

## **Theatre, theatricality and resistance: some contemporary possibilities**

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**THEATRE, THEATRICALITY, AND RESISTANCE: SOME  
CONTEMPORARY POSSIBILITIES**

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**A dissertation submitted in accordance with the  
regulations for the degree of  
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**Queen Mary  
University of London**

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## Abstract

### Theatre, Theatricality, and Resistance: Some Contemporary Possibilities

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*Theatre, Theatricality, and Resistance* is concerned with how certain elements of contemporary Western – mainly British and Hungarian – culture are manifested through theatrical activity, both on and off stage. In so doing, the thesis asks the extent to which *resistance* is possible in contemporary theatre and theatricality.

The thesis argues that conventional Western theatre is grounded in escapism and nostalgia. Restricted by its own institutional system, ideological function, and commercial aims, conventional theatre reaffirms the spectators' psychological and emotional desires, and confirms the hegemonic views and assumptions of contemporary postindustrial societies. In so doing, it silences the various voices available in society and erases even the possibility of resistance.

Then the thesis proposes that while theatre is regarded as a marginalized commodity on the cultural market, *theatricality* has now produced a number of new practices in postindustrial societies. As the everyday appears as representation in various, constantly evolving and continuously improvised, collective and individual cultural performances, theatricality is not only thoroughly utilised by dominant social groups, but is also open to resistant voices left out of public discourses. These voices express their resistance by rewriting the means, practices, and strategies that the dominant culture employs.

Finally, the thesis investigates those *theatre* practices (labelled 'resistant') that are alert to recent changes in theatricalised society. These practices reconsider social, political, and cultural boundaries; confront logocentricity; and place equal emphasis on

visual, oral, textual, and proximal elements, as well as the audience's creative-interactive participation. Theatre can thus reflect on the anomalies of the theatricalised society, social and sexual (in)difference, gender assumptions, and ethnic stereotyping, and resist the lure of power. Through these practices, theatre may attain complexity, endangering institutions, hierarchies and power, and offer alternatives to the dominant ideology by fusing popular and high culture, and giving visual, textual, intellectual and sensual pleasure to its participants.



*For Szilvia,  
Gergő,  
Ábris, and  
Zsombor*

**DE  
~~OB~~STRUCTING  
THE DOORS  
~~CAN~~ BE  
DANGEROUS**

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## INTRODUCTION – Theatre, theatricality, cultural hegemony, and postmodern resistance

This thesis does not give an in-depth study of any particular theatre practitioner, genre, and cultural activity or tradition. Instead, I am concerned here with how certain elements of contemporary Western culture<sup>1</sup> – mainly British and Hungarian – are manifested through certain theatrical activities on and off stage. Two directions define my approach: I shall investigate certain formations of contemporary Western theatre<sup>2</sup> in their connections to everyday life, and I shall present some of the manifestations of contemporary Western culture in terms of theatre. The introduction aims to clarify this double orientation by setting them in the mutual frame of the concepts of cultural hegemony<sup>3</sup> and postmodern resistance<sup>4</sup>.

The Brazilian theatre director, dramatist, theorist, writer, teacher, and politician, Augusto Boal gave the following example when he lectured on ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ in Manchester in 1995.

I went to Buenos Aires. I wanted to do theatre in the street as I always did before. [...] It was about a useful law, which existed in Argentina that said that no Argentine who was hungry should die from hunger. If you were Argentine and had an identity card, then you had the right to go into any restaurant and ask for whatever you wanted, except wine or desert. [...] We prepared a play in which there was a young man that went into a restaurant. [...] We rehearsed the scenes as we were going to do it in several streets outside. Then someone had a brilliant idea and said, ‘Look, instead of doing the play in the street as we were planning, why don’t we go into a real restaurant at mid-day when it is crowded? [...] So the next day we did that. We went to the restaurant. [...] The protagonist was a young man, not violent or aggressive. He started speaking out loud saying ‘I want steak, potatoes, and two eggs, but I don’t want wine and I don’t want dessert.’ [...] When the food came, he ate heartily to play the role well. Everyone

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Western’ is used in the way that Jacques Derrida used it in his writings, especially in his book, *Writing and Difference* (see Derrida 1978). I use the term ‘culture’ in its widest sense as Raymond Williams defined it in *Marxism and Literature* as a ‘whole way of life’ (see Williams 1977a: 11-20, especially 13).

<sup>2</sup> The term Western theatre also derives from Derrida’s article *The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation* (see Derrida 1978: 232-250). I shall discuss his treatise later in detail.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of cultural hegemony is based on Antonio Gramsci’s and Raymond Williams’s interpretations (Gramsci 1971, and Williams 1977a). I shall analyse them later in detail.

<sup>4</sup> The term of postmodern resistance builds on the interpretations of Hal Foster, Fredric Jameson, and Philip Auslander (see Foster 1985, Jameson 1991, and Auslander 1997). I deal with them in detail below.

was laughing, even the manager. That was the first act of the play.

During the second act nobody laughed. The second act began when he asked for the bill. When it came, he looked it [...] then showed his identity card and got up to leave. The manager arrived and asked who was going to pay the bill. The actor said, 'I have no idea but I know that I am not going to pay. The law permits it.' The manager went to call the police, which we knew he would do. It was written in our script. An actor who was playing a lawyer then went up to the manager and warned him that if he called the police, the police would come and arrest him, because the customer had the law on his side. He gave the manager information on the law. [...] A discussion followed in which numerous customers participated. [...] Everyone in the restaurant joined in, because it was a real situation for them and not presented as a play.

Boal in Delgado and Heritage 1996: 22-23

To the surprise of his Manchester audience, Boal called the event in the restaurant 'theatre'. Their surprise is understandable, since when we speak of theatre, we usually mean something else. The various senses of theatre, recorded in *The Oxford English Dictionary* for instance, can be divided into two major groups: one that is concerned with theatre as an art form, and another that is concerned with certain aspects and elements of everyday life as theatre (see *OED* 1983: 261-262). In the first group, theatre is considered either as a physical object (a constructed or natural, ancient or modern building), or as metonymic replacement of its own constitutive elements (stage, audience, performance, institution, and drama). In the second group, theatre is not confined to a particular artistic activity, but rather its definition is extended onto a more general ground. That extension refers to the ancient Greek etymology of the word theatre, since its ancient Greek use originates from the verb *to see*: the Greek word for theatre means a 'viewing place'. Based probably on that etymology, theatre is thus interpreted metaphorically: the definition is concerned with how certain aspects and elements of everyday life are 'exposed to view'.

As these meanings seem to be found in Boal's restaurant scene, I shall take this example as the methodological field on which some of the well-known definitions of theatre can be tested. First, I shall investigate theatre as an artistic form, and then I shall turn to its metaphoric uses when I define the notion of theatricality. Finally, I delimit the territory, based on the concepts of cultural hegemony and postmodern resistance, where these definitions are later used.



### *Interpreting theatre*

In contrast to the wide-ranging senses of theatre as recorded in the *OED*, the editor of *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, Phyllis Hartnoll did not attempt to define theatre at all, but immediately related the term to London's first Renaissance theatre, The Theatre (Hartnoll 1967: 939). The absence of a definition is probably an editorial slip, as elsewhere Hartnoll gave definitions. In so doing, Hartnoll attempted to break with the habit, which defined theatre from the perspective of literature. She defined 'play' for instance not as a literary category, but rather as a theatrical term:

[Play] may designate spirited exchange of backchat between two mountebanks in the marketplace or a full-length work given in a special building – a theatre – with a cast of highly trained professional actors aided by all the appurtenances of lighting, costuming, and production.

Hartnoll 1967: 741

Hartnoll implicitly interprets theatre as a physical object (a building): the very first definition in *OED*. Though following a very common practice<sup>5</sup>, the problem is that her interpretation excludes the other elements of theatre, such as players, performance, audience (etc.) and their interrelationships. Moreover, that interpretation often uses the naming of the physical object as symbolic replacement of the event usually taking place within the confines of that physical object. These interpretations, however, do not help to define theatre as a complex *event*, nor to an understanding of Boal's group in action at the restaurant.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, probably one of the most frequently quoted definitions in theatre studies originated from the American drama theorist, Eric Bentley. Based on the notion of theatre as *activity* rather than place, Bentley's so-called minimal definition, in his book, *The Life of Drama*, was as follows:

*A impersonates B while C looks on.*

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<sup>5</sup> The definition of theatre as building can also be found in Géza Staud's book *Magyar Színházlexikon* [*Hungarian Theatre Lexicon*] (Staud 1976: 345), as well as in *Új Magyar Lexikon* [*New Hungarian Lexicon*] (1962: 240), *Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár* [*Hungarian Dictionary of Definitions*] (1972: 1291) and *Magyar Larousse* [*Hungarian Larousse Encyclopaedia*] (1994: 745-746).



Since then, his definition has found its way into theatre semiotics (see Eco 1977, Elam 1980; de Marinis 1987; Fischer-Lichte 1982 and 1995; and Aston and Savona 1989), theatre phenomenology (State 1985, and Wilshire 1989), theatre criticism (Wardle 1992; and Nightingale 1998), as well as into the various course books on theatre (see Wilson 1985 for instance).

In his 1964 book, Bentley first dealt with drama on paper (aspects of a play's plot, character, dialogue, and thought), and then he investigated drama as the theatrical enactment of these elements. His treatise followed spatial orientation and chronological progression from the pre-written text to its 'final and conclusive concretion in the performance' (Bentley 1964: 70). The direction of concretion is linked to the style 'set by the poet, not the stage designer, nor the director, nor even the actor, all of whom have to adapt themselves to the style of the writing' (Bentley 1964: 78). The style of writing centres mainly on the dialogues, because 'a play is written by someone who wishes to do nothing but talk for an audience that is resigned to do nothing but listen to talk' (Bentley 1964: 75). Bentley claimed that when 'we see a play in the theatre, possibly against a pictorial background, we watch people encountering each other' (Bentley 1964: 64). In Bentley's treatise, the enactment of drama on stage (i.e., theatrical performance) is led by the playwright, dominated by the actor 'reading out' the dialogues, and the impersonations of the pre-written characters. Bentley subordinates the visual and proximal elements of the performance to the 'people' talking in the foreground. Thus Bentley structures the elements of performance into a hierarchy, because only this way can he reduce his definition to the actor (*A*) and the text-based impersonation (*B*) as the most important elements of the theatrical hierarchy, which are then observed by an un-situated viewer (*C*). The reconstruction of Bentley's treatise reveals and his examples attest that, for him, the definition of the specific literary (and dramatist)-oriented (mainstream) American theatre of the 1960s becomes a neutral, omnipotent, and challenge-less entity that is extended by him and later users as the general definition of theatre.

The problematic assumptions in Bentley's definition can be clearly seen when we interpret Boal's example through his definition. At first, the definition seems to

work, since the actor (*A*) impersonated a protagonist (*B*), while someone (or rather many) (*C*) looked on. In this sense, Boal's experiment qualifies as theatre. However, did all the participants there share that opinion? Did the protagonist (*B*) or a young man (?) eat the food? Should the young man (?) or the actor (*A*) or the protagonist (*B*) have had to pay for the real food in a real restaurant? Did *A* really *impersonate*, in theatrical terms, *B*? Did *A* impersonate *B* for *C*? Did *C* really *recognise* *B*, and *A*, or saw only a hungry and then satiated young man? Finally, did *both A* and *C* think of that event *as* theatre? Bentley cannot answer these simple questions. Hence, his definition is appropriate only for the *description* of certain practices in literary, dramatist-oriented theatre and its extension as the general definition of theatre is highly problematic.

Like Hartnoll's earlier silence, Bentley's description also assumes that readers (and the given theatre's spectators) know *what* theatre *is* and takes it for granted that readers (and the given theatre's spectators) can recognise an event *as* theatre without any difficulty. As both of them treated these assumptions as self-evident, neither Hartnoll nor Bentley dealt with the circumstances in which (any kind of) theatre can be realised. Therefore, though both Hartnoll and Bentley concentrated on theatre as activity rather than place, Hartnoll's silence and Bentley's description did not take into account what exactly *makes* theatre theatre and not something else.

The analysis of Bentley's description also draws attention to the fact that the general definition of theatre (if such exists) cannot be found by describing a specific practice and then reducing its elements to a specific but supposedly universal minimum. Rather, we should investigate political, ideological, and cultural relations in which theatre can be realised. That was recognised by one of the most influential twentieth century theatre directors and theorists, Peter Brook, who argued in the opening paragraph of *The Empty Space* that

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.

Brook 1968: 5 – emphasis ZI

Brook's definition of theatre has since become part of the credo of many theatre practitioners. His definition is popular, partly because it focuses on theatre as activity

rather than place, partly because it draws attention to the fact that it is possible to create theatre in any place and in any situation; and partly because it suggests that theatre could be liberated from its institutional structure and from conventional expectations. The core of his definition, however, the concept of empty space, has been widely criticised by those who argue that space is never empty since it is always embedded in a network of social, cultural, political and other factors (see Auslander 1997: 13-27; Bharucha 1993: 68-87, and Constantinidis 1993: 87-99). Theorizing visual culture, Irit Rogoff for instance illuminated the problem of empty space through criticising the illusion of transparency. Analysing visual culture's attempt to repopulate the obstacles and boundaries evacuated by the illusion of transparency, Rogoff pointed out that 'space is always differentiated: it is always sexual and racial; it is always constituted out of circulating capital; and it is always subject to the invisible boundary lines that determine inclusions and exclusions' (Rogoff 1998: 22). In a space realised by individuals and/or communities, it is always the network of the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the utterable and the unutterable that contains and defines the relations that allow a certain phenomenon to be realised and to be recognised as such. In the restaurant scene above, as Boal attempted to reveal the invisible, unknown, and unutterable political, cultural, and ideological assumptions, practices, and expectations of the time, he took – in contrast to Brook – a *crowded* space, and called it a *filled* stage where his protagonist ordered food and drink without paying, while others were watching him. Boal's theatre was thus sexual and racial, constituted out of circulating capital, and was situated within various visible and invisible social, ideological and political obstacles and boundaries, determining inclusion and exclusion.

Boal recognised that the event in the restaurant could have never happened in that form in any of the Argentine theatres of the time. On the one hand, the ideologically and politically rigid Argentinean censorship of the 1970s would have probably prohibited a performance attacking social injustices and social differences. On the other hand, the social customs of the 1970s Argentinean theatre, indicating passive spectators, and authoritative separation between stage and auditorium, as well as theatre and everyday life, would have prevented direct dialogue between performers and spectators. In order to go beyond these boundaries, Boal merely took up Brook's claim that theatre can be liberated from its 'red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness, box-



office, foyer, tip-up seats, footlights, scene changes, intervals, music' (Brook 1968: 5). As a result, Boal abandoned the commonly known attributes and practices of theatre to create his own theatre practice in which he could take a *real* space and called it a *real stage*.

Boal termed this practice 'theatre invisible'. In invisible theatre, as he also pointed out in his Manchester lecture, 'the idea of not knowing, of not being cautioned that you are in the presence of an actor [*A*] in an acted situation, always made me try to find other forms of theatre in which the spectator [*C*] would become a 'spect-actor' [*A*, *C* and maybe *B* together]' (Boal in Delgado and Heritage 1996: 24). Therefore, Boal deliberately leaves no sign from which his theatre can be recognised as theatre, because he needs active spectators who can intervene, and this way participate directly in the development of the entire event. As Boal's spect-actors can shape the development of the event, those marginal opinions can also be heard which would be otherwise silenced and suppressed from public discourse. Hence, Boal's theatre invisible brings the visible and invisible, known and unknown, and utterable and unutterable social, ideological and political obstacles and boundaries of a certain community and/or society into the spotlight in which – in the ancient Greek etymological sense of theatre – these are 'exposed to view'.<sup>6</sup>

### *Frame and Framing*

Boal's invisible theatre also draws attention to another crucial feature not discussed so far: recognition. Boal's rhetoric (actor, script, play) reveals that for him the event in the restaurant was recognised as theatre. However, did the manager and the other customers in the restaurant also recognise it this way? Or rather, was it, for them, a real event bearing no recognisable sign at all that would have differentiated it from other events of everyday life? Nevertheless, how is it possible to recognise an event as theatre and as an everyday life activity at the same time?

The Italian semiotician Umberto Eco touched on the problem of recognition when he attempted to answer such basic questions as why 'something' becomes a sign

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed analysis of theatre invisible see Boal's book, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*

on stage and how that 'something' on stage can be recognised as a particular sign and not as something else. In order to find answers to these questions, Eco used a public lecture on alcoholism as his prime example. Eco described a lecture, in which the Salvation Army put a drunkard on stage, with the intention of demonstrating in explicit terms that consuming alcohol has dangerous effects on people's health, while in implicit terms it was to propagate the advantages of temperance. Eco was interested in how the Salvation Army's intention could be delivered successfully. First, he investigated how the audience accepts and recognises the drunkard as the representation of drunkenness; then he analysed how the audience recognises the drunkard as the Salvation Army intends them to recognise him as an anti-alcohol deterrent. To the first question, Eco replied that 'the very moment the audience accepts the convention of the *mise-en-scène*, every element of that portion of the world that has been framed (put upon the platform) becomes significant (Eco 1977: 112). For Eco, a frame (the convention of the *mise-en-scène*) contextualises the elements of the world being on stage as signs subject to interpretation. That frame, however, can work only when the spectators also accept that frame, and the elements on stage as signs, standing for something else. In the case of the Salvation Army, the staggering, ruddy-nosed man could thus become the sign of a drunkard and the representation of drunkenness through the interpretation of the audience. To the second question, Eco did not give any clear answer. He only reminded us that there could be no absolute guarantee that the intended meaning of the framed elements always coincides with the interpretation given to these elements by the spectators. This is true even if the framed elements are organised in a way that leaves very little room for interpretations different from the intended one.

In his example, Eco used the term 'frame' in the sense developed by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his book, *Frame Analysis*.<sup>7</sup> Goffman argued that 'definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with the principles of organisation which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify' (Goffman 1974: 11). For Goffman, frame is not a solid and objective entity, like the

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(Boal 1992) or Auslander's article, 'Boal, Blau, Brecht – The Body' (Auslander 1997: 98-107).

<sup>7</sup> In fact, Gregory Bateson conceived the concept of frame in his 1954 essay, *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (Bateson 1954). Goffman took over Bateson's concept and extended it onto a more general

wooden frame of a painting, but rather (based on one of the ancient etymological senses of the word) a symbolic representation of the forces that organise the experiencing of a certain situation. Hence, frame can be conceived as usage, a position of discovery, as well as an interpretative form and rhetorical figure of cognitive processes.

Returning to Eco's example, the audience's experience of the situation was organised by a theatrical frame in which the drunkard could step forward as the representation of drunkenness, i.e., the drunkard – in theatrical terms – was exposed to view. The construction of the drunkard as a moral injunction was possible for spectators there when they knew that the realisation of the situation was organised by that theatrical frame. The success of the communication of the drunk as a negative example or warning, however, depended also on the Salvation Army and the audience sharing a set of social rules referring to the appropriate (i.e., negative) interpretation of the presentation. The negative interpretation of drunkenness thus meant that the participants shared the same cultural attitude and moral point of view *against* drunkenness, at least by the end of Salvation Army's presentation.

Approaching Boal's restaurant scene through the concept of frame, I propose that the spect-actors of the restaurant could not recognise that situation in the theatrical frame of actor, character, and spectator in which Boal later reported it. The spect-actors in the restaurant were not aware – and probably could not even imagine – that such a theatrical frame could also organise the event. Moreover, they would have been outraged and felt cheated if they had known that Boal deliberately organised the event as invisible theatre. The spect-actors in the restaurant organised their experience, and defined the situation within another frame, as customers and restaurant staff in everyday life. Therefore, there were *at least* two sets of frames in use in that particular situation: a theatrical and an everyday. In general, the interpretation of Boal's example reveals that the organisation and the recognition of any situation in everyday life as in the restaurant depend partly on the application of particular frames and partly on the point of view from which they are applied.<sup>8</sup>

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territory. As Goffman's treatise does not differ substantially from Bateson's, I deal only with Goffman's.

<sup>8</sup> Boal's experiment also draws attention to the fact that the recognition and interpretation of events in theatre, on TV or in everyday life like Boal's event in the restaurant also depend on their framing and the recognition of their frame(s). The relativity of framing, of course, brings forward ethical dimensions. In 'candid camera' scenarios for instance, individuals being filmed are not aware that they are framed as



### *Theatre as frame*

Bentley took the particular theatrical frame of the 1960s literary-oriented, text-based American theatre and its recognition for granted, and that is why he did not deal with the explanation of its realisation. Though Brook recognised the existence of a theatrical frame, he failed to take it into consideration beyond a negative perception. Though Boal's invisible theatre eliminated any references from which people present could have recognised the situation as theatre, he also drew attention to at least two different *theatrical* frames: implicitly he referred to the accepted frame of theatre, and explicitly he referred to the frame of his own invisible theatre.

In Boal's above-mentioned example, the socially accepted frame of theatre appeared implicitly as rhetorical pattern. That frame is based on social consensus, which prescribes a group of individuals who – aware of their role as performers participating in an enacted event called performance – are consciously exposed to the view of another group. The latter group, being aware of their role as spectators, watch that enacted event, called performance. What is crucial is that both groups be aware that what they are participating in is an event recognised as theatre.<sup>9</sup> The Italian theatre semiotician, Keir Elam argued that the recognition of theatre is based on theatrical competence, referring to the fact that 'theatrical events are distinguished from other events according to certain organizational and cognitive principles which, like all cultural rules, have to be learned' (Elam 1980: 87).

Having defined the common frame of theatre like this, Boal's experiment in the restaurant can be considered as theatre only from his point of view: he was the only theatrical spectator of the entire event aware that what he was watching was a piece of

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protagonists of a (reality) show. Therefore, individuals perform actions they would probably not do if they had known they were being framed as protagonists by the camera.

<sup>9</sup> Boal's abandonment of the accepted frame of theatre also draws the attention to the fact that its instrumental and seemingly superfluous elements (like red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness, box-office, foyer, tip-up seats, footlights, scene changes, intervals, music) can also fulfil important functions in the realisation and recognition of theatre. These instrumental elements are also used to remind the participants that what they are actually participating in *is* theatre. Without them, it can easily happen that people there simply fail to note that what they see and what they do can also be interpreted as legitimate theatre. This was consciously utilised by the performance of Boal's invisible theatre in the restaurant.



theatre. Though the definition of theatre is generally offered on the above-mentioned lines, Boal's approach demonstrated that theatre is always culture-specific, so that its rules have to be learned. As a result, Boal also demonstrated that the accepted theatrical frame is not universal, natural and self-evident, and it is possible to realise a theatrical frame in other ways (see also Boal 1998 and 1999). In fact, Boal's experiment drew attention to the fact that the realisation and the recognition of theatre demands continuous *negotiation* and social *consensus*.

Regarding theatre not as a neutral and self-evident entity, but as frame, the possible choice of the framed elements is without limitation, at least in theory. Based on this premise, the American composer and music theoretician John Cage, for instance, formulated one of the broadest definitions of theatre: 'Anything that engages the eye and the ear' (Cage in Kirby and Schechner 1965: 50). In everyday practice, however, conventions, customs, and institutions limit the framing of theatre. In everyday practice, the only phenomena that can be considered as theatre are those in which framing and recognition collide, sealed by social consensus. In the history of theatre, however, we can find practices – like Boal's – which have attempted to rearrange and rewrite the socially accepted and legitimate frame of theatre.<sup>10</sup> Due to these unconventional definitions of theatre, the presuppositions, expectations, consensuses, ideologies, rules, desires, aims and their relations, defined by social, cultural, political and historical factors, are also revealed as crucial features, which can be framed and recognised as theatre. Based on the interpretation deriving from Boal's experiment, it is possible to challenge the assumption that we 'know' what theatre is (and has always been). Instead of accepting theatre as a closed, fixed, and essential entity, I intend to focus on some of the ways in which theatre can be *framed* and *recognised* in given political, economic, social and cultural contexts.

As already mentioned, theatre is often identified with the building in which the dramatic text is enacted (see Hartnoll). Apart from that identification, theatre is often defined as the final interpretation of a dramatic text, i.e., the adaptation of the text as performance (see Bentley). Parallel to these approaches, as Christopher McCullough

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<sup>10</sup> The reader can find formulations of theatre different from the accepted and legitimated ones in Bim Mason's *Street Theatre and Other Outdoor performance* (Mason 1992), Baz Kershaw's *The Politics of Performance* and *The Radical in Performance* (Kershaw 1992 and 1999), and Jan Cohen-Cruz *Radical*

pointed out in his book, *Theatre and Europe*, theatre is often seen as the transcendental vision of the artist that exists outside the material conditions of economic production obeying only the laws of aesthetics (McCullough 1996: 27). These approaches are similar in the sense that they highlight only certain aspects of theatre (building, dramatic text, performance, as well as aesthetic principles), but neither of them takes into consideration the complexity and multifunctional relations of theatre.

In order to approach the complexity and multifunctional relations of Western theatre, I consider theatre as *process*, *institution*, and *phenomenon*. Firstly, theatre can be considered as a *process* between text<sup>11</sup> and performance<sup>12</sup>, performance and spectators<sup>13</sup>, and spectators and text. Secondly, theatre can be seen as an *institution* with structural and hierarchical relations, supported/prohibited by society/community, which represents and forms the attitudes, assumptions and principles of the given society/community. And thirdly, theatre can also be regarded as *phenomenon*, being deeply enmeshed in the social, cultural, historical, ideological and political networks of society. In this sense, my analysis of certain late twentieth century Western theatrical formulations is based on four basic questions derived from the perspectives of production-aesthetics, reception-theory, deconstruction, sociology of theatre and theatre anthropology. In the thesis, I shall ask

- (1) how can theatre as process be realised and recognised through the models and conventions of theatrical forms and representations?
- (2) what kind of representations are offered by, and what kind of society is represented within, theatre as institution? What are the expected models of social behaviour in that institution, and how are these organised socially?

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*Street Performance* (Cohen-Cruz 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Here I refer to the extended notion of the text, used by semioticians (Eco, Elam, Marinis, and Fischer-Lichte) denoting every kind of element (material, written text, thought, image, movement, etc.) which can be possibly used *for* performance.

<sup>12</sup> The term performance goes back to the notion of performance-text conceived by Marinis 'as a complex network of different type of signs, expressive means, or actions' (Marinis 1987: 100). In this sense, performance-text refers to those elements, which are actually used *in* performance.

<sup>13</sup> I use the term spectator as Eugenio Barba did it in his article, *Four Spectators*: 'The word 'spectator' does not apply only to those who are gathered around the performance. In part, the actors and directors are also spectators: they are active in the composition of the performance; they are not, however, the masters of its meaning' (Barba 1997: 96).



(3) how is theatre as a phenomenon regarded among other arts and leisure activities, and how does it relate to other cultural, political and economic phenomena?

(4) who finances this (or does not finance it), and why?

Through these questions, theatre is interrogated not only as an artistic form, isolated from everyday life, but rather as a cultural institution, social phenomenon, political forum, and economic venture situated *within* the matrix of everyday life. Though a theatrical frame often seems to be universal, based on the illusion of the shared cultural and social experience, and even declared to be so (see Bentley), each theatrical frame is context-dependent, culture-specific, and defined in and by (historical) time and (social) space. Each theatrical frame is thus inscribed in changing viewpoints, and realised in shifting contexts and different interpretations. Keeping these remarks in mind while investigating the various formations of contemporary Western theatre in their connection to everyday life, the objectives of my analysis are

- (1) to shed light on how a theatrical frame licences or restricts experience of culture;
- (2) to consider how play of signification is licensed or controlled by ideology and power;
- (3) to demonstrate the tactics and strategies with which dominant ideology and power can be enforced or subverted; and
- (4) to show how theatre can reinforce or problematise the assumptions of everyday life; reflect on the anomalies of culture; introduce the practices of resistance to the lure of power; and offer alternatives to the dominant ideology.

### *Interpreting theatricality*

Though Boal described the event in the restaurant from the point of view of theatre, the guests and the employees of the restaurant probably considered Boal's protagonist's deeds as simple everyday life activities. Boal's example thus also demonstrates a

phenomenon already noticed by sociologists, cultural anthropologists, psychologists, and theorists of theatre and performance-art: public and private activities of everyday life can also be conceived on the model of theatre, and regarded as cultural performances.<sup>14</sup>

The idea of considering certain aspects of the world as theatre and social activities as performance is not new. It was already used by ancient Greek and Roman thinkers like Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero for instance, and was commonplace in the Renaissance and the Baroque. Nevertheless, as Marvin Carlson pointed out in his book *Performance*, since the second half of the 1950s ‘the metaphor of theatricality has [again] moved out of the arts into almost every aspect of modern attempts to understand our condition and activities, into almost every branch of the human sciences – sociology, anthropology, ethnography, psychology, linguistics’ (Carlson 1996: 6-7). Apart from researchers working in the human sciences, journalists, politicians, media researchers, and religious leaders extensively use theatre as a metaphor for the interpretation of various cultural, political, and economic fields and activities. Analysing works on various aspects of culture and the diversity of human conditions by such distinctive scholars as Guy Debord, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Françoise Collin, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, the American theatre theorist Elinore Fuchs has recognised that ‘theater becomes not simply a metaphor but a structural element in a series of world-cultural narratives’ (Fuchs 1996: 151). Fuchs points out that the use of theatre as metaphor does not serve to demonstrate the fictionality, falsity, or the misrepresentation of the real world, but has become an organising force, and a ‘grounding principle’ in these writings (Fuchs 1996: 156). For her, theatre as metaphor appears ‘when the last ontological defences crumble’ and ‘when the metanarratives begin to slide’ (Fuchs 1996: 155). Through the analysis of these writings and contemporary social practices of all kinds, Fuchs reminded us by rewriting Derrida’s famous remark that today ‘*Il n’y a pas de hors-théâtral*’ (Fuchs 1996: 146).

Like Fuchs, the German theatre semiotician, Erika Fischer-Lichte also pointed to the emerging presence of the concept of theatre in everyday life and in academic thinking. For Fischer-Lichte, theatre is not employed only as metaphor, but as a specific cultural model in various disciplines. Moreover, for her, it seems to be one of the most

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<sup>14</sup> As I shall not deal with the interpretation of the term cultural performance, see its various guises in

widespread heuristic models in cultural studies. The interpretation of theatre as heuristic model is based on three main sources. First, it is concerned with the fact that the orientation of research in human sciences has recently changed as researchers no longer claim to be investigating *the* reality, but rather they concentrate on how meaning is given to reality by individuals and groups. In this sense, it can be argued that ‘it is no longer *existence*, but *meaning*, or rather *appearance*, the classical field of theatre stands in the centre of attention’ (Fischer-Lichte 1999: 71). The second refers to the complexity of theatre as a particular art form. Theatre collects the problems of society and reflects them in the sharpest way, while using inter-disciplinary strategies for their interpretation. Theatre is thus capable of working as ‘the sharp focus point of the interdisciplinary dialogue’ (Fischer-Lichte 1999: 71). The third – according to Fischer-Lichte – ‘can be located in particular possibilities of the perception of our culture, especially in the remarkable similarity between the *transitory* event-ness of present-day culture and the *transitory*, event-like nature of theatre’ (Fischer-Lichte 1999: 71). Apart from that, Fischer-Lichte also proposed that the introduction of ‘theatricality as a possible basic category of cultural science aims at an interdisciplinary research concerning the theatrical aspects of culture outside theatre’ (Fischer-Lichte 1999: 78).

The danger in Fuchs’ and Fischer-Lichte’s interpretations of theatre, however, is that theatre is introduced as *the* cultural model.<sup>15</sup> Though the notion of theatre as a cultural model is very attractive, everyday life is not theatre, and not all of its aspects can be approached and interpreted exclusively through that model. The heuristic use of theatre was also criticised by the American anthropologist, Edward L. Schieffelin in his article *Problematizing Performance*. Schieffelin argued that the theatre-model structures the world ‘out there’ as it introduces separation, spelled out by the dominant practice of Western theatre. Separation takes place not only between relatively active performers and relatively passive, though emotionally responsive audience, but it is also ‘metaphysical, even ontological [separation] [...] between a world of spectators which is real and a world conjured up by performers which is not, or more precisely, which has another kind of reality: a virtual or imaginary one’ (Schieffelin 1998: 200). The Western

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Jansen 1957, Singer 1959, Clifford 1988, States 1996, and Carlson 1996.

<sup>15</sup> In one of his articles, Clifford Geertz, for instance, drew the attention to various cultural models – he called analogies – in social sciences. Among others, he analysed game; text; and theatre in details (see



notion of theatre as illusion and performance as a form of in-authenticity leading to manipulation implicitly haunts the use of theatre as a heuristic model. The danger is that the hidden moral and epistemological judgements of Western theatre can thus be transported into and/or transposed onto the analysis of the activities of everyday life seen through the model of theatre.<sup>16</sup> As a result, I shall use the term ‘theatricality’ for the analysis of cultural events. I use theatricality first to avoid the separation and division of the dominant practice of Western theatre; second not to transpose the hidden moral and epistemological judgements of Western theatre onto my analysis; and third to distinguish that phenomenon from theatre.

In the history of theatricality, two distinctive approaches can be distinguished. On the one hand, theatricality refers to the specific features of theatre: all those materials and sign-systems, apart from the dramatic text, that belong to theatrical performance (see Fuchs 1909). On the other, theatricality is defined outside the realm of theatre and seen within those events of everyday life that are considered spectacular and symbolic in certain respects (see Jevrejnov [1908] 1927).<sup>17</sup> From the point of view of my analysis, the latter approach extending from Nyikolaj Jevrejnov’s 1908 paper through the works of Elizabeth Burns, Joachim Fiebach and Rudolf Munz to Fischer-Lichte, Michael Quinn and Helmar Schramm needs more attention.<sup>18</sup> The concept of theatricality I use derives thus from theatre as metaphor, and its definition goes beyond the artistic frame of theatre. In this thesis, I use theatricality in at least two senses: as a *mode of perception* and as an *occasion for appearance*.

### *Theatricality as mode of perception*

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Geertz 1983: 19-35).

<sup>16</sup> Jonas Barish analysed the moral and epistemological judgements and prejudices of Western theatre in his *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Barish 1981).

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed analysis of Jevrejnov’s notion of theatre instinct and his theatrical practice, see Sharon Marie Carnicke’s book, *The Theatrical Instinct* (Carnicke 1989).

<sup>18</sup> As Fischer-Lichte’s article, *A színház mint kulturális model* (‘Theatre as cultural model’), analysed these approaches with considerable insight and depth, they are not reviewed here and I refer only to those I also use in my thesis (see Fischer-Lichte 1999). See the German version of Fischer-Lichte’s article ‘Theater als kulturelles Modell. Theatralität und Interdisziplinarität’. In: *Germanistic – disziplinäre Identität und kulturelle Leistung*. (ed.) Jäger. Ludwig. Aachen, (1995) 164-184., or its shortened version in English ‘Theatricality: A Key Concept in Theatre and Cultural Studies’, *Theatre Research International*

Though theatricality is most often defined as spectacularly demonstrated behaviour and/or expression, it is possible to use it in another sense. In this sense, theatricality refers to the notion – as Elisabeth Burns argued – that it can be attached to ‘any kind of behaviour perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or implicitly) in theatrical terms. [...] [Though] degrees of theatricality are culturally determined, theatricality itself is determined by a particular viewpoint, a mode of perception’ (Burns 1972: 13). In this sense, theatricality does not exclusively depend on a degree of ostentation, and it is not merely the inherent symbolic aspect of a certain situation, event or behaviour. Rather it is a particular perspective, which defines whether a certain situation, event or behaviour can be seen and recognised *as* theatrical. The decisive factor shaping mode of perception is usually located in social conventions, though there can also be individual and particular differences. Theatricality as mode of perception is thus considered not only in terms of the application of a theatrical frame to everyday situations, events or behaviours, but also in terms of the way these situations, events or behaviours are consciously organised, recognised, and interpreted through theatrical terms and perspectives. Therefore, theatricality means not only the recognition of symbolic aspects of certain situations, events or behaviours, but also the recognition of a theatrical frame in and by which symbolic aspects can be constructed and recognised.

