance as an impermanent medium becomes more concretely linked to “loss, disappearance, and death” (Schneider 95), as Blau argues that “of all the performing arts, the theater stinks most of mortality” (*Vanishing* 83). Equating the passing of a moment (or the passing of a series of moments which constitute a performance) with death, Blau refigures how we understand “live theatre.” Typically juxtaposed with the recorded or replayed, the “live” in the theatre no longer simply signifies that what is being seen is not reproduced, but original. Instead, from Blau’s perspective, the designation of “live” comes to suggest that performance is truly alive because it is a medium that can (and does) actually “die” through its disappearance. Theatre is not only perpetually “at the vanishing point,” but might also be understood to

¹⁶ Marcia B. Siegel uses similar language to describe dance in her 1968 book, *At the Vanishing Point. A Critic Looks at Dance*: “Dance exists at a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation it is gone...It is an event that disappears in the very act of materializing. No other art is so hard to catch, so impossible to hold” (1).

be produced much like Pozzo describes humanity in *Waiting for Godot*: “astride of a grave” (Beckett 103).

Blau’s concerns are usefully informed by Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger theorizes existence itself as oriented towards, and thus shaped by, the horizon of the potentiality of death, which is always both immediate and yet-to-come. In that work, he states that, “The ‘end’ of being-in-the-world is death. The end, belonging to the potentiality-of-being, that is, to existence, limits and defines the possible totality of Da-sein¹⁷” (216). Furthermore, he argues that “Death is a possibility of being that Da-sein always has to take upon itself” (232). However, it is not simply that Da-sein exists in the perpetual shadow of its eventual death; for Heidegger, the potential end of Da-sein shapes its being in the present. He states that “With death, Da-sein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being” (232). Death no longer signifies simply the end, but a completion of the otherwise not-yet-complete being (219-220). Heidegger characterizes Da-sein as “thrown being-towards-its end” (233), temporally bringing Da-sein’s present into conversation with its future. In this way, the end of being comes to constitute precisely what it means to be. The focus here is not necessarily, therefore, on death as a potential event (though this always lurks as an inevitability), but rather on the way in which the current non-presence of death structures that which is alive. Heidegger’s theory usefully illuminates Blau’s discussion of the theatre, as performance, like the subject, is perpetually oriented towards its own disappearance. Therefore, the way in which theatre makers and audience members view a live performance is conditioned by their knowledge

¹⁷ Heidegger’s term for the being that is “ontologically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being” (10).

that it is ephemeral and will inevitably disappear. It is necessary to think of performance as a presence on the verge of disappearance, always in terms of its inevitable vanishing.

In response to theatre's constant threat of disappearance, performance theory has turned towards work that focuses on the presence and liveness of performance's fleeting moments. In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Peggy Phelan takes up performance's ephemerality through a temporal lens. Drawing from Schechner's argument for theatre's lack of permanence and its inherent quality of immediacy, Phelan comes to the conclusion that "performance's only life is in the present" (146). Indeed, this is the logical extension of Schechner's assertions of theatre's ephemerality and evanescence: if performance does not entirely exist in written text, then it instead exists in the moment that it is enacted. From Phelan's perspective, performance disappears precisely because it can only "live" in the present. As many philosophers have asserted, "the present" is a constantly moving target, never fully graspable or attainable.¹⁸ Thus, theater can occur only in the present moment, a moment which disintegrates just as quickly as it comes into being; or, as David Edgar puts it, "the live theatre is in the present tense or it is nowhere" (*State of Play* 3).

However, Blau and Phelan do not simply observe these attributes of performance as descriptors of its nature. Rather, both scholars argue that the theatre's unique relationship with time and disappearance are fundamental and constitutive aspects of performance. Blau asks, "*What is the theater but the body's long initiation in the mystery of its vanishings?*" (299). The implied answer is that theatre would not be theatre if it were not for this process of constant evaporation. Phelan echoes this sentiment when she

¹⁸ C.f. Walter Benjamin "Theses on the Philosophy of History"; Henri Bergson *Matter and Memory*.

argues that “performance...becomes itself through disappearance” (146). If, according to Schechner and Phelan, performance is understood to exist only in the present moment, then the art form is one that comes to be not only at the same time as it disappears, but precisely because it disappears.

Phelan further affirms this point by arguing that in any attempt to document performance in order to combat its vanishing—for example, by video recording—the product of that documentation always “becomes something other than performance” (146). If performance is defined as performance by virtue of its disappearance, then any representation which attempts to make performance permanent ceases to be performance. By this logic, a recording of a performance is a recording of a performance, and never the performance itself. For Phelan, it is not simply that concretization has no place in performance: any attempts to record, or document live performance do not simply render the impermanent in permanent form, but rather, attempts to concretize are inherently destructive. She argues that “Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations” (146). Every individual moment of the event of performance, for Phelan, is singular and unrepeatable. As Alice Rayner similarly states, “Sameness is the impossibility, because the present slips into the past” (23). So impermanent is performance that no moment of the theatrical event can ever return or be returned to.¹⁹

¹⁹ However, this theoretical approach to theatre produces some practical problems. Theatre is a form designed around its own repetition—often, performances must be repeated in identical form any number of times. This may at first appear to be at odds with Schechner, Blau and Phelan’s claims that performance is purely ephemeral, and cannot be captured. If performance is that which comes into being and disappears simultaneously, how can this repetition be possible? Phelan accounts for this problem when she points out that a dramatic work “can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as ‘different’” (146). This becomes evident on a practical level: if one goes to see a performance for a second time, that audience

Not all performance theorists agree about the nature of theatre's "liveness." In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander dissents, wondering, "whether there really are clear-cut ontological distinctions between live forms and mediatized ones" (7).²⁰ In this work, Auslander argues that the live and the mediatized are not inherently or naturally different, but are instead marked differently based on social perception. Auslander argues that, "historically, the live is actually an effect of mediatization, not the other way around. It was the development of recording technologies that made it possible to perceive existing representations as 'live'" (51). He develops a model of performance in which the live and the mediatized are intrinsically linked, mutually dependent, and inextricable from one another: "whereas mediatized performance derives its authority from its reference to the live or the real, the live now derives its authority from its reference to the mediatized, which derives its authority from its reference to the live, etc" (39). His understanding of "liveness" as a socially constructed category directly opposes Phelan's argument about the ontology of performance by arguing that "It is not realistic to propose that live performance can remain ontologically pristine or that it operates in a cultural economy separate from that of mass media" (40). Instead, Auslander argues that the mediatized, the very quality of mass reproduction, "is now explicitly and implicitly embedded within the live experience" (31), giving the example of the sound systems used in Broadway productions, which "produce digital-quality sound at live performances...[which in turn]

member brings into the auditorium knowledge they did not have when they first saw the performance. The spectator may not be the sole change: actors may mistakenly or deliberately change lines or movements. There is no possible perfect replication of the live event: the repeated performance is always already different, and therefore, entirely new.

²⁰ Auslander defines "mediatized performance" as "performance that is circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction" (5).

encourages audiences to assess live performances in terms of their resemblance to mediatized ones” (31). The importance of Auslander’s dissent for this project is his assertion that a) liveness is not necessarily ontologically defined, and that b) liveness is not necessarily temporally determined. Auslander’s suggestion that liveness is not naturally produced by the present moment or the “now,” but can instead be deliberately manufactured and evoked by other means is significant. José Esteban Muñoz states that, “The here and now is a prison house” (*Cruising* 1); however, I propose that we can think differently about the oft-theorized phenomenon of liveness. If liveness is not equated to the present moment, what comprises it? How might we describe, analyze, or otherwise think about liveness as distinct from the “now”? Auslander offers one consideration of the matter of the “live” outside of the present moment through the lens of mediatization; in this dissertation, I offer an alternate means to think through liveness outside of temporal constraints.

i.iii.ii Thinking in the Present Tense

In this dissertation, I seek to expand the conception of liveness beyond “the here and now” to which Muñoz refers. In order to refigure the ways in which we think about the experience of liveness and its ontological characteristics, we must first consider the mental work that occurs when viewing a live performance event. Suggesting that performance’s ephemerality gives those who experience the work a privileged or authentic connection to the event as it *really* happened relies on the assumption that human perception encounters the external world in a largely unmediated fashion. In contrast, representations of live performance—such as video recording—which are

viewed as mediated because the performance is filtered through another form, such as the video camera. However, human perception is far from offering a reliable, unmediated documentation of the event of performance. The trouble is the impossibility of fully grasping the present moment; as Brian Massumi puts it, “the present is lost...passing too quickly to be perceived, too quickly, actually, to have happened” (“Autonomy” 91). The human mind’s inability to absorb or process the present moment as it occurs means that it is perpetually fragmented. Derrida concurs with this depiction of the present as temporally disjointed, referring to it as “The disjointure in the very presence of the present, this sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself” (*Specters* 29). Amelia Jones makes a direct connection between this reality of perception and performance, suggesting that “the profound paradox of live events...is that they are only accessible through human perception, even in the live ‘instant’,...we perceive and make sense of performances through bodily memory, itself impossible to pin down or retrieve in any full state” (“Performance” 34).

These comments regarding the impossibility of processing the “live” or present moment echo Henri Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, in which he elaborates on the ways in which perception and memory work in conjunction. Bergson argues, “Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it” (133). To imagine that perception involves a direct, pure contact with the external world would be to forget the profound effect that memory has on a subject. To this end, Bergson asserts that “The whole of our past psychological life conditions our present state” (148). Put simply, the subject’s perception is profoundly influenced by past experiences, or memory. This inextricability of perception and memory is a central focus of *Matter and Memory*. Bergson reaches this point by

examining the nature of what we call “now,” wondering “What is, for me, the present moment?” (137). He ultimately concludes that, since what we experience as the present is, in fact, a confluence of the past and future: “what I call ‘my present’ has one foot in my past and another in my future” (137-38). He goes on to state, “The psychical state...that I call ‘my present,’ must be both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future” (138). Bergson’s theorization of the function of perception and memory is exceptionally relevant to any discussion of performance.

Bergson articulates the relationship between perception and memory using the diagram of an inverted cone: the summit of the cone, (S), touches the external world (P) at a singular and minute point, representing one’s connection to the present moment. The cone widens from its tip, to points A and B, which are furthest from the point of contact with the external world. As Bergson explains, “At S is the present perception which I have of my body...Over the surface of the base AB are spread, we may say, my recollections in their totality. Within the cone so determined, the general idea oscillates continually between the summit S and the base AB” (161). For Bergson, one is never only in the single, present moment of perception (represented by point S), but is always connected to memories and past experiences (represented by points A and B). It is precisely this oscillation which is significant for Bergson, as he states, “the normal self never stays in either of these extreme positions; it moves between them” (163). Bergson therefore proposes that “our entire personality, with the totality of our recollections, is present, undivided within our actual perception” (165). He furthers this point by arguing that “the moment that the recollection is linked with the perception, a multitude of events contiguous to the memory are thereby fastened to the perception—an indefinite multitude,

which is only limited at the point at which we choose to stop it” (167-68). Perception, therefore, is always already intertwined with memory.

We are never truly in the moment of the present: constantly remembering, processing what has just happened (and is now past, and therefore in the space of memory), and anticipating what is to come, we cannot experience the present as *present* or *immediate* in the pure sense that performance theorists such as Schechner and Phelan seem to suggest we ought to. Instead, following Bergson, the present is constantly imbued with other temporalities: “When we think this present as going to be, it exists not yet, and when we think it as existing, it is already past” (150). Bergson summarizes this view, stating, “Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; in truth, every perception is already memory. *Practically, we perceive only the past*, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future” (150).

In short, in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson argues a) that perception is not an independent, or unmediated process, and b) that memory is similarly mediated. Rather than a model that suggests that the memory is a repository of information, Bergson argues that “our past experience is individual and no longer a common experience” (179); in memory, we individualize the experience of the external world. Memory, therefore, is a *representation* (subjective and individual), rather than a recording (which would be objective and “common experience”). According to Bergson, “matter goes in every direction beyond our representation of it, a representation which the mind has gathered out of it, so to speak, by an intelligent choice...our brain begets representation” (181). More than simply reinforcing his assertion that memory is a representation in the mind, what Bergson expresses here is the fact that our representation of the external world is

always lacking. The world around us will always exceed our capabilities of representing it to ourselves. In short, we will always miss something.

In summary, for Bergson, our perception of the present moment is always intrinsically tied to the past. We associate memories of incidents that have happened before, feelings we have felt previously, with what we perceive in the present moment. These memories, in fact, mediate our perception of the present moment. For example, an individual watching a play might regard a scene as deeply upsetting, while her neighbour watches without responding emotionally. Ostensibly, the two watch the same scene, but their perception of the scene differs because their past experiences influence their present perceptions. As Nicolas Ridout puts it in *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems*, “there is no unmediated relation to be found in the theatre” (15). Since our perception is mediated in the first place, so too must our memory be. Through the influence of our past on our present, both perception and memory become processes of active representation.

Bergson’s description of perception and memory disturbs the understanding of performance offered by performance theorists such as Schechner, Phelan, and Blau. How can performance be wholly ephemeral if our perception functions in the past tense? Performance does not simply exist independent in the external world; its core function and purpose is *to be perceived*.²¹ Aspects of the theatrical event might be ephemeral to some individual spectators, since, as Bergson argues, the totality of an experience cannot be represented to the mind, and therefore exceeds us. However, considered from the

²¹ Further to Brook’s point, as Martin Welton indicates in *Feeling Theatre*, theatre and perception are linked etymologically: “From the Greek *thea*, or ‘view’, comes *theatron*, or place of seeing, of which theatre is a specialist case in point” (7).

perspective of the mind, performance cannot be understood as wholly ephemeral because in the moment of its being perceived, it becomes represented as memory, and is therefore archival.²² Indeed, Peggy Phelan might argue that since perception is representation, what is experienced by the audience is not the performance itself, but rather “something other than performance” (146). However, where can we locate performance if not in the perceptions of those who view it (whether from the auditorium seats, on the stage, in the wings, or in the lobby)? Following Peter Brook, performance does not even begin to exist if it is not perceived in some way. It seems more logical, at this point, to conclude that performance cannot be regarded as entirely ephemeral, as even its perception in the moment of its being performed is a representation, a memory.

Following this elaboration of the interrelationship of perception and memory, it is not necessary to argue that performance must disappear entirely; indeed, Rebecca Schneider insists that “Upon any *second* look, disappearance is not antithetical to remains” (102). Perhaps, argues Schneider, despite its ephemeral nature, performance does *not* necessarily disappear entirely as its moment passes. “Liveness” is conventionally defined by the disappearance or loss that is seen as characterizing ephemerality. What if we could locate “liveness” beyond the singular moment of performance? What if “liveness” is not immediately equivalent to “the present” or “now”? What if “live” is not necessarily a synonym for “in the moment”? These questions, which seek to reorient the theatrical and cultural understanding of “liveness” shape my theoretical approach to performance.

²² This understanding of memory differs from Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking Fast and Slow*, which theorizes memory as having two distinct systems of thought processing and formation, which correspond to two selves: the “experiencing” and the “remembering” self.

One of the performance scholars working to dispel the notion that performance disappears entirely is Marvin Carlson. In *The Haunted Stage*, he addresses the notion of the ephemerality and impermanence of performance, arguing that, “The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection” (2). Thus, in opposition to performance theorists who focus on the immediacy of performance as a medium, for Carlson, performance is centred on re-enactment, re-experiencing, and recycling. He definitively states, “All theatre...is as a cultural activity deeply involved with memory and haunted by repetition” (11). Carlson argues—echoing Bergson’s work in *Matter and Memory*—that performance cannot only exist in a fleeting present moment because that present moment is always imbued with memory and past experiences, which both precede and exceed the act of performance itself.²³ Theatre stages the process of return and recycling in a number of ways: actors return to the stage as various characters, costumes from previous productions are reused in new shows, and spectators return to the same theatre to see a different performance. Carlson develops a theatrical double temporality, stating, “There appears to be something in the very nature of the theatrical experience itself that encourages...a simultaneous awareness of something previously experienced and of something being offered in the present that is both the same and different” (51). For the audience, this phenomenon results in “a doubled vision encouraged by the recycled dramatic text” (51). Thus, Carlson does not

²³ James Andrew Wilson similarly describes the temporality of performance as layered as a result of past experience and memory: “my responses unfold in time as a process more entangled with my persisting and evolving sense of myself than with a cordoned off moment of ephemerality, fading as it is born” (116). Both Wilson and Carlson, therefore, figure the moment of the present in performance as a space which is layered with multiple temporalities and tenses.

outright deny the immediacy or presence of performance; instead, he suggests that there are more temporal layers to the theatre than simply the “now”. The past seeps into the present through the audience’s memories of past experiences, while the future influences experience via expectation. However, it is important to note that though Carlson deconstructs the notion that theatre’s “only life is in the present” (Phelan 146), his conception of the theatre remains entirely focused on the moment of the present: for Carlson, the present moment is split into multiple temporal spaces, and it is the present that is influenced by the past or future. “Now,” from Carlson’s perspective, is still a central point for theatre as it functions as a sort of crossroads between past, present and future performances.

i.iii.iii Traces, Remains: the (After)lives of Performance

Carlson’s revision of what “now” means in the theatre necessitates a reconsideration of what remains after a performance, both material traces (costumes, sets, programs) and immaterial (memories, opinions). Rather than categorizing performance’s remains as entirely distinct from the performance itself, I follow scholars such as Carlson, Munoz, and Schneider, who argue for the consideration of performance’s afterlives as equally informative as the performance itself. While distinct from performance, I argue that remains operate under a similar economy of affective liveness. Much like performance itself, afterlives, whether they are material or immaterial, affect their audiences in meaningful ways.

In emphasizing the recyclability of the theatre, Carlson implies that the seemingly vanished present may return via traces and fragments, which attest both to its absence, as

well as its continued presence and influence. In “Ephemera as Evidence”, José Esteban Munoz argues for a consideration of ephemera as material evidence of disappearance, which have the ability to attest to realities. He characterizes ephemera as “all of those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself. It does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things” (10). He continues, “Ephemera includes traces of lived experience and performances of lived experience, maintaining experiential politics and urgencies long after these structures of feeling have been lived” (10-11). In “On the Haunting of Performance Studies,” Powell and Shaffer also emphasize the importance of ephemera or remains, which they characterize as traces, stating, “The trace emerges in a process of iterability via repetition. Where presence is commonly misinterpreted as the result of reproduction, the trace functions as a (non)presence of repetition because it always already has erasure(s) contained within it” (12).²⁴ This particular definition of the trace follows Derrida’s definition of the trace as “the very conditions of non-presence of the present” (*Derrida*). The trace, according to Powell and Shaffer works in a seemingly paradoxical economy: as performance disappears at its every iteration, the trace marks this repetition of disappearance, which becomes present as a marker of absence.

In defining the term “trace” in terms of the presence of an absence, Derrida continues, asserting that “In order to access the present, there must be an experience of the trace” (*Derrida*). This suggestion that the trace is intrinsic to any experience of the

²⁴ Powell and Shaffer seem to figure themselves in opposition to Peggy Phelan and Herbert Blau, stating “haunting imagines performance as never disappearing but continually producing system, sites, and modes of critical inquiry” (2). This perspective, however, seems to ignore the necessity of disappearance in the first place, in order to permit the return, the re-emergence that is constitutive of the ghost.

present falls in line with Bergson's discussion of perception and memory, characterizing the present as intrinsically linked to loss. Though the experience of loss is not Bergson's central focus, it is implied by his formulation of perception: comprehending the present moment as present exceeds our abilities and tendencies. Instead, we experience the present in relation to both memory and futurity—our experience of the present, therefore, is not only limited, but also fragmented. It is necessarily comprised by traces—of experiences, of memory, of perception. The temporality of the trace moves in multiple directions: that which is understood as “present” is populated by traces of the past, and memories of the past are affected by traces of present from which they are revisited. As Schneider describes it,

To find the past resident in remains—material evidence, haunting trace, reiterative gesture—is to engage one time resident in another time...Time, engaged *in* time, is always a matter of crossing, or passing, or touching, and perhaps always (at least) double...the past is given to remain, but in each case that remaining is incomplete, fractured, partial—in the sense of both fragmentary and ongoing. (37)

Schneider's description of the encounter with remains testifies to the complexity of our interactions with temporality. The nature of our experience of remains exemplifies our experience of temporalities more generally: they are always already intertwined, inextricable. Furthermore, Schneider indicates that the remain is always fragmentary or partial, and therefore cannot be assumed to give full access to the past to which it testifies. One's encounters with traces or remains are as much concerned with the present experience of that artefact or memory as they are with the past.

Many describe the relationship between performance and traces as that of “afterlives” or in terms of ghosts and haunting.²⁵ However, as Bergson argues in *Matter and Memory*, when it comes to the subject’s perception, past, present, and future are temporal categories that constantly cross, and overlap. It seems incorrect to refer to fragments or traces relating to performance as “afterlives”, as this suggests a temporal linearity that does not necessarily apply to the experience of performance. For example, many so-called “afterlives” of performance such as program books, promotional photographs, and other ephemera or merchandise, are actually produced in advance of the performance, in anticipation of its successes. In another sense, the term “afterlives” suggests the conventional understanding of performance as ephemeral, in which the performance is only “alive” as long as it is taking place and is “dead” afterwards. As this dissertation aims to move past this restrictive understanding of what “liveness” means and signifies, I seek to offer a reconsideration of performance’s so-called “afterlives”. Perhaps, instead of regarding the material ephemera of a performance as testament to its disappearance and death, fragments in fact keep performance alive.

As has become evident throughout this section, I am certainly not the first to suggest that performance’s ephemerality means that it is necessarily lost, or that it disappears entirely. However, in contrast to theorists like Carlson, Rayner and Schneider, I turn to affect theory in my attempt to argue for performance as remaining in an active, vital form. In *Empathic Vision*, Jill Bennett suggests that “affect, properly conjured up, produces a real-time somatic experience, no longer framed as representation” (23). In the

²⁵ Such as in Marvin Carlson’s *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001), Jacques Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1993), and Alice Rayner’s *Ghosts: Death’s Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (2006).

following section, I aim to argue for performance's potential to be similarly "conjured up" and producing a "real-time somatic experience" (23). If, as Munoz and others suggest, ephemera or fragments can speak to the experience of a now-vanished present, this is perhaps due to their continued, persistent affective qualities. Therefore, I introduce affect into my own theorization of the fragmentary traces and remainders of the ephemeral moment of performance, suggesting that affect might transcend the temporal confines of the present. As my aim in this dissertation is to reconsider liveness in order to argue for its existence outside the specific "live" moment of theatre, I reorient liveness from its current quasi-ontological category towards affect, a category which I believe better represents its economy in terms of performance.

i.iii.iv The Liveness Affect

"Affect" is a famously difficult to define term, with theorists and philosophers developing and operating under varied understandings of the term for centuries. In this dissertation, I define affect as feeling experienced both mentally and physically, which is produced in a subject's interactions with their environment and those objects or subjects within it. This definition draws together several theoretical threads present in the literature on affect theory; this section will summarize the existing scholarship, highlighting the common features which comprise my working definition of this elusive concept.

Spinoza is widely regarded as providing one of the earliest definitions and explanations of affect. In *Ethics*, Spinoza states, "By 'affect' I understand states of a body by which its power of acting is increased or lessened, helped or hindered, and also the

ideas of these states” (51). Spinoza’s definition avoids the equation of “affect” with “emotion”,²⁶ which accords with my own definition of affect, wherein emotion and sensation are aspects of affective feeling, rather than synonyms for it. In his introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi defines affect—according to Deleuze and Guattari—as distinct from emotion, echoing Spinoza. Massumi explicitly states, “Affect/affection: neither word denotes a personal feeling/sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari” (xvi). Indeed, Massumi makes explicit reference to Spinoza when he asserts, “*L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity²⁷ corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act” (xvi). He therefore defines affect as what happens in “an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies)” (xvi). In the introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Siegworth similarly define affect as distinct from emotion. They mirror Massumi and Spinoza in stating that “Affect arises in the midst of in-betweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body” (1). Put more succinctly, they assert, “Affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*” (2). They also specify further that “Affect,

²⁶ This direct connection between “affect” and “emotion” is likely etymologically rooted: “The term ‘affect’ is one translation of the Latin *affectus*, which can be translated as ‘passion’ or ‘emotion’” (Brennan 3).

²⁷ Here, and in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement Affect Sensation*, as well as “The Autonomy of Affect”, Massumi uses the term “intensity” as a synonym for affect. In “The Autonomy of Affect”, he states directly that “intensity will be equated with affect” (88).

at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension” (1). Here, Gregg and Siegworth characterize what I have termed “feeling” as “forces”; however, their description of these forces resonates with my definition in their description of them as “visceral”, meaning they have a material, physical, impact on the experiencer, and in their statement that these forces are “vital forces insisting beyond emotion” (1). For Gregg and Siegworth, as well as for myself, “affect” is a term that is useful because it refers to ways of feeling that exist beyond simply emotion or physical sensation, and because it emphasizes feeling as an *active* process. While I agree with Gregg and Siegworth’s suggestion that affect might exist “beneath” or “alongside...conscious knowing”, I disagree that affect can operate without conscious thought, as they imply in their statement that affect might be “other than conscious knowing” (1). Indeed, while affect is not produced through the subject consciously willing it into existence, feeling is an action and therefore is experienced consciously.

Following theorists like Gregg, Siegworth, and Massumi, affect refers to “forces of encounter” between bodies. In turn, I define bodies (and therefore that which can house affect) to include both human and nonhuman, as well as physical and nonphysical. In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Sedgwick writes, “Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects. Thus, one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy” (19). When Anne Cvetkovich discusses the “archive of feelings,” she similarly allows for the detachment of affect from the human body, instead exploring, “cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not

only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception” (7). Indeed, if we return to Gregg and Siegworth’s definition of affect as “[arising] in the midst of in-betweenness” (1), then it becomes clear that affect cannot be understood to exist solely in the physical, human body. This is not to say that affect is not bodily; indeed, in order for affect to function as a force in the world, it is necessary that it is perceived, and therefore incorporated into the body. In his definition, Spinoza focuses on affect as primarily manifested in the physical body: affect is “states of a body by which its power of acting is increased or lessened, helped or hindered” (51). However, he also asserts that affect can include “the idea of these [bodily] states” (51), suggesting that, though affect is always mediated through a body, it can be produced through one’s interaction with non-physical “bodies”, such as an idea or concept. It is just as important to consider the work of the mind in thinking about and processing affect. Further, in Massumi’s definition of affect as “an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include ‘mental’ or ideal bodies)” (xvi), his parenthetical point follows Spinoza by maintaining a non-specific interpretation of “body”. His assertion that “body” is meant to be understood “in its broadest possible sense” can be understood to include various types of non-human bodies: bodies of text, objects, spaces, and non-physical bodies, such as ideas. Affect, then, is related to bodies (generally), but is experienced and understood through the perceiving human body. Affect is comprehended via the subject, but it can be deployed, located, and therefore perceived in alternate spaces or modes.

If affect can both exist and persist in places other than the subject, but is necessarily perceived by the subject, affect must be understood as an inherently dynamic and mobile force. Affect is waiting to be perceived, because it is only through its

perception that it becomes manifest and truly *affects*. As Massumi states, “Expression²⁸ is always on the move, always engrossed in its own course, over-spilling individual experience, nomadically evading responsibility. It is self-transporting, serially across experiences” (*Shock* xxi). Similarly, Massumi points out the body’s instinct towards feeling (and therefore perceiving) and movement, aligning these as parallel processes: “When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It moves, it feels. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving. Can we think a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other?” (*Parables* 1). The subject’s relationship to affect is intrinsically linked to their relationship with the world: to exist in the world is to be affected. Gregg and Siegworth also point to the worldliness of affect, stating, “affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations...Affect marks a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters or; [sic] a world's belonging to a body of encounters” (1-2). If affect indicates an interconnectedness of subject and world, then affect makes subjectivity dynamic: “with affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself—webbed in its relations—until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter” (3). In discussing her theory of the “transmission of affect”, Teresa Brennan concurs, arguing that “we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the individual and the ‘environment’” (6).

²⁸ Massumi does not speak explicitly of affect in the introduction to *Shock to Thought*, but I regard his use of the term “expression” as applicable to affect. He describes “expression” as related to “communication,” an attribute of “a self-governing, reflective individual whose inner life can be conveyed at will to a public composed of similarly sovereign individuals” (xiii). Expression, therefore, is an action related to the interaction between the subject’s internal and external worlds—as Massumi elucidates in other works (c.f. *Parables for the Virtual*, and in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s *One Thousand Plateaus*) this interconnection between subject and world is precisely the economy which governs affect.

The act of feeling, therefore, creates a dynamic relationship between subjects and the world, constantly shifting the boundaries between the self and the other, the internal and the external. What, then, is the effect of this affective connection between subject and world? Patricia Clough suggests an answer when she offers her definition of affect in *The Affective Turn*. In that work, she states, “affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act, to engage, and to connect” (2). While her statement summarizes several definitions that have been offered already, her later clause emphasizes affect’s potential to create a connection between subjects and their environment. She continues, stating, “autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive—that is, aliveness or vitality” (2). Further, James Thompson argues that “Affect, for Clough, is connected both to a capacity for action and to a sense of aliveness, where it is that vitality that prompts a person's desire to connect or engage” (119). The language of vitality and life also permeates Massumi’s discussions of affect:

For it [affect] is nothing less than *the perception of one's own vitality*, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability (often signified as 'freedom'). One's 'sense of aliveness' is a continuous, nonconscious *self-perception* (unconscious self-reflection). It is the perception of this self-perception, its naming and making conscious, that allows affect to be effectively analysed—as long as a vocabulary can be found for that which is imperceptible but whose escape from perception cannot but be perceived, as long as one is alive. (“Autonomy” 97)

Here, Massumi works to suggest that the sense of liveness or vitality produced in the encounter with affect, is a function of how we perceive affect itself. Becoming attuned to perceiving affect (rather than only feeling it) necessitates a doubling of perception,

according to Massumi, who states, “sensation is never simple. It is always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling. It is self-referential” (*Parables* 13).²⁹ He further defines affect as “perception of the event of perception in the perception. We experience a vitality affect of vision itself. This is like the doubleness of perception I was talking about becoming aware of itself... This is thinking of perception in perception, in the immediacy of its occurrence, as it is felt” (“Thinking-Feeling” 6). In short, because feeling engages us consciously, affect makes us aware of our processes of perception, thought, and feeling as they coalesce. Therefore, it is the self-reflexive perception of affect which leads to a moment of recognition of one’s own vitality. In recognizing oneself doing the mental work of perception, one becomes conscious of their own existence by becoming aware of process which often take place with conscious notice, such as breathing, thinking, perceiving, and feeling. Moreover, an affective experience can also result in one’s recognition of the liveness of the world with which they engage in the act of feeling. It is this process which I argue in this dissertation that results from what I have termed the “liveness affect”.

This concept is in stark contrast to those who suggest that because affect precedes consciousness or perception, it is beyond or external to these processes of thought. Though affect precedes (and often exceeds) consciousness and thought, affect remains an integral precursor to these meaning-making processes. To this end, Teresa Brennan suggests, “One may as well say that the affects evoke the thoughts” (7). As Jill Bennett summarizes, in *Proust and Signs*, “Deleuze’s argument is not simply...that sensation is an

²⁹ “The feeling of having a feeling is what Leibniz called the ‘perception of perception’” (Massumi *Parables* 14)

end in itself, but that feeling is a catalyst for critical inquiry or deep thought” (7). She continues, “For Deleuze, affect or emotion is a more effective trigger for profound thought because of the way in which it grasps us, forcing us to engage involuntarily” (7). As Deleuze himself puts it, “Thought is nothing without something that forces and does violence to it. More important than thought is ‘what leads to thought’...impressions that force us to look, encounters that force us to interpret, expressions that force us to think” (*Proust* 61). Deleuze further elucidates this idea, explaining, “What forces us to think is the sign. The sign is the object of an encounter, but it is precisely the contingency of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what it leads us to think” (62). Rather than the traditional model where, “intelligence always ‘comes before’...characteristic of signs is their appeal to the intelligence insofar as it comes after, insofar as it must come after” (63). As Jill Bennett states, from a Deleuzian perspective, “The kind of affect the sign incites, however, is not opposed to the thinking process in the sense of supplanting critical inquiry with a kind of passive bodily experience; far from foreclosing on thought, it agitates, compelling and fuelling inquiry rather than simply placating the subject” (36). Placed in conversation with affect’s claims to recognize a “vitality” or “aliveness”, it is affect’s ability to make the mental shift from sensation to interpretation manifest and recognizable which leads to the increased perception of one’s own vitality. It is affect which leads us to an interpretive and intellectual understanding of the world around us, and it is through affect that we can come to understand the much-theorized concept of liveness.

In summary, for the purposes of this dissertation, affect is defined as the meeting of physical and mental feeling. Affect exists in potential forms in the things (fellow subjects, objects, or concepts) that surround us, and we experience affect when we engage

with aspects of our environment. Therefore, affect is produced as a reaction or response to the things with which we interact. While affect is not conscious in the sense that we actively will it into existence, or knowingly determine its nature, it is consciously experienced because feeling is an active process. The term can encompass a wide set of feelings that extend beyond the common categories of sensation or emotion, and often refers to those feelings which combine the physical and the mental. While scholars like Massumi characterize affect as partially beyond our consciousness, I suggest that affect is always self-conscious because feeling is something we do as much as it is something we experience; in turn, affect makes subjects aware of their own existence and vitality. While affect may be produced by something inert—such as an object—encountering and engaging with one’s environment is an active process, and the affects produced through these actions are experienced consciously. In short, being affected by something makes us feel alive, in addition to the specific mental or physical response we may also experience.

Rather than being an intrinsic quality of performance, liveness might be usefully reconsidered as a reactive state on the part of the spectator. Liveness, therefore, can be understood as temporally disaggregated, as it is encountered, felt, and carried in the body of the spectator. No longer is “live performance” limited to the moment in which a spectator is seated in a theatre. Rather, the liveness of an experience is an affect that can be recalled and consumed at a later time, in a different place. Liveness is also a force that can be specifically deployed by performance works, as is in the case for the works I study in this project.

When Martin Welton in *Feeling Theatre* states, “we experience the theatre—even installed in seats as looking spectators or as a listening audience—as a dynamic process” (10), he implies the doubled kinetic structure of affect: it can shift from person to object

to group. As Welton asserts, “In watching or performing theatre, we undertake practices of perception which are founded in certain kinds of movement—of visual or aural attention for example—and in doing so, ‘get a feel for how it goes’” (3). However, affect is also dynamic in that it also produces a *conscious* reaction in the subject’s mind; affect is a self-awareness of our own perceptions and reactions to the world around us.

Awareness of this type of processing and interpretation is particularly emphasized in performance, as Welton indicates, “In its marriage of bodily and technological modes of production, contemporary theatrical performance is quite often providing a stage for perception itself” (7). Many scholars have similarly indicated the significance of perception to the theatre (c.f. Peter Brook, J.L. Stynan). I suggest not only that perception is constitutive of the theatre, but also that performance sets the stage for a conscious perception of affect itself.

Several theorists have taken up the study of affect in the theatre, most often in order to explore and analyze the communal environment established by the performance space. Welton indicates that “In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Jerzy Grotowski sought to describe the *communitas*, the raw and unmediated sharing of affect between its participants, which lies under theatre's scenic and presentational effects” (5). As Grotowski himself puts it, “we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion” (19). This discussion of affect as mobile, dynamic, and transmittable supports this vision that the affect of the theatrical encounter might be uniquely capable of creating a truly communal experience. The possibility of theatre producing community is precisely what Jill Dolan suggests in

Utopia in Performance, in which she “argues that live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (2). Leaving aside, perhaps only for the moment, Dolan’s argument for theatre’s utopic possibilities, it is her commitment to the idea that the theatre can establish profound affective connections between members of the audience that is significant here. Dolan’s assertions that a utopia is possible via theatre consistently relies on the assumption of intersubjectivity between members of a theatre audience. In the experience of performance, Dolan sees “potential for intersubjectivity not only between performer and spectators but among the audience, as well” (10). The result of this intersubjectivity is that “Audiences form temporary communities, sites of public discourse that, along with the intense experiences of utopian performatives, can model new investments in and interactions with variously constituted public spheres” (10). Indeed, she describes this phenomenon as one of “*communitas*,” referring to “a term popularized...by anthropologist Victor Turner, [which] describes the moments in a theater event or a ritual in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way” (11). Effectively, “spectators' individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience” (11). Therefore, for Dolan, “utopian performatives let audiences experience a processual, momentary feeling of affinity, in which spectators experience themselves as part of a congenial public constituted by the performance's address” (14). Performance establishes a space which allows for the affective interconnection between

members of a gathered crowd, producing this experience of “affinity” and sense of community.³⁰

Without entirely negating the argument of Grotowski and Dolan for the community-building capabilities of the theatre, I suggest that the limits and borders of individual affect also require consideration. Teresa Brennan, in her discussion of the transmission of affect between members of a group, states, “even if I am picking up on your affect, the linguistic and visual content, meaning the thoughts I attach to that affect, remain my own: they remain the product of the particular historical conjunction of words and experiences I represent” (7). Even in the context of affective exchange or transmission, affects retain a certain amount of individuality. The subject’s body might be porous, making connections with the external world, but this does not mean that the body does not have limits. Affect enables interconnection, but not total interpenetration: individual bodies do not combine, nor are they wholly subsumed into the external world. When Brennan discusses her definition of the “transmission of affect,” the effect of the physical body’s boundaries becomes clear, as she states that the term “captures a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect” (3). Deleuze also emphasizes the individuality of affect, stating, “Each subject expresses the world from a certain viewpoint. But the view- point is the difference itself, the absolute internal difference. Each subject therefore expresses an absolutely different world. And doubtless the world so expressed does not exist outside the subject expressing it” (*Proust* 28). Following Brennan and Deleuze, I conclude that while affect can be variously produced, deployed, exchanged and transmitted, it is ultimately the individual who does the work of

³⁰ In the second chapter of *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan offers an analysis of the affective interconnectedness of groups, using group therapy sessions as her case studies.

perceiving and experiencing affect. Thus, while there is an element of communal experience, affect ultimately boils down to the perceiving individual. By placing theorists such as Deleuze, Massumi, Brennan and Bennett in conversation, I establish the following understanding of the affective process, which will shape my discussion of the liveness of performance as an affect: the subject encounters another subject or a non-human body, experiences affect, perceives themselves experiencing affect, which produces for them a sense of vitality or liveliness.

In the works of performance theorists such as Blau, Phelan and Auslander, “the live” or liveness is characterized as an inherent quality of performance itself (even as Auslander interrogates its validity). In this dissertation, affect is inherently live; therefore, when I refer to “affective liveness”, I mean the feeling of vitality produced by the experience of feeling. Intellectually, when we go to the theatre, or see a street performance, despite the temporality of the narrative, we understand that what we are watching is live. But, there are a number of ways in which we *feel* the performance’s liveness: anxiety about the potential for audience participation, fear (or pleasure) when something goes noticeably awry, irritation at your seat neighbour’s behaviour, and so on. The aspects of performance which make the audience aware of its being live are ultimately affectively derived. Nicolas Ridout furthers this point, suggesting that “the encounter with another person, in the dark, in the absence of communication, is also an encounter with the self, and thus the occasion for all sorts of anxieties, anxieties that one might begin to discuss under headings such as narcissism, embarrassment or shame” (9). As Ridout argues, these aspects of performance which I have identified as those which signal the experience’s liveness to the audience member, are ultimately affective in nature, producing both physical and mental reactions in the spectator.

Indeed, even in Phelan's seminal chapter on "The Ontology of Performance," the qualities which assert performance's life in the present moment can also be read affectively. Further to her point that performance's "only life is in the present" (146), Phelan argues that "Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies" (148). She goes on to state, "In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of 'presence.' But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, character, 'art'" (150). This emphasis on the reality of the living bodies onstage is significant. Though Phelan suggests that performers disappear behind their representations, I argue that the performer as a living being never fully disappears from the perspective of the audience. No matter how involved in watching a performance one might become, or how effective the illusion of the theatre might be, in most cases, audience members maintain the knowledge that they are in a theater, watching other human beings perform onstage for them. There is no end to encounters or experiences that constantly work to remind the audience of this fact: an obviously missed or flubbed line, the misstep of an actor onstage, the cough of the neighbour in the audience. Each of these common experiences works to destroy the suspension of disbelief encouraged by the theatre. In these moments, the audience is faced with their reality: they are in the process of an encounter with another human being, (or, indeed, a number of other human beings), and this encounter is inevitably one of recognition, and therefore one of subjectivity. In these moments of recognition, the performer can no longer hide behind their mask, and is revealed to be (as they always were) a human subject. In many participatory and immersive theatre performances, the audience is similarly recognized as a collection of individual subjects, rather than a faceless mass. In the moment in which an

audience member is invited to participate in the performance, whether bodily, vocally, or intellectually, they too undergo a process of recognition: the audience enters the spotlight and becomes recognizable as a subject. These moments are instances of both absolute threat and absolute humanity, as it is only in these moments of existential panic that one truly feels their own vitality. This is, ultimately, an affective experience, as the forces of shame, panic, or threat are all experienced sensorially.

Moreover, Phelan's assertion that "In performance art spectatorship there is an element of consumption: there are no left-overs, the gazing spectator must try to take everything in" (148) implies the individuality of the performance experience: each spectator takes in as much as possible, but can never absorb the entirety of the performance, nor can they or will they experience the same performance as another spectator. Phelan's use of the term "take everything in" is instructive here, as it suggests that performance becomes a part of the spectator once viewed. I would argue that the way in which this occurs is through the transmission of affect between the spectator and the performance, performers, theatre space, and other audience members. If the (incomplete) performance is "taken in" by each of the spectators, as an individual, affective experience, then it would seem that there can be no assertion of a singular "present" or even "life" for performance. Performance's presence is dispersed across the crowd of its audience, as well as any other perceiving subject in proximity. The usher waiting in the theater lobby certainly must experience the performance on some level, though their experience of the performance's "presence" will necessarily be radically different from an audience member, or a stagehand in the wings. This turn of phrase, therefore, introduced in Phelan's description of performance's inevitable disappearance, in fact suggests that

performance may not be entirely ephemeral. Instead, performance is contained within the individual, precisely because it is experienced differently by each individual.

If liveness is the affect of an individual's experience of the "live," then this constitutes a fulfillment of what Jimmy Porter so vehemently argues for in *Look Back in Anger*. Under the effect of the liveness affect, the individual spectator feels, in a visceral manner, their encounter with the theatrical event. The affect produced as a result of such an encounter makes one conscious of their own perceiving body as it experiences the affect. Porter expresses an imperative for society, and in turn audiences, to let out "a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah!...Hallelujah! I'm alive!" (Osborne 15). Though what I am suggesting is no cry of "Hallelujah," the affectivity of liveness leads directly to the self-realization which Porter argues is desperately necessary in modern society.

The pursuit of conscious recognition of life and vitality has continued from its roots in 1956 to the present day. In the present context, audiences seek out experiences which will engage them affectively in order to feel consciously connected to their own vitality and subjectivity. Each of this dissertation's case studies represents a performance experience that is designed for, and used by spectators in order to experience intense feeling. Wendy Brown suggests that, when neoliberalism is translated from economic policy to everyday cultural practices, what is retained is the shaping of one's life and experiences under the framework of economization. For Brown, this need not specifically include monetization, but rather, "Within neoliberal rationality, human capital is both our 'is' and our 'ought'...Human capital's constant and ubiquitous aim, whether studying, interning, working, planning retirement, or reinventing itself in a new life, is to entrepreneurialize its endeavors, appreciate its value, and increase its rating or ranking" (36). Under neoliberalism, affective experiences become a way for consumers to be

entrepreneurs; however, the primary management project for these entrepreneurial consumers is themselves. How and what can we consume in order to improve ourselves, and maximize our own value as human capital? Brown points out that the project of the neoliberal subject is to “self-invest” by shaping themselves to be perceived as valuable (32-33). Individuals must capitalize on all aspects of their lives, not only to communicate their value to others, but also to shore up and validate that value for themselves. Affective experiences are key to this project: as Jimmy Porter indicates, consciously recognizing one’s own vitality is fundamentally important. From a contemporary perspective, affect—as both mental and physical feeling—fulfills the need for neoliberal subjects to become valuable by producing a self-aware recognition of one’s own vitality. Affective experiences which consciously connect a subject to the materiality of their existence therefore function as both pleasurable and edifying experiences, because they allow subjects to recognize their position in relation to their world. Not only do these experiences confirm our existence and identity as active and vital subjects in the world, but this recognition also reveals our potential to engage in labour and productivity, in pursuit of progress. In so doing, neoliberal subjects can use experiences of intense feeling to shore up their value as participants in their culture. Accordingly, affect functions as part of neoliberalism’s necessary economization of the self. As subjects accumulate affective experiences and their associated feelings, they establish themselves as valuable to themselves, validating that positive valuation, and therefore their capital as a participant in the neoliberal society, in every subsequent affective encounter.

I suggest, following others such as Jen Harvie (2013), Claire Bishop (2012), and Shannon Jackson (2011), that the recent move towards increasingly immersive or participatory performance works has to do with neoliberal ideology, wherein “human

well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2). In short, in a neoliberal culture, the valorization of individual productivity, capital, and potential is presumed to be of the greatest benefit to society as a whole. Immersive or participatory performance works present a community-building, collectivity-oriented public image, though the reality, as Jen Harvie discusses in *Fair Play* and Claire Bishop argues in *Artificial Hells*, is that these participatory works are often more divisive than community-building. For example, it takes a certain amount of cultural capital in order to attend a Punchdrunk performance: ticket prices are high, performances are sometimes relegated to difficult-to-find locales, and a certain amount of “insider knowledge” is necessary in order to get the most out of the performance. These works reinscribe a neoliberal agenda by purporting to promote the collective, or bolster a community, while actually relying on and rewarding the individual alone. My dissertation demonstrates how these performance projects can often work against their own presumed goals in a theoretical sense. If, as I have argued, liveness is an affect that is experienced on the level of the individual—in fact, personally re-made by the individual spectator themselves—then constructing a truly shared experience among a group of strangers becomes impossible, as (in simple terms) each individual sees a different show. While this does not exclude the possibility of connection based on comparing experiences and affects, the described effect of a “community experience” seems to suggest a singular experience shared by a group of individuals, though the economy of liveness and affect make this process impossible. These performances, therefore, offer the patina of community experience, while truly producing and rewarding the individual. This isolation and valorization of the individual is,

ultimately, neoliberalism. What this process produces, from my perspective, is an individualization of not just performances, but also history itself. If each event encountered is experienced as radically individual, then it is the individual who produces a history for themselves.

i.iv Methodological Approach

From a practical standpoint, asserting that performance can only exist in the moment in which it is enacted challenges the possibility of any study of performance. How is a scholar meant to speak about performances from the past without resorting to recordings or other archival ephemera, which Phelan asserts are “something other than performance” (146)? Must we regard the responses of those who were not able to experience a performance live as less legitimate, less scholarly, less in touch with the performance in itself, than those who were there when it happened? As Amelia Jones implies in her article “‘Presence’ in Absentia”, this privileging of the live experience places a dangerous limit on the scholarly potential of performance studies as a field: if it is only those who have seen a performance in person who are authorized to speak to its actuality, then performance studies risks becoming exclusive, both temporally and spatially limited and limiting. Therefore, in the wake of the liveness debate, numerous scholars have begun to speak about how we might incorporate video recordings, textual materials and other archival resources into our understanding of what constitutes performance. As these archival materials become increasingly available and necessary for scholarly work, it is vital that they no longer be regarded as second-rate representations of the seemingly sacred live moment of performance. It is my belief—and my argument in

this dissertation—that these archival materials can be understood alongside live performance itself by re-theorizing and broadening our definition of this quality we call “liveness”. In this vein, Amelia Jones recognizes that “while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical ‘truth’ of the performance” (“Presence” 11). The impulse behind this assertion is not merely to assuage the problem of access to live performance vs. access to performance archives (though this is certainly one of Jones’ aims). Rather, the ways that we perceive live performance and archival documents are certainly different, but perhaps not quite so different in the ways that we might initially think.

I utilize Bergson’s theory of the relationship between perception and memory in *Matter and Memory* as the theoretical foundation for my methodological approach. Firstly, from a practical standpoint, Bergson’s theory legitimates the use of archival materials. As Amelia Jones also argues, encountering a performance in person and through a video recording are different experiences, but one need not be privileged over the other in terms of the insights it can provide. Bergson’s work suggests that perception is always already archival: when we perceive in the theatre, we experience what is seen as already past, because it undergoes the very process of association with memory that Bergson outlines. Though it may differ in form, perception is a representation, and it should be regarded as equally valuable and instructional as any other representation.

In order to study performance—in all of its various “live” iterations—affectively, my research methodology focuses primarily on my own responses as a spectator and reader. As previously discussed, personal experience and memory are often considered the only true connection to the ephemeral performance “as it happened,” but as Amelia

Jones cautions (following Henri Bergson), perception and memory do not ensure a stable experience of temporality: representation in the mind is also fragmentary (“Presence” 33-34). I follow Jones’ method in choosing to study performance not only from the perspective of a spectator watching a performance in person, but also through performance’s remains. Therefore, my methodology mimics my theoretical approach, as it unifies liveness and remains by balancing personal experience as a spectator with a study of traditional archival materials: play-texts; rehearsal notes; recordings of performances and workshops; and newspaper reviews. Supplementing conventional research methods, I analyze the general public’s responses, incorporating materials such as blog posts, Wikis, posts on Twitter and Facebook, and other social media as integral signals of what liveness and the contemporary mean for today’s performers and spectators.

My study combines analysis of theatrical works in three different forms: text, performance itself, and various performance remains, focusing on my experience of each of these performance forms. In so doing, I will attempt to elucidate the phenomenon of liveness from a materialist standpoint. As Ric Knowles points out in *Reading the Material Theatre*, “Traditional ways of analyzing drama and theatre have tended to focus on what happens on stage or in the script, assuming that theatrical scripts and productions ‘have’ universal meaning that is available for interpretation by audiences anywhere” (9). In addition to the theoretical drawbacks to this approach, it is my argument that an analysis of affect necessitates material understanding. Indeed, as I have already suggested, affect is a primarily individual force. In view of this individuality, no singular critic is in a position to speak in generalities about affective moments in performance. My instinct in including social media, and other crowd-sourced or open access material in my analysis is

an attempt to ensure that my discussion of affect is grounded in multiple sets of individual experiences. In *Theatre & Audience*, Helen Freshwater wonders why theatre critics, “appear to prefer discussing their own responses, or relaying the opinions of reviewers, to asking ‘ordinary’ theatre-goers—with no professional stake in the theatre—what they make of a performance?” (4). By making placing individual responses (via Twitter, Facebook, and blogs) in conversation with more commonly represented responses (such as professional theatre reviewers, directors, and actors), I gesture towards addressing the problem of limited perspective that Freshwater notes can occur in current theatre criticism. Furthermore, in analyzing theatre through the lens of the individual, I seek to support my theorization of liveness itself, wherein it is experienced as an individual affect.

Knowles also indicates his desire to “[develop] modes of analysis that consider performance texts to be products of a more complex mode of production that is rooted, as is all cultural production, in specific and determinate social and cultural contexts” (10). This dissertation, situated as it is across a tumultuous period of history, will seek to account for changing social conditions in its analysis of theatrical works. For example, Martin Crimp’s most famous, and most consistently re-staged work, *Attempts on her Life*, features a significant plotline related to terrorism: how might reactions to this plotline differ in a post 9/11 context? I therefore echo Knowles’ focus on “the ways in which the cultural and ideological work done by a particular production may be seen to have been mediated by the cultural and, particularly, theatrical conditions through which it has been produced by theatre workers, and through which its meaning is produced (as opposed to being merely received, or interpreted) by theatre audiences” (10). By attending

specifically to cultural shifts, I place both the theatrical work itself, and the individual spectator response discussed above in its appropriate socio-historical context.

i.v Dissertation Structure

This dissertation discusses liveness in relation to three representative categories of performance. Each chapter therefore examines a different economy of liveness, using a broad theatrical genre as its case study.

In my first chapter, I analyze how Martin Crimp refashions British theatre's traditional social realist style, disintegrating the "kitchen sink"-style drama. While his plays maintain many of the signifiers of realist dramas, these features are deployed in order to question, and ultimately undermine, the reality that they are meant to represent. The plays I discuss—*Attempts on Her Life* and *The City*—stage the fragments of their once cohesive, idealized temporality: narratives remain unfulfilled, characters are never properly embodied, and references are made to absent experiences. Crimp interrogates the relationship between reality and liveness in each work; in response, I ask, can the intangible or imaginary be understood as "live"? Can someone be imagined to life? This first chapter introduces my decoupling of liveness from temporality, by suggesting that non-present, spectral, and imagined characters can be "live" presences, if their audiences (on stage or off), engage affectively with them. From a content perspective, both *Attempts* and *The City* respond directly to their contemporary capitalist contexts; indeed, each play's characters become fragmentary as a direct result of their encounters with their late capitalist worlds. I probe whether or not liveness can be produced, and what types of lives are created in the process. Exploring concepts of precarity, contingency, and what Lauren

Berlant terms “good life” fantasies (*Cruel Optimism*), I argue that each play’s characters are imbricated in an affective promise structure, which at once makes them precarious, but also sustains their tenuous presence, casting them as the specters of capitalism, haunting their respective stages.