#### *Theatricality as occasion for appearance*

Theatricality can also refer to occasions when everyday behaviours appear through theatrical means, and where reality is constructed by spectacular forms of expression. In this sense, utilising John MacAloon’s concept of cultural performance, theatricalities ‘are occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective [or personal] myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others’ (MacAloon 1984: 1). Though these occasions often appear stable, they are also shifting, and vary greatly from culture to culture. These occasions happening *amid* the flow of existence are always subject to constant (re)construction and defined by visible and



invisible boundary lines determining inclusion and exclusion. In spite of their constant change, theatricalities attempt to fix temporarily the flow of existence within their frames. Theatricalities are thus considered as occasions in which different representations of the real can be manifested and confirmed, or even challenged and altered.

The interpretation of theatricality as occasion is based on a distinction between *the real* and *reality*. The former is lived through only in the present without repetition and reflection. The latter appears when one consciously reflects on the real: when one does so, one constructs representations of the real 'out there'. These representations, however, can never totally grasp and never be identical with the real. This is not only because representations can never fully (re)present the complexity and multiplicity of the real 'out there', but also because 'not only factually, but also in principle we do not have direct access to the real' (Welsch 1998: 170). Hence, representations of the real are always partial and fragmentary, and they always differ from each other as their perception is tied to subjects. The use of theatricality as occasion for appearance, however, does not mean that the real 'out there' does not exist anymore. It does not mean either that the real can only be approached through theatrical frames. Rather it means that the various *representations*, constructed on the real, are very often structured and interpreted through theatrical frames.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I shall place the emphasis on how the real is constructed in and by the various representations, and investigate how these representations are 'exposed to view'. In this sense, I shall consider theatre not merely as an art form, produced to express, confirm, or subvert and change the cultural, political, and ideological discourses, but I shall regard it as one of the basic (even necessary) models and possibilities of being-in-life in the contemporary world.

### *Interpreting cultural hegemony, and postmodern resistance*

It is not possible to deal here with all the forms, tactics, and strategies of theatre and theatricality. I analyse only some of the manifestations of contemporary Western culture, which are realised through theatrical activities within and outside the theatre. I am most

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<sup>19</sup> I shall discuss this topic in detail below, in Chapter 2.

interested in those forms, tactics, strategies, and manifestations that attempt to express, maintain, form, as well as rewrite the cultural hegemony of society.

The concept of cultural hegemony is central in the writings of the Italian Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. Though Gramsci coined his concept of cultural hegemony in circumstances entirely different from today's postmodern condition (Lyotard), a number of his insights and arguments are still valid. His *Prison Notebooks* (written in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Mussolini's Italy) create a complex network of intersecting arguments, copious examples and insights, rather than strict definitions and selected historical examples. As the American theatre historian, Bruce A. McConachie, pointed out certain major patterns emerge from Gramsci's writing: 'his distinction between cultural hegemony and domination by force, his emphasis on language as the chief propagator of cultural hegemony, and his conviction that hegemonic culture, however pervasive, is always contradictory and open to change' (McConachie 1989: 39). Gramsci extended the conventional meaning of the term 'hegemony' as political rule or domination onto a more general territory, and distinguished between two major ways of exercising power: domination by force and cultural hegemony. Gramsci emphasised that few social groups maintain their power through domination by force alone, as even dictatorships having attained power by force seek to legitimate themselves through cultural hegemony based on 'intellectual and moral leadership' (Gramsci 1971:57-58). That means in McConachie's reading that a certain social group's power is legitimated by 'the half-conscious acceptance of the norms of behaviour and the categories of knowledge generated by social institutions, public activities, and popular rituals viewed as 'natural' by the people whose actions they shape' (McConachie 1989: 40). The legitimacy of the power of certain social groups is thus realised by ordinary people. Hegemonic culture works its ways into their 'spontaneous philosophy', massively shaping a social group's ideology and culture by language; by 'common sense' and 'good sense'; and by popular religion, i.e., by an entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of 'folklore'.

In Gramsci's approach, however, hegemonic culture is not conceived as a homogeneous entity, but rather as the result of the competition between dynamic forces setting various social groups and their versions of the real in conflict with one another.

For Gramsci, reform and radical change are also possible as hegemonic culture is historically dynamic and always incomplete. As Walter Adamson demonstrated in his analysis of Gramsci, hegemony is ‘a process of continuous creation which, given its massive scale, is bound to be uneven in the degree of legitimacy it commands and to leave some room for antagonistic cultural expressions to develop’ (Adamson 1980: 174). Consequently, any socio-historical moment, even one exhibiting strong hegemony and hierarchy, can be considered as a highly contested territory that is rich in open as well as hidden conflicts, and full of the various views, voices, and (sub)cultures of the different social groups.<sup>20</sup>

Half a century later, Raymond Williams also dealt with the concept of cultural hegemony in his 1977 book, *Marxism and Literature*. Williams critiqued, although he did not fundamentally change Gramsci’s main argument on cultural hegemony. For Williams, hegemony is

a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives.

Williams 1977a: 110

One of the immediate advantages of Williams’s concept of hegemony is that he modified the Marxist theory of the power of the ruling class. Williams envisaged the social organisation and control of everyday life through the various formations of domination and subordination. These formations are much more flexible and leave much more space for the analysis of how the various social groups form and maintain their power than the Marxist concept of the ruling class. These formations cannot be expropriated by a single social group, but various social groups can use them even at the same time. As a result, cultural hegemony is dynamic, full of contradiction, as well as opposing and/or parallel forces.

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<sup>20</sup> For detailed analysis of Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony, see Lears (1985), Adamson (1980),



The other advantage of Williams' concept is that it lifted artistic works and cultural activities out of the Marxist model of base and superstructure. For Williams, artistic work and cultural activities are not seen merely as super-structural expressions of an already existent and defined social and economic base-structure, but rather they are treated 'among the basic processes of formation itself and, further, related to a much wider area of reality than the abstractions of 'social' and 'economic' experience' (Williams 1997a: 111). In Williams's treatise, the social, economic, and a whole raft of lived-through everyday experience are thus linked to artistic works and cultural activities.

What is an extremely important point for my analysis is that Williams also emphasized that hegemony is not a fixed and closed unity, but rather it is 'always a process', 'a realised complex of experiences, relationships, and activities', and 'has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified' (Williams 1977a: 112). Though hegemony seems to be by definition dominant and exclusive, it is constantly subjected to resistance, alteration, and challenge by pressure not at all its own. Therefore, resistant practices and tactics can also be seen as significant elements of hegemony. What is crucial is *how* these resistant tactics and practices question and challenge hegemony, as well as *how* hegemony reacts to these challenges. In this sense, the concept of hegemony refers to *how* social reality and social experience are formed, maintained, challenged and modified through the constant and mutual play between the various (often opposing and contradictory) concepts, practices, and tactics. In this sense, cultural hegemony can be regarded as a territory in which various groups and (sub)cultures can interact and live together in a given (historical) time and (social) space.

Interpreting cultural hegemony as a dynamic, constantly changing and contested territory, a question immediately arises: how is resistance still possible in this contestation? Contemporary cultural theorists claim that resistance is impossible in the contemporary world, since critical distance is no longer available due to the collapse of the distinction between the economic, political and cultural realms. The American cultural theorist, Hal Foster reminded us, however, that we need to reconsider the possible means and strategies of political criticism in this changed situation. The task of

postmodern political criticism is no longer to proclaim negation, and to transgress and revolt against known enemies, practices and institutions, as was possible in the early twentieth century for European avant-garde artists and political revolutionaries or for the artists and political activists of the 1960s counter-culture. Rather, postmodern criticism needs to respond to power not by 'transgression', but by 'resistance'. For Foster, resistance can be considered as a deconstructive perspective developed from the 1980's, and mostly influenced by French post-structuralism. Resistance is thus claimed as a distinct form of opposition in a new social order of heterogeneous and fragmentary elements, and as 'an immanent struggle from within or behind them' (Foster 1985: 150). For him, resistance aims

- (1) not to represent given representations and generic forms but to investigate the processes and apparatuses which control them;
- (2) not only to resist these operations [material operations of real political power] but to call or lure them out by means of 'terroristic' provocation – [...] – or, conversely, to deny the power of intimidation its due;
- (3) to contest the given systems of production and circulation; [and]
- (4) to question its own rhetoricity and challenge the possibility of its representations.

Foster 1985: 153-154

In so doing, contemporary political art and activism can be interpreted as the conjunction of practices 'from within and behind' through which contestation against dominant practices and hegemonic institutions again becomes possible. In this sense, postmodern resistance is to be site-specific, historically situated and relative: what is seen as resistant here, can be regarded as hegemonic there.

Drawing on Foster's theory of postmodern resistance, I shall investigate the practices of theatre and theatricality, which use the structures, methods, and means of hegemonic culture and conventional practices 'from within' in a way which reveals the processes of cultural control, demonstrates such strategies and practices as help their members to reflect their own situation as individuals or as community, as well as reveal how dominant discourses, hegemony and hierarchy of the surrounding world are constructed and what governs inclusion and exclusion. As a result, I shall investigate how reality is constructed and represented through the constant negotiation for power

and authority by dominant ideology and its resistant counterparts; how certain social groups attempt to legitimise their power, hierarchy, and ideology, and how certain social groups keep interrogating, and challenging, hierarchy and hegemony in theatre and theatricality. What I am mostly interested in is to reveal at least some of the ways *postmodern resistance* is possible in contemporary theatre and theatricality.



## CHAPTER 1 THEATRE WITHOUT RESISTANCE





## 1.0. Convention and resistance in contemporary Western theatre

The various tactics and strategies of resistance in theatre (and theatricality) can only be grasped properly, especially in a situation labelled 'the postmodern condition' by Jean-François Lyotard (see Lyotard 1993), when we are aware of at least some of the criteria, working mechanisms, and ideological functions of the conventions and the conventional. Terms like resistance and convention do not exclude each other, as often assumed; rather, they can be interpreted only through each other. In addition, terms like convention and resistance are not fixed and closed entities, but rather they are relative and flexible frames and their definition depends on the given situation and their interrelationships.

Before analysing the main theatrical convention and the dominant elements of conventional theatre in Western theatre, I would like to draw the reader's attention to several assumptions. The terms 'theatrical convention' and 'conventional theatre' are *theoretical* constructs. The difference between them is based on the notion that as each specific performance derives from convention(s), the term 'theatrical convention' is not pejorative, but simply it refers to a summary of the past. In contrast, the term 'conventional theatre' is pejorative. Its definition, however, is relative: it cannot be exclusively attached to any concrete place, theatre, or company, though there are places/theatres/companies where it appears more often than in others.

### 1.1. Conventions

When theatre is interpreted as frame, it seems that the possibility of what can be framed as theatre is without limitation – at least in theory. In practice, however, customs and institutions limit that possibility, and indicate quite clearly that those events can usually be regarded as theatre in which framing and its recognition is legitimated by social consensus. If that is true, then it is possible to propose that there are traditions in contemporary Western theatre. A proposal referring to theatrical traditions, however, faces immediate rejection. As the Indian theatre theorist, Rustom Bharucha, has pointed out: 'Western societies do not have performance traditions that have come to them from

antiquity' (Bharucha 1993: 74). By contrast, in India for instance, there is 'a living history of traditional performances and a body of critical writing on acting and aesthetics where the most intricate iconography of performances has been schematised' (Bharucha 1993: 74). In contemporary Eastern societies (India, China, Korea, or Japan), there can still be found today ancient theatrical traditions (kathakali, ramlila, Peking Opera, sandaegŭk, Noh, and kabuki for instance) characterised by highly stylised movement, gesture, and costume, and by a tight integration between singing, dancing, and performance skills, whose discipline requires years of training and total dedication. Practitioners and spectators alike are familiar with the basic elements and working mechanisms of these traditions and their possible variations. These theatrical traditions are usually situated in strong social and/or deeply religious contexts, and performed at important religious dates and/or on social occasions, when theatre, religion, popular entertainment, rituals, sacred events, market, everyday life, and pilgrimage can merge. In Eastern societies, theatrical traditions are thus regarded partly as an inventory of knowledge, including performance techniques, texts, aesthetic principles, basic rules, mythology, worldviews, and hypotheses about society; and partly as process through which knowledge is handed down from generation to generation. In this respect, Bharucha is right, as contemporary Western societies have no such theatrical traditions at all.<sup>21</sup>

The lack of Eastern type of theatrical traditions in the West is linked to Western ways of thought. The cultural history of Western thinking can be arranged within well-defined social, cultural, political and ideological paradigms. According to that view, each paradigm from the ancient Greeks until the mid-nineteenth century was different from the previous one, and kept rewriting and refuting the previous one's characteristic ideas. Since the Enlightenment and Romanticism, however, different paradigms have emerged and worked parallel to each other within the same period. Since then a Renaissance idea has been strengthened especially in European modernism proposing that Western thinking is built on individuality, originality, and the myth of the 'new'. Parallel to that idea, it was also recognised that there are no longer shared cultural,

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed analysis of the various Indian theatrical traditions see *Indian Theatre. Traditions of Performance* by Farley Richmond, Darius Swann, and Philip Zarilli (Richmond, Swann, and Zarilli 1993). And for a short introduction to ancient Korean, Japan, and Chinese theatrical traditions see Brown (1995:



political and social convictions and practices in Western culture that might comprise tradition in Bharucha's sense.

Apart from ascribing absolute value to individuality, originality, innovation and the myth of the new, the movements of European modernism demonstrate also that though it is not possible to mark centuries of continuous tradition in Bharucha's sense, there are *conventions* based on common practices of production and reception in Western art and theatre against which these modernist movements rebelled. In this respect, the term 'convention' can be interpreted as 'a principle or proposal which is adopted by a group of people, either by explicit choice, [...] or as a matter of custom, whose origins are unknown and unplanned' (Honderich 1995: 165). Western conventions are much more flexible, varied, temporary, open, broken, and interrupted than Eastern traditions. In Western theatre, the term 'convention' refers to the theatrical practices with (or against) which the specific theatres of contemporary Western culture are framed and recognised. In this sense, the notion of *theatrical convention* refers to the most often used and the most widely known theatrical practices, built on standardised, established and institutionalised theatrical frames with more or less stable sets of characteristics and relations. A theatrical convention is thus legitimated by social consensus; based on previous experience of theatre; and maintained by social and political institutions, the theatre industry, education, press, as well as by theatre practitioners, critics, spectators, and scholars.

#### *Structural criteria of convention*

Writing on Antoine Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double*, Jacques Derrida attempted to deconstruct the Western theatre against which Artaud's anger and disdain were directed. For Derrida, Western theatre is logocentric and theological

for as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech, by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance. The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety tradition, comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles,



regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter represent him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters who represent characters who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the 'creator'. [...] Finally, the theological stage comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of 'enjoyers' – as Nietzsche and Artaud both say – attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to voyeuristic scrutiny. [...] This general structure in which each agency is linked to the others by representation, in which the irrepresentability of the living present is dissimulated or dissolved, suppressed or deported within the infinite chain of representations – this structure has never been modified.

Derrida 1978: 235

Logocentric and theological theatre which regards the author-creator (usually the dramatist) as the origin of theatre, considers the text as the representation of the author's logos, the possessor of meaning, and envisages passive spectators is what is described in any theoretical, practical and historical writing on theatre (from Aristotle via Diderot, the early semioticians, through to Bentley and post-structuralism). Derrida's claim, however, that the theological and logocentric structure of Western theatre has never been modified, is problematic. Derrida's claim – that the logocentric and teleological convention was already and always regarded as the most important element in the entire history of theatre – is based on one of the basic premises of theatre history. Emerging as a distinctive area of study in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, theatre history took over the list of dramatic texts canonised by literary history, and directed theatre historians' attention to the analysis of the theatrical circumstances of these canonical texts (see Carlson 1991, and Postlewait and McConachie 1989). In consequence of this premise, the dramatic text usually appears as a fixed, closed and unified entity, and theatrical performance is regarded as a corrupt derivation and an incomplete appearance of the text's endless possibilities.<sup>22</sup> As a result, most of the works of theatre history give significance to the theatrical periods, which produced texts canonised as *literature* (see Brown 1995 or Simhandl 1998 for instance). Theatrical practices – improvised folk-drama in thirteenth-century medieval theatre, sixteenth century *commedia dell'arte*, and

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<sup>22</sup> In contemporary theatre, this practice can be seen in the fact that theatre bills draw the viewers' attention mostly to the name of the playwright or the title of the text, and only then to the name of the

the visual spectacles of Baroque theatre for instance – not based on pre-written texts and largely not producing literarily significant texts could usually be incorporated in the history of theatre as predecessors of the literary-oriented theatrical periods. As a result, the entire history of Western theatre has often been regarded as exclusively literary, dramatist-oriented logocentric (word) theatre in theatre history, as well as in Derrida's above account.

The interpretation of theatre as an exclusively literary, dramatist-oriented logocentric convention, however, has characterised the history of Western theatre mainly for the last two hundred years, and has only become dominant since late nineteenth century theatrical realism (see George 1996).<sup>23</sup> Even during this time, however, beside the literary, dramatist-oriented theatre, there have been other theatrical conventions (street theatre, market theatre, or walkabout, for instance) that are still omitted from the major works on theatre history, as well as from Derrida's above account. In this sense, Derrida took the literary, dramatist-oriented theatre and its theological structure dominating contemporary theatre as *the* (general and universal) model of theatre, and projected that model back upon the entire history of Western theatre. Thus Derrida – wrongly – supposed that Western theatre consists of only the literary, dramatist-oriented convention. That supposition, however, limits the variety and differences found in Western theatre onto a single, though nowadays dominant convention, and eliminates the non-literary, non-dramatist-oriented practices of Western theatre. Apart from these problems, however, Derrida's treatise very much applies to the main Western theatrical convention, i.e., to the literary, dramatist-oriented convention. Theatres appearing within this convention are based on texts, dominated by speech, and often characterised by 'enslaved interpreters', 'a passive, seated public of consumers', and productions often without 'true volume or depth', and in which 'the irrepresentability of the living present is dissimulated or dissolved, suppressed or deported'.

In his book, *Theater Under Deconstruction*, the American theatre theorist, Stratos E. Constantinidis, investigated the working method and structural system of

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theatre, director, players, and company.

<sup>23</sup> In the last hundred years of its history – as Gerald Rabkin has also pointed out – the dominant Western theatrical convention has been 'defined in relation to the history of a species of literature' (Rabkin 1983:



Western theatre. Drawing on Derrida's claims of the logocentric, hierarchically organised theatrical stage, Constantinidis argued that the recent system of Western theatre operates under two dominant spatial metaphors: the metaphor of the production line and the metaphor of the market ellipse (Constantinidis 1993: 7). Applied to Western theatre in general, however, Constantinidis's metaphors are problematic: there are practices obviously questioning and challenging the method and the structure described by his metaphors. Like Derrida's treatise, however, Constantinidis's metaphors can also be applied to the analysis of the production method and structural system of the main Western theatrical convention.

In this sense, theatre companies operating under the metaphor of the production line 'adopt a structured, linear and hierarchical order of production which proceeds from playtext to performance text through such intermediate, 'subordinate' texts as the 'prompt-copy' and the 'rehearsal-text' (Constantinidis 1993: 7). The origin of that process is the dramatist, the vehicle of meaning is the dramatic text appearing as stable entity, and theatre people are subservient to the authority of the dramatist and of the text. The dramatic text is seen as fundamentally linear, illusionistic, thematic or psychological, and is regarded as a constant and persistent presence for the historical consciousness. The convention of staging reduces performance to the service of (re)interpreting the dramatic text, and aims to transform the verbal signs of the dramatic text into verbal, acoustic, and visual images. As a result, theatre is seen as secondary to the primacy of the written text, and is thus often regarded as an interpretative and imitative art. The adoption of a production line is probably necessary for companies attempting to survive in a market economy, but this usually defines the entire theatrical process from text to production in terms of financial and economic markers. Hence, the production line often financially limits the time spent on production, fixes the economic and social hierarchy between its participants, reduces them to highly specialised executioners of distinct tasks, and places them at the mercy of economic factors, which do not allow experiments, but focuses on the familiar images of star performers, and the repetitions of already proven successes and solutions.



Apart from the metaphor of the production line, Constantinidis attempted to describe the dominant structure of Western theatre with the metaphor of the market ellipse. Constantinidis applied the concept of centre/periphery to theatre as he compared the theatre system of a country to 'planets rotating around the sun' (Constantinidis 1993: 7). For him, the theatre system of a country is seen as a market and is organised around a centre: 'the companies on the outer rings generally repeat (rehash) the shows and the production structure of the companies in the center' (Constantinidis 1993: 7). Applied to Western theatre in general, Constantinidis's claim is problematic again: there are theatres (Kaposvár, Opole, Cardiff, or Holstebro for instance) on the so-called periphery that do not repeat, but rather reinterpret and change the principles and methods of the productions and the working methods of the centre. Nevertheless, the orientation, described by Constantinidis, forced mostly by economic and financial reasons, can be detected in the main convention of Western theatre industrialised and institutionalised since the second half of the nineteenth century. Though Constantinidis's latter metaphor was probably modelled on the American theatre system, similar tendencies can also be seen in the United Kingdom where the centre of theatrical production can be found in London, and in other European countries (Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway, and Italy are exceptions in this respect) where usually the cultural and administrative capitals fulfil the function of the theatrical centre.<sup>24</sup>

Constantinidis's metaphor of the market ellipse situated the outer ring within national borders, but that metaphor based on the principle of centre/periphery can also work – with certain limitations of course – within wider geographical borders. In this sense, the theatrical centres of Western Europe (London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna) have extended their influence on the peripheral theatres of Eastern Europe since the second half of the nineteenth century. Except for some of the highly influential East European theatre directors (Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Kantor, for instance) and dramatists (Chekhov, Bulgakov, Mrožek, and Havel, for instance), East European theatres have appeared much more rarely in Western Europe than the other way round. The lack of

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<sup>24</sup> In a recent survey on West European theatre, S. E. Wilmer argued that West European countries tended to decentralise their theatre systems after World War II. In the middle of the 1990s, however, due to economic recession, the decentralisation process was curtailed as subsidies for regional and independent theatres were cut, and then theatre was generally seen as an economic venture in Western Europe (see Wilmer 1998: 17-26).

East European theatres in the theatrical centres of Western Europe draws also the attention to the fact – not meant in any nationalistic sense – that this process can be seen not only as European multiculturalism, but also as the cultural expansion of West European theatre.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, Constantinidis's metaphors refer not merely to symbolic spatial orientation within the theatre structure of a country, but also to hierarchical relations in the entire theatre system of modern Europe. Hence, it can be argued that the economic, artistic and ideological hierarchy of *West European* theatre largely defines the main convention of *Western* theatre.

### *Poetic criteria of convention*

Apart from structural criteria, the main convention of Western theatre can also be characterised by poetic criteria. In both production and reception, that convention is *text centred* in that it is based on pre-written text(s); *actor centred* in that it concentrates mainly on actors' presence and their delivering the lines of the text(s); *story centred* in that the story brings together the elements of the performance; and articulated by the *assumptions of theatrical realism*.

For Raymond Williams, realism can be characterised as secular, contemporary, socially extended, and embedded in a particular political viewpoint (see Williams 1977b: 64-68). Apart from these characteristics, Stephen Lacey distinguished two other interrelated senses of the term: an 'attitude' and a 'method'. 'A realist 'attitude' – writes Lacey – (political or social in origin, and embodied in a contemporary and socially extended narrative) is articulated through a particular 'method', which [...] offers itself in terms of verisimilitude, its closeness to outward forms of social reality' (Lacey 1995: 66). For this assumption, realist theatre is supposed to have a mimetic function 'imitating' an "outside" reality considered as fixed and accessible. 'A premise of all realism is that reality is knowable, and the objective of realism is to show "how things really are" – to know reality better; and if our understanding of the world is incomplete,

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<sup>25</sup> It is especially significant when we have a look at the recent works on the history of theatre. Peter Simhandl's work, for instance, proposes an introduction to the entire history of theatre from the ancient Greeks to today, but the proportion of West European theatres, directors, and dramatists are much higher than the East European ones, and the Eastern theatrical traditions are not even represented there (see Simhandl 1998).



then this is because we simply do not yet have the analytical tools to master its complexities. [...] ... there is, as Lovell notes, a “basic realist belief that there is an external knowable reality which can be made accessible through the construction of works of art” (Lovell 1980: 84 in Lacey 1995: 142). The realist premise thus supposes chronological order between theatre and reality: reality comes first, and then theatre reflects it. Hence, realist theatre rather naively assumes that it can continue to represent with increasingly sophisticated analytical tools a/the reality that is located separately from theatre, somewhere ‘outside’.

The performances of Western realist convention (and their reception) are based on the assumption that the characters, arranged as unified personalities and seen as ‘real people’, can be interpreted through psychological motivations. The narrative seen as a unified and harmonious structure is often organised around a single centre: the main character. The main character is not only ‘the embodiment of the play’s moral or political values, but is rather the structural centre of the narrative, whose dilemmas are the chief source of dramatic conflict, and who precipitates the significant action’ (Lacey 1995: 68). The narrative is rendered linearly leading towards a main crisis, unifying the different concerns and events of the work, while it captures the unified story behind. The narrative also contains the general message, and it signifies the teleological aim to which the scenes and the characters are oriented, as well as referring to the way their signification can be organised hierarchically. Fictional time can also be sequenced linearly, and locations serve to motivate the characters’ deeds and decisions. Apart from these, ‘identification with the protagonist becomes the main “point of entry” into the world of the narrative [...] and one of the chief ways through which narrative “point of view” is constructed’ (Lacey 1995: 68). The fictional universe of these performances and their reception are built on the assumptions and expectations of the bourgeois illusionist theatre. Theatre thus gives the illusion of reality; supposedly depicts the physical circumstances and emotional development of the unified human personality; and maintains the view that the body can adequately express a person’s inner emotional happenings (see Fischer-Lichte 1990: 159). Therefore, the main Western theatrical convention is characterised poetically by closed representation, harmoniously built-up composition, fusion, stylistic unity, psychological motivations, and dominated by realist theatrical illusion. In that sense, theatrical illusion is predicated upon a belief – as



Arnold Aronson put it – ‘that if the audience accepts the physical environment of the stage [...] as emblematic of a real place, then it follows that they will accept the illusionistic temporal rhythms as well’ (Aronson 2000: 26).<sup>26</sup>

### *Reception of convention*

Apart from structural and poetic criteria, the main convention of Western theatre can also be characterised by its reception process. In contrast to Boal’s invisible theatre, however, contemporary Western theatre imagines its spectators rather differently. Here, I shall analyse how spectators are usually seen and treated in contemporary Western theatre.

### *Constructing the model spectator through data*

Ever since theatre officials and practitioners realised that audiences can be measured, targeted and drawn into the theatre with marketing, there has been an increase in sociologically driven audience-research.<sup>27</sup> Audience surveys can of course reveal a great deal of valuable information about the audience in measurable terms as they are designed to consider ‘the number attending cultural events and audiences’ spending on cultural events and activities’ and to ‘examine audience profiles by social group, age, gender and region’ (Casey 1996: 58). These surveys, however, often hide their purely practical and economic aims behind friendly terms, implying to their examinees the existence of community between theatre practitioners and audiences. The audience survey of the 1998 London production of the musical *Rent*, for instance, claimed that ‘[w]e would like your help in finding out about YOU – our audience.’<sup>28</sup> After that

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<sup>26</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that the buildings most often incorporating the performances of the dominant theatre convention were also realised in the late nineteenth century, preserving and conserving not only the practice of production that then evolved, but also the practice of reception as well, both in terms of the customs of theatre-going and of attitudes to interpretation.

<sup>27</sup> On the history and research methods of theatre sociology see Gurvitch 1956, Shevstova 1989, and Martin and Sauter 1995.

<sup>28</sup> The French Theatre Season Audience Survey (1997) contained nearly the same sentence in its introductory paragraph: ‘It [your answer] helps us to find out more about you, our audience, and aid our future planning.’

statement, there were questions that used the pronoun 'YOU' (still with capital letters) as often as possible to give an illusion that it was really 'you' in whom they were interested. In fact, this survey investigated only the actual respondee's frequency and variety of theatregoing, reading and booking habits. Though often disguised in personal terms, audience surveys in general are just marketing tools, used to find out not about you as person but about YOU as a social role. These surveys investigate the cultural habits and the social expectations rendered to the role of the spectator. Their questions are directed to find out where the spectators come from; what they consume; and what sort of materials they can be (later) targeted with. By eliminating individual differences, these surveys reconstruct real audiences as 'the model spectator' consisting of a mass of alienated social and economic data. As a result, the 'model spectator' is constructed as the late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'model consumer' who is to be targeted and brought into the theatre. Therefore, these surveys handle theatrical spectators according to dominant ideologies of postindustrial society: spectators are usually seen as cultural consumers.

### *Constructing the model spectator through regulations*

The model spectator is constructed not only by audience surveys, but also by those norms, habits, and behavioural patterns generally attributed to the role of spectator. These norms, habits, and behavioural patterns appear in their most detailed form in descriptions of etiquette. In her book, *Etiquette*, Adriana Hunter for instance proposed that etiquette is no longer a collection of strict rules and regulations, but a set of correct and socially accepted behavioural norms. First, she listed the general norms in everyday situations (introductions, love, divorce, eating, sport, etc.) then she dealt with the special occasions (engagement, wedding, christening, funeral, restaurant, job interview, abroad, etc.). Hunter placed theatre among the special occasions, and gave detailed advice about the time spent in the theatre, from choosing appropriate dress, selecting the right play, as well as the behaviour expected during the performance and at the interval. Hunter first drew the would-be spectator's attention to the fact that one is only *a* member of the audience, so one is to *behave*, so one is to be disciplined. Analysing the visual, oral and bodily noises that are to be disciplined, she gave advice on how these conscious or even



reflexive noises (coughing, sneezing, etc.) can all be suppressed (see Hunter 1994: 134-135).

Theatre leaflets and bills displayed in theatre foyers often articulate similar disciplinary advice about 'ideal' behaviour.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the usual instruction preventing the noise of mobile phones, watches and speaking in the auditorium, the leaflet of The Place (London) for instance strictly indicates spectators' place in the institution: 'the stage may not be crossed at any time'. There is of course a health and safety issue here, but the leaflet verbalised a common expectation prohibiting spectators from appearing on or behind the stage. While spectators' behaviour is disciplined by norms based on social consensus into a passive and noiseless position in the auditorium, their area of movement is also restricted to certain areas: only to those places which are confined to them by the theatrical institution. Such disciplinary instructions on the spectator's expected behaviour draw attention to the fact that the dominant assumption towards audience is directed by the concept of the ordered and disembodied mass. That can be achieved by controlling with strict, though often invisible, regulations the spectators' behaviour.

Though these norms seem natural in today's theatre, they are also historical developments reflected in the common interpretations of the most often-used theatre buildings. The structure of these buildings derives from Italian Renaissance theatre architecture, and many of its extant forms were designed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. At that time, stage and auditorium were separated spatially by proscenium arch, electric lighting, and house curtain. Though the term proscenium arch as the frame for a perspective set was already used in the court theatres of the Italian Renaissance, it was reinvented by late nineteenth century theatrical pictorialism as picture frame (by the Bancrofts in 1881 at the Haymarket Theatre, London for instance) to control and separate.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the introduction of electric lighting made it possible for the first time in the history of Western theatre for the rear of the stage also

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<sup>29</sup> 'We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing, rustling paper and the bleep of digital watches may distract the actors and your fellow audience-members' (leaflet, Royal National Theatre, London).

<sup>30</sup> The term proscenium initially indicated an area in front of the stage, and was used as link rather than separation between stage and auditorium (see Christopher Wren's 1674 design for the Drury Lane Theatre for instance in Brown 1995: 207).



to be used, and for the audience to be there in the darkness of the auditorium without being seen. Parallel to these changes, the house curtain was also introduced to separate the world of the stage – the world of illusion – from the real world of the audience. Based on these devices, the middle- and upper-class desire for theatrical performance to be a regulated activity behind a physical border, physically and visually separated from spectators, received its final realisation in the convention of the fourth wall.<sup>31</sup> According to that convention, expressed in detail by August Strindberg in his *Preface to Miss Julie* (1888), players are integrated into a three-dimensional physical and imaginary space behind the proscenium arch, considered as an immanent unit, and spectators are conceived as voyeurs peeping through a keyhole. Since that time, that convention has prescribed that spectators can be safely present in public theatres, while they are subject to strict behavioural regulations and sit silently and undisturbed in the darkness of the auditorium.

Though physical separation seems to be fundamental in contemporary theatre, separation also occurs between the relatively active performers and the relatively passive, but emotionally and intellectually responsive, spectators. That separation refers also in a metaphysical, even ontological sense to that between the real world of spectators and the fictional world of the performance. The latter is supposed to be a world conjured up by performance, which has another kind of reality: a virtual or imaginary one. Parallel to that, though perception is just as creative as the realisation of the performance, the spectators' perception is conceived as if it implied only mere receptive acceptance. This refers to the fact that spectators are not supposed to take part directly in the development of the entire theatrical event, for they come to see only the fixed and reproducible final product, i.e., the performance. And, even if spectators attempt to express their delight or dissatisfaction, it is to be done in highly codified forms at the appropriate time and place, also as prescribed by the institution. If spectators intervene in the performance with their comments and suggestions, they break various invisible, but extremely powerful boundaries and taboos of social custom, expectation and habit (see Hunter's advice, for instance). In contemporary theatre, spectators are thus expected to behave *as if* they were not even there, while players are

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<sup>31</sup> A detailed analysis of the structure and function of proscenium theatre can be found in Schechner's

expected to perform *as if* they were by themselves within a fictional world seen as an immanent and unitary system. By these means, they merely disguise the fact that they depend on each other, as performance is rehearsed for the promise of future audiences, and it is played for and in the presence of an audience. As a result, a real spectator is conceived not only as a 'model consumer', but also as an 'as-if spectator'.

Consequently, though there are various popular or less popular theatrical conventions (visual theatre, street theatre, music theatres, theatre of mixed means, spectacle, and walkabout for instance), it is possible to argue for a main convention in contemporary Western theatre. The main convention appears when the structural criteria of its production process can be characterised by the metaphors of the *production line* and the *market ellipse*, when its stage is seen as *logocentric* and *theological*, when its *text centrism*, *actor centrism*, *story centrism* are organised by *realist assumptions*, and when its reception is dominated by the *as-if-model spectators'* activities.

## *1.2. The conventional and resistance*

In contrast to the respected Eastern traditions, the term 'convention' in the Western world has often been used pejoratively as something 'out of date' and already 'dead'. Bharucha also referred to that pejorative notion when he declared, for instance, that 'there is a lot of dead theatre in the world today, particularly in capitalist societies like America, whose regional theatres are like factories, where plays are manufactured in less than six weeks and performed by a group of actors who remain strangers to one another and the audience as well' (Bharucha 1993: 52). Here Bharucha referred to theatre in the sense described by Peter Brook as 'deadly theatre'. For Brook, 'deadly theatre' is based on automatic repetitions of already established truths, and characterised in terms of boredom, and a sense of cultural duty (see Brook 1968: 11-46). Deadly theatre is thus *conventional* in every aspect. Conventional theatre is not necessarily constant: what is regarded *as* conventional is constantly changing. To uncover the structural, institutional, and poetic criteria, established working methods, and ideological functions of contemporary conventional theatre, I shall here concentrate on Stephen Daldry's

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article 'Toward a Poetics of Performance' (Schechner 1994a: 153-186, especially 161-166).



production of *An Inspector Calls*, and on Richard Olivier's production of *The Merchant of Venice*.

### ***1.3. Conventional theatre as field of didacticism: Stephen Daldry's An Inspector Calls***

The production of J. B. Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls*, directed by Stephen Daldry, opened at the Royal National Theatre (Lyttelton) in September 1992. Then it moved to the Aldwych Theatre in August 1993 and subsequently to the Garrick Theatre in October 1995 where it closed in April 2001. The same year, in September, it opened again at the Playhouse Theatre for a final London season (until May 2002) before continuing with an international tour. In 1994, Daldry also directed the play on New York's Broadway where it had an unexpected eighteen month run. The production won four Olivier Awards in 1993, and then subsequently went on to win nineteen major theatre awards in London and New York.

In connection with his highly successful production, Daldry wrote the following in 1999:

What constantly pleases me is the appreciation of the play as a political piece of work: "communist propaganda" one young woman said to me in New York, which is obviously not true, but her outrage thrilled me. Priestley still disturbs, still speaks to different generations as a contemporary voice. By using every theatrical trick in the book, he grabs the audience by the scruff of the neck and propels you towards the inevitable conclusion that our society is in urgent need of self-analysis.

Daldry – leaflet of the Royal National Theatre (London, 1999)

Daldry's concept of what Priestley's play did and what theatre in general should do in society is based on two long-standing conventions coming in and out of focus in varying ways throughout the history of theatre. On the one hand, it echoes the notion of theatre as useful institution, and on the other, it refers to the idea regarding theatre as political forum.

Though the notion of theatre as a useful institution for the analysis of social problems and relations is as old as theatre itself, it was especially instructive in the



Enlightenment.<sup>32</sup> In his book, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey has shown that the thinkers of the Enlightenment presumed that 'the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it rightly. But this presumed that there existed a single correct mode of representation, which, if we could uncover it (and this was what scientific and mathematical endeavours were all about), would provide the means to Enlightenment ends' (Harvey 1989: 27). Apart from scientific, philosophical, and mathematical endeavours, the arts were also expected to be rule-bound and instructive, and engaged in the goal of securing a reformed and enlightened society. The theatrical angle on this was expressed in Friedrich Schiller's 1784 essay entitled *Theatre as a Moral Institution*. For Schiller, theatre is 'the communal channel through which the light of wisdom pours down from the better, thinking part of the populace to spread in gentler rays through the whole state' (Schiller 1965 [1784]: 48). Since then theatre has had an especially significant social function in the general education of members of society, the examination and improvement of social conditions, and also in the presentation of a social order based on the principles of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'.

Apart from the notion of theatre as useful institution, Daldry's analysis referred to the idea of theatre as political forum as formulated by the theatre reformers of the Russian Revolution and developed by the German theatre director, Erwin Piscator, in the 1920s. For Piscator, theatre was not mere entertainment or cultural habit, but a political instrument focused on social dialogue and political change. His production of *§218*, for instance, dealt with one of the highly controversial issues of contemporary German society: the civil law on abortion (see Innes 1972: 137-8). Piscator's provocative production activated spectators and they 'interposed comments, offered other views, and finally voted to reject the law' (Bennett 1990: 26). During World War II, the French existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, utilised theatre as political instrument for the (disguised) expression of French national resistance and for the introduction of possible ways of conducting one's life under German occupation (see Brown 1995: 420). Likewise, Bertolt Brecht consciously exploited political possibilities in his epic theatre

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<sup>32</sup> The Enlightenment was based on the concept that the universe is a rational system, wholly accessible to human reason and can be ordered by logical and rational thinking. That concept established the Enlightenment's doctrines of egalitarianism, tolerance and belief in progress; and ideals of popular

with which he could also provoke social and political change (see Brecht 1968; Benjamin 1973; Heath 1974; and Brown 1995: 402-407).

The influence of the earlier political theatre was also central to the development of the oppositional, overtly political theatre of the 1960s and 1970s. It can be detected in the productions of such diverse theatrical groups and directors as Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre in the United States (see Beck 1972, and Tytell 1997) or Joan Littlewood and George Devine in Britain (see Gooch 1984). Likewise, the founders of the Munich street theatre, Politische Forum, Wolfgang Anraths and Victor Augustin, claimed similar aspirations for their theatrical practice, and summarised the virtually compulsory principles of the 1960s political theatre in their 1968 manifesto. For them, just as for Piscator, Brecht, Littlewood, Devine, Beck and Malina,

theatre exists only when it works as a forum forming political consciousness. [...] Theatre is political. It aims to analyse social relations and agitate for their change by mobilizing the audience.

Anraths and Augustin 1981: 236 – translation ZI

The American theatre scholar, Wendy Lesser, detected the principles of political theatre, spelled out by Piscator and Anraths and Augustin, in Daldry's 1992 London and the 1994 New York productions of *An Inspector Calls*. For her, Daldry's production was political as it dealt with the examination of society, propagated social change, and also activated the audience (see Lesser 1997: 15-36). British theatre critics also situated Daldry's production along the lines of British political theatre of the 1970s. Eric Gordon argued, for instance, that it is 'so faultlessly innovative that it brought back to me all the great theatre I had seen under George Devine and Joan Littlewood' (Gordon 1995). Hence, a consensus seemed to emerge among British and American theatre critics that Daldry was using theatre as a political institution. First, I shall investigate the theatrical and cultural context of the 1990s in which Daldry's production of *An Inspector Calls* appeared. Then, I shall analyse Daldry's re-interpretation of Priestley's play as an attempt to challenge the assumptions of the theatrical and cultural context of the 1990s.

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sovereignty, equality before the law, as well as individual liberty.



Finally, I shall critique the political position of his reinterpretation by differentiating between propaganda theatre and political theatre.

*The context of Daldry's production: market, industry, and commodity*

Britain is commonly regarded as one of the world's leading theatrical centres: it possesses probably the highest number of working theatres and companies, attracting theatregoers from all over the world. In spite of the high number of theatre visits (approximately 25 million per year)<sup>33</sup>, however, theatre forms only a minor part of cultural activity in Britain<sup>34</sup>: a British citizen probably goes to the theatre less than twice a year, and possibly not at all.<sup>35</sup> Cultural and theatre surveys (see Gardiner 1991, and Casey et al. 1996) demonstrate that theatre in Britain is still reserved for the relatively high-earning members of the educated (upper)middle-class<sup>36</sup>, and more than *eighty* per

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<sup>33</sup> See Society of London Theatre, *Box-Office Data Report 1995* (1996). The cultural survey, *Culture as Commodity* mentioned a lower number (approx. 23 million), but drew attention to the fact that the actual number of visits was probably higher (see Casey et al. 1996: 59).

<sup>34</sup> That – for some European countries unimaginably high – number is, however, only 8.3 per cent of the total number of attendances at cultural activities in Britain (see Casey et al. 1996: 59). In 1993/94, there were at least 325 million attendances at cultural events and activities in Britain, and over a third of these were accounted for by cinema visits (113 million – 34.8 per cent). Apart from cinema visits, even the number of attendances at heritage properties and sites (95 million – 29.2 per cent) and at museums, galleries and exhibitions (90 million – 27.7 per cent) were ahead of performing arts events (theatre, and opera, ballet, concerts, etc.) (see Casey et al. 1996: 59-60).

<sup>35</sup> Most of the theatrical surveys of British theatre point out that the number of people attending performing arts events is probably smaller than the number of the actual visits. The Target Group Index's 'data suggested that theatre was the most popular type of performing arts events, attracting 10.8 million people including 2 million foreigners' (quoted in Casey et al. 1996: 60). From that, the authors of *Culture As Commodity?* concluded that 'approximately *twenty* per cent of the population in Britain went to the theatre in 1993/4' (Casey et al. 1996: xix – emphasis ZI). If the numbers of visits and the actual people attending were right, approximately 11 million people made 25 million visits. Hence, it probably turns out that the British 'model spectator' attended theatre approximately *twice* a year, or even less often, since there were 2 million foreigners among the 10.8 million visitors.

<sup>36</sup> A 1991 audience survey revealed that the typical theatregoer (female 51%; male 49%) of the West End theatres was (upper-) middle class, and had received at least university or college level education. The typical theatregoer went to the theatre once or twice in two months as one member of a couple and bought the tickets more than one week in advance. Most frequently, the typical theatregoer used public transport and spent an average of £22 (or £31 if also eating out) during the evening (see Gardiner 1992). The audience survey of the theatrical centre of Great Britain showed also that the theatregoers of 1990/1991 consisted mostly of the residents of the most prosperous London boroughs (Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Westminster); and of the most prosperous counties (Kent, Surrey, Essex and Hertfordshire) (see Gardiner 1991: 11). Moreover, that survey also revealed that, due to economic factors, 'theatre-going frequency increased with age' (Gardiner 1991: 37). The 1993/4 cultural survey, *Culture As Commodity?*, supported these tendencies, emphasising that 'in general, it can be said that the audience for cultural events outside home is predominantly from the higher social groups' (Casey et al. 1996: 68).





cent of the population has *never* visited the theatre. For Dragan Klaič, the proportion of theatregoers in the other countries of Western Europe is at most only *three* per cent<sup>37</sup>, while in Eastern Europe, approximately *eight* per cent of the population goes regularly to the theatre (Klaič 2000: 17). Cultural and theatre surveys thus strengthen the sociologists' view, which locates theatre as one of the urban subcultures (see Crane 1992) attracting mostly (upper)middle-class audiences all over Europe (see Maanen and Wilmer 1998: 48, 241). As the actual number of visits is decreasing, and the total number of visitors is shrinking in Britain as in Europe, it is highly unlikely that theatre fulfils an important role either in the British or in other European societies, or in their citizens' everyday life.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Daldry's and the theatre critics' view (see Nightingale 1998, and Wardle 1992, for instance), regarding theatre as useful institution, still playing a vital part in the analysis of social problems and relations and in the general education of the population in Britain as in Europe, seems to be on the one hand illusory due to the fact that most of the people simply do not bother to go to the theatre. On the other hand, we can argue, however, that since theatre is reviewed in the so-called quality press and is attended by those who make or/and influence political decisions, theatre still could carry political and social significance. This is a political/social function rather different to that of Piscator, Brecht or 1960-1970s agitprop theatre and the social consciousness raising of contemporary alternative theatre which involves itself with disadvantaged groups (prisoners, children, women, ethnic minorities, etc.).

Apart from the shrinking number of people involved in theatre, the notion of theatre went through considerable changes in Britain in the 1980s and then in Europe in

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(These surveys were undertaken towards the end of a long period of Conservative government when the ethos of market forces had led to a considerable rise in ticket prices. In the last three years, however, there has been a shift of policy and both grant-making bodies and sponsors have been subsidising the audience as much as the show or the institution. The 'Travellex' £10 tickets at the National Theatre and the two opera houses in London are, – as it is now claimed by the Artistic Directors of those institutions (BBC Radio 4, Front Row, 06.01.2005) –, resulting in much greater seat occupancy, a younger, more diverse audience and, as a result, a renewed confidence to engage in more radical programming.)

<sup>37</sup> Hans van Maanen gave even a lower number (2,5%) of actual theatregoers in the Netherlands (see Maanen 2002: 181).

<sup>38</sup> In Germany, though the number of the actual visits is quite high, it has been decreasing since 1957 (see Hofmann 1998: 233). In Spain, attendance is also decreasing, and only 13.9% of those above 18 attended a theatre performance in 1997 (see Bonet 1998: 575). In France, 50% of the population had never been to the theatre, and only 12% attended a theatrical performance in 1992 (see Escande 1998: 219). In Austria, 1% of the population attended a theatrical performance in 1992 (see Gruber and Köppl 1998: 62).

the 1990s. Analysing the changes in British cultural policy<sup>39</sup>, Baz Kershaw argued in his excellent book *The Radical in Performance* that dominant ideologies of the contemporary British postindustrial society treat theatre as a disciplinary system. Kershaw pointed out that the disciplinary mechanism of theatre can be seen in three major areas: (1) in the process of audience training; (2) in the system of cultural production; and (3) in the method of spatial indoctrination. In the first area, for Kershaw, theatre serves to make the changes in modes of perception and reception in the wider cultural economy natural and acceptable to its audiences. Thus contemporary British theatre increasingly participates in consumerism and commodification, and incorporates these phenomena into its own practice. In the second area, the aim of theatre is to shape society's basic assumptions according to the cultural politics of the dominant ideology. In contemporary British theatre, that means that as post-industrialisation with an increasing number of service and media jobs seems to be one of the most important organising principles in society, art in general is viewed as part of the service and leisure sector to which theatre has also adapted itself. In the third area, for Kershaw, the physical arrangement of theatre aims 'to embed normative social values in the behaviour of its participants' (Kershaw 1999: 31). In this way, theatre forces its spectators like the consumers of social life into the comfortable and even pleasurable, but subordinate, position of voyeur. As a result, theatre as a disciplinary system is directly linked to the commodification of culture. Theatre has been transformed from emblematic art, defined as part of the national heritage, into a contemporary cultural product, defined as a

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<sup>39</sup> That change is clearly seen in the policy of the Arts Council of Great Britain. John Pick argued that the post-war Arts Council worked according to the Glory model, and sought 'above all to sustain the national heritage, that approved emblematic art by which a nation's character is supposed to be known and which - in national galleries, in national opera houses and on national theatre stages - is understood and approved by the influential and privileged' (Pick 1983: 157). The vast majority of its funding hence went to the perceived major centres of 'artistic excellence', the Royal Opera House, the National Theatre, and the Royal Shakespeare Company (see also Bull 1994: 24; and Elsom 1979: 130). Major changes in the Arts Council's policy and its approach towards arts took place around the end of the 1980s. The new trend appeared in the prospectus of *A Great British Success Story* published by the Council. Arthur Marwick has pointed out that it 'spoke of the arts as a productive investment, and of the productivity and efficiency of the British 'Arts industry'. Everything now had its market value. The trend was towards commercial sponsorship' (Marwick 1994: 198). The budget of the Arts Council was cut each year and companies which were supported earlier were forced to look for support from the private sector or local funding. For instance, by 1992 'the Royal Shakespeare Company had organised a three-year deal worth £2.1 million with the Royal Insurance Company, and British Telecom were stumping up £1.5 million for the RSC touring productions and for the Northern Ballet Theatre' (Bull 1994: 27).



financial investment. At the same time, performers and performances are also transformed into commodities, and theatre audiences into cultural customers.<sup>40</sup>

Theatre organised according to commercial principles, however, is not a new phenomenon in the history of British theatre. The first public theatres were commercial, right back to 1576, and the West End has always worked as a profit-orientated theatrical industry, with a commercial and business-like approach to cultural and artistic aims. Like it or not, the West End is a cultural market, operating according to market laws and by economic competition in the same way as the sale of cars, computers, clothes and other goods. A production is measured mostly by its financial success, registered in the box-office, and sold later on to other (inter)national theatrical markets. In order to produce a show with profit, capital is invested, and each show is supported by a massive infrastructure and industrial machinery, from marketing the production to selling ice creams at the intervals.<sup>41</sup> The general extension of West End commercial principles into British theatre in the 1980s, however, has resulted in the cultural policy of theatre being defined by severe economic market pressure. As a result, today, the commercial model can be regarded as one of the widely accepted models for theatre making in Great Britain (see also Pick 1983 and 1985), and also in Europe (see also Hofmann 1998: 242-250, and Gruber and Köppl 1998: 53-62).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The claim that contemporary theatre increasingly participates in consumerism and commodification, and incorporates these phenomena into its own practice is valid of course not only for British, but also for European theatre, including Western and Eastern Europe.

<sup>41</sup> Looking at the marketing of West End theatres, that process is not so obvious. The brazenly economic orientation of commercial theatre is disguised and carefully maintained through the cultural power of its various West End awards for the given year's *best* production, actor, actress, director and so forth. It looks as if the competition for these awards is wide open, hence the chosen winners are really the 'best'. But only those productions, which are played in theatres located in the West End can be nominated for the most prestigious and influential awards, - like the Evening Standard and the Laurence Olivier Awards. Productions which cannot afford to rent a theatre building in the extremely expensive West End have no chance at all of being considered the 'best'. The 'best' thus comes down to funding, and defined first of all by economic factors. As these theatrical award ceremonies are among those few theatrical events that are broadcast on (inter)national television, and widely reported in British and foreign newspapers and magazines, thus reaching an audience of which a very high proportion have never attended a West End theatre, the productions with the best chance of finding their way into the public consciousness within and outside national borders are those which *can* be nominated for these awards. As theatre in the Western world is still regarded as one of the few highbrow activities, the leading figures of the West End (and also the Broadway) have always paid serious attention to the status of the theatre to maintain that it is still an institution of high art through the above mentioned awards. Although the awards might look as if they reflect artistic judgements, they are in fact little more than disguised marketing tools (see also Bull 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Even those countries (Germany, Austria, for instance) which had tended to see the promotion of culture as a major state responsibility, changed their position in the 1990s, and now see art as cultural service without ignoring anymore the laws of the market (see Hofmann 1998: 242-250, and Gruber and Köppl



The principles of consumerism have introduced basic changes throughout the working mechanism of theatre in Britain and also in Europe. This involves an increase in marketing: theatres spend more money on advertising, sales, and services. Parallel to that, however, there is an increase in the access to theatre buildings. The theatre, as a building, is also a cultural drop-in centre, partly because it may support concerts, parties, film clubs, restaurants, bars, and other activities, and partly because it emphasises the cultural pleasure of theatre-going rather than the interaction between performance and audience.<sup>43</sup> The introduction of the commercial principles results also in a growing number of performance-related commodities, metonymically replacing the event itself. In addition, these principles result in a shift in theatre programming that drifts towards populism, staging less experimental work and more proven successes, as well as an increasing predictability of theatre programming marked by promotional hyperbole.<sup>44</sup> These changes result in even the possible subversive power of the theatrical performance being 'sucked dry by the peripherals of theatre as it is transformed into a service industry with subsidiary retail outlets' (Kershaw 1999: 47).

These significant changes in theatre's working mechanism are also connected to a re-evaluation of the social status of theatre. As Kershaw rightly pointed out, 'the contract created by the modified conventions of the theatre experience implicitly underwrites commodification. [...] Within the theatre's walls, consumption of theatre is increasingly an abdication of authority and a relinquishing of power, especially when performance itself succumbs to commodification' (Kershaw 1999: 51-52). The theatrical audience partly embodies and partly consumes the dominant ideologies of contemporary society through the representations offered. As a result, contemporary British society sees theatre as entertainment, locates it in the service industry, and governs its strategies through the economy of the postindustrial market. When theatre accepts

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1998: 53-62). In East European countries, where theatre was fully subsidised by the state before 1989, nowadays economic principles are highly influential factors.

<sup>43</sup> Of course, this is partly due to an idea of social engineering – making the theatre building a place where people who never go to the theatre drop in for a cup of tea and a chat and then think 'maybe I'll go and see a show'.

<sup>44</sup> In his book on British theatre after World War II, John Elsom pointed out that 'the West End depends upon box-office successes, hence upon strong public responses to productions. The total commercial reliance upon the box-office led to many inhibitions, timidity in choice of plays, reliance upon stars, an unwillingness to challenge popular prejudices, an attachment to old genres such as mystery plays and the habit of prolonging hits endlessly' (Elsom 1979: 88-89). See also in Kershaw 1999: 45-47.

commodification, and adopts an institutional structure based on economic principles, theatre becomes *conventional*: it is then characterised as a sort of industrialised cultural service, functioning to satisfy the social expectations by producing art-like cultural products that maintain and re-assure dominant ideologies and the status quo. And this is the political function conventional theatre in fact fulfils in contemporary British or any other European society.

### *Stephen Daldry's An Inspector Calls*

In the theatrical and cultural context of the 1990s, Daldry attempted to use theatre as useful institution, and as political weapon conceived by Piscator and his followers for the change of the contemporary social and political issues. When Daldry was invited to direct a play for the Royal National Theatre in 1992, he chose to do *An Inspector Calls* (*AIC*). Priestley's play deals with the examination of (upper)middle class concerns, presented in a respectable domestic setting, where the seemingly unified Birling family begin to disintegrate under internal and external pressure. Analysing Priestley's dramatic oeuvre, Holger Klein has finely pointed out that though Priestley's drama can be seen as a 'family' play, 'the thematic centre of *AIC* is the social conscience. [...] *AIC*, a modern morality play<sup>45</sup> [...], explores what specific individuals do or do not do, to and for others' (Klein 1988: 199).<sup>46</sup> Priestley never denied the propagandistic aim of his play, as his friend Tony Benn remembered: Priestley 'consciously intended it to make a contribution to public understanding which, in its turn, he hoped might lead to a Labour victory after

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<sup>45</sup> Here Klein borrowed John Gassner's opinion (see Gassner 1963: 409). Klein also mentioned in his footnote to this passage that Benedict Nightingale (1982: 231) 'goes further, assigning the Seven Deadly Sins to the characters of this "morality thriller"' (Klein 1988: 280).

<sup>46</sup> Priestley's continuous action play reveals working-class girl Eva Smith's fate. 'Her gradual descent from reasonable happiness to the morgue is traced, [and] also the way she was pushed down, without their knowing of each other's doings, by the members of the Birling family' (Klein 1988: 200). As Klein rightly pointed out, 'the story is evidently fabricated, a hypothetical model case' (Klein 1988: 199-200). Priestley sets the action going by creating an unforeseen situation for the Birlings: the arrival of a Police Inspector. In the form of a thriller, the Inspector reveals through thorough question-answer sessions that the local factory owner, Mr Birling, dismissed Eva Smith as ringleader after a strike. His daughter Sheila had her fired from her next job as a shop assistant due to wounded vanity. Sheila's fiancé, Gerald, kept Eva as his mistress, and then dropped her. The Birlings' son Eric seduced her, made her pregnant and abandoned her. Then Mrs Birling persuaded the Women's Charity committee to refuse the pregnant Eva Smith's application. At the end, without any hope for help, Eva Smith committed suicide.



the war was over' (Benn 1992: 14). Since its 1946 premiere in England<sup>47</sup>, *AIC* had been so often staged by repertory theatres and amateur groups (see Lewis 1992 and Kingston 1992)<sup>48</sup> that, by 1992, it was considered an 'old chestnut' (Wright 1992), seen as 'propaganda' (Lewis 1992), and its mise-en-scène defined by the realist 'glass-wall technique' (Lewis 1992; Colvin 1992; Paton 1992; and Hirschhorn 1992).<sup>49</sup>

Daldry intended to re-evaluate Priestley as 'an experimental playwright' linking the play with his *Johnson over Jordan* (1938) and *They Came to a City* (1943)<sup>50</sup> (Daldry in Croft 1992: 6). Daldry discovered that the first productions of the play in the Soviet Union by the Kamerny and the Leningrad Theatre Companies in 1945 used 'a big cyclorama' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 6). Later Daldry's designer, Ian MacNeil, also found information about Priestley's initial intention. MacNeil met a designer who set her 1950 production in a realist box set. When Priestley saw it, he said to her: "I never intended it for a box set, I didn't write for a box set and I wish people would stop doing it in a box set" (Daldry in Croft 1992: 6). Finally, Daldry and his team came to the conclusion that they would do a production that is not 'based on Basil Dean's original London one' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 7), but instead used an expressionist theatrical setting.

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<sup>47</sup> Priestley's play was premiered at the Opera House, Manchester, in March 1946, and subsequently at the New Theatre, London with the Old Vic Company in October 1946. The director Basil Dean set the 1946 production in an appropriately furnished realist dining-room, placing a massive dining table with five chairs in the middle in front of a sideboard, flanked by a fireplace on the left and a desk on the right. The realist theatrical presentation was then connected to Priestley's play by the publication of the floorplans and the furniture and property list of the 1946 production in the 1948 acting edition (Priestley 1948: 53-59). Apart from the furniture and property lists, the acting edition reproduced the very detailed single realist set of the 1946 Manchester production, and also reproduced three drawings of the 1946 New Theatre production's realist set (see Priestley 1948: 53-59).

<sup>48</sup> All the *Inspector* reviews mentioned later can be found in *Theatre Record*, 9-22 September 1992, 1096-1100.

<sup>49</sup> Its popularity in England can also be seen in the fact that even *Brewer's Theatre* has an entry on it. The way the editors summarise the play tells a lot about how Priestley's play is regarded: 'A happy engagement party at the home of the prosperous Birling family is interrupted by the arrival of a mysterious Inspector Goole. The family clock stops as he announces that he is investigating a young girl's suicide. It transpires that each member of the family has contributed to the girl's tragedy, and all react in a hostile and guilty way. As he leaves, the Inspector reminds them: "We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other." The clock starts working again as the family checks with the local police to find that the inspector is unknown; consequently they return to their celebrations, assuming that they have been the victims of a hoax. The telephone then rings to inform them that an inspector is about to call to interview them about a suicide' (Brewer's 1994: 232).

<sup>50</sup> Priestley experimented with time, non-linearity, dramatic modes and theatre's multi-mediality, and with the systematic and integrated use of music in *Johnson over Jordan* (1938), and also in *Music at Night* (1938), and *Ever since Paradise* (1939). For a detailed analysis of these plays see Klein 1988: 144-154.



Daldry also intended to achieve the play's political reconsideration by re-evaluating Priestley as a 'radical playwright' who – as Daldry explained it – 'was trying to break the mould and re-invent theatre for moral purposes' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 6). Daldry re-situated Priestley's play in contemporary context, arguing that 'there is a new generation [in 1992] that has no inkling of that [1945] romantic vision of creating a better society' (Daldry in Lewis 1992: 20). And like Priestley in 1945, Daldry also aimed 'to change people's minds, [and] to vote in a different way' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 7) at the 1993 general election.

Though Daldry did not radically cut the dialogue and did not rearrange the scenes<sup>51</sup>, his production introduced several changes in the realist convention bound to Priestley's play. When the Lyttelton Theatre's safety curtain opened, it revealed a late nineteenth century-type proscenium arch with a red curtain and an old red telephone box in the left front corner of the stage.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, a loud siren wailed in the background. A child climbed out of a trap door and stared around him at the curtain, the proscenium arch, the telephone box, and the audience itself. Then he ran over to the right side of the stage where there was a 1940s type radio. The boy kicked it several times, and music started: a haunting, eerie melodramatic tune.<sup>53</sup> More children emerged from the trap door, and while the curtain began to rise, they dived for the floor suggesting fear of bombardment and also a desire to see what was behind the curtain. When the curtain finally went up, there was an expressionist landscape on the stage (see the picture below).

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<sup>51</sup> His textual changes were adjusted to the staging of the play and were mainly concerned with spatial changes (due to the set), shortening some dialogues, and cutting a few outdated expressions and references to the pre-World War I era. At the beginning of the production, for instance, Daldry cut Mr and Mrs Birling's, Sheila's, and Gerald Croft's conversation on drinking (later problematic for Eric), and also the dialogue between Mr Birling and Gerald on the absence of his parents. The production started with Mrs Birling's address to Edna: 'All right, Edna. I'll ring from the drawing-room when we want coffee' (Priestley 1948: 2). This way, Daldry made the engagement happier with less confusion and contradiction.

<sup>52</sup> The Lyttelton Theatre had no proscenium arch in 1992, so the effect was an initial surprise for the audience (see Kingston 1992, Arditti 1992, Morley 1992, for instance). When *AIC* was transferred to the West End, this effect was lost on the way since both the Aldwych Theatre and the Garrick Theatre have proscenium arches considered as necessary part of the building. Instead of this effect, these proscenium arches were repainted as very old and worn-down ones, and the telephone box was placed in the first box on the left of the stage.

<sup>53</sup> The Birlings' house – as Kim Greengrass remarked – 'bears a remarkable resemblance to the house of horror in Alfred Hitchcock's shocking 1960 film, *Psycho*' (Greengrass 1999: 24). The music of Daldry's production was originally written for the 1958 Hitchcock film, *Vertigo*. This and the visual aspects of the production made a connection with 1940s cinema, and helped create the atmosphere of a suspense thriller.





Daldry's *An Inspector Calls*, 1992 London

The Birling family's home was designed 'like a doll's house towards the rear of the vast Lyttelton stage perching on stilts above a cobbled wilderness' (Kingston 1992) in a 'bomb-damaged landscape' (Arditti 1992) with a line of smaller and smaller lampposts on its left. The house referred to the Edwardian era when Priestley's play was set (1912), while the street, the radio, and the children's clothing referred to 1945 after the 'blitz' when the play was written. Constructing a false proscenium with a red curtain, Daldry used the elements of mainstream theatre as alienation effect, placing the performance between quotation marks, while the children's behaviour made the spectators aware that their own presence and perspective are also acknowledged. As a result, Daldry situated the production in three parallel time-zones: in 1945, 1910, and in 1992.

Ian MacNeil's elevated doll's house represented the bourgeois Birling family's isolation and social superiority. This way, the production – as Elizabeth Faint Doyle rightly expressed it – allowed 'space to be used in a very abstract way: illustrating and maintaining the notion of "social" space' (Doyle 1996 - [www.geocities.com/collegePark/9349/aic](http://www.geocities.com/collegePark/9349/aic)). In the first ten minutes of the production, Edna, the family's maid, the children, the audience and later the Inspector could observe the Birlings' celebration only from outside. When the Inspector's investigation started, however, the house opened up, indicating that from then on the Birling family's private life was being exposed to public view. Then, the design of the house forced the Birlings to relinquish their elevated status: they were brought to street level to recognise their contribution to the downfall of the generic humanity figure of Eva Smith. The other tiny house-images similar to the Birlings' in the background of the set suggested that what happened to the Birlings could also be being mirrored elsewhere, allowing 'the audience to formulate the abstract notion of the stage play reflecting a much wider sphere – that of



society in general and the abuse of one class by another, more privileged one' (Doyle 1996 - [www.geocities.com/collegePark/9349/aic](http://www.geocities.com/collegePark/9349/aic)). Daldry's use of space expressed in visual terms that as the street (public space) is linked to the house (private space), the Birlings are also linked to society even if they think they are not.

The costumes and the acting style of the Birlings also emphasised the time-zones, and articulated in visual and material terms their changing situation. The Birlings' pre-first world war costumes recalled again the Edwardian era and expressed the luxury and elegance connected to their social status (see the picture below).



Daldry's *An Inspector Calls*, 1992 London

Arthur Birling, Eric Birling, and Gerald Croft were dressed as gentlemen in traditional evening suits, while the women wore stylish but also emblematic evening dresses: Sheila was in virginal white, opposed to her mother's devilish, worldly red. At the beginning, they were very elegant, and the stereotypical images and gestures of family celebration and of upper-middle class social behaviour of the 1910s were extensively used. By the end, however, their dresses gave the impression that they were 'worn down', and their stereotypical gestures were also broken down. Apart from verbal expressions, these visual images also demonstrated the Birlings' unpleasant emotional journey during the Inspector's investigation; and the signs of dirt, tiredness, and untidiness expressed also that the Birlings were forced to engage with the harsh realities of the world around them.

In order to emphasise the production's wider social connotations, Daldry introduced new characters who are not in Priestley's play. As mentioned before, children appeared through a trap door at the beginning of the production. Later, when the



Inspector delivered his final speech ('we are responsible') directly to the audience, a crowd appeared behind him, and then they left the stage together. They included the children, women dressed as secretaries and servants, men in the clothing of soldiers, clerks, shopkeepers, and manual workers. These characters and the Inspector were all dressed in 1940s clothing suggesting that they were from the same era and – as Daldry expressed it – representing 'a whole class, a dispossessed group' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 8; see the picture below).<sup>54</sup>



Daldry's *An Inspector Calls*, 1992 London

Daldry's re-contextualisation of the Inspector and the introduction of the crowd are problematic, however. The problem is not that there is no evidence for a collective in Priestley's text, but rather that Priestley's text situates the Inspector's investigation of the Birlings in a slightly different context. Priestley's instructions describe the Inspector as 'a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period [1912]' who speaks 'carefully, weightily', in language that is at least the equal of the Birlings' 'standard' middle class speech (see Priestley 1948: 8).<sup>55</sup> As Klein observes, 'he wields power, based in the first instance on his presumed worldly position, ultimately based on the feelings of guilt harboured by the other characters, which feelings Goole relentlessly forces them to acknowledge to themselves' (Klein 1988: 227). On the one hand, he is an outsider, and on the other, he has power and acts like an omnipotent force discovering

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<sup>54</sup> Daldry attributed these new characters to Priestley. Daldry argued that Priestley probably 'wanted us to perceive the Inspector as a collective response to the Edwardian age. [...] So I took the leap of assuming maybe he had wanted a collective on stage. So that's why the silent onlookers come in and you stop seeing the Inspector, I hope, as an individual and start seeing him as a group, a whole class, a dispossessed group, coming together and rejecting the Edwardian age' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 8).

<sup>55</sup> When the Inspector leaves, the Birlings attempt to identify him. In their terms, Goole could not be a real



the hidden matrix of the Birlings' deeds in connection with Eva Smith's death. In this sense, the Inspector can be seen as 'an embodiment of Social Conscience' (Klein 1948: 227).<sup>56</sup> As the embodiment of 'Social Conscience', he cannot be located anywhere, cannot be identified with any social group, and cannot be threatened by the Birlings' social status and economic power. Only as the embodiment of Social Conscience can he conclude his final speech with a moralistic urge for the need for social responsibility. Hence, Priestley needed to find a mysterious figure *without* any specification for the investigation of the Birlings.

Priestley's propaganda piece signalled that people such as the Birlings constitute a danger to the future of Britain. At the beginning of the play, Mr Birling's second speech demonstrates his short-sighted perspective, crude capitalist ideas, and self-satisfied tone.<sup>57</sup> Mr Birling says the following:

Just because the Kaiser makes a speech or two, or a few German officers have too much to drink and begin talking nonsense, you'll hear some people say that war's inevitable. And to that I say – fiddlesticks! The Germans don't want war. Nobody wants war, except some half civilized folks in the Balkans. And why? There's too much at stake these days. Everything to lose and nothing to gain by war. [...] And I am talking as a hard-headed, practical man of business. And I say there isn't a chance of war. The world's developing so fast that it'll make war impossible. Look at the progress we're making. In a year or two we'll have aeroplanes that will be able to go anywhere. And look at the way the automobile's making headway – bigger and faster all the time. And then ships.

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inspector as he spoke the 'standard' English (see Priestley 1948: 45).

<sup>56</sup> See Ernest Short's explanation (see Short 1951: 119) and Gareth Lloyd Evans's interpretation of Goole (see Evans 1964: 208).

<sup>57</sup> Though the general tone of the family celebration is cheerful, a close reading of the text reveals Priestley's encapsulated 'time-bombs'. Among others, these time-bombs include the tension between family members particularly between Mr and Mrs Birling as the latter acts as 'her husband's social superior' (Priestley 1948: 1)); the generation conflict between the older Birlings and their children; and the characters' individual problems – Eric Birling's possible drinking problem, for instance. Proposing various toasts on the occasion of his daughter's engagement, Mr Birling admits that the engagement is not only a family (private) affair, but opens the perspective for prosperous business plans. He hopes that this engagement will unite the two families' businesses (Birling and Company and Crofts Limited) and this way 'we may look forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together – for lower costs and higher prices' (Priestley 1948: 3). The issue of upward mobility is so important for the Birlings that the fact that Gerald Croft's parents (Sir George and Lady Croft) are not present at the engagement comes back three times within the first part: first, when Mr Birling and Gerald are speaking about 'judging port' (Priestley 1948: 2); secondly when Mr Birling proposes a toast on the occasion (Priestley 1948: 3); and finally when Mr Birling hints to Gerald that he might be on the next 'Honour List' (Priestley 1948: 6). These repeated references to Gerald's absent parents creates an uneasy sense of strict social hierarchy since Mr Birling seems to accept what can only be understood as a snub. The hierarchical nature of society will be one of the central themes of the Inspector's investigation.



Why, a friend of mine went over this new liner last week – the Titanic – she sails next week – forty-six thousand eight hundred tons – forty-six thousand eight hundred tons – New York in five days – and every luxury – and unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable. [...] In twenty or thirty year's time – let's say in 1940 – [...] you 'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these Capital versus Labour agitations and all these silly little war scares. There'll be peace and prosperity and rapid progress everywhere.

Priestley 1948: 5

Here, Priestley consciously utilised two parallel perspectives: 1912 and 1945. The former was situated within the fictional world of the play, and the latter was situated outside the play – in 1945 at the time of writing. The 1945 perspective was to bring contemporary readers/audiences within the fictional frame of the play: having lived through the war-experiences they recognised that Mr Birling's predictions and the views he represents are wrong. The 'absolutely unsinkable' Titanic sank on its first journey between Southampton and New York in 1912. Not only did the Birlings' war break out but it was the *first* World War. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, it was also clear that progress did not prevent the wars, but actively contributed to the destructiveness of war as most European cities including London had been bombed sometimes to virtual destruction.

Though Daldry cut the direct references to the German Kaiser, the German officers and the Titanic, he utilised the 1945 perspective of the Inspector and the spectators' 1992 perspective from which it was also inevitable that Mr Birling was wrong. Mr Birling gave his false predictions for the future standing in white tie evening dress on the balcony of the doll's house holding a cigar in his left hand and a glass of cognac in his right, looking out towards the auditorium. Daldry's staging characterised Mr Birling as the stereotypical selfish, self-satisfied, and rich 'Capitalist', and also ironically caricatured him and his predictions which were delivered in a tone by the Inspector, Kenneth Cranham, as inevitable 'truth'. Daldry's production singled out the Birlings as the enemy: they were the cause of Eva Smith's death in particular, and the main problem of society in general. Identifying the Inspector with the crowd, however, Daldry narrowed the general perspective of Social Conscience. His Inspector investigated the Birlings from the perspective of the 1945 working class. As a result,

Daldry set up willy-nilly an (old Marxist) social conflict between the Birlings (ruling class) and the crowd (working class) without changing the 'didactic moralistic message' (Klein 1988: 200) of the Inspector's final speech. Hence, the Inspector's final speech suggested that the social conflict between the ruling class and the working class can be solved by moral responsibility.