The second chapter analyzes the immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, which subverts spectators’ expectations of canonical works (*Macbeth*, *Woyzcek*, *Faust*, for instance) by dismantling long-established narrative and formal features. Immersive theatre, and immersion more generally, have in recent years become highly popular and profitable entertainment forms. Such developments in the entertainment industry, I argue, indicate a societal turn towards immersion, suggesting that consumers desire the feeling (and indeed, the illusion) of deeper involvement and increased participation. In performance, this cultural desire is addressed by performance practices which seem to grant the spectator the truly active, experiential spectatorship that they seek. Of a significant number of theatre companies and performance groups which have incorporated the active participation of the audience in their work (i.e. Shunt, dreamthinkspeak, Coney, and others), Felix Barrett’s company, Punchdrunk, has become the most widely recognized and popularized form of immersive theatre. The company eliminates the stage, transforming found spaces (e.g., warehouses) into large-scale installations where audience members wander freely through the performance. This chapter explores the role that this new pattern of physicality has on the affect of the performance: how does the audience encounter the live performance differently when they are themselves physically involved in its production? I argue that by spatially fragmenting narrative, and therefore atomizing spectators’ experience of the “present” of the theatrical work, the company challenges a notion of liveness as a singular, unified,

communal experience. Rather, Punchdrunk's productions situate liveness in the mobile, disorganized perceptions of the spectators, as a product of radically individual sensorial experiences. Drawing from Herbert Blau's question, "*What is the theater but the body's long initiation in the mystery of its vanishings?*" (299), this chapter analyzes the relationship between the body and the non-traditional format of the immersive performance space. Punchdrunk radically alters the foundational relationship between performer and spectator, closing the space between the performance space, performer, and the spectator, and ultimately fashioning spectators as themselves performers. Each of these features of Punchdrunk's immersive theatre—the sensorial and bodily experience, the ability to participate and perform, as well as the scattering of the theatrical narrative across the building and its spectators—work concomitantly to give spectators an *individual* affective experience. While *Sleep No More* purposefully interpellates spectators into neoliberal consumers by encouraging them to explore alone, and to be ambitious in seeking out affective experiences, audience members use neoliberal strategies in the hopes of finding intimate encounters, and forging connections with the performers as subjects. In their pursuit of feeling, spectators seem to frustrate the neoliberal model somewhat, attempting not only to mark themselves as the consummate spectator-consumer, but also seeking an intersubjective exchange which might connect them to an other. In Crimp's plays, spectators forge connections to fictional characters in order to create a space in which to consume feeling repeatedly and endlessly; Punchdrunk provides a similar safety net by allowing spectators to engage in affective encounters without them having to take on much personal risk or responsibility. Together, these two sets of works demonstrate the ways in which contemporary consumers of performance have taken on the expected economically-informed behaviours of neoliberal spectators,

but utilize those same strategies in an effort to establish connections to others. However, in each instance, these connections take place in a constructed and regulated encounter, where risk and responsibility are not ascribed to the consumer themselves, and often occur in service of fulfilling and edifying the experiencing spectator as valuable for having been affected. Punchdrunk capitalizes on the fact that liveness can be produced and delivered on an individual basis, perfecting their schema in order to ensure that each spectator has a radically individualized affective experience, a structure which is designed to make consumers want to work to have a fulfilling experience and to view themselves as successful and edified when they do. Punchdrunk's strategic deployment of affect in their productions illustrates the degree to which consumer desire has oriented itself towards the individual, and their need to be made valuable through the consumption of feeling and experiences.

The third and final chapter discusses Forced Entertainment, an experimental performance ensemble whose performances integrate theatre with various technologies. The group produces liveness through use of documentation and archivization, which are traditionally modes in which the "live" is clearly defined by its exclusion. Forced Entertainment blurs the conventional distinction between "live" and "document" by devising performances based on collected documentary remnants, such as records, lists, or newspapers (Etchells *Fragments* 52). In addition, documentation of the company's practices is deliberately presented in fragments—dramatic dialogue commingling with commentary from writer Tim Etchells, alongside photographs of technical set-ups—giving their own archive a sense of the improvisation and spontaneity of their live performances. I analyze Forced Entertainment's performances and documentations to demonstrate that liveness persists beyond the performance proper, temporally and

spatially. In this chapter, I also explore liveness as present in archival fragments themselves, discussing the phenomenon of experiencing a performance solely through its archival documentation—i.e. video recordings, programme notes, scripts—in order to suggest that these encounters are themselves “live”, and that the affective experience of liveness is not necessarily temporally bound. Forced Entertainment’s integration of live and archive is significant in two related ways. Firstly, the group has created an artistic corpus that allows for the mass distribution and consumption of liveness and affect, without necessitating in-person engagement. This approach explodes the notion of liveness as experience collectively in a singular moment; instead, the group’s performances are watched, read, experienced, engaged with, and felt, from numerous locations, in a variety of conditions, at any available point in time. Secondly, their use of archives resonates with neoliberal calls for artists to become entrepreneurial. In addition to strategically designing their artistic practice to maximize their productivity and influence, Forced Entertainment also encourages spectators to become entrepreneurial themselves by giving them agency to shape and determine some of the group’s documentations. However, beneath this premise of inclusivity, access, and other communitarian ideals, Forced Entertainment’s archival projects ultimately work against themselves by reinscribing several significant neoliberal priorities in their valuation of increased individual engagement with their work, and utilization audience labour to increase the group’s exposure for the purposes of advertising and profit.

Each of these variant performance forms deals directly and often explicitly with the issue of liveness. Whether it is through dialogue, or political message, or formal innovations, these works represent a reconsideration of the concepts of the “live,” the “vital,” or the “immediate”, which were considered ideals for postwar British drama

following Osborne in 1956. These concepts have not vanished in the intervening years; however, as these ideas have aged, they have necessarily developed and progressed. Perhaps, now, we must accept that it is theoretically impossible to have “real world...brought into the theatre and plonked on the stage like a familiar old sofa” (Greig qtd. in *Rewriting* 18). Nonetheless, this realization does not negate the work of Osborne, or Wesker, or Ravenhill, and many others. Rather, it has simply become necessary to reorient our understanding of what it means for theatre to be labelled “live”. Perhaps Aleks Sierz’s comment that “Truly contemporary plays are ones in which the audience recognizes itself” (68) holds: rather than suggesting that the audience must imagine themselves filling the roles of the characters onstage, the theatre is a space in which the audience recognize themselves as perceiving, feeling participants in the theatrical action. It is from this starting point—that individual members of the audience take into themselves an aspect of the performance—that I move forward to suggest that liveness might be best understood to describe a set or cluster of affects. From this perspective, liveness becomes both temporally and spatially loosed: it can be found in experiences of and encounters with manuscripts, play-texts, video recordings, staging notes. David Edgar asserts that “Alone among the arts, the live theatre is in the present tense or it is nowhere” (*State of Play* 3). However, I suggest that the present tense is more flexible, and therefore more complex, concept than it might seem.

This dissertation therefore refigures liveness in order to better understand the relationship between the temporal and affective experiences of the individual and works of performance. This turn towards theorizing spectatorship and performance in terms of the individual is informed by recent audience engagement studies, which have indicated a similar trend towards individualism, from the perspective of both researchers and

audience members. In particular, over the course of the Arts Council of England's 2007 Arts Debate, Kate Rumbold notes "many participants increasingly saw the arts in terms of benefits to themselves, rather than to society" (193). This phenomenon is, I would argue, indicative of increasingly prevalent neoliberal thought, which values the individual over the collective. The purpose of this project is not, however, to analyze real-time audience responses to theatrical performances; work such as this is being successfully accomplished by a number of governmental and research agencies such as the Arts Council of England, The British Theatre Consortium, The Society of Theatre London, and Independent Theatre Council. Rather, the aim of this dissertation is to provide an accompanying theorization of the individual's experience of theatre, drawing insights from the above-mentioned studies. My primary goal is to utilize philosophy, performance theory, and actual works of theatre to explain precisely why this shift towards the individual in performance has occurred, and what specific effects this new paradigm has on both audiences and dramatic works, providing a theoretical elucidation of these trends as they are borne out in dramatic content and dramaturgies. By analyzing the trope of the live, and its affective impact, in contemporary dramatic works, I seek to reorient the ways in which we consider performance as an aspect of our daily lives. As government agencies, funding bodies, and think-tanks continue to ask how best to engage with theatre audiences (both qualitatively, and of course, quantitatively), this dissertation considers what it truly means to "engage".

Chapter One: Presence

“*Am I invented too?*” – Chris, *The City*

1.1 Living Remains

This chapter discusses several of British playwright Martin Crimp’s works, with a particular interest in his recurring use of absent or fragmentary characters in his stage plays. Through this exploration of what it means to stage absence, I discuss several different iterations of the potential meaning of the word “live”, relating “liveness” to “aliveness” as each concept functions in the context of Crimp’s plays. In *Living Remains*, the question of whether or not all the presences on stage are truly alive is central. In *Attempts on Her Life*, I interrogate the possibility of bringing someone to life via narration, questioning whether or not the play’s central character, Anne, can be thought of as “alive” or “live”, despite her spectral presence. As I move to discuss *The City*, the matter of being alive shifts towards an analysis of what it means to have a life, recalling Lauren Berlant’s discussion of what constitutes “the good life” in *Cruel Optimism*. In each of these plays, I interrogate definitions of what it means to be “living”, and asking whether or not life is a prerequisite for liveness. The characters I discuss in this chapter are spectres, contingently present onstage, hovering somewhere between presence and absence, or, life and death. I examine Crimp’s work in relationship to ideology and precarity to suggest that the characters of Anne and Chris are projections of specific sets of consumer desires; following Berlant, I argue that these characters are representative of promises made to their audiences by the ideologies of their cultural contexts. Thus, no matter the state of their presence onstage, Crimp’s characters produce affective engagements with the audience, because these characters are structured by the promises

and expectations projected onto them by their spectators. The tenuous and contingent presences that haunt Crimp's plays are brought to life, and therefore made live, through their audience's engagement with them as objects of desire and consumption. This connection is significant to me in two related ways: firstly, the affective engagement produced by these works makes both character and spectator precarious, insofar as this connection is grounded in utopic ideological promises which are ultimately subverted by material conditions. Affective liveness is precarious, and produces precarity. Crimp capitalizes on this fact in order to make the precarity of his characters—namely, Anne and Chris—actively felt by his audiences. Secondly, this model of desiring spectators producing (in this instance, through the projection of promise and expectation) that which they would like to consume represents a mode of affective experience which becomes inherently narcissistic. Performances which seek to produce live, affective experiences often allow audiences the space to define certain aspects of their experience of the performance. However, as I suggest at the close of this chapter, this feature of affective experience—which appears across all the works I discuss in this dissertation—encourages a particular type of narcissistic and capitalistic consumption that problematizes claims that the experience of liveness promotes community, unity, and other socially positive values.

Before turning my attention to *Attempts* and *The City*, I would like to use one of Crimp's first plays to introduce some of the key concerns and questions that this chapter will pursue. Crimp's first staged play, *Living Remains*, represents not only a compelling opening to his playwriting career, but also to my consideration of his later works in this chapter. In *Living Remains*, which was staged at the Orange Tree Theatre in 1982, a woman named de Zouch sits next to a "smooth, uniformly coloured" cubicle, speaking to

the presence contained therein, which can only respond to her inquiries through a series of rings (one for yes; two for no) (1). Crimp himself recognizes the influence of Beckett over this particular work,³¹ and the Crimp's interest in representing absent or unstable presences on stage throughout his oeuvre recalls Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. However, if in *Godot* Beckett explains nothing of his titular character, Crimp often obscures knowledge by providing an excess of information. Though we have limited knowledge about de Zouch's relationship to the cubicle, and what might be contained within it, de Zouch's comments seem to suggest that the presence inside the cubicle might be a former partner or lover.³² For instance, de Zouch brings a sweater, and the pair have an exchange which resembles a conversation between romantic partners. She excitedly asks,

Do you like it? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring] Is it your size? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring] Is it your colour? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring] Are you *quite* sure? [One ring] Because I could take it back if you don't like it. Shall I take it back? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring] Do you hate it? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring] Do you despise it? [One ring] Are you sure? [One ring]. (15-16)

This series of questions is certainly suggestive of a familiar scene of affection; however, if this is a former lover or loved one, he or she has evidently experienced some unknown

³¹ In an interview with Aleks Sierz, Crimp is asked, "You started out at the Orange Tree Theatre. What were your influences at that time?" to which he responds, "To me, looking back, it's obvious that I was heavily influenced by Beckett. Of course, that's a really dangerous influence, but in some ways not a bad one. Better than no influence at all" ("The Question is the Ultimate in Discomfort" 352).

³² Sierz provides a more assured description of the work, stating, "Woman, a bag lady who is 'older rather than younger', and who smokes dog-ends from a tin, visits her hospitalised husband, who is too sick to speak and can only communicate by pressing a buzzer, once for Yes and twice for no" (15). However, as the text attempts to preserve some of the mystery and interpretive openness of the play by leaving out key information about the pair's relationship and circumstances, I have chosen to maintain that obscurity in my own description.

trauma that has robbed them of their corporeality and ability to communicate beyond the ringing of a bell. Nonetheless, there is still a presence there with de Zouch, responding to her queries: “Would you feel sad? (Vehement:) Well? [One ring] I should think so. And disappointed, yes? [One ring] I should think so. And cheated, yes? [One ring] And crushed? [One ring] And indifferent? [One ring]” (3). However, as the play continues, de Zouch reveals that she plans to run away with a man, Mr. Cook, and brings it up to the cubicle presence, teasing her news by asking, “Aren’t you curious?” to which she receives the response: “[Two rings]” (7). Nonetheless, she continues: “He’s invited me there. I said, He’s invited me there. Did you hear? (Vehement:) Well? [One ring] ... What do you think? If he sets a date, should I go? (Slight pause. Gently:) Well?” (8). There is a shift in the nature of the responses de Zouch receives from this point: the cubicle answers only in the affirmative for a long while, prompting de Zouch to suggest that it is not listening to her. She asks, “You can still hear me? (Slight pause) (Brightly:) Quite right”, ultimately filling in the answer for herself (18). After a period of only affirmative answers, the cubicle ceases communicating at all, leaving de Zouch entirely on her own.

A strange play in practice, *Living Remains* opens up a series of compelling questions. The title is, it would seem, an oxymoron: if “remains” typically refers to that which is left behind after someone dies, how can such detritus be understood as “living”? How can these two seemingly oppositional states exist simultaneously in the same “body”? Moreover, the play confronts yet another paradox by staging something which is absent. The cubicle stands in for a presence, and communicates for it, making it half present and half absent. Does de Zouch’s interaction with the cubicle make it a “presence”? Does the force of her engagement—whether imagined or real—with the cubicle give it life, or make it live? More generally, can something imagined be conjured

onstage by an other? Can we produce a live presence onstage through affective and communicative engagement? Can we make something “living”? Such questions structure my thinking about liveness, presence, and affect in this chapter, and these questions recur across Crimp’s career, pursued even more forcefully in the plays I discuss at length here, *Attempts on her Life* and *The City*.

1.2 Introduction

Written and first performed eleven years apart, *Attempts on Her Life* and *The City* each respond to their own specific cultural contexts. *Attempts* was first staged on March 7 1997, at London’s Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, in what Aleks Sierz describes as “the dying days of John Major’s Tory government, a sorry tale of sleaze and continuous xenophobic clamour” (*Theatre of Martin Crimp* 49). Just a few months later, on May 1st 1997, Tony Blair was elected Prime Minister, and as Sierz puts it “the era of New Labour, with its spin doctors and politically correct control freaks, began” (55). New Labour’s win in the general election represented a seachange for British politics, ending 18 years of Conservative rule in the country. This context is recalled in Katie Mitchell’s 2007 revival of the play, where she opened the production by playing D:Ream’s “Things Can Only Get Better”, a song used in Labour’s 1997 campaign (Angelaki 58). However, this shift in the UK’s political power did not go so far as to reverse the tide of neoliberal thought introduced by Thatcher and the country’s Conservative government. As *Attempts*’ focus on the sexualisation and commodification of its central character—Anne—demonstrates, neoliberalism’s valorization of the individual’s self-interest along with their potential to gain capital and consume with abandon remained a prevailing ideology. In 2008, *The City*

entered the theatre scene, first in Berlin and several months later in London, UK, during a similar period of upheaval. In 2007 and 2008, the world experienced a financial crisis, beginning with the failure of the sub-prime mortgage market in the U.S., and becoming an international emergency on September 15th 2008, when the investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy.³³ The financial crisis resulted in an increase in unemployment and saw the United States enter a recession. The UK was not immune to this economic crisis: in fact, one of the first signs of a financial crisis came from the UK when the bank BNP Paribas decided to block withdrawals from three hedge funds due to a “complete evaporation of liquidity” in August 2007 (Elliott). Just a few weeks later, customers began lining up en-masse to withdraw their money from Northern Rock bank, in a panic about the bank’s ability to honour their investments. These early signs of crisis were followed up in the United States in the summer and fall of 2008, with the UK’s economy similarly suffering. While Labour was still in power in 2008, in light of the economy uncertainty, support for the Conservative party began to gain steam, and Conservative party member Boris Johnson was able to defeat the incumbent Labour party candidate in the London Mayoral Election. Two years later, in 2010, the Conservative party would regain control of the government, with David Cameron at the helm as Prime Minister. The fundamental uncertainty and instability of the economy in 2008—one of many events which precipitated the political change that would come thereafter—is a key focus in Crimp’s *The City*. On several occasions, Crimp has identified Richard Sennett’s 1998 book *The Corrosion of Character*, which discusses the effects of late capitalism on

³³ Farndale, Nigel. “Lehman Brothers collapse: How the worst economic crisis in living memory began.” *The Telegraph* (23 December 2008).

the lives of contemporary workers, as a central influence on *The City*.³⁴ Sennett's book details the detrimental effects of late capitalism on the lives of workers, and his case studies foreshadow what was realized en-masse in 2008: the foundations upon which contemporary employment and work are based are fundamentally uncertain, unstable, and ultimately, precarious. Crimp's play stages this experience quite literally, as Chris, one of *The City*'s central characters, is made redundant as a result of his company's "restructuring" (12). The feeling of potential threat, of the rug being proverbially pulled out from under your life, pervades both *Attempts* and *The City*. Responding to two distinct, but connected contexts, Crimp explores how we are to exist in uncertain social, economic, and political conditions.

In each of the plays I discuss in this chapter, it is language that is at the heart of the production of presences. Since language is inherently ideological, as I will discuss following Louis Althusser, both play's characters are rooted in the ideologies that are projected onto them. In *Attempts on Her Life*, Anne is constructed via a series of variant descriptions of her; in *The City*, Clair has a diary in which she not only writes into existence the characters with whom she shares the stage, but also records the act of doing so. The question this chapter asks is, can the act of writing or speaking of someone actually create or conjure their presence on the stage? Is language alone sufficient to make something or someone present? And, what type of presence does language produce? In both plays, language is used to produce characters who represent specific ideological fantasies. Following from the theorization of liveness I have developed in the

³⁴ During a post-show talk on 8 May 2008 at the Royal Court Downstairs, Crimp makes specific reference to the book as an influence on *The City*, in terms of the play's representation of capitalism and the downfalls it can produce.

introduction to this dissertation, affect is a necessary component of presence and liveness. Thus, this chapter explores the ways in which language and affect work in tandem to produce presence onstage, following Lauren Berlant's discussion of promises and fantasies as affective structures. In short, even in instances where theatrical characters are unstable or even absent, they can be understood as having presence, since others narrate them into existence. In so doing, these others—including audience members—project their ideologies onto each play's contingent presences, sustaining the characters through their affective connections to the promises which these characters are made to represent.

Both *Attempts on Her Life* and *The City* deviate from conventional character representations, in each case focusing their attention on characters who are in some form incomplete, fragmented, or spectral. Furthermore, these play's central characters are "conjured" into being in some form: in *Attempts*, Anne is not present onstage, but her presence is produced through description provided by the play's other voices; in *The City*, the characters of Jenny, Mohammed, Chris, and the little girl are all products of Clair's imagination, written into existence in her notebook. Responding, as each play does, to its specific late capitalist cultural context, I argue we can understand these characters as creations of capitalism itself. Insofar as each of these characters is produced through voices, texts, and ideologies which are not necessarily their own, what is ultimately manifested in each play are spectral presences. These characters, it seems, can never truly come alive because they do not, in any way, participate in their own formation. They are only ever known to us through indirect means, through ascribed narratives and descriptions, voiced always through an other.

Specifically, the characters of Anne in *Attempts* and of Chris in *The City* become commodities in their respective contexts, emphasizing the ways in which they are

produced by capitalism, ready to be consumed and disposed of by an eager market. In each instance, the characters who produce Anne and Chris stand in for the larger system: in both works, characters are crafted according to the consumer desires of others. Moreover, the consumer desire that produces these characters can be categorized as the “good life” fantasy, as theorized by Lauren Berlant in her book, *Cruel Optimism*. In *Attempts*, Anne represents a perverse version of the woman who can “have it all”³⁵: she can be a mother, a wife, a sex object, a terrorist, and an enigma, all at once. However, the play splits Anne between these numerous projected roles, which results in her inability to sustain a cohesive character. The result is Anne’s fragmented and discontinuous presence over the course of the play. In *The City*, Clair’s creation of the characters who come to populate her life is similarly engaged in the “good life” fantasy, as she creates for herself a husband with an office job, and two children, making them the ideal nuclear family, as well as Jenny, a personable neighbour with a respectable job as a nurse. Clair’s fantasy good life falls apart too, though in different ways than Anne: Chris loses his job, the children are never physically manifest, suggesting they do not exist, and Jenny’s conversations repeatedly take a turn for the violent and strange. Thus, I propose that both plays stage the ways in which others project “good life” fantasies onto characters, allowing these imagined promises to determine identities, and turning characters into commodities to be consumed by desiring others.

³⁵ A term which can be traced back to Joyce Gabriel and Bettye Baldwin’s 1980 book, *Having It All: A Practical Guide to Managing a Home and a Career*. However, the phrase gained larger cultural recognition with Helen Gurley Brown’s 1982 book *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even if You’re Starting With Nothing*. The term has since appeared in numerous forms, its implications waxing and waning with the cultural climate. While at time of writing, the phrase is most typically invoked in articles debating and usually rejecting the possibility of one “having it all”, the fantasy associated with the phrase—that one can (and perhaps *must*) achieve perfect satisfaction in every possible facet of their life—persists.

I extend this argument to suggest that if characters like Anne and Chris are structured and produced by performers who stand in for their capitalist contexts, then we might suggest that their audiences similarly produce these spectral, commodified characters, based on their own consumer desires. I would like to pause here to emphasize the individual variance inherent to any audience, as the projections and promises I discuss throughout this chapter are necessarily individual creations. As I go on to discuss different “good life” ideologies, it is important to note that these fantasies will have different meanings or significance depending on one’s particular attachment to them. As I have established in the introduction to this dissertation, the collection of past experiences that one brings to a performance or play text necessarily influences one’s response to the work. There is individual variation in the versions of the fantasies projected onto Anne and Chris, as well as in audience/reader reactions to the play. While we are inherently like these characters in that we are similarly marked by ideological forces which precede and exceed us, because we are not fictional, we have the potential agency to manipulate and reorganize our given ideologies. In what follows, I describe Crimp’s characters as projections of ideological fantasies on two levels: within the world of each play, the characters are determined by an other; in the world beyond the stage, audience members project their own individual expectations onto the characters with whom they are presented. In this latter sense, I use the collective pronouns “we” and “our” to suggest that the act of ideological projection is universal, though the contents of one’s expectations and fantasies remain entirely individual.

The characters that I discuss in this chapter are the products not only of those who literally speak them into existence on stage, but also of our own ways of living, and our own cultural contexts. In this way, even though I characterize these figures as spectral,

they are nonetheless live, because they are what we, the audience or reader, have created. We are affectively attached to these characters because they represent the promises our ideologies seem to make to us; more accurately, they represent the expectations we project onto our world as a direct result of our ideologies. I draw from both Derrida's *Specters of Marx* and Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* to discuss the ways in which these spectral characters are figured as promises, produced by and for those who consume them. We produce these images of ideal capitalism, fantasy constructions created in our interactions with our ideologies as a form of wish-fulfillment; however, these are specters and therefore are never entirely within our desired realm. As much as Crimp's characters represent a dream world, they are also its failure: while Anne may be the woman who has successfully proved that one can "have it all", her representation in *Attempts* gives us a perversion of that dream, and ultimately, her identity is entirely effaced by the efforts to make her everything at once. Similarly, while Chris bounces back from his job loss, suggesting the possibility of overcoming external economic conditions to succeed on the strength of one's individual merits, he loses his humanity in the process, becoming increasingly robotic and constrained as the play continues. Thus, what these plays offer us are our capitalist dreams, the fulfillment of various cultural and economic promises; however, what we get is not complete, but rather fragmented, never fully alive, and moreover, never fully achievable. Rather than deterring us, the impossibility of these spectral promises merely encourages us to maintain an affective connection to them, to continue to pursue these dreams, as if we may one day be able to make them come truly alive. While these characters may fail to fulfill the desires we project onto them, we do not discard them fully; rather, we preserve them as half-lives, persistent presences on the neoliberal stage.

In this chapter, I discuss affect through the concepts of promise and precarity, insofar as they are manifested in two of Crimp's plays. To this end, I will briefly outline the relationship between these concepts and affect here, extrapolating more thoroughly and discussing the related implications throughout the chapter, as they apply specifically to *Attempts on her Life* and *The City*. If we understand affect, following Gregg and Siegworth as "mark[ing] a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters" wherein "a body is as much outside itself as in itself—webbed in its relations" (2, 3), then it is possible to conceptualize affect in relation to the circumstances of the world in which we live. To begin with, a promise—speaking specifically here of promises not between one subject and another, but rather in terms of the promises made to us by our cultural contexts, ideologies, and societies—exists in the space between the subject and their world. A promise in this sense is comprised of inputs from the world and the subject. A key example might be the infamous "American dream", which promises that if one were to just work hard enough, one can become a success. On one hand, this promise is created by American ideology in various forms, such as the circulation of success narratives which inculcate the promise into the culture, making hard work a foundational value, and making belief in the promise a fundamental aspect of the country's cultural identity. On the other hand, the promise is produced by the desires, expectations, and anxieties that subjects project onto the world around them. The "American dream", like other fantasy constructs, persists because subjects desire what they have been promised, and have been conditioned to believe that fulfillment of the fantasy is possible despite any barriers. As Brian Massumi puts it, "The future has a kind of felt presence, an affective presence, as an attractor" (*Politics of Affect* 60). For Massumi, we are drawn towards that which we see as potential and futural, like a promise. Thus, a promise is constituted in the encounter

between an individual and their world, in the interaction which takes place in the space between them. We can understand promises as the material result of an affective encounter between an individual and their circumstances. To use Berlant's terminology, the figurative "leaning towards" a promise—or an object which promises or represents a promise—is an affective response to one's world. Berlant suggests that

When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. This cluster of promises could seem embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text...being drawn to return to the scene where the object hovers in its potentialities is the operation of optimism as an affective form. In optimism, the subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her object. (23-4)

Just as I theorize affect as something to be accumulated and consumed by desiring theatre spectators, promises are similarly consumable. As Berlant puts it, "Fantasy is the means by which people hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world 'add up to something'" (2). The promises made to us by our cultural ideologies are affective not only when they are fulfilled or fail to actualize: even in solely potential forms, they provoke an affective response: desire, satisfaction, joy, anxiety. Moreover, the affect produced by a promise is desirable in and of itself. We actively seek out promises from our world, I suggest, in order that we might fulfill our desire to consume affective experiences themselves. If affect is delivered to us via promises, then both *Attempts* and *The City* demonstrate the ways in which these promises can come to structure our lives, through the narratives and experiences we choose to consume.

Precarity is also closely tied with affect, but precarity more specifically involves an encounter between two subjects. In *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant offers a useful definition, identifying precarity as “a condition of dependency—as a legal term, precarious describes the situation wherein your tenancy on your land is in someone else's hands” (192). This understanding of precarity as dependency is an affective state because it relies heavily on each individual’s capacity to affect and be affected, a set of conditions which defines affect for theorists like Spinoza, Teresa Brennan, Brian Massumi, as well as Gregg and Siegworth.³⁶ This potential to be affected or acted upon by an other signals one’s fundamental (and reciprocal) vulnerability, and therefore precarity, in encounters with an other. Over the course of this chapter—and, indeed, this dissertation—I will invoke the concept of precarity in a few different contexts, in two broad categories: ontological precarity and socio-economic precarity. In this chapter, when I speak of the ontological precarity of the characters Anne and Chris, for instance, I am theorizing their existences as entirely dependent on an external force, as both characters are created, spoken, and performed by subjects other than themselves. When I turn to discuss, for example, Chris’s socio-economic precarity, I am using the term in a more material sense. For example, Chris losing his job demonstrates that his life’s stability is vulnerable to certain cultural forces, such as economic downturn, and corporate restructuring. These two senses of “precarity” represent two different approaches, one being more abstract, and the other relating more so to real-world conditions. Naturally, these two categories have fluid borders, overlapping in telling ways. For instance, in *The City*, Crimp mirrors Chris’s

³⁶ For example, Massumi defines affect as “*L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected” (1000 Plateaus xvi), and Gregg and Siegworth state that “Affect arises in the midst of in-betweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (1).

existential precarity and his socio-economic precarity to demonstrate that the latter can be felt as an ontological threat. As I work through these various forms of precarity over the course of this chapter and the following, I will return to key theorists such as Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant in order to explore how the term functions in different performance contexts.

1.3 *Attempts on Her Life*

Martin Crimp's most well-known work is *Attempts on Her Life*, first performed at the Royal Court in 1997. The play focuses on a character named Anne, who is never fully present. In contrast to *The City*, *Attempts* does not seek to create a character from scratch, but rather seems to be an attempt to use narrative representation to approximate a non-present subject who exists elsewhere in order to make their existence present on the stage. The work is an attempt to make a character live simply through linguistic representation or description. These descriptions are constructed based on traces of Anne's subjectivity. Each of the scenarios refers to an absent presence, and the play is an attempt to build a subjectivity from fragments. The work seems to ask: can you make a live presence on stage through the assembling of trace elements? Can you use description and representation to represent an other, in all their liveness? Following the existing scholarship on *Attempts*, I suggest that Anne's subjectivity cannot be made live through linguistic representation alone. However, as I argue throughout the entirety of this dissertation, liveness is not produced solely on the stage, but is rather borne out of affective engagement with an other. Anne becomes "live" because the play's narrators, who stand in for her audience, project their ideological fantasies onto her. Despite the

impossibility of language alone constituting a presence, if we read the play's use of language through Althusser's understanding of ideology and interpellation, then Anne becomes an accumulation of the desires and expectations of those who aim to represent her. Moreover, I propose that the fantasy construction ascribed to Anne is based in our affective attachments to the world around us. Thus, Anne is produced by and for those who will consume her. Indeed, the play speaks to some of my overarching concerns in this dissertation, specifically the ways in which individual experience can become commoditized. Emilie Morin echoes this view in her article on the play, arguing that the work is "a troubling critique of the ways in which contemporary living is manufactured and packaged as a sensory experience worthy of financial investment" (75). I argue that the ways that Anne is staged mirror the ways that spectators are themselves staged in other performative spaces.³⁷ I extrapolate on Morin's point in this chapter, extending her incisive commentary on *Attempts* to Crimp's *The City*, proposing that affective experience is central to the ways in which subjects are treated by their economic markets, and social/cultural contexts. Other scholars have described Anne's presence in this play as spectral or ghostly,³⁸ and in the latter part of this section, I will respond to these precedent claims by placing *Attempts* in conversation with Derrida's seminal *Specters of Marx*, in order to understand Anne's liminal presence. I will conclude the section by discussing how exactly one might engage affectively with a spectral presence, how

³⁷ I expand on this point specifically in this dissertation's second chapter, in reference to Punchdrunk theatre's particular brand of immersive performance.

³⁸ For example, Rachel Clements' article "Deconstructive Techniques and Spectral Technologies in Katie Mitchell's *Attempts on Her Life*" specifically discusses how spectrality is made manifest in performances of the play.

Anne's ghostly nature might alter the audience's affective response, and discuss the importance of not disregarding the potential liveness of that which is spectral.

Attempts is comprised of 17 scenarios which attempt to represent the central (but never fully present) character, Anne, in various ways and through various genres. The play can be performed with any number of actors and in any order; the scenes do not identify speakers, simply listing the lines without any required attribution. In the play-text, there is no indication that an actor must necessarily portray Anne in any of the scenarios, nor are any lines of dialogue attributed to her. However, for practical reasons, many productions choose to use at least one actor to portray Anne in some of the play's scenarios. In Katie Mitchell's 2007 production of the play, she resists giving Anne any singular embodied form by having numerous performers represent her over the course of the play, sometimes even having more than one "Anne" onstage at once. Over the course of the play's 17 scenarios, the character variously referred to as "Anne", "Anya", "Annie", or "Anny," is represented as, among other things, a young woman, an older woman, a mother, a child, a political radical, a murderer, a victim, a terrorist, a porn actor, and an artist. The play begins with a scene marked as optional for performance, wherein a telephone answering machine plays out its messages, which progress to violent threats and foul language expressed by a repeat caller, who alludes to a series of grim scenarios. This opening seems to follow in the tradition of late twentieth century British social realist drama, such as that of Mark Ravenhill or Edward Bond. However, from this point, the play diverges into more experimental territory, as unnamed speakers attempt to describe the character of Anne into existence. The play's other scenarios feature a sex scene between two unnamed characters narrated and repeatedly re-written by other performers, a showcase of the objects Anne has used in her suicide attempts, several

songs, an interrogation of sorts, and even a car commercial for the latest model, the “Anny”. Uniting each of this play’s fragmentary scenes are the performers’ verbal descriptions of the absent Anne, as if the performers are attempting to produce a cohesive image and understanding of someone who is not entirely present. Thus, many of the play’s lines are in a descriptive mode, such as, “The whole of the past is there in her face” (17), or “She’s the kind of person who believes the message on the till receipt” (23), or in the case of the car commercial scenario, “The *Anny* skims the white beaches of the world as easily as she parks outside the halogen-lit shoe shops of the great cities” (37). In each scenario, performers describe Anne in various ways: what she might be like, what she might have done, what she might do, what she might look like, and so on. This third person descriptive mode emphasizes Anne’s absence from the stage: we are explicitly told, rather than shown, who she is.

Anne is intrinsically linked to language: in the play-text, her only existence is through the words of others. This connection is a significant one because if Anne exists in and through language, then she is also an inherently ideological construction. In a related vein, scholars have read Anne as a representation of Derrida’s language theory, for example taking up Derrida’s argument that “there is no experience of *pure* presence, but only chains of differential marks” (318) to characterize her as citational, as Liz Tomlin does in her article “Citational Theory in Practice”. Indeed, Tomlin’s argument offers a useful way of understanding Anne’s relationship to her representation. Derrida argues that “Representation regularly *supplements* presence” (“Signature, Event, Context” 313), and extends this argument by stating, “The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence...But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It

intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void” (*Of Grammatology* 144-45). If we regard the supplement—in this case, Anne’s representation in descriptive narration—as that which adds only to replace, then one reason for Anne’s tenuous presence in this play becomes clear: she has been supplemented, and therefore substituted by the ideological narratives and fantasies ascribed to her. This feature of supplementary representation as Derrida describes it is but one way in which Anne’s existence in this play is never fully formed.

Anne can be further understood as a fundamentally precarious being in the context of this play in two connected ways: insofar as she exists on the stage, she is spoken into that existence through the voices of others,³⁹ and since her representation is disseminated by multiple voices, and multiple performers, the version of Anne produced by the play is never stable or consistent. In all scenarios but one, Anne is represented through third person narration, in descriptions provided by various performers. There is only one instance in the play where it is possible that Anne speaks for her herself: in scenario 16, the stage directions note that “*The principal speaker is a very young woman*” (71).⁴⁰

³⁹ Several scholars have also noted this aspect of *Attempts*. Elisabeth Angel-Perez refers to Crimp’s characters as “often ventriloquist voices”, stating that “The spectralised character only exists through and inside the others’ voices, to the point that we may wonder if the character would exist at all without them to speak her or if she can only achieve a being thanks to these rememberers, commentators, and ventriloquists: in other words, voices that are not her own” (353; 356). Sierz echoes this point in his statement that, Anne is “an absence filled by other peoples’ ideas and opinions” (52). Angel-Perez ultimately suggests that “it is essentially through putting the voice at a good distance from the self that he [Crimp] achieves the expression of selfhood. De-centred, circulating, nomadic voices become the only place capable of sounding the subject” (353). In a different vein, in Liz Tomlin’s article, “Citational Theory in Practice”, she suggests that several of Crimp’s characters, including *Attempts*’ Anne, “can be seen to be expositions of citational, rather than essential, readings of identity, as they ostensibly refuse to point to any semblance of a determinate or originary reality, as might be anticipated within more realistic, or psychologically rounded modes of characterisation” (372).

⁴⁰ Luckhurst argues that scenario 16’s young female speaker is definitively Anne, describing the scenario as “the only one that explicitly states that ‘Anne’, ‘a very young woman’, speaks” (58). However, as the play-text does not name Anne in the stage directions, only indicating “a very young woman” (s.d. 71), I do not share Luckhurst’s confidence that this scene gives us an embodied Anne, but rather that her presence onstage remains purposefully uncertain.

However, for most of this scene, the description remains in the third person: for example, “The best years of her life are ahead of her” (71). This refusal to vary the narrative style from previous scenes suggests that even if this scene is understood as an instance where Anne speaks for herself, she is nonetheless still limited to speaking of herself from an external perspective, only ever conceiving of herself through the perspective of an other. As the scene continues, the young female speaker’s narration begins to break down, as she appears to forget what she is meant to say, and is repeatedly prompted by another performer with the correct line (74). As she continues to falter, we get a brief respite from the third person, as the speaker pauses, and says “I can’t...I can’t” (75). These lines precede the speaker’s total breakdown, as “She turns away” and “another speaker takes over” (s.d. 75). After this brief collapse, the play’s narrative structure is quickly re-established, as another performer takes over for the previous speaker, returning immediately to the scene’s third person descriptions, finishing the line that the female speaker could not: “Everything is provided for her needs. Including a regular education” (75). If we understand the first speaker to be Anne, or a representation of her, then this re-establishment of the play’s strict order demonstrates that she cannot be represented in any form other than through an external perspective, voiced by an other. The attempt to grant Anne some form of voice, as compromised as it is by necessitating that she narrate herself from an outsider’s perspective, results in the brief breakdown of the play’s communicative abilities. Thus, Anne’s existence depends on the perspective of the other, as she does not exist beyond the narrations offered by those who are other to her. As Angel-Perez argues, the voice of the other is vital, as “Language is the place where the characters become real: on Crimp’s stage...to verbalise, to vocalise, to vociferate, is to bring to life. More than a performative function, voice has an ontological vocation” (354).

Indeed, Anne's only form of manifestation in this play—a work ostensibly about her—is through the voice of the other, making her reliant on the will of an other simply to exist, even in the fragmentary and uncertain forms that she takes over the course of the play.

It is significant that language is the means used to construct Anne since language is always already ideological; when describing Anne, her narrators project their ideological preoccupations and expectations onto her. In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, Althusser makes this connection between language and ideology in his example of interpellation, “which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’” (174). In a form of speech-act, the moment in which one is hailed causes a recognition, wherein the individual “becomes a *subject*” (174). Althusser is clear that, in reality, this process of the subject's interpellation and recognition as a subject is not as processual as given in the “hey, you there!” example. Rather, he argues that “The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing” (175). Put differently, ideology and the language used to express it are already intrinsically connected. Furthermore, Althusser proposes that “individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already subjects” (176). Anne is narrated by *subjects*, who are, therefore, inherently ideological. Secondly, the specific use of language to represent Anne—rather than, for example, visual representation—is important because, though the fragments which represent her perhaps cannot produce her as a subject *per se*, since she is made of language, she is created with her cultural context's ideologies as inherent to her. In short, it is her creators' ideologies which come to form Anne, through their use of language as their medium of representation.

Anne is narrated by those who are other to her, and she is produced through language; both of these features mean that Anne is constructed by ideology. More specifically, Anne represents a particular ideology (or its perversion): the “good life” fantasy of the woman who can “have it all”. “Having it all” traditionally refers to the ability, typically of a woman, to balance both professional and personal lives: to maintain a successful career, as well as having a partner and child. Oftentimes, the promise of being able to “have it all” comes with additional responsibilities and expectations beyond just maintaining family life and a career. Various cultural sources (television, film, magazines, advertising, for example) perpetuate a specific image of contemporary femininity: one is expected to be an excellent cook who eats a healthy diet, to keep an immaculate home, stay up-to-date with current fashion trends, go to the gym to remain fit and healthy, earn large sums of money, rise to the top of their career, be an active participant in all their child’s activities, both academic and extra-curricular, keep up with friends and family, and so on. In a perverse way, Anne can be understood as a potential fulfillment of this largely middle class dream: over the course of the play, she is represented as a mother, an activist, an artist, and sexually desirable, at the same time as she is a terrorist, suicidal, and perhaps exploited as a sex worker. Through the framework of *Attempts*, Anne is given the opportunity to become as many different versions of herself as can be imagined, to adopt and fulfill numerous roles, though the play flips the fantasy on its head by making several of Anne’s roles and responsibilities ones which subvert the traditional expectations of one who “has it all”. This perversion of the “having it all” fantasy demonstrates that for Anne, as well as for those beyond the play, to be able to adopt and fulfill numerous expectations and roles does not equate to what might be considered a “good life”. Thus, through Crimp’s satirical lens, it is the “having it all”

fantasy which grants Anne the latitude to engage in terrorist activities. After all, as so much media directed at young women emphasizes, she can be anything she wants.⁴¹

Moreover, we must attend once more here to Anne's circumstances: the roles she is given in *Attempts* are not necessarily what *she* wants, but are rather given to her by others. The "having it all" fantasy is what has been projected onto her. Those who narrate Anne into existence have structured her according to *their* desires, and her fulfillment of this particular fantasy indicates that the expectation to have it all is on the side of Anne's observer-creators, and is not immediately inherent to her. In her article on the play, Luckhurst echoes some of these points, arguing that "'Anne' points to a compulsive desire to create out of women the most polymorphously-perverse, ultimately consumable

⁴¹ This reading resonates with Angela McRobbie's analysis of post-feminism, a detailed discussion of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. In brief, McRobbie suggests that, in contemporary discourse, "various political issues associated with feminism, are understood to be now widely recognised and responded to (they have become feminist common-sense) with the effect that there is no longer any place for feminism in contemporary political culture" (720). As a result, "The meanings which now converge around the figure of the girl or young women...are now more weighted towards capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment, entitlement, social mobility and participation. The dynamics of regulation and control are less about what young women ought not to do, and more about what they can do" (721). From this perspective, Anne becomes an ironic embodiment of McRobbie's post-feminist woman, imbued with capacity, who is able to do anything she wants. Not only is Anne made to "have-it-all" in this perverse sense as a critique of the discourse of female capacity, but she also occupies a distinctly neoliberal position, as she can be co-opted as a symbol of meritocracy. As McRobbie puts it, "Within the language of Britain's New Labour government, the girl who has benefited from the equal opportunities now available to her, can be mobilised as the embodiment of the values of the new meritocracy. This term has become an abbreviation for the more individualistic and competitive values promoted by New Labour particularly within education" (721-722). McRobbie summarizes this phenomenon in her suggestion that, "We might now imagine the young woman as a highly efficient assemblage for productivity" (722). Anne both embodies and subverts this expectation of productivity: she is productive in her ability to take on numerous, even conflicting, female roles. However, her ability to occupy numerous positions seems to be undercut by one in specific: the terrorist, by its nature, an inherently destructive role. In this way, Anne seems designed to occupy the post-feminist ideal in order to undermine it. Anne is thus not only figured as a commodity, but as a decidedly neoliberal commodity: she is numerous iterations of an ideal "post-feminist" woman, who must necessarily turn towards the self, becoming, as McRobbie puts it "important to [herself]" (723). This production of Anne as commodity means she is intended to be consumed. This figuration casts both those who describe Anne in *Attempts* as well as her spectators as not only producers of a neoliberal fantasy construct, but also as consumers of that fantasy and Anne herself. Thus, *Attempts* extends the logic of the post-feminist character to its most extreme conclusion: the very capacity that is rewarded by the neoliberal logic is precisely what allows Anne to become a terrorist, and therefore destructive where she ought to be productive.

product in the global market economy, a commodity invented only to be exchanged, guaranteed to yield ‘the sexiest scenario’ for any consumer” (55). Luckhurst’s analysis here resonates with the “having it all” fantasy, which often emphasizes sexual desirability as requisite in addition to other forms of success. Moreover, Anne’s frequent representation as a sex worker at several points in the play also aligns with Luckhurst’s perspective by emphasizing that Anne’s entire being is constructed as a commodity, even her non-existent body. Those who create Anne construct her for their own consumption. Those onstage who describe Anne can be characterized as “prosumers”, which is the term for consumers who produce that which they consume. Affect is not only a process of transfer and exchange, but also of consumption. Having an experience which affects one is not a passive process, but an active one in which we consume the experience and its associated affects.⁴² Thus, spectators and readers of *Attempts* project their own desires onto the character of Anne so that they might produce the character they would like to see on stage, whose narrative they would like to consume for their entertainment and edification. Anne represents not only the fantasy of “having it all”, but the promise of that type of “good life” dream. If we can make Anne successfully “have it all”, then perhaps there is hope that this construct is not a mere fantasy, but that it indeed can fulfill all that it promises to us.

Althusser discusses the figure of the Subject, marked as distinct from subjects through his use of the capital “S” (178). While I would not go so far as to suggest that Anne is a God-like figure in *Attempts*, she is nonetheless positioned at the centre of the

⁴² This is a point I discuss in more depth in this dissertation’s second chapter, using B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore’s concept of the “experience economy” to theorize the experience of performance—and particularly participatory and immersive performances—as consumer experiences. As I argue in the introduction

play and is marked as distinct from the subjects who represent her. Importantly, Althusser suggests that The Subject is one who interpellates individuals as subjects, and identifies them as subject *to* the Subject (179), which I argue is also one of Anne's key functions in *Attempts*. Althusser further suggests that "all ideology is centred, that the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects" (180). Althusser's argument here allows us to consider Anne not just as created by the subjects around her, but also as interpellating them, calling on them to represent her. Rachel Clements argues that Anne "both encourages and resists being described" (340). Perhaps unconsciously, Anne interpellates her creators through her fragmentary and contradictory nature, calling upon them to attempt to represent her in a stable form on the stage. Katie Mitchell's production of the play similarly emphasized the ways in which Anne's representation encourages spectators to desire and visually consume her body; the production's use of video and multimedia additions represent Anne by mimicking mass media consumption, with extreme close-ups on the face, and extended shots of the performer's body. Importantly, this technique also physically fragments the performer portraying Anne, visually and physically representing her character's larger fragmentation. If the play's representation of Anne encourages the audience to look at, desire, and ultimately consume her, then I suggest that Anne can be understood as interpellating her spectators. If Anne is constructed by language, placing ideology at the core of her existence, then this representative structure extends into the play's audiences or readers, interpellating us by representing, through Anne's linguistic construction, the very ideologies which also structure our subjectivity. According to Althusser, interpellation is a double-mirror structure: "the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject is

speculary, i.e. a mirror-structure, and doubly speculary: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning” (180). Just as Anne interpellates us, we project ourselves onto her in the form of our own ideological expectations. In this way, I understand the play’s spectators as participating in the work by casting onto Anne their individual expectations for the “good life” or “having-it-all” fantasy that she represents. She is, as Mary Luckhurst puts it, “a fantasy-repository for extreme kinds of wish-fulfilment” (55). The fact that Anne is narrated by others is fundamental to this interpretation, since she is fragmentary and transient precisely because she is narrated by numerous voices. However, that very ephemerality also fuels the continued projection of desire and promise onto her. As Luckhurst states, “The fact of ‘Anne’s’ non-existence accounts for her fabricators’ obsessive engagement with attempting to narrate her: only in narration can ‘Anne’ be imagined to be real and only through repeated attempts to resolve the irresolvable, that is—to summon her presence—can the idea of ‘Anne’ be sustained” (55). This fantasy or idealized version of life is projected onto her both by those who narrate her existence, but also by those of us who observe her. From this perspective, I argue that the audience is implicated in the performance, because the play’s speakers stand in for us. They, like us, are other to Anne, and create her based on their desires, appetites, and expectations.

While Althusser’s theory that ideology plays an absolutely determinative role in the formation of subjectivity, I suggest that there is more room for play in the ways that ideology structures our narratives of subjectivity and experience than Althusser allows for. Applying Althusser’s theory alone risks producing a reading of *Attempts* that does not allow for variation in interpretation and response based on the individual experience of the spectator or reader. While ideology influences the representation of Anne given to us,

and the expectations we project onto her, it does not necessarily determine our immediate affective responses to her. Crimp's plays model putting spectators in the role of the "prosumer",⁴³ standing in for the play's actual spectators by allowing performers to determine and create the character they wish to see on stage. In two senses, it is clear that the prosumer's power is limited: more obviously, the performers' choices are ultimately determined by the script, but from a more abstract perspective, the narratives the performers ascribe to Anne and Chris are also anticipated and determined by their ideologies. Over the course of this dissertation, I will continue to complicate the role of the "prosumer", which always seems to offer free choice, though these choices are always already anticipated and even determined in advance.

Insofar as Anne is constituted or created by this ideology, it also destroys her because she cannot sustain an existence; thus, the "good life" ideology casts her as possible and impossible simultaneously. Crimp seems to suggest here that the ideological fantasies or promises which structure contemporary lives are unsustainable. Ironically, as each of the play's scenarios tells us more about the absent Anne, the less possible and whole she becomes in our understanding of her, as each layer of description destabilizes her existence. The play's excess of description, as well as the variation and heterogeneity

⁴³ This term was coined by Alvin Toffler, to refer to "combined producers and consumers who do for themselves what would formerly have been done for them by others (more specifically, other workers) and who fulfil their own needs by producing what they want to consume, whether that be a commodity or a service" (Harvie *Fair Play* 50). As will become evident over the course of this dissertation, the prosumer model is central to how I conceptualize contemporary spectatorship. I propose that the appeal of certain types of theatre being produced in the neoliberal era, is that we—as audience members, readers, and more generally those who engage with the performance work in whatever form it takes—are given the agency to participate in the structuring of our own experiences of the work. In the subsequent two chapters, I will discuss this same phenomenon in terms of participatory theatre, which allows spectators to play some form of active role in the theatrical experience, and in terms of live streams and other archival performance forms, which allow spectators to engage and disengage, consume and dispose of entirely at their own will and for their own convenience.

of the representations, means that the play never produces a singular or cohesive image of Anne. Simply put, the play describes her in too many different ways for any one image of her to emerge. This feature was emphasized in Katie Mitchell's 2007 production of the play at the Lyttleton Theatre, where performers would alternate taking on the role of "Anne" in various scenes; in addition, in several scenes, multiple performers would represent Anne simultaneously. Even when Anne was embodied by a performer in this production, that embodiment was never consistent, stable, or singular, preventing the audience from establishing any firm assumptions about how Anne might look, move, or behave. In addition to excess, this scattered or diffuse effect is also produced through a series of contradictions and uncertainties from those who describe her. To this first point, for example, there is no possibility that who Anne "is" can be consistent across various scenarios, because she simply cannot be both a model of car (as represented in scenario 7) and a human woman having sexual intercourse (as described in scenario 2). Moreover, the ways in which Anne is described in each of these scenarios undermines any assumptions of certainty. For instance, in scenario 2, the speakers are in the midst of the process of collaborating to create the scene they describe, and it is one which they do not always agree on:

- Even now in the intensity of her passion a kind of shadow crosses her face.
- A premonitory shadow.
- Premonitory?
- A premonitory shadow, yes, crosses her face.
- Is that a word?
- Is what a word?

Pause.

- Well yes, of course premonitory is a word. (12-13)

In scenario four, there is a similar occurrence, where one speaker describes Anne's son as living in America, and another interjects to disagree, stating "Canada, actually... Toronto" (23). Repeatedly, speakers respond to one another through repetition and reassurance, producing exchanges such as,

- It's a valley.
- It's a valley—yes—deep in the hills
- It's a valley deep in the hills...And there are fruit trees.
- Each child who is born in this valley has a fruit tree planted in their name. In fact there's a kind of ceremony.
- A formal—exactly—ceremony.
- A kind of formal ceremony takes place in the village. (17)

This ongoing process of creation, reassertion, and reaffirmation of the descriptions produces a level of uncertainty for the reader or audience in terms of what we are being told. The speakers inspire no confidence in the authenticity or validity of what they describe, in fact emphasizing that they are collaboratively improvising these descriptions. This style of narration a) places uncertainty at the heart of the "attempts" at representing Anne, and b) suggests that there is no "real" or precedent or extant Anne from which these descriptions are being derived. Thus, despite the play's continual "attempts" to produce Anne, she remains fragmentary, only existing in estimation and traces.

Thus, as much as Anne might "have it all", she in fact does not, because the result of such a structure means that her character lacks any cohesiveness across the play. As I have just indicated, Anne's various roles begin to contradict one another, making her character an impossible one. She is never embodied onstage because she cannot maintain

a consistent identity. Instead, she is fragmented, the various roles and activities ascribed to her are scattered across the entire play, while she is consistently unable to achieve a singular form. She is simply too many things at once, and as a result, is unsustainable: her character begins to fall apart as more and more details are granted to her. Unable to hold herself together, Anne's representation within the play demonstrates why "having it all" remains a fantasy rather than a reality: stretched too thin, it becomes impossible to unify oneself under numerous discrete roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Ultimately, Anne fails to fulfill for us the promise that one can "have it all". The result, for Anne, is that she can only ever half-exist in the play, haunting every scene through a contingent presence, always existing somewhere between appearing and disappearing.

Anne's existence in the between space of the play is emphasized in the title's key word, "attempts", a fact which is foregrounded when the term takes on an alternate meaning in scenario six. This scene is a discussion of Anne's numerous and repeated efforts to commit suicide, as the first two lines indicate "It's not her first attempt. / It shouldn't be her first attempt. She's tried at various times" (27). This introduction of "attempt" as no longer simply referring to the speakers' attempts to, by various means, produce a representation of Anne on the stage, but rather referring to suicide attempts, means that we must understand "attempt" as both a creative and destructive term. The titular phrase *Attempts on Her Life* thus refers both to its perhaps more common usage of "trying to kill someone", as well as to the play's repeated efforts to produce a representation of Anne's life on the stage. This simultaneity of oppositional meanings is echoed in scenario six, when the speakers discuss various photographs of Anne, primarily of her travelling, analyzing her life from childhood, interrogating whether or not it is possible to see suicidal tendencies in Anne's actions and words from across her life. This

concern becomes apparent when the speakers state that “The fascinating thing, that’s right, is that the bag turns out to be full of stones. /The stones are there to keep her under however much she thrashes, and the handles of the bag are tied to her ankles” (33). They wonder if they can suggest that Anne’s red backpack (featured in many of the photographs discussed earlier in the scene) “perhaps...was *always* full of stones. From the moment in fact that she left the house” to which another speaker replies “We can’t be sure” (34). Much like in the doubled meaning of “attempt”, by this scene’s description, Anne seems to be positioned as potentially both alive and dead, occupying a space between the two. In essence, this scenario asks whether or not it is possible to see Anne’s death in her life, and in turn, whether or not it is possible for her to exist as both dead and alive. The scene thus literalizes the situation that the play presents as a whole. If this play is constructed by “attempts on her [Anne’s] life”, then the play works to both produce and destroy her, creating instead a form of Anne which exists in an in-between or liminal space.