In 1945, the close of the play suggested that it is impossible to restore the Birlings' initial values and worldviews, i.e., it is impossible to go back to the Edwardian era before the war. The inevitable change was represented by the younger Birlings, Sheila and Eric, who realised that 'it does not matter whether the story [of Eva Smith] was faked or not, that the only thing of importance is a sense of social responsibility in which they have been lacking' (Klein 1988: 201).<sup>58</sup> Priestley's play did not propagate revolutionary social and political change (i.e., communism or socialism), however. Rather it suggested a moralistic urge represented on the social level – as Klein pointed out – in 'the notion of "Capitalism with a human face"' (Klein 1988: 184).<sup>59</sup> Though often seen as naive and sentimentalist due to its practical inapplicability<sup>60</sup>, the notion of 'Capitalism with a human face' was not merely a desirable outcry, but rather it was a possible alternative in 1945. The renewal of the British national consensus and the

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<sup>58</sup> In the last part of Priestley's play, a sharp division sets in: 'the older Birlings and [...] Gerald Croft are eager to put the disagreeable experience behind them and are only angry with themselves for having allowed the Inspector to cow them; the two youngest, on the other hand, Sheila and Eric Birling, remain touched and realise that it does not matter whether the story was faked or not, that the only thing of importance is a sense of social responsibility in which they have been lacking' (Klein 1988: 201). By the time the Inspector leaves, the Birlings have publicly acknowledged the serious drawbacks of their value-system and worldview. Though they attempt to redeem themselves by calling up the Infirmary to enquire whether a girl has died there, when they find out that no one has died, they describe the Inspector's investigation as fake. The closure of the play suggests, however, that going back to the Birlings' values and restoring their crude capitalist, selfish and non-responsible world is impossible. By the time the old Birlings and Gerald have re-established the initial situation, the telephone rings. Mr Birling answers it, and 'he puts down [the receiver] slowly and looks in a panic-stricken fashion at the others) That was the police. A girl has just died – on her way to the Infirmary - after swallowing some disinfectant. And a Police Inspector is on his way here – to ask some – questions – (As they stare guilty and dumbfounded – the CURTAIN falls' (Priestley 1948: 52).

<sup>59</sup> As Wendy Lesser argued, 'at the end of the play, a feeling of guilt is all that Sheila and Eric want their parents to admit to' (Lesser 1997: 35). For Lesser, it is not problematic at all, moreover it is desirable, since, for her, 'one of the central points of this play [A/C] [...] is that feelings alone can matter, whatever their effects or non-effects' (Lesser 1997: 35). Looking at it from the perspective of political theatre, Lesser's notion of 'feeling of guilt' is problematic since personal guilt means that the play does not have to analyse society on social, political and economic levels. There is no suggestion in the play that Sheila's and Eric's change forecasts any political or social change in society in general.

<sup>60</sup> It is impossible to execute social responsibility in everyday decision-making on both personal and social levels without equal rights and equal resources for instance.



creation of the welfare state after 1945 were partly necessitated by the fact that all strata of the British society took part in the war,<sup>61</sup> and were partly realised due to post-war economic prosperity and full employment providing 'an extensive range of public services' (Gladstone 1995: 2).<sup>62</sup>

In 1992, the end of Daldry's production articulated the Birlings' damaged situation with a visual image: their doll's house tilted forward and all the contents came spilling out into the street. The older Birlings and Gerald Croft attempted to restore the ruins and close the house, but their effort was ineffective: the telephone rang, and Mr Birling announced that a police inspector was about to call to interview them about a young woman's suicide.<sup>63</sup> The younger generation, Sheila and Eric, did not take part in the restoration. Their changed situation was expressed not only by their costumes (from evening dress to blanket) and gestures (from stereotypes to real emotional struggle), but also by the use of the red curtain.<sup>64</sup> Lowered at the end of the production, the curtain separated Sheila, Eric, and Edna from the rest of the Birlings. This way, the production suggested radical change, but that change was also based on a moral principle: Sheila and Eric were to depart from their family as their parents' life was *morally* inadequate.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> As David Gladstone pointed out, 'The people's war in a sense necessitated the people's peace' (Gladstone 1995: 4).

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed analysis of the welfare state see Gladstone's book (Gladstone 1995), and for its development see his article: 'The welfare state and the state of welfare' (Gladstone 1995: 1-27).

<sup>63</sup> The impossibility of the Birlings' social isolation was also expressed by another image. As Mr Birling went back to the house, it opened up again showing inside the silent crowd and among them the rest of the Birling family.

<sup>64</sup> In Daldry's production, at the end of the play's first and the second acts, the red curtain started coming down as convention indicated, but the children pushed it back to allow the action to continue. This way, Daldry could maintain the initial framing device throughout the production to emphasise the artifice of the theatrical experience; and to make the spectators aware of watching a theatrical performance, and of their presence in the theatre. Moreover, the false act endings prepared the way for the characters' direct addresses to the audience. From the elevated house, Sheila and Eric came down to the street, then nearer and nearer the edge of the stage during the Inspector's investigation, expressing their emotional journey from ignorance into knowledge, from isolation into community. Finally, when they were standing right at the edge of the stage, they admitted their guilt, remorse and responsibility directly to the audience. This way, the audience functioned as a kind of outsider judge for Sheila's and Eric's confessions. Later, however, when the Inspector addressed his 'we are responsible'-speech directly to the audience, the auditorium was illuminated, and the audience was cast into another role. The audience was not situated as judge, evaluating the action from their comfortable position, but rather they were brought into the fiction suggesting that they are also responsible for one another in their everyday life.

<sup>65</sup> The division between the older Birlings and the younger generation was also expressed in linguistic terms by a small but significant textual change. At the end of Priestley's play, when having found out that there was no Inspector Goole working for Brumley Police and that no one died in the Infirmary that day, Sheila's parents and Gerald tried to behave as they did before the Inspector's investigation. Sheila reminded them with the following: 'You began to learn something. And you've stopped now. You're

Given the multiple time periods evoked by the framing devices, the close of the production suggested to the 1992 spectators too that their contemporary social situation can also be solved by following Sheila's and Eric's decision.

In his interview to *The Times*, Daldry located the contemporary social situation in a wider historical context. He located the production in 1945, because

that was the pivotal point in British domestic history. A shift in consensus took place, in which Priestley was very involved. The optimism and conviction of the play is that of 1945, looking back in anger at the moral basis of Edwardian society and rejecting it. The play asked: were we really going back to that? A huge war had not been fought to put the clock back to that kind of society. [...] The next major shift in consensus, in 1978, brought in the Thatcher years, during which much of what remained of the vision of 1945 was finally dismantled.

Daldry in Lewis 1992: 20

Here, Daldry referred to three periods of British domestic history: the Edwardian era, the post-World War II period (1945), and the Thatcher-years (1978-1992). The values attributed to these particular periods were clarified in the programme booklet of the production. The programme-booklet contained a brief description of the social conditions obtaining in the 1910s, and the high expectations of 'public ownership and social reform' of 1945. The latter was also reinforced by photos and reports emphasising the desire for creating the world of the welfare state. Then Priestley was introduced, as one of the advocates of that change. All these were contrasted with Margaret Thatcher's famous statement in 1978: 'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families'. In the performance, the 1992 situation was clearly connected to the Edwardian era through Mr Birling's speech, when he anticipates Thatcher's sentence: 'a man has to take his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too. But the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense' (Priestley 1948: 7). Daldry connected the assumptions of Thatcher's England to the Edwardian values of the Birling family, and

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ready to go on in the same old way' (Priestley 1948: 52). In Daldry's production, the original pronoun 'you' was replaced by 'they'. The change of pronouns created a division between them (Mr and Mrs



contrasted both with the post-war period. As a result, Daldry formulated the contemporary British social situation as an opposition between the post-war dream of the welfare state and the social situation of the Thatcher-years that attacked the achievements of the welfare state. Daldry, however, did not take into consideration that in 1992 there was not anything like the experience of World War II creating a consensus on a national and international scale, or that the Thatcherite response to international economics was resulting in a British economy that was incapable of generating prosperity and high levels of employment, while monetarist policy also dictated a withdrawal of public services (see Gladstone 1988).<sup>66</sup> As Daldry's production did not take into consideration the social, political, and economic circumstances of 1992 both on national and international levels, it could not offer different solutions except the moralistic urge: 'Be responsible and you can change the society in which you live!' As a result, Daldry's production suggested that charity, philanthropy, and morality can solve the national and international social, political, and economic problems.

Due to the identification of the Inspector with the crowd, and the application of the moralistic message to the contemporary 1992 situation, Daldry's production even suggested that 'a dispossessed group' can influence social power and hierarchy, and achieve social and political change merely by forcing their rulers to engage in responsible behaviour. This claim is of course illusory and the Inspector's general message was thus seen as 'political harangue' (Milne 1992: 15). The problem with Daldry's propaganda<sup>67</sup> is that without a complex social and economic analysis and without presenting dialectic dialogues between different views and perspectives on the actual social, political and economic situations of 1912, 1945, and 1992, it confined its interpretation within a rather limited territory: either the spectators accepted the initial construction and the conclusion drawn from it (see Nathan 1992, Kingston 1992, and

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Birling and Gerald) and us (Sheila, Eric, – and Edna).

<sup>66</sup> In this sense, we can see Thatcherism as a British response to an international economic and political challenge. Andrew Gamble also argued, for instance, that 'the crisis of accumulation and the crisis of social democracy are world phenomena, and Thatcherism is one particular national response' (Gamble 1988: 20).

<sup>67</sup> Of course, the woman referring to Priestley's play as *communist* propaganda (quoted by Daldry in Daldry 1999) was not right. There is nothing in Priestley's text or in Daldry's production which would have dealt with communism or socialism. Still, she was right that both Priestley's play and Daldry's production functioned as propaganda and both had serious drawbacks in terms of social and political analysis.

Taylor 1992 for instance)<sup>68</sup>, or they criticised the limit of the initial construction and did not accept the conclusion drawn from it (see Milne 1992 for instance).<sup>69</sup> It was preaching to the converted.<sup>70</sup> In general, since propaganda theatre does not analyse the social, economic and political situation of a certain era, and does not present the opposing characters' opinions, perspectives, and views with equal measure, depth, and intensity, it does not reach beyond the already convinced.<sup>71</sup> That can be the reason that most of the theatre critics applauded<sup>72</sup> or condemned<sup>73</sup> Daldry's production for its

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<sup>68</sup> Reading the production according to Daldry's intention, a group of critics identified the Birlings with a Tory family of the Thatcher-years (Nathan 1992, Kingston 1992), the crowd as the Labour voters of 1945 (Nathan 1992, Kingston 1992, and Taylor 1992), and the Inspector as the spokesman for the silent crowd of 1945 (Kingston 1992), and regarded Daldry's *AIC* as an assault on Thatcher's Britain. For these critics, the contemporary relevance of the play's message was demonstrated – as Taylor pointed out – 'by turning on the houselights for the Inspector's big sermon, delivered downstage' (Taylor 1992). In their reading, the production refuted both the Birlings' Edwardian values and contemporary Thatcherism by showing 'how false, corrupting and dangerous are such [Mr Birling's and Mrs Thatcher's] pronouncements' (Kingston 1992).

<sup>69</sup> In her review for the *Sunday Telegraph*, Kirsty Milne articulated her concern with the political intentions of the production, and criticised its actual-political references. She wrote that 'when the inspector comes in off the street, he is not a mysterious moral arbiter, but the leader of a delegation from the future. He is followed by a ragged band of urchins, old women and servicemen who line up to confront the Birlings, clutching their air-raid blankets in mute reproach. [...] The drawback is that the production gets weighed down by its portentousness. The inspector's summing up becomes a political harangue. The moral shock experienced by the Birlings is translated into the collapse of their class: the house literally topples over, and the entire family is decanted shivering into the street' (Milne 1992: 15). Milne was not right when she identified the silent crowd with 'a ragged band of urchins' (Milne 1992: 15). As Wendy Lesser rightly pointed out, these 'common folks [...] are not the homeless or the poor, but they are clearly less privileged than the Birlings' (Lesser 1997: 23).

<sup>70</sup> None of the reviewers admitted that Daldry's production converted them by demonstrating the untenable position of the Birlings and Thatcherism (see Morley 1992, Arditti 1992, Hirschhorn 1992, Grant 1992, Paton 1992, Milne 1992, Wright 1992, Peter 1992, and Butler 1992).

<sup>71</sup> In his book, *Theatre and Propaganda*, George H. Szanto argued that all theatre is propagandistic. 'The play propagandises an ideology without awareness on the part of the playwright or of the production that the presentation is implicitly laden with values which the play is propagandizing' (Szanto 1978: 73). Here Szanto does not claim that all theatre is merely propaganda, but argues that all theatrical productions contain implicit propagandistic aspects. Moreover, there are productions explicitly designed with propagandistic aims. Szanto divided propaganda theatre into three categories: agitation, integration, and dialectic (Szanto 1978: 72). For him, agitation propaganda like socialist-realism 'is most often subversive propaganda and has a stamp of opposition' (Szanto 1978: 73). Integration propaganda like bourgeois realism is 'a self-producing propaganda that seeks to obtain stable behavior, to adapt the individual to his everyday life, to reshape his thoughts and behavior in terms of permanent social setting' (Szanto 1978: 74). Dialectical propaganda like Bertolt Brecht's productions 'attempts to demystify, by depicting separately, interactively and always clearly, the basic elements which comprise a confused social or historical situation. This is the science of dialectic materialism [...], brought to dramatic presentation' (Szanto 1978: 75). Though both Priestley's and Daldry's *AIC* initially falls into Szanto's first category, their effects might also situate them as integration propaganda. For another approach to propaganda theatre see Zygmunt Hubner's book, *Theatre and Politics* (Hubner 1992).

<sup>72</sup> Most of the critics praised Daldry's production, because – as Jack Tinker expressed it – 'this is how a musty, dust-laden classic is polished and re-set to blaze like a new gem in the crown of our cultural heritage' (Tinker 1992). Tinker emphasised the overall 'filmic quality' of the production, and concentrated



theatrical achievements and aesthetic qualities, but they avoided mentioning the intended contemporary actual-political references and allusions (see Morley 1992, Arditti 1992, Hirschhorn 1992, Grant 1992, Paton 1992, Wright 1992, and Butler 1992).

Daldry's use of the crowd draws the attention to other problems. The members of the crowd had no expressions, no words – they were not allowed to speak. The Inspector was speaking for them and on their behalf. At the Royal National Theatre (London) in 1992, the crowd included a large cast of extras, selected by the assistant director from unemployed actors/actresses and local people. Played by the star Kenneth Cranham, the Inspector was speaking on their behalf. When the production toured in Britain, the extras were chosen from local people, and Cranham as the Inspector was still speaking on their behalf.<sup>74</sup> These examples seem to be farfetched, but they in fact highlight that though the crowd in Daldry's production was intended to be the representation of 'a whole class' (Daldry in Croft 1992: 8), their presentation contradicted the very purpose for which they were brought on stage. Though the members of the crowd were supposed to be seen as the representation of 'a dispossessed group', they could not express themselves by reflecting their own social issues and political views. Hence, they were also dispossessed both as individuals and as an entire group by the theatrical institution which utilised them and gave them someone who silenced them by the moralistic message.

The use of the silent crowd in Daldry's production can be problematic from other perspectives as well. The members of the crowd included children, women, and men

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on the non-realist elements like the initial theatrical frame devices, the expressionist set, and the other theatrical devices (the house falling down for instance) with which Daldry achieved the expressionist reinterpretation of Priestley's well-worn, hand-me-down old warhorse (see also Hirschhorn 1992, Grant 1992, Paton 1992, Wright 1992, and Butler 1992). At the end of his review, he concluded that 'now I simply want to rush back [to the theatre] as if to rediscover a masterpiece' (Tinker 1992).

<sup>73</sup> The critical response to Daldry's production was in general positive, though there were some negative voices as well. Having ironically described Daldry's theatrical devices as 'gimmicks', Sheridan Morley concluded in one of the extremely negative reviews that 'virtually all the impact of *AIC* has been defused and diffused by a gimmicky travesty of the original, in which even the [Inspector's] great last-act speech [...] is destroyed by Daldry's sudden lighting of the auditorium, as if he thinks the play is over. Beware, especially when you are dead, directors who wish to "make their mark"' (Morley 1992). Morley was not interested in how the play was transformed into theatrical situations. Instead, Morley echoed the realist convention bound to the play as if it had been the only faithful realisation of Priestley's intention. Morley was not interested either in Daldry's attempts to incorporate the audience's contemporary perspective by extending the 1945 play's message to the contemporary British situation. Instead, he attacked Daldry's directorial power. Morley felt that Daldry's production was an obvious example of a director glorifying himself at the expense of a playwright.

<sup>74</sup> The information on these productions was received from the PW Productions responsible for the touring production of *AIC*.

with various occupations, perspectives, and voices, probably. Their different voices, however, were not heard as the Inspector's single voice was speaking on their behalf. From a feminist perspective, a man's single voice was speaking for the women of the crowd. From a racial perspective, a white man's was speaking for a white crowd. When Priestley wrote his play the politics of gender and of race were not central issues, but a contemporary reinterpretation of his play could have reflected the inherent problems of Priestley's representation as these issues have since become central to contemporary British society.\*As Priestley's play was set in 1912 and 1945, he could also have referred to the minority groups of Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and Jews living in England at that time. Though the politics of gender and race and the representation of British national identity have characterised the social agenda since the late 1960s, their exclusion from the reinterpretation of Priestley's play clearly demonstrated that Daldry's *AIC* still used the patriarchal white male voice to spread the general message without reflecting the voices of the new social forces. The recent emergence of women, blacks, other 'minorities', gay and lesbian movements, ecological groups, students, etc. have made clear the importance of gender, sexual, racial, and professional difference in such a way that the concept of society and its representation on stage might also be analysed in relation to these terms.<sup>75</sup>

In spite of Daldry's effort to contextualise his production, the general message was clearly recognised by theatre critics arguing that neither Priestley's play nor Daldry's production were situated in particular social and political circumstances.<sup>76</sup> Rather, as John Peter pointed out, for instance:

Priestley's writing transcends the Birlings, Yorkshire and England. His subject is the age-old conflict in which ordinary people come to resent that they are being led, patronised and morally judged by heartless, corrupt and blinkered fellow

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<sup>75</sup> For a precise analysis of how the Wooster Group deconstructed the inherent social and sexual stereotypes in Arthur Miller's *Crucible* see Auslander's article, 'Toward a concept of the political in postmodern theatre' (Auslander 1997: 58-72, especially 64-72).

<sup>76</sup> That might be the reason that most of the critics praised Daldry's production for its *theatricality*, and discussed the theatrical devices in detail with which Daldry changed the realist convention bound to Priestley's play (see Hirschhorn 1992, Grant 1992, Paton 1992, Wright 1992, and Butler 1992). Having analysed the theatrical devices, Malcolm Rutherford remarked, for instance, that Daldry switched 'the action to 1945' (Rutherford 1992). For Rutherford, however, the switch did not make 'a ha'p'orth of significant difference [...]. But it allow[ed] the use of a crowd scene' (Rutherford 1992). As a result, Rutherford did not refer to Daldry's attempt to extend the production onto the contemporary present.



creatures. Inspector Goole is usually played as a sinister, even creepy infernal agent; here [in Daldry's production] Kenneth Graham makes him a messenger of higher goods, full of that moral indignation that comes from living cheek by jowl with injustice.

Peter 1992

For Peter, both Priestley's and Daldry's *AIC* focused more on the 'age-old' conflict between ordinary people and their inappropriate leaders, and 'moral indignation' rather than on the precise analysis of the British social and political situation whether in 1912, 1945 or 1992. In spite of Daldry's initial intention, his interpretation might suggest that the major problem of contemporary British society was merely that its conservative Tory leaders represented by the Birlings were not socially and individually responsible for their deeds and actions. In fact, the lack of their responsibility might be seen as the final obstacle to general 'happiness', implying willy-nilly also that even if there were some problems in society like the Birlings or their contemporary equivalents, these could be solved soon. So when the leaders of society (in general) change by showing the signs of responsibility, society lives in a good world after all, and then a happily-ever-after final solution is nearly at hand.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the lack of the British society's particular political, social, and economic circumstances and its social representations made the transfer of Daldry's *Inspector Calls* possible from London to New York, from New York to Japan and from one culture to any other part of the alienated and power-ruled postindustrial world.

In general, when a production – like Daldry's *Inspector Calls* – builds its interpretation on propagandistic principles, it can only create representations which do not deal with the complex analysis of political relations, social situations and representations. Based on the *illusions* of change and social control, and often on supposedly universal moral principles, contemporary propaganda theatre cannot engage with the examination of social conditions and the *resistant* role of political theatre. As a result, propaganda theatre can only give the *illusion* that it struggles with dominant discourses, while in fact it is unable to offer strategies of counter-hegemonic resistance

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<sup>77</sup> That is the reason why Daldry's production can also be seen – in Szanto's terms – as integration propaganda.

except through its declared moralistic message. Replacing resistance with moralising, propaganda theatre distorts the subversive practice of a political theatre that questions and challenges the hierarchy; instead it willy-nilly confirms the status quo. Since propaganda theatre uses simplified, binary-bound political and social contexts as background to explore the general and therefore allegedly universal themes of everyday alienation, it is unable to explore real alternatives except the one it propagates. Thus, propaganda theatre often gives the illusion that individuals live in societies where their life is governed *merely* by moral rules. In consequence of this rather utopian assumption, propaganda theatre often claims that alienation is only temporary and can be cured. As a result, propaganda theatre sends a general message that though society is sick<sup>78</sup>, its sickness is not caused by its power structure, social difference, the unfair system of privileges, and exploitation, but because its members are not responsible and they do not take responsibility for their own actions.<sup>79</sup>

#### *1.4. Conventional theatre as field of idealised memory: the Globe Theatre and Richard Olivier's *The Merchant of Venice**

Conventional theatre often gives the illusion that it deals with the past – the always and already Other, the unknown, the foreign, and the far away – while in fact it only supplements the past by the already known and the always familiar elements of the contemporary present. Conventional theatre thus avoids the possibility of contrasting and confronting the present with the Other, the unknown and the foreign, i.e., with the past. To demonstrate how this supplementation works, my analysis now focuses on Richard Olivier's 1998 production of *The Merchant of Venice*.

##### *The context of Olivier's production: Shakespeare, theme park, and tourism*

The initiator of the London Globe Theatre reconstruction project, the American actor, Sam Wanamaker, opened the construction of the theatre with these words in 1993:

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<sup>78</sup> For the analysis of the myth of the sick society, see Baudrillard 1998, especially 167.

<sup>79</sup> I reconsider the possible resistant functions of political theatre below, in Chapter 3, *Theatre as deconstruction: postmodern bricolage and 1003 Hearts*.



Here where Shakespeare lived, where his most famous theatre stood, has been built a faithful reconstruction of the Globe, together with an exhibition of the development of that spectacular period in British and world drama.

Sam Wanamaker –guide-leaflet of The Globe, 1993: 1

For Wanamaker, the new Globe Theatre would not be merely a reconstruction of a theatre building in London, but an attempt to reconstruct *Shakespeare's* most famous theatre. Considered as the theological initiator and the end-goal of the reconstruction, the interpretation of Shakespeare's emblematic figure is heavily loaded semantically and syntactically. Today Shakespeare represents the 'National Author of England' (Appleyard 1995: 15), and he has become an international literary celebrity, often regarded as 'the greatest creative artist humanity ever produced' (Appleyard 1995: 15). Shakespeare was also voted 'man of the millennium' in Britain, and one of the great Britons – along with Princess Diana, Lord Nelson and Charles Darwin. In addition, Shakespeare signifies economic value within the cultural industry in general, and in film, publishing, and theatre in particular (see Bristol 1996: 88-117). Therefore, Shakespeare's status is located not only in high culture, but also within mass culture where he has established a daily presence in terms of reputation.<sup>80</sup>

### *Travelling, cultural tourism, and translation*

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<sup>80</sup> Shakespeare is considered part of European heritage, although his places of remembering (see Nora 1984) are centred in England, tied to specific sites and buildings in Stratford-upon-Avon and London. These places of remembering might offer opportunities for visitors to encounter the past, the foreign and the Other, and to reflect the visitors' present by contrasting it with the past. Apart from the Stratford industry and the local councils of Stratford and London, these places of remembering are kept alive by the visits of the cultural tourists (see Hodgdon 1998, especially 191-240; Bristol 1996, and Dávidházi 1991). The little provincial town of Stratford emerged as one of the destinations of cultural tourism with the Shakespeare Jubilee, organised by the famous English actor, David Garrick, in 1769. Since then Stratford has been dependent on cultural tourism and become a quasi-religious centre (see Dávidházi 1991: 28-69). Though pilgrimage is a necessary part of the tourist's experience, cultural tourism can also be described as a form of recreation in which travellers spend significant leisure time and money on cultural activity. Since 1769, Stratford has developed as the centre of Shakespeare's cult as it is demonstrated by the English Tourist Board's phrase; it is now called 'Shakespeare Country'. The expression is not entirely new, however, as Walter Jerrold and Ernest Haslehurst already called the region 'Shakespeareland' in their 1910 tourist guide with the same title (see Jerrold and Haslehurst 1910).

In his article on Shakespeare and cultural tourism, Dennis Kennedy argued that ‘all of us are tourists now and then, reluctantly or eagerly visiting the exotic, consuming the foreign, watching the great universal show. The past is particularly important for tourism: jet travel since about 1960 has become a form of time travel, allowing us glimpses of lost worlds, making us into historians of heritage and connoisseurs of the alien’ (Kennedy 1998: 174). Kennedy’s concept of tourism is based on an implicit division between the familiar and the exotic; the known and the alien; and the home and the foreign. The non-tourist’s territory is the familiar, the known, the local, the home, while the tourist is – as Kennedy put it – ‘the willing stranger’ (Kennedy 1998: 175). For Kennedy, the condition of the tourist is temporary and lasts as long as one experiences the foreign, the alien, the strange, and then returns to the familiar: home. Two questions arise, however. Is it really the strange, the alien that the tourist experiences on the journey? Moreover, is it really to the familiar, to home that one returns?

Contemporary analysis of tourism describes a different picture. With the expansion of tourism, there has been a substantial rise of interest in history and heritage (see Cohen 1985). ‘We turn to the past which always remains unapproachable but which tempts us with the illusion of the knowable. In a world of simulations, we seek certified sites, verified objects, and confirmed auras’ (Kennedy 1998: 179-180). Here, Kennedy draws attention to a contradictory situation: as the present is simulated, uncertain, and strange, the past is often arranged as idealised memory and presented as part of the (inter)national cultural heritage, which can be experienced by the cultural tourist as theme park (see also Cohen 1988).

Contemporary (postmodern) psychology<sup>81</sup> supports Kennedy’s argument. The American psychologist Robert Jay Lifton asserts that a new concept of human individuality has emerged amid the uncertainties of the late twentieth century, a figure he called Protean man after the Greek mythological figure Proteus. Protean man is characterised by the constant change and rush after the new in everyday life, while equally drawn to an image of a mythical past of perfect harmony and pre-scientific wholeness.

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<sup>81</sup> I deal with the analysis of postmodern psychology in detail below, in Chapter 2, *Identity reconsidered*.



He is profoundly attracted to the idea of making all things, including himself, totally new – to the ‘mode of transformation’. But he is equally drawn to an image of a mythical past of perfect harmony and pre-scientific wholeness, to the ‘mode of restoration’. Moreover, beneath his transformation is nostalgia, and beneath his restoration is his fascinated attraction to contemporary forms and symbols.

Lifton 1996: 129-130

While Protean man experiences the dizzying whirl of reality as ‘mode of transformation’, package tours and (historical) theme parks represent for Protean man the contemporary ‘mode of restoration’, as well as the image of perfect harmony, underlined by nostalgia (see also Cohen 1985). Historical theme parks are thus one of the most logical models of how to present a culture of global pastness in a global economy. ‘Despite their extreme merchandising of culture, theme parks are popularly successful because they provide an accessible and diverting thoroughfare to an imagined history or mythical world’ (Kennedy 1998: 179-180). Therefore, though the contemporary tourist is supposed to be a ‘willing stranger’, and though historical theme parks are supposed to present ‘the past, the foreign, the alien’, what the tourist can usually experience in these theme parks is the idealised memory of the past and the wholeness of an imagined harmonious world.<sup>82</sup>

Apart from universal mythmaking and romantic notions about the dream of a bygone Golden Age, historical theme parks are built on the conscious embodiment of the past’s absence. Barbara Hodgdon makes a similar point in her excellent article on the Shakespeare-sites at Stratford: ‘the collections at each property [in and around Stratford] constitute a cult of fragments, an assemblage of material objects that stand in synedochal, metaphoric, or metonymic relationship to Shakespeare; a context for the subject *substitutes* for the subject himself, its episteme, resemblance to a lost Elizabethan world’ (Hodgdon 1998: 203 – emphasis ZI).<sup>83</sup> As the enduring absence of

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<sup>82</sup> Kennedy’s example is Disneyland. In his book, *Performance*, Marvin Carlson depicts a similar example: Fort Ross in Northern California is ‘a living history site’, where husband and wife, dressed in the costumes of the 1830s, greet visitors in the roles of the last Russian commander of the fort and his wife (see Carlson 1996: 3). Hodgdon reports similar features at Mary Arden’s property of Glebe Farm outside Stratford or the reconstructed village at the North England Beamish Open Air Museum or the Black Country Mining Museum (see Hodgdon 1998: 215).

<sup>83</sup> Hodgdon also observed that though the tourist can experience Stratford by chance, it is also coherently



Shakespeare's past is translated by substitution into and onto symbolic, real, and virtual places, objects, and narratives, substitution becomes one of the fundamental rules the tourist must learn while experiencing these properties.<sup>84</sup> The major problem is, however, that through substitution the Stratford Empire of Shakespeare is organised as a complete and coherent initiation to a Shakespearean/Elizabethan dream-world: the idealised, imagined, and seemingly different substitutions are underlined by the notion of familiarity.<sup>85</sup> The Shakespearean/Elizabethan images, objects, and narratives presented are already familiar from other sources (books, picture-books, popular films, and 'classical' theatre); and the working method of these Shakespearean institutions in and around Stratford is also familiar from other theme parks.<sup>86</sup> Based on synedochal,

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narrativised by tours and processions. The St. George's Day flower procession, annually held on Shakespeare's birthday, is organised as a coherent narrative. 'Following the traces of his [Shakespeare's] body from cradle to grave, the Birthday procession's itinerary maps him onto Stratford, tying him to places and properties, those inhabited by him and by his heirs (Susannah, Elizabeth) as well as those devoted to studying his texts and their contexts and to projecting and disseminating their histories' (Hodgdon 1998: 193). The virtual Shakespeare is almost embodied by the sites of and around Stratford. That embodiment is centred on Stratford's must-see property, the one that impersonates him and controls the Shakespeare-narrative: his Birthplace. Here, the story of Shakespeare ancestry can be traced and the visitor may experience Shakespearean 'family values'. Having read Shakespeare's personalised narrative at the Birthplace, the tourist's horizon is then widened in time and space as the rhetoric of the 'tour', linking townscape with country, associates Shakespeare to a bygone world of an ideally imagined, rural Elizabethan England. The home of Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, for instance, 'exemplifies a "countryside of the mind": ancient, stable, and cosy, it represents a bulwark against industrial society, a perfectly harmonised – and moralised – vision of the English way of life' (Hodgdon 1998: 213). Mary Arden's property, including the Glebe Farm and the Shakespeare Countryside Museum, 'is a "living history" site [...], which attempts to recover and represent the experience of daily life "as it was"' (Hodgdon 1998: 215).

<sup>84</sup> All the re-staged moments, notions, images and narratives of the Shakespeare Empire are once again materialised in the shops of the various properties. There, the tourists can buy (themselves into) Shakespeare with the promise 'to return to the scene of its origin, authenticating their connection to the sites and sights of Stratford' (Hodgdon 1998: 232). These shops are the 'micro-universe of Bardic consumer culture [where] the objects are shaped by expectations and [are] accessible to a wide range of incomes' (Hodgdon 1998: 235). Here, the tourist's experience is based on the familiarisation effect as one (un)consciously recognises the metonymic connection between the artefacts on sale and Shakespeare's land, as these products are produced as pocket-sized versions of the representations of the romantic notions about the dream of a bygone Golden Age (see also Bristol 1996).

<sup>85</sup> Stratford's other fantasylands (the exhibition of the World of Shakespeare and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Picture Gallery) tie him to other narratives. The former is a twenty-five-minute history pageant that wraps Shakespeare in an imagined, ideal Elizabethan Age, and ties him to those momentous moments of English history that appear in his texts. The latter memorialises a Victorian inheritance where 'the visitor who comes to Stratford with images engendered by Victorian ideas of Elizabethan England as a romanticised place of nostalgia and also with Victorian preconceptions of how Shakespeare is (or should be) played can find [...] ample support for these notions' (Hodgdon 1998: 229).

<sup>86</sup> Think only of the life-size mannequin of Shakespeare in his study at the Stratford Shakespeare Centre. Shakespeare's neatly dressed wax figure is sitting in white stocks and slippers at a desk, holding a text on its lap, and surrounded by books, notes, pens, and a cup. The arrangement of that scene affirms the already known image of Shakespeare in the visitor: Shakespeare is not a theatre man, but, most of all, a man of



metaphoric, and metonymic substitution, the working method and the construction of these theme parks always foster the experience of the(ir) familiarity in their visitors, even if their themes are different. Though theme parks are supposed to be built on and to play with the necessary difference between past and present, they usually emphasise the supposedly universal quality of humanity: cultural *sameness* and universal *familiarity* spanning (historical) time and (social) space. It is that cultural sameness and universal familiarity that the tourist usually experiences in historical theme parks. As Myra Shackley has pointed out, theme parks are ‘exercises in nostalgia, presenting a sanitized view of culture’ (Shackley 1994: 396-97). As a result, the alien, the strange, the Other are thus substituted by the same and the already familiar. Hence, the alien, the strange, the Other are reproduced and restaged as the already known.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Wanamaker’s Globe-reconstruction project*

Since its inception, the London Globe Theatre reconstruction project has operated with three agendas: artistic, educational, and economic (see Kennedy 1996, 1997; and Mulryne and Shewring 1997). Though Wanamaker’s initial aim was to recreate ‘a faithful reconstruction of the Globe’, he had to present the project in terms of financial liability and economic regeneration. He linked the reconstruction of the Globe with the redevelopment of the south bank of the Thames at Southwark, and also attempted to gain the support of international artistic and business individuals/communities, and the local residents of Southwark.<sup>88</sup> Apart from giving an economic and civic dimension to the project, he unintentionally fostered the impression that the Globe would be just another entrepreneurial property development, i.e., a historical theme park (see Wanamaker’s

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literature. The popular image of Shakespeare as a man of literature appeared recently in film as well. In *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998), for instance, when we first encounter Shakespeare, he is sitting at his table trying his signature. He does not like the result, scraps the paper and throws it towards a scull (presumably meant as a reference to *Hamlet*). Then he tries again. Another mistake – the paper lands at a casket (a reference to *The Merchant of Venice*). The scene introduces Shakespeare as a writer – but humorously so, partly because he is engaging in the displacement activity of one who is suffering writer’s block, and partly because it calls on our familiar knowledge of plays that this Shakespeare has not yet written.

<sup>87</sup> For an excellent analysis on Stratford’s various properties and their working methods see Hodgdon 1998.

<sup>88</sup> For a detailed analysis of Wanamaker’s attempts to gain support and their contradictions see John Drakakis’s article, ‘Theatre, ideology, and institution: Shakespeare and the roadsweepers’ (Drakakis

interview in Holderness 1989: 16-23).<sup>89</sup> To counter that impression, Wanamaker always emphasised that ‘the basic idea was to make a faithful reconstruction based on specialist research in the Renaissance theatre’ (Wanamaker in Holderness 1989: 16). And even when the Globe was being built, it advertised itself as the authentic reconstruction of ‘the theatre where Shakespeare worked’ (see the guide-leaflet of The Globe, 1994: 1). To achieve the authenticity and the accuracy of the design, a research team consisting of academics specialising in Renaissance theatre and practical experts on Tudor building techniques was assembled at the inception of the reconstruction project. For their leader, Andrew Gurr, this ‘brought together the best expertise in a uniquely wide range of special skills to address the questions raised in the design process’ (Gurr 1997: 36).