If we understand Anne as liminal, and specifically produced in between life and death in this work, then Anne must be understood to a certain degree as ghostly, or spectral, to follow Derrida’s terminology.⁴⁴ In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida not only discusses the ontology of the specter, but also argues that specters are inherently connected to commodification, a link which I argue Crimp dramatizes in *Attempts* as well

⁴⁴ Other scholars have given lengthy analyses of the figure of the ghost as it relates to theatre and performance, which are beyond the scope of this chapter to summarize. In brief, Marvin Carlson’s *The Haunted Stage* uses the concept of “ghosting” to refer to the reiterability and recycling inherent to the theatrical form, arguing that “the theatre has been obsessed always with things that return...Everything in the theatre, the bodies, the materials utilized, the language, the space itself, is now and has always been haunted and that haunting has been an essential part of the theatre’s meaning to and reception by its audiences in all times and all places” (15). Alice Rayner’s *Ghosts: Death’s Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* also argues that “theatre, in all of its aspects, uniquely insists on the reality of ghosts” (xii).

as *The City*. In *Specters*, Derrida elaborates on what he describes as “hauntology”, a term he ascribes to that which is “neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes. It does not belong to ontology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death” (63). For Derrida, the spectre challenges accepted binaries, not just those relating to life and death, but also in terms of temporality. He argues that, “If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth” (48). He continues, stating, “There is first of all the doubtful contemporaneity of the present to itself. Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, of the past present and the future present, one must perhaps ask oneself whether the spectrality effect does not consist in undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other” (48). Specters, for Derrida, are reminders of temporal non-linearity, opening up space for presences which defy such boundaries. Indeed, Derrida describes the specter as messianic, stating “everything begins by the apparition of a specter. More precisely by the waiting for this apparition. The anticipation is at once impatient, anxious, and fascinated: this, the thing (‘this thing’) will end up coming. The revenant is going to come. It won’t be long. But how long it is taking” (2).

We can similarly view *Attempts* from an anticipatory perspective; since Anne is repeatedly described in what I interpret as an effort to conjure her presence, she always remains in potential, yet-to-come. Derrida refers specifically to the concept of conjuring, arguing, “‘Conjuration’ signifies...the magical incantation destined to evoke, to bring forth with the voice, to convoke a charm or a spirit. Conjuration says in sum the appeal

that causes to come forth with the voice and thus it makes come, by definition, what is not there at the present moment of the appeal. This voice does not describe, what it says certifies nothing; its words cause something to happen” (50). It is telling that Derrida differentiates conjuration from description, as it is through description that *Attempts* seeks to conjure Anne’s presence. I would therefore resist Derrida’s opposition of conjuration and description, as *Attempts*’ approach undoubtedly causes “something to happen”, though that “something” may differ in quality from what Derrida imagines, as I suggest that Anne is conjured not as present on the stage, but is rather made present for spectators and readers through affect. Derrida goes on, stating, “to conjure means also to exorcise: to attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonized, diabolized force, most often an evil-doing spirit, a specter, a kind of ghost who comes back or who still risks coming back post mortem” (59). This introduction of the antithetical into the concept of conjuration also resonates with *Attempts*’ project, which produces as much as it dismantles Anne. Thus, while *Attempts*’ approach to conjuration differs from that which Derrida describes, the result is the same, not only summoning the spectre of Anne, but producing her as a spectre by simultaneously creating and destroying her, figuring her as at once present and absent through the entirety of the play.

Rachel Clements similarly notes Anne’s spectrality in her article on Katie Mitchell’s 2007 production of the play, defining spectrality as a formal principle in the work, arguing, “Crimp, in effect, creates a hauntology of production: his play—satiric, ironic—knows that it is ghosted, and figures this spectre as Anne, Anya, Annie, Anny, Annushka (and, in several of the scenarios, just ‘she’), a proliferating ghost who appears, and reappears, and reappears again. Rather than repressing the spectral, then, Crimp gives it structural free-reign, and uses it as a formal principle” (334). For Clements, the concept

of spectre allows her to explore the technical aspects of Mitchell's production of the play, which purposefully draw attention to the constructedness of the theatrical experience. Clements suggests that "the ghost of Anne highlights the flaws, dangers, and constructions of the dominant discourses of the media", a process that she terms a "pulling apart" of the contemporary world, which "might enable us to understand that this act of undoing is, emphatically, also a doing: the work of deconstruction is a rigorous and creative labour which...resulted in a production which seemed to propose that attending to and being attuned to the act of image construction both 'exposes its irony' and multiplies its possibilities" (341). I concur with Clements's assessment that the spectral allows us to see more clearly the operations of our world; however, for the purposes of my analysis, I approach the notion of spectrality from a less formal perspective, analyzing instead the relationship produced in the encounter between the ghost and the subject.

Understanding Anne as a spectre is illuminating in several ways: firstly, Anne's ghostly nature makes her both a promise and a threat to those exposed to her; the spectre of Anne possesses the uncanny spectral ability to look without being seen, addressing the audience of her work in ways which necessitate critical and productive self-reflection; and finally, via Derrida's connection between spectrality and economics, we can better understand Anne as a commodity. Anne's spectrality resonates with her characterization as the representation of various ideological promises. Just as the spectre is defined by its anticipatory quality, so too are the promises made to us by various "good life" fantasies. Thus, Anne's positioning as a spectre emphasizes the impossibility of the promises she has been imbued with; they, like her, will only ever exist in potential. However, this perpetual anticipation does not sever our affective connections to the promised experience or presence, but rather further entrenches our engagement with it, such that it continues in

perpetuity. While the specter draws us towards it via potential and promise, it also repels us out of fear. Indeed, as much as Anne represents fantasy, she is also a threat, as she exemplifies the ways in which these ideological dreams can, in fact, make one precarious, as the very ideological fantasy which constructs Anne is also that which prevents her from having a stable and sustainable presence. Finally, Anne can be understood as operating under the “visor effect”, a term which Derrida derives from the appearance of the ghost in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (*Specters* 6). He defines this visor effect as that which “looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there... We will call this the *visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us” (6). He argues, “This spectral someone other looks at us, we feel ourselves being looked at by it... To feel ourselves seen by a look which it will always be impossible to cross, that is the visor effect” (6). Anne can be understood as operating in a similar fashion in *Attempts*. As I have mentioned, Anne interpellates her creators and spectators as much as she herself is interpellated. I relate her ability to interpellate her audiences as a function of the visor effect; her audience cannot “see” her because she is never fully embodied onstage, and yet she wields power over them and their behaviour.

Anne’s ability to interpellate her audiences is connected to her position as a commodity. On the relationship between spectrality and the commodity, Derrida states, “As is well known, Marx always described money, and more precisely the monetary sign, in the figure of appearance or simulacrum, more exactly of the ghost. He not only described them, he also defined them, but the figural presentation of the concept seemed to describe some spectral ‘thing,’ which is to say, ‘someone’” (55). He continues, “the existence (Dasein) of money... produces a remainder. This remainder is—it remains, precisely—but the shadow of a great name... The whole movement of idealization

(Idealisierung) that Marx then describes, whether it is a question of money or of ideologems, is a production of ghosts, illusions, simulacra, appearances, or apparitions” (55-56). I propose that we can understand Anne as these spectral remainders of the processes of capitalism. In specific, *Attempts* features two scenes which openly commoditize Anne. The first, scenario seven, entitled “The New Anny”, figures Anne as a car, in a scene which mimics a luxury car commercial. As Angelaki argues, “Through the metaphor of a car branded ‘The New Anny’, *Attempts on Her Life* depicts how the artist's own body, inseparable from the body of work, becomes a profit vehicle, promoted as an attractive commodity that embodies all the sought-after qualities that will appeal to consumers” (57). This point is reiterated in scenario eleven, “Untitled (100 words)”, where Anne’s artwork—and by extension, her body itself—becomes a commodity, as this scene stages a panel discussion about an assumed exhibition featuring all the items Anne has used in her past suicide attempts. Clearly satirizing the art world, art criticism, and critical theory, the discussion staged by the play seems to set out to determine whether or not Anne’s art has any social or economic value. Among other things, the work is criticized for being “pure narcissism” and “undigested exhibitionism” (52). The discussion quickly turns to the matter of where art’s value lies, as one commentator asks, “*Why* can’t people learn to draw? *Why* can’t people learn to paint? Students should be taught *skills*, not ideas. Because what we see here is the work of a girl who quite clearly should’ve been admitted not to an art school but to a psychiatric unit” (53-54).⁴⁵ In defending Anne’s work, a commentator states that Anne is “offering us no less than the spectacle of her own existence, the radical *pornography*—if I may use that overused

⁴⁵ A reference, according to Aleks Sierz, to “Charles Spencer’s review of [Sarah] Kane’s *Phaedra’s Love*, in which he wrote, ‘It’s not a theatre critic that’s required here, it’s a psychiatrist’” (53).

word—of her own broken and abused—almost Christ-like—body” (57). It is this mention of pornography that takes this scene beyond just the commodification of Anne’s art, to the commodification of her body and her existence itself as well. Moreover, the play uses Anne’s spectrality as its *raison d’être*, which places her at the centre of an economic exchange and value system, both when the play appears in text and on stage. Thus, Anne’s role as a commodity and her spectral existence are intrinsically linked, with neither preceding the other: she is spectral because she has become a commodity, and she becomes a commodity because she is a spectre.

While Anne is best understood as a spectre in *Attempts*, she is nonetheless “live” in the sense that she affects and is affected by those who create and consume her presence. *Attempts* creates conditions which encourage and perhaps even demand affective engagement on the part of spectators and readers: as the play’s narrators act as stand-ins for ourselves, we are implicated in the process of creating and subsequently consuming Anne’s image and presence, tenuous though they may be. Indeed, we are not only implicated but also participate in this construction of Anne as a promise or fantasy structure. Through both the narrators’ and spectators’ ideological projections, Anne comes to represent the promises the world makes to us. However, this promise fails: in the first place, Anne represents a perversion of the cultural promise of “having it all”, and secondly, the attempt to have her play every and any role leads to her dissolution, and she ceases to hold together as a coherent entity. The spectrality that comes to define Anne is a symptom of the very promises and prosumerist desires we project onto her in the hopes that she might represent their fulfillment. Nonetheless, Anne’s spectral presence does not limit our affective engagement with her, as we project our desires onto her continuously throughout the play. Indeed, Anne can be understood to be “live” in this performance

because her presence is entirely designed by those who spectate her; from this perspective, Anne is “live” because she exists in some form—expectation, hope, desire—inside each of her creator/consumers. She is spectral because she is scattered across numerous subjectivities, who in turn project her onto the stage. If *Attempts* mirrors the performance situation more generally—as I argue it does—then the play suggests that performers and characters become as they are affectively regarded by audience members. However, such engagement produces a spectral version of the performer/character as he/she is perceived by the spectator. She becomes a ghost that occupies the space between performer and audience. Moreover, Anne’s inability to sustain an existence under the ideological narrative which structures her foregrounds her precarity, and it becomes clear that it is ideology itself which makes her precarious. This situation can be extended to Anne’s audiences as well. Insofar as we are constituted by texts and narratives which precede and exceed us, we are all made precarious by our ideologies. This production of a spectral, ideology-fuelled, promise-filled, version of the subject presents an ethical problem because it produces, but fails to recognize, precarity.

1.4 *The City*

The City deals with a similar set of concerns as *Living Remains* and *Attempts on Her Life*, in that, as Angelaki succinctly puts it, “the text, relating to everyday anxieties in a capitalist society where everything, from the individual to art, is perceived as a malleable, exploitable and potentially, dispensable commodity” (28). In Crimp’s works, text and life are intrinsically linked, as each play attempts to produce presence through text or speech. In *Living Remains*, Crimp attempts to make an absence a live presence

onstage; in *Attempts*, performers create scenarios in which they describe an absent character's life in various, often conflicting forms; in *The City*, Crimp poses a related problem: can a character imagine an other into being? Put another way, can a character become present and embodied onstage through the creative imagination of another character? In contrast to both *Living Remains* and *Attempts*, in this work, the imagined characters are actually embodied onstage, though their ontology is no less tenuous as a result. *The City*, which was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in 2008, initially appears to be a domestic drama, following the lives of Clair, a writer, and her husband, Chris. However, as the play continues, it transcends the seemingly mundane nature of Clair and Chris' day-to-day lives, as they perform and recount increasingly strange encounters with the play's other characters: their neighbour Jenny, an unnamed child, and a man named Mohammad, who never appears onstage. Crimp dismantles the play's realist frame scene-by-scene, until, in the play's final scene, Clair reveals that she has "invented" every other character onstage, describing herself visiting her "city"—a creative and imaginative construct in which she hopes to produce characters who are truly "alive"—writing her own husband, her neighbour, and the strange unnamed child into existence. Crimp's titular city is an imaginative device, intended for the creation of "real" characters, but which instead unwrites the being of its inhabitants. The glitches in reality perceived throughout the work become evidence of Clair's failure, as she describes finding herself unable to make these characters "come alive" (62). She explains that "their stories fell apart, even as I was telling them" (62). In this section, I will discuss *The City*'s specific negotiation of subjectivity, character, and presence. The play pursues many of the concerns introduced in *Attempts*: Crimp again gives us characters who are in the process of being imagined into existence, staging the

conflicts and contradictions that result from an attempt to represent subjectivity in its fragmented state. I argue that *The City* also seeks to represent spectral characters; however, Clair's imagined characters are differently spectral, as they do not exist in a singular form as ghosts. Instead, their behaviour oscillates between reality and fictionality, mirroring the perspective that I argue audience members must take in response to the revelation at the close of the play that these characters have been created. In the latter half of this section, I connect this discussion of the characters' precarious existence—positioned as they are between fiction and reality—with the play's depiction of real-life conditions of precarity, as embodied by Chris's sudden unemployment. Linking this instability of presence and form to the character Chris's dismissal from his job and subsequent taking up of part-time employment, I argue that the play may be best understood through Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant's theorizations of precarity. Chris's instability is not only the result of his being Clair's creation; it is also a feature of his contemporary context, as the material conditions of his life are similarly unstable. This play gives us not only a case study of the ways in which liveness, presence, and affective connection might exist even in situations of contingent and unstable being and subjectivity in performance, but also speaks to larger concerns of instability in a contemporary context, to which I suggest affective connection is not merely a side effect, but a social requirement.

The City offers a similar situation to that which is presented in *Attempts*: characters are produced and made tenuously “present” on stage by language, written and subsequently spoken into existence. The result is characters who are imbricated in the ideologies of their creators. What differentiates *The City* from *Attempts* is that in the former, the created characters are not assemblages in approximate representation of an

absent, “real” individual. These characters are created from scratch in Clair’s city. While these characters often appear fragmentary in similar ways to Anne, this is not a failure to represent a being that exists elsewhere, but rather Clair’s failure to create cohesive companions at all. Another key difference between the two forms of staged subjectivity that I discuss in this chapter is embodiment: in *Attempts*, Anne is never fully embodied on stage, instead being produced by being described by others. In productions like Katie Mitchell’s, a representation of Anne might appear in certain scenarios, but the character is played by different performers (and sometimes by multiple performers simultaneously), preventing any clear association between Anne and any specific embodied representation of her. By contrast, in *The City*, Clair’s imagined characters are fully embodied as singular beings: characters are played by the same performers in each scene, leading to a clear association between a character and a specific bodily representation of them. In contrast to the unnamed presence in *Living Remains*, and the scattered presence of Anne in *Attempts on Her Life*, the created characters in *The City* have bodies, can speak and move, and to the audience, are indiscernible from the play’s only “real” character, Clair. Of the three, it is the only work in which the invented characters are wholly visible and physically embodied onstage, making their simultaneous reality and fictionality particularly troublesome. Regarded somewhat simplistically, *The City* draws our attention to the ways in which the theatre is always already a space of conflicting realities, where real human beings onstage represent and embody fictional characters. While it is not necessarily novel to draw attention to the constructed nature of the theatre—meta-theatre has, indeed, become a well-trodden technique in works such as Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, as well as others—it is necessary to mark a significant difference between *The City*’s meta-theatrical turn, and that of other theatrical works. In

this instance, the fictionality and constructed nature of the play's characters is not made evident until the play's final scene, forcing spectators to re-evaluate the dramatic action retroactively. In the conventional theatrical situation, a fictional environment is established, the reality of which is accepted by the audience for the duration of the performance. When the curtain call arrives, this guise is dropped, the reality of the non-fictional world is re-established, and the characters turn back into human actors to take their bows. However, in Crimp's *The City* a reality is carefully constructed, only to be superseded in the play's last moments by a new reality, one that casts the previous as fiction. This moment of revelation, by rewriting the reality of the performance, uncovers the tenuous relationship between fictionality and actuality that undergirds theatrical events. Following Fischer-Lichte, I suggest that performance's oscillations between the real and the fictional are a productive space in which to interrogate the ways in which *The City* makes the audience engage actively with Chris's precarity.

In the play's final scene, Chris reads aloud from a diary Clair has been secretly writing in, where she theorizes her own imagination as a city. She explains that she "truly believed there was...a city inside of [her]" (61). Clair imagines this city populated by "an inexhaustible source of characters and stories for my writing. I was convinced that in order to be a writer I'd simply have to travel to this city—the one inside of me—and write down what I discovered there" (61). However, when she actually locates this "city", she finds it absolutely decimated. "I looked for inhabitants to write about," she says, "but there were no inhabitants, just dust...there was nothing—nobody—just dust" (62). She asks, "Could this really be all that was inside of me?" (62). In response to this crisis, Clair states that she: "invented characters and...put them in my city. The one I called Mohamed. The one I called the nurse—Jenny—she was funny. I invented a child too, I

was quite pleased with the child” (62). Following this revelation, her husband Chris asks “What about me?...Am I invented too?” (63). While Clair tells Chris that he is no more invented than she, the dialogue that follows demonstrates that he is, in fact, different than her. Like a puppeteer, Clair instructs Chris to “take off [his] hat”, and, playing the part of the obedient puppet, he complies and “*slowly removes his hat*” (63, s.d. 63). For me, this moment indicates that, contrary to what Clair has told him, Chris and her are of different ontological orders, as she has authorial control over Chris’s movements. He is indeed precisely what he had feared: yet another one of Clair’s “inventions”.

This moment rewrites the preceding dramatic action, wherein the audience by default suspends disbelief and accepts the temporary reality of the stage. The bodies onstage thus are regarded as characters, rather than performers. At the point of Clair’s revelation, a split occurs, dividing characters into real and unreal: Jenny, Mohamed, the child, and Chris are all declared fictional, while from her position as the author or creator, Clair alone remains “real” in the construct of the play. In addition, this split works retroactively, casting all characters but Clair as having been unreal from the start, without the audience’s knowledge. However, this fictionalization presents problems for our understanding of the character/performer boundary, which is ordinarily clearly defined, but here is blurred. The theatrical illusion relies not only on the perpetuation of the boundary between character and performer, but also requires that the performer’s reality is effaced, yielding to the character’s. The reality of the character tends to rub off on the actor: during a dramatic work’s state of suspended reality, a performer onstage is understood to be real inasmuch as their character is understood to be real. Similarly, at Clair’s revelation, I argue that the performer takes on the unreality of the character; put simply, we are presented with a problem, having just been told that the bodies onstage

which we know to be real are actually fictional. This revelation necessarily alters how we must understand the characters' existence.

In *Attempts*, Anne can be understood as spectral throughout the performance, because she is never embodied in a stable form onstage. However, *The City* gives us a slightly different form of spectrality, one which necessitates perceptual oscillation between fiction and reality. This shifting of perception is significant in two ways: it makes audiences aware of their own processes of spectating, and it gives audiences a space to contribute to the performance by constructing and experiencing a uniquely-perceived version of it. By choosing to reveal the contingent existence of most of the play's characters at the end of the performance, Crimp requires his spectators to reconsider the entirety of the performance through a new, destabilized, lens. Equipped with the knowledge that Chris, Jenny, Mohammed, and the child are all fictional creations, an audience member or reader must recast their understanding of the play's plot. Rather than retroactively regarding these characters as wholly fictional, or even entirely spectral, I argue that their embodied presence onstage produces a more complex perceptual relationship between audience and character. In *Attempts*, Anne exists firmly in the space between life and death, presence and absence. In *The City*, even the characters' in-betweenness is destabilized. These are still spectral beings, as they possess the same liminal presence that plagues Anne; however, since the characters are embodied onstage, we are forced to recognize their existence as real performers with real bodies, in simultaneity with our understanding of their contingent existence as partially fictional figures. I argue that the response Crimp expects from his audiences is one of perceptual oscillation, where one views the characters as constantly shifting between their real embodied selves, and their characters, which are not only fictional insofar as they are

Crimp's creations for the purposes of this play, but are also fictional creations even within the world of the play.

This need for oscillation on the part of the audience is emphasized in several ways within the play itself. While for the most part, Chris behaves as if he is real and alive within the context of the play, there are moments where we glimpse his constructedness and unreality. For instance, in the transition between scenes two and three, Chris remains onstage "*exactly as he was, concentrating on his watch*" (29). By contrast, while Clair ends scene two onstage with Chris, at the beginning of scene three, the stage directions indicate that she "*appears, in a light sun dress*" (29). For Clair, time has passed, because she has an existence that extends beyond the action of the stage. Her leaving the stage at the end of the scene and returning in a different outfit suggests that her life is not limited to the performance space, since she has experiences elsewhere. By contrast, Chris remains onstage through the transition, beginning scene three as if no time has passed in the duration after scene two. Chris, therefore, does not possess an existence beyond what is seen onstage. When the dramatic action stops, Chris's life also ceases. This moment differentiates Chris from Clair, and signals his constructedness, making him appear less real than others onstage because we cannot imagine him to have a fullness of life: he does not go anywhere, do anything, or change at all, beyond what occurs on the stage. Placed alongside the moment I mentioned at the outset of this section, the final scene's display of Clair's control over Chris, where he behaves as if he were a puppet, dutifully performing the actions she commands him to, both are examples of Chris's fictionality. These are moments in which his character demonstrates the failure of Clair's creations, in that they cannot "come alive" (62). As Clair indicates, while they may ultimately fail to represent or embody reality, her characters do "live a little" (62); however, throughout most of the

play, we are not made aware of Chris's half-life. It is in the instances that I have described above that we are signalled to the characters' inability to be fully alive.

These moments which reveal Clair's project—and its ultimate failure—are not limited to Chris. In a similar fashion, when Jenny first appears in scene two, she is ascribed a verisimilitude which undermines her believability as real or actual. When introduced to Clair, she states:

We're neighbours. You've probably seen me getting into my car—or—like your husband over there—watched me in the mornings taking off my uniform when I've driven back totally exhausted from the hospital...I could probably fall asleep there and then, but what I like to do instead is curl up in a chair with a nice piece of toast or a nice egg, and watch one of those old black-and-white films on TV...I like to play the piano for a bit. I'm not too bad at playing the piano—I took it quite seriously as a child—and I always warm up with scales and things like that—but the funny thing is, is that although I can get all the notes and understand just how intensely the composer must've imagined it, there's no life to my playing. (21)

As she goes on to exhaustively detail the rest of her life—her husband's having gone to war to work as a doctor, and his experiences of war, along with her experiences as a nurse—it becomes clear that Jenny must speak all of these details in an effort to make them real. Notably, we are not given an excess of detail about Clair's life, precisely because it exists primarily offstage. However, Jenny must detail her life and her experiences to Clair and the audience because they do not exist elsewhere. These numerous details function as an attempt at verisimilitude by Jenny—to assert her reality—but the very necessity of having to do this places her actuality into question. A

fully-fleshed out, rounded character need not provide long expository speeches to prove that they are real, because their existence is assumed at the outset. Similarly, in Katie Mitchell's production of the play at the Royal Court theatre in 2008, Jenny's performance is described as being "characterized by a broken and fragmented physicality, which avoided reference to any recognizable physical abnormality from our world but instead presented a distorted, damaged version of humanity" (Tomlin "Poststructuralist Performance" 63). By making the choice to dehumanize Jenny's physicality, Mitchell's production further emphasized unreality of those on stage. *The City* thus denaturalizes the performer/character relationship: the performer and specifically her body, becomes implicated in the unreality of the character.

The uncertainty and instability of each character's perceived "realness" presents a particular problem for audience members: in what category do we place these contingent characters? Are they to be regarded as real or unreal? Alive or dead? Rather than viewing the figures as existing only in the in-between space of the spectral, I suggest that we must practice a cognitive oscillation in order to understand how these characters operate differently than those presented in Crimp's other works. I locate a potential answer to this problem in Erika Fischer-Lichte's *The Transformative Power of Performance*, in which she states that in performance, "aesthetic perception...takes the form of oscillation. It switches focus between the actor's phenomenal and semiotic body, thus transferring the perceiving subject into a state of betwixt and between" (88-89). She theorizes the experience of this oscillation between representation and reality as "perceptive multistability...in which perception switches between phenomenal body and character. The perceiving subject stands on the threshold between two modes of perception, as alternately the actor's real body and the fictive character step into the foreground" (89).

Her theory specifically references the type of oscillation between reality and fictionality demanded by *The City*:

As the previous order of perception is disrupted and abandoned, a new one is established. To perceive the actor's body in his bodily being-in-the-world establishes one order of perception, while understanding the actor as signifying a character establishes another. The first order generates meaning around the perceived's phenomenal being that might trigger chains of association, while the second order produces meaning which, in its entirety, constitutes the character.

(148)

For Fischer-Lichte, this situation suggests that spectatorship always rests on destabilized ground: "The perceiving subjects remain suspended between two orders of perception...on the threshold which constitutes the transition from one order to another; they experience a liminal state" (148). She proposes that "Perceptual multistability ensures that neither of the two orders can stabilize themselves permanently. With each shift, the dynamic of the perceptual process takes a new turn, creating ever more instances of destabilization...Each turn allows for new perceptual content that contributes to the stabilization of the newly established order and, effectively, helps generate new meanings" (150). The effect of operating within this liminal space, Fischer-Lichte argues, is that spectators become "conscious of their own perception as emergent and elusive" (149). She further suggests that "the shifts direct the attention to the dynamics of the perceptual process itself," and that, "perceiving subjects begin to perceive themselves self-reflexively, thus opening up a further sphere of meaning and influence on the perceptual dynamics" (150).

Fischer-Lichte argues that “If, over the course of a performance, perception remains in a state of flux, leaving the spectators suspended between two orders of perception, the difference between the two loses its significance...spectators become increasingly aware that they are unable to control these transitions” (149). While, as she points out, “Some might try to ‘retune’ their perception intentionally to retain either the order of presence or that of representation,” ultimately, “they soon realize that they cannot prevent the unintentional shifts and are fluctuating against their will” (149). It is the shift into what Fischer-Lichte terms the “order of presence”, a term she uses to describe the spectator’s realization of the actor’s presence, rather than their representation of a character. The shift into this perceptual state is significant because it opens up “an ensuing chain of associative meanings not necessarily related to what is perceived”, resulting in the spectator’s “perception and the generation of meaning begin to operate unpredictably or better ‘chaotically’” (149). Fischer-Lichte argues that, “the order of presence allows meanings to emerge over which the perceiving subjects have no control” (150). If, as Fischer-Lichte suggests, perceptive multistability serves to both make the spectator aware of their shifting between states of perception and interpretation, as well as demonstrating the chaotic nature of the perceptual process itself, then this mode of spectating is one which makes those who experience it aware of the instability of their relationship to the work they experience. In short, plays like *The City*, which provoke perceptive multistability, make the process of spectating and interpreting precarious, by emphasizing the ways in which the nature of one’s perception can be itself be unstable and uncontrollable. Moreover, the experience of the play through a constantly unstable perspective mirrors the main characters’ fundamental uncertainty, both in terms of his precarious position between fiction and reality, as well as the uncertainty of the material

conditions of his life once he loses his employment. In this way, the play makes palpable the contemporary climate of uncertainty—in terms of one’s finances, employment, living situation, social safety net, etc.—that Crimp depicts through Chris’s struggle to pursue the moving target of the “good life”. By foregrounding the need to view the work through a destabilized perspective, *The City* makes its audiences feel the uncertainty and constant flux that Chris experiences in his daily life; indeed, the play utilizes this perceptual frame to encourage spectators to recognize the unstable or precarious conditions of their own lives and the world around them.

What the concept of perceptive multistability offers for my analysis of *The City* is a mode in which one becomes aware of their own perception and subjectivity as constantly in flux. This process mirrors the play’s representation of its characters as fragmentary, incomplete, and even precarious, encouraging spectators to become conscious of the ways in which their lives can also be understood as precarious. Furthermore, Fischer-Lichte’s theory also complicates the performer-spectator situation: if subjectivity is understood as being defined in relation to others, then the subjectivity of each individual participating in a theatrical encounter is always already radically destabilized, ever-shifting between variant states, always oscillating. As the spectator’s relationship to the performer is necessarily in a constant state of flux, neither can assume a singular, stable sense of identity or subjectivity. Instability of identity is, of course, not limited to the performer: subjectivity is formed and perpetually revised through our encounters in the world. An oscillating perspective represents another way of understanding both the characters’ and spectators’ ontological precarity: if subjectivity is defined in relation to the other, and that relationship is in a perpetual state of flux, then one’s subjectivity can be understood as always already precarious. Both *Attempts*’ Anne

and *The City*'s Chris exemplify this understanding of subjectivity because they make their unstable existence visible. Both are constructed not only by those who "create" them onstage (the chorus of narrators in *Attempts* and Clair in *The City*), but their subjectivity is also defined in their relation to those who watch them. They perform the instability of subjectivity, as they are spoken into being by those other to them, and have their existences supplemented by the perceptions of spectating others, who engage affectively with them and project their expectations and desires onto them. This multitude of individual inputs and relations through which these characters are produced mirrors the processes of subject formation which operate in the world beyond the stage.

By casting Chris as perceptually destabilized, and therefore prompting the spectator's recognition of their own subjectivity, the play allows the audience to feel the precarious conditions Chris is subject to in a visceral and material way. This conscious recognition of the processes which determine and influence one's subjectivity allows space for audiences to become aware of the ways in which they, like Chris, might be positioned on destabilized or precarious ground. By unsettling the ways that spectators view Chris as subject, the play translates his predicament into the world of the audience, in order to emphasize that anyone is potentially subject to forces beyond their control which might make their existence similarly precarious. Furthermore, the play's use of perceptive multistability makes the performance live for each spectator by making Chris's destabilized subjectivity felt materially by necessitating that audience members do the active work of constantly revising how they perceive him.

Fischer-Lichte's perceptive multistability model is one that I suggest can be applied to considerations of the collisions between reality and fictionality that occur in every theatrical act. Indeed, rather than turning to issues of representation to understand

the relationship between the performer's actuality and the character's fictionality, I suggest that it is productive to view the performer as existing as real and fictional in simultaneity. Each state is possible at any moment of the production: the actor could be flawlessly delivering a monologue, when all of a sudden they flub a line, visibly lose their place, and drop character. The performer's reality interrupts and replaces their fictionality in such a moment. Each moment, therefore, equally possesses the possibility of actuality or fictionality. As a performance takes place, these states traverse each other, crossing, overlapping, shifting in every moment. Either, and therefore both, are possible.

If we understand *The City* as a work which demands perceptive multistability, then it similarly demands a degree of audience participation and implication in the work. Viewing the play through the lens of oscillation means that each spectator re-fashions the work for themselves, constructing a unique version of the performance in their minds. Thus, for each individual spectator, the performance is slightly different, as each audience member experiences the characters' and performers' oscillations at different moments: at any given moment, a collection of individual spectators will perceive the work and its characters as either fictional or actual. As one's experience of the performance is a collection of these oscillations, each individual experiences the performance differently, producing an entirely unique memory of the performance for themselves. If, as I have argued in the introduction to this dissertation, our memories are our experiences, re-constructed and represented back to ourselves, then in each encounter with *The City*, a spectator might produce an entirely individual version of that performance in their mind. Angelaki summarizes Michael Billington's review of the performance along similar terms, stating, "[*The City*] places the audience in the position of the author, able to devise its own narrative" (26). It is in this way that I argue that the play can be understood as

demanding audience participation as each spectator “sees” a different performance, based on their unique perceptive oscillations.

Behind *The City*'s unstable ontologies and demands for perceptive multistability is the ever-present threat that Clair's created characters might become entirely fictional, ceasing to exist even in their embodied forms. That which keeps the characters existing—albeit in fragmentary and discontinuous forms—is the audience's engagement, that is to say, their participation in the play's perceptive multistability. As in many of the performances I will discuss in this dissertation, performers and character rely to a certain degree on those who watch them: in *Attempts*, Anne does not exist beyond the perceptions of her observer-narrators, and in *The City*, the embodied existence of the characters onstage is confirmed by the audience's perceptive and affective engagement with them as living bodies as well as characters, even if those categories are not maintained consistently. In the following section of this chapter, I will explore this constant teetering on the edge of one's own existence through the lens of precarity, which similarly deals with the dependence on an other, specifically invoking Lauren Berlant and Judith Butler. However, before I unpack their theoretical approaches to the concept of precarity, I would like to ground my choice of precarity as an appropriate lens through which to view this play by spending a few paragraphs discussing the play's dramatic content in terms of its social and economic context.

The City was first produced in 2008, and the work's representation of Chris as a precarious subject mirrors the economic instability of that time. In a post-show talk about the play, Crimp identifies capitalism and war as key influences on the play, specifically referencing Richard Sennet's *The Corrosion of Character* as playing a fundamental role in the creation of the play. Angelaki suggests that “Crimp refers to [*The Corrosion of*

Character] particularly in terms of the impact of redundancy on those who thought ‘they had jobs for life’...He [Sennett] probes the idea of life as a story that once made sense, but is no longer predictable” (33). Sennett argues, “The conditions of time in the new capitalism have created a conflict between character and experience, the experience of disjointed time threatening the ability of people to form their characters into sustained narratives” (31); in sum, as Angelaki puts it, the instability of the labour market “impinge[s] on the individual's ability to construct their own coherent and cohesive story” (34). We see a similar phenomenon in Chris, who is not only denied the opportunity to determine his own life’s narrative (as it is simply conferred to him by Clair), but is also unable to sustain the narrative trajectory of his life, which continually breaks down until the moment where its constructedness is finally revealed to him. Indeed, Sennett suggests that this pervasive instability is not only endemic to the labour market, but also “is woven into the everyday practices of a vigorous capitalism” (31). These comments, both from Crimp himself, and Angelaki, warrant a serious consideration of the play’s representation of precarious ontology in conversation with contemporary late capitalism. Chris is not just a destabilized character because Clair has “invented” him, but also because of the economic forces which determine, revise, and disrupt his life, even within the world Clair attempts to create. In *The City*, Crimp literalizes the “corrosion of character”, eroding Chris both through the loss of his job and Clair’s announcement that he is fictional. Crimp therefore plays with the double meaning of “character”: for Sennett, “character” refers to “the long-term aspect of our emotional experience...the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others” (10), whereas Crimp takes “character” not only to refer to an aspect of one’s interiority, but indeed the entirety of Chris’s being and existence. Chris’s trajectory in the play, as Angelaki puts it, “is the

tragedy of someone who encounters rather than controls his fate. Chris reluctantly provides the voice for worlds that are spoken by him and yet do not belong to him; they are both his and not his at the same time” (34). She argues that the play demonstrates that “Existence is not a clear narrative but one subject to unforeseen, often uninvited revisions” (33), referring not only to the tenuousness of existence but also particularly of the attempt to live one’s life in the contemporary economic climate.

At the start of the play, Chris works at a non-descript office job, positioning he and Clair as decidedly middle class. However, in the first scene, Chris reveals over the course of his conversation with Clair that his job is under threat, as he describes a colleague of his visiting his office and explaining to him that “the North American division is beginning to restructure...if they’re beginning to restructure in North America it won’t be long before they start restructuring here” (11). As Chris explains to his wife, his colleague’s job is protected based on his personal relationships, but “given the situation in the North American territories”, Chris’s job “is, well is obviously much more vulnerable” (12). This information gives meaning to an anecdote Chris tells earlier in their conversation, wherein his ID card would not swipe at the building’s front door, and as he puts it: “I tapped on the glass and the only person there was a cleaner so the cleaner came over to the glass and I held up my card and pointed, obviously, at my picture on the card, but the cleaner just shrugged—which is odd because I know all those cleaners really well” (9). When he begins to re-tell this story after explaining the conversation he had with the colleague earlier, it seems likely that Chris has been fired from his position.

The following scene confirms that Chris has indeed been fired: the scene takes place during the day with both Clair and Chris at home, and, as the stage directions note, while “Clair works at a computer, referring to a book or manuscript beside her”, Chris is

“casually dressed”, and hangs around watching Clair work (16). In the scene that follows, Chris is eager to do anything around the house, enthusiastically answering the door when it rings, offering to take coats or supply drinks. In these moments, he appears to be seeking a space in which he can still provide useful labour. In the third scene, Chris is reinvigorated, having gotten hired at a new job. While out buying groceries, Chris encounters a former classmate working at the supermarket meat counter. At first, Chris’s disdain for this working class occupation is evident: “I asked him how things were going—how life was treating him—which was really stupid because I could see that life was treating him like shit: wearing a badge, dressed in a stupid hat” (34). But, Chris’s former classmate’s expression of happiness and satisfaction with both his life and his job are evidently convincing to Chris, who appears in the final scene, “wear[ing] the outfit of a supermarket butcher’s assistant: a white hat with a brim, a white smock, and pinned to the smock a badge with his name: ‘Chris’” (57). While Chris is excited about his new position, Clair seems hesitant and uncomfortable with the new job; when Jenny visits to exchange Christmas gifts, she inquires with surprise at Chris’s absence. Clair responds in a seemingly defensive manner, stating “surely it’s not unusual. It’s not just doctors and soldiers, it’s not just nurses like yourself, Jenny, who work at Christmastime. Commerce can’t stop any more than the course—isn’t this right?—of some fatal diseases. And while you and I are sitting in front of the fire like this, unwrapping our gifts, people still need to buy things” (56). Clair puts public service jobs—such as doctors, nurses, and soldiers—in comparison to retail employment, suggesting that the requirement for people to buy things is as important as these public services. Doing so seems to betray her insecurity about the social and personal value of Chris’s new job, as evidenced by her uncertainty and appeal to Jenny for agreement. She seems to be attempting to justify the work’s value

not just to Jenny, but also to herself. When Chris arrives at their home, Clair's discomfort with Chris's employment is manifested in her reaction to its physical identifiers; she immediately asks him to remove his uniform, telling him, "Take off your hat. And don't wear your badge indoors, we know who you are" (58). Indeed, the play concludes with Clair again telling Chris to remove his butcher's hat, and when he does, informing him it is "Much better" (63).

Clair's discomfort seems rooted first in her perception of what types of employment are considered valuable to society, and secondly in her investment in class position. Claire's work as a writer and translator seems to be regarded as inherently valuable, and is thus never questioned. Moreover, she characterizes her work as highly exclusive, an occupation that could only be understood by other writers and translators. For instance, when she returns from a conference in Lisbon, she describes the experience to Chris, concluding by stating "I can't explain what it was like" (49). Chris responds that she has just told him "what it was like" (49), but she replies, "No. Because it wasn't like that at all, you see" (49). As she continues to recount the experience, she states that the jokes in her paper received some laughs, but when Chris asks her to re-tell one for him, she declines, stating that they were "Not that kind of joke—not a joke you 'tell'—just ways of putting things—phrasing things" (49). This exchange makes clear that Clair does not expect Chris to be capable of comprehending the intricacies of her occupation, seeming to characterize the work as too complex or abstract for him. Prior to his job change, Chris worked at an office, locating him and Clair firmly within the bounds of the middle class. However, with Chris working what is typically regarded as a blue collar job as a butcher, Clair appears to begin to feel some class tension, at once attempting to downplay Chris's job by removing its markers from their home, while also seeking to

justify the value of such work to herself and to others. Chris's shift in work situation, and the subsequent shift in his wife's perception of him and his value to their society, leads me to a consideration of ontology and affect in relationship to capitalist labour and associated class divisions.

In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant offers a theoretical framework to understand the affective attachments we make to perceptions, promises, and potentialities, which can be usefully applied to the matrix of ontological and labour-based problems that Chris confronts at the close of the play. Berlant defines "cruel optimism" as "the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object" (24). She characterizes an object of desire as not desirable in and of itself, but because it is "a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us" (23). Thus, "the object of cruel optimism here appears as the thing within any object to which one passes one's fantasy of sovereignty for safekeeping" (43). One of the ways in which Berlant sees cruel optimism manifested in contemporary culture is through the vision of the "good life". For Berlant, the prevailing "good-life fantasy" is the typical heteronormative, middle class, first world dream scenario, with all its familial, personal, and economic stability. In proposing the "good life" as a form of cruel optimism, she asks, "Why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies—say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work—when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds?" (2). For Berlant, our continued fidelity to the dream of "the good life" is an act of cruel optimism: "'We' live in proximity to a desire now bound up in this version of the good life and can almost remember being alive in it, flooded by a sense of expectation" (31). She summarizes her project as follows: "The book is about what happens to fantasies of the good life when the

ordinary becomes a landfill for overwhelming and impending crises of life-building and expectation whose sheer volume so threatens what it has meant to ‘have a life’ that adjustment seems like an accomplishment” (3). If the vision of the good life offers a specific cluster of promises—stability, personal fulfillment, satisfaction—Berlant plumbs what happens when the world, or the desired object, fails to deliver on or fulfill the promises we have imagined it to have made to us.

In *The City*, Clair seems intimately invested in the idea of maintaining “the good life”: she has a stable and presumably well-paid job which affords her opportunities to travel to conferences, give talks, and meet important writers. At the play’s outset, Chris participates in this fantasy scenario: he has an office job, with some presumed upward mobility. The couple has two children, they live in a home with enough space for a yard for the children to play in, and are in a friendly neighbourhood, as evidenced by their neighbour Jenny’s repeated visits to their home, even on the holidays. Indeed, there are specific things onto which Clair seems to project her image of their good life: her husband and her children representing their functional and content familial environment, as well as her and her husband’s jobs, which represent each individual’s contributions to their social milieu and their rewarded value to the world around them. However, as the end of the play tells us, each of these symbols of “the good life” are Clair’s creations. Thus, she steps even beyond the fantasy function described by Berlant, not just casting expectations on existing parts of her life, but actually creating the very objects which she expects will deliver to her the “good life” she has fantasized. However, as in Berlant’s description, Clair simply cannot make her fantasies come to life, and one-by-one, they begin to disintegrate before her eyes. First, Chris loses his office job, which would have given him the upward mobility that typically marks one as successful in a neoliberal

cultural context. Even worse, he replaces his lost job with a decidedly more working class occupation, now a part of the service industry, a form of labour that lacks the cultural prestige and opportunities for growth requisite to the “good life” fantasy. Moreover, in the play’s final scene, Clair’s children—notably never seen on stage, or even heard—begin to disintegrate. While up until this point, the children’s actual existence seemed uncertain, their reality is called firmly into question by Jenny, who states, “You say your children are out on their bikes—but I can’t hear them—I didn’t see one child when I walked here from my flat—nobody was out” (56). Each of Clair’s inventions—produced, I argue, in an effort to fulfill her fantasy of a “good life”—begin to fail, or as Clair puts it in her journal confession, “it was a struggle. They wouldn’t come alive. They lived a little—but only the way a sick bird tortured by a cat lives in a shoebox” (62). Not only does Clair’s attempt to achieve the impossible “good life” fail insofar as the objects she attempts to write into existence in support of the fantasy cannot sustain themselves, but if we consider her work as another crucial component of her fantasy structure, then her inability to produce living characters becomes a failure of her own ability as a writer.

What is produced in place of the “good life”, Berlant argues, is precarity, a concept which is valuable to this discussion on several different levels, as *The City* gives us characters in precarious socio-economic situations, as well as themselves being revealed as ontologically precarious. “Precarity” is a concept which has been invoked often in the past two decades to describe labour markets, socio-economic conditions, and states of being more generally. Butler defines the term by stating, “‘Precarity’ designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (*Notes* 33). She continues, “Precarity also characterizes

that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure” (33). From these qualities of dependency and vulnerability comes a fundamental instability, a lack of agency or control over the conditions of one’s own life. To give but a few examples, the term has been used to describe the situations of migrants and refugees, who, in fleeing deadly situations in their home countries, must rely on the willingness and ability of other countries to accommodate them. The term has also been widely applied to the contemporary labour market, where part-time, contract, and contingent employment has become common. As Butler argues, “Neoliberal rationality demands self-sufficiency as a moral ideal at the same time that neoliberal forms of power work to destroy that very possibility at an economic level, establishing every member of the population as potentially or actually precarious” (*Notes* 14).

We see this process in action in *The City*: Chris specifically tells Clair that “Bobby’s job is protected, whereas mine, given the situation in the North American territories, is, well is obviously much more vulnerable” (12). As a result of these vague economic conditions, Chris’s job is eliminated. However, in response to this sudden instability, Chris manages to get a new job where, according to his friend and new co-worker Sam “the pay and conditions were well above average--...job security—good prospects” (34). Despite the fact that Chris’s new job seems offer the stability not guaranteed to him by his previous work, Clair seems to disapprove of the new occupation as it does not fit in with the image of “the good life” that she has created for herself. The irony of Clair’s situation is that in her effort to produce a “good life”—a stable, well-paid, and engaging job for herself, an upwardly mobile, respectable office job for her husband—she has actually created a highly precarious life, as her attempts at creation seem to betray her by becoming destabilized. Just as Chris losing his seemingly “stable”

job reveals the precarity which unknowingly defined his situation from the outset, as he and Jenny begin to display cracks in the veneer of realism which Clair has applied to them, they begin to demonstrate that a fundamental instability and precarity undergirds their entire being as characters. As Berlant suggests, “The promise of the good life no longer masks the living precarity of this historical present” (196).

What does it mean for Clair to have created a scenario which is so fundamentally precarious? Indeed, when she describes her imagined city, the imagery she uses is especially evocative and troubling. Clair imagines her city as a place she can visit in her mind, which she expects to find rife with interesting and lively characters that she can utilize in her writing. She states that “I knew that if I could find life in my city, and be able to describe life, the stories and characters of life, then I myself—this is what I imagined—could come alive” (62). Based on what Clair ultimately produces, I interpret her desire to “come alive” here as referring to her fantasy “good life”. She imagines that if she can access some form of creative utopia, then she might be able to produce for herself the life that she feels is promised to her. However, what she finds when she reaches this city is much different than what she expects: “The houses had been destroyed and so had the shops. Minarets lay on the ground next to church steeples...I looked for inhabitants to write about, but there were no inhabitants, just dust. I looked for the people still clinging on to life...but even there...there was nothing—nobody—just dust” (62). She asks, “Could this really be all that was inside of me?” (62). So, Clair says that she “invented characters and...put them in my city” (62). In this moment, the scene becomes one of utmost precarity: the characters’ being is highly contingent, always on the edge of failing to be sufficiently alive, and the scene in which they exist is one of absolute ruin. Indeed, the imagery recalls any number of cities which have, in the past decade, been the

subject of absolute ruin as a result of world politics: we may recall here the photos which have circulated depicting the state of Aleppo, Syria in 2016; Baghdad, Iraq, following the U.S.'s invasion in 2003; Kabul, Afghanistan, following the U.S. invasion of that country in 2001; or Sarajevo, Bosnia in 1992. In each instance, the ruined landscape leads to widespread precarity for its occupants, who are often forced to flee, leaving stable lives—jobs, families, access to resources—behind in favour of temporary refugee camps, and the uncertain possibilities of migration. Mirroring these real world conditions, Clair's description of her city not only recalls contemporary real-life examples of precarity, but the absolute groundlessness of her creative environment also ensures that that which she attempts to create within it will always be contingent and destabilized.

Clair, a translator by trade, clearly wants to be a successful writer, based on her utopic vision of her own creative capabilities. I would like to offer two potential readings of Clair: first, considering her characters within the fiction of the play, and secondly, in regards to the real-life situation she produces for performers and audiences. The first, following Berlant, suggests that Clair aims to reap the apparent benefits of a precarious existence through creative labour. Berlant states that “Jacques Rancière, in *Hatred of Democracy*, and Adam Phillips, in *Equals*, claim that the majority in the formerly protected classes increasingly ‘hate’ the instabilities, incongruities, antagonisms, ambiguities, and messes that constitute their life in contemporary capitalist mass society” (194). According to Berlant, the two “argue that the PPB [the “planetary petty bourgeoisie”, a term used by Agamben⁴⁶] wants to hoard for itself not radical flexibility but the privilege of only moderately creative living and working amid relatively

⁴⁶ In *Coming Community* (1993).

predictable security, while demanding from everyone else deference, docility, self-management, and predictability” (194). She goes on to state, “In their view, which is also Agamben’s, the managers of capital and its service class are finding the threat of real vulnerability a crisis condition within the ordinary; their response to it has been fundamentally antidemocratic” (194). From this perspective, we might view Clair as the bourgeoisie, wielding power over her creations, demanding stability of them so that she might be able to fulfill her dream of feeling “alive” in the way she has imagined living. As the play’s creator-figure, she can behave as inconsistently or strangely as she likes, but when her characters begin to question their situations—Jenny, for example, telling Clair in the final scene that everything feels “unnatural” (56)—they are failing, not sufficiently fulfilling the expectations that Clair has for them and their behaviour. This interpretation casts Clair as one who seeks to use precarity to her own advantage, engaging it when it is beneficial to her, and disavowing it entirely when it fails to deliver to her the life she feels promised.

This reading of Clair, which casts her as one of the planetary petty bourgeoisie, also positions her as a model artist/creator in a neoliberal context. Firstly, she is a prosumer: she creates for herself the life she would like to experience. Thus, she writes into existence her “good life” fantasy in order to consume and experience it. In addition, her creative process is entirely self-interested, since her care for the precarious characters she has invented seems to extend only so far as to ensure that they sustain her fantasy. Her request that Chris remove his hat in the play’s final scene can be read as caring and tender, but its actual purpose is for Clair to maintain her control over Chris’s being. Her project is, therefore, an intrinsically narcissistic one, as it serves Clair alone. Indeed, it is significant that both Anne and Clair are both women who appear to wield a certain degree

of control over those around them. While Anne is shaped by the ideologies and fantasies that surround her, Clair attempts to have total power over her environment. Rather than allowing her world to shape her, Clair aims to produce a world determined entirely by her own fantasy, not any others'. Importantly, the same ideology of "capacity", to borrow McRobbie's term, which multiplies Anne's existence in *Attempts* also plays a role in shaping how Clair approaches her world. She is similarly a character who believes herself, as McRobbie puts it, "a highly efficient assemblage of productivity" (722). Clair has internalized the discourse of female capacity and productivity so much so that she has decided to produce for herself a new world, one in which she hopes to find absolute determinative power for herself, by closing it off to any intrusive ideologies which do not fit into her fantasy. However, at the end of the play, Clair finds that she cannot sustain absolute authority over her characters' behaviours, and therefore she cannot sustain the fantasy world she has constructed. This failure is the result of Clair's investment in an ideology which she does not seem to recognize as defining her and her project, and which is the foundation of the world she tries to build. In the same way that the "having it all" fantasy fails Anne (and others) by stretching her existence across too many necessary identifications, Clair's attempts to construct an entirely self-sufficient existence and environment makes her precarious: the city, her icon of independent creative power, ultimately falls into ruin.

However, when extrapolated beyond the content of the play itself to the work's manipulation of the performer/audience relationship, a somewhat more optimistic version of precarity and its potentialities opens up. In *Prekarious Life*, Judith Butler invokes Levinas, arguing that it is the face of the Other which "carries the meaning of this precariousness," continuing that "The face of the Other comes to me from outside, and

interrupts that narcissistic circuit. The face of the Other calls me out of narcissism towards something finally more important” (135; 138). As performance is, at its core, a face-to-face encounter, viewing performance draws the spectator into a relationship of precarity with the performer. As much as theatre might attempt to disguise the precarity of its performers through the adoption of the “mask” of a fictional character, the reality of the subject always peeks through. As a result, the spectator cannot entirely forget the precarity of the performer, precisely because this situation is a reciprocal one. As Butler points out, “there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know. This fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that I can will away” (xii). The recognition of the Other’s precarity is simultaneously a realization of one’s own vulnerability, and is therefore constitutive of one’s own position as a subject. The knowledge, therefore, that performers are not solely fictional characters, but also real, precarious subjects, is deeply entrenched, as it is also a self-knowledge. The performer is a subject because I too am a subject.

If we recognize the performer as a precarious subject, then Clair’s statement that she “invented” the characters onstage is a troubling one. Do we choose to believe the words spoken on stage? If we choose not to, we disavow the very construction which upholds the theatrical illusion: if we choose to reject this aspect of the theatrical work’s reality, how are we to sustain the rest of it? Choosing to accept Clair’s words at face value, however, conflicts with our recognition that the performer onstage is a fellow subject. Does Clair’s statement that she has invented those who share her space onstage necessarily make this true? I argue that Clair’s utterance, placed, as it is, in the scene’s final act, is not sufficient to erase the existence of those bodies we have watched performing in the play’s preceding scenes. I would suggest that instead her words enact a

recharacterization of both the figures and events of the play, necessitating, I suggest, that we regard performing bodies as always already both fictional (or textual) and embodied (or “real”). An element of fictionality is layered onto the performers onstage, and while their reality as living, breathing bodies onstage prevents them from becoming *only* representations of fictions, their ontological status becomes increasingly tenuous as the play begs the question: how can one be both fictional and real? I return here again to Derrida’s concept of the specter; just as we can understand Anne’s presence in *Attempts* as spectral, Crimp seems to have given us another spectre in *The City*’s Chris, though his presence is spectral in a different way. Importantly, Chris *is* embodied by an actor on the stage, for the entirety of the performance, which alters our relationship to that character/performer. In contrast to *Attempts*’ Anne, we witness Chris, ensuring, to a certain degree, his reality and presence on stage; it is important to note that Chris is not under the same kind of bodily threat that Anne is. However, by using perceptual multistability, we nonetheless perceive Chris through a contingent lens: the performer’s body is real, but the character’s reality within the world of the play may not be. Thus, like Anne, Chris occupies a liminal space, though rather than inherently between life and death, Chris exists between fiction and reality.

Regarding the actor as occupying an in-between space, produced by the play’s demands for perceptual multistability, emphasizes their ontological precarity. The performer is not denied their reality by the text of the play, but this reality is significantly under threat. There are often moments during a play where, as a spectator, one might find themselves immersed entirely in the fictionality of the play, temporarily forgetting the simple fact that those on stage are not solely fictional characters. However, a performer can be regarded as precarious not only because they are human, but also because their

humanity is constantly at risk of being effaced by the fictional dramatic construct. Regarding the performing body's relationship to dramatic texts as one of "possibility" is therefore an ethical position to hold in relation to performance, as it both recognizes threat and precarity, while actively working to maintain a balance between fiction and reality which regulates this threat. In our thinking about performers and performance, we must maintain a suspension of conflicting realities, precisely because fiction and reality on the stage are inextricable. If we accept possibility as a mode of thinking about the theatre, then it need not be structured as only ever fiction or reality, text or body, but rather always both. As the performing body and the theatrical text merge onstage, they produce numerous possible combinations of reality and fictionality. The performer's ontology, therefore, is not contradicted by the text, but rather multiplied by it.

Crimp sets up Chris as the victim of *The City*'s multiple competing forces of both capitalist and dramatic reality: he has lost his corporate office job, and become a butcher (an occupation which he genuinely enjoys, a fact which elicits much class-oriented disdain from Clair), and he is also the only character visibly unsettled by the revelation that he has been invented, written into being and determined by his own wife. While the play closes with Chris's capitulation to Clair's instructions, if we adopt Fischer-Lichte's perceptive multistability, then the audience's relationship to him opens up a space of productive potentiality: he does not cease to be at Clair's statement (or, to apply the same logic to his occupational precariousness, when he is fired from his job), but rather occupies multiple potential states of being at once. Furthermore, Chris's radical visibility (on the stage, in the lights) as precarious—not only economically, but ontologically—is powerful. Following Butler's discussion of public assembly in her recent *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, I would suggest that through Chris's bodily presence

onstage, both the character and the performer “demand to be recognized, to be valued, ...exercising a right to appear” (26). In a roundtable on precarity, Butler elaborates on this idea, suggesting that “[t]he ‘we are here’ that translates that collective bodily presence might be re-read as ‘we are still here,’ meaning: ‘we have not yet been disposed of.’ Such bodies are precarious and persistent” (168). Chris’s bodily persistence—his refusal to disappear entirely from the stage, even as his existence is called into question—is important, because it suggests a continued attachment between him and those who engage with him. If Chris, like Anne, is understood as a kind of spectre, then it follows that he would persist; he haunts, and therefore he cannot be gotten rid of entirely. In turn, the ideologies he becomes representative of similarly persist hauntingly, even after the play concludes. It becomes clear that Chris’s continued existence does not only rely on Clair; he persists despite her failure to bring him to life. I suggest that it is ultimately the audience’s engagement with the character which sustains him. Indeed, we can understand Chris as a precarious figure who refuses to be disposed of, but rather demands not only to be seen, but also to be seen as numerously potentialized. This occurs through the audience’s affective engagement with him; Chris is structured by the “good life” fantasy, but this promise does not mean the same in every context. Thus, under the umbrella of the “good life” promise, each individual audience member projects their unique desires and expectations onto Chris, multiplying his resonances infinitely across spectators’ and readers’ affective connections.

Countless reviews of *The City* have referred to it as representing a bleak and uncompromising view, not only of a neoliberal capitalistic world, but also its inhabitants: Crimp writes a world in which we are all spoken into being by texts unknown to us, and one in which we can be unwritten at a moment’s notice. All of this, of course, sounds

strikingly familiar within our contemporary context. However, what I would argue *The City* grants us is not this familiar, frightening image of our neoliberal world, but rather an alternate way of seeing. This is a precarious perspective, refusing the singular and the concrete in favour of perceptive multistability offers an alternative to realism, not only allowing us to see our world in ever-shifting ways, but also giving subjects the tools to relate to one another in numerous potential, and oscillating forms.

1.5 Living Spectrally

I began this chapter by asking whether or not it was possible for live characters to be produced on the stage, conjured into being by those that are other than them (whether character or audience). In response to this initial inquiry, I have suggested that what are produced in these instances are spectral characters, figures who perpetually teeter in the space between life and death, fiction and reality. However, this is not to say that such characters do not produce a feeling of liveness, which finds its source in the ability for affective engagement. As I have suggested over the course of this chapter, it is indeed possible to engage affectively with characters who occupy a precarious or contingent presence on the stage. The type of affective engagement I have used to characterize these encounters is manifest in our relationship to the promises and expectations of our contemporary culture, broadly categorized under what Berlant has theorized as “the good life” fantasy. Thus, in this chapter, I have analyzed at length two instances of characters who become structured as representative of late capitalist promises, commodified in order to be consumed by their desiring fellow characters, and us, their audiences.

In both *Attempts on her Life* and *The City*, it is ideological fantasies, and ideology itself, which form the source of the characters' precarity. Anne and Chris become representative of specific promises of contemporary life, and in so doing, they become fragmented and spectral. The projection of ideological fantasy onto the characters, by both their creators within the plays and the spectators or readers who encounter them, perpetuates those same ideologies, giving them life, and then casting them back upon ourselves. In reference to ideology's function in contemporary life, Massumi argues that "The dominated classes... must be duped into affectively investing in the mechanisms of power that oppress them, without ever noticing the contradiction. They must become the willing instruments of their own domination. This is most efficiently done by weaving ways of feeling and acting that are in consonance with the power structure of society into the habitual fabric of everyday life, where they go on working unexamined" (85). In one sense, what these plays demonstrate is this very insidious enactment of ideology. By modelling, and therefore setting the stage, for spectators and readers to project their own fantasies into the world of these two plays, onto their characters, Crimp not only opens up space for prosumers, but also for that act of creation to also become one of becoming ideologically "duped", being tricked into replicating and perpetuating ideological fantasies which not only make characters precarious, but also make their creators—us—precarious as well. Affect and affective connections allow us to recognize the precarity produced in the context of each of these plays, but ideological fantasies nonetheless influence our affective engagements, determining the kinds of fantasies in which we invest our energies.

While both Anne and Chris have tenuous existences, and can be made present only contingently, their spectrality means that they persist, haunting the contemporary

stage. Despite each character's precarious existence, they have presence, even if it operates in fragmentary forms. Following Fischer-Lichte's model of perceptive multistability, I regard these characters' contingent existences on an oscillating basis. Their existence and presence shifts throughout the play. They are neither entirely present, nor entirely absent, but rather shift between these states, depending on each individual spectator's perspective. This is significant in that these two characters are representative of ideologically-based fantasies of what one's life should look like: their persistent presence despite their precarious existence emphasizes the relentless presence of ideological forces, which endure despite changes in specific cultural or socio-economic contexts. Importantly, that which makes these characters precarious is also that which makes it impossible for them to be disposed of. The relationship between the spectator and the character in Crimp's works therefore represents a spectral ideology. They are shaped by ideological forces which produce them as precarious, and in so doing, as persistently present.

I have discussed both Anne and Chris as objects of desire in specific ways: Anne is repeatedly sexualized in *Attempts*, and Chris is desirable in his ability to fulfill his necessary role in the "good life" fantasy by being a stable and successful partner to Clair. However, in both instances, the characters fail to fulfill the desires projected onto them, in the context of their theatrical world (i.e. for those who share the stage with them), as well as beyond the stage (i.e. for spectators and readers, who are just as affectively invested in these characters for the fulfillment of their desires). This failure to satisfy desire is endemic to processes of consumption, and to this point, Berlant suggests that "consumption promises satisfaction in substitution and then denies it because all objects are rest stops amid the process of remaining unsatisfied that counts for being alive under

capitalism” (42). Here, Berlant suggests that the process of desire can be understood as an end in itself. By continually having our desires remain unfulfilled, we are kept in a constant state of desire and disappointment, a state which Berlant suggests is what “counts for being alive under capitalism” (42). While Berlant’s perspective offers us an ostensibly cynical view of life under capitalism, I would like to extrapolate on her statement briefly. Both desire and dissatisfaction are felt affectively. If remaining in this state is “being alive”, then, as I have suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, we can understand affect itself as linked to our experience of life. From this point, I would further suggest that consumption is less about consuming the desired objects, but to a greater degree involves the consumption of the affects associated with the desired object. If our desires remain perpetually unfulfilled, then we maintain an attachment to the desired object, which means that we can continue consuming the affect associated with its promise, as well as those feelings that come with its failure to fulfill that promise. This accounts for Crimp’s characters being not only understood as precarious, but also as spectral. Their presence is sustained, in some form, because spectators and readers continue an attachment to the ideological fantasies and promises that they represent.

In the face of unfulfilled desire, Berlant suggests “hoarding seems like a solution to something. Hoarding controls the promise of value against expenditure, as it performs the enjoyment of an infinite present of holding pure potential” (42). Our consumption of affect can similarly be understood as a “hoarding”: we seek out experiences which engage us affectively, sustaining connections which we can feed on in perpetuity. As I have suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, affect is central to my understanding of liveness, and Berlant’s point that “hoarding” allows us to occupy an “infinite present” echoes with my own theorization of temporality. If we engage with contemporary theatre

by forming affective connections which we sustain in order to continue to consume their affects, then we keep the performance in a constant state of being “live”, as we continue our engagement with it. To feel in relation to a performance or play-text is to make it “live” for oneself. To continue to engage with the work’s ever-haunting specters, is to make the play, and in turn, the ideological fantasies which it represents, perpetually “live”, in a continuous present.

Moreover, hoarding or accumulating affect in the way Berlant describes is a form of consumption which fulfills particular neoliberal desires. Liveness is an affective quality that allows subjects to feel a connection to their own existence as thinking and feeling individuals, and is therefore intimately associated with one’s sense of identity. When they are actively seeking out and consuming feelings through performance experience, spectators can also be understood as attributing value to themselves and their experiences by shoring up their sense of self and identity. Liveness, in short, offers an opportunity for spectators to feel themselves as valuable and productive subjects, particularly when a degree of participation or prosumption are involved, as they are in *Attempts* and *The City*. Both plays mirror this logic of using affect to bolster identity and personal value, as in each work, affect is deployed (specifically, as a promise) in order to reinforce the identity of invented characters. In both instances, the promises ascribed are meant to make Anne and Chris seem valuable to themselves and others by shaping their identities through the “good life” fantasy. However, the result is that neither character is valuable to others beyond their ability to fulfill the desires of those external to them. As spectators, we imagine we can overcome this problem, and become valuable to ourselves and for ourselves by accumulating affect, because it marks our existence as living breathing things (in contrast to characters like Anne and Chris who we do not read as

consistently live subjects). Indeed, in addition to the fragmentations and precarity ascribed to both characters, part of the reason both Anne and Chris remain only tenuously live or alive to their audiences is because we cannot know whether or not they experience affect. Therefore, spectators and consumers distinguish themselves against these fictional characters because we can experience feeling, a quality which ascribes value to subjects. As much as Anne and Chris's precarious existences ask those who engage with them to feel and experience the effects of their unstable existence, for spectators, these plays also represent an opportunity to reinforce their conception of their own existence as valuable members of their world precisely because they can, and will continue to, consume affect.

Thus, both of the Crimp plays I have discussed over the course of this chapter offer us a model for an economized, but nonetheless narcissistic engagement: in both *Attempts* and *The City*, a character is produced entirely based on the desires of an other, or a set of others. In both examples, the characters' creators stand in for their cultures and social contexts more generally. In short, they stand in for the audience, often taking on the role of spectator themselves. These plays mirror a contemporary desire to be entertained by worlds which make material our individual desires, to engage only with the desired version of life we have projected onto our fictions. Far from legitimizing this type of consumption, Crimp's plays seem to criticize and demonstrate the limits of this narcissistic consumption pattern. In both *Attempts* and *The City*, these efforts to construct living characters who fulfill the roles, expectations, and desires that their audiences project onto them ultimately fails. They can never be made to "come alive" (*The City* 62). However, while these spectres can never become fully present, they remain affectively live to us, meaning that we can still experience them *as if* they were alive, fulfilling our desire to engage in a present manner.

Chapter Two: Community

“We are no longer content to sit quietly in our seats when we can storm the stages.”

- Claire Bishop, *Double Agent*

2.1 Introduction

“Immersion” and “immersive” have become culturally inescapable terms: from film and video games to the theatre, audiences flock towards immersive experiences, fetishizing works that envelop the individual. Punchdrunk, the UK-based theatre company responsible for *Sleep No More*, and more recently *The Drowned Man*, has become a phenomenon for its largescale immersive performances. The company attracts myriad audiences for its performances, as well as its immensely popular themed costume parties. Punchdrunk has extended its commercial pursuits, winning fashionable advertising deals with companies like Stella Artois, Louis Vuitton, and more recently, Absolut Vodka, and has branched out into two offshoot organizations, Punchdrunk Enrichment and Punchdrunk Travel. Punchdrunk is not the only immersive theatre company to enjoy commercial success: in the fall of 2015, Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd’s *You Me Bum Bum Train* entered its third iteration. In the past, tickets for the performance were so popular that they sold out in as little as one minute. While numerous critics point to the limits and problems presented by immersive theatre—such as the genre’s exploitation of the spectator/performer’s labour, as Jen Harvie describes in *Fair Play* (2013), or *You Me Bum Bum Train*’s highly protested takeover of several (occupied) London retail spaces in 2015 (Mortimer)—audiences continue to flock to immersive performances in droves. What is it about immersive theatre that generates such interest? Why does immersive

theatre generate such strong reactions, both positive and negative? Ultimately, what draws spectators to this type of performance?

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the cultural phenomenon of immersive theatre, and other modes of immersive entertainment, in order to link these practices to a specifically affective register. In short, I argue that the popularity of these forms of entertainment results from the proximity of the spectator to the art object, leading to a perceived intimacy, which in turn produces bodily affective responses. I then explore the ways in which contemporary performance addresses this desire for immersion, discussing participatory and socially turned arts, and their relationships to notions of community, as well as the benefits and pitfalls of such uses of art. Following a critical reading of discourses of community and participation, in which I situate immersive practices as complicit with contemporary neoliberal agendas that emphasize the individual over the community, I turn to Punchdrunk as a case study. The first half of my analysis of Punchdrunk's work focuses on their extra-performative features, such as online participation schemes, merchandising, and promotional work. The second half of this analysis deals with *Sleep No More* specifically, discussing how the performance itself mirrors many of the neoliberal preoccupations of the company's other engagements, but also discusses the ways that spectators engage with the performance's neoliberal economy in order to pursue affect, intimacy, and intersubjective connections. Furthermore, I analyze this work of immersive theatre via its numerous and deliberate narratological, spatial, temporal, and experiential fragmentations, characterizing it as a work which defies the notion of liveness as a force which is communal or unified. Through a discussion of the performance's highly embodied form of spectatorship, I argue that the work's immersion emphasizes both radical individualism as well as

physical and emotional intimacy, challenging conventional performer/spectator relationships. By examining the work's relationship to intimacy, subjectivity, and ultimately, ethics, I utilize my analysis of *Sleep No More* to suggest that liveness occupies a tenuous position in this performance. While the experience radically individualizes those who experience it, spectators still find strategies that allow them to find value and personal edification through affective connection.

2.2 Immersive Culture

Founded in 2000 by Felix Barrett, Punchdrunk has popularized a particular form of immersive and promenade style site-specific theatre,⁴⁷ wherein audiences experience performances by roaming through expansive theatrical spaces, encountering performers and narratives as they move through the space. Punchdrunk is well known for its performance spaces. The company transforms buildings into intricately detailed sets, which are necessary components—actors, even—in the performance. The company has established a distinctive brand, and developed a recognizably “Punchdrunk” style, typically including a large-scale installation performance space, promenade-style spectatorship, and the required Punchdrunk mask: an iconic grey Venetian-style mask, which audience members must wear during the entirety of the performance. Layered into the performance space are a particular set of narratives, drawn from classical and contemporary sources. Texts Punchdrunk has used in the past include: Shakespeare's

⁴⁷ “Site-specific theatre” refers to work that will “articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an ‘object’ or ‘event’ and a position it occupies” (Kaye 1).

Macbeth, Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, and the film noir style (*Sleep No More* 2003, 2009, 2011); Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and the Hollywood of the 1960's (*The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable*, 2013); *Romeo and Juliet* in combination with Stravinsky's *The Firebird* (*The Firebird Ball*, 2005); an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* (2006); and a compilation of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories (*The Masque of the Red Death*, 2007). Punchdrunk has also experimented with several interactive performances directed primarily at younger audiences, namely *The Crash of the Elysium* (produced in conjunction with the BBC's *Doctor Who* in 2011) and *Against Captain's Orders* (2015), produced with the National Maritime Museum. Of all these, *Sleep No More* has proven to be Punchdrunk's most successful endeavour: opening first in London, UK in 2003, then moving to the U.S. in conjunction with Boston's American Repertory Theatre in 2009, and finally finding its current home in New York in 2011, a co-production with the American company Emersive. There, *Sleep No More* has won several prestigious awards, and continues to enjoy an uninterrupted run of shows at present.

Sleep No More is a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, taking that classic play's cast of characters and placing them in a 1930s noir setting. In addition, *Sleep No More* adds several characters not included in *Macbeth*: those most closely associated with the McKittrick Hotel,⁴⁸ such as the Bell Hop, the Porter, and Catherine Campbell; those who populate the Sanitorium, such as the Nurse, Matron, and Orderly; and the residents of the Gallow Green like Mr. Bargarran, Mr. Fulton, Agnes Naismith, and the Speakeasy Bartender (*Sleep No More* 16-17). The action takes place across a variety of settings

⁴⁸ Named in reference to Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

inside the six-floor block of Chelsea warehouses that Punchdrunk has transformed in the style of a 1930s hotel.⁴⁹

The performance space is comprised of over 100 rooms, each a specifically designed setting. For instance, on the 5th floor, visitors will find the Sanatorium, a sterile ward filled with rows of cots, all unoccupied but for a single bed that is filled with rocks. In another part of the 5th floor, audience members can explore an expanse of woods, designed as a maze. In other parts of the building, spectators will find bedrooms, intricately decorated early 20th century style, a speakeasy with a pool table, a hotel lobby, a graveyard, a set of shops (taxidermist, candy store, tailor, and a detective agency), and finally, a massive ballroom with a raised banquet dining table. Upon entering *Sleep No More*, spectators are handed a playing card, shuttled through a long, dark hallway that opens out into the sultry (and fully functioning) Manderley Bar,⁵⁰ where spectators wait for their playing card's suit to be called. Sending audience members stumbling through absolute darkness in order to re-enter a bright, warm environment, and using the playing cards to stagger entry into the performance and thus separate visitors from any companions they might have brought with them, are *Sleep No More*'s pre-performance rituals, strategies used in an effort to disorient the audience, and prepare them to enter the performance destabilized and divorced from their traditional theatre viewing practices and attitudes. Once an audience member's suit is called, they assemble with other spectators

⁴⁹ *Sleep No More*'s promotional materials have occasionally suggested that the space used for the performance is, in fact, a vintage hotel that has been rediscovered and restored by Punchdrunk (see <http://www.mckittrickhotel.com/#McKittrick> and <http://www.scoutingny.com/exploring-new-york%E2%80%99s-abandoned-mckittrick-hotel/>). This elaborate fiction seems an attempt to lend increased reality to the performance that occurs within, as the performers become "ghosts," re-enacting the possible histories of the building's presumed former residents. In reality, the location played host to several clubs and bars before it was occupied by Punchdrunk.

⁵⁰ A reference to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*.

in a small, enclosed back room, where the rules of their spectatorship are asserted: you must wear a mask; you must remain silent; and you are encouraged to explore *alone*. It becomes clear that the “room” is, in fact, an elevator, and slowly but surely, you and the other spectators are deposited on various floors of the performance space, in random groups, thrown, as it were, into a world already in action.

While Punchdrunk might currently have the most mainstream name recognition when it comes to immersive theatre, they are neither the first nor the only company to experiment in this style. Before I begin my analysis of Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More*, I will discuss immersive theatre more generally, investigating this increasingly popularized theatrical mode’s position in its cultural context. As Josephine Machon indicates in *Immersive Theatres*, the form finds precursors in Antonin Artaud’s total theatre,⁵¹ the Happenings of the 1960s,⁵² and Environmental Theatre⁵³ (38-39). Immersive practice has developed from these foundations, not only in theatre, but also in visual and performance art (c.f. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*). Though many modern and postmodern art, theatre, and performance traditions have incorporated immersive techniques, it is only recently that this mode has been widely popularized and canonized. Machon defines the parameters of

⁵¹ In “The Theater of Cruelty,” Artaud summarizes his vision for a form of theater that would break from convention: “we want to resuscitate an idea of total spectacle by which the theater would recover from the cinema, the music hall, the circus, and from life itself what has always belonged to it. The separation between the analytic theater and the plastic world seems to us a stupidity” (*The Theater and Its Double* 86).

⁵² A new performance form, popularized in the 1960s, which “abandoned the plot or story structure that is the foundation of our traditional theatre. Gone are the clichés of exposition, development, climax, and conclusion, of love and ambition, the conflicts of personality, the revelatory monolog of character. Gone are all elements needed for the presentation of a cause-and-effect plot or even the simple sequence of events that would tell a story. In their place, Happenings employ a structure that could be called insular or *compartmented*” (Kirby, “Happenings: an Introduction” in *Happenings and Other Acts*, 3).

⁵³ A form of performance which deviates from traditional performance by omitting the differentiation between audience space and performance space, and moving beyond conventional locations for theatrical work; indeed, one of Richard Schechner’s “Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre” states, “ALL THE SPACE IS USED FOR PERFORMANCE; ALL THE SPACE IS USED FOR THE AUDIENCE” (“Six Axioms” 48). For more: Schechner, Richard. *Environmental Theatre*. New York: Applause, 1973.

this emerging genre, “immersive theatre”, as “events that assimilate a variety of art forms and seek to exploit all that is experiential in performance, placing the audience at the heart of the work”, continuing that, “At every stage of this process the work is responsive to the actions of its audience, moulding them as co-authors of their experience” (*Immersive Theatres* 22-23). This definition clearly identifies audience experience and participation as central features of immersive work. However, this definition also leaves the genre undefined in terms of its practical conventions; this being the case, immersive theatre tends to be a radically diverse category of performance. Other practitioners of this mode include dreamthinkspeak, whose productions often draw inspiration from such classic dramatic texts as *The Cherry Orchard (Before I Sleep, 2010-11)*, or political events such as the Gwangju Uprising in South Korea (*One Day, Maybe, 2013*). In addition, Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd’s *You Me Bum Bum Train* has been produced in several iterations, the most recent occurring in the fall of 2015. Though information about the performance’s contents is a deliberate secret, it is known that the performance places spectators in a variety of scenes and situations, in which it is the audience member that serves as a primary actor. For example, spectators have often described one scenario in which they play a coach delivering a pep talk to a football team. While this form seems to have blossomed in the United Kingdom, where the majority of contemporary practitioners are located, immersive theatre has now become an international sensation. For instance, *Sleep No More* has established an essentially permanent home in New York City, and recently opened a second production in Shanghai, China. In addition, immersive practices have been taken up and innovated by smaller theatre groups and individuals in pursuit of

artistic, social, and political goals.⁵⁴ For instance, in April 2015, Coney's *Early Days (for a better nation)* was produced as a touring production. The work takes place in the days following a disastrous world tragedy, with audience members cast as survivors who must work together in order to govern their new world. As Coney indicates, performances took place during the UK General Election in 2015, and thus sought to explore the functions of democracy, voter engagement, and collective will, and how these behaviours as performed during *Early Days* might enrich our understanding of citizenship, nationhood, and democracy in the world beyond the theatre (Coney).

Immersion's popularity is not limited to strictly theatrical forms; this mode has become a large-scale cultural trend. Consider, for example, the 3D IMAX film: seated in the movie theatre, having just donned your plastic glasses, you are presented with a choice by the commercial onscreen: "Watch a movie or be part of one" (Shaw Organization). This is, according to IMAX, "the world's most immersive movie experience" (Shaw). Since the resurgence of 3D film technology in the early 2000s, there has been a cultural shift towards the desire for deeper immersion, and therefore more "realistic" entertainment experiences. 3D IMAX films are but one in a series of technological developments that encourage the spectator to feel that they are an active participant. For instance, with Dolby Atmos sound technology, "any sound...can exist as an independent audio object, free of channel restriction. It can be placed and moved anywhere, including anywhere overhead...Sounds move in three-dimensional space—flowing above and around you in step with the visuals" (Dolby Laboratories). It is, in the company's own words, "an immersive experience" (Dolby). The cinema is no longer a

⁵⁴ For example, Canada's Sheridan College produced *Brantwood School* in 2015, a site-specific musical performance which cast audience members as alumni of the institution from 1920-2020.

space reserved for watching: now it is designed for *experiencing*. Pushing the immersive technology trend to its zenith is Oculus Rift, a head mounted device that provides its user with a stereoscopic 3D view, which has become vastly popular years in advance of its availability on the consumer market. Oculus Rift has found numerous applications, from the gaming industry, to military recruitment programs, and educational programs teaching young people not to drink and drive. The development of these technologies which allow the spectator to enter into otherwise fictional or virtual environments, I argue, are indices of a larger cultural trend towards immersion. The success of immersive technologies on the mass media market indicates a cultural desire to be absorbed by worlds other than our own, to experience the unavailable, the unachievable, and the impossible. This is a trend that manifests not only in technological advances such as Oculus Rift and 3D IMAX films: live tweeting, “breaking news” coverage, and point-of-view, or individual perspective-based personal entertainments similarly attest to this desire to feel involved, a participant rather than merely a spectator. What is so appealing about immersive experiences that they have achieved such mass media appeal? I argue that popularity and consumer choice in this market are intimately linked to affect.

As Bowman and McMahan state, “The goal of immersive virtual environments...was to let the user experience a computer-generated world as if it were real—producing a sense of presence, or ‘being there,’ in the user’s mind” (36). They argue that “many successful applications of immersive VR depend on high-fidelity sensory stimuli with the goal of producing a realistic experience that effectively places the user *in* the simulated environment...they produce a sense of *presence*” (37). For Bowman and McMahan, the virtual environment’s ability to achieve realism is linked directly to the user’s experience as one that is fully immersive. While the conventional

relationship between an art object and its spectator—traditionally, a relationship which involves physical or emotional distance in some form—can certainly produce an affective response, I argue that as a result of immersive artistic practices’ produced sense of “being there”, they attempt to produce affective responses that more closely match those experienced in everyday life.⁵⁵ Affect, I suggest, is related to the spectator’s mental and often physical (whether real or imagined) proximity to the work of art. While traditional 2D films can produce emotional responses in their audiences, the immersivity of 3D IMAX films, or Dolby Atmos sound technology aims to supersede the knowledge that one is sitting in a movie theatre, supplanting it with the artificial reality on the screen. However, despite IMAX and Dolby’s best efforts, whether this effect is achieved successfully depends on the individual, and more specifically, perhaps still relies on the individual’s willingness to suspend their disbelief. There is, then, a guise of authenticity in immersive entertainment experiences, which nonetheless can produce real sensorial and therefore affective responses. Theoretically, when the film appears to be happening all around you, rather than merely on a flat screen in front of you, your body might respond as if it were a part of that simulated world.⁵⁶ While this effect may not be sustainable across the entirety of a film, videogame, or performance, the body’s equation of virtual and real is evidenced in moments where, for example, audiences in 3D films

⁵⁵ Daniel N. Stern similarly argues that certain artistic forms (such as music, performance, and dance) can produce “forms of vitality” (19), which are affectively engaging experiences derived from the dynamic nature (either physical or mental) of certain artistic practices. For more, see Stern, Daniel N. *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

⁵⁶ In a study examining users’ perceptions of audio in VR vs. real-life environments, Schoeffler et al. found that while users perceived audio’s interaction with space in similar ways across VR and in-person scenarios, ultimately, the subjects’ perceptions in VR environments did not precisely match those experienced in-person. Ultimately, this study represents VR’s potential to accurately replicate real-life environments, but that subjects still tend to react differently towards technology—whether this is the result of under-developed VR technologies, or a deliberate maintenance of distance between the real world and VR on the part of the experiencer remains to be seen in further study.

instinctively dodge oncoming projectiles. Josephine Machon argues that artistic forms which engage their spectators across a spectrum of senses have a unique effect on the spectator's experience of that work. In *(Syn)aesthetics*, she describes the synaesthetic work this way: "a variety of artistic principles, forms and techniques, manipulated in such a way so as to fuse the somatic and the semantic in order to produce a visceral response in the audience" (14). Such a form, she argues, relies on "sensation itself being transmitted to the audience via a corporeal memory, the traces of lived sensate experience within the human body, activated within the perceiving individual" (14). I extend Machon's argument here to suggest that sensorial experience need not rely on in-person experiences. What is important is the activation of the sensorial in spectators, not necessarily its source. Technologies which simulate the conditions of the real world—such as 3D films, or Oculus Rift—can potentially produce real sensations, and in turn, affects.⁵⁷ One of the effects, therefore, of immersive practices is that, rather than a mere spectator, one feels like a participant, engaged in the work not only on an intellectual, but also a physical, sensorial level.

This participatory feeling is produced by affect, which creates a dynamic relationship between subjects and the world, constantly shifting the boundaries between the self and the other, the internal and the external. Affect, as Daniel Stern suggests in *Forms of Vitality*, is intimately linked with a sense of vitality produced by affect's embodiment of the dynamic connection between a subject and their world. This point is echoed in *The Affect Theory Reader*, where Gregg and Siegworth argue that "affect is

⁵⁷ In the third chapter of this dissertation, I will extend this argument further, in order to suggest that affects might be produced by objects connected to, but at a temporal and/or spatial distance from performance, such as archival materials like photographs, play-texts, or video recordings.

persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations" (1). Indeed, they reiterate, "with affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself—webbed in its relations—until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter" (3). As I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, affect involves the forces produced in and as a result of encounters with the subject's world, and with the other subjects who reside within it. Among its other characteristics, as Clough argues, affect means that an individual can affect others, or the world, and can similarly be affected by others, or the world. Recognizing one's affective attachments is a simultaneous recognition of the shared liveness of the subject and the world: to be affected, I would argue, is to recognize a connection between oneself and the world they inhabit.

Affect therefore functions by challenging the boundaries between the internal self and the external world. Indeed, both immersive technologies and immersive theatre conjure affect by similarly traversing these seemingly distinct categories. As audiences are increasingly encouraged to immerse themselves in aesthetic worlds, to physically and emotionally enter into the stage, a space once entirely external to them, they are often asked to become participants, co-creators, to shape the space, and perhaps the performance itself. Nicholas Bourriaud's theorization of relational art capitalizes on the interconnectedness produced in specific artistic forms, suggesting that the intersubjective realm produced by art's affects might produce an ideal environment for the production of social relations. He defines relational art as that which emphasizes not just the connection between the individual and the work of art, but also that individual's interactions with others in relation to the art object, or, as he puts it, "an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social contexts, rather than the assertion of an

independent and *private* symbolic space” (14). Though he does not specifically reference immersive theatre, the genre’s characteristics are identifiable in Bourriaud’s description of relational art: immersive theatre often allows and even encourages connections to be made between spectators, by establishing collective work or analysis and interpretation as fundamental aspects of the performance itself (as in *Early Days [of a better nation]*). Bourriaud continues that “Art is the place that produces a specific sociability” (16), particularly when it comes to relational art, a form “where the substrate is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the ‘encounter’ between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning” (15). Relational art, according to Bourriaud is most effective when it links subjects to one another and to their social context. Indeed, the emphasis placed on affect by immersive practice is precisely what signals and marks one’s participation in a larger social world; part of the appeal of relational art is rooted in its affective elements. Bourriaud argues that relational aesthetics allow audiences to connect to one another. Extending his logic, immersive theatre specifically allows audiences the space to feel and assert their fundamental humanity through the performance of connections between the self and the other, as well as the self and the world.

If, as I have suggested above, the appeal of immersive entertainment experiences is affect, and the feeling of connectedness that these affects produce, how are such affects created and deployed? How do you make audiences feel connected to each other and the world in which they live? In a word: experience. In *The Experience Economy*, B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore define the experience economy in distinction from other economic modes, such as goods or services: “When a person buys a service, he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he

pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages—as in a theatrical play—to engage him in a personal way” (2). They argue that “Even the most mundane transactions can be turned into memorable experiences” (4) giving several examples: Chicago’s O’Hare Airport parking garage, where each floor is decorated along the theme of a different sports team; Southern California’s Bristol Farms Gourmet Specialty Foods Markets, which feature “music, live entertainment, exotic scenery, free refreshments, a video-equipped amphitheater, famous-name guest stars and full audience participation” (4). They state, “While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are *memorable*” (11-12 emphasis mine). The individual’s memory is key to the experience economy, as this is precisely what businesses seek to produce and sell. Such companies, “no longer [offer] goods or services alone but the resulting experience, rich with sensations...experiences are inherently personal. They actually occur within any individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level” (12). With that said, Pine and Gilmore suggest that “no two people can have the same experience...Each experience derives from the interaction between the staged event and the individual’s prior state of mind and being” (12).

Following Pine and Gilmore’s definition, I argue that Punchdrunk and other such immersive theatre companies operate as experience economies, wherein the performance experience must be bought and consumed. Purchasing a ticket to a Punchdrunk show gives audiences members access to a specific experience: entrance into a dark, seductive world in which spectators might play voyeur, detective, or active participant. In addition, the company emphasizes the performance’s position as part of a larger experience: for instance, all promotional emails and communications sent by *Sleep No More* are scripted

as part of the production's fiction. At *Sleep No More*, ticket-buyers are given the opportunity to dine at the on-theme restaurant, The Heath, or relax on the Gallow Green, a rooftop garden, or have a drink at the performance's Manderley Bar. All of these attractions function as extensions of the performance itself. These supplementary or extra-theatrical performance projects demonstrate the very desire for increased immersion to which experience economies respond.

2.3 Emancipated Spectators

Immersive theatre takes the experience economy a step further, valorizing the potential social value of the in-person experience, which can actively engage spectators, encouraging them to participate, and providing a sense of agency in the work. I connect the experience economy directly to my understanding of liveness: the experience economy, and other participatory forms, fulfill consumer desire to feel intensely, to be reminded of their own vitality through the deployment of affect. The experience economy is a monetization of liveness, capitalizing on contemporary desires to produce affectively live experiences for the purposes of consumption. Immersive theatre's engagement with its spectators follows from a contemporary trend towards art that involves the spectator in a meaningful way, allowing them to participate and contribute. There has been, as Claire Bishop notes, "an artistic orientation towards the social in the 1990s" and beyond, which has sought to produce artistic works in which the artist acts "less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a

'viewer' or 'beholder,' is now repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*" (*Artificial Hells* 2). This form of art—variously referred to as participatory art, or to use Jen Harvie's term, "socially turned art"—aims to "engage others who are not the artists (so principally, but not always, audiences), and in so doing, second, to enhance their social engagement... They engage audiences in active participation with an environment and/or process that compels those audiences to interact socially with each other" (*Fair Play* 5). As Bishop states, "participatory art aims to restore and realize a communal, collective space of shared social engagement" (*Artificial Hells* 275). Socially engaged artistic practices, therefore, represent the larger cultural trend within which immersive theatre participates. In socially turned performances, according to Harvie, "audiences do not sit in darkness, in silence, contemplating moving performers on a stage set apart in the light. Audiences are invited effectively to become performers, roaming at will through fully designed environments... Audience interaction is actively solicited" (6). This rhetoric of engagement and participation in the work of art is echoed by Machon's description of immersive theatre as "moulding [spectators] as co-authors of their experience," and her statement that "Punchdrunk's mission to place the audience at the epicentre of the experience repositions these individuals as creative 'comrades' in the processual interaction" (*Immersive Theatres* 73).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In his book, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetics, Politics, and Productive Participation*, Adam Alston specifically takes up the "free roaming" aspect of Punchdrunk's performances, arguing that "Even though the company does not claim a political agenda, free-roaming invites political examination, as does Barrett's suggestion that a central feature of Punchdrunk's work 'is the empowerment of the audience'. Some free-roamers are freer than others and this freedom ultimately rests on the degrees of productive participation that they are able to exploit" (140).

The desire for participatory or socially-engaged art comes from several sources, including the spectator/participants, artists, and institutional authority figures. In

Participation, Claire Bishop argues that the

calls for an art of participation tend to be allied to one or all of the following agendas. The first concerns the desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation. The hope is that the newly-emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality...The second argument concerns authorship. The gesture of ceding some or all authorial control is conventionally regarded as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability. Collaborative creativity is therefore understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model. The third issue involves a perceived crisis in community and collective responsibility...One of the main impetuses behind participatory art has therefore been a restoration of the social bond through a collective elaboration of meaning.

(12)

In its ideal form, participatory art, therefore, is expected to produce a utopic liberal society: democratic, non-hierarchical, populated by individual subjects with agency, who willingly join together in a community to better both themselves and the world around them. Indeed, as Bishop states in *Artificial Hells*, “This desire to activate the audience in participatory art is at the same time a drive to emancipate it from a state of alienation induced by the dominant ideological order—be this consumer capitalism, totalitarian socialism, or military dictatorship” (275). She argues, “Instead of supplying the market

with commodities, participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change" (12-3). These sentiments are echoed by many, from artists such as Felix Barrett, who describe immersive theatre as "the empowerment of the audience" (qtd. in Machon, *Immersive Theatres* 159), to governmental organizations like the Arts Council of England, which in 2006 encouraged artistic practice that allows spectators the "opportunity to engage and participate in theatre, to develop and build their creative, technical and communication skills; to engage in debate; and to gain a greater understanding of the world" (*ACE Theatre Policy* 7). This rhetoric surrounding the social benefits of participatory art was particularly appealing to UK governmental and arts funding institutions. As Bishop describes it,

In the UK, New Labour (1997-2010) deployed a rhetoric almost identical to that of the practitioners of socially engaged art in order to justify public spending on the arts. Anxious for accountability, the question it asked on entering office in 1997 was: what can the arts do for society? The answers included increasing employability, minimising crime, fostering aspiration--anything but artistic experimentation and research as values in and of themselves. (*Artificial Hells* 13)

New Labour operated under the assumption that "if people became disconnected from schooling and education, and subsequently the labour market, they are more likely to pose problems for welfare systems and society as a whole. New Labour therefore encouraged the arts to be socially *inclusive*" (13).

This expectation that particular types of performance might be socially beneficial finds its roots in a long-held assumption that the theater is a community-establishing space. In "The Emancipated Spectator", Jacques Rancière quotes the Sommerakademie's claim that "theatre remains the only place where the audience confronts itself as a

collective” (qtd. in 5). For Rancière, this “signifies that ‘theatre’ is an exemplary form. It involves an idea of community as self-presence” (5). He continues that, “Theatre is an assembly in which ordinary people become aware of their situation and discuss their interests, says Brecht following Piscator. It is, claims Artaud, the purifying ritual in which a community is put in possession of its own energies” (6). Rancière recognizes a legacy of thought which characterizes the theatre as “embod[ying] the living community” (6). This assumption that theatre is naturally a community experience (a notion which Rancière endeavours to dismantle in the remainder of his essay) aligns with the argument that theatre is not only intrinsically political, but can also be mobilized and deployed for political purposes. In addition to theatre theorists like Brecht and Artaud, this line of thought can be identified in the work of Augusto Boal, who encourages his audiences to join together as “spect-actors,” in order to effect political change through theatre (*Theatre of the Oppressed*). In *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan pursues a similar goal, albeit from a more optimistic perspective. Much like those previously mentioned Dolan begins from the understanding that audiences establish communities, stating that the audience is “a group of people who have elected to spend an evening or an afternoon not only with a set of performers enacting a certain narrative arc or aesthetic trajectory, but with a group of other people, sometimes familiar, sometimes strange. I see, in this social choice, potential for intersubjectivity not only between performer and spectators but among the audience, as well” (10). She argues that “Audiences form temporary communities, sites of public discourse that, along with the intense experiences of utopian performatives, can model new investments in and interactions with variously constituted public spheres” (10), drawing on the notion of *communitas*, “a term popularized...by anthropologist Victor Turner, [which] describes the moments in a theater event or a ritual in which

audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way; spectators' individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience" (11).⁵⁹ This understanding of the theatre as an experience which builds communities leads Dolan to suggest that "Attending performance, disparate people constitute these temporary publics; such spectatorship might encourage them to be active in other public spheres, to participate in civic conversations that performance perhaps begins" (11).

If theatre allows individual spectators to form a community as an audience, then, as Dolan argues, behaviours that are practiced at the theatre might be replicated beyond its walls. For Dolan, as well as Boal, Brecht, and Artaud, these social behaviours rehearsed as spectators allow the theatre to benefit its communities by placing social and political agency in the hands of the collective. In *Utopia in Performance* Dolan argues, "live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (2). Dolan theorizes moments of "utopian performatives," defined as "the received moments of gestus, when those well-delineated, moving pictures of social relations become not only intellectually clear but felt and lived by spectators as well as actors" (7). Such moments, "persuade us that beyond this 'now' of material oppression and unequal power relations lives a future that might be different...The affective and ideological 'doings' we see and feel demonstrated in utopian

⁵⁹ Notably, theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski also valorizes the idea of "communitas" in the theatre, stating in *Towards a Poor Theatre* that theatre "cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion" (19). In *Feeling Theatre*, Martin Welton describes Grotowski's version of "communitas" as "the raw and unmediated sharing of affect between its participants, which lies under theatre's scenic and presentational effects" (5).

performatives also critically rehearse civic engagement that could be effective in the wider public and political realm” (7). For Dolan, theatre orients audiences towards a utopic future that need not be an impossible, imagined space: “[audiences] can imagine, together, the affective potential of a future in which this rich feeling of warmth, even of love, could be experienced regularly and effectively outside the theater...Being moved at the theater allows us to realize that such feeling is possible, even desirable, elsewhere” (14-15). Indeed, as Dolan argues, theatre “lets audiences imagine utopia not as some idea of future perfection that might never arrive, but as brief enactments of the possibilities of a process that starts now, in this moment at the theater,” and concludes that “Through the power of affect, usefully explored and even harnessed at the theater, perhaps progressives can once again persuade one another that a better world doesn't have to be an out-of-reach ideal, but a process of civic engagement that brings it incrementally closer” (17; 21). Dolan’s argument, therefore, relies on two assumptions: a) the theatre is a community-oriented space, and b) manifestations of community in the theatre can extend into the everyday social environment.

Extending this argument, one might suggest that performances that deliberately integrate the audience, encouraging their participation in, and co-authorship of the performance would maximize the theatre’s community orientation, resulting in even greater social benefits. However, in addition to theorists such as Miranda Joseph, who challenges this utopic vision of community, several arts scholars (c.f. Bishop 2006, 2012; Harvie 2013; Jackson 2011) have pointed out that participatory arts are more socially and economically complex than the equation of participation with social good would indicate. Joseph argues that, rather than functioning as a respite from contemporary society, community is in fact complicit “with ‘society,’ enabling capitalism and the liberal state”

(2). In *Against the Romance of Community*, Joseph argues that utopic visions place “community in an idealized past, disconnected from the present as if by epochal break. In representing a temporal discontinuity between community and modern society, it elides the material processes that have transformed social relations” (9). Participatory art projects manifest several key ways in which community bolsters a capitalistic, neoliberal status quo, rather than challenging it, as communitarian discourse suggests is possible.

To begin with, both Bishop and Harvie identify delegation as a primary problem in participatory arts. Delegated art is a form that shifts responsibility for the artwork away from the artist herself, and onto another, typically one who is otherwise a member of the public. For instance, *You Me Bum Bum Train* not only has its spectators step in as performers as part of the immersive experience, but also relies on volunteers from the public in order to perform numerous other roles in the work, as well as building and painting sets and doing other “behind the scenes” jobs. As Bishop points out, in delegated performance, “Although the artist delegates power to the performer (entrusting them with agency while also affirming hierarchy), delegation is not just a one-way, downward gesture...performers also delegate something to the artist: a guarantee of authenticity, through their proximity to everyday social reality, conventionally denied to the artist who deals merely in representations” (*Artificial Hells* 237). Though this exchange is two directional, it is far from equal. To begin with, as Jen Harvie indicates, “What the audience can actually do in delegated performance and art is often extremely limited” (41). Delegated performers appear to be given the freedom to exercise their agency over the work, when in reality they are often there to fulfill specific roles as prescribed by the artist. While there are usually spaces where delegated performers can “contribute meaningfully and ... reflect critically on problems that delegation produces, delegated

art's potential to cast everyone in its audiences as infinitely replaceable supernumerary extras significantly undermines the social benefits of such work by exploiting its audiences" (43). It is not only in their lack of true agency that participating audience members or delegated performers might be considered exploited; in particular, *You Me Bum Bum Train* has repeatedly come under fire for relying on volunteers to perform labour for the work, instead of hiring Equity actors, or paying wages.⁶⁰ While *You Me Bum Bum Train*'s exploitation of the labour of its volunteers is especially visible and extreme, as Harvie points out, other immersive performances operate in a similar fashion. She states that oftentimes "the worker to whom the labour is outsourced is present—he or she is you, the audience member," continuing, "The audience member as worker in this flexible art and performance economy is rendered, in many ways, insecure, deskilled and alienated" (47). Such operations are at work in Punchdrunk performances as well, where audience members are chosen by performers to act as ostensible props (for example, being pulled in to share a dance with a performer), or are given specific tasks to do (such as being directed by a performer to help them put on their coat). The spectator-as-labourer in participatory or immersive performances is unpaid, has limited agency, and is infinitely replaceable. As Werry and Schmidt suggest, behind participatory art's "idealized spectator lies its critiqued counterpart: the spectator as static witness and obedient consumer, a socially disembodied, ideologically and physically passive receiver of visual and aural messages. This latter is a mythic figure, of course, and one with a long history" (468). Both images of the spectator are key to the commercial success of companies like Punchdrunk. The former stands as a model, while the latter is presented only to be

⁶⁰ "You Me Bum Bum Train gives actors a bad ride, says union", *The Guardian*.
<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/13/you-me-bum-bum-train-equity>

rejected. Indeed, if Punchdrunk's goal is success on the capitalist market, then the latter *must* be rejected, as it is the ideal, "active," "involved" spectator who seems to prove the most profitable consumer.

2.4 Performance on the Market

In addition to its commercial successes, Punchdrunk has courted a large amount of criticism for its relatively unabashed embrace of its commercial successes, often being criticized for "selling out". For instance, the expansion of performance into accompanying franchise-like projects, such as *Sleep No More*'s numerous nightclub-style parties, the McKittrick's restaurant, *The Heath*, or the building's seasonal rooftop garden, the *Gallow Green*, seems to demonstrate a re-appropriation of the company's artistic innovations towards purely commercial goals. With their relative lack of aesthetic or performative material,⁶¹ these side projects appear as simple profit-making ventures, tagging onto the success of the performance proper. Further, Punchdrunk's inclusion in mass media enterprises, with episodes of television shows *Gossip Girl* and *Law and Order: SVU* taking place inside *Sleep No More* itself, support the now-popular image of Punchdrunk having "sold-out" in favour of mass commercial popularity and greater profits. In addition, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Punchdrunk has engaged in several corporate-sponsored promotional performance works, namely with Absolut Vodka, Louis Vuitton, and Stella Artois. For Absolut Vodka's launch of limited edition Andy Warhol bottles, Punchdrunk collaborated on the development of *Silverpoint*,

⁶¹ Felix Barrett states in an interview with *The Guardian* that the *Gallow Green* was originally intended to establish a separate performance, with its own cast of twelve characters, but that this idea was ultimately discarded (Soloski, 31 Mar 2015).

an interactive gaming app which tasks users with solving the mysterious disappearance of a character named Chloe, which involves several of Andy Warhol's "Silverpoint" drawings (Spary, *Marketing Magazine*). To launch a new Louis Vuitton store location, Punchdrunk developed a one night only immersive performance, which reportedly eschewed narrative in favour of an exploration of the artefacts, histories, and inspirations found by Barrett and Doyle in a private Vuitton museum in Paris.⁶² Finally, for Stella Artois, Punchdrunk produced *The Night Chauffeur*, a promenade performance piece, and *The Black Diamond*, a two-night performance/party, all to launch Stella Artois Black.⁶³ The company defends these works in often oppositional ways: in reference to *The Night Chauffeur*, executive director Colin Marsh emphasizes that the work is not a Punchdrunk performance, but is a collaboration with Stella Artois, and is ultimately "Stella's event" (Caird), but while speaking of *Sleep No More's Gallow Green*, Barrett emphasizes that such projects are "experiments, research" (Soloski). As much as Punchdrunk might wish to suggest that it operates on artistic ideals, and utilizes these other (always commercialized) forms *only* as a means to their innovation, it is clear that Punchdrunk engages with the consumer market for economic, as well as potentially artistic, reasons. However, rather than simply offering a criticism of Punchdrunk's capitalization on the consumer market, I will spend this section briefly discussing these commercial efforts, in order to emphasize the company's reliance on, and indeed, valorization of, the ideology of individualism. Each of Punchdrunk's works, whether they be promotional campaigns for major companies, or extra-performative online projects, are examples of the

⁶² Garratt, *The Telegraph*, Jun 24 2010.

⁶³ See Caird, *The Guardian* 9 November 2010; Alston, Adam. "Funding, product placement and drunkenness in Punchdrunk's *The Black Diamond*". *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 32.2 (2012): 193-208.

company's production of a form of liveness which can be experienced beyond a single moment or space. In each project, Punchdrunk deploys affect by producing in those who engage with their work a feeling that what they are experiencing is *live*. This affective liveness is a particularly useful tool for Punchdrunk, as it capitalizes on the company's desire to ensure that experiences are individual; thus, they build performance schemes that do not only acknowledge but exploit the fact that perception, experience, and affect are all experienced on an individual, not collective, level.

Beginning in November 2013, *Sleep No More* launched a social media campaign under the hashtag "#mysleepnomore". According to the performance's Facebook page, the hashtag functions as a way for audience members to "Share [their] most interesting Sleep No More artwork, photographs, and McKittrick inspired curiosities" (*Sleep No More NYC 2013*). Fans of the show post photos to Instagram, and these photos are then reposted to *Sleep No More's* Facebook page. These photographs generally include souvenirs from the performance (the famously mandatory Punchdrunk Venetian-style mask, or the playing cards used to sort entrance times), or items encountered in one's daily life that remind one of the *Sleep No More* atmosphere and aesthetic. Fans often make art from the raw souvenirs of the performance, for instance altering the standard grey mask, repainting it, and rendering it an art object. Using the #mysleepnomore hashtag, fans take up the mask as a lingering symbol of the experience of *Sleep No More*, which they can manipulate and refashion themselves.

I suggest that fans' continued engagement with *Sleep No More*, while serving the practical purpose of making *Sleep No More's* imagery increasingly recognizable in order to draw in larger audiences, also allows spectators to individually re-fashion and participate in the performance they have seen. The opportunity to not only possess a piece

of the performance, but also individually re-create it grants audiences a feeling of ownership over their consumer experience, and is evidently a pleasurable enterprise, considering the enthusiasm with which fans participated in the campaign.

By extending its immersivity beyond the theatre's spatio-temporal limits, the #mysleepnomore campaign allows audience members to engage with the performance in on a level that is not possible inside the McKittrick. While the performance is happening, there are limits to one's participation. For instance, Punchdrunk famously prohibits talking during the performance, making it impossible for spectators to exchange commentary during the performance. As an audience member at *Sleep No More*, your participation does not have the power to change the performance in any significant way; indeed, you have little power to exercise any influence at all. However, #mysleepnomore gives audience members the opportunity to actively participate, albeit retrospectively. By creating artworks, or expanding on themes from the performance, spectators can engage deeply with the performance by becoming co-creators. Producing artistic work based on the themes and aesthetics that *Sleep No More* presents is similar labour to that which is done by the production's props, costume, set design, and artistic direction teams. While the #mysleepnomore artworks do not influence the performance itself, these artistic acts do have the power to exert influence over *Sleep No More*'s reception and circulation in the public sphere.

At first, the #mysleepnomore campaign seems to democratize the experience of *Sleep No More*; however enjoyable it may be for participants, this model can nonetheless be problematic. Punchdrunk's #mysleepnomore campaign asks and encourages spectators to re-engage with *Sleep No More* by becoming unpaid producers of advertising materials for the company. Many of these creations are labour intensive, aesthetically complex

works of art, and while the physical work may remain the property of the individual who creates it, the campaign capitalizes on the promotional potential of these artworks by collecting and re-posting the artist's photographs. As Jen Harvie argues in *Fair Play*, many immersive theatre productions' use of spectator participation actually exploit the labour of their audiences (28). Though the invitation to participate can democratize a conventionally elite form, like the theatre, the labour performed by participant spectators is often undervalued, because it is not only unpaid, but paid for; such contributions are ultimately disposable because spectators are an infinitely replaceable labour force. Jen Harvie recognizes that delegated performance—which places some or all of the performance work in the hands of audience members, or otherwise “ordinary” people (i.e. not professional artists)—“offers audiences potentially expanded degrees of agency in making art and its meanings, enabling individual expressivity, extending to all participants the opportunity to be an artist and democratizing the role of artist” (36). However, she argues that making audience participation an integral part of performance outsources much of the labour of the performance to the spectator him or herself (36). Punchdrunk takes this delegation a step further, not only demanding its audience fulfill specific roles during the performance, but also expecting them to continue their labour after the performance, and to have that labour take material form, both through the production of art works, and their presentation via online platforms. Ultimately, uploading an image to a social media platform such as Facebook or Instagram renders the image the property of the platform, not the individual, and the website has the authority to use that image as they choose (Smith). Participating in the campaign, therefore, sees artists relinquish the ownership and rights to their work not just to the social media platform, but also to Punchdrunk, for whom the campaign represents a non-stop, free

advertising venture. Though the company may not own the rights to the submitted photograph, they are the ones who profit from its circulation, as these creative re-engagements act as promotions for *Sleep No More* itself. It is not only the seductive appeal of Punchdrunk's aesthetic (often imitated and built upon by #mysleepnomore submissions), but also the testimony provided by the submitters' enthusiasm about the experience, which sells the performances to a wider public.

Punchdrunk's performances do not only operate in the literal economies of ticket and merchandising sales, profit margins, or dollars and cents. Immersive theatre's second currency is cultural capital. Submitting an aesthetic creation in response to the #mysleepnomore campaign is not only an act of delegated labour for the production, but also a performance of consumer privilege. If one redesigns a Punchdrunk mask, for example, that individual can be assumed to have the capital (both monetary and cultural⁶⁴) to be able to attend a Punchdrunk performance. A spectator's public identification of themselves as an audience member can also be understood as a form of promotion for Punchdrunk, emphasizing *Sleep No More's* cultural significance by perpetuating the production's circulation in the popular culture market. The campaign, therefore, promotes the image of the individual by categorizing him or her as a consumer of expensive, secretive, and therefore "exclusive" cultural productions, as well as

⁶⁴ A form of capital which is intimately related to social determinants such as age, class, race, etc. Pierre Bourdieu argues that cultural capital exists in three forms: "in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee" ("Forms of Capital" 47). In Bourdieu's article "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction", he refers to cultural capital as something which individual subjects "possess", characterizing cultural capital as something that is not solely socially inherent to one's being, but is also linked to capitalist economies through processes of ownership.

promoting *Sleep No More* as a gathering place for such fashionable, culturally-aware, affluent individuals, and therefore as a cultural centre. It is not new to think of theatre and performance as cultural currencies; however, Punchdrunk's approach to capitalizing on this historical trend is inherently modern. Punchdrunk's cultural capital is performed across contemporary popular culture mediums (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, as well as appearing in advertising campaigns for fashion houses, and in an episode of the then-popular television show *Gossip Girl*), and appeals to neoliberal economic and social patterns in order to ensure its success.⁶⁵

Part of what draws spectators to immersive theatre, as well as projects that surround them, like #mysleepnomore, is the promise of participatory power, whether or not it is actually granted. As Andrew Eglinton and W.B. Worthen have both suggested,⁶⁶ entering *Sleep No More* as a spectator means entering a space where a role is prescribed for you, not only inside the performance, but also as a consumer of its experience in any form. The illusion is that spectators have agency, power to be, as Machon states, "co-authors of their experience" (*Immersive Theatres* 23). Nevertheless, many spectators seem content because despite its artificiality, the experience of immersive performance produces real embodied sensorial and affective responses; indeed, the same might be said for Oculus Rift or 3D films. The ways in which spectators engage with immersive experiences, both in the moment and in retrospect suggest a shift towards a desire for real feeling, even if this feeling is produced in artificial environments. If, as I have argued

⁶⁵ See Jen Harvie, *Fair Play*.