In his article, ‘Shakespeare’s Globe – A history of Reconstructions and Some Reasons for Trying’, Gurr pointed out that though various earlier attempts had been made either on paper or in stone and wood to reconstruct the Globe from Edmond Malone through Ludwig Tieck, William Poel, Edward Lutyens, F. C. Owlet, John Cranford Adams to C. Walter Hodges, none of the previous projects had done so much work as Wanamaker’s project did on questions about the structure, measure, and design of the building, and none of them had had such a range of expertise in historical methods of construction.<sup>90</sup> Gurr identified five main fields of knowledge where evidence was found. They were

(1) scholarly analysis of the pictorial evidence, (2) scholarly analysis of the evidence offered by the plays themselves, in stage directions and the like, and any descriptive comments from the time; (3) the archaeological evidence, (4) the evidence of traditional building techniques provided by surviving Tudor timber-frame structures across the country, and (5) the work of art historians on Tudor iconography and decoration.

Gurr 1997: 36

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1989).

<sup>89</sup> The Globe Theatre project has in fact contributed to the regeneration of the Southwark area. The new building of the Tate Gallery, Tate Modern, is now located in this area and other constructions are following it, while it is surrounded by a landscape of attractive warehouse-style designer-homes.

<sup>90</sup> Further information about the earlier Globe-building-projects can be found in Gurr’s essay (Gurr 1997, especially 27-32) and in *Rebuilding Shakespeare’s Globe* by Andrew Gurr and John Orrell (Gurr and Orrell 1989).



Based on the analysis of different drawings (De Witt's Swan, for instance), pictures (Wisscher's panorama of London, Hollar's 'Long View' of London, and other contemporary maps), engravings (in John Norden's *Civitas Londinium*, for instance), other written documents (Nash's papers, and the Henslowe archive, for instance), Shakespeare's plays, the recently discovered archaeological fields of the foundations of the Rose Theatre<sup>91</sup>, and traditional building techniques, the expertise was in Gurr's words 'the guarantee that whatever we ended up with, it would not be another Lutyens fantasy, a Shakespeare Disneyland, but the very best guess, the most faithful reconstruction, that all the leading experts working side by side could come up with' (Gurr 1997: 46).

In spite of the enormous amount of theoretical, historical, and practical research in the third Globe project, and the historical construction methods – as accurate as possible – never used in any of the previous Elizabethan theatre reconstructions, the third Globe reconstruction project had to face various difficulties. Gurr admitted in his article that 'we did not have any detailed or reliable picture of the first Globe' (Gurr 1997: 38), and drew attention to the fact that 'what could be found in the plays and other written texts from the time, gave very little direct help about the design of the whole theatre and auditorium' (Gurr 1997: 38). But while the archaeological discoveries of the Rose Theatre may have been useful, 'no amount of archaeology [...] provides us with much evidence for anything else above ground level' (King 1997: 2). Moreover, Gurr also informed us that the final design of the third Globe was to meet modern regulations for audience and players' safety and comfort (see Gurr 1997: 34). In spite of Gurr's and the research team's expertise and the vast amount of evidence gathered from the above mentioned sources, a tension between a reconstructed heritage structure and its claimed authenticity emerged.

In his above mentioned article, Gurr centred his argument on the authenticity of the Globe's structure, and argued that the expertise was its guarantee. Adolf Ehrentant remarked, however, that the interpretation of authenticity is especially troublesome for a reconstructed heritage structure as 'any authenticity claimed for a heritage structure is the social construction of its creators rather than the intrinsic property of the object'

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<sup>91</sup> For an excellent analysis of the controversial issues around the Rose Theatre's excavations see Peggy

(Ehrentant 1993: 270). The popular conception of authenticity, however, covers merely the building's resemblance to a no longer-existent 'original'; and the physical proximity to the 'original' location. Thus the paradox is that only a socially re-constructed authenticity can legitimate the project's claim to genuine material authenticity. Hence, the result of the research team's 'best guess' can be seen as the reconstruction of a building that it is thought that the Globe *might have been* in the seventeenth century.<sup>92</sup> And though the researchers were well aware of these inadequacies and the problematic notions of authenticity and accuracy, publicity and the media presented (and still present) the third Globe's reconstructed authenticity as genuine: the intrinsic property of the building. As a result, in its media presentation, the particular circumstances of the third Globe building could allegedly be separated from their (historical) time and (social) space, and were rooted in the universal entities of the past. Publicity and the media based their presentation on these (highly problematic and debatable) principles to guarantee the entire Globe project's 'genuine' authenticity. Despite this, Kennedy argued that the Globe centre is 'the most obvious example of a cultural theme park', as 'its key concepts are its most problematic concepts: authenticity versus simulation, art versus antiquarianism, instruction versus tourism' (Kennedy 1997: 32). In this sense, 'the Globe centre operates under a kindred camouflage, erasing the conservative ideology that underpins it and concealing alternative perspectives on its historical virtue' (Kennedy 1997: 32). Though the Globe is not a profit-making organisation *per se*, it receives no operational subsidy from public funds and must compete for consumers like an airline or car-manufacturer. As a result, concludes Kennedy, whether we like it or not, the Globe centre is situated on the tourist map like any other tourist attraction in London from Tower Bridge to Piccadilly Circus and Madame Tussaud. It is one of the targets of global tourism, and operates as an artistic, educational, and business enterprise, using the marketing strategies of global capitalism.

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Phelan's article, 'Playing Dead in Stone, or When Is a Rose Not a Rose?' (Phelan 1996).

<sup>92</sup> An attempt to overcome that paradox can be seen in Ronnie Mulryne and Margaret Shewring's article, *The Once and Future Globe*, published for the opening of the Globe. The authors claimed that it was not of course the original Globe that had been rebuilt, and the name of the new theatre (Shakespeare's Globe) 'stands as the title *for* and expression of an unattainable ideal' (Mulryne and Shewring 1997: 15 – emphasis ZI). Here, the fundamental rule of substitution appears again. In this sense, what was built is a particular theatre building that is now standing in for the authentic ideal.



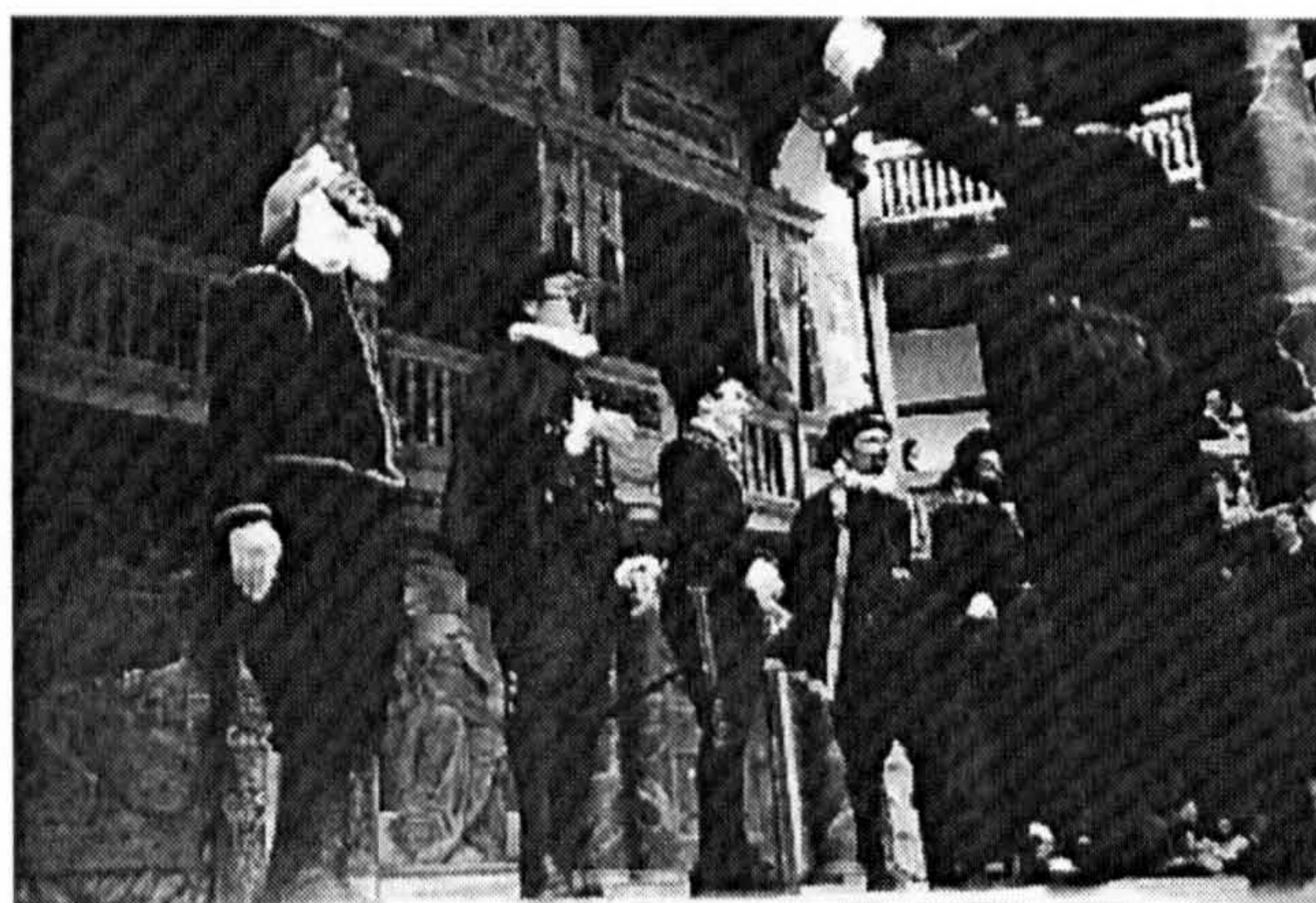
In spite of these problematic notions, Kennedy also acknowledged, however, that the Globe Theatre has ‘historical justification’, and has achieved ‘valuable discoveries in the performance of Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists’ (Kennedy 1998: 182). To get beyond the ontological mousetrap of material authenticity, he proposed that we should accept that the third Globe ‘is a form of staged authenticity’ and its definition is based on ‘the spectator’s experience’ rather than ‘the authenticity of the structure or of the playing’ (Kennedy 1998: 181). In this sense, the unique experience of the Globe Theatre does not lie in the claim that the authentic reconstruction of the building itself would recreate the original performance conditions including staging, actors’ style, language, and especially audience behaviour and socio-political context. This assumption would be based on the naively a-historical assertion that ‘there is an essential “Shakespeare” which the recreation of a version of the original conditions of performance will somehow *naturally* release’ (Drakakis 1989: 33 – emphasis JD). Rather, keeping in mind Kennedy’s proposition, it seems appropriate to accept Ros King’s opinion on the Globe. She argues that ‘there is no certainty that its design is actually correct in any respect’ as ‘the precise form of the original building is finally unknowable’ (King 1996: 5). But there is no doubt that the building as currently constructed ‘is as close as we are currently likely to get to the concept of “Elizabethan theatre”’ (King 1996: 5). The value of the Globe is that its design and level of technology give audiences a different experience of theatre. Its circular structure means that actors are exposed on all sides. This and the same light conditions for both stage and auditorium mean that actors and audience share the same visual space. This creates an interplay between stage and auditorium and also means that all members of the audience are consciousness of each other. The effect is anti-illusionist and serves as ‘a constant reminder of the cultural *otherness* of the plays performed within it’ (Mulryne and Shewring 1997: 16 – emphasis ZI). The Globe could be an ideal place for encouraging translation from one period to another, from one culture to another. The question remains, however, as to the extent to which this has happened in practice.

*Richard Olivier’s The Merchant of Venice*



When the Globe Theatre opened in 1996, one of the most obvious ways to achieve a ‘unique experience’ seemed to be the attempt to reconstruct the plays’ ‘original’ conditions. As the stage manager, Jack Morrison, claimed in an interview, Richard Olivier’s 1998 production of *The Merchant of Venice* (*MofV*) was ‘an early attempt at “Authentic Practice” at the Globe. [...] The costumes, props and furniture were all historically researched from the Venice of the period. Everything was made in the original way, the stools were hand made, the clothes were hand cut and stitched to sixteenth century patterns, etc.’ (Morrison 2004 – unpublished manuscript).

Olivier’s production opened with a prologue-like scene. As the audience was assembling, the male members of the cast in English period costumes and Italian masks could be heard singing an Italian madrigal (*O dolce vita mia...*) in the musicians’ gallery, while down among the spectators a masked carnival character also in period costume was playfully teaching the audience a popular Italian song. Suddenly, the men in Italian masks drove away the masked carnival character, and then came together on stage to sing and dance as in a Venetian Carnival (see picture below). The prologue-like opening to the production showed that Olivier interpreted ‘Venice as a carnival city of jollity and broad japes, masks and singers, where blacked-cloaked Bassanio and friends are exuberantly care-free’ (de Jongh 1998).<sup>93</sup>



In 1998, *The Merchant of Venice* began with members of the cast singing and dancing - masked from left to right: Andrew French, Benedict Wong, Neil D’Souza, Mark Rylance and directed by Clarence Smith as Lorenzo (Photo by Irene Musumeci)

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<sup>93</sup> All *MofV* reviews mentioned later can be found in *Theatre Record*, 21 May – 3 June 1998, 687-691.



The carnivalesque atmosphere continued in Belmont – as Lois Potter remarked ‘the play’s second scene invited the audience to laugh at a series of national stereotypes and to share Portia’s horror at the prospect of a suitor with “the complexion of a devil”’ (Potter 1999: 75). Then the same atmosphere appeared in the intermission when Launcelot Gobbo (Marcello Magni) checked people’s backpacks, attacked illegal photographers with various items, and danced and sang with the spectators. Finally, the performance ended in fairy-land Belmont where all the characters except Shylock were happily singing again the Italian madrigal (*O dolce vita mia...*) in unison.

In Olivier’s production, Portia<sup>94</sup> and Bassanio, Gratiano and Nerissa, and Lorenzo and Jessica were all presented as true lovers.<sup>95</sup> Bassanio (Mark Rylance) was portrayed as Portia’s genuine suitor<sup>96</sup>, and Antonio (Jack Shepherd) was played as a jovial old friend of and a father figure to young Bassanio. The presentation lacked much

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<sup>94</sup> Though Shakespeare’s texts were initially conceived for an all-male cast in which boys played female roles, he often played with the literal and theatrical implications of this convention. In *As You Like It*, for instance, a boy playing Rosalind (female) plays Ganymede (male) playing Rosalind (female) to Orlando in the forest. Implying Shakespeare’s special interest in gender roles, cross-dressing is also used in the court scene of *MofV* when a male actor (in fact a boy) played a female (Portia) playing a male (Bellario). Portia’s cross-dressed scene is rooted in her subjection to male will, i.e., her father’s will, and her need to overcome it. One of her first sentences reveals that ‘so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father’ [I.ii.23-24]. Choosing the appropriate husband (Bassanio), then Portia faces another male-created constraint in the shape of the bond. She has to solve the constraint in a way by saving Antonio from Shylock, and by turning Bassanio towards herself for ever. Portia has to enter the world of men which has created the bond. But ‘only as a man can Portia enter the Duke’s tribunal and give the judgement which will save Antonio. Only as a man can she take from Bassanio the ring with which she will ensure his future fidelity’ (Overton 1991 [1987]: 306). The problematic issues lying beneath the cross-dressed scene of the trial draw attention to the fact that the interpretation of Portia and the other female characters in *MofV* was probably floating between a male representation of a woman and the real woman, and of a male oriented world and the situation of women in it. Thus, ‘the uncertainty about the gender of the speaker in a period when women’s parts are played by male actors [was] part of the comedy’ (Belsey 1985: 181), and ‘the audience [was] offered shifting identities as a source of humour, pleasure, and sexual titillation’ (Hobby 1991: 138). The presentation of female characters by male actors on Shakespeare’s stage might thus be used to mingle contrary images of sexuality and sexual identities, to open gender boundaries and to challenge gender representations. The cross-dressed parts in Shakespeare’s *Merchant* can still offer opportunities for players and directors to play with the construction of gender representations. In Olivier’s production, however, the actresses’ bodies and the female parts they played coalesced in the audience’s imagination. As the female players’ feminine characteristics were emphasised by their décolletage costumes highlighting their body-shape, shoulders, necks, and breasts, the female characters appeared as the sexual objects of the male characters’ desire. Even when Portia appeared as Bellario in the trial scene, she did not modify her tone, and did not change her gestures, facial expressions, and body-language. Hence, the cross-dressed scene was not connected to the problems of gender-boundaries and gender-stereotyping.

<sup>95</sup> Though there are references to the problematic figures of Cressida, Thisbe, Dido, Medea and Jason in the text, Olivier’s interpretation did not let them disturb the happy atmosphere of the scenes.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Billington criticised Olivier’s interpretation of Bassanio as ‘modern scholarship and theatrical practice see Bassanio as either a fortune-hunting opportunist or a man agonisingly torn between his new

reference to the fact that Bassanio's desire to marry Portia (Kathryn Pogson) is at least partly led by the fact that she is rich and he has serious debts. John Peter remarked, for instance, that 'nobody seems to have told [Mark] Rylance that playing a youth of gauche sincerity [...] is wrong for this role [Bassanio]' (Peter 1998). In other recent productions, Antonio has also been seen as a figure capable of arousing conflict between Bassanio and Portia (see Peter Sellars, 1994; or Róbert Alföldi, 1999, for instance). In 'Brothers and Others', W. H. Auden also pointed out, for instance, that Shakespeare deliberately avoided 'the classical formula of Perfect Friends' (Auden 1991 [1962]: 70) by making their relationship unequal, and also by not offering Antonio a final peace in Belmont where the symbol of final peace and concord is marriage. 'Had he wished, Shakespeare could have followed the Pecorrone story in which it is Ansaldo, not Gratiano, who marries the equivalent of Nerissa' (Auden 1991: 70). As a result, Bassanio might also have presented as a man torn between his new wife and his old friend/lover.<sup>97</sup>

On Olivier's stage, the problematic notion of Jessica's conversion from Jew to gentile was presented as a seamless affair. In the play, Jessica is also subject to male will. Unlike Portia, she rebels. But like Portia, she gains freedom by dressing as a male. Her story suggests, however, that it is not so easy to become 'a gentile, and no Jew' (II.vi.51). First, she is ignored by Portia and Bassanio when she arrives at Belmont (III.ii.), and later even Lancelot Gobbo, the servant, interrogates and teases her as converted Christian (III.v.). In Olivier's production, however, Jessica was welcomed in Belmont whole-heartedly by Portia and Bassanio, and later the conversation between Jessica (Lilo Baur) and Lancelot Gobbo (Marcello Magni) on her conversion was played as a sequence of jokes. By avoiding the disturbing references in their portrayal, Olivier created a unified group of lovers to set them against Shylock.

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wife and his old male lover' (Billington 1998).

<sup>97</sup> Auden also suggested that *MofV* gives textual evidence that Antonio is in love with Bassanio. Shakespeare portrays Antonio 'as a melancholic who is incapable of loving a woman' and 'whose emotional life is concentrated upon a member of his own sex [Bassanio]' (Auden 1991: 70 and 72). Based on Auden's suggestion, contemporary scholars of Shakespeare have argued that references to same-sex relations not only in *MofV* but in other Shakespeare-plays complicate the characters' relationships. Alan Sinfield has noted, for instance, that '*The Merchant* allows us to explore a social arrangement in which the place of same-sex passion was different from that we are used to. [...] It is not that Shakespeare was a sexual radical, therefore. Rather, the early modern organization of sex and gender boundaries was different from ours, and the ordinary currency of that culture is replete with erotic interaction that strike strange chords today' (Sinfield 1996: 138-139).



Shylock was played by the German actor, Norbert Kentrup, as ‘a hook-nosed vengeful materialist’ – as one critic uncomfortably noted – who set up a bond, and then did not show mercy for Antonio’s loss (see H. R. Greenberg – shakesper@ws.bowiestate.edu). Shylock’s soliloquy (I.iii.), for instance, was spoken by Kentrup on centre stage directly to the audience in a manner which immediately attracted hissing and boos.<sup>98</sup> The interpretation of Shylock was also emphasised by his costume. Kentrup wore the type of garment (a long black gown, long wide trousers, and a red three-cornered hat) worn by Charles Macklin in his famous 1741 production which portrayed Shylock as ‘wolfish, cunning, eaten up with hatred’ (Gross 1992: 105). John Peter pointed out in *The Sunday Times*, ‘Shylock, deprived of a network of relationship, became more isolated and therefore more of the villain of the piece, solitary and melodramatic’ (Peter 1998). Portraying Shylock as ‘the villain of the piece’ was problematic and even disturbing because of the fact that Olivier did not stage the circumstances in which Shylock’s ‘villainy’ is framed in Shakespeare’s play.

Though Shylock’s desires<sup>99</sup> – as A. D. Moody expressed it – ‘are wolfish, bloody, starved and ravenous’ (Moody 1991 [1964]: 82), the events of the play

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<sup>98</sup> Carole Woddis strengthened this view describing Kentrup’s Shylock as ‘unequivocally, a villain’ (Woddis 1998). \*

<sup>99</sup> In *MofV*, when Shylock first meets Antonio, he remarks:

How like a fawning publican he looks.  
 I hate him for he is a Christian;  
 But more, for that in low simplicity  
 He lends out money gratis, and brings down  
 The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
 I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.  
 He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,  
 Even there where merchants most do congregate,  
 On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift –  
 Which he calls interest. Cursèd by my tribe  
 If I forgive him.  
 (I.iii.39-45.)

Shylock’s first sentences recall a situation in which Jews and Christians are implacably at odds. He expresses his hatred towards Christians in general (‘I hate him for he is a Christian’), and Antonio in particular (‘He lends out money gratis’). Shylock is a professional usurer. As such he fulfils an essential economic function in his society, but it also makes him an outcast from the community (see Gross 1992: 35-50 and King 2000: 209-230). To the problem of usury is added the pound-of-flesh story, which recalls the conventional blood libel of the European anti-semitic tradition suggesting that Shylock ‘is proposing to commit a ritual murder at one remove’ (Gross 1992: 17). Both sides, however, characterise the other in terms of the devil. In an earlier soliloquy, it was Shylock who conjured up the Devil (‘Yes, to smell pork,

demonstrate partly that Shylock consciously accepts the villainy the Christians impose on him,<sup>100</sup> and partly that those who condemn him are no better than him. At the trial-scene (IV.i.), for instance, the Duke, Antonio, Bassanio, and then Portia as Bellario ask Shylock's mercy towards Antonio, but Shylock refuses it. When Portia turns the case against Shylock, however, the Christians punish him without exercising Christian mercifulness either. As a result, what Shylock represents is not the villain *per se*, but rather 'the inward condition of the Christians' (Moody 1991 [1964]: 79). Though Shakespeare drew on stereotypes in creating Shylock, he complicated the picture of racial stereotyping by demonstrating how these stereotypes were constructed by both Christians and Jews in sixteenth century Venetian/English society.<sup>101</sup>

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to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into!' [I.iii.31-32]). But after he has cited the biblical tale of Laban's sheep, Antonio observes, 'Mark you this, Bassanio? / The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. / An evil soul producing holy witness / Is like a villain with a smiling cheek, / A goodly apple rotten at the heart.' (I.iii.96-97).

<sup>100</sup> Shylock is not a villain *per se*, as he clearly states his decision to *become* a villain: 'The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction' (III. i. 67-68).

<sup>101</sup> Shakespeare's play, *MofV*, was probably written in 1596-7, and it eventually appeared in print as *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare took inspiration from various sources, Italian and English, for Antonio and Shylock's pound-of-flesh story and Portia's casket scene, which he amalgamated and transmuted. Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) might have given some further hints, and it is often suggested that the trial scene refers to Rodrigo Lopez's trial. Lopez, a Jewish-Portuguese physician to the Queen, was hanged in 1594 for conspiring against her (see Wells and Taylor 1988: 425). Although there is notable stage history stretching back to at least Edmund Kean which has drawn on Shylock's own 'do we not bleed' speech and which has sought to present Shylock as a wronged human being, since World War II *MofV* is often assumed to be insulting to Jewish people. That assumption is based partly on the view that Shakespeare presented Shylock as a Jewish stereotype like the Machiavellian gothic figure, Barabas, in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (c. 1589); and partly to the fact that though the situation of Jews in 16th century England was very complex, Elizabethans often considered Jews as the dangerous Other, in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Elizabethans never knowingly met a Jew – and largely because the word 'Jew' had become synonymous with usurer. Gross points out in his analysis of Marlowe's Barabas that Marlowe manages to satisfy contemporary expectations by presenting Barabas as a figure of extreme hatred (see Gross 1992: 9-16). King complicates the picture, however, by arguing that 'not all Jewish characters on the popular stage matched the Machiavellian gothic horrors of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*' (King 2000: 215). She cites Haughton's *Englishmen for my Money* (1599, published 1616) in which the Marrano London merchant is 'considerably less ridiculous than the three wealthy foreign merchants (French, Dutch, and Italian) whom he has chosen as husbands for his flighty daughters'. She concludes that just like the presentation of 'the Jew' on stage, 'real life attitudes to "the Jews" were far from homogeneous'. Although 'there were officially no Jews living in England between 1290 and 1655, both London and Bristol supported small but fluctuating communities of Jews who had ostensibly converted to Christianity, notably Portuguese Marranos. Some seem to have successfully integrated into English society, and there are even cases where the authorities knowingly tolerated Jews' religious observance within their homes. Venetian Jews were consulted by Henry VIII's advisers on the legitimacy of his divorce, while protestant interest in the literal word of God sparked intellectual curiosity in the original language of the Bible, with the first Chair in Hebrew established in Cambridge in 1549' (King 2000: 215-216, citing Roth 1930 and Shapiro 1996: 68-76). Likewise, Shapiro argued that 'at most a couple of hundred [Jews] could be counted among the thousands of strangers living in late sixteenth-century England. Virtually all of them practised their faith in secret [though] the members



In Olivier's production, however, the young Christian couples were portrayed as well-behaved gentlemen/gentlewomen. Their portrayal was even supported with Christian iconography. At the trial scene, for instance, while Shylock was running up and down shouting, Antonio was standing calmly at one of the pillars in a position indicating self-respect and self-confidence. Then, when Shylock was ready to take his pound of flesh from Antonio, Antonio was placed in a position which recalled the innocently murdered Christ on the cross (see picture below).



The trial scene – from left to right: Mark Rylance as Bassanio, Jack Shepherd as Antonio, Andrew French as Gratiano and Norbert Kentrup as Shylock (*photo by John Tamper*)

Thus, the characterisation of the Christians as 'goodies' and Shylock as the 'baddy' marked the binary opposition of Olivier's production, something which the play itself avoids.<sup>102</sup>

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of this small Jewish community [...] did meet to observe Passover and Yom Kippur' (Shapiro 1998: 14). John Foxe's *Sermon Preached at the Christening of a Certain Jew*, for instance, gives a vivid sense of some of the disturbing notions Elizabethans held about Jews. Foxe speaks of their 'heinous abominations, insatiable butcheries, treasons, frenzies, and madness', and describes them as 'ritual murders, usurers, and host desecrators' (Shapiro 1998: 14). Many of the chronicles and histories published at the time also contained stories of Jewish criminality (see John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* or Sir John Mandeville's *Travellers*, for instance) (For a detailed analysis of how Jews were regarded in 16th-century England, see Shapiro 1996). By the end of the sixteenth century, however, interactions between English and Jews were becoming more frequent, especially abroad, in Morocco and Turkey, as well as in Antwerp, Amsterdam and Venice, where Jewish communities were flourishing. 'These encounters gradually called into question many of the stereotypes that had prevailed in an England largely free of Jews for 300 years' (Shapiro 1998: 15).

<sup>102</sup> The prologue-like opening to the production already prepared the opposition between Christians and Jews as the singers of the Italian madrigal were all Bassanio's friends, while the masked carnival character acted by Marcello Magni later appeared as Shylock's servant, Launcelot Gobbo.



The fact that Shylock was played by a German actor created unresolved tensions.<sup>103</sup> As his German accent was also a sign of the character's otherness, it might have been signalling the ideological construction of the Other. Morrison argued, however, that

the political nature of casting a German actor was talked about early on in rehearsals and then [...] ignored for the rest of the process. Shylock being a big German is only an issue if you think it is. [...] It was not an "issue" that was played on (or off) stage.

Morrison 2004 – unpublished manuscript

There is historical justification for Olivier's choice of a German actor. Gross pointed out, that the Jews living in the ghetto of sixteenth century Venice, 'consisted of three separate communities or "nations" [...] – the "German nation", the "Levantine Nation" and the "Ponentine" or Western Nation. [...] In time the differences between the three began to fade, but at the end of the sixteenth century these were still sharply defined – and historically [...] Shylock could only have been a member of the German Nation as the "Germans" were the only group in the ghetto permitted to practise moneylending' (Gross 1992: 25). Kentrup as a German could have portrayed Shylock the Jew as a stranger in an English/Venetian lingual, social, and theatrical community. The critics' complaints demonstrate, however, that the production did not capitalise on Kentrup's pronounced German accent,<sup>104</sup> but rather it became merely an obstacle to understanding Shakespeare's language.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> To the question, why Kentrup was given the role, Jack Morrison answered: 'Norbert was asked to play Shylock primarily, because he had a long history with the Globe Theatre through the Bremmer theatre company, which he ran. He had been a long term supporter of Sam Wanamaker and had performed on the experimental versions of the Globe stage, as well as at the opening ceremony. [...] Basically, he was a well known character around the Globe and had often voiced his wish to perform in the company' (Morrison 2004 – unpublished manuscript).

<sup>104</sup> Alastair Macaulay wrote, for instance, that 'Norbert Kentrup's Shylock would be a distinguished performance if played in his native German; but it is hard to follow an actor who speaks of „a Tenniel come to chudgement"' (Macaulay 1998).

<sup>105</sup> The German theatre director Karin Beier consciously utilised the different languages of the actors in her 1995 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The members of her international cast coming from England, Italy, Russia, Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Hungary, France, and Israel, spoke Shakespeare's text in their own languages. As they could not rely on literary signifiers, their physical action substituted speech and language became a problem in itself (see Kennedy 1997, especially 36-39).



Given German history in the twentieth century and knowledge of nazi prosecution of the Jews in World War II, the language issue could have also been connected to an even more complicated representation: a Jew played by a German. A German actor playing the Outcast could have allowed Olivier to stage Shakespeare's play in contemporary circumstances concerning the demonisation of minorities. Unfortunately, Olivier's production did not embrace this possibility either, but reinforced Shylock as the enemy of the harmony towards which the entire community (Christians and converted Jews like Jessica) aspires.<sup>106</sup> Hence, Olivier's *MofV* failed to question racial, Jewish stereotypes. Indeed it rather excited racist and prejudiced reactions, and reinforced, as Carole Woddis observed, 'the belief of Christian virtue's supremacy' (Woddis 1998). As a result, the effect of Olivier's production was to suggest that the anti-Semitism that is undoubtedly present in some individual characters' utterances *is* in fact the message of *MofV* as a whole.

Setting up an opposition between Christians and Jews, interpreting Shylock as villain, and constructing 'the entrepreneurial Antonio and his friends [...] as well-born thugs' (de Jongh 1998), Olivier's production was – as Alastair Macaulay argued – 'the summer equivalent of Christmas pantomime' (Macaulay 1998), recalling the audience reaction to a pantomime: hissing of the baddies and loud applause for the goodies.<sup>107</sup> The problem with Olivier's production is not that he organised the production as a pantomime. Pantomimes have their own qualities, aims, functions, and merits as one of

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<sup>106</sup> de Jongh condemned the production exactly for this interpretation: 'Watching the company on the authentic Elizabethan stage you might think *The Merchant of Venice* is no more than a romantic fairy-tale in which the rich heiress wins her man, while the money-lending Shylock loses everything he holds dear. But such a superficial concept is decades behind the theatrical times' (de Jongh 1998).

<sup>107</sup> Michael Billington condemned that practice saying that 'last Friday afternoon I heard a Jew being hissed at in south London. Not, I hasten to add, at a National Front rally but at a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* at Shakespeare's Globe. Having heard Orlando's brother, Olivier, prompt a similar reaction the previous evening in *As You Like It*, I began to wonder whether one effect of this new theatre is to morally simplify Shakespeare's plays and turn them into a form of Victorian melodrama' (Billington 1998). Patrick Marmion also complained that Olivier's production reduced 'the intellectual atmosphere to the level of an Arsenal/Tottenham football derby' (Marmion 1998). The audience's reaction was, however, encouraged earlier by Mark Rylance who emphasised in various interviews that the audience was supposed to behave as sixteenth century audiences did. In fact, Olivier's 1997 Globe production of *Henry V* organised the conflict between French and English in a similar way, encouraging rabidly anti-French play-acting in the audience as if it were both genuine and morally unproblematic. The American actors playing the French encouraged the negative reactions from the audience by their significant looks and pregnant pauses, and described their characters as 'villains' on the TV documentary that was made to mark the opening of the Globe Theatre (Channel 4, 1997). For an analysis of Olivier's *Henry V* see King 1999.



the longest living popular theatrical conventions in British theatre. The problem is that though Olivier claimed an 'Authentic Practice', his interpretation did not re-discover, but rather seriously reduced the complexities and the potentials of the text. Instead of an original re-interpretation of the play, Olivier re-staged *MofV* as the mixture of two well-known conventions. One of them considers *MofV* as a fairy-tale or folk tale as Harley Granville-Baker and John Middleton Murry did it in the 1930s<sup>108</sup>, while the other regards Shylock as a monster like Macklin's production.<sup>109</sup> Mixing these conventions and ironing out Shakespeare's ambiguities, Olivier turned his production into a simplified fairy-tale about humanity, based on supposedly shared, constant, and universal principles (i.e., good-bad), though appearing in historically researched forms (i.e., costumes, props, furniture, etc.). In the words of Michael Billington, 'I would argue that *The Merchant* is still [...] complex. It is the Globe style that simplifies it' (Billington 1998).

Decades before Olivier's production, Auden had already questioned the romantic interpretation of Belmont expressing distaste for the way in which Portia caricatures her foreign suitors (see Auden 1991 [1962], especially 63-64). Then Bill Overton pointed

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<sup>108</sup> In 1935, Harley Granville-Baker declared in the first paragraph of his preface that *MofV* is 'a fairy tale' (Granville-Baker 1991 [1935]: 3). For him, the Bassanio-Portia story is 'the story of the sleeping beauty and the prince in another kind; a legitimate and traditional outcome' (Granville-Baker 1991 [1935]: 7). Referring to Shylock's condemnation at the trial scene, Granville-Baker concluded his preface that 'the tragic interest is posted to oblivion [...] and] the play ends, pleasantly and with formality, as a fairy-tale should' (Granville-Baker 1991 [1935]: 34). Likewise, John Middleton Murry characterised *MofV* in 1936 as 'a true folk story', a popular entertainment in which Shylock plays 'the villain of a story well-known to the contemporary audience' (Murry 1991 [1936]: 46). He also argued that *MofV* is not 'a problem play; it is a fairy story' (Murry 1991 [1936]: 46).

<sup>109</sup> In *Shylock*, Gross argued that though 'very little is known about the early stage history of *The Merchant of Venice* [as] no details of early performances [...], nor have any comments on the play have survived' (Gross 1992: 89), it is often assumed that *MofV* was interpreted as a comedy in Shakespeare's time. That interpretation is probably based on the first printed title, *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice*, and strengthened by George Granville's successful 1701 adaptation, *The Jew of Venice*, in which Shylock was played by Thomas Doggett, the leading comic actor of the day, as 'a figure of fun' (Gross 1992: 92). Doggett's interpretation was changed by Macklin in 1741. As the beliefs about Jews changed due to Jewish assimilation in the nineteenth century, the interpretation of *MofV* and the presentation of Shylock changed again. In 1814, Edmund Kean (Drury Lane, 1814) in black beard and wig changed Shylock from a malignant fiend to a man of racial pride, plausibly resentful, and an avenger through force of circumstances. Marcready (Covent Garden, 1823) added touches of nobility of Shylock's harshness, while Henry Irving's interpretation (Lyceum Theatre, 1879) was intensely proud, gently menacing, the type of persecuted race. The 20th century has seen many versions: hysterical, extravagantly theatrical (Tree, His Majesty's Theatre, 1908), repulsively realistic (Maurice Moskovich, Royal Court, 1919), dignified and implacable (Ernest Milton, St James's Theatre, 1932) through performances by such players as John Gielgud, Donald Wolfitt and Michael Redgrave, to Laurence Olivier's prosperous private banker (see Gross 1992, and Trewin 1999: 66-67).



out that only by evading the disturbing elements in *MofV*, is it possible to see it as a pleasant and charming fairy-tale (see Overton 1991 [1987], especially 294-298). *MofV* disturbs its readers and audiences by evoking uncomfortable responses as there is no relationship without an edge, no jest without at least a tinge of hostility, and no virtue without self interest.<sup>110</sup> *MofV* is not about resolving the tensions and ambiguities created at the beginning, but rather – as Ros King has pointed out – Shakespeare constructs ‘correspondences between characters and situations, usually allowing opposing characters to express their conflicting desires with equal intensity. The result is dialectic [functioning] to allow the reader to engage actively in the construction of meaning’ (King 2000: 223).<sup>111</sup>

Focused on the struggle between ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’, Olivier replaced *MofV*’s difference by similarity, its remoteness by sameness, and its strangeness by familiarity. As Billington concluded, ‘we live, inescapably, in a post-Freudian, post-Holocaust world; you cannot turn the clock back and present *The Merchant* as a play untouched by history’ (Billington 1998). The unfortunate result was that Olivier only succeeded in strengthening the notion of the Globe Theatre as theme park, and threw away the potential for reinventing theatre offered by that theatre’s unique stage/audience relationship.<sup>112</sup>

#### *Translation vs. substitution*

Kennedy’s definition of cultural tourism was based on such divisions as the familiar and the exotic; the known and the alien; the home and the foreign. Now, it is time to reverse these seemingly obvious divisions. The tourist can only experience the already familiar, the already known, the home, when a mythical but familiar dream-world is realised as historical theme park. And, it is the tourist’s *temporary* condition in which the tourist

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<sup>110</sup> One of the best examples is the first encounter between Antonio and Shylock in I.iii., when the characters demonstrate their self-interest and produce valuable arguments to defend and strengthen their own opinion.

<sup>111</sup> That dialectic functions properly at the trial-scene for instance when Antonio, the Duke, Shylock and later Portia present their opinions, validate their claims, while the response given by the other characters validate their own opinions. See the analysis of the scene in detail in Moody 1991 [1964]: 79-86.

<sup>112</sup> For analyses of other, similar Globe productions see Potter 1999, Kennedy 1998, and King 1999 and 1996.

does not have to *translate*. The tourist as stranger in an insecure, fragmented, order-less and simulated everyday life seems to be today the *permanent* condition of human relations and human existence. Thus, all of us are tourists – strangers even in our home. This is not just because, as James Clifford argued in *Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* that ‘everyone’s on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel’ (Clifford 1997:2). It is also because even if one did not move, the world has certainly *moved in on* one. Thus, translation is not a provisional and temporary phase between cultures, texts, and worlds, but compulsory, necessary, and permanent. The condition of translation is a constant in-betweenness of cultures, texts, and worlds. Though translation is commonly thought of as direct substitution of language, it is, in fact, a creative process which may involve triangulation, as different cultures do not necessarily share the same concepts, views, and perspectives. Translation is, however, suspended when one is a tourist in a constructed cultural space whether Stratford-upon-Avon’s commercialisation of Shakespeare or Olivier’s pantomime at the Globe.<sup>113</sup>

Consequently, in theatre organised as historical theme park – be it in a city or in a theatre building, at home or abroad – translation interpreted as substitution revokes from the discovery of difference between the past and the present, the distance of the foreign, and the confrontation with the Other. That theatre stages the images of perfect harmony, nostalgia, imagined history, mythical past and unified present. In that theatre, safety is extended in (historical) time and (social) space not only to the near but into the distant past, recalling the illusion in the visitor that the world has always been the same pleasant place to live in. On the cultural market, these theatres can easily be sold to those (inter)national tourists and/or theatre-goers who are in pursuit of mythical dreams and nostalgia.<sup>114</sup>

### 1.5. Conclusion: conventional theatre and resistance

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<sup>113</sup> John Peter, for instance, urged the leaders of the Globe Theatre to invite ‘the foremost Shakespearean directors, Barton and Hall, Nunn and Hands, Thacker and Mendes, Warner and Noble, Donnellan and Alexander to work there’ (Peter 1998: 688). Billington also added to this urge that ‘what I’d love to see is a director of the calibre of Deborah Warner or Sam Mendes proving the Globe is capable of transcending moral melodrama’ (Billington 1998: 687).

<sup>114</sup> I return to the possible resistant functions of tourism, theme park, and the recreation of the past below, in Chapter 3, *Theatre of imagination: spectator, installation, and H.G.*



The shrinking number of people involved in theatre as both participants and spectators hardly provides evidence of its legitimacy. For some, the legitimization of theatre is connected to power relations, and the interests of certain social groups. From that perspective, theatre is maintained for ideological purposes: it receives legitimization through those ideological functions by which it serves the interests of the dominant social groups. For Henri Lefebvre, for instance, theatre is not only a concrete physical place, but also *a space of domination*. That space is organised and shaped by the dominant ideologies of society, made for purposes of power and control, while working in the interests of a dominant minority (see Lefebvre 1991: 49-52). Lefebvre's argument is highly relevant to theatres propagating the dominant ideologies of dictatorial regimes, for instance, since these regimes regard not only theatre but also all types of private and public places as spaces of domination. Lefebvre's view – with certain restrictions of course – seems also relevant to conventional theatres in contemporary Western democracies. According to that view, conventional theatre plays its role in the system of power and control. What this theatre is for is partly to offer the dominant views as entertainment and partly to construct idealised representations of the present and the past.

The representations offered by these productions – be they contemporary like Daldry's *Inspector* or historic like Olivier's *Merchant* – are based on pseudo-realism. Pseudo-realism originates in late nineteenth-century melodrama and well-made plays, and today, apart from theatre, it can be found in popular Hollywood films and television soap operas. In these films, soap operas, and theatrical performances, characterisations, physical surroundings, and narrative developments seem to be contemporary or historically 'authentic', but their arrangement in the fiction is not connected to a complex social, political, and ideological analysis and their assumptions are not embedded in a particular counter-hegemonic practice. Rather, they are based on predictable patterns, dubious principles, simple binary oppositions, and emotionally exaggerated conflicts of pure values and scheming villainy in a plot full of suspense. These films, soap operas, and theatrical performances put the emphasis on fast, implausible and spectacular action, larger-than-life and over-emotional heroes and villains, and usually end in restoring harmony and the illusion of a totally accessible and controllable 'reality'. As a result, conventional theatre produces illusory, dreamlike,

though seemingly authentic representations which fosters the illusion in spectators that the world can be known, controlled and authorised, because the murderer is caught, catastrophe is forestalled, conflicts are solved, lovers are married, and the (re)presented world is saved and settled peacefully for ever after.

Conventional theatre is based on the illusion of permanent *Order*, and at the same time, it idealises the given cultural, political and ideological hierarchy. Theatre functions to give amusement; to present (mostly male) heroes of culture; to standardise masculine values and heterosexuality; to fetishise youth and power; and to foster the illusion in spectators that safety, security, and stability can extend to the contemporary, changing world.<sup>115</sup> Conventional theatre is thus built on *re-assurance* concerning time spent in the theatre, and it fulfils its spectators' expectations with the illusion that a sense of security can be projected onto the outside world. That theatre, however, gives security only to those who are within the world represented on stage, while it ignores and makes non-existent Others.

Consequently, theatre is conventional when it can be characterised as 'a playground for the newly privileged, a quick stop-over site on the tourist and heritage map, an emporium in which the culturally curious can sample the latest short-lived lifestyles' (Kershaw 1999: 5). Kershaw is right in the sense that conventional theatre has become a marginal commodity in the capitalist cultural market, but its function is more complex. Within the multicultural, constantly changing, and simulated forms of everyday life, conventional theatre *seems* to have lost its vital engagement with the institutions of contemporary society, power relations and hierarchies. In fact, conventional theatre has given up only resistance and reflexivity. It serves and confirms implicitly and/or explicitly dominant ideologies: it offers representations of an imagined and idealised everyday life that suppress, silence, and erase the various different voices available in society.

Conventional theatre works according to the principles of inverted representation. It inverts the direction of mimetic representation starting initially from the 'imitated' (real) to 'imitation' (representation), while maintaining the claims of the initial model. The practice of inverted representation produces representations claiming

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<sup>115</sup> I reconsider the possible resistant functions of entertainment, parody, and laughter below, in Chapter 3,



resemblance to the real, and even embodying the real. Though that practice offers representations which – even in their best form – can only be fragments of the real, it places these fragments metonymically as if they were the real. That practice claims that the real is what that practice shows and represents, and confirms a version of the real as reality the dominant ideology expects, while distracting attention from the possible other versions. Even if spectators recognise the aim of inverted representation, it still reaffirms them psychologically and emotionally in the desired illusion that the world around them can be known, ordered, and controlled.

In this respect, conventional theatre is conceived in a way that is remarkably similar to the conventional practice of a Museum of Fine Arts. As Pierre Bourdieu pointed out,

everything in these civic temples in which bourgeois society deposits its most sacred possessions, that is, the relics inherited from a past which is not its own, in these holy places of art, in which the chosen few come to nurture a faith of virtuosi while conformists and bogus devotees come and perform a class ritual, old places or great historic homes to which the nineteenth century added imposing edifices, built often in the Greco-Roman style of civic sanctuaries, everything combines to indicate that the world of art is as contrary to the world of everyday life as the sacred is to the profane. The prohibition against touching the objects, the religious silence which is forced upon visitors, the puritan asceticism of the facilities, always scarce and uncomfortable, the almost systematic refusal of any instructions, the grandiose solemnity of the decoration and the decorum, colonnades, vast galleries, decorated ceilings, monumental staircases both outside and inside, everything seems done to remind people that the transition from the profane world to the sacred world presupposes, as Durkheim says, “a genuine metamorphosis”, a radical spiritual change, that the bringing together of the worlds “is always, in itself, a delicate operation which calls for precaution and a more or less complicated initiation”, that it is not even possible unless the profane lose their specific characteristics, unless they themselves become sacred to some extent and to some degree.

Bourdieu 1991: 286

Like Bourdieu’s museum, conventional theatre is presented as a civic temple (e.g., the portico of Haymarket Theatre, or Lyceum Theatre in London, or the 1908 building of the Hungarian National Theatre in Budapest) in which bourgeois society dramatises its

collective myths and memories, and displays its heroes, relics, and histories. In these civic temples, spectators are expected to leave the profane world outside the walls of the institution, and to consider the event inside as a ritual. At the same time, theatre requires its spectators to submit themselves to disciplinary initiation in order to become able to appreciate the sanctity of art.<sup>116</sup> In exchange, conventional theatre rewards its spectators by satisfying their assumed expectations and needs<sup>117</sup> with productions characterised as – in the words of John McGrath – ‘a distanced slice of life or a poeticised piece of fantasy’ (McGrath 1981: 29). As production and perception coincide, theatre keeps itself aloof from any challenge to the dominant ideology, and avoids direct interaction and confrontation between audience and performance. As a result, conventional theatre ‘has become a deadly business and the public is smelling it out’ (Brook 1968: 12).

It seems to be fair to claim that ideologies and practices of culture and the general modes of production and reception in society determine the disciplined spectators of contemporary theatre. It is also beyond dispute that the practice of conventional theatre attempts to utilise dominant social disciplines. The spectator’s perception in the theatrical event coincides with the social practice of the consumer, which – in the words of Michel de Certeau – ‘seems to constitute the maximal development of the passivity assumed to characterise the consumer, who is conceived of as a voyeur [...] in a show biz society’ (Certeau 1984: xxi). Certeau is not alone in using theatre as metaphor for everyday life. The practices of conventional theatre, with their treatment of its audience, the organisation of the performance and the entire theatrical event, foster the illusion that theatre mirrors exactly the happenings of society. As a result, conventional theatre represents society as well ordered, well-organised, and thoroughly disciplined, both on stage and in the auditorium. The model spectator is thus imagined as a consuming voyeur in a showbiz society. Therefore, conventional theatre is organised as an analogue medium in which there is no room for direct audience action,

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<sup>116</sup> In a Platform Talk, the British theatrical radical, Steven Berkoff, described these spectators as persons who are deprived of their rights of speaking, moving, etc. In exchange, said Berkoff, spectators are given the privilege that they can be there to sit in silence and stare at the ceremony on stage, in an act of devotion as they are expected as consuming ‘believer’ - to behave. Berkoff saw only two possibilities for the spectator to break the circle of the dominant practice – falling asleep or staying at home (see Berkoff, Platform Talk at the Royal National Theatre, London, 1999).

<sup>117</sup> The problem is that very often theatre people give their audience the treacle they think the audience want without asking them what they really would like to receive. For the spectators’ assumed

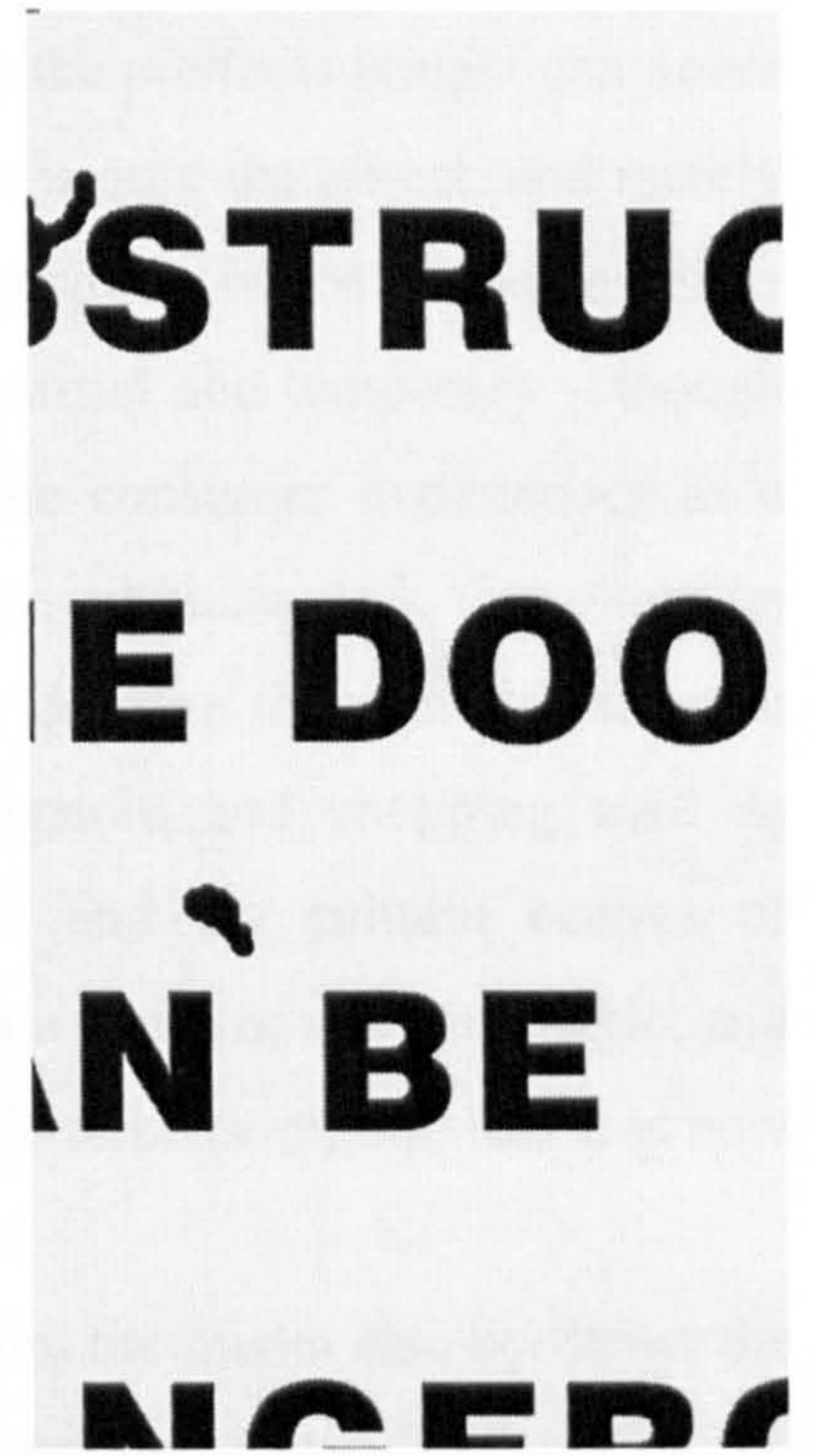


comment, and interruption. With its strict disciplinary approach, conventional theatre is not interested in producing Boal-type spect-actors. Rather, in that theatre, spectators considered merely as measurable quantities are silenced in order to make *assertions* possible, and dialogues nearly impossible.<sup>118</sup> As conventional theatre is restricted by its own working methods, institutional systems, poetic criteria, ideological functions, commercial aims and audience treatment, it cannot become a Barthesian methodological field (see Barthes 1977, especially 156-157), exercising criticism, providing alternatives, and resisting dominant ideologies of production and reception. Instead, conventional theatre produces performances as commodity-products, grounded in escapism and nostalgia that can be taken home by the disciplined spectator as souvenir. That is the practice, condemning participants to passivity, which forced Boal to create his invisible theatre where the various voices in society are partly *exposed to view*, and partly *brought into open debate*. As conventional theatre is not a conveyor of basic information about society, it is based on social norms indicating that the 'citizen of culture' should attend the theatre at least once a year. To be a 'citizen of culture' in this sense is to confirm social and cultural status, and to satisfy the needs for safety, entertainment, illusion, and nostalgia. As Aronson put it, 'attending the theatre and participating in its rituals confirms the spectator's place in that society or initiates the viewer into the secrets and legacy of culture' (Aronson 2000: 9). The changes in the social status and the ideological functions of theatre in general do not mean, however, that the elements of theatre as representation, dramatisation, and role-playing are not fundamental in everyday life. These changes do not mean either that theatre has absolutely lost its function for analysing social, political, or cultural problems and relations as Boal dreamed about. The following chapters aim partly to demonstrate how fundamental theatricality is in everyday life, and partly to show how resistance is still possible in theatricality and even in the theatre.

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expectations, see Robinson 1998.

<sup>118</sup> I reconsider the possible resistant functions of the spectator and spectating below, in Chapter 3, *Theatre as deconstruction: postmodern bricollage and 1003 Hearts*, and also in Chapter 3, *Theatre of imagination: spectator, installation, and H.G.*





### *2.1. Changes in contemporary everyday life and theatricality as mode of perception*

After the 1989 revolution, East European societies also found themselves in the phase of postindustrial society. The economy of postindustrial societies is based on commodification, globalisation and consumer culture, and organised by the needs of the international market. That economy produces objects that are not mere objects, but products, bought mostly not for their utility, but rather for the images, illusions, and desires the producers give them. Consumption is experienced as miracle, based on the promise of possible happiness. Happiness materialised in the products bought can never be fully achieved. What the consumer actually purchases is only the object, and merely the sign of happiness, temporarily materialised in the product, which sooner or later dissolves. In fact, consumption is driven by an always partial and temporary – though claiming as absolute – promise of happiness, which the consumer experiences as a magical circle, led from product to product without an ultimate end. Consumption commodifies not only everyday objects and consumers, desiring these products, but it extends its influence onto the realm of culture. Drugstore and shopping mall as ‘shopping and entertainment centre’ are the emblems and the cultural centres of consumer culture. These institutions keep their visitors in a world of miracle, magic, and myths. Advertising and the media present the power circle of consumption that it is now seen as one of the main organising forces of everyday life.

Apart from publicising the images of consumption, the media also construct the basic myths of consumer society.<sup>119</sup> The immediacy of presented events in and by the media and the use of technical devices (telephone, fax, satellite television, and the internet) led to the explosion of information and to the phenomenon called by Marshall McLuhan as ‘world village’ (see McLuhan 1964). The immediacy of global information has resulted in broken structures and fragmented traditions. At the same time, it has made the concept of fixed centre, stable references, and the idea of culturally and socially homogenous and unified (national) state impossible. These changes caused the realisation of multicultural social realities described as ‘creolised’ by James Clifford (see

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<sup>119</sup> Jean Baudrillard described these myths as the cargo, the catastrophe, the universality of the news

Clifford 1988). Parallel to these, the explosion of information, easy travelling of and access to various traditions, conventions, narratives, symbols, and myths, and the incredibility towards metanarratives has led to a world of multiple competing tensions, namely to Lyotard's 'condition of postmodernity' (see Lyotard 1984).<sup>120</sup> All these changes have led to the appearance of the image-based spectacular society – in Guy Debord's term –, in which theatricality has *exploded* onto the everyday (see Debord 1992). Before I demonstrate some of the basic tactics and strategies of theatricality as occasion for appearance, I shall investigate why theatricality as the mode of perception – which means not only the recognition of symbolic aspects rendered to certain events and behaviours, but also the recognition of a theatrical frame in and by which that symbolism can be constructed and perceived – has become one of the dominant perceptive strategies in the contemporary everyday life.

### *2.1.1. The 'bazaar of realities': rhetoric, manipulation, and theatricality*

Theatricality has become one of the dominant perceptive strategies in contemporary everyday life due to the changes in the concept of (forming) reality. Reality is often defined as 'what exists in the real world' (*Larousse* 1979: 1020). In his book, *Role Playing and Identity*, the American phenomenologist Bruce Wilshire pointed out that the concept of reality is often based on the view that 'reality is only what it is observable from a third-person point of view, that is, thoroughly objectifiable and measurable entities or events' (Wilshire 1982: 105). Supplemented with the principles of coherency and wholeness, the common concept of reality presumes that reality *as such* can be grasped, fixed, stabilised, and can be observed *objectively*. In 'a dynamic, expanding universe' described by Stephen Hawking as relative, changing, and possessing arbitrarily chosen coordinates (see Hawking 1988: 34-58), however, there is no absolute and eternally fixed centre anymore in which perspective is settled and from which time and space can be objectively measured, and the world can be ordered. Contrary to the illusion of objectivity, the situation is that each position is always temporary, often

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item, the sick society, and the service (see Baudrillard 1998: 25-36).

<sup>120</sup> For the analysis of postmodernity see Ihab Hassan 1987, Hutcheon 1988, Harvey 1989, Jencks 1991, Jameson 1991, and Bertens and Kokkema 1997.



arbitrary, and observers can be neither passive nor objective, because they frame and recognise the phenomenon observed in a particular form. The real is of course 'out there', but the utterances we form on the real are constructed, hence necessarily limited, and can be interpreted only within their temporary and relative co-ordinates and given space-time. If utterances on the real are temporary, fragmented, and relative, the above quoted definition of reality does not reflect 'the state of things', but rather it refers to a human desire which attempts to fix and control the flow of the world around us instead of facing the discomfort of multiple competing forces and tensions.

*'A real situation, the state of things' (Larousse 1979: 1020)*

The illusion of objectivity and the multiple competing utterances on the real draw the attention to other problems. If each utterance on the 'real' is temporary and relative, then can only the concept of 'anything goes' (see Feyerabend 2002) come? If not, how can a certain state of things still be considered as reality?

Analysing visual culture, Martin Jay pointed out in the concluding remarks of his article, *Scopic Regimes of Modernity*, that, instead of speaking about the visual hierarchy characterising the (pre-)modern, today 'it may therefore be more useful to acknowledge the plurality of scopic regimes now available to us' (Jay 1992: 190). Though Jay referred to the functions of scopic regimes in the (pre-)modern, he drew the attention to perspective. As visual metaphors ensnare every aspect and field of everyday life and thinking, perspective can be regarded metaphorically as one of the determining factors of being-in-life. In a dynamic, expanding universe, the plurality of perspectives and their possible though partial validity prevail, resulting in different opinions, different representations, and different observations for the construction and definition of reality. With the multiplicity of perspectives, representations, and observances on the real, realities themselves can also multiply.

In this sense, argued Connie Zweig argued that

postmodern thinkers suggest that cultures create structures. Our beliefs, in this view, are socially constructed – designed for the purpose of building reality and enabling a society to function. Such postmodern views could only emerge and be widely accepted in an era of globalisation when we can see, each night on CNN,

that there are as many realities as there are cultures or, perhaps more accurately, as many as there are people.

Zweig 1996: 145

Zweig described this changing condition as the vast 'bazaar of realities'. In that bazaar, the concept of reality based on 'thoroughly objectifiable and measurable entities or events' can only be seen as one of the versions among the many possible variations on the real. Reality is not inherited naturally and found painlessly, but rather it is culturally and socially constructed and painfully fabricated.<sup>121</sup> It does not mean, however, that the 'real out there' does not exist anymore. It does not mean either that we can decide that there is nothing 'out there'. Rather as Walter Truett Anderson formulated, 'it means understanding that all our stories about what's out there – all our scientific facts, our religious teachings, our society's beliefs, even our personal perceptions – are the products of a highly creative interaction between human minds and the cosmos. The cosmos may be found; but the ideas we form about it, and the things we say about it, are made' (Truett Anderson 1996: 8). From the stable concept of reality, there has been a transition to dynamic, temporary, competitive and relative realities, built on arbitrary, temporary, and fragmentary observations, representations, and perspectives. As we choose among the various perspectives and create various representations of the real 'out there', we construct our 'realities'. As mentioned before, these representations, however, cannot be identical with the real. It is not only because representations cannot bring to the present the complexity and multiplicity of the real, but also because 'not only factually, but also in principle we do not have direct access to the real' (Welsch 1998: 170). Hence, representations of the 'real' are always partial and fragmentary, and they always differ from each other especially as their perception is tied to subjects. The appearance of various parallel, even competing representations of the 'real', however, raises the problem of legitimation, manipulation, and authorization.

*'The essence or manifestation of something'* (Larousse 1979: 1020)

The relation between the various parallel and competing representations, their

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<sup>121</sup> On the social construction of reality, see Berger and Luckmann 1966.



authorisation, and their legitimation by a given community was one of the main concerns of Stanley Fish's book, *Is There a Text in This Class?* Investigating the authoritative power of the various interpretative communities, Fish took relativity *ad absurdum*, and argued that among the various representations – he called stories – ‘we tell one another, the “true” ones are merely more “popular”, more “prestigious” than others. What counts as reality is given by the story or stories which happen to be “standard”; non-standard ones are merely “non-authorized”’ (Fish 1980: 239). For Fish, an interpretative community authorises certain stories and then accepts them as ‘the best, the most fundamental, and the most authentic’ representations on the real ‘out there’. In exchange, these representations authorise and legitimate a community as community. The representations authorized as reality are accepted not by their absolute and exclusive truth-value or/and essential quality, but rather because they express most appropriately what the given community holds on the real ‘out there’. If Fish is right, then the formation of any representation on the real needs to employ the most persuasive ways, means, and practices to authorize a group of people as community.

Writing on representations and their authoritative power, Pierre Bourdieu emphasised that representations are very often based on the persuasive power of language. Bourdieu reminded us, however, that language should not be treated as an object of contemplation, but rather as an instrument of action and power. He pointed out that language is never innocent and natural as it always operates in certain discourses in which the speakers occupy different positions. Therefore, the verbal delivery of a story for instance is not simply a one-sided linguistic exchange between the speaker and the audience, but rather an event fertilised by relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between the speaker and the audience are actualised (see Bourdieu 1991, especially 37-41). The questions of who is speaking, to whom, in whose name, and who is the legitimate speaker, authorised to speak, reflect the negotiation for authority among the narratives and the speakers. The means, tactics, and strategies of persuasion involve not only language, but also visuality, proximity, and corporeality. These all influence the process of negotiation in which certain representations available on the real ‘out there’ are authorised. Since each representation (reality-fragment) is to be *presented*, presentation is thus based on the art of persuasion: rhetoric.

Instead of concentrating on construction, manner, delivery of speech, and verbal

expression, I would widen the concept of rhetoric. That widened concept of rhetoric involves not only language, but physical, mental, visual, proximal images, pictures, space-organisation, movements, and intertextual and intercultural references and allusions, because all of these can be utilised for the organisation and presentation of a representation. Hence, I use rhetoric as Kenneth Burke conceived the term. Burke argued that the classical definition of rhetoric referring to the art of making speeches can also be extended onto every aspect of everyday life. For him, rhetoric is thus ubiquitous and necessary, because ‘wherever there is ‘meaning’, there is ‘persuasion’” (Burke 1969: 43). In this sense, as Burke pointed out, the politics of rhetoric works consciously and/or unconsciously to manipulate entire groups throughout an era to accept their common reality (see Burke 1969: 22-23). That rhetoric forces and fosters social norms and knowledge through conscious and unconscious identification, and uses various tactics and strategies to manipulate an audience.

The contemporary politics of rhetoric is grounded on performativity<sup>122</sup> as the manipulator constantly and self-consciously chooses among and selects from fragmentary traditions, customs, styles, and information, often combining them with irony and parody. With the recognition and more or less conscious acceptance of the constructions of the various realities, now, the term ‘manipulation’ is not pejorative anymore, but it refers to the conscious stage-management of various representations. That is the result of the constant and immediate changes in the social, cultural, and political sphere, which force not only public figures, but also individuals in their private life to select constantly and choose consciously. That atmosphere characterises and produces the social formation of what Baz Kershaw called ‘performative society’. For him, ‘performative societies of the contemporary world are found where democracy and capitalism meet. In such societies, performance has gained a new kind of potency because multi-party democracy weaves ideological conflict visibly into the fabric of society. It follows that, especially in highly mediatised societies, the performative becomes a major element in the continuous negotiations of power and authority. So modern democracies may be described with some accuracy as performative democracies

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<sup>122</sup> For interpretations of performativity in linguistics, see Searle 1969, Austin 1975, in anthropology, see Schieffelin 1998, and for a general introduction to performativity in human sciences, see Carlson 1996: 13-78.



in order to indicate how fully they rely upon various types of performance for the maintenance of their political processes and social structures' (Kershaw 1999: 13).

In performative democracies, the basic rhetorical practices derive mostly but not exclusively from such performative genres as theatre and performance-art.<sup>123</sup> These genres are regarded as the fields of conscious manipulation. Their practices range from the conscious manipulation of the performers' speech, body, appearance, space, and time, to the manipulation of the relation between performers and performers, as well as performances and spectators. Using the various practices of theatre and performance-art in the constant negotiation for power, legitimisation, and authority, 'a certain state of things' is realised by these means, and then legitimised as reality by the consensus of the given community and/or political, economic, and/or military power of certain social groups.

As reality is subjected to legitimisation, legitimisation is based on individual and collective negotiations and decisions in performative societies. The authority of these decisions lasts only as long as most members of the given society submit themselves to the power of these decisions. More precisely, these decisions receive their power and authority, because the majority of the community believe them. As reality is constructed, it can also be conceived as the legitimised accumulation of the socially accepted and temporarily authorised representations of the real. As the contemporary world is characterised by a loss of belief in an objective world and incredulity towards metanarratives of legitimisation, the conceptual criteria defining 'true statement' and 'truth' are also subjected to constant negotiation.

In performative democracies, the accepted representations of reality are often technicised and mediatised until the so-called pseudo-reality develops, which replaces even the memory of the real. In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard argued that 'the generalized consumption of images, of facts, of information aims also to conjure away the real with the sign of the real' (Baudrillard 1998: 33). One of the most obvious means by which such removal works is the mass media: the electronic and the printed press. 'What characterizes consumer society is the universality of the news item in mass communication. All political, historical and cultural information is received in the same

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<sup>123</sup> For the history and theory of performance-art, see Carlson 1996, States 1996, Howell 1999, Szöke

– at once anodyne and miraculous – form of the news item. It is entirely actualized – i.e., dramatized in the spectacular mode – and entirely deactualized – i.e., distanced by the communication medium and reduced to signs. The news item is thus not one category among others, but the cardinal category of our magical thinking, of our mythology. [...] What mass communication gives us is not reality, but the dizzying whirl of reality [...]’ (Baudrillard 1998: 33-34). As a result, we enter the world of the pseudo-event, pseudo-history, and pseudo-culture in which the raw material of events are filtered, fragmented, dramatised and put together again through the industrial chain of production into a finished and spectacularly dramatised product reduced to signs. Therefore, though mass media presents representations on the real as closed, polished, and sealed theatrical performances, it claims that these representations are identifiable with the real. With the scale and the illusion of intimacy and immediacy of theatricality appearing in the mass media, conventional (dramatic) theatre, presenting unified ‘as if’ stories fixed in advance cannot compete. In conventional theatre, events always remain fictional, while on the stages of the media and everyday life, it seems as if life itself plays, or life itself is played out.

Though Baudrillard asserted above that we live in a pseudo-world, he still supposed that the real exist somewhere, however remote from that pseudo-world. In his *After the Orgy*, however, he described the contemporary world as a field where simulation has taken over the real, and where the fractal mode of dispersal has replaced even the mortal and final stadium of disappearance. In the fractal stadium, argues Baudrillard, ‘there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without reference to anything whatsoever, by virtue of pure contiguity. At the fractal stage, there is no longer any equivalence, whether natural or general. Properly speaking there is no law of value, merely a sort of *epidemic of value*, a sort of general metastasis of value, a haphazard proliferation and dispersal of value. Indeed, we should really no longer speak of “value” at all, for this kind of propagation or chain reaction makes all valuation impossible’ (Baudrillard 1993: 5). The fractal stadium challenges the possibility of an ordered and knowable world possessing a stable centre, since there is no longer a point of reference that could guarantee surely and finally the



connection between signifier and signified, copy and original, and representation and represented. Arbitrary-ness, Baudrillard's *simulacrum* (see Baudrillard 1983), and Derrida's *différance* (see Derrida 1991: 43-63) have taken over. That process destroys even the illusion of the real, and results in the constant construction of the changing realities in the contemporary present. Though the real 'out there' is in its complexity unrepresentable, the living present is the non-representable desire and inaccessible aim of representation. Representation is thus always a partial discovery, and a changing variation on, and a distortion of the real 'out there'. As there is no fixed centre, no definitive origin, no constant essence behind, the flow of appearances and representations becomes fundamental in the constant negotiation for power and authority – both on social and personal level. In the contemporary mediatised and dramatised world, theatre and performance-art offer their techniques, tactics, means and strategies for these representations. That's the moment – or stadium in Baudrillard's term – when theatricality as occasion for appearances – consciously using performative means for manipulation and legitimisation – represents and negates what can be acceptable for certain individuals, groups, and communities as reality.

### ***2.1.2. Visual culture and visual perception***

As reality is not given, neutral, and eternal in the bazaar of realities, but rather fragmented, arbitrary, and relative, the emphasis falls upon the conscious construction of representations. When reality is constructed, rhetoric necessarily appears. Rhetoric gives opportunity for its user(s) to employ the means, tactics and strategies derived from theatre and performance-art. Performative society forces its citizens to make a series of performed occasions in their everyday life. In postindustrial societies based on fragments of broken structures, and temporarily connected customs and traditions, everyday life is performed by constant improvisation, inventing newer and newer fragmented structures and representations. Now, I shall concentrate on another distinctive feature of postindustrial societies, that is, the appearance of visual culture. First, I shall outline the transition from a language/text-based culture to visual culture, and then I shall sample the consequences of this change in terms of everyday life. Finally, I shall take into consideration how visual production and perception contribute

to the theatricalisation of everyday life.

### *Textuality – visuality*

The cultural historian Michel de Certeau asserted in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, that

from TV to newspapers, from advertising to all sorts of mercantile epiphanies, our society is characterized by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or to be shown and transmuting communication into visual journey. It is a sort of epic of the eye and of the impulse to read.

Certeau 1984: xxi

Here, Certeau recognised very precisely the growth of vision in everyday life. The problem of Certeau's assertion is, however, that he still situated that phenomenon within the conventional Western interpretation of the visual. This interpretation was described by Nicholas Mirzoeff as the one which 'has consistently privileged the spoken word as the highest form of intellectual practice and seen visual representations as second-rate illustrations of ideas' (Mirzoeff 1998: 5). The conventional concept has rendered Western civilisation meaningful within the lingual/textual paradigm. In that paradigm, speech is reserved as epitome of meaning; text as its epistemological paradigm, and reading as its omnipotent method for gaining meaning. Locating visuality within the lingual/textual-paradigm, Certeau not only proposed the notion of the world as text, but also assumed that reading is the omnipotent process with which one can acquire meaning. That is why, for him, the visual journey of 'the epic of the eye' ended in reading.