⁶⁶ Eglinton, Andrew. "Reflections on a Decade of Punchdrunk Theatre." *TheatreForum International Theatre Journal*, 2010, pp. 46-55; Worthen, W.B. "'The written troubles of the brain': Sleep No More and the Space of Character." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2012, pp. 79-97.

here, immersive theatre is an experience economy, then commercialized immersive experience—such as Punchdrunk performance, or VR technologies like Oculus Rift—encourage us to consume feeling, rather than to truly experience it. Indeed, the sensorial and the affective have entered a commoditized economy, in which, if we spend enough, we can purchase experience and feeling. *Sleep No More* is perhaps less about performance, and more about the individual's ravenous desire to consume the experience. Punchdrunk's ticket sales structure exemplifies the types of individualistic desires many consumers bring to the performance. At *Sleep No More*, you can purchase one of four ticket options: standard; Maximillian's Guest, which allows you to skip the line, and be escorted straight to a reserved table at the Manderley Bar; and two options which include reservations at the McKittrick's restaurant, The Heath. If you are willing to pay for the privilege, you can skip the typical theatre-going aspects of the performance (waiting in line, in particular), in order to be more fully immersed in the performance's reality. Keren Zaiontz similarly attests to the connection between economic capital and the type of experience available in her description of her experience at Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man*:

For a staggering £85 per ticket, my friend and I were escorted into the warehouse through an alternate entryway, siphoned off from the mass of mostly young theatregoers, and taken to the basement of the building. There, we clinked glasses with two performers, were promptly separated, and were made to run through a dark corridor where a prologue was privately delivered to each of us. (413)

Simply buying a ticket for a Punchdrunk show certainly ensures the purchase of an experience, but how much one is willing (or indeed, able) to spend determines the nature of the experience: essentially, one can purchase the privilege of deeper immersion into the

performance. However, as Zaiontz indicates, the amount that you are willing to spend does not necessarily correlate to the quality of experience you will have:

After the performer of the prologue had run off, I did not feel a sense of theatrical pleasure, but a profound sense of self-entitlement. I was convinced that my ticket had purchased me more than just a short speech. Indeed, my friend and I were encouraged to wear our visitors' passes around our necks with the promise that they might garner us more one-on-one experiences, but after the prologue nothing in the way of premium access ever materialized. Eventually, we found ourselves wandering from floor to floor of the building, chasing performers alongside the horde of youth. (414)

Sales of “premium” tickets, therefore, rely on consumer anticipation about the experience in order to be profitable. In short, such ticket schemes work because potential audience members want to “make the most of” their experience of the production, concomitant with an anxiety that something might be missed or lacking if one were to only purchase the “standard” ticket. Based on Zaiontz’s experience, it is clear that, for Punchdrunk, successfully selling these higher priced tickets on the promise of better, more immersive experiences is of higher priority than actually providing individualized experience. As Alston points out, the responsibility for creating satisfactory experience is outsourced to the spectators themselves: “The equation of empowerment and free-roaming transfers at least partial responsibility for the production of an individually encountered and discovered performance journey onto the shoulders of individuals” (*Beyond Immersive Theatres* 139). Indeed, as Alston emphasizes, “Entrepreneurial participation is also the participatory mode expected of audiences, for without exercising at least a degree of entrepreneurialism, the participant is likely to reduce, probably inadvertently, the number

of opportunities that are available to them” (133). The language of entrepreneurialism further indicates Punchdrunk’s transfer of responsibility for the experience to the individual him or herself. Thus, for Punchdrunk, what matters is the quantity of purchases, rather than the quality of the experience. This paradox seems precisely to represent Punchdrunk’s utilization of the experience economy: the company is happy to have you pay extra for elevated status, but ultimately, as ever in a Punchdrunk performance, it falls to the individual spectator to “make the most” of their experience. This example—in combination with the performance of cultural capital and consumer privilege that immersive theatre can often become—demonstrates that the experience economy is significantly more oriented towards the economic than the experiential. In the following case study, in which I analyze Punchdrunk’s *The Drowned Man* sale, this orientation towards consumption rather than experience comes further into focus.

Following the conclusion of Punchdrunk’s *The Drowned Man* in July 2014, the company placed the entire contents of the performance up for sale, making props, costumes, set pieces, technical equipment, and numerous other artefacts available for public purchase. The sale took place in person and on the auction website eBay from August 7th-10th 2014, and was advertised widely across Punchdrunk’s social media accounts, as well as on several independent UK theatre news sites and blogs. The sale, it would seem, grants all interested parties an opportunity to own a piece of the performance. However, the choice of sale location (in the same warehouse where *Drowned Man* was performed), and the company’s advertising language and placement suggests that the sale was particularly targeted to former audience members, presumably eager to memorialize their experience.

Alongside #mysleepnomore, this sale represents another example of the archival impulse which compels individuals to supplement ephemeral experiences with physical concretizations. Oftentimes, this archivization is also a commercial and consumer experience. For instance, *Sleep No More*'s online gift shop sells souvenir programs, themed playing cards, and even *Sleep No More* branded Moleskin notebooks. One's ticket to a Punchdrunk performance also provides an opportunity for material consumption, as intrepid spectators can obtain souvenirs from within the performance itself, whether it be one of many scraps of paper that fill desk and dresser drawers, a business card, or other such ephemera that litter the expansive performance spaces. While I refer to these small souvenirs as "ephemera," they are in truth the opposite, as their function is to concretize and make material the ephemerality of the performance, by representing the performance experience. Indeed, the term "souvenir" is intended in its true etymological sense here, as a "remembrance" or "memory". The objects do not act solely as aids to memory, but actually stand in for one's memory of the performance, and therefore for the performance's ephemeral nature.

This desire to concretize the ephemerality of the experience in the form of a souvenir or commodity betrays a disconnect between experience economies and individual practices. Immersive theatre's use of the experience economy presents spectators with situations and experiences, emphasizing the specialness and ephemerality of the experience, and therefore producing an anxiety towards its eventual conclusion and subsequent vanishing. Conveniently, Punchdrunk's performances also offer a solution to this conundrum: spend more money to purchase material (and therefore permanent) representations of the performance. In this way, these "souvenirs" are fetishized as commodities that might grant one access (whether by memory or mere proximity) back to

the original, ephemeral performance. This creation of fetishized commodities means that Punchdrunk's economy does not only sell experiences, but also material representations of experiences. Indeed, I argue that Pine and Gilmore's suggestion that experience economies can remain entirely distinct from other economies (goods, services) is inaccurate. Anecdotally, consumer desire seems to require that experience be anchored by commodities, because it feels insufficient to purchase that which is entirely intangible. In the same way that visitors to Disney World spend their money not just on the visit, but also on photographs, Mickey Mouse hats, and other such souvenirs, audience members at immersive theatre performances demonstrate a desire to secure the ephemerality of the experience with a material object. In the experience economy, it is not just that experiences are purchased and consumed; indeed, commodities must also be purchased and consumed in order to confirm the reality and the memory of the experience itself.

When it comes to the *Drowned Man* sale, this pattern of consumption is clearly at work, as former audience members and other members of the public flocked to the opportunity to own a piece of the performance. However, much like #mysleepnomore's artistic engagements with *Sleep No More*, while seeming to provide a democratizing opportunity for everyone and anyone to participate in the performance in some way, items purchased at the *Drowned Man* sale function less as a connection to the original experience of performance, and more as a performance of the buyer's cultural capital. Once purchased, rather than representing the performance itself, the commodity becomes a signifier of its owner's cultural and economic capital. In the eyes of the owner, perhaps, the object calls up remembrances of their experience. However, commodities marketed as souvenirs—and particularly many of the types of products available for purchase at *The Drowned Man* sale—are intended for display rather than practical use. Because, as

Punchdrunk intends, experiences at their performances are radically individual and intimate, the intended signification of a souvenir cannot extend beyond a single individual. Thus, for the outside observer who has had no personal experience with *The Drowned Man* upon which to draw and relate to the object, the signification instead becomes solely that of the owner's consumer privilege and cultural capital.

For Punchdrunk, selling disposable commodities such as the former props, costumes, and ephemera available at *The Drowned Man* sale, or more widely available souvenir merchandise, ensures the company's continued existence. Founder Felix Barrett has made no secret about the financial difficulties of running a company like Punchdrunk, which relies on large, unique spaces, filled with the necessary accoutrements, in order to execute their stunningly rendered performance environments. As Brian Logan describes in an interview with Barrett, "with the exception of *Sleep No More* on Broadway⁶⁷, Punchdrunk shows don't make money. 'My ambition is too high,' says Barrett, whose events cost film-sized sums commensurate with the cinematic experience he offers audiences" (Logan). Indeed, as Caroline McGinn similarly points out, "Punchdrunk shows don't make money. 'I'm not sure we've ever done a show that's broken even,' says Barrett" (McGinn).⁶⁸ As a result, Punchdrunk must seek alternate means to fund their

⁶⁷ This production was brought to New York through a partnership with the American company Emursive, who were largely responsible for raising the funds to produce *Sleep No More* on Broadway (Slade). While the financial details for the production are unavailable to the public, it is important to note here that *Sleep No More*'s success in New York, and therefore its profits, are most likely split between Emursive and their private investors, and Punchdrunk.

⁶⁸ Conditions for Punchdrunk have likely changed in the years between when this comment was first made and the present. However, despite their changing fortunes, the overarching point of the comment remains the same: Punchdrunk shows are incredibly expensive to produce and sustain, and they do not seem to make exorbitant profits. Punchdrunk is a registered charity, and therefore does not sustain any profit; any money made is reinvested for future projects. In addition, as a registered charity, some of Punchdrunk's financial information is available to the public. Their charity profile reports the company's 2016 income as £2.2million and their overall expenditures for the year as £2.1million (charitycommission.gov.uk). In addition, in each of their annual Trustee's Reports from 2012-2016, the company reported that no single

performances, beyond simply ticket sales, turning to corporate partnerships and merchandizing in order to accomplish this goal. In the age of austerity, the Arts Council of England encourages theatre companies to be “entrepreneurial” when it comes to funding. As Harvie argues, this perspective is problematic due to “its emphasis on and celebration of self-interested individualism; its implicit acceptance that an inevitable by-product of innovation is creative destruction [...]and its emphasis on productivity over other potential values” (23). With typical Punchdrunk performances only ever breaking even, the necessity of the post-show liquidation sale becomes clear: it exists in order to propel Punchdrunk’s future projects. It is, it seems, the buying power of its clientele that keeps Punchdrunk afloat and sustains its future.

Furthermore, while Punchdrunk’s format (and publicity) advertises participation, audiences are alienated from the labour they execute in service of Punchdrunk. For instance, while the much sought-after one-on-one encounters during *Sleep No More* (and other Punchdrunk performances) might seem and feel intimate and deeply personal, blogs such as “They Have Scorched the Snake” have demonstrated that these experiences are repeated night after night, to such a degree that bloggers and other frequent attendees can provide instructions on how to best position yourself to be chosen for specific one-on-ones. Though Punchdrunk performances may appear to be participatory, they offer their audiences little ownership over their experiences during the performance. For instance, the aesthetic objects submitted to Punchdrunk as part of the #mysleepnomore campaign cease to belong to the artist, but instead enter the market as Punchdrunk advertisements and promotions. In the case of *The Drowned Man*, this alienation even extends to the

employee received more than £60,000 in remuneration per year, indicating that company members are not receiving excessively large salaries.

purchasing of merchandise or souvenirs after the performance. While it is primarily their spectators' purchase of material goods and experiences that allows Punchdrunk to continue to produce performances, spectators are neither granted agency nor participatory power over the work they have ostensibly helped to produce. The souvenirs of performance I have mentioned are commodities that, in fact, serve to represent and commemorate the spectator's lack of ownership over the experience itself. Why, then, do consumers continue to participate in Punchdrunk's economy?

Though the experiences on offer at Punchdrunk productions often occur in the company of other consumers and often play on the potential for intimate interactions with performers, the company foregrounds the experience as an individual one, and it is often enthusiastically pursued as such by spectators. Indeed, Pine and Gilmore's definition of the experience economy is specifically oriented towards the individuality of experience. This is evidenced in their focus on experiences as "memorable", which, as Bergson theorizes, casts the experience as always already an individual representation.⁶⁹ Thus, while hundreds of spectators attend each Punchdrunk performance, most of the company's experiences are oriented towards the individual alone. Josephine Machon suggests that "as much as the 'form' of the event is repeated within the duration of any given performance night and across the performance run, the nature of each moment of this performance for each individual audience member is different and diverse" (*Immersive Theatres* 31). In short, it does not matter if actual performances are unique, as long as an individual audience member perceives this to be true. This fact is echoed by Adam Alston, who states, "What is perceived to be a unique experience may end up being

⁶⁹ In *Matter and Memory*.

at least fairly reproducible. While performers may input improvisatory contributions into a participatory encounter...The non-reproducible element comes largely from the consumer narcissistically investing their own personality and desire. The reflection appears unique to each participant, but the mirror remains much the same” (“Audience Participation” 131). Indeed, both Alston and Keren Zaiontz note this focus on the individual: “Attention tends to be turned inwards, towards the experiencing self” (Alston “Audience Participation” 130); “self-absorption serves as a primary mode of experience for audiences within particular types of participatory art and performance” (Zaiontz 407). As I will explore more thoroughly in the following section, the narcissistic focus noted by both Alston and Zaiontz is intimately linked to the ways in which Punchdrunk deploys affective liveness in their performances. Punchdrunk performances are designed in order to maximize the experience of the individual, which marks the company—as well as numerous other immersive theatre companies—as participating in a decidedly neoliberal economy.

Both the #mysleepnomore campaign, and Punchdrunk’s *The Drowned Man* sale represent Punchdrunk’s literal monetization of theatrical experience. However, the neoliberal influence on Punchdrunk’s work is just as clear in ways that spectators have internalized an economic approach to their own performance experiences. The ideology becomes manifest in performances through audience members’ self-interested approach to consuming the performance, which encompasses the entrepreneurial, and even competitive, spectatorial strategies. Moreover, the Crimp plays discussed in chapter one and Punchdrunk encourage similar modes of affective consumption, wherein spectators mimic the free market economic policies of neoliberalism—which argue that an

individual should be permitted to acquire as much capital as they can⁷⁰ —in their personal consumption, by capitalistically accumulating experience for themselves. While actual economic capital ensures the individual access to performances like Punchdrunk’s, attendance at an immersive performance event also contributes to the accumulation of one’s cultural capital. If, following Adam Alston, we understand immersive theatre as participating in the type of experience economy that Pine and Gilmore describe, one which literally monetizes experiences of liveness, then Punchdrunk performances also produce the conditions which allow audience members to “collect” or “accumulate” as much live, affective experience as they wish. For example, *Sleep No More*’s design ensures that no spectator can see the entirety of the performance in a single visit, thus baiting audience members to return to the performance repeatedly, fuelled by the desire to see and ultimately consume as much of the experience as possible. In addition, the performance’s one-on-one encounters function as “collectibles”, and many fans report visiting *Sleep No More* with the specific intention of being picked for specific (or, indeed, numerous) one-on-ones.⁷¹ Alston characterizes this economization of immersive performance along the lines of “productivity”, wherein “Audiences in immersive theatre are often asked to do something more than watch, think and feel so that they can feel more of the work and feel more intensely: to interact, to roam freely through a space, or set of spaces, to speak with others, and so on. As involvement increases in immersive theatre... so does the intensification of audience productivity” (*Beyond* 9). The concept of

⁷⁰ In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey suggests this fact in his definition of neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property right, free markets, and free trade” (2).

⁷¹ See, for example, <http://violetpatronus.tumblr.com/post/30117793618/sleep-no-more-second-experience>.

productivity is useful because it resonates with neoliberal labour expectations, which place increasing demands on workers to be productive.

In Punchdrunk's performances, productivity is linked to consumption: if you want to consume more of the performance experience, you must be more productive in your spectating.⁷² In *Performing Ground*, Laura Levin gives an example of what this implicit call for productivity looks like: she describes the performance as having a "survival of the fittest" structure, which compels spectators to push through crowds to see the action and chase after actors as they run from scene to scene" (84). She describes how "Those who pursue characters most voraciously are given access to the most 'exclusive' experiences, the coveted one- to- ones. Each time I gained entrance into a private room, I had to shove my way to the front of the line so that I would be selected first. (I felt like a jerk, but it worked)" (84). There is a further economic inflection to these behaviours: tickets to *Sleep No More* cost upwards of \$100 (USD), and when I visited, this cost meant that I approached the performance with a desire to have an experience that fulfilled my expectation for a satisfactory return on investment. For many, myself included, attending a Punchdrunk performance is not only about consuming experience, but about consuming as many experiences as possible. This, I argue, mirrors patterns of capitalist consumption: instead of purchasing and accumulating goods (though Punchdrunk is also supported by a market of material goods), spectators collect immersive experiences, which are banked as cultural capital. Moreover, it is precisely the nature of liveness which feeds and enables

⁷² Alston echoes this point in his statement that "Immersive theatre also conceives itself as an apparatus for the production of affect; however, immersive theatre resources the productive capacities of prospectively or actually participating theatre audiences, which includes the audience's role in the production of affect, and focuses their attention on affectively voluminous experiences" (*Beyond* 217-218).

this kind of accumulation: spectators desire experiences that feel live and engage them affectively. The experience economy in Punchdrunk's performances therefore seems to be at odds with the types of experiences that spectators seek out. Individual self-interest and frenzied competition are the means through which spectators attempt to engage on an affective level with the performance and its performers. Audience members' desire to forge intimate affective connections—such as through one-on-ones—but they achieve these ends by disengaging themselves both physically and affectively from the spectators around them.

Theatre that encourages active engagement participates in the same utopic logic that characterizes the understanding of liveness as a collective experience in a particular time and space, as both are said to encourage collectivity and extoll communitarian values. However, the experience economy functions by monetizing the affective experience of liveness, orienting both towards individual affect, experience, and consumption. Indeed, Punchdrunk's participation in this framework is not limited to their extra-performative exploits; rather, this focus on giving individual consumers affectively live experiences is built into the foundation of the company's performances.

2.5 Punchdrunk Theatre: Case Study

In this section, I continue my discussion of Punchdrunk's theatrical works by analyzing *Sleep No More's* utilization of *Macbeth* as an example of the work's many fragmentations. Just as the company's extra-performative features, such as their opportunities for online engagement and material consumption demonstrate that the experience of the performance is both temporally fragmented and experienced on a

primarily individual level, *Sleep No More*'s use of narrative and space similarly destabilize our understanding of what it means to experience something "live". By scattering its performance across a massive five floor warehouse, I argue that Punchdrunk challenges the notion of a singular "live" performance moment; by its nature, *Sleep No More* produces numerous instances of liveness, dispersed across the work's numerous spaces and spectators. In the following sections, I theorize the ways in which audience members negotiate the performance's fragmentations, and discuss the effects of the process of experiencing, assembling, and interpreting the performance from the perspective of a spectator. Ultimately, I argue that, in tandem with Punchdrunk's capitalization on the individual in their commercial pursuits, the performance experience of *Sleep No More* not only valorizes, but also requires that the experience be an entirely individual one. The structure of *Sleep No More* demonstrates that liveness does not exist as a singular, cohesive force, but rather is radically individual. Liveness, therefore, can be manipulated, dispersed across a variety of spaces, times, and perceiving bodies, in order to serve their spectators' desire to consume experiences for their individual benefit and edification.

The individuality of experiences at *Sleep No More* is significant, because the temporality of the experience runs contrary to conventional theorizations of liveness. Peggy Phelan asserts that liveness occurs "through the presence of living bodies" (148), depending on a theatrical situation in which spectators all view the performance grouped together, at the same time, and in roughly the same place. Indeed, Philip Auslander summarizes this perspective, in terms of performance artist Eric Bogosian's statement that "theatre is ritual. It is something we make every time it happens" (qtd. in Auslander 4). Auslander states that Bogosian's "perception of the value of live performance clearly

derives from its existence only in the moment ('every time it happens'), and its putative ability to create community (if not communion) among its participants, including performers and spectators" (4). Indeed, the rhetoric of live theatre bringing individuals together into a community relies on the assumption that "live" and "liveness" refer to a singular, unified force experienced by an entire group of people at the same time, in the same place, and in approximately the same way. In each of these descriptions, it is the presence of the audience that seems to play a constitutive role in liveness. A performance is defined as live precisely due to the physical presence of spectators in the moment of its being enacted, in that the audience and the performance occupy the same place and the same time.

However, while I argue that physical and temporal presence is indeed a defining aspect of liveness, the notion of presence itself is more complicated than the above theorizations would suggest. In particular, when applied to spectator experiences of immersive theatre practices, the assumption that liveness is constituted by the combination of performance and spectatorship occupying the same physical and temporal space falls short. How might we theorize liveness in a theatrical situation that differs from the traditional stage set-up, which groups and clearly delineates performers and spectators? Can liveness be disaggregated and distributed across a performance space? Can a performance be "live" for different spectators at different times, or indeed, "live" for multiple spectators, in multiple ways, all at once? These questions necessitate not only a reorientation of our understanding of liveness, but also presence, in order to come to an understanding of how the live operates in immersive theatre; in addition, this reconsideration of liveness will seek to develop a theorization of liveness which can be applied to a variety of theatrical forms. In short, I argue that the theory of liveness that I

have briefly described here, and more thoroughly summarized in the introduction to this dissertation, is derived from, and bases many of its assumptions on, more traditional theatrical set-ups—stage, audience seated in auditorium, etc.—and therefore does not accurately describe the nature of liveness across theatrical forms. In the latter half of this chapter, I will argue for a re-conceptualization of liveness that describes the nature of the live in immersive performances, but will be applicable to performance more generally.

I suggest that Punchdrunk’s dismantling of classical works, only to reconstitute them in fragmentary, trace, and discontinuous forms, demonstrates the limits that linear dramatic structures have placed on our understanding of the live. These classical dramatic archetypes have defined how we understand liveness. However, through analysis of performances that deviate from, and indeed outright reject linear narrative and dramatic patterns, it becomes clear that the experience of liveness depends on the features of any given performance.⁷³ As I have argued in the introduction to this dissertation, liveness is a protean force. It is not necessarily an inherent fact of every performance, nor does it behave in consistent ways across variant types of performance. I suggest that it is only by analyzing experiences of performance that we might come to understand liveness, not as a single force, but through the affective responses that it produces.

The notion of presence, at first, seems to be reasonably simple, referring to occupying the same time and space as something else. However, as Giannachi and Kaye describe, presence is significantly more complex; they suggest that, “‘Being present’...indicates ‘now’ but also ‘in the previous moment’ and so what precedes it,

⁷³ Indeed, in the following sections I will focus specifically on one of the primary modes through which *Sleep No More* produces liveness: its dismantling of the conventional distance between performers and audience members. This creates the potential for an intimate physical proximity, and exchange of gazes—both of which establish an intersubjective relationship between performers and spectators.

where we come from; so implying a temporal as well as spatial ‘before’. Indeed, although presence is ‘in front of I am’, and so imminence, it is also what is yet to come” (5). They argue that presence is tied to subject formation, stating, “presence is what appears before or in front of the subject caught in the act of its making as a subject, so implying a relational movement or change” (5). They continue, stating, “Spatiality, temporality, sociality and being *are*, therefore, the conditions through which it occurs. Its construction is social *and* cultural, which means that our perception and reception of ‘presence’ vary in time and space” (5). Giannachi and Kaye’s description of presence, therefore, characterizes presence less as a universal fact, but rather as an individual experience, suggesting that presence actually plays a role in the formation of the subject him/herself. This reconfiguration of presence from mere spatio-temporal proximity to an entirely individual process aligns with my own reorientation of liveness away from its seeming cohesive universality. If, as Phelan and others suggest, liveness finds its roots in presence, then following Giannachi and Kaye’s theorization, liveness must necessarily be more individualized than it has thus far been described.

2.6 Welcome to the McKittrick Hotel

Experiencing a Punchdrunk performance can be disconcerting to spectators accustomed to more conventional theatre structures, wherein the audience typically gathers in darkness, separated from the well-lit objects of their gaze. This traditional set-up is designed to encourage a linear gaze: the audience member looks at the stage and the actors, while the actor looks out from the stage towards the audience. Punchdrunk,

however, encourages performers and spectators alike to look anywhere.⁷⁴ There is no clear distinction between the space marked out for performance and the space designated for spectating; rather, they are one and the same.⁷⁵

The image of the static, passive spectator is one that Punchdrunk attempts to overthrow in favour of the more idealized active participant. As Felix Barrett puts it, We're trying to break the formulaic conventions of going to the theatre. At the theatre you're in a pack. There is safety in numbers. We want the audience to feel the rug has been pulled and they're having to make conscious decisions about what to do next...Once you've had that beat of slight rising concern, then you're there in the space, you're active, you're part of it...It's all about presence. (qtd. in Hemming)

This re-structuring of the role, position, and actions of the spectator again evokes Jacques Rancière's figure of the "emancipated spectator", discussed at the beginning of this chapter. W.B. Worthen observes that "*Sleep No More* stands apart from a totalizing, prescribed narrative, materializing a rather depoliticized vision of Jacques Rancière's active, emancipated spectator" (82). Indeed, as Rancière himself argues, "in a theatre, in front of a performance, just as in a museum, school or street, there are only ever individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts and signs that confront or

⁷⁴ This fact is made particularly clear by Punchdrunk's detailed scenescapes, which allow audiences to thoroughly look through and examine every inch of space in the performance, including dresser drawers, wardrobes, filing cabinets, bookshelves, et cetera.

⁷⁵ Where necessary for safety or other logistical reasons, performers will clear and mark space designated for their performance, though this is accomplished in a diegetic manner, without breaking character. For instance, while attending Punchdrunk's NY production of *Sleep No More*, myself and numerous other spectators in the area were forcibly moved out of the way by the actor portraying Macbeth, who was about to perform a violently choreographed dance. *Sleep No More* is also populated by black-masked guides, who will occasionally steer or even block roving spectators, for example, to ensure that a single room does not become dangerously full.

surround them” (16). However, it is necessary to note that Rancière does not so much argue for an emancipation of the spectator, but rather an emancipation of our understanding of the spectator, stating that such a project “begins when we challenge the oppositions between viewing and acting...when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts...She observes, selects, compares, interprets” (13). Rancière summarizes the work of thinkers such as Artaud and Brecht, whose theatrical projects seem to embrace the emancipated spectator, who is “removed from the position of observer calmly examining the spectacle offered to her...she will exchange the privilege of rational observer for that of the being in possession of all her vital energies” (4). However, rather than necessitating a refashioning of the theatrical environment, he argues that a spectator “participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way...They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them” (13). He concludes that “Spectatorship...is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know, as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and said, done and dreamed...We don’t need to turn spectators into actors. We do need to acknowledge that every spectator is already an actor in his own story and that every actor is in turn the spectator of the same kind of story” (17). Rancière identifies spectatorship as a natural state of being, and argues that the innate active engagement of the spectator must become more recognizable in theatrical structures. However, Punchdrunk’s attempt to have its audiences engage more thoroughly with the performance by inviting spectators to move freely through the space is without value. I want to suggest, perhaps in a fashion similar to Dolan, that the mode of spectatorship utilized by Punchdrunk might allow audience members to recognize their position as spectators in spaces beyond the theatre more

readily, and give them the tools to think critically about what spectatorship might mean or involve for them personally.

2.7 “Best experienced alone” ⁷⁶

In this section, I will elaborate on Punchdrunk’s valorization of not only experience in their works, but the ways in which they construct performances to encourage individual experience. This focus on the individual further dismantles and disperses the notion of the live, demonstrating that, for Punchdrunk, the live is not a holistic, communal state, but rather an individually felt affect. As Punchdrunk encourages spectators to roam their performances alone, as individuals, they reconstitute liveness as a collection of individual bodies, scattered across the performance space, experiencing traces of the live, rather than as a singular force at work uniformly on a collective. By both explicitly imploring their spectators to pursue individual live experiences, and by designing the performance to ensure solitary exploration and discovery, Punchdrunk incentivizes audiences to adhere to an economically-informed mode of spectatorship. *Sleep No More*’s structure, which disperses liveness into individual encounters and experiences, provides an ideal environment which allows spectators to engage in self-interested consumption. From this perspective, Punchdrunk’s mask, which every spectator is required to wear, becomes an emblem of the ways in which the performance casts audience members as individual consumers.

⁷⁶ This line (in full, “And remember, this show is best experienced alone”) is included in the list of “guidelines” given to incoming spectators, along with the instruction not to speak, and to wear your mask at all times.

As I have previously described, once inside the performance space, audience members are free to wander, explore, spectate, and interact with the environment as they please. The performance runs in three loops over the course of three hours. Indeed, even if entrance times were not staggered, audiences would always enter *Sleep No More* in medias res, because the performance's first loop begins before any spectators enter. Performers, and therefore the dramatic action and the narrative itself are scattered across the entirety of the performance space, to be encountered (or, as the case may be, not) by roving audience members. While the space is entirely interactive (spectators can rummage, read, and move objects as they please), performer/spectator interaction is highly regulated. The audience spends much of the performance as unnoticed voyeurs, but for brief selected moments of interactions, such as an invitation to dance, or Punchdrunk's coveted one-on-ones, wherein an audience member is selected by a performer to experience a private moment. Examples of these one-on-one interactions include being given a mission to find and return a ring to the witch, Hecate, or having the Nurse lock you inside a room and recite a monologue for you, alone. For the average audience member, time spent in the McKittrick is divided between two major activities: exploring the space (for instance, rummaging through the piles of paperwork in or on desks, exploring the contents of dresser drawers, and so on) or pursuing a character and/or action (often, actually necessitating that one run after performers, and the crowd of spectators also following them).⁷⁷ You are free to leave the performance at any time, but

⁷⁷ Jennifer Flaherty summarizes these dual approaches to spectatorship: "most audience interactions with the environment of *Sleep No More* fall into the categories that the author of [the blog] *Behind a White Mask* refers to as 'the Search' and 'the Tail'. To search is to take the time to explore the rich spaces of the McKittrick Hotel, examining the details of the 'crackling wallpaper, chests of drawers, desks, all filled with scraps of paper, notes, cameos, photographs, bars of soap... The tailing experience involves following the characters of the production as they move through and interact with the spaces" (136-37).

unlike *Sleep No More*'s beginning, there is a clear and definitive end: as 10pm approaches, audience members are slowly and subtly funnelled into the ballroom for a final banquet scene. While the novelty of this type of performance and spectatorship is evident, in the subsequent section, I will explore more thoroughly the appeal of this particular brand of performance experience.

While Punchdrunk's rhetoric surrounding its spectatorship focuses on the way in which their performances emancipate and grant agency to audiences to become active participants in the work, this power is ultimately limited. When it comes to *Sleep No More*, for instance, decisions about what happens in the performance on a large scale are made by authority figures such as Barrett and Maxine Doyle (artistic director and choreographer, respectively), who structure and direct the narrative, as well as the performers' movements through the space. While there are moments for possible improvisation, the show relies on a strictly regulated plan. As Barrett points out, Punchdrunk performances build in features that allow audience members to feel liberated, while actually being carefully directed and positioned. He states,

The basic way that we shape the response, whatever the work, is the choreography and manipulation of audience around a space. It relies on allowing them to think they're discovering things, whilst in reality we are gently flagging moments for them. If we *tell* the audience what to see, we break the spell. If they find it themselves and they think that they're the first person to come across it, that's where the power lies. Through sound, through light, through proximity to performers, through lack of performers, through levels of threat and tension around a building; it's a richly textured tapestry that's there, gently pointing them towards moments of interest. (Machon *Immersive Theatres* 161-162)

As part of Punchdrunk's strategies to manipulate bodies and affects, *Sleep No More* utilizes "14 synced soundtracks around the building...[which] can control the sonic shape of the entire site to echo and support the narrative; when the dynamic's picking up on a certain floor we can lower or mute the acoustic environment either side of it" (162).

Though Punchdrunk presents its audience members with the illusion (and indeed, a small amount) of participatory power, these opportunities are highly regulated by the performance's structure itself. Audience members can become actors in Punchdrunk performances, but as Sophie Nield puts it, "when we enter the space, the world of the play, the play masks and costumes us, presents to us our 'limited role', and creates us as the character named Spectator" (53).

More than simply assigning these roles through its scenographic features, Punchdrunk casts its audience members in the specific role of Spectator through the use of the aforementioned Venetian-style mask, which both marks spectators as such, and influences their behaviours while inside the performance. Speaking about the masking of his audiences, Felix Barrett states that the audience is

empowered because they have the ability to define and choose their evening without being judged for those decisions. They are also removed from the traditional role of the passive, hidden audience, as they become part of the scenography and sometimes actually create walls to frame the action, providing a more intimate environment. The impact of the mask differs for each audience member—for some, wearing the mask gives them a sense of character, enabling them to come out of their shell and adapt their behaviour accordingly. This is empowering because it means they have the freedom to act differently from who they are in day-to-day life. (160)

Barrett's perspective on the mask in this instance is particularly optimistic, though in other instances, he has described the mask as "like assigning seats in an auditorium. It establishes each individual as part of an audience, and creates a boundary between them and the action. The masks creates a sense of anonymity; they make the rest of the audience dissolve into generic, ghostly presences, so that each person can explore the space alone" (24). Echoing this observation, W.B. Worthen describes the mask as "perform[ing] the work of the darkened auditorium and the theatre seat, separating, individualizing, and interiorizing us as a group of spectators...we are less the agents of the performance than its furniture" (95). From these slightly differing perspectives, we can gather that the mask is intended to serve a dual purpose: at once allowing the audience to feel free (perhaps invisible) enough in the space to explore it liberally, but also to mark the separation between spectator and performer. It is, therefore, intended to bring the spectator closer, and to distance her. The mask simultaneously gives access, but denies intimacy: Gareth White observes that, by using the mask, Punchdrunk "bring[s] the audience very close to the aesthetic objects of the theatre—performers' bodies, action, set and setting—while allowing them to maintain a feeling of distance" (228). Similarly, Zaiontz describes how, "[the mask] created a protective bubble (a fourth wall) between spectators and the theatrical world even as they inhabited it" (413). The mask's function is various, and sometimes it works in seemingly paradoxical ways. As Andrew Eglinton states, "On the one hand the mask has the capacity to work as a distancing device, invoking an inner voice that comments on the world of the performance. On the other hand it also has the capacity to be a proximity device, welding the audience member to the environment" (48). The mask seems to place the audience in a liminal space, both distanced from the performance they are watching and invited into it by virtue of the

mask, which permits access. The mask therefore characterizes the audience as something other than audience: not yet performer, because they are marked differently, yet not passive spectators, as the mask grants access and allows for participation and involvement.

However, more than just placing the audience in this in-between space in relation to the performance, the mask functions in other seemingly oppositional ways. White observes that, “Masked audiences are much more reticent, less inclined to interact unless invited and are more inclined to follow the characters from a distance, watching scenes unfold. The unmasked audience spent more time speaking to each other, with far more self-conscious laughter; they were more present to each other, there to exchange glances, to confirm reactions to the performance, and to conform to them” (225). White argues that, with masks, “a crowd does not form to the same degree, instead a string of—literally—faceless strangers mill around, each having very individual experiences” (224). Others have noted the ways in which the masks work to construct a faceless audience: Machon refers to the masked spectators as “‘ethereal beings’ that haunt the event, part of the scenographic design” (73). From the perspective of Punchdrunk, audience members are often props, drawn into the performance only when it is beneficial to the dramatic action, but otherwise allowing the wall of masked spectators to decorate the performance spaces, “like ghosts floating through the story” (Marsh qtd. in Eglinton 51), or as Lauren Mooney puts it, “like part of the set design” (qtd. in Zaiontz 413). However, these observations that the mask structures the audience member as part of a ghostly mass are not necessarily at odds with Barrett’s claim that the masks allow spectators to let go of inhibitions. This is a matter of perspective: from the point of view of a performer, the mask indeed casts spectators as a mass which populates the performance space, unified by

the mask which renders each individual the same, giving each an identical face. From the perspective of the individual, as Barrett suggests, one does not necessarily recognize themselves as one of the collective. Though you might be perpetually aware of its presence, from inside the mask, the only masked faces you can see are those of other spectators. They become a mass, whilst you become an individual. The mask hides your identity, and as a result, you can do what you want in the performance space without feeling the potential for any repercussions. Though from an external perspective, the mask seems to structure the audience as the ultimate collective, an identical mass of bodies, the perspective from within that mass is much different. As Gareth White implies, what the mask actually accomplishes is a disassembling of the audience. Where previously audience members in a performance might share the experience—by whispering comments to one another, or making physical contact, for example—in a Punchdrunk performance, the mask severs these audience connections.⁷⁸ As Alston points out, the mask also eliminates the possibility of shared affect: “Affective facial expressions are concealed within a private space behind the mask, known only to the audience member and those performers who temporarily remove the mask for a one-on-one performance within the performance” (*Beyond* 134). The mask therefore acts as a physical and symbolic barrier, preventing the experience from being shared, in any form, in real time. Despite the co-presence of many other spectators, the mask ensures that the spectator experiences the performance entirely individually, or, put more pessimistically,

⁷⁸ Punchdrunk accomplishes this by other means, as well. Before the performance, randomized playing cards are distributed in order to sort spectators into groups for entry, which attempts to separate groups of friends who have arrived together, and while waiting to be ushered into the performance itself, spectators are instructed that they are not to hold hands with friends or partners during the performance, and that conversing with each other while inside the performance is forbidden. Spectators are strongly encouraged to experience the work alone, as it is emphasized that this is the way to get the most of out the performance.

in isolation. Rather than transforming its spectators into entirely autonomous actors in the performance, or casting them as ghosts, sentenced to float perpetually in the background, what Punchdrunk's mask truly accomplishes is this process of individualization, ensuring that each spectator's experience of the performance is (or, at least, is perceived as) hers and hers alone.

The individuality of a Punchdrunk performance is repeatedly emphasized: W.B. Worthen points out that *Sleep No More*'s fragmentation of the *Macbeth* narrative means that it must be "assembled by an individual spectator's trajectory through it" (85). Indeed, the experience of the *individual* is valorized as part of Punchdrunk's structure, as Machon points out, "as much as the 'form' of the event is repeated within the duration of any given performance night and across the performance run, the nature of each moment of this performance for each individual audience member is different and diverse and would be unrepeatable were they to attend every performance across the entirety of said run" (31). Providing their spectators with an experience that is individual and unique in every way seems to be Punchdrunk's goal: it is built into the instructional mechanics of the pre-performance, and it is a natural effect of the company's expansive and labyrinthine performance space. Moreover, the company's integration of one-on-one encounters between performers and spectators emphasizes this goal. A performer selects a single audience member to join them for a private performance, sometimes from out of a large crowd, or sometimes because the spectator is the only one in the right place at the right time. There are a number of one-on-one encounters that are "available" to spectators: the *Sleep No More NYC Wiki* lists nine characters who perform one-on-ones, and each will choose a spectator to whom they will give a specific quest, tell a story, or, in W.B. Worthen's experience: "At the end of one performance, just before the banquet, I

followed Duncan to a corner behind the evergreens in the first-floor ballroom; he turned, embracing me, and said, ‘Don’t you know the body is a temple’” (94). These one-on-one encounters emphasize the individuality of the performance experience not just because they occur privately. Each one-on-one relies heavily on a physical or emotional intimacy: performers will often touch the spectator, stand in extremely close proximity, or whisper in the spectator’s ear. Audience members recounting these experiences often identify these moments of individual performance as particularly charged by their intimate nature. Flaherty gives the examples of being “invited into personal spaces, often standing inches away from characters as they dance, cry, and even undress...Audience members can lean on the bathtub or peer through windows as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth dance passionately in and around their bed” (137). This physical and emotional intimacy means that, though performers might deliver as many as three one-on-ones in a night’s performance, each encounter is entirely individual in terms of the spectator’s experience and reaction to the one-on-one’s intimate nature. While somewhat masked by claims of community orientation or social engagement, Punchdrunk’s valorization of the one-on-one encounter in their performances, as well as their structuring of performances in order to privilege the individual, exemplify immersive theatre’s tendency to focus on the individual, a habit which marks the form as an ultimately neoliberally-inclined enterprise.

2.8 On the Subject of Performance

Since immersive theatre invites its audiences to occupy and become involved in the performance space, as Machon puts it, the form “revels in the liveness and consequent *live(d)ness* of the performance moment” (43). Because spectators interact with the

performance on an individual, sense-based level, immersive theatre makes spectators aware of the liveness of the performance more acutely than in traditional performance. Liveness can be felt in a variety of theatrical situations: in more conventional theatrical set-ups, the live nature of the performance might typically become evident in moments where theatre seems to confront its own failure,⁷⁹ when performers onstage cease to be solely representational, and it is their humanity, rather than the character they play, that becomes evident. In immersive theatre, it is not solely in moments of representational failure that the spectator/performer relationship is exposed as an encounter between two subjects. Departing from the traditional spectatorial arrangement necessarily alters the relationship between audience and performer. One of the instances I argue produces the feeling of liveness is in the confrontations between performer and spectator, which in immersive theatre often occur in close physical proximity, and allow for an exchange of eye contact, more closely mirroring encounters between subjects in the everyday world. These face-to-face encounters, I argue, trigger a moment of recognition, in which the mutual subjectivity of each participant becomes evident to the other. Punchdrunk's performances, with their focus on intimate interactions between spectators and performers, are full of such moments. For instance, as the writer at the Tumblr blog "Blood Will Have Blood They Say" describes, "[Hecate] held my hand and we had this...stare-down that seemed to go on forever. I...found myself being pulled in deeper and deeper, watching this insane range of emotions drifting across her face. When a tear fell from her eye it was so intense that I literally started crying too. I'm pretty sure I had

⁷⁹ As Nicholas Ridout argues in *Stage Fright*, "Theatre's failure, when theatre fails is not anomalous, but somehow, perhaps constitutive" (3).

tears rolling down my mask-cheek” (April 20 2012). In this moment, the writer’s exchange of gaze with Hecate not only occurs on the level of character and performance, but also, I would suggest, is affectively charged because it is a moment of mutual recognition of subjectivity. I not only attribute the strength of the writer’s emotional reaction to his/her confrontation with a performer as both fictional character and living subject, but I would also argue that the audience member’s emotional reaction results in the performer’s recognition of the spectator’s subjectivity. Not only do *Sleep No More* and other immersive performance works utilize affect to unite bodily feeling and sensation with perception and interpretation, they also affect their audiences in order to manipulate the subjectival relationship between performers and spectators.

Performance is an intersubjective process. We do not experience theatre as a closed-off, objective event, which we simply view from its exterior as voyeurs. In *Stage Fright*, Nicholas Ridout summarizes this situation, stating, “the distinction between onstage and offstage, the work and its audience is supposed to be clear cut” but instead “in reality, because the people who are co-present to each other in the theatrical setup are always alive, this kind of interchange, however embarrassing, however much we seek to avoid it, is always already there, built into the structure of ‘the entire situation’” (9). Since performance involves real bodies, the form necessitates a recognition of the performer’s subjectivity. In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Peggy Phelan argues, “Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies” (148). She goes on to state, “In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of ‘presence.’ But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, character, ‘art’” (150). This emphasis on the reality of the living bodies onstage is significant.

However, while Phelan suggests that performers disappear behind their representations, I argue that the performer as a living being never fully disappears from the perspective of the audience. Indeed, this fact has been the subject of numerous recent works of performance studies. In *Feeling Theater*, Martin Welton states that “we experience the theatre—even installed in seats as looking spectators or as a listening audience—as a dynamic process” (10). Thus, we do not experience theater from the perspective of an isolated other, gazing voyeuristically into a discrete fictional reality. Because the stage is populated by real bodies, there is necessarily a subjectival connection between the performer and the audience. Ridout echoes this fact, arguing that as a theatre spectator, “You watch it happening... You are one of the ‘accessories’. The theatre is structured upon the face-to-face encounter... In the theatre you always know you are there, at the scene of the action, at the site of production” (29). Indeed, as Tzachi Zamir suggests, performance’s intersubjectivity is not only a feature of performance, but rather a constitutive factor; he argues that “Actors need spectators because... only a spectator is able to give the external indication that the actor momentarily exists in this amplified form. The audience provides the inter-subjective context of recognition” (230). Engaging with the oft-repeated sentiment that all that is required to make theatre is for one person to watch another, Zamir furthers this argument; he suggests that the spectator is a necessary part of performance because it is the spectator who affects and affirms the performer’s subjectivity.

Recognition of the other’s subjectivity in performance happens in several different ways. Firstly, no matter how involved in watching a performance one might become, or how effective the illusion of the theatre might be, in most cases, audience members maintain the knowledge that they are in a theater, watching other human beings perform

onstage for them. There is no end to encounters or experiences that constantly work to remind the audience of this fact: an obviously missed or flubbed line, the misstep of an actor onstage, the cough of the neighbour in the audience. I argue that in these moments the audience is made aware of the fact that they are in the process of an encounter with another human being (or, indeed, with a number of other human beings); this encounter is one of recognition of the other, invoking a sense of responsibility for the other that makes one consciously recognize their own subjectivity. As Ridout suggests, “the encounter with another person, in the dark, in the absence of communication, is also an encounter with the self” (9). Numerous philosophers have taken a similar position, arguing that it is the Other who defines one’s subjectivity. Ridout’s comment here resonates with Levinas, who argues that the other “disturbs the being at home with oneself” (*Infinity and Totality* 39). Levinas suggests that this unsettling of one’s at-homeness with oneself is precisely the necessary condition for subjectivity. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre suggests that, “I recognize that I am as the other sees me...I need the other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being” (222). Sartre’s theorization of the relationship with the other relies on the shame produced in the self at becoming the object of the other’s gaze (222), though I suggest that the theatrical encounter produces affect in excess of shame, because there is a reciprocity and mutuality involved in the recognitions that take place in theatrical situations. For this reason, Levinas’s argument—that the face of the other necessitates responsibility⁸⁰—seems more appropriate to the theatrical encounter. For Levinas, the responsibility demanded by the other’s face means that you become subject

⁸⁰ “The first word of the face is the ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all” (*Ethics and Infinity* 89).

to the other, and your subjectivity is defined in relation to this other.⁸¹ Moments of encounter, particularly in immersive theatre, are ones of mutual recognition, wherein performers and spectators are both made consciously aware of their position as human subjects. While such moments of recognition often occur in the instances of theatre's seeming failure, this recognition, I argue, happens by other means as well. Taking immersive theatre as my specific case study, I suggest that there is an affective exchange that takes place in the moment of performance; this exchange is reciprocal, and I argue, constitutive of subjectivity.

Theatre relies on the performer's ability to transmit affect to the audience: an actor portraying Hamlet is expected to communicate his character's feelings, with the assumed goal of garnering an emotional engagement with and reaction from the audience. However, if, as I have argued, the performer never fully disappears behind that which they represent, this affective transmission takes place between subjects, rather than only between a fictional character and a subject. Teresa Brennan, in *The Transmission of Affect*, argues that "The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without. They come via an interaction with other people and an environment" (3). Affect is always already a social process. Though Brennan speaks here about the everyday world, her comments are applicable to the theatre. If we assume that the purpose of theatre is to make people feel, to achieve a level of emotion that Aristotle refers to as catharsis, then the theatre necessarily also must become the stage for interaction between subjects. Theatre is not

⁸¹ Levinas argues that this face, which demands and obliges responsibility, "speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation" (*Totality and Infinity* 198).

something that takes place isolated unto itself; rather, as James Thompson puts it, “the performance is happening between people” (157-158).

Performance’s affective exchange therefore emphasizes the subjectivity of both performer and spectator. As affect is transferred in both directions, both spectators and performers reveal a vulnerability central to their being: they are capable of affecting and of being affected. Put in other terms, the relationship between performer and audience can be understood in terms of precarity. Echoing Levinas, in *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler argues that it is the face of the Other which “carries the meaning this precariousness,” continuing that “The face of the Other comes to me from outside, and interrupts that narcissistic circuit. The face of the Other calls me out of narcissism towards something finally more important” (135; 138). Indeed, as she points out, “Levinas has also told us that the face—which is the face of the Other, and so the ethical demand made by the Other—is that vocalization of agony that is not yet language or no longer language, that one by which we are wakened to the precariousness of the Other's life, the one that rouses at once the temptation to murder and the interdiction against it” (139). Thus, as performance is, at its core, a face-to-face encounter, viewing performance draws the spectator into a relationship of precarity with the performer. As much as theatre might attempt to disguise the precarity of its performers through the adoption of the “mask” of a fictional character, the reality of the subject always peeks through. As a result, the spectator cannot entirely forget the precarity of the performer, precisely because this situation is a reciprocal one. As Butler points out, “there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know. This fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that I can will away” (xii). The recognition of the Other’s precarity is simultaneously a realization of one’s own vulnerability, and is

therefore constitutive of one's own position as a subject. The knowledge, therefore, that performers are not solely fictional characters, but also real, precarious subjects, is a deeply entrenched knowledge, as it is also a self-knowledge. The performer is a subject because I too am a subject.

Butler's theorization of precarity is useful, as it enriches Levinas's claims that subjectivity is based on responsibility to the Other, casting the relationship between self and other as based in ethics. Indeed, I would argue that this sense of responsibility has always been at work in the theatrical situation. From Peter Brook's much-quoted assertion that "A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (7), to Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*—in which characters lack meaning, substance, and direction when they are deprived of a theatrical narrative—and finally to Beckett's *Endgame*, in which Hamm is continually unable to "end", his life unwillingly persisting under the gaze of an audience, it becomes evident that the audience has a responsibility for the performers onstage. It is only in the gaze of an audience that Beckett's and Pirandello's characters can exist, and as Peter Brook succinctly asserts, there simply cannot be theatre without the act of spectatorship. The relationship between spectator and performer is necessarily one of responsibility. Outside of traditional theatre and drama, this fact has been repeatedly investigated by performance artists. For instance, on October 24th 1975, Marina Abramović presented *Lips of Thomas*, which tested her audience's willingness to witness her doing harm to her body—ultimately, after watching Abramović suffer for a time, spectators intervened to cover her naked and injured body, and remove

her from the performance space, ending the performance (Fischer-Lichte 11).⁸² In this instance, recognition of the performer's subjectivity—the fact of their being beyond the representation they offer in their performance—leads to a perceived responsibility on the part of the spectator.⁸³

However, I have described the theatrical situation as one of mutual recognition and responsibility: if the audience's responsibility for the performer is evident, both thematically in works of drama, and practically in acts of performance, how might we understand the performer as responsible for the spectating subject? If we return to the example from the beginning of this section, in which a spectator reflects on his/her experience at *Sleep No More*, the performer becomes responsible in that she, following Brennan, through her performance transmits affect to the spectator. The performer conditions the spectator's experience, and in particular, his/her affective experience through their performance, manipulating, for instance, space and proximity, as well as

⁸² As Erika Fischer-Lichte summarizes, during the performance, Abramovic “cut a five-pointed star into the skin of her abdomen with a razor blade. Blood welled out of the cuts. Then she took the whip, kneeled down beneath the photograph with her back to the audience, and began to flagellate her back severely, raising bloody welts. Afterwards, she lay down on a cross made of blocks of ice, her arms spread out to her sides. An electric radiator hung from the ceiling, facing her stomach. Its heat triggered further bleeding from the starshaped cuts. Abramović lay motionless on the ice – she obviously intended to endure her self-torture until the radiator had melted all the ice” (11).

⁸³ This is, however, not the case in every instance. Issues of ethical response become more complex when audience members are explicitly asked to take action which may cause harm in a performance: for instance, Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, which tasked audience members with cutting away pieces of her clothing in order to expose her body. In Abramovic's *Rhythm 0*, audience members were told that they could use any of the 72 objects in the room on Abramovic's body, in whatever manner they chose. The objects included “a feather, pen, book, saw, honey, band-aid, salt, rose, gun, bullet, paint, whip, coat and scissors” (The Art Story). The audience divided themselves into two broad categories: those who chose to do violence to her, and those who sought to protect her (The Art Story). These responses, which differ from that which is described by Fischer-Lichte in *Lips of Thomas*, suggest that the potential for violent response occurs when the audience is the latitude to actually take action within a performance—in both *Cut Piece* and *Rhythm 0*, spectators were given tools and clear instructions to *do* something with them. By contrast, where the degree to which one can participate is less clearly delineated, as in *Lips of Thomas* and in *Sleep No More*, responses tend to be more regulated. While opening up the space of active participant, *Sleep No More*'s spectators are by no means encouraged to do as they please to the performers, and the performers themselves precisely regulate any physical interaction.

emotional representation, in order to make the spectator feel a sense of threat, or perhaps intimacy and connection. In addition, immersive theatre opens up theatrical gaze; features of *Sleep No More* like physical proximity, lighting, and stage design mean that spectators can become the subject of the performer's gaze. While in traditional theatrical set-ups that divide the audience and the performers, it is the audience that is the primary bearer of the gaze, in immersive theatre, all participants have equal opportunity to make meaningful eye contact. This set-up establishes the conditions necessary for the ethical relationship theorized by Levinas, who states that the "gaze is precisely the epiphany of the face as a face" (*Totality and Infinity* 75). Performers in immersive theatre can make eye contact with their audiences, a power previously denied to them. As Sartre suggests, being looked at can produce a feeling of shame that constitutes one as a subject. Immersive theatre performers therefore subjectivize their audiences through their use of the gaze. Indeed, in this instance, the feeling of shame at being the subject of a look is amplified, as audience members who are still invested in conventional modes of spectatorship might find themselves particularly uncomfortable at being watched, looked at by those who are traditionally meant to be watched themselves. This reversal of roles—the spectator becoming the object of spectatorship—can be unsettling, and I would argue produces an intense version of the shame that Sartre describes. If we continue to follow Sartre, in a situation where both performer and spectator are the subjects of each other's gazes, then each defines their subjectivity in relation to the other. In this way, when we apply performance's usual characterization as an intersubjective process to immersive theatre, it becomes clear that immersive performance can be understood as the fulfillment of the intersubjective process, making it truly reciprocal and mutual.

Though the intersubjective nature of performance is widely agreed upon by performance theorists, as Trueman puts it, “The conventional relationship in theatre (i.e. a non-immersed audience) often seeks to makes us forget our physical existence, wrapping us up in the onstage action” (qtd. in Machon 56), and therefore encourages spectators not to reflect on the intersubjective exchange at work in performance. By contrast, immersive theatre places its focus on the physicality, movement, and embodied experience of the work’s spectators. Immersive theatre, rather than working to obscure, foregrounds the intersubjective relations produced by physical proximity, and face-to-face encounters. In particular, the spectator’s interaction with Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More* is, for the most part, non-textual, and therefore primarily bodily and sense-based. This affective engagement with the immersive environment is precisely that which produces the conditions for subjectival recognition and formation. As Watkins states, “Affects...are the corporeal instantiation of recognition, the sensations one may feel in being recognized” (273).