Analysing contemporary visuality, Chris Jenks pointed out, however, that the conventional interpretation of the visual is contradictory. Contradictory, because though visual representations are seen as second-rate illustrations of ideas, 'the way that we think about the way that we think in Western culture is guided by a visual paradigm' (see Jenks 1995: 1-6). Based on Jenks' observation, it is possible to argue that the contemporary culture might cast an entirely new role onto visuality: a role in which visuality might become an organising force with its own merits, developing a visual



paradigm through which the contemporary image-based world might be grasped.

One of the basic problems of the lingual/textual paradigm is, as David George argued, that it conceives the world as text creating ‘the assumption that it is authored – and, therefore, authorized, purposeful, meaningful’ (George 1989: 74). The application of that assumption onto a multi-functional, inter-cultural, incomprehensible and unauthorized world held together by multiple competing tensions simplifies its complexities and closes it into structures to which it is not suitable. Due to its incomprehensible and unauthorized narratives, fragmentary conventions, and broken structures, the contemporary world might be better grasped by a visual paradigm based on visual perception. I use visual perception in a sense that John Berger pointed out in his book, *Ways of Seeing*. He argued that ‘looking is an act of choice. We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves’ (Berger 1972: 8-9). In this sense, visual perception is an act of choice, the discovery of the relations between objects and subjects, and asserts a perceptual framework different from the one used in the lingual/textual paradigm. According to Scott Lash, ‘images unlike language are based upon perceptual memories which draw on the unconscious, which is not structured like language with systematic rules. Images signify iconically that is through resemblances’ (Lash in Featherstone 1991: 69-70). If Lash is right, then I can argue that it changes how meaning is circulated and interpreted in a world, defined by image-based visual frameworks, since visual perception plays a major role in contemporary thinking. These visual frameworks signify iconically, are constructed by random associations, and are based on the plurality of the various verbal, textual, proximal, spatial, and visual practices. As the ‘cancerous growth’ of visuality contests the notion of the world-as-text and reading, thus Certeau’s ‘epic of the eye’ should rather go through the sensory process of seeing and conclude in visual perception.

The notion of visual perception, however, can also be problematic when it conjures up the notion of world-as-picture. When the world is imagined as picture, its connotations again fix the constantly changing world, frame it as a static and disembodied image, and often render it onto a flat two-dimensional physical surface. When the picture like the page is considered as a concrete, fixed, framed, and composed entity, then it is the picture that shows and hides, and at the same time allows one to see and not to see. Apart from the fact that the notion of world-as-picture reduces vision and

the world experienced, it is 'no longer adequate to analyse this changed and changing situation. The extraordinary proliferation of images cannot cohere into one single picture for the contemplation of the intellectual' (Mirzoeff 1998: 8).

Apart from the notion of the world-as-picture, Certeau's notion of the 'the epic of the eye' is also problematic. Certeau referred to the singular eye, the Cyclopean eye that for Martin Jay, was conceived in 'the manner of a lone eye looking through a peephole at the scene in front of it. Such an eye was, moreover, understood to be static, unblinking, and fixated, rather than dynamic, moving with what later scientists would call 'saccadic' jumps from one focal point to another' (Jay 1998: 68). From this singular centre point, the world is usually organised by the vertical and horizontal hierarchy of perspective. In order to centre vision on the single eye of the beholder, among others, the dominant convention of perspective was introduced in the European art of the early Renaissance. As Berger pointed out, the dominant convention of perspective 'makes the single eye of the centre of the visible world. Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity. The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God' (Berger 1972: 16). Perspective vision was thus fixed from the ideal point of view of the beholder. Perspective vision fixes the notion of the world-as-picture as it conceives an unmoveable, perceivable world in front of which an innocent, objective eye is deployed by an (un)situated viewer as the centre of the universe.

Though even Renaissance artists like Dürer and Caravaggio, and later painters like Bosch or Blake for instance, often incorporated multiple points of view in their paintings, the untenable position of the notion of the human centred, omnipotent and fixed perspective was evidently demonstrated by the invention of the camera in the late nineteenth century. The camera revealed visually that 'what you saw was relative to your position in time and space. It was no longer possible to imagine everything converging on the human eye as on the vanishing point of infinity' (Berger 1972: 18). Therefore, Certeau's notion of 'the epic of the [singular] eye' is to be replaced with the vision of the binocular eyes. The latter is dynamic, moving with saccadic jumps, and situated in various shattered perspectives at the same time; as well as located within the



matrix of given (historical) time and (social) space.<sup>124</sup>

Consequently, I would argue that the ‘cancerous growth of vision’ creates a new visual paradigm. In visual paradigm, the visual does not simply replace the verbal/textual model, but it contributes to the way meaning is dispersed verbally, textually, proximally, spatially, and visually. That dispersion cannot be arranged from a single and fixed perspective, as an established and settled picture in which the elements logically and naturally coincide with each other. That vision is constructed by shattered memories and moving views, readings and passed-by images, chaotic oral and textual fragments and their influence on and connection with each other. As Irit Rogoff argued in her analysis of visual culture that ‘in the arena of visual culture the scrap of an image connects with a sequence of a film and with the corner of a billboard or the window display of a shop we have passed by, to produce a new narrative formed out of both our experienced journey and our unconscious. Images do not stay within discrete disciplinary fields such as ‘documentary film’ or ‘Renaissance painting’, since neither the eye nor the psyche operates along or recognizes such divisions. Instead they provide the opportunity for a mode of new cultural writing existing at the intersections of both objectivities and subjectivities’ (Rogoff 1998: 16). Visual culture gives opportunity not only for *rewriting*, but also for the *revision* of the everyday. The forms of revision can be conceived – like patchwork – as multi-functional and trans-formational, often simulated, decentred, distorted, fragmented, accidental and multiple three-dimensional visual frameworks to which the viewer’s binocular eyes attach the fourth dimension of time. These changing revisions are not exclusively visual, but also verbal, textual, kinetic and spatial. In the binocular vision of the patchwork, the visible and its viewer can be found together. The former is fragmented, partial, open-ended, simulated, mediated, and constantly (re)focused. The latter is on the move all the time, particular and selective with jumps and blinks; and one’s perception is defined by learned, inherited and invented scopic regimes. Therefore, the vision of the everyday is led by visual perception, seen by binocular eyes, and realised by performative manoeuvres.

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<sup>124</sup> Here, I should also deal with the problematic notion of the integrated and centred identity in postmodern psychology (see Jacques Lacan, Robert Jay Lifton, Kenneth Gergen, and others), and its consequences in visual perception. I deal with that notion below, in Chapter 2, 2.2.1. *Constructing reality 1: (re)interpretation of identity and body in popular magazines*.

## *Visuality and theatricality*

Contemporary cultural critics argue that we can 'now see the collapse of reality in everyday life from the mass visual media' (Mirzoeff 1998: 8-9). That collapse is not exclusively connected to mass-media, though it has played a significant role in it, but it is based on the collapse of the idea of the single, fixed perspective; the destruction of the unifying and guaranteeing centre; the loss of belief in an objective world; and an incredulity towards metanarratives of legitimisation. What can be clearly *seen* on the stages of the contemporary world is nothing else than the visual constructions and representations of the various simultaneous and multiple realities.

In these highly spectacular and dramatised representations, appearance and visual dimensions get most of the attention. What is happening is the conscious impression management and aesthetization of these visible representations in the name of persuasion. It is achieved by the improvisation of various, distinctive lifestyles, and impressive images. The production and perception of these visual representations receive their basic techniques and strategies from theatre as the only medium in which verbal, textual, visual, proximal, and spatial elements are interwoven in the here-and-now. Consequently, the world seen as representation is arranged by visual production, perceived by visual perception, and realised by the conscious application of theatrical means.

### *2.1.3. Aestheticisation of everyday life*

In June 1998, the British television *Channel 4* launched a new series, *The Design Avengers*, in which everyday objects were placed under investigation. Before the actual start of the series, the *Modern Lifestyle Magazine* asked Paul Thompson, the director of Design Museum, London, and Marcus Field, the editor of the magazine *Blueprint*, to sample some of those everyday objects that should be looked at. Thompson said that

Ironing boards definitely need looking at: they're too heavy, they're ugly, and they inevitably trap your fingers or fall on your shins when you fold them up. We need less hazardous mechanism in a more lightweight material! And something



has to be done about the *aesthetics*.

Thompson 1998 – emphasis ZI

Field came out with the following:

My household *bête noire* is the kitchen bin. I've yet to find one that accommodates the detritus of modern life, and lets you get the bag without ripping it and spewing rubbish everywhere. Someone should *design* a bin that disposes of rubbish in a new and ingenious way. I'd be the first customer.

Field 1998 – emphasis ZI

Two key terms of contemporary consumer culture can be found in Thompson's and Field's opinions: aesthetics and design. These terms are connected in contemporary thinking, as everyday objects are not merely practical and functional objects, but products, which are designed with aesthetic standards. The design of everyday objects based on aesthetic standards is part of a process, called by sociologists and cultural theorists as the aestheticisation of everyday life. While previously I argued that theatricality is necessary and needs visual presentation, here I shall assert that theatricality is executed with aesthetic standards.

### *The tendency of aestheticisation*

The American cultural theorist, Mike Featherstone argued in his extremely well-written book, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, that consumer culture 'is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption' (Featherstone 1991: 13). In the accumulation of material culture, the dominance of exchange-value of the objects on sale has managed to obliterate even the memory of their initial use-value. The objects have become products that now take on secondary values. These secondary values are connected to desires, beauty, fulfilment, communality, scientific progress, good life, happiness, and other desired cultural associations and illusions. These connections are organised by the manufacturer, displayed in the visible domain of the shop-window, and rendered under the aegis of the

brand name, thus arranging the fragmented and independent images and illusions into a coherent and collective vision. The consumer is caught up in the web of seduction, expressed by the desires and illusions of the brand name, and led by these desires and illusions to newer and newer products. While consumers buy, their satisfaction is derived from products fertilised by 'the dreams and desires which become celebrated in consumer cultural imagery and particular sites of consumption which variously generate direct bodily excitement and aesthetic pleasures' (Featherstone 1991: 13). The physical excitement and mental satisfaction, gained through the shopping experience, is emphasised in the most spectacular mode by advertising. In consequence of advertising, the overproduction of secondary-values, the reproduction of various images and simulated experiences are connected to the aestheticisation of reality. In that reality, consumers become fascinated by the endless flow of bizarre juxtapositions, which takes them beyond the sense of stability. In aestheticised reality, the boundary between everyday life and art seems to be transparent, the distinction between high and popular art seems to be erased as a general stylistic promiscuity and a playful mixing of codes are effectively employed. In aestheticised reality, instrumental behaviours are thus conceived as performed, and public places are transformed into public stages for performance where individuals and social groups can exhibit their own distinctive lifestyles, play out their competing voices, and realise their possible dialogues.

For Featherstone, it is possible to speak on the process of aestheticisation in everyday life at least in three senses:

Firstly, we can refer to those artistic subcultures, which [...] sought to efface the boundary between art and everyday life. [...] Secondly, the aesthetization of everyday life can refer to the project of turning life into a work of art. [...] The third sense [...] refers to the rapid flow of signs and images, which saturate the fabric of everyday life in contemporary society.

Featherstone 1991: 66-67

In the first sense of the term, the frame defined by Featherstone derives from art, and it refers to the movements of historical avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, and postmodern art. In these movements, a notion of double coding can be found as, on the one hand, there is a direct challenge against the work of art, based on the desire to destroy the aura of art,



to disassemble its sacred halo and challenge its usual location in the museum, at the gallery and the academy. That notion consciously plays on the recognition that art is not natural and obvious, but rather it depends on consensus. In that sense, art cannot be located in artistic camps, outside the realm of everyday life, but rather it is the question of what is framed and legitimised as art within the matrix of social production. On the other, there is an assumption – the consequence and the end-goal of the previous notion – that art can be (seen) everywhere. That assumption brings the high status of art down into the realm of common objects and the actions of everyday life, while it maintains the possibility that these common objects and actions can also be regarded as art.

In the second sense, Featherstone connected the aestheticization of everyday life to artists and intellectuals of the early twentieth century Bloomsbury Group and dandyism. Dandyism is especially instructive in this respect – wrote Featherstone – as it ‘stressed the quest for special superiority through the construction of an uncompromising exemplary lifestyle in which an aristocracy of spirit manifested itself in a contempt for the masses and heroic concern with the achievement of originality and superiority in dress, demeanour, personal habits and even furnishings’ (Featherstone 1991: 67). Dandyism was built on the concept of an original and organised lifestyle based on aesthetic principles in which the personal construction, the conscious enactment, and public management of personality was framed and recognised as a piece of art. The dandies of the early twentieth century could thus construct their life as actors putting together their characters’ stage life in the theatre – partly lived through, partly consciously controlled – to develop their own distinct personality and lifestyle. In spite of the fact that most of the dandies affected to despise consumer culture, the theatrical notion of dandyism can be regarded as the early model of distinctive lifestyles in contemporary consumer culture, though nowadays aristocratic spirit seems less important than originality, enactment, and public management.

In the third sense of the term, Featherstone redefined the increasing dominance of the secondary values attached to the products, and argued that this increasing dominance had led to ‘the centrality of commercial manipulation of images through advertising, the media and the displays, performances and spectacles of the urbanized fabric of daily life, [which] entails a constant reworking of desires through images’ (Featherstone 1991: 67-68). All that brings itself the constant reworking of desires that

can be achieved by the constant reconstruction and reproduction of everyday objects, images, styles, and behavioural stereotypes according to aesthetic standards. As secondary values are attached to anything from dress, demeanour, personal habits to furnishings etc., we create expressions and seek for their meaning in the everyday as we do in art and the theatre. Ian Watson pointed out for instance that ‘the reception and reading of daily-life behaviour is not unlike the way in which audiences read the action of characters in the theatre. [...] We assign a simultaneous double order to behaviour, the first as instrumental action, the second as expression’ (Watson 1998: 212). As a result, the common objects and actions of everyday life are transformed into expressions full of potential meanings waiting for interpretations.

All the three senses of everyday aestheticisation described by Featherstone can be found in Thompson’s and Field’s above quoted opinions. Both opinions are grounded in the first and second senses of the term. For them, both ironing board and kitchen bin should become aesthetic/artistic objects: they are not only *made* but *designed* as artefacts with distinctive aesthetical style. That advances the third sense of the term that turns an object of everyday life into a piece of art. Therefore, the customers’ choice between the various aesthetically designed objects reflects and expresses not only their personal style, but also a trend to which they belong or tend to belong. Through the conscious choices between the various products available, costumers can aestheticise their own everyday life. Choice is fundamentally performative. When choice, realised by the decisions among various distinctive lifestyles available, is to express taste and ideology, than it is saturated by all the potentials of expressions. Hence it is especially performative. The consumer’s choice is the possible consequence of the third sense of aestheticisation: the customer purchases not only a practical and functional object, but also desires and images rendered to the product by its contextualisation. Turning back onto Thompson’s example, that means that though ironing is – probably – rock bottom in the street cred stakes, an ironing board – in a beautiful curvy-linear form for instance – even if it does not make ironing desirable, can serve as the materialisation and temporary fulfillment of conscious and unconscious desires, aims, illusions and even physical excitement. In general, the aestheticisation of the everyday has led to the conscious arrangement and management of the customers’ everyday life as image, as lifestyle.



### *The arrangement of aestheticisation: lifestyle*

Aestheticisation has various consequences in the field of everyday life. As mentioned before, the proliferation of images and signs leads to a loss of stability in which dream-images and desired but never fulfilled illusions finally evaporate the real. The distinction between image and the real seems to disappear and everyday life becomes the simulated world of postmodern culture. In *Simulations*, Baudrillard called that reality 'hyper-reality' in which the real and the imaginary are confused and aesthetic fascination is everywhere so that 'a kind of non-intentional parody hovers over everything, of technical simulating, of indefinable fame to which is attached an aesthetic pleasure' (Baudrillard 1983: 151). Hence, art ceases to be a separate enclaved entity, and it enters again into the everyday, and also into the mechanisms of economic production and reproduction. As a result, economic products can fall by this token under the sign of art and become aesthetic. The differentiation between the real and art is highly problematic and that moves us into hyper-reality in which the secret discovered by the surrealists becomes more widespread and generalised.

Parallel to the proliferation of images and the emergence of hyper-reality, another distinctive feature comes with the aestheticisation of postindustrial consumer culture: the appearance of lifestyle as one of the central organising forces of everyday life. The concept of postmodern lifestyle, deriving from dandyism, is attached to individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness. Your body, clothes, speech, leisure, pastime, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holidays, and your entire life are regarded as indicators of your individual taste and sense of style. For the individual, lifestyle is not simply inherited through convention, but rather it is adopted reflexively and consciously constructed through performative choices and decisions. For Featherstone, the new heroes of consumer culture

make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle. The modern individual within consumer culture is made conscious that he speaks not only with his clothes, but also with his home, furnishing, decoration, car and other activities, which are to be read and classified in terms of the presence and

absence of taste. The preoccupation with customizing a lifestyle and a stylistic self-consciousness are not just to be found among the young and the affluent; consumer culture publicly suggests that we all have room for self-improvement and self-expression whatever our age or class-origins.

Featherstone 1991: 86

The new heroes consciously employ performative practices, derived from theatre and performance-art to organise and stage their distinctive choices as (life)style. Due to the aestheticisation of everyday life, symbolic values are attached to anything and they can be found everywhere. That introduces conscious decision into the individual's actions and the choice among the various possibilities available. Aestheticisation transforms private and public spaces (flat, city, workplace for instance) into sets of expressions in and by which individual's or community's distinctive lifestyles can be visually staged and performed. Due to their symbolic values, cloth, body, face, and place become quotations drawn from the other, imaginary side of life: from fashion, cinema, theatre, advertising, and the infinite suggestibility of urban iconography. Hence, contemporary individuals construct themselves as hyper-reality through creating self-representations based on quotations. Contemporary consumer culture is thus regarded as dominated by the 'as if'. That is the 'as if' which is consciously employed by theatre. Though the creation and maintenance of a distinctive lifestyle cannot be available for anyone in equal measure, contemporary culture renders lifestyle-project as example to everyone. Consequently, though earlier cultures also exercised hegemony through visual spectacular means, contemporary consumer culture uses theatricality extensively to achieve its proposed and proclaimed aim: to place individuals' life as representation on display for showing and being seen.

#### ***2.1.4. Conclusion: real, representation, aesthetics, and theatricality***

The plurality of perspectives, the collapse of the unifying and guaranteeing centre, the loss of belief in an objective world, and the incredulity towards metanarratives of legitimisation, utilising the immediacy of technical changes, all result in the emergence of simultaneous and multiple hyper-realities. In these realities, presentation and appearance stand at the centre of attention. What is happening today in the world is the



conscious management of impressions based on aesthetic principles of the visible representations for persuasion. Rhetoric realises distinctive and impressive lifestyles, images and through them, it creates visual reproductions of reality. Visual reproduction is conceived as multi-formational, often simulated, decentred, distorted, fragmented, and accidental, and organised by multiple three-dimensional visual frameworks. In these visual frameworks, information is dispersed verbally, textually, visually, proximally, and spatially, and performed by visible performative means. That is the very situation in which the means, practices and strategies of theatre can be utilised. All that has led to the appearance of the theatricalised, spectacular and performative mass society in which representation is unavoidable, even compulsory.

With the appearance of the image-based spectacular society, theatricality is constantly present in the everyday. Therefore, theatricality is not only a possibility among others, but the one which has moved and still keeps the contemporary postindustrial world economy moving. Theatricality becomes one of the fundamental strategies in the private and public spheres of the contemporary postindustrial mass society since everyday life appears basically as its own representation in the various cultural performances. Theatricality is not fundamental because everyone goes to the theatre each day, but because it provides modes and occasions through which reality – both social and individual – can be organised and displayed. The postindustrial world needs these modes and occasions in never seen measure, because reality needs constant construction which can be realised by the endless visual appearances and aestheticised manifestations of the various competing voices and tensions.

## ***2.2. Changes in contemporary everyday life and theatricality as occasion for appearance: three case studies***

Theatricality as mode of perception has become one of the dominant perceptive strategies of everyday life due to the appearance of multiple realities, visual culture and aestheticisation. Here, I shall deal with three special cases of theatricality as occasion for appearance. I shall deal with occasions where everyday behaviours and/or modes of expressions can appear, where representations of the real can be visually constructed and delivered by aesthetic standards, and where social reality can be manifested, interpreted and legitimated, as well as changed. Before enumerating three special cases of theatricality, I shall organise a frame through which at least some aspects of such diverse actions – as the reinterpretation of identity and body, a Royal Wedding ceremony, and a public protest – can be recognised and interpreted. That frame focusing theatricality onto certain tactics and practices of dominance and resistance can be found in Richard Schechner's concept of direct theatre.

The analysis of dominant and resistant practices of theatricality is central in Richard Schechner's article, 'Invasion Friendly and Unfriendly: The Dramaturgy of Direct Theatre'. Schechner argued that by the 1960s festivals, carnivals, protests, rituals 'constituted a distinct liminoid/celebratory/political/theatrical genre with its own dramaturgy, mise-en-scène, role enactments, audience participation, and reception' (Schechner 1992: 90). Schechner called that distinct liminoid/celebratory/political/theatrical genre direct theatre. In contrast to the aesthetic limit of theatre, Schechner pointed out that direct theatre means a lot more as it takes place on the streets with ritualised actions, and intends to produce real effects by means of symbolic cases. In direct theatre, argued Schechner,

large public spaces are transformed into theatres where collective reflexivity is performed, fecund and spectacular excesses displayed. Parades, mass gatherings, street theater, sex, and partying – everything is exaggerated, ritualized, done for show. Masquerading encourages experimenting with behaviour and identity slippage. Rulers or ruling ideas are either exalted, [...] or overthrown.

Schechner 1992: 103



Schechner differentiated between official and unofficial direct theatre. The former is usually produced by the authorities exploiting the practices of 'bread and circuses'. In official direct theatre, actions are produced to demonstrate the power of the authorities, while fun is staged for audiences of ordinary people. Leaders of officialdom are in the centre, and actions serve to maintain hegemony, and to reassure the positions of the authorities in the hierarchy. As the authorities govern the means and strategies of reality-construction, they control these public celebrations, providing only scripted fun within official frames. The scope of the official direct theatre is quite wide as it can include the 'voluntary' May 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations in the ex-socialist countries of Eastern Europe, as well as the various royal/national/state/local celebrations in Western democracies. Even within the strongest dictatorships, however, there can be voices and reality-constructions, however marginal, which are often recognised by the authorities as a danger towards the *status quo*. Dictatorial power, however, often organises its own resistance partly to keep the real alternatives under its own control; partly to legitimate its own oppressive mechanism; and partly to demonstrate its own openness by incorporating certain elements of the alternative realities into its own concept of reality.

For Schechner, unofficial direct theatre is often produced against official power by improvising its own 'tactics' (Certeau) or rewriting the elements offered by dominant ideology. In unofficial direct theatre, participants often get along in a network of already established forces and representations, and create something of their own out of the dominant concept of reality. When – wrote Schechner – 'the power to produce public fun passes into the hands of ordinary people, events take an unpredictable theatrical turn, [...] rewriting ritual, dissolving the restrictive frames' (Schechner 1992: 103). Unofficial direct theatre thus criticises the accepted concepts of reality, and at the same time, it offers such realities, which can be answered by strict revenge by the authorities or result in change in the status quo.

As both official and unofficial direct theatres are concerned with the construction of reality – dominant or resistant –, they are explicitly or implicitly political, even if there are forms of direct theatre in which the political content seems to be drained off. Schechner demonstrated the implicit political content of direct theatre in the analysis of the Daytona Beach Spring Break Weekend. In that festival, American university students come together annually 'to be happy and feel good' without any explicit

political aims. The ideology of consumer culture however underlines these events particularly. That ideology is present in the advertisements of the various multinational companies (Pontiac, Diet Pepsi, Coors Light, etc.) sponsoring the events. Therefore, events like the Spring Break festival are political in the sense that they implicitly strengthen representations offered by dominant ideology. In contrast to that, the political content of the protests against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, or against the Chinese government in 1989, or the Revolutionary Celebrations in the ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe, around 1989 was expressed explicitly, bearing alternative, even resistant concepts on the possible construction of reality.

As the construction and maintenance of the real is at stake, direct theatre is consciously produced for the persuasion of a given audience/community. That audience is much wider than for the type of theatre produced in designated theatre buildings as it consists of the participants themselves, as well as journalists, and high-level officials in their offices or secret places. Direct theatre is not only audience-aware, but media conscious as well, as the media provides further stages to construct reality for audiences that are/were not present at the actual event. The connection between the media and direct theatre is mutual, as direct theatre offers raw material that the media later selects, edits, and reproduces on a national or global scale. According to its political, social and ideological impact, media focuses mostly on the highly theatrical bits of direct theatre. 'For political direct theatre, participants and viewers alike are told what's going on, how to relate to it, and what the future holds. The ultimate layers are hidden from view, taking place in editing rooms and corporate or government offices' (Schechner 1992: 105). Though media reports give the impression that they are immediate, multivocal, and factual, they are often the opposite as immediacy is re-staged, multivocality of the event is strictly reduced, and factuality is organised in the broadcast according to implicit/explicit political concerns, set by – dominant or alternative – ideology. Therefore, the question of who controls and influences the media is central for the construction, maintenance, or even modification and change of hegemony and the status quo. Using Schechner's concept of direct theatre, focused on issues of dominance and resistance, I shall analyse some of the tactics and strategies of theatricality as occasion in the political direct theatre of the British Royal Wedding ceremony of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones (19 June, 1999) and the Anti-capitalist Riot, *June 18* (18 June, 1999).



My analysis shall deal with the kind of reality represented by these events, and how the rhetoric of persuasion was employed, and how hegemony was challenged and reassured.

Schechner's concept of direct theatre makes it possible to analyse events realised in public and on public places. His concept, however, leaves unnoticed those theatrical events that take place in private, sometimes even invisibly, inside an individual, and manifested only in the individual's spontaneous philosophy. These theatrical events are as integral parts of the construction and maintenance of reality as the public ones. The sciences of human behaviour and psyche have demonstrated the various applications of the means, tactics, and strategies of theatre as metaphor and analytical tool from role-theory, psychodrama, behaviour rehearsals, psychotherapy to identity politics and psychoanalysis. In these approaches, the human psyche and body are considered as virtual space and real place in and on which virtual/liminoid/political/theatrical behaviours and actions can take place consciously, producing virtual/real effects in the individual's life. Through these virtual/real behaviours and actions, individuals can reflect not only the 'outside' world, but they can also create themselves by experimenting with the realisation of various identity-constructions. In these experiments, dominant ideas, fashions, trends, conventions, inherited qualities, with implicit or explicit political messages, suggested by or rather realised against officialdom, can all be utilised or challenged. All these experiments can be realised for various audiences, and often influenced by and sometimes even done for the media. Consequently, the scope of Schechner's direct theatre can be extended to the investigation of the human psyche and body. In the first part of the chapter, while I take into consideration some of the performative tactics and strategies of the construction of identity- and body-representations, I distinguish between *indirect* and *out-direct theatre*. The former is concerned with the changes in the concept of identity introduced by postmodernity. The latter is concerned with the expectations and suppositions referring to the changed function of the body in the individuals' self-representation, while investigating the tactics and practices that are displayed on and performed by a human body. As a result, I shall investigate the connection between the in-direct theatre of identity construction and the out-direct theatre implied on and executed by a human body. What I am interested in here is how rhetoric is employed, how hegemonic ideas of self-representation are employed and/or challenged, and how identity and body can be

constructed.

### *2.2.1. Constructing reality 1: (re)interpretation of identity and body in popular magazines*

Erving Goffman wrote in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* that ‘when a performer guides his private activity in accordance with incorporated moral standards, he may associate these standards with a reference group of some kind, thus creating a non-present audience for his activity’ (Goffman 1959: 71). In this sense, Goffman’s three-parties theatrical model (actor-character-spectator) merges into one, with the result that any human activity can happen in the virtual presence of an imagined spectator.<sup>125</sup> In his theory of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud pointed out that a socially constructed network of norms and regulations, obtained from parents, colleagues, politics, etc., acquired through the individuals’ self-development, is built into the structure of the psyche. The inner appearance of the social norms and regulations, Freud called Superego (see Freud 1971). Freud’s concept of the Superego can also be interpreted as the virtual spectator Goffman supposed. If Freud is right and the Superego is unavoidable, then any kind of human activity seems to appear in front of an inner virtual spectator, hence, a sense of cultural performance can be given to any kind of human activity. Thus, everyday life – as Goffman also put it –, ‘is [interpreted as] a dramatically enacted thing’ (Goffman 1959: 63), and individuals have to express their characteristics, aims, values, desires, instincts, and drives. First, I shall point out the changes in the concept of identity in contemporary psychology; then I shall have a close look at its consequences in the politics of the body. Finally, I shall investigate some of the ways resistance is possible in the changed conditions of identity, body, and theatricality.

#### *Identity reconsidered*

From the beginning of the twentieth century, analytical psychology has been driven by

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<sup>125</sup> Bruce Wilshire offers a critique of Goffman’s theory in *Role Playing and Identity* (Wilshire 1982:



an understanding of the differences between individuals, and an attempt to describe the relation between individual and environment. Early psychoanalysis, especially Freud's structural approach, considered the Ego as the central force of identity, and assumed that an individual has to achieve a consistent personality. Freud's students and the members of his school (Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and then Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and others) all emphasised the importance of the Ego, and agreed that a healthy self-development should direct itself towards the achievement of psychic wholeness and an integrated identity. Apart from their particular differences, identity-, development-, behavioural psychology, and role-theory from Freud to the 1970-1980s, all conceived the structure and the function of human psyche within a single paradigm. These approaches treated human psyche as a system, defined by individual qualities, and described as an integrated organism realised through its connections to the outside world. These approaches considered identity as a unit, ideally working in harmony with the outside world.<sup>126</sup> For these approaches, identity is structured hierarchically, ranging from the lower to the higher ranked components, rendering these components in binary oppositions as in Freud's psychoanalysis, identity typology, Wiggins's trait theory (see Wiggins 1989), or Kretschmer's physical typology (see Kretschmer 1978).<sup>127</sup> A structured identity is organised around a centre, the Self, though the concept of how that unit can be achieved differed in each theorist. In humanistic psychology, Rollo May argued for instance that human beings are generally characterised by a tendency towards centralisation. For May, identity-development is seen as sequences of various phases in which the consistence and coherence of the development can only be achieved by constant integration (see May 1961). Integration is thus seen as one of the basic assumptions, while dissociation is regarded as one of the main problems. As the Hungarian psychologist Annamária Komlósi explained, dissociation refers to 'the disorientation of the human psyche. It signifies a state where individuals are incalculable

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274-281).

<sup>126</sup> In order to achieve that harmony as the Gestalt-psychologist, Kurt Lewin pointed out for instance, unified identity is structured in a way that only certain components should be regarded as important, forming a so-called harmonious 'energetic field' due to their connections to each other (see Lewin 1972).

<sup>127</sup> The humanistic psychologist, Abraham Maslow differentiated for instance between five basic human needs (physiological need, security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-realisation) in his developmental model. For Maslow, these human needs are structured hierarchically in the human psyche, and he claimed that order, structure, and hierarchy are the fundamental instincts of the human psyche

and inconsistent without being aware of that. In that state, individuals appear as if they do not have 'integrated personality' (Komlósi 1999: 64-65). Therefore, dissociation is seen as the most fearful enemy preventing an individual from developing a unified identity. Apart from that, dissociation results also in the de-stabilisation of the centralised Self, the de-structuralisation of the structurally conceived personality, and finally leading to the collapse of the supposedly integrated individual. Dissociation is thus fearful because it causes an identity crisis in which dangerous multiple-identities can develop.<sup>128</sup>

While the conventional concept of identity is centred on integration, coherence and consistence, contemporary postmodern psychologists and cultural theorists have argued that the social, ideological, and technological changes have also created a change in the concept of identity. As the American psychologist Kenneth Gergen pointed out, that change is based on dissonance, since 'an individual can no longer develop and maintain a strong, integrated sense of personal identity' (Gergen 1996: 133). For Gergen, that change also reveals two fundamental premises of conventional psychology: '(1) it is normal for a person to develop a firm and coherent sense of identity, and (2) it is good and healthy for him to do so, and pathological not to' (Gergen 1996: 133). These premises have defined psychological research from psychoanalysis, behaviourism, role-theory to phenomenological psychology.

In postmodern psychologists' writings (Roy Schafer, Donald Spence, Richard Geha, Serge Viderman and others), the concept of integrated and unified identity is a highly contested territory. Gergen's own psychological experiments drew his attention to the remarkable flexibility of identity, and he observed that an individual does not only play various roles, but can also possess many potential *Selves*. From his research, Gergen concluded that 'we are not apt to find a single, basic Self to which we can be true, [hence] we must abandon the assumption that normal development equips the individual with a coherent sense of identity' (Gergen 1996: 138). The integrated and unified identity is merely construction: it is the individuals' assumption rather than the fundamental characteristic of identity. Hence, it is possible to see the conventional

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rather than the characteristics of his developmental model (see Maslow 1970).

<sup>128</sup> Apart from the authors mentioned, I used the following sources: Pléh 1992, Komlósi 1999, Atkinson 1999, and Thorne and Henley 2000.



concept of identity-concept as one of the possible identity-constructions, and as a temporarily realised, possible rejectable, as well as changeable concept.<sup>129</sup>

Basing his theory of identity on incoherency and dissociation, the American psychologist Robert Jay Lifton argued that a human being is constantly experimenting, exploring, constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing. Therefore, one is constantly changing in a lifetime. In consequence of the frequency and speed of these changes, it is not possible to speak about an integrated and unified identity. Flexibility of identity-construction is no longer considered pathological, and this leads to new type of personality-concept. Lifton called this new type of personality-concept Protean man, after the constantly changing shapes and appearances of the Greek mythological hero, Proteus. Lifton observed that until recently someone lived through only one or two significant ideological, political, and cultural significant shifts in a lifetime. In today's postindustrial societies, however, several such shifts can be accomplished relatively painlessly within a year, a month, or even a day. Therefore, as Lifton put it, 'the Protean style of self-process, then, is characterized by an interminable series of experiments and explorations, some shallow, some profound, each of which can readily be abandoned in favor of still new, psychological quests. [...] In fact, I would claim that polymorphous versatility of one kind or another is becoming increasingly prominent in contemporary life' (Lifton 1996: 126). Though Protean man changes constantly, it is in psychic struggle with the very idea of change itself. Whatever happens to Protean man, it cannot take these happenings seriously which results in absurdity, irony, and mockery developing a sense of guilt without awareness of what is causing the suffering. Lifton also reminded us that though Protean man is supposedly young, its youth cannot ever be achieved, hence its realisation is connected to a never-ceasing quest for the imagery of rebirth from all sources, ideas, techniques, religions, political systems, mass movements and even drugs. Taking these into consideration, Lifton concluded that 'the direction of Protean man's prophecy lies in new, fluid, threatening, liberating, confusing, and revitalising personal boundaries' (Lifton 1996: 131).<sup>130</sup>

Though radical behaviourists had already proposed that the stable and constant

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<sup>129</sup> On that problem, see Gergen 1991.