However, though immersive theatre makes spectators and performers more aware of their reciprocal subjectival relationship, the representative aspect of performance cannot be wholly denied. Though, as I have pointed out earlier in this section, performance is filled with moments in which the performer’s representation falters, revealing their position as fellow subjects, we must also consider the act of performance holistically. We might recall Erika Fischer-Lichte’s theory of “perceptive multistability” here, a concept which I used in the previous chapter in reference to characters who were at once fictional and real. Punchdrunk’s work, of course, places the performer in significantly closer proximity than the traditional stage play, emphasizing the self-consciousness associated with an encounter between a performer and spectator. Just as we

may regard *The City*'s Chris from an oscillating perspective, we must regard the denizens of the McKittrick in *Sleep No More* with a similarly destabilized perspective, recognizing both their representative function as characters, and their reality. Indeed, Punchdrunk's proximity and bodily co-presence ensures that the subjectivity of its performers cannot be entirely effaced by their characterizations. By occupying the same space as the audience, Punchdrunk's performers insist on their own physical reality.

At first, this desire to emphasize performers' and spectators' mutual intersubjective relationship in Punchdrunk's performances seems to work against the mode of individual consumption encouraged by the performance structure. Spectators compete with one another, behave narcissistically, and engage in various capitalistic behaviours in order to ensure that they have a fully affective experience. However, it is the intimacy of one-on-one performances (which are often highly emotionally charged), and the reality of the performer's subjectivity (embodied by their proximity and exchange of gaze with audience members) that spectators seek out. The goal of spectators' self-interested consumption is to achieve a real, intersubjective, and intimate connection with another human being. What the opposition between spectators' desired form of affective engagement and the means through which they achieve it indicates is that Punchdrunk's audiences are pursuing a performance situation which offers them an opportunity to feel connected to others in a formalized and regulated environment. The encounter between spectator and performer is an affective experience that comes with reduced risk and responsibility for the audience member, because it is ultimately Punchdrunk and their employees (the performers themselves, as well as the "guides", whose presence inside the performance space is intended to ensure safety) who are in control of the encounter. Both intersubjective exchange and affect engage a subject's sense of themselves: in an

encounter with another subject, one becomes aware of their own position as a subject, while affect produces both a physical and mental feeling, which makes the subject aware of their existence and how their bodies and minds interact with their environment. These encounters are both intersubjective and affective, and therefore link the experience with one's sense of their own identity. Spectators' accumulation of these affective experiences serves as an edification, both validating and enhancing one's understanding of themselves and their value as subjects. Consequently, the spectatorial experience at Punchdrunk performances is designed, and utilized, in order for spectators to achieve this edifying affective experience within the confines of a strictly regulated environment, which allows them to have intimate and emotional experiences that are relatively free of risk or responsibility for the consumer. Ultimately, Punchdrunk performances represent a controlled environment for the playing out of intersubjective connections, which seems to be deemed preferable by consumers both because of its relative safety, and because the performance is optimized to allow spectators to pursue and experience these encounters.

Immersive theatre, according to Josephine Machon, has a privileged relationship with liveness. She argues that immersive theatre engages with its spectators in a physical and bodily sense, and is "visceral in every respect, being both embodied and noetic. In the realm of theatre, it can be understood that this feeling of 'being there' is a fact; the audience-participant *is actually there*, physically inhabiting the fantasy world created. This live(d) experience of physical *praesence*, the participant's physical body responding within an imaginative, sensual environment, is a tangible fact and a pivotal element of the immersive experience" (61). She argues that this "makes an individual aware of *being in the moment* and highlights her or his *praesence* within the sensuality of the immersive event" (83). She suggests that "Immersive practice...foregrounds the unique potential

held in the ‘liveness of the live moment’...[and] accentuates the ‘presentness’ of the performing moment” (107). While I agree with Machon’s suggestion that physical intimacy in performance—between spectators and performers, or spectators and the space—mobilizes spectators to actively recognize their physical presence in the performance space and time, I would suggest that it is perhaps not necessarily immersive theatre’s intrinsic nature to be “more live” or “more alive” than traditional theatrical forms. Rather, some attributes—particularly those found in Punchdrunk’s genre of immersive theatre—engage with spectators intimately, and thus produce the affective feeling of liveness. Therefore, I suggest that *Sleep No More* produces a feeling of liveness through the self-reflexivity that its spectatorial set-up encourages; ultimately, conscious recognition of one’s position as a spectator-subject in the performance leads to the perception of the work’s liveness. Furthermore, performance exemplifies and participates in a continuing process of subject/identity formation. Performance is taken into the self, as part of an ongoing negotiation of one’s subject position. If this is the case, then performance can be understood as perpetually “live”, as it is embodied in its living, breathing spectators and performers. Encountering performance, particularly immersive performance, affects individuals, leaving an impression. These affects are intimately linked to processes of subjective identification. If affects play a role in determining our position within the world, then I argue that they cannot be understood as ephemeral. Not only do affects remain as a result of the impact they have on an individual’s subjectivity, they remain *live*, as the very process of negotiating one’s subjectivity is perpetually ongoing. In this way, immersive theatre stages subjectival encounters, performing the affective elements of such encounters, and (perhaps most significantly) manipulating the audience/performer relationship in order to expose its ethical elements.

2.9 Experiencing the Fragmentary

Punchdrunk performances are, generally speaking, presented without much speech. Indeed, an audience member's entry into the performance comes with a prohibition against speaking. The silence is not only on the side of the audience; performers rarely speak, and the work primarily relies on choreographed movement and dance to express the narrative. However, this does not mean that these performances are non-textual. As W.B. Worthen puts it, "*Sleep No More* uses writing, but cuts it from the book, rearranges, and repositions it, as performance must do, into another mode of production; in performance, words signify as something else, as action" (91). Punchdrunk fragments the original texts from which it draws, rearranging and translating those well-known narratives into actions and movements, which are dispersed across the expansive floors of the performance space. It is, I argue, important to note the types of texts that Punchdrunk and other immersive theatre companies often draw from: revising, adapting, and experimenting with classical texts is a common device. Part of the desire to refashion familiar narratives might come from their name recognition: more spectators might be inclined to purchase tickets based on the source text, whether because of particular affection for it, or simply the relative comfort of being eased into a new theatrical form through a familiar storyline. However, it is not only commercial enterprise that fuels the desire to base immersive performances like Punchdrunk's on classical texts.

In this performance, Punchdrunk references not only a classical text, but also a classical playwright, one whose works have defined much of what we understand to be theatre today: Shakespeare. Classical works come with specific expectations for the structure of the narrative: the beginning of the play is expected to introduce the main

characters, the narrative, and the conflict, narrative events will develop in a logical fashion, ultimately reaching a point of crisis and definitive conclusion. While the details naturally change between works, the structure, and most significantly, the linear progression of the narrative, is expected to remain the same. However, in *Sleep No More*'s version of the narrative, these events are disjointed, both in the performance itself, and in the spectator's experience of them. The performance produces moments in which cause and effect seem unrelated to one another. For example, I watched as Lady MacDuff was brutally attacked and killed, and soon afterwards, saw her rise to begin her character's loop once again. Indeed, *Sleep No More*'s looping format creates numerous similar moments, wherein formally dead characters reawaken to begin the narrative again. In fact, as a result of this looping structure, any character who dies during the performance must necessarily rise again to perform their death again. As Punchdrunk deliberately avoids clearly marking beginning or end points to the performance's loops, such instances do not appear as storylines on repeat, but rather seem to be uncanny returns, moments in which (following Freud) one has arrived again at the same place, seemingly at the same time, without any intention of having done so. These particular moments seem especially uncanny in a performance space, where one expects linearity, but instead finds recursivity. In addition to such disruptions in the source text's narrative sequencing, *Sleep No More* makes no effort to include all of the plot features of *Macbeth*. Instead, spectators experience literal fragments of the narrative, moments from the original rather than a comprehensive representation. These fragments do not even necessarily appear as performed action, as some aspects of the plot are represented by set pieces, props, and other extra-performative materials that can be found scattered around the McKittrick. For instance, Lady Macbeth's treatment by a doctor is not a part of the

performance proper, but spectators can read about this treatment by examining the doctor's notes.⁸⁴ In this way, *Sleep No More* fragments its classical source, both temporally and spatially throughout the play.

This particular utilization of *Macbeth* dismantles not only that traditional narrative, but also the associations that accompany traditional theatrical narratives more generally. Many classical theatrical forms encourage the assumption that live performance is a coherent and stable domain: since narratives follow a logical temporal sequence, and the narrative action takes place primarily in a singular space (on the stage), the liveness of such performances of classical texts appears intact, uninterrupted, and therefore internally consistent. By dismantling the traditional narrative from which *Sleep No More* draws much of its material, the work challenges the assumption that the live can only exist as a coherent and stable category. By replacing the classical text's logic and structure with fragments and discontinuity, the performance expands the definition of the live: if narrative resides in traces—props, visual clues, isolated phrases—and if that narrative trace nonetheless produces an affective response in its spectator, then those material fragments, I argue, are just as live as the performance itself.

By scattering its source texts across the performance, *Sleep No More* defies the linear sequencing of traditional narratives, instead imposing a discontinuous temporality over the production. As a result of this structure, W.B. Worthen states, “The verbal images that guide critical interpretations of *Macbeth* are visualized here in chilling details, and...detached from the narrative and dramatic logic of the play, to be assembled by an individual spectator's trajectory through it” (85). In order to demonstrate this point,

⁸⁴ Worthen 80.

I will offer an example from my personal experience of the performance: I stood in a large room, watching Lady Macbeth bathe. The room is closed in by windows, meaning that while you might be watching a scene take place inside the room, you may also become aware of what is going on outside the room. In my case, the low, muted lighting of Lady Macbeth's bedroom was contrasted by brighter, flashing light coming from a hallway outside the room. In addition, because the scene I was observing did not feature much sound design beyond quiet, ambient noises, I became aware of the soundscape outside the room, a crescendo of dramatic instrumentation and volume. Though, at this point, I had only been inside the McKittrick for a short period of time, based on basic knowledge of cinematic and theatrical techniques, I knew that these dynamic lighting and sound changes outside the room indicated that something of dramatic importance was happening just beyond my peripheral vision, and therefore, my experience. *Sleep No More*, I argue, utilizes simultaneity in its performance experience, and, perhaps most importantly, ensures that its spectators are aware of the temporal co-presence of multiple events. Though the performance space is large, *Sleep No More* often places performance events in temporal simultaneity and spatial proximity in order to emphasize the expansiveness not only of the performance and events, but also its temporal landscape. This is done, I argue, in order to further emphasize the individuality of the spectatorial experience at *Sleep No More*.

While, to a certain degree, it becomes the responsibility of individual audience members to piece together the narrative based on the fragments they encounter as they move through the McKittrick, the work continuously defies linear sequencing, demanding that spectators assemble from these fragments a narrative which remains perpetually fragmented. Even from the perspective of the performer, the action of the performance is

somewhat fragmented: though characters follow a specific “track”, which is itself mostly linear,⁸⁵ experiencing the performance in this way as a spectator is impossible. From the outset, spectators experience fragmentation, since most enter the performance somewhere in the midst of its first loop. Even if an audience member were to attempt to follow a single performer, and thus a single narrative track through the entirety of a loop, as Jennifer Flaherty points out, “it is difficult to stay with a particular figure for the entire night because the actors run up staircases and through secret passages, sometimes departing with one audience member into locked rooms” (138). It therefore becomes impossible to remain with a single character through the entirety of a loop: not only do performers disappear behind locked doors, to perform one-on-ones, or merely escaping briefly into backstage areas, but following a single character often involves chasing a performer who knows the space better, and has more freedom to move through it, than audience members do. Indeed, when one also considers that audience members must contend with the large crowds of fellow spectators who choose to follow characters closely, it becomes clear that *Sleep No More* does not wish its spectators to experience the performance in a linear fashion. The work limits access and continuity by design; as a result, every spectator’s experience is an assemblage of fragmented texts, sensations, and experiences.

Not only is the experience of *Sleep No More* fragmentary, but the performance emphasizes its disjointed, incomplete nature, ensuring that this feature is felt by its audiences. The performance deals in excess: since the performance takes place in a fragmentary form, scattered across the entirety of the McKittrick, there are always more

⁸⁵ Accounting for performers’ necessary exits to backstage spaces for brief breaks, or to fix costuming, makeup, or prop issues.

scenes to be seen, more spaces to explore, and more experiences to be had. *Sleep No More* ensures that this endless potential is felt: as you stand watching Lady Macbeth bathe in one room, you cannot help but hear the performance's engineered soundscapes indicating that action is taking place in an adjacent room. If you have decided to pursue a single character, you limit your experience, seeing the performance from the perspective of only one of its storylines. Or, as you faithfully pursue a character, he or she runs off, disappearing in the darkness and leaving you alone, feeling the incompleteness of the performance you are seeing. Even if you are to attempt to experience the performance in as many different ways as possible—pursuing characters, exploring a variety of rooms, wandering without direction—the choices you make still ensure that your experience of the performance will include a felt lack. By presenting its audiences with an excess of rooms to explore, characters to follow, narratives to absorb, or one-on-ones to experience, *Sleep No More* ensures that no single spectator can ever experience the performance as a whole. These types of moments are instructive ones, directing the spectator's attention to the expansiveness of the performance's potential, while also emphasizing its fundamental limitations, as you are faced with the need to choose between these numerous potential experiences.

In an attempt to comprehend or represent *Sleep No More* in its entirety, an online community of the work's fans have developed several Wikis. These collaboratively built databases track the constantly shifting set of cast members, as well as mapping out the endless rooms in the McKittrick, cataloguing the performance's scenes, and recording various private, one-on-one experiences between audience members and characters. The Wikis, "The McKittrick Hotel Unofficial Guide" and the "Sleep No More Wiki," attempt to concretize the ephemeral work, to capture and archive it in its entirety, such that it

might become knowable as a totality. However, part of *Sleep No More*'s appeal is its refusal of totalization; thus, these resources can only ever act as supplements to the experience of the performance. Even with knowledge of the unseen or unencountered aspects of *Sleep No More*, for spectators these aspects are necessarily secondary to experience itself, since immersive theatre is particularly preoccupied with "liveness," active engagement with the present moment, and participation. This trend of online supplementation, therefore, draws into sharp relief the limits of perception when experiencing a performance "live": you can know *of* what you are not seeing or not comprehending, but all you can truly know is what you perceive individually. In short, *Sleep No More* is designed to be experienced as fragmentary in numerous ways, and the value that Punchdrunk places on the individual ensures that no two experiences of the performance will ever be the same.

2.10 Spectating Bodies

What aspect of the spectator's experience stitches together fragmentary events? It is, I suggest (following Merleau-Ponty), the individual spectator's embodied and bodily experience of the liveness and the affective nature of the performance that creates a continuity of experience from the work's fragmentary components. One of the primary differences between immersive theatre and more conventional theatrical forms is the former's integration of the spectator's body in the performance. Immersive theatre projects build environments which engage with multiple senses, what Machon terms a "fused sensory experience...a blending of disciplines and techniques to create an interdisciplinary, intertextual and 'intersensual' work" (*[Syn]aesthetics* 14). Machon

argues that “With (syn)aesthetic signification and reading, the body produces and interprets a language of the flesh, aided by a corporeal memory” (22). To conclude this chapter, I will expand on Machon’s assertion: immersive theatre’s unique mediation of performance through the physically experiencing body of the spectator further (and finally) isolates the audience as individuals.

In “The Emancipated Spectator”, Rancière summarizes the work of the spectator: “She observes, selects, compares, interprets...She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way” (13). While these mental processes of reassembling, refashioning, and interpreting the performance are certainly at work in *Sleep No More* and other Punchdrunk performances—evidenced, and necessitated, as I have suggested by these works’ numerous fragmentations—immersive theatre sets itself apart by including the body, and not just the mind, in these perceptual tasks. To begin with, as Machon indicates, the sensory inputs in an immersive theatre performance are more diverse than in traditional performance, which mostly tends to focus on the visual and the auditory. In immersive theatre, the spectator must also perceive the performance on the levels of smell, touch, and occasionally, taste⁸⁶. The work of spectatorship, therefore, includes the entirety of the body’s senses in an immersive performance.

However, the spectator’s body is not necessarily only limited to the sensorial in *Sleep No More*. As I have theorized previously, the performance presents its visitors with fragments—narratives, texts, and indeed, experiences—which are to be assembled and reconstituted by each individual spectator as they encounter these traces. While this interpretive labour is performed largely at a cognitive level, the role of the physical body

⁸⁶ A small number of spectators at *Sleep No More* will be offered a drink from the bartender.

in the process ought not to be dismissed. I argue that the hermeneutic process at work in *Sleep No More* is a piecing together of fragmentary elements via personal experience, through which the individual charts their own interpretive path through the traces of performance. Indeed, this process has a distinctly embodied component, as the spectator literally moves through the performance. As audience members make conscious choices about where to go, whom to follow, and what impulses to pursue inside the performance space, they use their bodies as the means to their interpretive ends. *Sleep No More* is a promenade performance, and therefore requires its spectators to walk through the space, and to continually move through it in order to experience the performance. As spectators perform the work of walking (or, in some cases, running), it is both the mind and the body that is engaged in the process of interpretation, and the refashioning of the performance's traces or fragments that forms the vital aspect of immersive theatre. Indeed, the body is not only a tool that allows the spectator to move through the space, to encounter various bits of performance, but it is also the means to perception. As previously mentioned, immersive theatre produces wholly sensorial experiences, felt through and by the body. One's body is the ultimate mediator, receiving inputted information via the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin, and translating that information into a form that lets us understand it on an intellectual level. The body is the first mediator of the performance experience, and is therefore intrinsically linked to the work of interpretation which immersive theatre demands. This mediation of hermeneutics through the body is further theorized by Merleau-Ponty in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, in which he argues that "My body is the common texture of all objects and is, at least with regard to the perceived world, the general instrument of my understanding" (244). He continues, stating, "man is a sensorium commune" (248). What is exposed in *Sleep No More's* mode of perception is

the very process that Merleau-Ponty describes; in short, one's body is the means and medium through which immersive performance is experienced, and in the specific case of *Sleep No More*, in which fragmentary experience is assembled.

In this way, I would argue that the body becomes an archive of immersive performance experience. Not only is perception and therefore interpretation mediated through the body, it is also stored there. In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton elaborates on the concept of "embodied memory." He argues, "In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body" (72). Repeated bodily movements or behaviours function as a form through which memory resides within the body itself. This type of embodied memory makes the body the "*domiciliation*" or "dwelling" for the archive, in Derrida's sense (2). The behaviours at work in a Punchdrunk performance—primarily spectating and walking—are everyday behaviours, already habits encoded in one's embodied memory. However, Punchdrunk employs these everyday behaviours in ways that break from already-formed habits. For instance, while watching a performance might be a habitual activity, the intimacy, and proximity of Punchdrunk performances alter the conventional relationship between spectators and performers. By closing the space between the watcher and the watched, Punchdrunk defamiliarizes the process of spectating. In this situation, it involves a reflection on subjectivity (both of the self and the other), moreso than in passive spectatorship. Similarly, the simultaneity of the performance necessitates a diffusion of one's spectatorial attention across several sets of action at once.

Furthermore, Punchdrunk's performance draws on a day-to-day style of movement, but requires much more athleticism and spatial awareness than is expected in regular life. In an attempt to follow the action, or specific characters' narratives,

spectators must often actually physically chase after actors, who tend to move at a very quick pace. In order to keep up, a spectator is required to run (more accurately, often, sprint) across the performance space, as well as up and down staircases. Therefore, both the movement and mental processes required by a Punchdrunk performance are emulations of one's everyday practices, but such behaviours are defamiliarized, often through their magnification: you must move more quickly, or watch more attentively. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau describes walking as "a spatial acting-out of the place" (97), actualizing "an ensemble of possibilities" (98). Walking is therefore an enunciative act. However, in *Sleep No More*, this process of enunciation—an expression of one's individual physical and interpretive path through the performance—is designed as a conscious process, in contrast to the familiar, automatic, and therefore relatively unconscious process of moving through one's city. This process of defamiliarization, as Shklovsky theorizes it in "Art as Technique", "is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object—it creates a vision of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it" (19). Speaking specifically of artistic works, he argues that "the author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception" (19). While Shklovsky argues for a slowness of perception, I argue that the same effect of deautomatization is produced by *Sleep No More*'s necessary speed. By manipulating these habitual movements and behaviours in unfamiliar ways, Punchdrunk makes spectators aware of their bodies, and aware of the actions their bodies are performing. In my experience at *Sleep No More*, I found myself noting how out of breath I would become after trying to keep up with an actor fleeing up a stairwell, as well as the soreness of my legs and feet after three full hours spent exploring the McKittrick. Even the very process of seeing—let alone spectating—became defamiliarized as I was

constantly peering out from beneath the mask. The process of making spectators actively aware of their bodies within the space serves to establish a link between the body and the mental processes at work in spectatorship. In short, this defamiliarization makes spectators conscious of the work their bodies are performing while they are engaged in the acts of spectating and interpreting. The physical work takes place in simultaneity with watching, thinking, and interpreting; thus, the physical and the mental are both hermeneutical processes here, as the performance comes to be known not only mentally, but also physically. The paths, therefore, that each spectator establishes through the performance, piecing together fragmentary traces, are not only mental re-workings of what has been witnessed, but are also physically manifest. As Watkins argues, “affect...accumulate[s] as *bodily* memory” (279). Linking the bodily and the mental processes at work while watching immersive performance engrains perceptual and interpretive processes in the physical body. The experience of the performance, as it occurs, and as it is remembered, is embodied; the body, therefore, becomes an archive of the spectator’s experience of the performance.

If, as I have argued here, immersive theatre’s effects and affects (both bodily and mental) are, and remain, physically present in the perceiving spectator, then the spectatorial experience of immersive theatre is fundamentally personal, individual, and perhaps even isolating. *Sleep No More* is a collection of fragments, at once physically present and ephemeral traces, which can only be perceived and processed as a continuous experience by a spectating body. However, in this very fundamental process of “making sense” of the performance’s fractured elements, the audience itself becomes disjointed, transformed into an assembly of individuals, with the performance itself scattered. While audience members might experience the same events as their fellow spectators, they will

never be experienced in precisely the same way. The performance, therefore, is not only “best experienced alone”, as *Sleep No More*’s guides suggest, but truly can only be experienced *alone*. From the masks and the requirement of silence, both of which divide audience members from one another, to the unique physical and interpretive paths taken through the performance, and finally to the individuality of affective experience itself, Punchdrunk’s performances engage on a strictly individual level, relying on and profiting from each spectator’s isolation. The performance only has and can ever exist within the individual who experiences it; indeed, a totally unique experience of the performance is physically and mentally produced and stored within each individual spectator. This, I suggest, is where the “live” aspect of “live performance” might be located: performance is perpetually present (both in the sense of “presence” and the temporal “present”) in the spectator. Immersive theatre, and particularly *Sleep No More*’s experimentations with the fragmentation of narrative, space, and indeed, performance itself, offer us a means to seeing this process of producing individual liveness at work.

2.11 Conclusion

Immersive theatre defies the conventional understanding of liveness, first by scattering live experiences across an expanse of space, time, and perceptions, and secondly by creating a situation in which spectators recreate the performance via their perception and memory, ultimately producing a wholly individual version of the performance, only ever “live” to themselves. Immersive performance, therefore, challenges our understanding of liveness, opening the term up to alternate experiences: perhaps we can conceptualize liveness outside of a singular “here” and “now”, instead

expanding the term to include individualized, fragmentary, non-continuous, and trace instances of liveness.

Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* is particularly exemplary of the ways in which the live is oriented towards the individual rather than the collective. The structure of the work favours the individual at every turn, as spectators are actively encouraged to explore and experience the performance alone, and are isolated from others by appeals to silence and the mandatory masks, as well as through the work's numerous spatial and temporal fragmentations, which ensure that no two spectators will have the exact same experience of the performance. Individual spectators therefore experience the liveness of *Sleep No More* in isolated terms, and thus the nature of the performance's liveness is as individual as the spectator's experience of the performance as a whole. Indeed, while the events and experiences that a spectator might encounter may be fragmentary—as they are often experienced out of context, disconnected from other events the spectator has seen, and from source texts—the spectator's experience is continuous. Audience members therefore encounter fragmentation, but they do not necessarily experience it themselves; as Worthen suggests, the performance is “to be assembled by an individual spectator's trajectory through it” (85). Therefore, it is not only the fragmentations themselves which characterize *Sleep No More* as an individualized work. As each spectator assembles an individual version of the performance from the fragments they have encountered, they produce an entirely individual version of the performance.

Just as in the previous chapter's discussion of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* and *The City*, Punchdrunk offers a theatrical structure which encourages, or even requires, spectators to become prosumers. Not only are spectators' experiences entirely individual, but they are also responsible for participating in the creation of the version of

performance that they consume. In this way, as I have suggested, spectators become archives of their individual affects, their bodies becoming the storehouses of their individual, unique experience. *Sleep No More* is a neoliberal economy not just in their sale of tickets and merchandising; Punchdrunk's regulation of the ways that the performance itself is consumed also shape spectators under an economical model. Spectators compete and work in order to become producers for the performance, interpellated by immersive theatre's expectation that audiences will become responsible for how valuable and satisfactory the performance experience feels. Moreover, Punchdrunk provides the framework for a continual process of affect consumption by structuring their performance as seductively repeatable and by instituting extra-performative features, all of which encourage continued engagement with the performance, but more importantly, with one's own affective experience of the performance. In this way, the company seems to produce a narcissistic affective structure: those who go to the performance are tasked with acting as spectator-entrepreneurs, creating the very performance they want to see, and are then encouraged by the company's numerous supplementary components to continue to re-engage with and therefore re-consume their own affective experiences.

Adam Alston argues that "once pitched as a group of individuals investing in the shared value of individualism, set against a seemingly accessible backdrop of looped performances in performance spaces that audiences are free to discover, a kind of democracy and empowerment emerges that depends on realising this shared value" (*Beyond* 139). However, he suggests that this utopic potential is superseded by the requirement that "participants must seek out the 'right' to the experiences that they have paid for. Autonomy ends up being elicited from audiences, which poses its own

restrictions on participation for those without the disposition or capacity to participate opportunistically” (139). Punchdrunk’s reliance on individualism and, indeed, narcissism, in order to experience their performances necessarily limits the experience to those with the neoliberal savvy to engage “properly”. Indeed, this exclusion is part of the pleasure of the experience, according to Alston, who writes, “Participation and immersion in Punchdrunk performances call forth an exclusionary politics that is all the more thrilling because of exclusion” (141). For Alston, the central problem with Punchdrunk’s politics is that “audiences are not called on to question the conditions of their own productivity, specifically, once they commit to a scheme of production that is assigned to them, and to which they must posit themselves as entrepreneurial participants if they are to participate conscientiously and effectively on the terms set out by Punchdrunk” (138). This valorization of the unique experience of the individual, coupled with Punchdrunk’s extra-performative ventures, which encourage spectators to continue to engage with the work for the economic benefit of the company, characterize Punchdrunk as an exemplar of neoliberalism’s effects on theatrical forms by ensuring that their performances are an individual affective experience as much as they are a capitalistic one.

However, as much as Punchdrunk’s format permits and encourages audiences to consume voraciously and without regard for fellow spectators, this sanctioned self-interest is often deployed with the goal of finding an intimate and personal connection that affects the experiencer. Audience members attempt to capitalize on their time inside the McKittrick in the hopes of having an experience which makes them feel vital, and which engages them in a form of subjectival recognition and negotiation. Punchdrunk does not only offer an exemplar of the ways in which audiences can be co-opted into actively participating in a decidedly neoliberal spectatorial arrangement. The company’s

work (in all its forms) also demonstrates the ways in which liveness and live experience can be manipulated towards neoliberal aims, but also how neoliberal strategies can be utilized by spectators to achieve the fulfilling experience they seek. Surely, Punchdrunk capitalizes on the same rhetorical strategies as neoliberal governments by offering gestures towards community-oriented goals: the guise of shared experience, total immersion into a new world, and the conscious co-presence of performers with spectators. However, the evidence provided by spectators' own testimonials online demonstrate that visitors to *Sleep No More* do find ways of having the shared, affective experiences that immersive theatre advertises, though these experiences take place between spectators and performers, and not among the audience itself. Nonetheless, it is significant that audience members have engaged with the performance's prescribed neoliberal economy in order to pursue their own desires: under a model which seeks to delegate responsibility and labour to its audiences, *Sleep No More's* spectators manipulate the format to their own benefit. Punchdrunk has effectively used their knowledge that liveness can be produced in specific performance environments to orient their performances towards a spectator-consumer model which fulfills their economic needs, and appeals to capitalistic desires imbricated in contemporary consumers; however, spectators have similarly learned to navigate exploit this neoliberal framework in order to apprehend affective liveness towards a recognition and validation of the value of their own vitality as subjects.

The company's insistence that performances like *Sleep No More* are "best experienced alone" is just one example of their neoliberal effects; indeed, as I have outlined in this chapter, their performances are designed so that they can only truly be experienced alone. Furthermore, the company's economic model relies on individual

consumption beyond just the performance space. The company's performances are designed to leave spectators feeling incomplete, with the aim that unsatisfied consumers will seek out supplements like merchandise, or continued engagement through repeat visits or participation online. Punchdrunk has capitalized on specific sets of desires—for unique experiences, as Pine and Gilmore have set out, or for continual consumption of affect—in order to ensure their continued success. Thus, Punchdrunk engages in several key performances: they exhibit the ways in which a text can be represented spatially, by taking it apart and scattering it across the performance space; they demonstrate their own prowess at strategically capitalizing on their neoliberal context to ensure their notoriety, success, and continued existence; and finally, their spectators are directed to perform as ideal neoliberal consumers, eagerly consuming an experience that is entirely their own, and doing so again and again. However, Punchdrunk's spectators also utilize the performance's neoliberal economy in order to find and experience intimate moments of intersubjectivity, performing themselves as valuable within and beyond Punchdrunk's work.

Chapter 3: Disappearance

“a performance as always already over must be known through other means”

- Amelia Jones, “Performance: Live or Dead”

3.1 Introduction

This chapter applies the concept of affective liveness to that which is commonly understood as liveness’s antithesis: the archive. In this chapter, I use the term “archive” or “archival” to speak about collections housed in institutions like libraries and museums, as well as a variety of stand-alone documentary materials such as texts, video, and photography, which similarly seek to archive live performance. As I will suggest in this chapter, the UK-based performance collective Forced Entertainment demonstrates that performance does not simply precede its archivization. Rather, the group crafts performances which incorporate the archival, and inversely creates archival projects which aim to replicate the spontaneity of their live performances. The relationships between Forced Entertainment’s documentations and live performances are never linear or teleological, but are instead messy, confusing, troubling, and precarious. In this chapter, I touch on traditional archival forms, such as play-texts, and the Forced Entertainment collection at the British Library, which houses a number of video recordings of the group’s performances and rehearsals. I also discuss instances of more “messy” afterlives, as well as the multifarious “other means” of knowing performance referenced by Amelia Jones in the above epigraph. This chapter discusses what are often referred to as “performance remains”: leftovers that are impossible to define as performance, and yet are inextricable from it. In this chapter, I argue that archives can be

understood as “live” insofar as they produce affective experiences for those who encounter and engage with them.

Forced Entertainment is a performance collective founded by Tim Etchells in 1984, and based in Sheffield, UK. The creative team is comprised of artistic director Tim Etchells, designer Richard Lowden, and performers Claire Marshall, Terry O’Connor, Robin Arthur, and Cathy Naden; the group also frequently collaborates with a number of other performers and artists. In their own words, their “work is a 30 year collaboration, reinventing theatre to speak about the times we are living in, inspiring audiences across the UK, in Europe and further afield” (Forced Entertainment). Their performances have included text-based work, improvisation, dance, multimedia, and durational performances. The group has also engaged in a number of less traditional performance pieces, producing several books, photography exhibitions in collaboration with Hugo Glendinning, CD-rom projects, and online content. The group represents a useful case study as they are uniquely engaged with the notion of remains: they have a long history of documenting their own works, and demonstrate an interest in manipulating archival forms by combining the notions of “live” performance and documentation in a variety of ways. Both Forced Entertainment as a company and Tim Etchells as a solo writer and performer are particularly interested in the role that documentation and archival traces play in live performance. Examples of their self-archivizations include: *A Decade of Forced Entertainment*, a performance piece which reviews and offers commentary on the company’s work from 1984 to 1994; the Forced Entertainment collection at the British Library, which houses not only polished performance DVDs, but also offers videos of rehearsals (notably often intercut with fragments of home videos); and the company’s longstanding collaboration with photographer Hugo Glendinning.

The group often positions their archival projects as manipulations or outright rejections of traditional archival forms. Forced Entertainment seems to refuse to be canonized without also interrogating the very processes which archive and therefore legitimize theatre in the UK. For example, while the group has had their work archived by the British Library—a major symbol of intellectual and artistic authority in the UK—this legitimacy is countered by the group’s choice to include in this collection rehearsal videos which are interspersed with the home videos of the group’s members.⁸⁷ Forced Entertainment emphasizes the fragmentary and disjointed nature of the archive, insisting upon multiform histories which combine the public and private, repeatedly inserting personal narratives into their documentations in order to emphasize the coexistence of multiple histories. Furthermore, in this example, and in the other case studies I discuss in this chapter, the group uses the archive as a means to perform resistance to forces of authority, while also attempting to introduce the spontaneity of live performance into their archival endeavours. Forced Entertainment has published several books which combine excerpts of performance texts alongside impressions, memories, and responses (such as *While You Are Here With Us Tonight*, which couples excerpts of performance texts—particularly from their 1994 play *First Night*—with devising and rehearsal notes, reflections, and photographs). Such performance collages simulate the non-linear, multivalent experience of performance generally, and Forced Entertainment performances

⁸⁷ For example, among the British Library’s Forced Entertainment holdings, there is video recording of rehearsals of *Showtime* which is described in the catalogue as “Rehearsals (begins at 19 min. 58 sec.)...Also includes what appears to be 'home-footage' of a family day out between 10 min. and 20 min” (British Library Sound and Moving Image Catalogue). In addition, a rehearsal video of the play *Hidden J* “contains 15 sec. footage of what appears to be a construction site”, without explanation (British Library Sound and Moving Image Catalogue). Rehearsal footage for *Emanuelle Enchanted* is described as follows: “First 22 min. recording of footage in a forest. Possibly footage from an evening gathering/meal after 23 min. 43 sec. until 26 min. 32 sec. This is then followed by rehearsal footage” (British Library Sound and Moving Image Catalogue).

more specifically. However, not content for their work to be archived unproblematically in conventional forms such as books or research libraries, the group consistently attempts to a) utilize archival space to demonstrate the limits of such documentation, and b) introduce a sense of their work's liveness into its archived form. I analyze each archival case study included in this chapter as an attempt to introduce affective liveness into performance's afterlives, and to therefore destabilize the linear temporalities which are conventionally associated with performance documentation. The historical dichotomy of live performance versus documentation and archives is hierarchical, with live performance always positioned as superior to its documented form. Thus, Forced Entertainment's attempts to unsettle the archive's temporality may appear to equalize all experiences of the archive: whether encountered on stage or on screen, each spectator's experience is equally significant and valuable. However, Forced Entertainment's projects in fact embody a familiar neoliberal economy: artists and spectators alike are asked to be individual and entrepreneurial. Here, rather than a redistribution of the archive's discursive power, Forced Entertainment reinscribes radical individualism—embodied by their necessarily self-interested approach to their own archive, as well as by encouraging their spectators to consume their work in similarly self-interested ways—as fundamental to the living archive of their work.

I begin this chapter with a brief review of established theories of the archive, beginning with well-known discussions from Foucault and Derrida. Using these theories to establish the archive as functioning to regulate the circulation of knowledge and discourse within a society, I argue that the archive is ultimately a performance of power. Subsequently, I turn to discuss how the field of performance studies has dealt with the problematic concept of archivization, summarizing the debate surrounding the possibility

of archiving seemingly ephemeral performances. This debate begins with Peggy Phelan's argument that "performance's only life is in the present" (146), and continues with several theorists of performance documentation who contend that, while not the same as live performance, archival forms can be understood through a similar lens as other theatrical modes. I follow scholars like Rebecca Schneider, who suggest that it is possible to locate live experiences within the archive. This throughline is apparent in the work of theorists like Diana Taylor, Joseph Roach, and Matthew Reason, each of whom have proposed versions of the archive which accommodate the liveness of performance works. I extend the work of these scholars to consider the role of affect in an archival encounter, suggesting that the experience of visiting, viewing, or reading archival materials can re-enliven documentations through the viewer's affective engagement with the material.

Turning to explore the work of Forced Entertainment, I first address the group's own attitudes towards archivization, analyzing how they define and attempt to enact the live in their work. I then explore Forced Entertainment's creative process, which is heavily invested in devising performance from (often fragmentary) found materials and documents. Here, I will suggest that by incorporating documentation and archival fragments into their performance's creative processes, Forced Entertainment's performers become living archives, re-embodying their found materials in live performance, and therefore bringing seemingly "dead" archival fragments back to life. I extend this theorization of the performer as a living archive to argue that spectators can also embody the archive, through their affective engagement with documentation. Moving to discuss Forced Entertainment's documentary projects, I first discuss the works in which the group most clearly attempts to reject archival conventions. I then turn to what I consider their more compelling attempts at incorporating the live, by discussing projects which aim to

integrate the viewer into the archive in various ways. I explore the ways in which these encounters between a viewing subject and archival objects or mediations (such as video recordings or photography) can be affective experiences. In my final case study, I discuss a recent set of Forced Entertainment live online streams and the corresponding audience responses, which are archived in real time via Twitter, making spectators into archive producers.

At the close of this chapter, I take a critical approach to the example that these Forced Entertainment case studies have set. This chapter suggests that just as liveness cannot be safely situated in an uninterrogated “present”, the archive is not solely the domain of the past, but rather can be a space of liveness. Broadly speaking, archival material becomes re-enlivened through affective connection and engagement. While I argue that it is possible to establish these affective connections in any archival encounter, much of Forced Entertainment’s work accomplishes this by calling upon spectators to take on active, participatory roles in their documentations. While such an approach encourages increased audience investment in the work, I argue that these projects reveal the group’s necessary self-interested approach to their own history and its importance to the world around them. However, the group also frustrates expectations that artists in neoliberal societies will engage in competition and continual self-promotion by turning aspects of their archival project over to their spectators, allowing audiences to take ownership of their experiences of Forced Entertainment performances, and include them in the group’s sanctioned narratives. These archival projects push those who encounter them to create individual versions of the history they are presented with, as these documentations are either comprised of fragmentary, non-linear narratives, or necessitate active participation in order to assemble the archive into a comprehensible form.

Individualizing the experience optimizes the dissemination of archival content, allowing more spectators to have access, and ensuring maximal affective engagement without excessive labour output on the part of the artist. In this way, Forced Entertainment's work embodies the "artrepreneur", which Jen Harvie discusses in *Fair Play*. Forced Entertainment's particular deployment of affective liveness in their documentary work does not entirely reject institutional values and conventions in the way that they would like. Instead, the group's work represents the ways in which art has become influenced by neoliberalism in the UK's current climate. Both archivization and mass dissemination of artistic works are demanded by a neoliberal culture. Forced Entertainment therefore seems to have optimized their own processes of documentation in order to thrive, delivering much-desired affectively live experiences en-masse, for the convenient consumption of eager individuals. This chapter closes the dissertation by further highlighting the ways in which neoliberalism has produced a cultural desire for live experiences which particularly emphasizes individual consumption and feeling over all other types of engagement with the world around us.

3.2 The Archive, Theoretically

The archive has received much critical attention, and I will use this section to summarize the major works which form the foundation for my own understanding of the archive. These theorizations of the archive—from Foucault and Derrida—destabilize notions of the archive as ever actually providing the origins, authenticity, proof, and connection to the past that the archive would seem to promise. Despite their tenuous relationship, and the fact that they diverged significantly in their approaches to other

concepts, Foucault and Derrida each consider the archive as a regulator of discourse. However, as Derrida indicates in *Archive Fever*, the archive is at odds with itself, destroying that which it aims to preserve. In this section, I discuss the ways in which Foucault and Derrida's theories harmonize in their conceptualizations of the archive as producing and regulating the circulation of knowledge within a culture. I extend this theoretical foundation to define the archive as a performance of discursive power. Not only does the archive perform its power over how the past is spoken of and understood, but the act of accessing archival materials also necessitates a performance on the part of the visitor. This section tracks the concept of the archive from its theoretical origins to establish a connection between the archive as performative and the archive as performance, arguing that the archive extends its regulatory power by continually implicating its visitors in the affirmation of its cultural power. In a latter section, I complicate this approach: while the archive does perform its own discursive power, this power is also vulnerable, and often undermined in Forced Entertainment's works. Moreover, Forced Entertainment purposefully engages with what Derrida terms the "archivolithic force" (*Archive Fever* 11), producing archives which resist memory and documentation through creative fragmentation and by incorporating audiences.

For Foucault, the archive is that which determines and asserts meaning. In his 1969 book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault argues that "The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass... but they are grouped together in distinct figures" (145-146). From this perspective, the archive does not just collect or organize, but determines the shape and significance of that which has been contained within it.

Foucault continues that “The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability” (146). In essence, the archive does not only collect material for future benefit, but also constitutes the ways in which this material will be presented in the future. Further, not only does the archive provide a shape to its content, but also organizes and structures material towards a specific purpose, ensuring not only the preservation of the archival content, but also the specific meaning granted to it by the archive itself. In stating that the archive “defines...the system of its enunciability” (146), Foucault suggests that the archive determines the ways in which information enters, operates in, and is valued by networks of knowledge. Foucault continues, stating, “[the archive] is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is the system of its functioning” (146). For Foucault, the archive’s primary purpose is to determine and preserve the *ways* in which information and material circulate in the present and future. To this end, he suggests that the archive “differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration” (146). The archive, therefore, does not only provide information, but also an element of interpretation, by organizing information in such a way as to pre-determine its meaning. This regulation of discourse can determine what is accepted as “real” or “genuine” knowledge within a culture. Thereby, the archive is not only the gatekeeper for permissible knowledges and discourses, but also shapes *how* this information means.

In *Archive Fever*, published in 1995, Derrida theorizes the archive from a psychoanalytical perspective; while his approach differs from Foucault’s, several of

Derrida's points resonate with what Foucault had theorized previously, and are particularly useful when applied to the archive's cultural role and function. He famously argues for a consideration of the linguistic origins of the word "archive": "*arkhe*" tells us that the archive operates as "commencement" and "commandment" (1), suggesting that the archive both represents a beginning and an ordering. Further, from the Greek "*arkehion*" comes "a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (2). Here, Derrida suggests that the archive's commencement and commandment takes place within the archive's domiciliation, or dwelling. But, he also suggests that the archive does not only need to "be deposited somewhere, on a stable substrate", but that "The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together" (3). In addition to these properties—indeed, perhaps as a result of them—Derrida stresses that "*every archive...is at once institutive and conservative*" (7). For Derrida, "*There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside*" (11). This definition suggests that the archive must be established with certain epistemological and linguistic boundaries, which are necessary to its constitution. The archive supplants human memory: "the archive...will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of said memory" (11). One of the most significant aspects of Derrida's argument appears in his proposal that "the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (17). He continues, "the said archival technology no longer determines, will never have

determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event” (18). In Derrida’s view, the very process of archiving “determines” and “produces” the documented material, constituting the archival content as worthy of documentation and therefore marking it as valuable knowledge or information. From this, I suggest that the archive can be understood as “reconstituting” or “re-creating” archival context insofar as the archive produces that material in its archivable and archived form.

This aspect of Derrida’s argument seems to echo and develop Foucault’s theory. For both theorists, the process of archiving something determines that thing as sufficiently important and valuable such that its archivization seems a necessity. When Derrida states that “The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17), he not only states that the process of documenting something recreates it in a permanent form. He also emphasizes that “archival technology...[determines] the very institution of the archivable event” (18), which suggests that the archive determines its content as “archivable”. In this moment, Derrida builds on Foucault’s argument to suggest not only that the archive influences the ways the past is understood and spoken of, but also that the very process of preserving knowledge shapes its discursive futures. By reconstituting historical knowledge in a form that is “archivable”, the institution immediately defines the content as culturally important, and worthy of its preservation. Moreover, the way in which historical material is archived—for example, the collection in which it is included—determines not only how it will be regarded by those who encounter it, but those who encounter it in the first place. Therefore, Derrida’s most significant contribution to my conceptualization of the archive is this specification that the archive not only influences historical discourse, but that the very processes of documenting and

preserving something recreate the material in its discursively authorized form. By drawing attention to the role that practical processes of archivization play, Derrida illuminates the ways in which the archive performs its own exertion of power over the circulation of knowledge.

3.3 Towards a Performance of Archive

In the previous section, I have summarized the work of Foucault and Derrida, who provide the foundations for theorizing a specifically performance studies archive by highlighting, a) the archive as a discursive tool, and b) the archive as itself serving a creative function. These fundamental aspects of the archive lead me to argue that the archive is a performance, building on Matthew Reason's assertion that "The archive...is...our live performance of the past" (85). Philip Auslander similarly connects the archive directly with performance, by suggesting that the distinctions made between the two are a matter of perspective. He argues that "the only significant difference between the documentary and theatrical modes of performance documentation is ideological: the assumption that in the former mode, the event is staged primarily for an immediately present audience and that the documentation is a secondary, supplementary record of an event that has its own prior integrity" ("Performativity" 3-4). Auslander further suggests, following J.L. Austin, that "the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such. Documentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces an event as a performance" (5). From this point, Auslander suggests that the archive is performative, constituting its contents within specific epistemological frames.

Indeed, this argument follows from Foucault; we might say that the archive performs a version of history and of telling. As Derrida suggests, the archive *creates*, not necessarily giving us an “authentic” history, but rather history repackaged for future consumption. However, this representation of the past is, as Derrida states, structured by the process of its creation. In order that it might appear in the archive, it must also be structured and determined by the archive. Thus, the material that ends up in the archive can be understood as performing the processes which created it, which is to say, the process of its own archivization. Further, as Foucault argues, the archive establishes the speakability of the past; specifically, he argues that the archive governs discourse itself (146). Building from these foundational theorizations, I would suggest that what the archive ultimately does is act as a performance of the functioning and circulation of discursive power within a society. The archive’s structure, as a legitimating and authenticating force, does the work of exercising power, while also standing as a testament to the ways in which that power circulates and determines culture significance more generally.

For example, in many instances, documentation refers to and determines a performance’s value to the culture in which it is produced: performance works that are archived and included in largescale archives, such as museums, libraries, or institutions are often those that have a certain amount of funding, and are relatively well-known. The process of including such works in archives further concretizes this institutional authentication of the work as culturally important, thus often conferring additional funding, as well as perceived cultural and economic value. As Matthew Reason argues, “performance is constituted with value precisely by being perceived as of value to future generations. This value is only enhanced by the historical fragility, the transience of performance and the deliberate effort that has to be invested in its preservation” (35).

Artists whose work might otherwise be considered ephemeral can therefore be characterized as culturally valuable by virtue of their archivization. Suffice it to say, permanence and largescale accessibility often represent success in the contemporary art market. Thus, these archival processes of documenting or preserving work inside an institution influence that artist or artistic work's knowability and reception in the world. The archive performs its own ability to determine and shape its cultural context. Any act of documentation is a performative exercise of cultural power.

However, I propose that more than simply being performative the archive can be understood as itself a performance. We may think of the activities around visiting an archive as similar to those which precede a performance: access must be granted before a visit can take place (sometimes archives even require a formal request for access in advance of the visit), and one goes through several rituals of preparation before entering the archival space proper. For example, in order to access the materials necessary for this dissertation at the British Library, I was required to schedule a visit, have that appointment approved, apply for access to the archives, travel to the building, have my identification checked and my bag searched, stow all my belongings in a locker (placing only what will be needed for the day's work in a clear plastic bag), then have my identification and belongings checked again, all before I could even enter the archive itself. These extra-archival rituals work to emphasize the legitimacy and cultural importance of the archive: when access is made exclusive, perceived cultural significance tends to increase. This experience of the necessary preparatory rituals is a familiar one for theatregoers, who must order tickets, check their coats, have their tickets checked, be given programs, wait in the lobby for the theatre doors to open, find their seats, etc. These similar sets of rituals frame performance as such, seeming to define its borders (as

impermanent as those borders may be), and frame the experience as a culturally significant one. There are other sets of performative practices around the archive: as Carolyn Steedman describes, there is the culturally pervasive image “of a figure solemnly hunched over a list of names” (xi), this being the well-recognized behaviour that is intended to signify use of the archive. Moreover, these rituals make the experience to the archive an affective one: for example, the numerous registration and security procedures required of me before entering the British Library produced a feeling of anxiety and trepidation, affects which permeated through the entirety of my personal experience there. Ultimately, I understand the archive as a performance of power; from this perspective, I theorize the encounter between the archive and its visitor as similar to the encounter between a spectator and a performance, opening up the possibility of documentation that is made live through the viewer or reader’s interaction with it.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida states that “The archive has always been a *pledge*, and like every pledge, a token of the future” (18), theorizing the archive as spectral⁸⁸ and futural. As he argues, “the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past...It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come” (36). He continues, stating, “The structure of the archive is *spectral*. It is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor

⁸⁸ While a thorough discussion of Derrida’s theorization of the archive as spectral is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this aspect of his argument resonates with the types of audience expectation and projection that I discussed in chapter one. In the case studies I offer in the latter half of this chapter, it is possible to characterize the spectator’s affective interaction with the archive as spectral, to a certain degree. Insofar as the spectator’s experience with the archive is a process of constructing from documentary fragments an individual experience which exists only in the spectator’s engagement with it, they create a spectral version of the archive with which they engage, which is present in one’s interaction with it, but is not inherently present from an objective standpoint.

absent ‘in the flesh,’ neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met” (84). If the archive is futural, we must consider not only *what* is being preserved for the future, but also *how* the archive operates into the future. As I have mentioned, and will discuss more thoroughly below, affective engagement with the archive re-enlivens the past, drawing history into the present moment through an experiencing subject. What are the implications of this “making present” of the past? One effect of this process is that the archive’s discursive power is not relegated to the moment of history which it records, but is instead continually perpetuated as the archive is repeatedly accessed, and re-experienced. A consideration of the archive as a space of liveness, therefore, allows us to understand the ways in which the archive sustains its power. I would suggest that it is through the affected minds and bodies of those who visit the archive that the institution’s power is perpetuated. Affects leave lasting impressions on those who experience them, even to the point of continually altering one’s perspective of the world. Therefore, when a subject visits and is affected by the experience of the archive (for example, by feelings produced by the content of the archival materials themselves, or the institutional setting, like the anxiety I experienced at the British Library), they are affected by not the past itself, but the past’s representation, which has been mediated by the archive’s discursive operations. Thus, the visitor to the archive, having been affected, takes that archive’s processes of regulation into themselves as part of their experience. In this way, it is not only documentary material itself which may be re-enlivened in the encounter between the archive and its visitors. The archive’s discursive power, its ability to determine and shape knowledge, is similarly brought into the present, made “live” again. However, as I suggest via *Forced Entertainment*, this re-

enlivening of the archive through a visitor's affective engagement with it produces an experience which, like in Punchdrunk's immersive theatre, is entirely individual.

3.4 The Performance Archive

The archive has been the subject of a long debate in performance studies, which runs parallel to the field's discussions of theatre's "liveness". I return here to the concept of performance's ephemerality to elaborate on the practical problems this perspective creates for the study of performance. The perspective that performance is an impermanent form is one of the primary impetuses for the documentation of performance, making archival documentation a practical necessity. As Amelia Jones points out, oftentimes the only access contemporary academics have to performance is through its archival remains: having been born too late to see many seminal works performed live, many scholars must make photographs, video recordings, play-texts, first-hand accounts, and other documentary materials their primary subjects of study ("'Presence' in absentia" 11). Recognizing the necessity of the archive as a practical means to access performances from the past, performance scholars have built on the work of Foucault, Derrida, and others, in order to develop a theory of the archive that is specific to performance. This section tracks performance studies' debate about the archive, from Phelan's objection to the documentation of performance, which represents the historical perspective that performance archives can never capture live performance, to contemporary theorists such as Matthew Reason, Philip Auslander, and Rebecca Schneider, who problematize the dichotomy of live performance and dead archives. The concept of a purely live and unmediated performance does not exist in practice; performance documentation is just as fragmented as experience in the present moment. The experience of the archive has a

similar economy to live performance, in that the subject who engages with archival materials occupies a similar position to a spectator at a live performance. The encounter between a subject and an archival object is an affective experience; thus, the archival experience is a re-enlivening of the past through the viewer's affective engagement with it, which integrates the live with the archival.

Matthew Reason rightly points out that "In the discourse surrounding live performance ideas of disappearance and transience mark one set of returning imagery, but they are accompanied by a mirroring, complementary yet contradictory, discourse of documentation" ("Detritus" 83). Evidence of this type of discourse is no clearer than in Peggy Phelan's oft-discussed claim that "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented" (146), in which she asserts that performance ceases to be performance when it is archived; it is precisely performance's ephemerality, and its inevitable disappearance, that defines its existence. However, Phelan's argument relies on a key binary: performance is "live", while by contrast, recording or archiving is "dead". As Rebecca Schneider summarizes, "*The New Oxford American Dictionary* describes the adjective 'live' negatively, giving us: 'not dead or inanimate; living.' Similarly, in terms of performance, we are given: 'not a recording'" (90). But, as I argue throughout this dissertation, "live" means more than simply an opposition to "dead" or "recorded", and I apply this same logic to the documentation of performance. This dichotomy of "live" performance versus "dead" documentation also illustrates a central tension in the study of performance: it is performance's inherent vanishing which produces a need for documentations, which are in turn regarded as lacking precisely because they remain where performance does not (and indeed, cannot). Performance's ephemerality both necessitates archivization and seemingly makes it impossible. This problem sits at the

heart of the performance archive, and informs the field's development of performance-specific archive theory. Phelan's objection to performance documentation can be split into two related factors: mediation and temporal distance from the original.

One of Phelan's major hesitations towards performance documentation is the fact that a recording, or archival record, becomes "something other than performance" (146). One way to understand this objection is as an expression of concern about the necessary mediation of performance through another form in order to document it. In *Liveness*, Auslander refutes Phelan directly, suggesting that rather than existing in binary opposition, performance and mediation are fully intertwined at the outset. He argues that the opposition between "live" performance and "dead" recording is problematic, because the two categories are far more interconnected than can be accounted for in such a dichotomy. He proposes that "Disappearance...is not...an ontological quality of live performance that distinguishes it from modes of technical reproduction. Both live performance and the performance of mediatization are predicated on disappearance: the televisual image is produced by an ongoing process in which scan lines replace one another, and it is always as absent as it is present; the use of recordings causes them to degenerate" (50). Following Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Auslander suggests that "live performance has indeed been pried from its shell...all performance modes, live or mediatized, are now equal: none is perceived as auratic or authentic; the live performance is just one more reproduction of a given text or one more reproducible text" (55). What, then, leads to what Auslander might term our unwarranted valorization of the live? He suggests that our conception of "the live" is actually historically contingent, arguing that "the live is actually an effect of mediatization, not the other way around. It was the development of recording

technologies that made it possible to perceive existing representations as ‘live’” (56). He continues, “Prior to the advent of those technologies (e.g., sound recording and motion pictures), there was no such thing as ‘live’ performance, for that category has meaning only in relation to an opposing possibility...the ‘live’ can be defined only as ‘*that which can be recorded*’” (56). Auslander ultimately argues that the mediated and the live are intrinsically linked categories: “That the mediated is engrained in the live is apparent in the structure of the word *immediate*. The root form is the word *mediate* of which *immediate* is, of course, the negation. Mediation is thus embedded within the immediate; the relation of mediation and the immediate is one of mutual dependence, not precession” (199). He continues, suggesting that “live performance is always already inscribed with the traces of the possibility of technical mediation (i.e. mediatization) that defines it as live” (199). While Auslander’s critique of Phelan focuses too heavily on her assertion of a dichotomy between live performance and documentation (to the point of ignoring more nuanced aspects of her argument), his response to this argument is valuable in its suggestion that liveness is contingent rather than intrinsic. The “live”, for Auslander, is a matter of perception. While for Auslander, this seems to suggest that the live is not a particularly valuable category, I would argue that the live’s perceptual contingency is not a limitation, but rather an important point of departure. Auslander implicitly suggests that the quality of liveness ascribed to performance events is projected onto them by their spectators.

Auslander’s *Liveness* aims to reconsider the distaste that some performance critics have expressed towards mediated forms, such as video recordings. In her article “The Video Documentation of Theatrical Performance”, Gay McAuley echoes many of Phelan and others’ anxieties surrounding the necessary mediation of performance, specifically

discussing video recording as a problematic medium. She, using similar rhetoric as Phelan, argues that “the lived reality of the theatrical event always escapes the recording medium” (183). McAuley continues, “Performance is unrepeatable and is fascinating to performers and audiences precisely because it is unique and ephemeral—something to be nightly recreated, and nightly changed in response to immediate circumstances” (184). While McAuley figures video recording as a reluctantly necessary tool for performance studies, she expresses a particular objection to the process of documentation through video recording, a perspective which has been shared by several theatre scholars. McAuley argues that while “Theatre is multi-focused, multi-‘voiced’, made up of many different sign systems using many different channels of communication,” documentary forms such as “film, video, and photography all impose the single perspective of the camera's eye on this multiplicity, while the camera also ‘sees’ much less than the human eye...[the] ever-present reality of the performance space as a whole” is ultimately lost (186). It is not only technological mediation that is a problem for McAuley, but also re-interpretation, as she argues that recording “involves choices of what to record, what position to record from, what point of view (in both senses of that term) to adopt” which she suggests “results in the creation of a new artefact” (187).

However, in describing the limitations of the film medium for archiving performance, McAuley also suggests that though video recording appears complete, it is just as fragmentary an archival form as others. She states that “A photograph is clearly a single frozen moment: it functions powerfully to trigger the memory or the imagination, but nobody would think that they had seen the production because they had seen a series of photographs. The play-text, too, is clearly a partial document: it records only one set of performance signs, the words spoken” (187). Here, McAuley recognizes the

fragmentariness of all performance documentation, even that which represents the closest approximation of the spectatorial experience of live performance. In their article, Varney and Fensham build on Bergson's theory stating, "We must remember that memory, unless forgotten, is coded; it cannot be otherwise. What this means in terms of performance analysis is that we rely on the already coded narratives of individual memories (actors, directors, theatre critics, etc.), each of whose narratives retells the performance, historicizing it and representing it as discourse" (91). Varney and Fensham argue here that not only is performance documentation inherently mediated, theatrical production itself is always already mediated through an individual's perspective and memory. This process of mediation is not only the case in production, but also in reception: if your experience of performance in the present moment is filtered through your unique perspective, so too is your experience of a piece of documented performance. Archival materials are built out of a perspective or context, as are the works of art they represent. If our perceptions are always already retellings or reinterpretations of an event as experienced through our individual perceptions, then the archival encounter is as fragmentary an experience as that of live performance. Amelia Jones similarly argues that "all present experience is only ever available through subjective perception, itself based on memory" (18). She extends this analysis to suggest that "all 'events'—those we participated in as well as those that occurred before we were born—can only ever be subjectively enacted (in the first place) and subjectively retrieved later" (18). As a result, "There is no singular, authentic 'original' event we can refer to in order to confirm the true meaning of an event, an act, a performance, or a body—presented in the art realm or otherwise" (18). She ultimately argues that "while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room

watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical ‘truth’ of the performance” (11).

As I have argued in the introduction to this dissertation, all experience of performance is an experience of that which has already passed, and is already archival for the experiencing subject. Both in-person and archival experiences are fragmentary, mediated representations, and neither can claim to represent the entirety of performance. Objections to archivization based on the argument that documentation mediates the previously unmediated perception at work in the live performance experience cannot hold under scrutiny. Rather, perception is mediated to a certain degree in any experience, whether it be as a spectator at a live performance, or as a viewer watching a performance recording. To suggest that archival materials are just as fragmentary and mediated as human perception and memory is not to flatten the distinctions between the experience of watching a performance live and watching a recording, or viewing photographs of it. These are, as Jones is right to emphasize, different types of spectatorial experiences. However, there are more similarities between the encounter with live performance and its archival documentations than the dichotomy of “live” performance versus “dead” archive might suggest.

In addition to mediation, reticence to accept performance documentations as legitimate experiences stems from the problem of temporal distance: a recorded or documented performance is no longer happening “live”. In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider follows Auslander in reconceptualising the documentation of performance, speaking specifically to the matter of temporal distance. Schneider focuses on the phenomenon of war re-enactments to explore the ways in which the past and the present can punctuate one another in performance, conceiving of “time as full of holes or gaps

and art as capable of falling or crossing in and out of the space between live iterations” (6). She argues that, “Rather than a unidirectional art march toward an empiric future of preservation, time plays forward and backward and sideways” (6). She suggests that re-enactment is a way of “keeping [performance] alive [that] is not aliveness considered always in *advance of* death nor in some way *after* death....it is more a constant, (re)turn of, to, from, and between states in animation—an inter(in)animation” (7). Indeed, following Derrida’s discussion in *Archive Fever*, Schneider calls for a more serious consideration of the futurity of archival forms, rather than positioning them as past or “dead”. She suggests that in terms of many archival forms, “The place of the documentation of the ‘original’ event has...shifted—becoming score, script, or material for ‘instruction.’ Documents that had seemed to indicate only the past, are now pitched toward the possibility of a future reenactment as much as toward the event they apparently recorded” (28). Indeed, throughout *Performing Remains*, Schneider challenges pre-conceived notions of the linearity of time, in one instance discussing live performance as a form of archive of its script, which “flips on its head the supposition that the live is that which requires recording to remain” (90). Schneider’s approach, therefore, seeks to blur the boundaries that have been placed between the past and the present, or the archival and the live.

Schneider argues that the archive’s gaps suggest that the past is never a secure, complete state: “it is the very pastness of the past that is never complete, never completely finished, but incomplete...If the past is never over, or never completed, ‘remains’ might be understood not solely as object or documentary material, but also as the immaterial labor of bodies engaged in and with the incomplete past” (33). She argues that engagements with the past are temporally blurred. For Schneider, visiting an archive

is not as simple as visiting emblems of the past from one's present context. Rather, she states, "To find the past resident in remains—material evidence, haunting trace, reiterative gesture—is to engage one time resident in another time" (37). Thus, she argues that "the past is given to remain, but in each case that remaining is incomplete, fractured, partial—in the sense of both fragmentary and ongoing" (37). Further, Schneider suggests that the performance archive can never be complete or holistic precisely because of the embodied nature of live performance: "In the archive, flesh is given to be that which slips away. According to archive logic, flesh can house no memory of bone" (100). From Schneider's perspective, it is possible to conceive of ephemerality, liveness, and archivization as functioning in tandem, rather than being mutually exclusive categories of thought.

What both Schneider and Auslander accomplish in addressing the field's historical arguments against performance documentation is a blurring of the categories that Phelan's seminal argument relies upon. Just as Auslander conceptualizes liveness and mediation as thoroughly intertwined categories, Schneider argues that the boundaries between past and present are much more fluid than binary dichotomies account for. By refuting these fundamental arguments, Auslander and Schneider argue for a conversation that takes performance archives seriously as legitimate and valuable, though inherently complex, tools.

3.5 Conceptualizing the Performance Archive

Recognizing the limits of archival theory to account for performance—particularly in terms of the absence of representations of performance's more "live"

aspects—several scholars, such as Diana Taylor, Rebecca Schneider, and Joseph Roach⁸⁹ have worked to theorize an archive which accounts for the live nature of performed practices. Below, I briefly summarize the work of Taylor and Schneider, both of whom use cultural practices as their case studies for exploring the ways in which embodied, live work might be archived. In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor seeks to resolve the conceptual gap that seems to have been opened between live performance and the archival. Taylor’s project is an inherently political one: in a similar vein as Amelia Jones, Taylor argues that if performance cannot be archival, then large swaths of cultural practices are in the position of perpetual disappearance. Taylor asks, “What is at risk politically in thinking about embodied knowledge and performance as ephemeral [*sic*] as that which disappears? Whose memories ‘disappear’ if only archival knowledge is valorized and granted permanence?” (36). As Taylor indicates, multitudes of these vital cultural performances remain, persisting through generations. However, it is important to note that many of these traditions have persisted through live repetitions. These performed repetitions form what Taylor terms “the repertoire”. Taylor argues that this “Embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive’s ability to capture it” (20). However, Taylor also figures

⁸⁹ In his *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Roach suggests that the desired original is always already the unfulfilled (unfulfillable) promise of the archive, referring to the process of archivization as “the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins” (3). He terms the process of cultural reproduction “surrogation”, by which, “Into the cavities created by loss...survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates” (2). However, he argues that “Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds...The intended substitute either cannot fulfill expectations, creating a deficit, or actually exceeds them, creating a surplus” (2). Roach’s argument, much like Taylor’s, figures performance as itself archival, wherein performance “stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace” (3). Furthermore, Roach similarly seems to suggest that repetition—in his conception, the continued surrogated archive desire—is a means through which performance can be both live and archival. Roach and Taylor therefore both suggest that the performance archive must embody multiple temporal and affective spaces, necessarily functioning as both live and archived.

the repertoire as repeated and repeatable performance practice: “The repertoire...enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (20). The repertoire makes ephemeral, embodied knowledges remain. Thus, Taylor nuances her assertion, asking, “what is embodied knowledge/memory, and how is it transmitted? And how does it differ from the archival, usually thought of as a permanent and tangible resource of materials available over time for revisions and re-interpretation?” (191).

Taylor repeatedly asserts that she does not seek to construct an opposition between archive and repertoire, stating explicitly that the two terms “too readily [fall] into a binary with the written and the archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge” (20). However, this dichotomization is indeed the logical extension of her analysis, which seems to maintain the divisions between live and recorded. However, in a certain sense, Taylor achieves her goal of avoiding a binary opposition between repertoire and archive, since the criteria she sets out for the repertoire categorizes it as archival. She characterizes the repertory “forms of embodied acts” as “always present, reconstituting themselves—transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next” (193). Indeed, it seems that Taylor’s engagement with the performance studies arguments about the ephemerality of performance might miss the salient point that what disappears in performance is never the performance itself—that is, the movements that were made, the words that were said, and so on—but rather the experience of its presence, its immediacy, or its liveness. When Taylor posits the “repertoire” in distinction to the archive, she is truly speaking of two sides of the same coin. Repertoire, in its necessary repetition (notably emphasized on a linguistic level), performs the archival attempt to capture and

reconstitute that moment of absolute “present-ness”. The performance, both in the repertoire and in the archive, does not disappear, but is captured, repeated; however, this move does not efface the disappearance of immediacy, of liveness that scholars like Blau and Phelan note of performance. Indeed, performance, as an inherently repeated phenomenon, constantly acts to re-apprehend the immediate, to bring the “live” back to life. Thus, Taylor theorizes a form of archive which incorporates disappearance into its processes of documentation. The repertoire allows performance to disappear and re-emerge, always at once live and preserved.

Much like Roach and Taylor, Schneider suggests that we can understand the archive not necessarily as domiciliation, in the Derridean sense, but as a reiterative ritual. She thus expands her definition of the archive, stating “When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the *act* of remaining and a means of re-appearance and ‘reparticipation’ (though not a metaphysic of presence) we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh” (101). She argues that the archive “becomes a social performance, a theatre of retroaction. The archive performs the institution of disappearance with object remains as indices of disappearance and with performance given to disappear” (104). She suggests that, “precedent art, no matter how ‘live’ the event may be or may have been, is never so much ‘over’ or ‘disappeared’ as given to call and response—to (re)composition in transgenerational conversation” (111). From this perspective, archival traces or fragments never fully cease to be live, as the intended purpose of documentation is to ensure that these material might be engaged by minds in the future. It is in that moment of engagement that the archival trace is re-enlivened, as it is experienced. Schneider considers the position of live re-enactment (in particular,

American Civil War re-enactors) in relation to the archival. She asks, “what is the time of a live act when a live act is reiterative?” (37). Can these re-performances of a series of historical events be safely categorized as either in the domain of the present or the past? She suggests that “Bodies engaged in repetition are boisterous articulators of a liveness that just won't quit” (39). The physical body, therefore, complicates the archive—I would suggest productively—by making embodied the temporal confluences that necessarily structure that which we regard as the document. From the re-enactors Schneider describes as embodying the past, to the individuals who visit archives, museums, libraries, or other locations which house aspects of the past, there is indeed life and liveness throughout the archive. Schneider describes performers’ embodiments of history as one way that the past is made present again. In any encounter with the archive, or archival materials, the past is made present through the cognitive engagement of a visiting subject, as affect is produced in the encounter between an experiencing subject and that which with they engage.

As the performance scholars I have discussed above illustrate, the role that the archive plays in relation to live performance is much more complicated than the historical dichotomy of live performance vs. “dead” documentation allows, and the categories of “live” and “archive” traverse one another repeatedly in performance documentations. While Phelan argued that documentations of performance cease to be performance itself, as Schneider and Taylor indicate archivization and the archive itself can be understood as a performance. Their perspective implicates a viewer or reader, analogous to the theatre’s spectator. If the archive is a performance then it is a performance that is made perpetually live.

Auslander states that “the crucial relationship is not the one between the document and the performance but the one between the document and its audience. Perhaps the

authenticity of the performance document resides in its relationship to its beholder rather than to an ostensibly originary event” (9). If it is the case that the archival encounter is fundamentally performative, then the archive takes on a similar “liveness” as performance. When one visits an archive, one has an experience in their encounter with artefacts and documents from the past. This encounter with the past produces affective responses in different ways. Therefore, because the archival visit or encounter is an affective experience, that which is found in the archive does not solely remain there. Rather, the subject’s experience of what they find there, and its affective resonances, are taken into the self. An affective experience has an effect on the subject’s memory and their subjectivity. What and how one has encountered the world necessarily influences the ways in which they might perceive and therefore experience the world in the future. Indeed, the way in which this affective experience is taken into and remains with the subject might be most clearly expressed through Eugenio Barba’s argument that one of the important aspects of performance is “*aftermaele*”, or “that which will be said afterwards” (77). Conversations, reviews, online posts, are all evidence of the ways in which performance remains with the spectator. In addition to Barba’s point, performance must also be concerned with that which will be *felt* afterwards. Performance does not end with the closing of a curtain, and the archive has the ability to produce a similar continued or persistent liveness. Indeed, Adrian Heathfield suggests that “the traces of performance prompt further questions and proliferate discourses around what exactly was done, seen, and understood” (27). Heathfield recognizes here that archival remains are decidedly *not* the performance as it happened, and therefore, they cannot supplant nor replace it. The encounter with the archive is a decidedly different experience than that which might

occur through live performance. However, this difference does not make the experience of archival remains less affective, or less active than in-person, live performance.

While we approach performances and archives with seemingly distinct intentions, the experiences are not altogether different. In each instance, we bring our own set of memories, preconceptions, and experiences to bear on the information or narrative which is laid out in front of us. In addition, if the archival encounter is understood as a subjective and affective interaction, then the archive can work to extend the life of performance. The archival object might be connected to the past, but when it is experienced or encountered by a perceiving subject, it is brought into that liminal temporal space of past and present. As Paul Clarke points out, performance does not just occur in its live moment but rather “takes place through the dissemination of its performative documents, our time-based encounters with them in archives or beholding them in displays; the work continues through oral accounts, rumours, hearsay, reviews, and reinterpretations in print” (378). He continues, suggesting that “Events remain live through research, the creative reuse of their documents, enactment, re-performance, and remediation, circulating and re-circulating in the cultural scene, both as performance and in representations” (378). Scholars, like Taylor and Schneider, have suggested that the archive can make the past present again through a spectator or visitor’s active engagement with its content. Here, I would like to build on this argument to suggest that it is specifically the affective experience of a visitor to the archive (or, reader of documentary texts; viewer of video recordings; etc.) which collapses the boundary between past and present.

The argument that archives produce experiences which can re-enliven the past in the moment of an individual’s encounter with them follows directly from Derrida’s

suggestion that during the archival process, the content that is saved is also produced. Furthermore, archival content is recreated by each individual in the moment that they engage with it. Much like in live performance, interacting with archival materials such as texts, photographs, or video recordings produces affective responses. As affect theorists like Spinoza, Massumi, Gregory, and Siegworth suggest, affect occurs in the space between two bodies, where “body” can be defined as either animate or inanimate. Thus, in the encounter with archival materials, an individual can experience an affective interaction with the document. Specifically, the object is able to catalyze a feeling in the experiencing subject. In this interaction, the subject experiences an affective response to the archival material which is produced in the space *between* the individual and the object. The affect is produced as much by the object as it is by the subject. In this model, no archival material exists in objectivity; documents only exist insofar as they are experienced and interpreted by those who encounter them. The borders between subject and object become permeable, and in this encounter—as with any interaction with a meaningful object—something of the object is taken into the subject, and as it is perceived through the lens of one’s individual memories and experiences, something of the subject is projected onto the object. It is from this understanding of the affective relationship between subject and object that, in the encounter with the archive, its content is recreated for and by each visitor, who brings their unique perspective to bear on it. Archival material, therefore, is always subject to refashioning by those who experience it.

Forced Entertainment’s documentary projects deliberately create the conditions necessary for the affective (and in some cases, literal) refashioning described above. While affect can work to re-enliven the past in any archival encounter, Forced Entertainment’s archival remains are a particularly useful set of case studies for the ways

in which archival and documentary forms can be utilized to produce affect. These forms grant the archive, if not the liveness of the performance itself, a new form which is re-enlivened as it is experienced by the encountering subject. Each of the Forced Entertainment projects discussed below acknowledge and call out to their audiences in diverse ways, implicating the viewer in the archive and encouraging their active engagement with the work. These calls for cognitive, and in some cases physical, participation in the group's archives are also prompts for affective response.

3.6 Archived Entertainment

Forced Entertainment experiments with and manipulates conventional forms in their performances as well as in their documentations. The group is particularly invested in self-archivization, having produced numerous texts, videos, photography projects, and other artistic materials which document their own history. This oeuvre of documentary works represents an attempt to disrupt traditional conventions of the archive in a variety of ways. However, the group does not simply destabilize the archives they produce and participate in; their practices also offer us the means to rethink the value and purpose of performance archives, and archivization more generally. This section tracks Forced Entertainment's 30-year collaborative history, observing the development of their approach to documentation, which has undergone numerous permutations as the group has refined their process. In Forced Entertainment's various documentary projects, they use multiple archival strategies; in contrast to their early experiments with destabilizing traditional archival forms, their more recent projects recognize and capitalize on the affective potential of the archive, producing live archives through the incorporation of

spectators. Using specific examples from Forced Entertainment's oeuvre—which encompasses a wide variety of artistic products such as recorded performances, performance texts, books, photography projects, interactive CD-rom programs, and social media—this section unpacks the practical features and material impact of documentations which seek to be perpetually “live”.

Forced Entertainment's documentations aspire towards capturing some of the liveness of the performance experience. This aim is made evident in several instances. For one, the introductory material for the play-text of *Showtime*, specifies that “A great deal of the text in *Showtime* was developed through improvisation and retains an element of improvisation even in its ‘finished’ performance version” (5). Tim Etchells, the group's artistic director, repeats this goal, explaining that “The thing is to look for forms of objects that reflect the aesthetics and contingency of the live events” (qtd. in *Reason Documentation* 59). Spontaneity and improvisation are important features of Forced Entertainment's live performances, and the group attempts to incorporate these aspects of their performances into their documentations by creating changeable or overtly fragmentary archival pieces. In her introduction to *Certain Fragments*, a book-length collage of documentations of Forced Entertainment's history, Peggy Phelan states that Tim Etchells' purpose in producing the book is “to create a performance on the page that echoes the performances he makes and sees on the stage” (12). This mimicry is an attempt to conjure similar affects in the readers or viewers of their archival materials as might be felt if one were sitting in the audience during a Forced Entertainment performance. However, there is an important distinction to be made here: these works cannot preserve the liveness of the past, but, the group's documentary projects can be

understood as separate “live” works by calling up affective responses in those who encounter them.

Derrida’s comments on the spectral and futural nature of the archive usefully inform the way I theorize Forced Entertainment’s archives. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida characterizes the archive as spectral, referring to it as “neither present nor absent...neither visible nor invisible” (84). He also defines the archive as futural, stating that the archive “is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow” (36). Forced Entertainment’s archives embody Derrida’s understanding of the archive by placing their focus on spectators’ interaction and affective engagement with the archive. The group’s archives deliberately fail to preserve the present moment of the performance or project they document. Derrida theorizes the archive as both self-destroying as well as casting itself into the future: the death drive “works to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing but also with a view to effacing its own ‘proper’ traces...It devours it even before producing it on the outside...the death drive is above all anarchivic, one could say, or archiviolithic. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation” (10). He continues, “the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory” (11). Forced Entertainment’s archives, therefore, must necessarily destroy that which they aim to preserve: the live experience of their work. However, the group’s archives also embody the live futurally: as spectators interact with the group’s documentations, their experience of the archive can become live again through an interaction that produces affect. Forced Entertainment’s archives exist in the potential of spectators’ future engagements with them. In this way, the group’s archives can be described as spectral. The archive is made live when it is engaged with by an individual. As a result, the archive’s form is always in

flux because each spectator's engagement with, and experience of, the archive will vary, recreating the documentation in a new affective register. Moreover, this perspective, which casts Forced Entertainment's archives as inherently changeable depending on how an individual subject interacts with them, again positions the group's archives in line with Derrida's theory. Individual experience, and especially individual affect, is entirely unknowable beyond one's personal encounter with it. It does not move from the internal to the external. If it is these individual affective experiences which define Forced Entertainment's archival works, then the group's archive is indeed marked by an archiviolithic force. While the group's archives are cast into the future in order to produce live encounters for spectators and visitors, the individual nature of the experience means that this logic works against itself. Affective experience is precisely what Forced Entertainment's documentations seek to archive by creating the potential for future engagements; however, this means that what comprises their archives is unknowable beyond the body of the experiencer. Thus, Forced Entertainment's spectral and futural archives destroy themselves because they seek to archive that which is unarchivable in the first instance.

Nonetheless, it is Forced Entertainment's project to attempt to engage creatively with their protean and resistant archives. In an interview with Matthew Reason, Etchells refers to the group's approach to documentation as that which "seeks to 'proliferate traces of work in a more artistic nature'" (qtd. in *Documentation, Disappearance* 57). This statement recognizes the fragmentariness of any documentation, as well as a desire to present those fragments artistically. The group does not simply use archives as a way to record what they have done, but rather attempts to create new artistic experiences through a playful engagement with archival forms. Thus, Forced Entertainment's documentations

are never (nor do they aspire to be) a repetition of the experience of the performance in its totality. Rather, the group attempts to manipulate and refashion documentations and our experiences of them playfully, attempting to adapt spontaneity to the page, or to the screen, in order to recall traces of their performance experience. In *Certain Fragments*, Etchells himself states that “There are rules for the critical writing here...that it should open doors not close them; that it should in some way mirror the form of its object; that it should work with the reader as a performance might (playing games about position, status and kinds of discourse). That it should be, in short, a part of the work, not an undertaker to it” (23). Etchells attempts to mimic the form of the group’s performances in their documentations, even suggesting that the document should develop a similar relationship with its reader as exists between a performer and her audience. Etchells also suggests that the document is “a part of the work”, suggesting a blurring of boundaries between past and present which blends the document with the original work. The group thus integrates past with present by producing documents which are fundamentally fragmented, calling on and necessitating the engagement of an interlocutor in the present in order to make meaning. Making audience involvement necessary mimics the performance situation and also ensures that the work is repeatedly made new, as it is encountered. The ultimate goal of Forced Entertainment’s self-archivization, therefore, is a preservation of their work in the *present*, rather than the past. However, by encouraging spectators’ involvement in producing, and specifically making meaning of, the archive, Forced Entertainment offers spectators a degree of ownership over the archive they experience. Following the group’s model, spectators consume the very perceptions which they project onto the archive in order to make it live, rendering the experience entirely within an individual, and therefore

subjective, framework. The archival work is made new, but it is made new only through the individual spectator's limited perspective, and for their exclusive experience of it.

It is important to note that Forced Entertainment's goal of creating an archive which preserves the present risks re-asserting the very temporal boundaries that Forced Entertainment seeks to blur. However, the group's devising process complicates what may at first seem a dichotomous relationship to temporality and presence. Tim Etchells and Forced Entertainment have repeatedly described one of their devising techniques as a gathering together and building from fragments found in the world around them. In the group's performance *A Decade of Forced Entertainment*, a project which is characterized as "part autobiography, part archive, part historical meditation and part theoretical speculation" (*Certain Fragments* 29), they describe their process of collecting archival fragments as follows: "10 years of finding notes in the street...all through winter we found things. There was a photograph of the ground beside a Mediterranean swimming pool, there was [a] page ripped out of a kid's cowboy book which had been vandalised...There were discarded photographs, there were incomprehensible shopping lists...There was a map, showing how to get to the motorway" (29-30). In another instance, Etchells states, "I have a notebook full of fragments of TV, conversation, books, bits out of newspaper. Probably a lot of those lines individually are from other things, with some 'original' writing...the writing was 'only' a copying out and bringing together of bits from all over the place" (*Art into Theatre* 247). These bits of archival traces—both textual and visual—often form the foundations of Forced Entertainment's works. In *Certain Fragments*, Etchells describes how "the reconstruction of a narrative from clues, the reconstruction of an event from its objects, the reconstruction of a text from its fragmentary scenes were framed as the objects of our work" (73). He describes the work

the group ultimately produces as “a document of the processes leading to it—a body that bares traces of its past” (75). Their work, therefore, defies a linear trajectory of documentation by utilizing archival materials at the conception of their work. Thus, for Forced Entertainment, the archive cannot be regarded as simply a recording of what has gone before; it is also what produced the work in the first place, and therefore is imbricated in each stage of its existence. Moreover, their work’s assembly of a wide variety of disparate traces means that no unified archive can be created: these are not fragments which come together to reconstitute a lost narrative origin. Rather, they are recycled into new forms, which distance them further from their origins. Indeed, it would be nearly impossible to locate and isolate the various fragments, let alone their origins, within a performance. These performances wholly deny the notion of a temporally linear, or authentically logical archive.

Furthermore, this grounding of the creative process in fragmentary traces of the archival is particularly interesting when it is used for live performance. In this situation, archival remains become embodied by Forced Entertainment’s performers, who during the course of a production, re-enliven (by re-embodiment) the fragments included as part of the performance. The tension between the unknown pasts of its contents and the present of their performance is played out on the live bodies of the performers. Tim Etchells states of the characters in Forced Entertainment’s oeuvre, “What you’re watching is in some ways the task of these people using, dealing with, exploring these texts and their conjunctions, their collisions. And we dramatise that task” (*Art into Theatre* 239). He continues, “I think in that sense the metaphor for us is ‘rag-picking’—of going through the ruins and getting these bits and trying to do something with them...Voices are coming out of these people, and yet they aren’t theirs—but in a subtle sort of way they

become theirs” (247). Etchells points to a useful tension here: the use of archival remains in performance places performers in a liminal space. Their performance labour is structured by that which has come before, and yet by embodying these traces, they necessarily make them their own, and therefore pulling them into the present. The suggestion that the “voices” that these textual fragments represent become the performers’ speaks to this temporal tension: the words become re-enlivened as they are taken into and become a part of the performers and are therefore newly embodied. Yet, this action is also one which turns the bodies of performers into archives, as they become the figurative storehouses of these fragmentary remains. Thus, the necessary simultaneity of the live and the remains in performance archives becomes physically embodied by these performers, as these temporal overlaps and tensions are played out on their bodies. This work, therefore, makes the archival materials upon which the group builds their performance live and breathe through the bodies of their performers. In subsequent sections, I will extend this logic to Forced Entertainment’s spectators, suggesting that as each individual encounters the group’s archival projects, they bring them to life through their unique affective experience of them, manifesting the group’s history through a continual—and necessarily self-interested—engagement with it.

The features of Forced Entertainment’s devising process, which I have described in brief above, demonstrate the group’s purposeful traversing of temporal boundaries in every aspect of their work. For Forced Entertainment and Tim Etchells, the archive is not simply that which necessarily follows live work; instead, the work incorporates documentation at the outset, integrating archives throughout their work. The approach to performance and its documentation collapses divisions between the live and the archival: their performances retain archival features, and their archives preserve some of the

liveness felt in performance. Understanding the context of Forced Entertainment's live work is important, I argue, because it emphasizes that their performances and the documents are reciprocally entangled. While I use focus my attention on the group's documentary projects, which have received less critical attention than their performance works, it is important to recognize that it is not *only* the group's archival work which manipulates temporality by crossing between the live and the document, but rather this occurs across their practice. Recognizing this fact demonstrates that the liveness integrated into the group's documents is purposeful, and part of the group's larger project of manipulating and experimenting with performance experiences.

3.7 Defiant Texts: *Certain Fragments*, and *While You Are With Us Here Tonight*

Forced Entertainment have created several archival works which, rather than attempting to mask the fragmentariness of the archive, embrace the incompleteness of the documentary form. In the two examples I address first—Tim Etchells' book project, *Certain Fragments*, and *While You Are With Us Here Tonight*, a hybrid play-text and documentary reflection—Forced Entertainment rejects the image of unity and cohesiveness typically performed by the archive, instead preferring to put on display the archive's fragmentary and incomplete reality. For the group, both live performance and its documentations are ultimately fragmentary materials, and can only ever represent a part of a narrative, event, performance, or interpretation. *Certain Fragments* and *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* seek to manipulate the archive from within its boundaries, as both are primarily text-based, and presented in book format, a quite traditional archival form. This choice attempts to interrupt the assumed connection between textual forms

(particularly those bound between covers, and published by well-respected presses) and features such as concreteness, cohesiveness, completeness, and ultimately, authenticity. Rather, in these examples, Forced Entertainment uses this traditional form to house a decidedly incomplete narrative, and one which flaunts its own limitations. Using these examples, I suggest that archives are, in reality, assemblages,⁹⁰ made to appear unified and singular, but in reality, comprised of disjointed fragments. In contrast to other archival projects that seek to maintain the illusion of a cohesive archival whole, Forced Entertainment refuses to maintain this illusion of unity, instead structuring their archives in order to emphasize their assembled-ness. In particular, Forced Entertainment accentuate this feature of their archive not only by presenting their work in fragmentary forms, but also by ensuring that these fragments are radically individual. Forced Entertainment marks their fragments as individual in two ways: firstly, the group's documentary projects tend to be comprised of personal narratives and reflections about the work that are written by Forced Entertainment members, collaborators, or commentators. Secondly, the group's work further emphasizes the assembled nature of the archive by encouraging (and in some cases, necessitating) that viewers participate in creating the archive by piecing together narrative fragments. This focus on producing an archive which is comprised of fragments also emphasizes the impossibility of the event itself being re-created: if viewers must assemble a document from Forced Entertainment's fragments, then in each archival encounter, the group's history is uniquely recreated, and continually remade.

⁹⁰ I use this term in the Oxford English Dictionary's sense, defined as "A number of things gathered together; a collection, group, cluster" ("assemblage" def. 4); my use of this term is not intended to invoke the English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's term "agencement", a concept which they theorize in *One Thousand Plateaus*.

Tim Etchell's book-length project, *Certain Fragments*, is another example of an archival project which foregrounds the fragmentary and incomplete nature of the archive. Here, the focus is on juxtaposition rather than present absences. Much like Forced Entertainment's other archival projects, *Certain Fragments* documents the group's history through deliberately fragmented means: excerpts of performance texts (always incomplete) are placed alongside snippets of reflections, and photographs which capture a mere moment of a performance (or, perhaps a rehearsal, or workshop). These material traces are what comprise most archival collections, but what sets Forced Entertainment apart is the deliberate attention paid to the fragmentariness of these documents. The group's archival works are never presumed to represent a whole, but rather comprise a compendium of random memories, records, and documents. The text begins with a section of essays and reflections by Etchells, but even here, there is not a singular shape to the collection. The book places essays in traditional academic style, like "On Performance and Technology", alongside more freeform reflections, such as Etchells' "Eight Fragments on Theatre and the City", which combines creative and critical work. Even the book's seemingly clear categorization of "essays" against "performance texts" is deceptive: the group's *A Decade of Forced Entertainment*, a performance text, is placed in the "essays" section, suggesting the multi-form nature of the group's works challenges systems of categorization to be more fluid. Furthermore, the book includes numerous full-page prints of Glendinning's photographs of the group, which—considering Glendinning's longstanding collaboration with the group—are as much a part of the Forced Entertainment narrative as that which is constructed through text alone.

Certain Fragments offers several pieces which deconstruct the utopian notion that documentation fragments a once objective and complete past. In particular, Etchells'

essays emphasize that fragmentation occurs in the very moment of experience, meaning that all memory, and therefore documentation and reflection, is individual and fragmented at the outset. In “On Documentation and Performance”, Etchells reflects on a conference on the topic of performance archives, offering a self-reflexive picture of the event. Analyzing as he reflects, Etchells produces an autoethnographic document by combining several modes of writing: he describes the event, for example, stating that “Wendy Houston ([of] DV8 [Physical Theatre]) begins by moving in the space” (71); he reflects on the conference’s content, for example when he states, “documentation commodifies” (71); and reflects on his own experience of the event, for instance, when he writes, “I am thinking about being in space” (73). Etchells’ piece moves between discussions of work which is presented at the conference, like Wendy Houston’s performance piece, and his own projects with Forced Entertainment, committing a section to reflect on the performance *Club of No Regrets*. Imbuing his documentation of the event with a perspective that shifts between the internal and the external performs the subjective nature of memory: Etchells constructs a history here which is necessarily only his. The individual nature of history is a point that is repeatedly emphasized throughout *Certain Fragments*. He similarly juxtaposes personal and public memory in “Repeat Forever: Body, Death, Performance, Fiction”, in which he elucidates the often unseen, individual histories of performance work. The essay follows Etchells’ heart troubles, beginning with his experience wearing a device intended to monitor his heart, to the surgery to receive a pacemaker, and several subsequent surgeries to perform necessary maintenance on the pacemaker. At every step, it is clear that Etchells’ personal experiences and individual history are intimately related to Forced Entertainment’s work. He describes how, while his heart is being monitored, “The rig of wires and machine looks so good we shoot

publicity photos for a performance project we're doing" (113). In addition, in light of health concerns and contemplating his own mortality, Etchells reflects that "In my own work with Forced Entertainment I'm struck by a fear that the performers are publicly rehearsing their own deaths, plotting lives for their own dead selves" (116). This intermingling of personal history with public document illustrates the ways in which histories are always already individual and subjective. While it might be tempting to regard this glimpse into Etchells' personal experience with Forced Entertainment as offering authoritative insight—Etchells is the group's artistic director, after all—the accounts provided in *Certain Fragments* refuse to ascribe this authority to his accounts, instead opening the group's history up to those who might encounter it.

As Peggy Phelan suggests in the introduction to *Certain Fragments*, Forced Entertainment is particularly interested in how history is adapted and refashioned by individual perception. She states that "Forced Entertainment has been especially literal about the way in which we suture our histories from scraps of fictions and reverberating echoes from 'the real world'" (11). She goes on to suggest that the group's trope of mapping narratives through space demonstrates "that complex process by which a public event arrives in the spectator's consciousness...Mapping space and time in this manner transforms history (and travel) into an actively composed set of personal stories and not a passively experienced set of external events and locations" (12). Thus, she argues that "Forced Entertainment's primary interest lies in how individual readers suture this new information into ongoing narratives of their own affective and empirically specific histories" (12). The piecing together of one's own historical narrative from their personal experiences, memories, and context is both a process that the group observes in their work, and one that they adopt themselves in this book. Phelan's comments here usefully

illustrate what Forced Entertainment presents in *Certain Fragments*, as the group documents the ways in which their own work builds from the context in which they create it, manipulating their own history in relation to the world around them. Phelan's analysis provides a reasoning for the group's particular thematization of fragmentation: it encourages readers to participate in the same processes which produced the book by assembling narratives and histories, and in so doing, re-creating the work on a radically individual level.

Certain Fragments is the group's largest documentary undertaking, and the text's various approaches to reflecting on and memorializing Forced Entertainment's work will appear throughout this section of the chapter. However, I would like to turn now to consider a text that is a hybrid play-text and documentary reflection. *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* is a large-print text of the opening speech for the group's performance work, *First Night*, which has been re-printed and heavily footnoted by several contributors. The book is reminiscent of texts which are footnoted in order to provide the reader with supplementary or explanatory information about the text.⁹¹ However, *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* deviates from this form in that the text's footnotes offer no attempt to explain or analyse the text of *First Night*. Based on the text's relatively familiar form, we might expect *While You Are With Us* to give context for the speech it quotes from *First Night*, discussing the work's relationship to Forced Entertainment's artistic development, or explaining the inspiration for the text's creation. Instead, *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* rejects convention by refusing to produce logical connections between the content of the speech and the footnotes which accompany it.

⁹¹ For example, a text intended for academic use, such as many editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems, which include explanatory notes for definitions or glosses of unfamiliar words or turns of phrase.



Figure 1. Pages 7 and 8 from *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* (reproduced with permission from Forced Entertainment/Tim Etchells)

The speech which the text ostensibly records is a series of instructions from a performer to the audience before the performance is about to begin, and tells the spectators, “while you are with us here tonight, we’d like to ask you to try to forget about the outside world completely” (i). The speech then lists an extensive set of specific things that the audience is asked to forget. For example, spectators are told to “Try not to think about chemical warfare” (7). Indeed, the attempt to make something absent in fact makes it all the more present: as the performer lists off an increasing number of obscure things that they request that the audience forgets, they actually call them up in our minds. To forget something deliberately, one must first recall it. For instance, the call to “Forget about sweat. The

smell of other people's sweat" (20) engages our sense memory, asking us to remember what other people's sweat smells like, in order that we might properly banish it from our minds. The footnotes are penned by Etchells, performer Terry O'Connor, theatre critics like Adrian Heathfield, and frequent collaborator Hugo Glendinning (whose "footnotes" are all photographic), among others. These additions, while often not even referring directly to the word they are footnoting and comprising more text than the speech itself, are yet again spaces for reflection, for making connections, and for finding resonances between the performance text, *Forced Entertainment*, and the world in which they operate. Even in this project, which seems to figure itself as a space for making connections between the performance work and the world more broadly, the logic of the connections is often obscured.



Figure 2. Pages 17 and 18 from *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* (reproduced with permission from Forced Entertainment/Tim Etchells)

For instance, in the example provided above, why is the line, “Try not to think about ovarian dysfunction” (17) footnoted by a photograph of a blurred performer standing on a mostly empty stage? The original text and the footnote are given, absent any explanation of their connection to one another. Similarly, the line “Try to forget what fear smells like” (20) is footnoted by Steve Rogers’ exhortation for the reader to “not think any more about Astrid Lindgren (14 Nov 1907-28 Jan 2002)” (21), the author of the Pippi Longstocking books. Any thematic connection between content and footnote must necessarily be made by the reader, as no context or rationale for these pairings is given within the text, nor are the connections self-evident. Here, like in other instances, Forced Entertainment seems to criticize the assumed logic and rationale of the archive. While the archive’s organizational structure makes connections between items appear natural and self-evident, this book crafts deliberately ambiguous connections, forcing its readers to fill in the logical gaps. Each reader necessarily refashions the work, assembling narrative scraps into an individualized version of the text which is refracted through the lens of their own perceptions of the world and structures of understanding. This labour crafts an archival experience which is unique to each reader, while also interrogating the potential arbitrariness of other archival forms, where logical connections seem both singular and self-evident.

The projects I have discussed here exemplify Forced Entertainment’s efforts to reject archival conventions. Rather than creating a monolithic archive, the group instead aims to produce documents that encourage interactions between the art object and each individual viewer. By representing themselves through work which refuses to impose a singular form to their archive, their documentations take on alternate forms depending on

their context in order to allow their work to resonate for various audience members in different ways. Furthermore, by structuring their archival projects as fragmentary, the group necessitates that those who experience their archives invest in the work both hermeneutically and affectively, in order to recreate the material presented by piecing together an individual and unique narrative. By calling their viewers to engage with their archives in this way, Forced Entertainment creates documentations which are never completed, but are continually made and remade by those who encounter them, and thus sustain a connection to the world around them. These projects set up the conditions for the group's more experimental archival projects, which are more explicit in the participatory demands they make on their audiences. Their archival projects extend connections into and through the world in which they are created; they are never truly completed, as this form of fragmented archivization allows for these connections to be continually made and remade through individual engagement. Indeed, this approach might also be reflected in the group's propensity to re-perform their works many years later⁹², a topic that I discuss at length in the conclusion to this chapter. The group's work is perpetually remade through its audiences' continued engagement with their archival forms, as well as their own reiterative performances.

3.8 Encountering Photography: *Void Spaces and Nightwalks*

In this section, I will discuss several Forced Entertainment documents which, I argue, exemplify an alternate approach to making archives "live". Rather than being

⁹² For instance, the group has recently re-performed *Speak Bitterness* (first performed in 1994), *Quizoola!* (first performed in 1996), and *12am and Looking Down* (first performed in 1993) and broadcast them as live streams available online.

shaped by their resistance to traditional archival forms, these works aim to engage those who encounter them; rather than attempting to recapture a lost “live” moment, in these projects, the past is re-enlivened through the interaction between documentation and individual. I specifically discuss two photography projects: *Void Spaces*, an exhibition which has been collected in book form, and *Nightwalks*, a visual CD-rom project, which requires the user to navigate their way through a visual narrative. Forced Entertainment’s *Void Spaces* collects photographs from a variety of projects, such as *Frozen Palaces* (a CD-rom project similar to *Nightwalks*, featuring panoramic scenes in which time appears to have stopped), *Hotel Binary* (which consists of several photographs lined up next to each other in juxtaposition: video still-like shots of performers are placed alongside photos of fireworks, street scenes, blurry cityscapes, and out-of-focus close-ups of indiscernible subjects), and *Rules of the Game* (which features a loose grid composed of photos of a party in progress, placed alongside lists of rules for a drinking game). In each instance, though in different ways, the photographic object encourages engagement not with the photographed event’s passing, but rather its continued life.

Forced Entertainment’s photography rejects the expectations of documentary photography; much like their other archival projects, their photography deliberately produces conceptual gaps, often producing images without context or explanation. Describing the nature of Forced Entertainment’s long term collaboration with photographer Hugo Glendinning, Etchells remarks that working in the photographic form was a relief. Rather than the theatre, which required “getting endless intangibles to be present in so many different rooms”, photography “could live under a new rule: just get it right and get it on film” (16). He describes how “Shooting with Hugo we loved the liberty of those performances that only had to be right, or simply look right, for a fraction of a

second” (16). Here, Etchells further distances the group’s utilization of archival forms from their typical intentions: the photographs taken by Glendinning do not have the expectation of representing performance in any form. Indeed, the group seems to use photography as a space to refuse documentation, using photography to stage the deliberate failure of archiving. Speaking of a set of publicity photos shot by Glendinning of performer Cathy Naden, Etchells wonders, “could she have known the way her eyes looked? Could Hugo even have known? I doubt it” (17). He continues, suggesting that “The chances are [Glendinning] was shooting without looking through the camera, holding it over his head or at arm’s length, shooting without being sure in order to escape the logics of framing and control—as if that alone might capture certain traces?” (17). More than avoiding the types of intentional mediation and representation which make performance documentation problematic, these acts are a deliberate refusal of the notion of an original. If the performer and photographer have no access to the past moment which they were ostensibly “recording”, it seems the intention of the photograph is to abandon its referent, to leave behind only the representation. This shifts the purpose and intention of the archival object away from its relationship to the past, and towards its connections to the future, rather than dwelling on the lost originary moment in which the object was produced, Forced Entertainment is much more interested in the potential encounter between the archive and its prospective interlocutors, which is characterized by active engagement and affective response on the part of the viewer.

I will read the encounter with Forced Entertainment’s photography through the work of Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, and Jill Bennett, each of whom regard the viewing of a photograph as a process of active engagement. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes argues that viewing a photograph is not a passive act; he suggests not only that

spectators add something of themselves to the photograph, but that the addition is also “*nonetheless already there*” (55). Barthes describes the photograph as having two aspects: the “studium” and the “punctum”. He describes the latter as, “this element which rises from the scenes, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me...A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (26-7). Immediately, the punctum is an affective feature of photography: it influences and produces a reaction in the photograph's viewer. Barthes goes on to describe the punctum as a force which seems to exist between the subject and the photographic object—it is what the spectator adds to the photograph, but what is also, according to Barthes, “*already there*” (55). The punctum can only exist in relation to a viewer, because it is produced in the spectatorial relationship, and is also the locus for its effect. Barthes extends this argument by suggesting that history requires a viewer, stating that history is “constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it” (65). Here, Barthes' theory is particularly useful for unpacking what Forced Entertainment's photography projects capture. In each of the Forced Entertainment photography projects I discuss here, there are elements of investigation and witnessing, and therefore meaning making on the part of the viewer. Adrian Heathfield describes the experience, stating, “you are placed in the position of the active seeker...something needs to be found, and the spectator's work...is to pursue this goal by exploring places, making connections, deciphering the signs” (21). He suggests that “Unless you manipulate them, these works will give you nothing” (21). He further suggests that spectators have a responsibility “to make the work, by transforming its fragments with your associations, sense, and logic” (21).

The necessity of active work on the part of the spectator is most obvious in *Nightwalks*, a CD-rom project in which users are presented with still images, and must

find and click on objects or spaces of significance in the photograph in order to advance to the next scene. The photographs are all staged at night, in mostly abandoned environments, such as back alleyways, empty streets, and construction sites. Some of the photographs include human subjects, while others do not; however, there is always evidence of human presence, whether it is garbage left on the street, or graffiti on the walls. In several uncanny instances, the viewer returns to the same scene, in order to find that it has changed slightly since they last saw it: a person has appeared, or a significant detail has either appeared or disappeared. In order to advance through this project, the viewer must find the appropriate place to click in the photograph. The technology is fairly basic, so there are not—as far as I could tell in my use of the program—any alternative paths one could take by making different choices. Thus, the project necessitates that interpretive activity be put to practical use, since you must decide where the most likely “clickable” location will be, which requires one to spend time examining the photograph, attempting to determine its most significant component parts. Just as with other forms of art, one must ask oneself: which aspects of this image are compelling? Which are important to its meaning? The accomplishment of these critical tasks is rewarded through your progression to subsequent images. Even in less obvious instances, interpretation and therefore participation is a necessary task when viewing other Forced Entertainment photography projects. For instance, in *Frozen Palaces*, the spectator must work to piece together a narrative from the work’s expansive panoramas. Etchells describes how the group’s work consists of “shards of narrative [which] were only ever shards but which activated the juices for making up a story—the viewer framed as explicit author, a moving point of connection, a joiner-of-dots” (*Void Spaces* 17). For Forced Entertainment, the spectator is a vital participant in producing the performance. Indeed, it

seems this relationship extends into performance's afterlives, where those who encounter the group's archives are given similar responsibilities of witnessing and assembling. This hermeneutical work means that the viewer projects aspects of themselves onto their interpretation of image that they observe. The spectator is thus implicated in each image. The group therefore makes central to its archival project that which is observed by Barthes as implicit: the photograph has no meaning without a spectator to engage with it. An engaged spectator is also vital to the archive more generally: the archive is the space which constitutes knowledge as knowable or speakable, but it is only through the archive's encounter with an interlocutor that the archivable content is made practically knowable. Thus, while it may be the archive that determines and shapes what we know, it is only when that archive meets a subject that this knowledge can enter the world, and therefore become comprehensible in a practical sense.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes goes on to complicate the temporality of the photograph, adding an element of knowing futurity to our viewing of it. He describes his experience viewing a photograph of Lewis Payne as follows:

In 1865, young Lewis Payne tried to assassinate Secretary of State W. H. Seward. Alexander Gardner photographed him in his cell, where he was waiting to be hanged...the *punctum* is: *he is going to die*. I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror the anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose...the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence. (96)

For Barthes, this collision of temporalities is itself a punctum (96). If the punctum is that which makes a photograph affective (both in the sense of provoking a reaction in the viewer, and being created by the energy the viewer puts into the photograph), then it

becomes clear that affect is produced, in part, by these instances of temporal blurring or crossing. In “A Short History of Photography,” Benjamin describes the photograph’s temporality in a similar fashion as Barthes. He argues that, when looking at a photograph, “the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it” (510). For Benjamin, the confluence of past and future is found by the viewer’s active choice. He links the viewers’ involvement in the work to what he considers a modern urge to gain proximity, arguing that “Now, to bring things closer to us, or rather to the masses, is just as passionate an inclination in our day as the overcoming of whatever is unique in every situation by means of its reproduction. Every day the need to possess the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative” (519). The ways in which Forced Entertainment allows its spectators to interact with their archives gives them proximity not traditionally available in those forms. For Forced Entertainment and their spectators, the proximity achieved through documentations traverses temporal lines, exemplifying the nature of the archive as never settled in a singular temporality. The proximity enabled by these works therefore is not necessarily a temporality proximity, but rather an affective one. We feel close to the work, regardless of its temporal position in relation to us.

Nightwalks does not only necessitate the participation of a viewer for practical reasons, but also aims to pull the spectator into the action of the photographs. In the example below, the proximity of the man on the right side of the photograph seems to acknowledge the existence not only of a screen or camera lens, which acts as the border

between subject and viewer, but also seems to recognize the existence of a viewer. Moreover, in the context of the *Nightwalks* CD-rom's programming, this photograph enacts Barthes' punctum. Having clicked through the previous image, the one below appears, the closeness of its subject startling the viewer out of any spectatorial passivity that they may have retained through other photos. This image has the power to startle the viewer by confronting them with a profoundly uncomfortable proximity which seems to implicate the viewer in the photograph. Though only the lower half of the man's face is visible, he seems to direct towards the camera his displeasure, with his stance appearing accusatory. No matter the intention, the image's composition demands recognition from the viewer it confronts.



Figure 3. Page 34 from *Void Spaces* (reproduced with permission from Forced Entertainment/Tim Etchells).

In another example, displayed below, *Nightwalks* forces its viewer into the role of the voyeur.



Figure 4. Page 36 from *Void Spaces* (reproduced with permission from Forced Entertainment/Tim Etchells).

While all of the project's photographs designate the viewer as a voyeur to a certain degree, this effect is heightened by the composition of this example. The placement of the couple to the far left of the frame makes their discovery and disclosure seem accidental, as if they have attempted to hide themselves, but have been unable to escape the searching eye of both the camera and the viewer. In both cases, the work personally implicates its viewer in the act of spectating. It is in this way that *Nightwalks* produces affect, as these moments in which the viewer is recognized tend to produce one of many possible reactions in the spectator: shame, perhaps, or self-consciousness, embarrassment, or indeed possibly pleasure. Additionally, the programming of *Nightwalks* necessarily produces a series of what must be characterized as confrontations between viewer and image: the user cannot see an overview of the images they might encounter, and they exercise no control over which image will appear next. This, I would suggest, heightens the potential for an affectively charged experience, as the spectator has none of the contextual information which might in other instances allow them to consider their reaction in advance of seeing the image itself. Instead, these repeated encounters with strange and at times distressing images demand an immediate response from the viewer.

This response, therefore, tends towards the affective, which is then followed by the critical work required by the project in order to move onto the next image. In sum, the program's design and the content of its images interpellate their audiences in ways which, I argue, produce affectively charged responses. In this way, the project takes an archival form, photography, and produces a live experience of the document, as a user's experience of the project is comprised of both its visual content, and their affective engagement with it.

This perspective seems to imply a rather utopic view of the archive, figuring it as a space where audiences might gain total immersion in an experience. However, the archival encounter produces similar boundaries as performance. Tim Etchells refers to the subjects of these photographs as “poised ghosts; clues to be followed and caught”, continuing that “the events here are halted at some banal or significant moment, while the viewer alone is free to investigate” (*Void Spaces* 15). Etchells' focus on the stillness of these performance objects—underlined in titling one project *Frozen Palaces*—is significant, because it alters the spectatorial relationship between viewer and object. Unlike in live performance, the spectator has the opportunity to spend as much time as they would like absorbing what is presented to them. However, gaining control over the duration of one's experience does not necessarily translate to increased comprehension. Indeed, the spectator is confronted with similar limitations to those produced by live performance: there is always knowledge that is unavailable to the spectator, and there are always limitations to the capabilities of representations, whether it is live or still. However, in both instances, it is the spectator who fills those gaps, not by finding knowledge within the representation, but rather through the experience and knowledge that they bring to bear on the image.

Not only is the spectator asked to take on an active position in relation to photographs, such as those produced by Forced Entertainment, but as Barthes and Benjamin both imply, this active spectatorship necessarily has an effect on the viewer. As Amelia Jones succinctly puts it, “The point here is to allow ourselves to be moved and, if ever so slightly, *changed* by the work we ‘relationally’ engage. The point is to activate and *become activated* by the traces of past performative works, all the while retaining an awareness of how these processes of activation are occurring” (“Unpredictable” 68). Jill Bennett echoes this argument in *Empathic Vision*, where she theorizes the affective responses produced by what she terms “trauma-related art” (7). While Forced Entertainment’s photography projects are not of the same category as those Bennett primarily discusses because they do not seek to document trauma, the group’s works often perform and depict trauma, which I argue allows for the application of Bennett’s argument. She argues that “trauma-related art is best understood as *transactive* rather than *communicative*. It often touches us, but it does not necessarily communicate the ‘secret’ of personal experience” (7). Here, Bennett suggests that the photographic medium is limited; while the photograph does not function to communicate to its viewer all of what may be contained within it, Bennett suggests that this does not limit the photograph’s effect on the viewer. The photograph cannot, therefore, communicate a specific truth, but rather produces affects in its spectators. These affective responses are triggered by the photograph, but are not resident within it, meaning that the affect felt in response to viewing a photograph is produced by the spectator, and varies depending on the viewer. Indeed, in contrast to Benjamin’s focus on the presence of a subject within the photograph, Bennett argues that affect can arise in situations other than identification with an other. She observes that in the works she studies, “affect arises in place rather than

human subjects, in a way that allows us to isolate the function of affect, focusing on its motility rather than its origins within a single subject” (10). She continues, arguing for a consideration of “an empathy grounded not in affinity (*feeling for* another insofar as we can imagine *being* that other) but on a *feeling for* another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible” (10).

From this perspective, we might understand the process of viewing Forced Entertainment’s archival photography projects as provoking an affective response, even where the photograph’s ability to communicate any form of truth is (often deliberately) limited or diverted. To return briefly to the examples offered earlier, the images that appear in *Nightwalks* do so without any explanatory context. When confronted with an image, all the viewer knows about it is what is shown: we see a kissing couple, or a pair of people in an alleyway, but we are given no background information about them. Indeed, there is no narrative to the piece beyond what the spectator produces as they interpret the photographs that appear. However, this lack of contextual information does not, I argue, limit the viewer’s engagement with these images. Even without knowing precisely what these photographs depict, the viewer experiences them affectively, reacting to their own interpretation of the photograph’s content. Affect is vital to the equation here: as spectators encounter *Nightwalks*’ images, they become responsible for producing their own interpretation of these fragmentary scenes, attempting to place the photographs within a narrative context which is assembled through a viewer’s perception and affective response to the content. In this way, spectators to the work project themselves into the work they experience, as the encounter is informed at first by how it affects them, and secondly how they utilize that affective response in order to interpret and piece together a narrative through which one can understand the work.

Thus, where representation fails, or hits a limit, it is the spectator who steps in to flesh out the work's potential. Tim Etchells describes the role of the audience as a responsibility, stating, "I think that we're familiar with the idea that when an audience sees this work they are responsible for completing it—filling gaps and making connections between texts...I don't think our work's any different to any other cultural artifact. Where I do think it's different is that we try to bring to people's attention to their role in completing what's happening" (qtd. in Kaye, *Art into Theatre* 247-249).

Ultimately, Forced Entertainment works to emphasize the role that the audience plays in sustaining archives. It is through the living bodies of spectators that the knowledge contained within the archive is continually re-enlivened. However, much like in Punchdrunk's immersive theatre, while the spectator might be invited in, this does not lead to infinite agency over their own experience. Etchell's wording in the above quotation is significant: spectators are integrated in service of "completing what's happening", which means that they are inscribed into narratives not their own, limiting their actual control over the experience. However, as is increasingly evident in the group's recent use of Twitter and live streams, Forced Entertainment upholds a discourse which plays into neoliberal patterns of consumption by suggesting that spectators can and do have the power to determine how they experience the performance. More specifically, Forced Entertainment seems to suggest the potential for spectators to experience in an entirely self-interested way; however, as much as their rhetoric might suggest otherwise, the group's own interests necessarily come before those of their spectators.

3.9 Collective Archives: Forced Entertainment Online

From April 2013 to October 2014, Forced Entertainment produced four separate live streamed performances of their work in order to celebrate their 30th anniversary. These performances included *And on the Thousandth Night*, *Quizoola*, *Speak Bitterness*, and *12am Awake and Looking Down*. Each of these live streamed performances had a hashtag which allowed online audience members to access a conversation amongst fellow spectators about the performance in real-time, an opportunity for simultaneous response which is traditionally not available in the theatre. Notably, in the years following their anniversary celebration, Forced Entertainment has live streamed numerous other performances, demonstrating the group's enthusiasm for the concept.⁹³ This format produces two parallel performances: the live-stream, showcasing work from Forced Entertainment's performance history, and the Twitter response, showcasing the impact of their works. While the live-stream might be understood to replicate the ephemerality of live performance, the Twitter response was archived instantly, not just online, but also on physical servers. Spectators' hash-tagged tweets thus outlast the performances as their remains or afterlives. This twin format offers a means of remembering and documenting which stages the limits of traditional performance archives by demonstrating that memories and responses to performance are always already radically individual, and therefore fragmentary. Here, the group once again challenges the presumption that a performance's afterlives offer (or pretend to offer) any "real" access to the performance itself. In this instance, Forced Entertainment engages with performance's longstanding

⁹³ At the time of writing in September 2016, Forced Entertainment was in the midst of a week-long nightly live-stream of their *Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare*.

conflict with the archive by democratizing its own archivization, seeming to place the power to define, structure, and construct the works' archives directly in the hands of audiences. Forced Entertainment uses these live streams to achieve two goals: to fulfill their audiences' desire to prosume, as well as have an experience which feels live, but also exclusive and individual; and to do the necessary entrepreneurial work to promote themselves as valuable contributors to the UK theatre economy. These live stream projects are both an archive of performance, and a performance of the archive, as the work makes plain the processes involved in documentation, as well as its commercial potential. More specifically, Forced Entertainment performs a particular type of archival project, which seeks to mimic the group's commitment to experimenting with archival forms, attempting to incorporate the liveness of their performances and of their audiences into their accompanying documentations.

From the perspective of a scholar like Peggy Phelan, for example, these live streamed performances vanish in the moment of their creation, just like any other performance, and the tweets which accompany the performance become the "something else" (146)—documentary remains, in this instance—that Phelan argues are produced when performance is saved, or repeated. However, these live stream/live tweet performances exemplify the limits of this dichotomy between performance as live and document as dead. From a practical standpoint, the performance, which seems ephemeral, is being transmitted by video link, and is therefore mediated through recording technology, and therefore, even in its "live" moment is already saved, in preparation for its (presumed) future dissemination. Additionally, if we understand tweets as 140 character, text-based performances, then that which appears to be inherently archival (because of its relative permanence online, and indeed physical permanence on a server in

a warehouse) in fact briefly intersects with the live, just as the live overlaps the archival. In this instance, performance becomes both live and archival, and the accompanying tweets at once archival and live.

For Forced Entertainment, Derrida's argument that the archive "determines the structure of the archivable content" (17) (thus re-constituting archived material, rather than recording it) is not a fact to mourn, but is rather creatively productive: offering up Twitter as a space for spectators to archive the experience of the live streamed performance, the group emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the archive. Each tweet represents only a fraction of a single user's spectatorial experience, and therefore can only attest to that brief moment of individual perception. Utilizing the audience as the central archiving component is therefore a significant strategy, and one that Forced Entertainment has employed in several recent instances. In addition to encouraging online response via Twitter for each of their live-streamed performances, in 2014, the group put out "an open call for people to submit texts describing, thinking around, considering, marking or in any way remembering the company's work in the three decades" (Forced Entertainment), for use in a notebook collection called #FE365. In each of these examples, the remains left behind by live performance are distinctly individual impressions, comprising a decidedly fragmentary archive. However, what differentiates the use of Twitter from #FE365 is Forced Entertainment's lack of authority over the content of the tweets. While the contributions ultimately chosen for #FE365 were carefully chosen by three individuals appointed by Forced Entertainment, tweets represent the uncurated responses of "regular" spectators. Allowing for response on Twitter, therefore, allows audiences to construct an archive that is entirely comprised of personal, individual response, as fragmentary, disagreeable, or confusing as it may be.

This format is representative of the economy of the archive, and memory more generally. An archive of tweets performs the limited nature of the archive, because these tweets themselves are the always already fragmentary representations of individual perceptions and memories—not to mention the further mediation through the self-representation and self-performance that goes hand in hand with posting a comment on the Internet. Rather than performing the expected tasks of the archive, such as securing performance's presence, preserving performance in its live form, or protecting against performance's inherent ephemerality, this Twitter archive instead demonstrates—and performs—the very limit and impossibility of such archival pursuits.

Rebecca Schneider poses a compelling question: “in privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently?” (98). While it is entirely possible that Forced Entertainment might release the recordings of their live streamed performances—as they have with many of their other performances—at present, the only archive of these performances are the tweets left behind by users watching the performances in real time. Forced Entertainment's chosen form of documentation not only demonstrates the limits of the archive's ability, but also demonstrates the ways in which affect can become the reality of one's experience, even if material conditions contradict that feeling. For example, the reliance on individual impressions seems to democratize the archivization of the group's work, by shifting the archival authority to the audience, and allowing them to determine the shape and content of the archive itself. However, the decision to utilize an online streaming format would also seem to void performance of the communal and intersubjective experiences of the live, in person, theatrical experience, audiences

reported the opposite. This reality that one likely actually experiences the live streamed performance in isolation is not sufficient to overcome the utopic discourse associated with this practice. While Forced Entertainment might be capitalizing on this disconnect in order to sustain the fantasy that this experience allows spectators agency over their affective experience, the group also offers a valuable insight into the ways in which how an experience makes a spectator feel is often more impactful than the reality of its material conditions. For instance, numerous Twitter users commented on the surprisingly intimate and communal atmosphere online, a sentiment which is utopic, but nonetheless of real value to those spectators. Based on audience responses, the experience of the live stream firmly undid the notion that the archive is a space for the “dead” past. Rather, in this instance, the space of the archive became, as Guardian theatre critic Lyn Gardner put it “an even more communal space” than the auditorium of a live performance because “you can be in constant dialogue with other people while watching” (“Tweet Bitterness”). The livestreams destabilize assumptions about what an archive must be by making the space reserved for the preservation of the performance host to a live audience experience, and collapsing the divisions which are commonly understood to exist between live theatre and its documentation. However, while this experience is a live one, it is also strictly regulated by the practicalities of the format, such as the previously-mentioned isolation, the typical single camera shot of the performance, and Twitter as the designated platform for response. Moreover, the use of Twitter as a documentation of their performances follows in Forced Entertainment’s trend of producing archives which necessitate audience participation; here, spectators participate in the work actively and meaningfully by determining its archival remains to some degree, but they also become inscribed into the narrative that Forced Entertainment wants their archive to tell, contributing personal

narratives and reactions which lead indirectly to monetary profit and cultural capital for the group, rather than the spectator.

Forced Entertainment has therefore developed a format which produces dual performances. The live stream might follow the logic of ephemerality, but the Twitter response produces a second performance, one which is simultaneously live and documentary, both defying the archive and defining it. While tweets might appear to be inherently documentary—particularly when written in response to an event—we can also characterize tweets as performative utterances⁹⁴ which, alongside any alternate purposes, such as documentation, perform a version of the self. The responses to Forced Entertainment’s live stream are not only remainders, leftovers from the live performances—an archive of performance—but also a performance of archive, wherein participating spectators/Twitter users perform themselves in the archival act, by recording online their reactions, responses, and reflections on the streamed work.

While discourse surrounding the archive’s fragmentary nature tends to focus on the destruction, loss, and absences produced by archival processes,⁹⁵ this performative archive offers a reorientation, focusing instead on what has been gained, for both the spectators and creators. The standard discourse surrounding the archive—particularly in terms of performance—casts documentations as a problematic but necessary antidote to performance’s ephemerality, in order to defend against live performance’s inevitable disappearance or vanishing. Forced Entertainment’s revision of the archival format in this instance shifts the aims of the archival process away from protecting against what might

⁹⁴ Following J.L. Austin’s “How to Do Things with Words”.

⁹⁵ For example, in Phelan’s anxiety that documentation destroys performance by changing it into “something else” (*Unmarked* 146).

be lost between experience and memory, instead celebrating what is gained in the experience of performance. The discourse of gain or benefit has two connotations: the first is the somewhat utopic narrative perpetuated by Forced Entertainment, that spectators will have gained some form of personal development or edification in having had an affecting experience; for their part, Forced Entertainment gains in the form of capital, either economic or cultural. The tweets themselves demonstrate the pervasiveness of the group's desired focus on the live stream's benefits to the spectator, as users Tweeting about the streaming version of *Speak Bitterness* commented on the audience's "incredible engagement" (@JasonJCrouch Sat Oct 18 22:57), another stating that "the Internet finally made proper sense to me last night" (@whoustoun Sun Oct 19 2014: 11:24), and yet another describing how the performance "moved astounded and rocked me. Exploded what I thought live performance was and could be" (@amcchisholm Sat Oct 18 22:07). Not only do these tweets demonstrate and convey the effect that the performance had on its spectators, but users also explicitly referenced the performance's continued and lasting influence over their lives. @KateWyver commented that "I feel like they're all still talking, we just can't hear them" (@KateWyver Sat Oct 18 22:16), and @k8heffernan tweeted that, "In the pub afterwards, every line of every conversation felt like a confession to an act I had been complicit in" (@k8heffernan Sun Oct 19 00:04). In this way, I argue that the remains of Forced Entertainment's live streamed performance are much more than, as one Twitter user put it, "frozen performance debris" (@jess_jbr, Sun Oct 19 08:33). What Forced Entertainment produces through these live streams is a shift from regarding the archive as marked by disappearance and loss, towards constructive gain. For the audience, the rhetoric of gain is a promise made by Forced Entertainment that spectators will have a valuable experience because it will be an

affecting one, and indeed this does seem to be case for many spectators, based on their Twitter responses. While it is Forced Entertainment that ultimately profits from this strategy—monetarily, as well as in terms of increased notoriety and cultural capital—the value of the affective experience that spectators have testified to on Twitter should not be immediately disregarded. Such responses demonstrate the value placed on experiences that make spectators *feel*, even if their material conditions do not wholly match their optimistic affect. For many spectators, the reality that companies like Forced Entertainment (and Punchdrunk) ultimately profit off of spectators' participation in and affective response to their work, does not diminish the value or effect of the experience for the consumer.

Despite their project's inherently neoliberal attributes, Forced Entertainment's reorientation of the archive is particularly pertinent for performance studies, where the archivization and documentation of live performance tends to be especially fraught. There are immense anxieties both over the need to record and document live performance to protect it from being lost to history, as well as concerns over what is lost when live performance is documented in a concrete form. What Forced Entertainment's experiment demonstrates are the possibilities of a space in which the archive does not necessarily portend live performance's destruction. While Twitter spectators express grief that the streaming performance has ended, the primary focus of the Twitter responses is on impressions, reflections, and opinions on the work. In short, these are affects which outlast the performance itself. Such tweets create an archive which is at once limited by its individual nature, but also allows us to understand variant experiences of the performance. The gain, therefore, is not solely on the part of the spectator, but also other interested parties who might visit the online archive.

Allowing audience members to feel involved in a performance, and giving them the agency to produce a performance archive is certainly beneficial on an individual level; however, this framework has several practical limitations. Firstly, though this format is more accessible than live performance, there remain issues of access, as watching the performance not only necessitates a computer and internet connection, but also the hours of free time available to watch them. Furthermore, Twitter's limit of 140 characters per tweet necessarily influences and modifies the way in which a spectator might respond, causing them to leave out observations in an effort to use the space economically. More significantly, many followers of the streamed performance used Twitter as a space to quote lines from the performance, without commentary, producing an echo chamber effect, as many Twitter users tend to post repetitions of the same lines. On the one hand, tweets which quote the text of the performance likely represent the closest point of access to the performance itself where no video recording or published complete text exists. The drawback, however, are these tweets' ambiguity: does a repetition express implied approval of the sentiment? That it resonates with the spectator? Or, could the quotation be intended as mockery? Without an accompanying response that tells us more about the user's experience watching the performance, the intentions of such utterances remain unclear. While this limits the interpretability of this democratized archive, these quotations can serve as further embodiments of the archive's limits. Even in documentation's moment of greatest potential, the fragmentary and subjective nature of archival projects means that these limits are continuously confronted, and in this case, performed. There is one more way in which this archive is limited which challenges its characterization as a "democratization". In order to participate in this archive, one must have a) access to a computer, b) access to the internet, c) the cultural knowledge

necessary to know how to use Twitter, and d) spare time available to commit to the performance, and to tweeting along with it. These logistical restrictions limit the possible participants in the performance conversations by implicitly necessitating a certain level of economic status and privilege to order to gain access to the performance and its accompanying discourse. Thus, while presenting a performance through an online live stream opens up access to the performance by making it free to watch and available from any geographical locations, it is important to acknowledge that the ability to view these performances or to offer commentary on them is not universal. With that said, Forced Entertainment and other theatre-makers who have chosen to release their work for free online should be recognized for taking steps to allow more diverse and far-flung audiences to see their work, and by encouraging more voices to participate in conversations about performance.

It seems appropriate that Forced Entertainment should mark its 30th anniversary with several experiments which manipulate the relationship between live performance and archivization. These live streamed/live tweeted works, I would suggest, demonstrate Forced Entertainment's further development of theatrical strategies which simultaneously perform, challenge, and defy the limits of the archive. Twitter, and other social media platforms, allow for audiences to respond independent of official authorization, but via a platform which allows their contribution to be publicly available, instantly archived, and therefore a constitutive aspect of the performance's documentation. Indeed, this project represents the logical extension of the group's attempts to integrate the audience into their archives, allowing spectators to determine and create the content of the archive.

In this chapter, I have discussed two broad categories of Forced Entertainment's archival works: those which are explicit attempts to reject archival conventions, and those

which aim to include the audience in their production of documentation. While the former can produce incidental moments of audience participation, the latter group of works makes this feature a necessity, and thus more successfully produces an engagement between the work and its audience. Rather than producing “live” archives by defying the traditional conventions of the form, by creating works which involve their spectators Forced Entertainment prompts viewers to respond, re-enlivening the documented work, and moving it from the past to the present through the affectively engaged spectator.

In the UK’s economic climate, which increasingly asks artists to become more entrepreneurial, Forced Entertainment’s creation of projects which document their own devising processes and performance practices cannot be regarded without some healthy scepticism. While their experimentations with archival forms allow us to reconsider the ways in which documentations operate in relation to those who encounter them, we must also interrogate the purpose and value of such works. Indeed, the group’s substantial collection of archives suggests that Forced Entertainment and their work is inherently important and culturally valuable. The logic of the archive is self-fulfilling: if one’s work is significant enough to be archived, this logic suggests, all work from that source is viewed through the lens of value and importance. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of Forced Entertainment’s documentations are produced by the group itself, though many are produced in collaboration with major institutions such as the Live Art Development Agency, Tate Research, or the British Library. In most cases, these are not instances of Forced Entertainment being archived by another body; instead, the group often self-archives. The group’s choice to archive themselves is, in part, a result of the UK government’s institutional encouragement of artistic entrepreneurship, which necessitates a certain degree of self-interest or narcissism on the part of Forced

Entertainment. In each of the examples I have provided in this chapter, the group maintains central creative authority over the ways that they are documented, exercising a significant amount of power over their performances' afterlives, and their legacy as artists. The photography projects I have discussed are all produced essentially from within, as they are photographed by Hugo Glendinning, the group's longstanding collaborator. Critical reflections—in particular, *Certain Fragments*, the only full-length book documenting the group's history—are typically produced within texts edited or substantially written by the group's artistic director, Tim Etchells, and are therefore sanctioned narratives. Even the group's choice to re-perform works from their own oeuvre attests to their myopic approach to archivization, which seems characterized by a desire to control the discourse through which they are understood, as well as a deeply entrenched self-interest at the heart of their creative process. From one perspective, the level of control Forced Entertainment has exerted over their archivization is precisely what has allowed them to experiment and innovate with forms of documentation.

However, while archive cannot and will not provide any authentic or objective access to the past, what does it mean for our understanding of the archive if we view it through the lens of self-interest and self-promotion? Furthermore, what are the implications of Forced Entertainment's choice to integrate their audiences into self-interested documentary projects? In the following section, which concludes this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which narcissism influences the archive, using Forced Entertainment's documentary works as the catalyst for an analysis of the function and value of archives in a neoliberal, contemporary culture.

3.10 Forced Entrepreneurialism

While the kinds of archival projects Forced Entertainment produces can be characterized as narcissistic, this individual self-interest is precisely the approach that the contemporary art market demands that artists take. In this final section, I will use Forced Entertainment as an example of the type of “artpreneurialism” that Jen Harvie discusses in *Fair Play*, ultimately coming to a proposed understanding of the purpose and implications of making archives into live experiences. I suggest that, in the documentary works I have discussed, Forced Entertainment has developed an optimized form for the mass dissemination of affect, which I argue is an exemplification of the kind of artistic forms that are encouraged by neoliberalism’s focus on individualism and profit.

Forced Entertainment’s dedication to self-archivization can be read as a form of narcissism: their projects can become centred around celebrating their own processes of devising and documenting (particularly in works like *Certain Fragments* and *A Decade of Forced Entertainment*). The group is self-interested in a very literal sense, insofar as their work often engages with other instances of their own work, or their own creative processes. Moreover, their work encourages a similar self-interest on the part of the audience by making it possible for spectators to experience their work in total isolation. The group’s repeated use of live streams, video recorded performances, as well as projects which use largescale distribution formats such as books, photographs, and CD-ROMs, allows their audiences to engage with the work when, where, and under what conditions they alone might prefer. No longer must audiences reckon with fellow spectators to experience a performance. Now, it is possible to do so in conditions defined entirely by one’s own desires. Consuming performance thus concerns the self alone in

relation to the work. In addition, spectators are not only given the power to determine the environment in which they consume the performance, but, much like in *Nightwalks*, are given a certain amount of agency over the performance itself. In this way, spectators are encouraged and given the opportunity to consume a performance experience that occurs entirely according to their specifications. Unlike at immersive theatre performances, which operate in a single setting occupied by a large group, Forced Entertainment allows for the individual to operate in total isolation. Thus, the ways in which a spectator might participate in crafting their experience of a Forced Entertainment performance work does not have any influence on how any other spectator might experience the work. From each end of the experience, individualism is the guiding principle: for Forced Entertainment, these projects are often all about their own work; for the spectator, the individual experience is similarly the focal point.

However, these self-interested performance and spectatorial strategies are not without purpose. Indeed, narcissism as a mode of consumption seems intimately linked to affective experiences. The pervasive cultural desire for experiences which feel live has extended so far as to include archival or documentary forms. Artists like Forced Entertainment have capitalized on this appetite for affective experiences for many years, producing a long list of performances which emphasize their liveness using techniques such as improvisation, spontaneity, meta-theatre, and durationality. Moreover, the group has extended this practice into their self-produced archival projects. Not only does this attempt to include liveness in what in the past have been considered “dead” forms demonstrate the centrality of the live to performance practice in a contemporary context, but it also exemplifies the group’s economization of the process of producing live experiences. In short, what might be considered narcissistic choices are also inherently

economical ones. While Forced Entertainment continues to perform new, original works, like *Real Magic* (produced in 2016) or *The Notebook* (first produced in 2014), many of the works they currently perform or have recently performed are re-performances (such as *Speak Bitterness*, created in 1994, and most recently re-performed in 2014, and *And on the Thousandth Night*, created in 2000, and most recently re-performed in 2016), or re-workings of previous pieces (such as *From the Dark* [2016] and *And on the Thousandth Night* [2000], both of which draw material from *Who Can Sing a Song to Unfrighten Me?* which was first produced in 1999). While the process of re-working a piece from one's repertoire can be a space for the creation of original content, this continual return to established works (and indeed established forms, as the group's most recent work *Real Magic* utilizes many of the group's characteristic traits) suggests a desire to maximize affective engagement while not overtaxing the group's creative abilities. Thus, Forced Entertainment follows a highly economical model of pairing strategies like re-performance, revision, or variation on the same themes or concepts with improvisation and spontaneity in order to produce the maximum feeling of liveness with a minimal output of additional creative labour. In this instance, Forced Entertainment benefits from the neoliberal expectations placed upon them. Under the expectation that artists must execute their creative work in increasingly entrepreneurial ways, Forced Entertainment has internalized neoliberalism's principle of economization, and used it to their own benefit. Their strategy—for example, performing old work in addition to new work, and relying on online streams to bring in additional audiences—allows them to continue to successfully make creative work without becoming subsumed into the economy of increasing productivity which often accompanies the expectation that labourers will operate entrepreneurially. Forced Entertainment therefore frustrates the neoliberal logic

that values excessive productivity as inherently valuable and a marker of one's success. By experimenting with archival techniques, Forced Entertainment can create, and deliver experiences to their audiences without requiring either creator or consumer to work disproportionately to feel fulfilled or satisfied.

Forced Entertainment's archival projects are an extension of the group's desire to produce maximal affect with minimal labour; "multiples" in the form of books, photographs, video recordings, and online content can all be produced on a large scale and bring in additional profit for the artists' work. Moreover, the group's recent penchant for live streaming performances follows a comparable economy: though not mass produced, the performance is distributed to its audience on a similarly massive scale. Based on my analysis of the affectively engaging features of the group's projects, Forced Entertainment's archivizations are a largescale delivery system for live, affective experiences. The group's corpus of documentary creations distributes affective experience on a mass scale, since these projects can be mass produced for mass consumption. This system is not only beneficial for the producer, as it allows them to increase their impact while limiting their workload, but is also appealing for consumers who are accustomed to instant delivery, constant access, and convenience in other aspects of their lives. For example, Forced Entertainment's live streams allow audiences to access live performances at their leisure, enable them to walk away without any of the stigma attached to such an action in a theatre, and permit them to return at their convenience. The live stream is designed to be easy-to-access, and to allow audiences to customize their experience of the work according to their personal preferences or needs. The live stream's Twitter response mechanism is similarly convenient for the user: spectators can choose to comment in whatever form they would like (though Twitter limits content to 140

characters, users can easily circumvent this by writing several successive tweets), at any time they would like, whether it be during the performance or long afterwards, or they can opt not to respond at all, again without any social or institutional pressure. This format allows you to engage or disengage at will; in short, it allows you to have an affective experience on your own terms.

Forced Entertainment's capitalization on the possibilities of archival forms for conveniently delivering affectively live experiences on a mass scale is both inherently neoliberal but also mutually beneficial for the artists and their spectators, both in its intentions and effects. Before I move on to discuss this work as an exemplification of neoliberal art, I would like to emphasize that I am not suggesting that the Forced Entertainment projects I have specifically discussed in this chapter, or the group's practice more generally, are lazy or meaninglessly capitalistic. Both developing new, original work, and re-performing previously presented pieces necessitates a significant amount of work, as does producing publications, exhibitions, and other documentary materials, and I do not seek to minimize Forced Entertainment's labour. I do not think the system of mass production and dissemination of experience is the result of a desire not to do work, but rather the result of and a response to the neoliberal context in which Forced Entertainment is situated. Moreover, Forced Entertainment has done constructive work by utilizing neoliberal expectations as the fuel to develop strategies which allow the group to continue to offer engaging and fulfilling experiences for their spectators. Indeed, in these projects, the group produces work which necessarily capitalizes on the cultural desires of their present moment, and demonstrates the types of strategies necessary for arts organizations to survive in the contemporary economy. Thus, in what follows, I aim to be critical not of Forced Entertainment themselves, but of the kind of work demanded by the

current cultural climate, and of its effects on our experience of the world in which it operates.

In her book, *Fair Play*, Jen Harvie discusses the demands that neoliberal institutions place on artists. She states that “Political, economic and social mandates to foster creative economies are increasingly casting art practice as economic practice and the artist as entrepreneur” (62). Specifically, she argues that arts funding agencies currently “exhort artists to model creative entrepreneurialism” (62). For example, Harvie quotes at length an Arts Council of England document entitled *Supporting Growth in the Arts Economy*, which foregrounds its capital-centric approach by referring to artists as “micro-creative businesses” (qtd. in Harvie 71). The document’s authors, Fleming and Erskine, suggest that with artists turning their attention to being more entrepreneurial—implicitly, self-interested and profit-driven—“art will not only get better, but it will be enjoyed by more people, on their own terms, and in deeper and more interactive ways” (qtd. in Harvie 71). Indeed, largescale active engagement seems to be the intended effect of Forced Entertainment’s recent projects, which expand access to allow more audience members to experience their work, at their convenience, and produce opportunities for those spectators to extend their engagement with the work through additional apparatuses, like Twitter. For Harvie, this expectation that artists be entrepreneurial in their practice is detrimental to the cultural ecology in three ways: “One, it insists that art prioritizes self-interest and individualism. Two, it requires art to acquiesce to creative destruction as an apparently inevitable by-product of innovation...And three, it obliges art relentlessly to pursue productivity, permanent growth and profit” (63). As Harvie recognizes, while the desire to make a profit is not intrinsically bad (76), “To use the business term, the ‘opportunity cost’ of this focus is that many other possible *cultural* values of art practices

are sorely neglected and underdeveloped, especially, I argue, principles of sociality and egalitarianism. Overall, accepting that artists should be entrepreneurial, that they must marketize to survive, fundamentally reifies neoliberal values as legitimate and legitimately ubiquitous” (78).

The problem with promoting such values, according to Harvie, is that “selfish and/or neoliberal capitalism inherently intensifies inequality and so is culturally divisive and destructive” (80). She continues, “increased inequality is not so much an unfortunate by-product of neoliberalism as it is one of its *requirements* as a necessary stimulus for its own growth” (81). A further danger of promoting self-interested and profit-driven attitudes towards art is the insidious nature through which these neoliberal values operate. To return to Forced Entertainment as an example, projects like their live stream/Twitter strategy mask their neoliberal features beneath a guise of inclusivity, universal access, and sociality. As I have already discussed, there are significant limitations to what at first appears to be a democratization of access. In reality, only a relatively privileged set of individuals will be able to partake. Moreover, while the experience of the live stream and its accompanying Twitter conversation might *feel* communal, the reality is that it is comprised of isolated individuals, participating alone from in front of their computers. This exercise therefore skillfully obscures its valorization of individual self-interest by professing intentions of community and inclusion. Notably, such qualities have been the major focus of the discourse surrounding these projects. While live streaming a performance online does not necessarily lead directly to profit for the company, the largescale exposure online (and especially on Twitter, via the advertising produced by spectators tweeting along with and about the live streamed performance) can be expected to lead to increased profits indirectly by increasing the group’s public profile. It is in this

way that Forced Entertainment exemplifies the “artrepreneur” that is so desired by contemporary arts funding agencies, and by those with neoliberal interests more generally.

The group’s extensive self-archivization signifies the company’s choice to take their reputation and legacy into their own hands, determining it themselves, rather than allowing it to be decided solely by market forces or arts institutions. In this entrepreneurial act, Forced Entertainment implicitly falls in line with the expectations of a neoliberal economy. The archive itself is a powerful stage upon which neoliberal value systems can play out. If, as I have argued throughout this chapter, the archive is a performance of power, then contemporary archives are decidedly neoliberal theatres. Indeed, each of the Forced Entertainment projects I have discussed in this chapter encourage self-interested engagement, as each is designed to be experienced alone. The affective component of these works further emphasizes that they are solitary exercises, as each spectator uniquely refashions the fragmentary documentary material they are offered in their experience of it.

Conclusion

“Theatre is ever the presence of the absence and the absence of the presence.”

- Elinor Fuchs, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing”

In September 2015, on a research trip to London, UK, I went to see dreamthinkspeak’s *Absent*, a site-responsive immersive performance, which took place at Shoreditch Town Hall. *Absent* brings together several of the themes which have permeated this dissertation, and this being the case, I would like to use the performance in order to encapsulate several of my thesis’s primary arguments. The work is based on the story of the Duchess of Argyll, who checked into London’s Grosvenor Hotel in 1978, and in 1990 was evicted from the hotel for lack of funds. In *Absent*, Argyll is adapted into Margaret d’Beaumont, “an optimistic 18-year old in the 1950’s and being evicted in the present day, into a modernised and radically changed world” (dreamthinkspeak). Over the course of the performance, spectators see d’Beaumont represented over the course of her life, the years compressed within the performance space. Taking place in a labyrinth of rooms in the basement of the Shoreditch Town Hall, *Absent* is experienced alone or in small groups. You move through a series of hallways, hotel bedrooms, a ballroom, and several desolate and empty cellar rooms, as d’Beaumont’s life plays out in front of you in various forms: the Duchess appears as a young woman in video clips projected onto the space’s walls, and as an older woman, briefly in person at the beginning of the performance (through a pane of one-way glass), and then scattered across photographs, bits of text found scattered around the space, and video clips.

At the outset, there are several key echoes between *Absent* and the performances I have discussed thus far: the work gives us yet another female character, fragmented and

scattered across a theatrical piece; the work is another instance of a performance where, like in Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* and *The City*, a character does not need to be fully present or embodied in order to be felt as such; the performance spatializes a non-linear narrative, and is a promenade immersive performance, allowing the audience to move through the theatrical environment and experience the performance as they come upon it, as in Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*; and the performance recalls Forced Entertainment's use of fragments and archival forms in live work, by telling its story through photography, video projections, and bits of text like newspapers. Moreover, *Absent* depicts a fundamentally neoliberal conflict: a real estate development project threatens, and indeed decimates, D'Beaumont's social safety net (her community environment at the hotel), requiring her to "go it alone". The impacts of neoliberalism have permeated the entirety of this project, not only because each case study is born out of a neoliberal socio-economic environment, but also because each can be read as using the quality or affect of liveness in order to produce and capitalize on an economized approach to daily life, and in particular, each performance's spectators participate in a pattern of affect consumption typical of neoliberal ideology. This connection between affect, liveness, and neoliberalism is embodied by both the experience and the content of *Absent*.

Absent represents a useful consideration of the ways in which the types of contemporary performance I have discussed can work to organize and regulate the experiences of their spectators, particularly in terms of affective response. For example, I arrived at the Shoreditch Town Hall, unaware that the entirety of the space had been given over to *Absent*'s fiction. I entered, and was promptly asked by a uniformed employee if I was there to check-in, as if at a hotel. I failed to realize that this "hotel

check-in” beginning was, in fact, part of the experience, and instead of responding in kind, I said I was there to see a performance, shattering the fictional scenario that the individuals I had not realized were also performers had set up. When they proceeded with the “check-in”, I realized my error, and felt distinctly at risk of “failing” the performance. Eager to make up for this failure to properly participate, when I was ushered into a café waiting area, I sat obediently, reading a copy of a newspaper that had been doctored to fit into *Absent*’s fictional world. Following these initial slip-ups, I felt the need to work to “measure up” for the remainder of the performance. These brief moments where I failed to properly participate in the performance’s fiction made material the expectation, and even requirement, that spectators perform labour in order to have a satisfyingly “live” experience.

Much like at Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More*, *Absent* makes necessary a certain amount of hermeneutic and narrative-assembling work on the part of the audience, again necessitating active work on the part of the spectator in order to feel that you have experienced the performance to its fullest. Even though *Absent* follows a more linear spatiality than Punchdrunk’s expansive spaces, the performance nonetheless still places demands on the spectator to construct a narrative based on their experience of various fragments of story. As Time Out’s review of the performance points out, “The one thing the rooms have in common is that she [the Duchess] is in none of them. She has checked out: the film projections are the memories of her, haunting the spaces she once lived” (Bowie-Sell). D’Beaumont’s narrative is given through bits of video recordings projected on the walls, short in-person appearances, and bits of text scattered around the space, such as newspaper cuttings, which describe at one point D’Beaumont’s arrival at the hotel, and at another announce the hotel’s remodeling project, signalling the passing of time; all of

these fragments require audience engagement in order to serve as substitutes for the Duchess's absent presence.

From these fragments, spectators are intended to construct a narrative based on what they experience over the course of the performance. More specifically, *Absent* asks its spectators to assemble a version of its main character, D'Beaumont. The task of making hermeneutic connections towards assembling an image of a woman echoes my discussion of Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* in this dissertation's first chapter. Spectators are asked to bring D'Beaumont to life by experiencing the detritus of her presence. For example, at one point in the performance, you watch a video recording of a party taking place in a ballroom. The scene is full of vitality and joy. Immediately afterwards, you open a door and step into the same ballroom shown in the video recording; however, when visited in person, the room is empty of guests, the party abandoned and the furniture having been overturned, and the room ransacked. In my experience of the performance, the reveal of this vacated space produced a disquieting affect, as the sudden emptying out of all presence and vitality from the space felt, to me, emblematic of all that D'Beaumont had lost. By moving through the space that she once occupied and reconstructing her presence from fragments and affective impressions, the performance's spectators are what sustains D'Beaumont's image. Furthermore, if spectators are intended to make D'Beaumont present through our affective engagement with her, then we are drawn into a precarious relationship with her. Precarity is an especially relevant concept here since D'Beaumont (and in turn, the Duchess of Argyll, on whom her character is based) is characterized as reliant on the hotel to sustain her way of life. For the real-life Duchess of Argyll, economic insolvency makes her precarious because it results in the loss of her home, and makes her dependent on others for support. Thinking through a

contemporary UK context, the fictional D'Beaumont is made precarious for much more politically relevant reasons: the hotel is being redeveloped, a situation which mirrors the experiences of many who live in contemporary urban spaces. The result, for D'Beaumont, is not depicted as her needing to put her life in hands of friends and family; rather, *Absent* puts her life in the hands of the audience.

The narrative drive of the performance is London's ever-changing and modernizing landscape: D'Beaumont is evicted to make way for the hotel's impending renovations, which will refurbish the building for a new, contemporary time. As *Absent* makes clear, D'Beaumont is of a bygone era, while London continues to march towards the shifting signifier of "progress". The performance illustrates the unceasing nature of development in the ballroom juxtaposition: the world which D'Beaumont knew is symbolically emptied and overthrown by the realities of the present. She simply does not fit into this new world's structures. For example, as we watch her move into her new, "modern" room through a one-way mirror at the beginning of the performance, she is evidently out of place, visibly uncomfortable and alien in this new environment. Indeed, the performance represents not only the realities of London's changing city landscape and its plethora of new development projects, but also demonstrates the ways in which these processes often offer progress somewhat counterintuitively, by harming or limiting the agency of those who are affected by such advancements. *Absent* resonates here with several symptoms of Britain's neoliberalization: like many British citizens, particularly in urban centres like London, D'Beaumont's life undergoes a series of material changes, the results of decisions which she ultimately has no agency or power to participate in, and the consequences of which are her isolation and the loss of a social support network or community. Aside from the work's compelling representation of what it means to exist

and persist from a theoretical standpoint, the performance also grapples with the material effects of neoliberalism on an individual life. For D'Beaumont, progress in real estate and architecture means a dematerialization of her life as she knows it. Now, her memories and her image merely haunt the rooms and hallways where she once lived. Moreover, the development operates despite any human consideration: it does not make a material difference for this project whether or not D'Beaumont can return to her previous life. From the neoliberal perspective, it is entirely her responsibility to cope and adapt to her changing conditions, even where she is powerless to determine the nature of those changes. In one sense, tasking the spectator with taking responsibility for sustaining her precarious presence is an act of kindness which allows the audience to fulfill a duty of care denied to D'Beaumont. The responsibility expected of spectators—who, it is important to note, are also neoliberal subjects—suggests that, contrary to D'Beaumont's experience, one *can* have agency over their conditions, and spectators invited to exercise that agency by imaginatively and affectively recreating the Duchess's presence. On the other hand, rather than placing responsibility for D'Beaumont's situation in the hands of larger forces such as ideological systems and institutions, this expectation that the audience will continually engage with and bring D'Beaumont back to life also offloads responsibility for a precarious subject onto subsequent precarious others. Ultimately, while representing a form of care for the precarious, *Absent's* choice to assign responsibility for D'Beaumont to its spectators is yet another instance in which audiences are expected to perform labour in service of making the performance experience a live one.

The relationship *Absent* produces between spectators and D'Beaumont crystallizes the prevailing position of precarious subjects in the neoliberal present, particularly in

terms of labour and art. In the previous chapter, I closed by discussing Forced Entertainment's entrepreneurial approach to their own archivization, working actively to ensure that their work is documented in a manner appropriate to their theatrical practice. I characterized this strategy, following Jen Harvie, as an example of the "artrepreneur", the self-interested and enterprising attitude towards one's own artistic output that has become common in the UK. neoliberal culture, and in particular, which is encouraged (even demanded) by the country's government funding structures. This conclusion takes the "artrepreneur" model a step further, suggesting that it is now the case that this expectation that artists must operate as "micro-creative businesses" (Harvie 71) is similarly applied to spectators, who are expected to approach art—and particularly performance—with an entrepreneurial spirit and a willingness to work to produce an experience which is felt to be live.

Spectators in the performance works I have discussed throughout this dissertation are tasked with doing creative labour by constructing their own experiences of the performance. As I have argued over the course of this dissertation, affective response is an inherent part of any experience of spectatorship. However, the performances I have chosen as case studies particularly capitalize on the supplementation provided by their spectators' experiences, framing their affective responses as both a mechanism for spectators to maximize their engagement and participation in the work, and therefore as a way to enhance their experience of it. These performances then profit from the spectators' affective engagement: Punchdrunk uses audience testimony and memorialization on social media as a form of independent advertising for their performance, and Forced Entertainment similarly uses audience responses to live streams as built-in promotion for both current and future live streams. More than just profiting from audience response, the

expectation of spectator labour is built into each artist or company's performances themselves. In Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* and *The City*, audience labour mirrors the work done by creative figures within the plays, and takes the form of expectation and projection onto the performers, casting them as the promises audience members expect to see fulfilled. In Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, the work of the spectator combines the physical and the mental, necessitating that audience members move about the space in order to experience the performance, requiring them to make decisions about where to go, who to follow, and ultimately, how to maximize their experience. Finally, in Forced Entertainment's archival projects, it is the affective work of the audience that fulfills the group's desire to make their documentations live. In every performance I have discussed, spectators are confronted with a series of fragments which they must assemble into a unique experience of the performance. Moreover, in each case, spectators expect, and are expected, to have an affective experience; however, the responsibility for maximizing this experience is placed squarely on the backs of the spectators themselves. For Crimp, spectators cast their unique versions of the "good life" fantasy onto the stage in order to connect affectively with the performance; Punchdrunk repeatedly emphasizes the individuality of their performance experience, inculcating in spectators that they are at risk of "failing" the immersive experience if it does not affect them in specific ways; and Forced Entertainment's archival projects remain inert without the audience's active interaction with them, making this labour an absolute necessity for any experience at all. Each of these performances encourage their spectators to create an experience for themselves, with the performance serving to frame the experience as a significant one, imparting a sense of value for the consumer.

Thus, not only are spectators expected to participate in the performance they experience in some way, whether materially (as in the case of Punchdrunk's immersive theatre) or immaterially (as in Crimp's *Attempts* and *The City*), but in doing so, they become prosumers. This is a concept I have invoked in previous chapters, but I would like to return to it briefly here. The prosumer is the consumer that produces that which they consume, and in the same way that the "artpreneur" has become the model for art creators in a neoliberal context, consumers are expected to be self-interested and entrepreneurial by becoming prosumers. This pattern is at work in each of this dissertation's case studies: in Crimp, we consume the "good life" fantasy or promise we have projected onto the play's characters; at Punchdrunk performances, while your experience is in fact carefully crafted by the company, the structure of the performance insists that you have the free choice to determine every aspect of your experience of the work; and for Forced Entertainment, the nature of your engagement and interaction plays a determinative role in how you experience the group's various archives. In each case, spectators are encouraged to consume performance as prosumers: they are responsible for creating the experience they would like to have. The prosumer structure is appealing in several ways, as it allows spectators to determine what they would like to consume and how they would like to consume it, all according to their individual tastes and desires. A prosumer model is not only desirable because it allows for customization, but also because it allows consumers to have experiences that are entirely individual and affectively intense. The prosumer model allows your experience to become entirely unique to you; as a result, the experience becomes valuable due to its exclusivity and uniqueness, and subsequently confers value onto the spectator him or herself. What prosumption does, particularly when it is combined with experiences that are intended to

be affective, is individualize consumers in a way that makes them regard experiences narcissistically. This is because having an experience which is entirely unique to you, and which is significant due to its affective impact, is marked as highly valuable, turning the consumer (and their memory of, and ability to have, affective experiences) into a commodity valuable to themselves. Brian Massumi argues that making consumers feel valuable by giving them affecting experiences is a fundamental aspect of contemporary culture. He suggests that it is the fact of having an affective experience, whatever it may be, that is of value to the consumer: “Intensity does not ‘have’ value. Intensity is a value, in itself” (*Politics* 99). Moreover, Massumi connects affect to the consumer’s productivity, arguing that “Capitalism’s mantra is ‘productivity’. In the era of biopower, what bodies are meant to produce is essentially their own economically productive lives—integrally self-converting into ‘human capital’” (109). From this, I would suggest that what affective experience produces is the consumer or spectator themselves as valuable insofar as they are producers of affective labour.

Returning to the concept of liveness from this perspective, I would suggest that what makes performance truly live is audience labour. Liveness, as I have theorized over the course of this dissertation, is a feeling produced in specific performance situations, rather than a marker of temporality. In each of the performances I have discussed, the live is felt in situations where spectators have worked in order to make the experience feel live. As I have summarized above, this labour need not be as obvious as in Punchdrunk’s productions; engaging with the capitalist fantasies that shape one’s life or supplementing archival work by interacting with it either physically, mentally, or emotionally, are also forms of audience labour. Indeed, each of these examples are instances where the

audience works for the benefit of their own experience, to engage affectively with a performance in order to produce the feeling that one is having a live experience.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I suggest that affect operates in the space between two bodies (human or non-human). It is the responsibility of the experiencer to take that affective exchange—the force of encounter, to use Gregg and Siegworth’s terminology—within themselves, and to engage with it. In this way, I would suggest that liveness is truly produced on the side of the experiencer: performances can set-up the conditions for a live experience to take place, but this experience only becomes truly live when it is felt as such, either by audience members, performers themselves, or others proximate to the performance. In order to be felt, liveness must necessarily be affective, which is to say, it must affect an experiencing subject. This perspective furthers the notion that audience members are, oftentimes, performance labourers: it is fundamentally the responsibility of the subject to engage with the affective conditions set by a performance in order to experience it not only perceptually and intellectually, but also affectively. Spectators thus produce for themselves the affective or felt liveness which they seek out, casting themselves definitively in the role of the prosumer.

As I have suggested across this dissertation, if spectators are producers of their own affective experiences, then they do so entirely individualistically. If audience members are understood as prosumers—creating the affective experiences they hope to consume—then they must too be understood as neoliberal consumers, who produce and create for themselves and their own benefit. Moreover, performances which prioritize affect over other types of experience will necessarily produce more individualistic experiences, since affect can only be experienced within the self. While Punchdrunk offers the most explicit example of a neoliberalized creation and consumption process by

telling their spectators specifically that they can *only* experience the performance alone, this ethos is at work in every performance I have discussed in this dissertation. In Crimp's *The City*, Clair becomes representative of the ideal neoliberal creator, producing an entire world for the service of her own fantasy, and making her invented characters precarious labourers as a consequence. Narrators and spectators use *Attempts*' Anne in a similar way by projecting their capitalistic fantasies onto her, in the hopes she might fulfill all their myriad desires. The result, once again, is a precarious existence for Anne, as she becomes a commodity to others. The content of Forced Entertainment's work does not intimate any neoliberal ideals; however, the group's approach to archivization is necessarily narcissistic. As a result, the group ultimately embodies the current artistic market demand that creators be highly self-interested and entrepreneurial. The way they choose to distribute their work, for example in an increasing number of live stream events, at once allows expanded access to their performances while also encouraging spectators to experience them in isolation, moulding the experience to one's individual preferences and convenience by moving the performance from the collective space of a theatre to the potentially alienating space of the internet. Each of these case studies have the potential to be read positively: Crimp's plays demonstrate the vast possibilities of the creative process, suggesting we might be able to produce real presence and being on the stage, through imagination and affective investment; Punchdrunk allows spectators the freedom and agency to explore and experience a whole world of theatrical content; and Forced Entertainment brings their work closer to the spectator, eliminating practical boundaries of accessibility and allowing more people to experience the theatre. However, as I have outlined, each of these cases also have major pitfalls, all of which orbit around the neoliberal ethos: in short, all of the case studies I have discussed either seek to achieve

their utopic ends through a strong focus on self-interest, or become individualistic as a consequence.

The discourse and the practical reality are similarly at odds with one another when it comes to the concept of liveness itself. I have argued that liveness works contrary to the prevailing discourse used to describe it. The concept of liveness is routinely associated with a communitarian ideal, and the recent interest in performance and other events which claim to promote community are, I would suggest, an attempt to reverse the damage of Thatcherite neoliberalism. As my above comments suggest, performances which promote liveness are actually complicit with a neoliberal ethos that works against their professed goals. This ideal of community experience is intrinsically linked to liveness, as it has historically been understood, because it valorizes a single instance of experience, suggesting that if a performance takes place in a single specific time and place, then all those present will experience it as a community. However, if liveness is understood not as a temporal or spatial quality, but rather as a feeling or affect, then even if a performance is experienced by a group of people at the same time and in the same place, the experience remains one which is entirely individual. In the present context, the neoliberal ethos has not disappeared, it is simply more insidious; it shows itself in the practical realities of those works which claim a communitarian effect. Thus, the utopic ideal that liveness leads to a community experience is an ideological promise. If neoliberalism and capitalism are forces which consume and destroy, then what liveness offers to consumers of performance is a substitute for that reality: by consuming affect, one can feel alive again. Moreover, much like in Crimp's *Attempts* and *The City*, this is ultimately an unfulfilled promise. We sustain an affective connection to this ideal, seeking out performances which promise to give us an experience which perhaps will change us or

better connect us to ourselves and those around us. Even when this promise fails (for example, in the rhetoric surrounding Forced Entertainment's live streams, which suggest they are "community" events, when in fact they are experienced largely in physical and affective isolation), we maintain our connection to it, even if we do not entirely believe or even desire it ourselves. Thus, the idea of theatre in a contemporary age, as well as specific types of performances, are touted as opportunities for the building of community, but often instead become opportunities for individual consumption and benefit. Indeed, I would further suggest that neoliberalism's guise of community is precisely what consumers want: instead of being outright individualistic, it is more desirable to give the impression of a communitarian attitude which in actuality benefitting on a strictly individual level. It is for this reason that community is maintained as a promise in these works: we sustain this promise by engaging affectively with it because we want to sustain the mask behind which we can live out our neoliberal fantasies and consumer desires.

In terms of its content, *Absent* is a work about consuming until there is nothing left to consume: the Duchess enjoys the luxuries and benefits of the hotel, until she no longer has the funds to sustain her lifestyle. The relationship between the spectator and the work is of a different nature. The hotel has been absented, both by the Duchess and by temporality: D'Beaumont only appears briefly, fragmentarily, even spectrally, and her varied forms of appearances (as a child, as a young woman, as an older woman) emphasize that the space embodies past, present, and future all at once. In this timeless space, spectators are invited to consume in ways D'Beaumont could not: they wander through the now-unhindered space and time of her life, peering somewhat voyeuristically into her world, affecting and being affected by the work. What D'Beaumont loses and ultimately requires—the social community which kept her economically and existentially

afloat—might seem to be fulfilled by the spectator's engagement with her fragmentary narrative and presence. D'Beaumont is, like *The City's* Chris, a precarious figure both ontologically and socio-economically, and as spectators who can re-enliven subjects and worlds by affectively engaging with them, one might suggest that in viewing *Absent*, a spectator brings D'Beaumont back to life, re-establishing her presence in the space and time which she had lost. We could, in other words, and following Judith Butler, suggest that the spectator enters a relationship of precarious interdependence with D'Beaumont. However, much like the liveness produced in the other case studies I have examined over the course of this dissertation, if D'Beaumont is made live once more, then this is labour done by the spectator in service of their own experience, not D'Beaumont's. This scenario is one in which spectators repeatedly re-enliven D'Beaumont's presence in the space by engaging affectively with her in order to peer into and consume both her past life, as well as the spectator's own experience of encounter with it. In this way, liveness perpetuates the neoliberal value of individual experience and consumption: it is experienced at the behest of the spectator, and, despite one's best intention, often acts to the detriment of a precarious other. In *Absent*, and in the other contemporary performance works I have discussed, the promises that have been projected onto the concept of liveness—communitarian ideals such as collective experience and shared affect—fail us. However, in continuing to engage with these performances which emphasize, and sometimes require, an affectively live experience, audiences sustain a connection to the ideological ideals which mask neoliberalism's actual operations. Even as these promises fail to be fulfilled in actual experience, we continue to consume—affectively, and perhaps narcissistically—always searching to acquire new experiences, attempting to accumulate

affect such that we might, finally, attach ourselves to a feeling of vitality which exists for us in perpetuity.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Post-secondary Education and Degrees:

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2011	B.A. (Hons), English and Comparative Literature, McMaster University

Honours and Awards:

2017	CATR Award for Outstanding Submission to an Open or Curated Panel
2017	SOGS Graduate Student Teaching Award
2016-17	SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship
2015-16	Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2015	TaPRA Postgraduate Bursary
2015	Alumni Graduate Award
2014-15	Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2012-16	Western Graduate Research Scholarship (PhD)
2011-12	Western Graduate Research Scholarship (MA)
2011	Chair's Entrance Scholarship
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Related Work Experience:

2015-present	Research Assistant, for International Indigenous Policy Journal. Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Western Ontario.
2011-17	Teaching Assistant/Tutorial Leader Dept. of English & Writing Studies, University of Western Ontario
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- 2016-17 Research Assistant, for Dr. Pauline Wakeham.
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Refereed Publications:

“Experience Economies: Immersion, Disposability, and Punchdrunk Theatre.”
Contemporary Theatre Review. (Forthcoming).

“Performing Conflict, Framing History: Documentary Theatre and Caryl Churchill’s *Mad Forest*.” *Logics of Conflict in Twentieth Century Women’s Theatre*. Essay in proposed book-length edited collection.

Non-refereed Publications:

“Archetype, Fantasy, and Vital Outrage: A Conversation with Sarah Marshall.” *Word Hoard* 5, November 2016.

Book review: *Sites of Performance: Of Time and Memory* by Clark Lunberry. *Theatre Journal* 68.1, March 2016.

Conference Presentations:

May 27-30th 2017 Canadian Association of Theatre Research Conference
Emerging Scholars Panel, “They’ll Never Stop The Simpsons”: Disposability and
Reiteration in Anne Washburn’s *Mr. Burns: A Post-electric Play*

May 28-31st 2016 Canadian Association of Theatre Research, Congress 2016
Against the Romance of Art Crawl: Space, Place, and Community in Canada and Abroad

May 28-31st 2016 ACCUTE Conference, Congress 2016
“Betwixt and Between”: Ontological Oscillations in Martin Crimp’s *The City*

Mar 17-20th 2016 NeMLA Conference 2016
Performing Conflict, Framing History: Documentary Theater and Caryl Churchill’s *Mad Forest*

Feb 4th-6th 2016 Festival of Original Theatre Conference 2016
Navigating Histories in Caryl Churchill’s *Mad Forest*

Sept 8-10th 2015 Theatre and Performance Research Association Conference 2015
First as Live Stream, then as Tweet: the Forced Entertainment Conversation

May 30-June 5th 2015 Canadian Association of Theatre Research, Congress 2015
“Am I invented too?”: Martin Crimp’s Possible Bodies in *The City*

Apr 30-May 3rd 2015 NeMLA Conference

Locating History: Urbanity and (Dis)placement in Graeme Miller's *Linked*

May 24th-30th 2014 Canadian Association of Theatre Research, Congress 2014

Sleep No More, Immersive Theatre, and the Boundaries of Perception