<sup>130</sup> See in a more detailed form in Lifton 1994.

identity is merely an illusion, they explained that proposal exclusively by outside environmental circumstances. Both Gergen and Lifton neither wrote about the impact of various roles, nor did they define identity in relation to roles and the single unitary Self, but rather they argued for the many potential *Selves* and the possible multiplicity of identities within an individual. Their argument leads to the abandonment of the stable, coherent and integrated identity-concept, and it replaces it – at least for postmodern psychology – with a concept proposing many possible realisations of identity. In this sense, the concept of identity-construction has lost its fixed centre by which its elements could be coherently structured, integrated and hierarchised. For the postmodern concept, the elements of identity are organised horizontally: identity is temporarily constructed besides slipping surfaces and temporary borders. The once integrated identity has thus been shattered, fractured and open up. It is not possible to speak about a single linear development and consecutive stages of changes anymore, but rather about various shifts from situation to situation in which the individuals' various selves and multiple identities are manifested in constant flux. One of the greatest fears of conventional psychology, dissociation, is not pathological anymore, but it can be considered as one of the contemporary models of identity-construction. Hence, postmodern psychology questions the notion of the unitary and integrated identity, and with that it refuses the concept of the fixed and stable identity. Identity is neither an autonomic unit, nor personal and eternal essence anymore, but rather it is situated in the plural. For postmodern concepts, identity consists of various identity-fragments in which emotions, experiences, desires, constant self-readings, self-interpretations, slippings, and changes are mixed. Therefore, postmodern identity can be considered as a constantly constructed *process*, that can only be fixed and closed temporarily. In the age of postmodern fragmentation, the situation is that we see centres in ourselves and also in our things, than structure and act our life accordingly. These centres, however, are neither fixed, nor eternal, hence they fall apart from time to time, and then disappear. And like Sisyphus, we start (re)constructing our identity again.

### *PR-identity*

Some of the postmodern psychologists contest not only the notion of the stable and



coherent identity, but also the very idea of the Self. They propose that even the concept of Self comes to an end (see Zweig 1996). If the 'death of the Self' is right, it introduces an age in which appearance is not simply the formal expression of an inner, essential content. Rather, it is the very thing itself as there is nothing constant, coherent, and stable behind individual utterances, actions, and performances. Paul Kugler accurately described that process: 'the speaking subject appears to be not a referent beyond the first person pronoun, but rather, a fragmented entity produced by the act of speaking. Each time the first person pronoun is uttered it projects a different entity, a different perspective and identity' (Kugler in Zweig 1996: 145) Therefore, your identity *is* (and is measured by) what it's like (or seems to be).

Even if we do not follow postmodern psychology so far, and if we still propose that identity and Self still exist somewhere, than we must assert that they can become significant only when they are presented and appreciated. In this sense wrote Baudrillard on identity-construction in *The Transparency of Evil* that 'we no longer have time to search for an identity for ourselves in the archives, in a memory, in a project or a future. Instead we are supposed to have an instant memory to which we can plug in directly for immediate access to a kind of public-relations identity' (Baudrillard 1993: 23). As a result, the human condition cannot be guaranteed anymore by the premise grasped in Descartes' assertion of 'Cogito ergo sum'. For Descartes, identity existed, because someone who thought that 'I think, therefore I am' could be certain not only that this thought occurred, but also that there was a thinking human being behind that thought. In PR identity, Descartes' assertion can be replaced by the postmodern 'Presento ergo sum'. Here the individual's presentia (existence) is to be visually proved, presented and delivered according to aesthetic standards. The individual's presentia does not exist until it brings into presence by presentation. Presentia is not realised when the individual is constantly acting (doing), but rather when the individual is *seen* to be *performing* by an audience. *Presentation* is used rhetorically as persuasion – in Burke's sense of the term – for representing the individual's existence and identity. In PR identity as Baudrillard pointed out,

everyone seeks their *look*. Since it is no longer possible to base any claim on one's own existence, there is nothing for it but to perform an *appearing act* without concerning oneself with *being* – or even *being seen*. So it is not: I exist, I

am here! But rather: I am visible, I am an image – Look! Look! This is not even narcissism, merely an extraversion without depth, and a sort of self-promoting ingenuousness whereby everyone becomes the manager of their own appearance.

Baudrillard 1993: 23 – emphasis ZI

Though the notion of seeing and being seen is not new, only a minor (and mostly rich) strata of society could afford to exercise it for centuries.<sup>131</sup> Recently, however, the territory of that notion has extended in such measure that it seems to be found everywhere. Today we (need to) play – really or virtually – the act of appearance, and the game of seeing and being seen in the practices of everyday life. PR-identity can be constructed by the images of advertisement, fashion, the spectacular worlds of the media, and the visual imaginations presented by television, cinema, and theatre.

The rhetoric of PR-identity is especially obvious in the popular magazines (see *Shape*, *Marie Claire*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Playboy* or the Hungarian *Nők Lapja*, *Kiskegyed*, etc.) in which PR-identity is celebrated through practical advice, concerned mainly with visual representation, and arranging PR-identity mostly as a visual field. Published in the Beauty section of one of the most popular magazines for women, *Marie Claire*, Susanna Cohen's advice demonstrate the construction and management of PR-identity. For Cohen,

it's no dumb cliché that beauty comes from within, but neither does it always shine through in the way you might think. While kindness and generosity are undoubtedly qualities that make a good person, it's confidence that *makes us perceive someone as beautiful*. Analyse the features of any recognised beauty – with the exception of a handful of supermodels and film stars – and their features aren't that extraordinary. Often it's a person's self-belief and ability to present themselves in a manner suggesting they are special that convinces us they are.

Cohen 1999 – emphasis ZI

Analysing the rhetoric of Cohen's advice, it is clear that Cohen does not concern herself with why someone is not confident enough. Cohen is not interested in someone's feelings, personal and emotional problems. Her advice refers only to representation: how

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<sup>131</sup> The notion of seeing and being seen can be seen in the physical arrangement of the 17<sup>th</sup> century public theatres. These theatres were also seen as public forums where the different social strata of society could



we are to perform, how we are to arrange to be seen when we are performing. As the title of her article admits, if we behave with confidence, i.e., we perform the tactics and tricks of implied confidence, the appearing act of confidence, then we are seen as confident, ergo we *become* confident. For Cohen's advice, confidence should be organised and staged as a visual representation. As Cohen's advice refers to a general tendency, it can be assumed that individuality and personality can/should thus be (p)reserved in and by visible performative styles and theatrical manoeuvres. Moreover, we – due to the pressure of the contemporary postmodern condition – are to develop our distinctive PR-identity and to display it whenever expected.

Due to the constant presentation of various PR-identities, everyday life has become – in Baudrillard's term – 'a masked ball' (see Baudrillard 1993: 22). In the ball, individuals are in direct or indirect communication with each other. Indirect means the prepositional presence of others, which is consciously and/or unconsciously included in the individual's identity (see Goffman or Freud). Direct means the real presence of others. In the contemporary masked ball, identity is thus neither substance, arranged around a centre, which would have different external roles, nor an already given entity, but something that is in constant flux. That flux can be organic, almost vegetal, but sudden and unexpected as well. Identity exists in constant *in-between-ness*, consisting of constantly played-out fragments. Consequently, identity cannot be regarded as an inheritance, existing since birth, or merely the consequences of historical styles, but it can be imagined as a series of representations realised in and defined by various discourses among historical conventions and possibilities available, the already possessed and inherited, genetically determined qualities and the individual's historically limited, but definite choices among the styles, performances and roles historically available.

### *PR-identity and body*

If Baudrillard is right, and contemporary PR-identity is theatrical in the masked ball of everyday life, then it is possible to approach some of the practices used in the ball.

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be found and seen together.

Among the various possible tactics, I concentrate on the body and some of the accepted practices of its various transformations. For long, 'body' had been interpreted as a corporeal and material fact. That interpretation, however, – as Judith Butler reminded us – changed with the recognition that 'the body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; [...] [but] an historical idea and a set of possibilities [that] signifies (a) that its appearance in the world, for perception, is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence, and (b) that its concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering a specific set of historical possibilities' (Butler 1988: 521). 'Body' can thus be understood as *expressive body*, communicating at certain point in space and time; and as *historical construction*, based on its various possible physical characteristics and the multiple identities expressed by it. The Body is not inherited anymore through convention, but rather it is consciously constructed and chosen from the various appearances available. As Butler also remarked, the body is 'always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention' (Butler 1988: 521). Therefore, body is neither an already given fact, nor merely a historical construction or self-styled entity, but rather it is personally, publicly, and historically constructed appearance.

For a long time, the interpretation of the body had been solely defined along a sexual binary (male and female). In order to challenge that assumption, Butler differentiated between sex and gender. Butler regarded sex as biological fact, and gender as the cultural interpretation of that fact. Butler argued that

to be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman', to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. [That corporeal project] is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective idea to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis.

Butler 1988: 522

Though the body is biologically sexed, it does not have any meaning in itself, as body is defined by the historical changing interpretation of what it is to be male and female. In



this sense, gender is representation: female is represented as the changing idea of woman, while male is represented as the changing idea of man by images, and attributes rendered to these gender ideas by society. These gendered representations are displayed most of all on and presented by the body. Their construction is dominated by heterosexual male point of view, even in the contemporary Euro-American world.

In the contemporary Euro-American world, – as cultural theorists argue –, the cult of the gendered body ‘no longer stands in contradiction to the cult of the soul: it is the successor to that cult and heir to its ideological function’ (Baudrillard 1998: 136). The body has thus acquired the status of capital, and become an object of salvation seen in the way as individuals manage their body. They handle it as they might handle an inheritance; and they manipulate it as one of the many signifiers of social status. As body is regarded as capital, it is subjected to labour and investment, concerning time and money. A new ethics of the body is structured along two inseparable leitmotifs: beauty and eroticism. That new ethics can also be divided into two interrelated poles: the feminine, defined by beauty and seduction, and the masculine, characterised by physical fitness. From these norms, irregularity and ugliness are excluded. In the age of postmodern fragmentation in which everything is changing and instable, the individual’s body seems to be the only material which can be put under (individual) control. The body has thus become a fetish, around which a cult has developed.

### *The rites and liturgies of body-cult*

As body is considered as fetish in contemporary culture, it is to be managed, shaped, maintained and kept under control to acquire aesthetic standards, described by society, and the ideal representations of woman/man through clothing, make-up, training, fitness, diet and sport. Susan Bordo pointed out in her *Reading the Slender Body* that the late Victorian era was the first in which ‘those who could afford to eat well began systematically to deny themselves food in pursuit of an aesthetic ideal. [...] Fat [...] was the declared enemy, [...] and the bourgeois “tyranny of slenderness” had begun its ascendancy (particularly over women), and with it the development of numerous technologies [...] aimed at a purely physical transformation’ (Bordo 1998: 214). Since then slenderness has emerged as the dominant body standard of Western culture in

which the ideal body is 'absolutely tight, contained, "bottled down", firm, (in other words, a body that is protected against eruption from within, whose internal processes are under control)' (Bordo 1998: 218).

Contemporary Western examples of the ideal body and the rhetoric of its regulatory discourse can be detected everywhere from cinema to theatre, but it is especially important in advertisements, the media, and the beauty sections of popular magazines. Among the various stories, the most popular ones narrate body-transformation in the form of confession. Susan Ford's story, published in the British magazine, *Prima*, also demonstrates that tendency:

By the time I was 20, I was 18 stone and wearing size 24 clothes. I couldn't face going into clothes shops so I bought everything from mail order catalogues. My weight did get me down and I developed a 'life and soul of the party' personality to hide my true feelings. But sometimes, when I was alone, I'd cry about it. In January 1994, [...] I joined Weight Watchers. [...] My target weight was nine and a half stone but I never thought I'd reach it. Within four months, I'd reached ten and a half stone. I rushed out and bought the little black dress I'd always wanted. Within two months, I was down to just over nine stone. Suddenly, I was the slim, glamorous *person* that I had always dreamed of being.

Susan Ford (28) – *Prima* 1999 – emphasis ZI

Susan Ford suffered from the social pressure of the ideal, slender body. Her 'true' Self was constructed only virtually, as she was not able to display it, because its place was occupied by a fat body. That fat body also forced her to develop a false, theatrical identity. Ford's suffering was caused not only by the difference between the ideal and her real, fat body, but also a moral attitude attached to the concept of the slender body by contemporary culture. According to that moral attitude, a fat or overweight body can be read as the sign of moral and personal inadequacy: fatness is an indication that the person cannot regulate their needs. The body thus publicly admits a lack of self-discipline and will power. Hence, Ford's unregulated fat body was considered by herself (and maybe by others) not only as ugly but also as the representation of her moral deprivation and lack of self-control. The rhetoric of the ideal slender body condemned her through the negation of her body.

In contrast to the fat and overweight body, the slim and well-muscled body has become a cultural icon in contemporary culture. That icon represents the state of soul



and is seen as the symbol of correct attitude. Correct attitude means – as Bordo explained it – that ‘one “cares” about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to “make something” of oneself (...), [and] “managerial” abilities that, according to dominant ideology, confer upward mobility’ (Bordo 1998: 220). Reducing hostile fat, Susan Ford could transform her body to the *ideal body*, she had ‘always dreamed of being’. The transformation of her body meant also that Ford could realise the representation of the *person*, she had ‘always dreamed of being’. That transformation can be understood by the inversion of the concept of biological determinism. In his 1963 book on body typology, Ernest Kretschmer proposed that our inherited physical qualities define our personality, since a strong connection exists between outer body morphology and inner vegetative control (see Kretschmer 1963). In Kretschmer’s theory, the inner psychological characters derive from outer body forms, supposing that there is direct relation between body and personality. In Ford’s case, that relation was maintained, while its direction was inverted. Ford firstly redesigned her body as the representation of the ideal slender body, and then the transformation of her body reconstructed her personality to an ideal personality dreamed up earlier by herself. The rhetoric of the ideal slender body not only transformed, but visibly reproduced as the act of appearance, and displayed her *personality*. When she appeared as an ideal body, she could also represent herself as the ideal personality of her dream.<sup>132</sup>

### *Body-cult – cosmetic surgery*

The ideal slender body can be constructed not only by clothing, physical exercises, sports, and diet, but also by cosmetic surgery. Anne Balsamo pointed out that cosmetic surgery ‘literary transforms the material body into a sign of culture’ (Balsamo 1998: 225). Cosmetic surgery is not only a discursive site, or merely a ‘natural’ place, but ‘a material site at which the physical female body is surgically dissected, stretched, carved

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<sup>132</sup> There is, of course, a health issue. If you are overweight or underweight, you do have an increased chance of disease. The health issue is, however, subordinated to a correct moral attitude, described by Bordo, and utilised for its implementation. See the various stories on models, actresses, or sportsman, suffering from anorexia, or bulimia. In these cases, the representation of the ideal body goes much beyond the health issue.

and reconstructed according to cultural and evidently ideological standards of physical appearance' (Balsamo 1998: 225). Like Bordo, Balsamo also connected the ideal good-looking body with moral and aesthetic standards connoting intelligence, competence and desirability. She regarded cosmetic surgery as the general process of female body-management in which 'cosmetic surgeons use technological imaging devices to reconstruct the female body as a signifier of ideal feminine beauty. In this sense, surgical techniques literally enact the logic of assembly line beauty: difference is made over into sameness. 'The technological gaze refashions the material body to reconstruct it in keeping with culturally determined ideals of feminine beauty' (Balsamo 1998: 225). In this sense, dominant heterosexual male rhetoric considers cosmetic surgery as a means of suppression by which the female body can be kept under control through the implementation of the ideal feminine beauty. The representation of the ideal feminine beauty is placed violently and bloodily by the cosmetic surgeons (most often male) onto their (lying and sleeping) female subject. Aesthetic standards and cosmetic surgery are developed from the dominant heterosexual male point of view, and based on 'Western markers of ideal beauty' (Balsamo 1998: 228).<sup>133</sup> While the beauty of the entire female body is accurately elaborated in detail and visually produced in the various medical books on cosmetic surgery, the male body is restricted only in a sense of the muscular body. The representations of the slim female and the muscular male bodies can be found in the various advertisements from kitchen sink to bathtub in popular magazines, television and on the stages of the street. Moreover, these representations can find their ways to any strata of society through the shows of the fashion industry and in sports like athletics, gymnastics, aerobic, as well as in its extreme form in body-building.

As in Ford's case, the various advertisements, and media presentations demonstrate, the territory of private life has also become theatricalised and mediatised according to aesthetic standards, creating various stages of and audiences for identity performances. Parallel to changes in identity-construction, the notion of body has also been changed. Body is now seen as one of the main stages on which identity performances can be organised and displayed.

In the contemporary world suffering from timelessness (among others) where

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<sup>133</sup> For deconstructions of the oppressive discourse of plastic surgery, see Auslander 1997: 126-140, and



even leisure is utilised for display (the display of wasting our time), representations and appearances are to be arranged to produce immediate impact. These representations and appearances are to be seen not only in clothing, arrangement of workplace and home, organisation of holidays, but also in the construction of our own body. Hence, our individual life becomes a series of representations arranged as lifestyle through which our expressions, choices, decisions and utterances are visually displayed.

The closure of the binary between soul and body, privileging the soul and regarding the body as a given, corporeal, factual entity, temporarily housing the soul, is not relevant anymore. In the theatricalised world of representations and appearances, body is not an inherited, unchangeable material, but rather it is the consequence of conscious choices and decisions between trends, techniques, materials, and aesthetics. The aestheticised body is kept, though stimulated and simulated, beautiful, alive and forever young with fitness, wellness, make-ups, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery. The new body-rhetoric prefers a performing body, an exhibited and represented body, hence a theatricalised body.

Susan Ford's story, published in a magazine designed for women, aimed to encourage those suffering from the new Western 'disease', i.e., fatness. The success-story of reconstructing her body allowed her to develop a distinctive lifestyle she had always dreamed of. Though the rhetoric of her success publicly celebrated her achievement, it implicitly reinforced the contemporary premise that the female body is still under the control of the ideal slender body envisioned from a male point of view. The publication of Ford's success story in a magazine designed for women made her story as an example for women worth to be followed. In Ford's case, the construction of the female body was considered as fundamental achievement of womanhood as especially womanish, but the possibilities of its constructions were subordinated to a patriarchal, male-oriented dominant ideology. Hence, the total application of the dominant representations of the female body and its implications to herself restricted her chance to resist the patriarchal, male-oriented dominant ideology. Adopting the representation of the ideal body, Ford could not foil the games and sites instituted by and allocated to her by heterosexual male desire and dominant ideology. In Ford's case, the

direct negation of the ideal body would not have resulted in resistance, as a fat body would have put her out of the discourse. In general, individuals have no chance to change the discourse with direct negation. Direct negation strengthens the dominant trend. Therefore, the only solution seems to be the adoption of the dominant representations with the conscious aim to utilise these representation for undermining the dominant discourse and the patriarchal game, and without fulfilling their supposed and expected functions in the dominant system.

### *2.2.2. Constructing reality 2: marriage, media, and the wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones*

In the previous section, I considered some of the performative means, tactics and strategies in the theatricality induced by individuals without little chance of directly manipulating the dominant discourse. On 19 June, 1999, the Queen's youngest son, Prince Edward, and Sophie Rhys-Jones celebrated their wedding in Windsor, witnessed by approximately ten thousand people on the spot and, via television and radio, more than two hundred millions worldwide. Here, I shall take a close look at the tactics and strategies of the wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones as an event, which went into public discourse in Britain and all over the world. The focus of the analysis is set partly on the theatrical means by which they stage-managed the impact of a 'privately public family affair' of their wedding, and partly on the question whether producing alternatives to conventions can be seen as resistant.

#### *Marriage and wedding: brief reconsiderations*

In the contemporary Euro-American world, marriage is seen as an institution that officially legitimates the relation between two individuals. Most of the time, its realisation is based on their individual decisions rather than familial, tribal or (inter)national agreement. The participants' decision is influenced (ideally) by their personal feelings, though economic factors and conventions cannot be totally excluded. Apart from that, marriage has still kept its contract-like character, aiming to establish and reassure the unity of family and the stability of society.



Wedding publicly represents the contract-like character of marriage as it is a privately decided and public delivered cultural performance, publicly demonstrating the participants' individual decisions, and institutionalised by the power of the community. The theatrical means of wedding can also be seen as the indicators of social, cultural, ideological, as well as economic factors. Wedding can be regarded as a rite of separation, to a greater or lesser degree; as a rite of passage, from one socio-economic status to another, and as a rite of unification, demonstrating the unity of the family and the continuity of the community (see Genep 1960). Through these rites, wedding legitimises the institution of marriage. Apart from these functions, wedding has still preserved its interpretation as myth. For centuries, love was seen as a danger to the social institution of marriage based on order, stability and logical decisions rather than incalculable emotional factors. Due to the official, mostly clerical ideological and economic control (inheritance, strategic diplomatic alliance etc.), the notion of love found its way to public consciousness through the arts.<sup>134</sup> From ancient literature to present-day soap-operas and popular Hollywood films, the story of the young handsome prince/poor boy and princess/poor girl usually concludes in their happy wedding.<sup>135</sup> That wedding is usually based on love, happiness, mutual fulfilment (or at least its promise) and emotional, moral, and economical satisfaction. Though the realisation of fulfilment and satisfaction as the story develops is often based on the violation of the status quo, marriage ultimately maintains marriage's main ideological functions, reassuring social hierarchy and stability through heterosexuality and patriarchy.

Wedding is one of the most theatrical forms among the ceremonial acts. Its participants prepare for this event for a long period, sometimes for years, selecting the place and the trappings. Preparation is defined by social, economic and cultural conventions, by the participants' personal attitudes and experiences of previous weddings, and by the participants' conscious but restricted choices from among the various historical and social styles. The rhetoric of wedding is carefully planned, consciously staged, and organised by various culturally, socially and ideologically

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<sup>134</sup> See its various representations in literature in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, or Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe (Power and Principle)* for instance.

<sup>135</sup> See such basic stories and their re-cycling as *Snow-white* and *Cinderella*. The latter has been rewritten in various forms and media as G.B. Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, or in films like *Pretty Woman*, *Runaway*

encoded customs, expectations and superstitions.<sup>136</sup>

Investigating the difference between theatre and social events, the French theatre sociologist Jean Duvignaud proposed that in the theatre action is *made for seeing*, and is, indeed, reconstituted *by spectacle*' (Duvignaud 1973: 85 – emphasis ZI). In spite of their difference, Duvignaud proposed that theatre and social life are connected by ceremony. In ceremonial events like tribunals, religious services, and festivals 'people play parts according to a scenario' (Duvignaud 1973: 82). Recognising the theatrical dimension of social life, Duvignaud differentiated between two kinds of theatrical modes. In the first mode, 'action is really carried out', and in the second, 'action is not directed towards immediate actions but uses artistic forms to fulfil the intentions of a group or an individual' (Duvignaud 1973: 87). Duvignaud situated wedding in the *first* theatrical mode. Starting from Duvignaud's assertions, here, I shall analyse the royal wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones through the relevance of these theatrical modes.

### *Convention versus alternativity: the Royal Wedding*

The wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones was consciously designed as a public ceremony, and realised as direct theatre, using every possible element of theatricality. The rhetoric of the wedding was built on the conventions of previous royal weddings, but consciously rewritten. The method through which the couple rewrote the elements of previous royal weddings could be clearly recognised in the church ceremony for instance. Corresponding to royal wedding (rw) convention, the ceremony started with the groom waiting for the bride, led by her father to the church, and ended with the usual pose for photographs on the steps of the church. The conventional kiss on the church steps, however, did not happen (see *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 June, 1999). Contrary to rw convention, the timing of the ceremony (afternoon ceremony, instead of the expected morning ceremony) and the dress code (no evening dress for women, no morning dress for men) were also modified (see *The Guardian*, 19 June, 1999). Contrary to rw convention, all the guests were invited to the reception after the church ceremony,

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*Bride* for instance.

<sup>136</sup> See popular books on wedding like the Collins Pocket Reference of *Weddings* (1994), or Adriana Hunter's book on etiquette has a special chapter on it (see Hunter 1994, especially 63-81) or the



and the guest list was the most informal ever at the wedding of a reigning monarch's child, including only a few foreign royals and no politicians (see *The Guardian*, 19 June, 1999). Most of the guests were the couple's friends and colleagues, and many were from the media and show business (see *The Guardian*, 19 June, 1999). Contrary to rw convention, there was no detail about the honeymoon announced neither were the wedding presents put on a show (see *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 June, 1999).

It is possible to detect how the conventional elements were also rewritten in the other events of the wedding ceremony. Instead of the usual place for a royal wedding, London's Westminster Abbey, the wedding took place in Windsor where the spatial arrangement covered nearly the entire city. Inside Windsor Castle, eight thousand ticket holders were seated<sup>137</sup>, while outside, barriers were placed for the crowd of thirty thousand from the Castle to St George's Chapel and on two other main streets. The procession before and after the wedding ceremony took place on the streets in front of the Castle, serving – with Prince Edward's words – 'as a wonderful setting for the wedding' (*The Times Weekend*, 19 June, 1999). The bride's dress was also carefully designed in a way – as its designer, Samantha Shaw explained – 'to have the medieval, gothic feel to match the atmosphere of the Chapel' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 21 June, 1999). The distribution of tickets served not only for logistic purposes, but it symbolically transformed the ticket holders into spectators. Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones, appearing in front of the set of the castle in gothic dresses, became the players in a social spectacle, and in theatrical terms, they were 'exposed to view'. As in conventional theatre, the barriers physically separated the participants and indicated the areas designed for players and spectators, as well as they referred to the principle of seeing and being seen. The theatrical arrangement of the event suggested that the entire ceremony could be interpreted as a performance of direct theatre in the set of a medieval Windsor.

### *Royal Wedding and the media: the Prince and Cinderella*

The mixture of conventional and new elements in the rhetoric of the royal wedding was

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various popular magazines on wedding dresses, hairstyles and table decorations.

designed partly to separate the event from previous royal practice, and partly to give an impression of disarming subtlety and lack of pretension, one that balanced the instinctive human desire for privacy and the simultaneous social need for publicity. That intended impression could not have been achieved without the printed and the electronic media. Before the wedding, the printed media presented Sophie Rhys-Jones through a mixture of stereotypical and emancipated female images, as 'pure, simple, and natural looking' woman (*The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June, 1999) and 'a working girl' (*The Times Weekend*, 19 June, 1999). Rhys-Jones's life was conceived as a metamorphosis from a village girl to a successful and independent self-made woman integrated into the leading group of the hierarchy as 'the village girl becoming princess' (*The Times*, 19 June, 1999). Apart from that, her life-story was also represented through the image of Cinderella, getting her handsome Prince.<sup>138</sup> Nostalgia was fully utilised in the reports and articles, and the fairy-tale atmosphere prepared for the perception of the wedding well before the actual ceremony. Through these allusions, the wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones could thus be framed as royal theme park with life-size performers in the title roles.

Though the notion of royal wedding interpreted as direct theatre and realised as historical theme park was established by the printed media, it was publicly strengthened by live broadcasting. Live broadcasting emphasised the fairy-tale dimensions and the theme park atmosphere of the wedding. The special effects of live broadcasting – as Ian Watson pointed out – assumes in its receivers that broadcasting is always right at the centre of events, where the most important events are happening. Thus live broadcasting is 'a performance of sort in which the reporting of the news becomes a metaphor for the nature of the news itself – that is "reporting live", being "at the centre of major events", and "witnessing history in the making"' (Watson 1998: 214). British society was thus 'witnessing history in the making' in the broadcast of the wedding ceremony. In fact, the electronic media was allowed to broadcast live only the Church ceremony and the procession. In contrast to the event as a whole, the Church ceremony was conservative

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<sup>137</sup> Tickets were distributed for free, but needed advanced booking.

<sup>138</sup> On the wedding day (19 June 1999), *The Times* published a front-page article with the following title: 'Sophie turns Cinderella for shoes to wed her Prince'. Then the reader was told that the bride's dress and the shoes did not match. Hence, 'like Cinderella, the hunt was on to match the bride with the correct



and conventional in the extreme. The text of the ceremony was taken from a 1928 royal wedding ceremony, quoting a 1662 text in which the bride promised to love, honour and obey the groom (*The Times*, 19 June, 1999). In the light of the troubled relationships of the Queen's other sons and their wives, the broadcast of the church ceremony might give the impression that though the image of a modern, independent self-made woman was earlier used by the printed media, that image was assigned to a patriarchal concept, which was strengthened by the image of Cinderella. Hence, for British audiences, the rhetoric of the broadcast ceremony was thus organised to display and reassure heterosexual man-woman relation, and patriarchal values. For international audiences, the rhetoric of the broadcast did not only display and reassure conservative values, but it also coincided with the conventional representation of England. Through the mixture of conventional and new elements, the rhetoric of the wedding ceremony implied not only the conventional image of England, but it also suggested that though England has gone through considerable changes, it still preserved its earlier attributes, values, and conventions.

Live broadcasting is also significant from another point of view. That is the effect it has on its receivers. Live broadcasting not only focuses the audience's attention to where the main events of history occur, but transforms history into a personalised event. That personalisation takes place virtually in the listeners' and/or viewers' living room, kitchen, or bedroom. Thus, public event becomes a private affair on a grand scale, as television and radio psycho-electronically fuse 'the public and private spheres into a single time-frame' (Watson 1998: 218). In this sense, live broadcasting transformed the listeners / viewers into the virtual participants of the royal wedding, and made the Prince and his Princess protagonists through whom their desires, aims, and expectations could be materialised, fulfilled and experienced. As the television broadcasting took place among the 'normal' Saturday television programme (television-series, news, films, and soap-operas), the royal wedding of the Prince and the heroine could thus also be perceived as a 'real' soap-opera, mixing fairytale images offered by the printed media, and the 'medieval-atmosphere' setting, the 'gothic feeling' of the dresses, the ceremonial

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footwear, but in this case the happy ending was reached by altering the shoes' (*The Times*, 19, June 1999).

atmosphere of the entire event, and the highly theatricalised behaviours.<sup>139</sup> All these happened live in the virtual and mediated, though seemingly unmediated, psycho-electronically present of the broadcast. For television viewers especially, the participants in the frame set by television cameras could thus be seen as virtual life-size performers, performing their life (or at least a part of it) publicly and consciously for the camera, and through the camera for (inter)national audiences.

Duvignaud, indeed, sees wedding as 'a social event of everyday life' in which 'the action is really carried out' (Duvignaud 1973: 87). Here, I have attempted to demonstrate that the wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones united Duvignaud's theatrical modes: their individual actions were really carried out, while artistic forms were also used to fulfil the intentions of certain social groups. Moreover, the entire wedding can be characterised by the qualities Duvignaud attached exclusively to theatre: their wedding was *made for seeing* and was reconstituted *by spectacle*.

The theatricality of the royal wedding ceremony consciously mixed popular images, established conventions, theatrical practices, and live broadcasting, and was governed by aesthetic standards from dressing to the various other activities. The appropriate code systems (dressing, behaviour, speech, manner, and gesture) and the order of service were acquired through various wedding rehearsals, while the places of Windsor were transformed into theatrical stages.<sup>140</sup> The Prince and his fiancé were both the protagonists and the spectacle managers of their own show. It is not surprising as both of them work where theatricality is fundamental: Prince Edward in show-business, and Sophie Rhys-Jones in advertising. Their rehearsed actions and minutely constructed space, time, and appearances were presented as a seamless, spontaneous and private ceremony, which popularised established values and maintained the *status quo*.<sup>141</sup>

Though the royal wedding expressed established values and reassured the status quo, it can also be interpreted as alternative: alternative *within* convention. The analysis of the royal wedding highlights the difference between alternative and resistant. 'Alternative' refers simply to modification within convention that does not question and

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<sup>139</sup> To that notion, the context contributed significantly too, in which the protest (*June 18*) appeared as a dangerous image threatening everyday life.

<sup>140</sup> For a detailed description and a map on Windsor on the day, see *The Times Weekend*, 19 June, 1999.

<sup>141</sup> I shall analyse *June 18* in detail in the following part of the thesis.



challenge basic assumptions. 'Resistance' seeks to change the convention. It is a counter-hegemonic practice that aims to undermine hierarchy and reconsider its assumptions and expectations as well. Apart from that, the analysis of the Royal Wedding demonstrates the changing nature of the contest for cultural, political, and ideological hegemony, and the flexibility of its interpretation. The interpretation of the wedding also shows how individuals (and social groups) attempt to construct and present the happenings of everyday life from their own point of view in order to control hierarchy, and to assure their own position in that hierarchy.

### ***2.2.3. Construction reality 3: protest, media, and J18***

Autonomously organised events, ranging from educational forums, pickets, protests, discussions, blockades, and street parties will disrupt business as usual and show the world that things could be very different.

**JUNE 18th 1999**

A day of protest, action and carnival in financial centres across the globe.

Activists from diverse groups and movements around the world are discussing, networking and organising for an international day of action aimed at the heart of the global economy: the financial centres, banking districts and multinational corporate power bases.

Environmentalists, workers, the unemployed, indigenous peoples, trade unionists, peasant groups, women's networks, the landless, students, peace activists and many more working together in recognition that the global capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of the few, is at the root of our social and ecological troubles. The June 18th occupation and transformation of financial districts, simultaneously across the globe, will be a contribution to and practical example of the process of making connections and building alternatives to the present social order.

***THE RESISTANCE WILL BE AS TRANSNATIONAL AS CAPITAL!***

Invitation leaflet, 1999

This extract was taken from a website, *June 18*, given its name by the fact that the representatives of the most powerful nations (G8) met in Cologne, Germany on June 18, 1999, the day before the royal wedding, to discuss the issues of free trade, global

economy, and corporate capitalism. Parallel to their discussions, activists and various groups all over the world temporarily occupied and attempted to transform their local financial centres (stock exchanges, banks, and corporate centres) to express their dissatisfaction with global capitalism. As the slogan of the London protest clearly expressed it, 'Global Ecology – Not Global Capitalism'. Drawing on Schechner's notion of political direct theatre and Gramsci's and Williams's ideas of cultural hegemony, first I shall take into consideration some of the oppositional strategies of the protest. Then I shall analyse the representations of the protest in the established and the alternative media, and investigate whether the protest can be seen as resistant.

### *Political direct theatre – official*

Political direct theatre is not a new phenomenon. The ancient Assyrian, Greek, and Roman generals, kings, and emperors demonstrated their power and victories through political direct theatre in processions, tournaments and other theatrical displays of power. Since then, public marches, state processions, and displays of booty after a war have been regarded as evidence for success in visual and material terms; as demonstration of symbolic domination; and as representation of the authority's hegemony. In these political direct theatres, the objects of celebration, the models of representation, and the central audience were often the same secular authority. In fact, the rhetoric of these direct theatres was organised to provide legitimisation for everyday life under the auspices of the secular authority.

Apart from and combining with these secular theatrical events, the rhetoric of political direct theatre has also been utilised by clerical authorities. The Church, especially the medieval Catholic with its visually elaborated liturgy, was one of the institutions that utilised in institutional form and re-occurring systematic order the specific propagandistic possibilities of public theatricality. Theatrical means were used not only in liturgy and in the ceremonies within the church, but for celebrations and processions and other public events like Easter or Christmas where entire districts were arranged as set for clerical representations.

It is not surprising therefore that clerical rhetoric served the basis for the rites of



the twentieth century's totalitarian regimes.<sup>142</sup> These regimes deliberately built their practices and symbol-systems on the centuries old clerical traditions. Writing on the ritual core of the Italian fascist theatricality for instance, Günter Berghaus argued that the similarities between fascist liturgy and Christian ceremonies were particularly obvious in the European Catholic countries. In these countries, a widely known repertoire of religious symbols, means, and practices were taken out of their religious context and used for special fascist political ideology. Berghaus pointed out that the fascist leaders very early recognised that they had to appeal to 'the subconscious desires of the masses and give symbolic representation of the political system that promised to fulfil the dreams and aspirations of the population. Translating fascist ideology into mythical language and actualising these myths through ritual performances was a far more effective way of producing consent and approval of the presented message than rational propaganda could ever hope to achieve' (Berghaus 1996: 50). In the 1930s and 1940s, similar tendencies could be detected in Germany. The Nazi leaders also utilised clerical symbols and rituals; through them they aestheticised politics and over-abundantly used theatricality in the other spheres of public life. As Roger Griffin pointed out, German Nazism was able 'to remain true to its core myth and legitimate itself only by generating an elaborate civic liturgy (or a "civic", "secular" or "political" religion) based on the myth of immanent national rebirth' (Griffin 1996: 25). Through the combination of clerical symbols, practices and Nazi ideology, the regime produced such visual evidence of the Third Reich, based on the myth and rhetoric of national rebirth, in which the German nation could be united behind its leader.

Ancient societies, the medieval church and the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century all used art and theatre too as legitimisation and propaganda. Yet, the area of use and the circle of users of art and theatre were much more limited. Hence, theatre's influence was much narrower than the public theatricalities organised by the authorities for propaganda intended to extend their influence onto the entire social domain (see Panse 1996, Cavallo 1996, and Levi 1996).

*East-European political direct theatre – official and resistant*

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<sup>142</sup> Christian liturgy was also built on the pagan rites and days of celebrations.

The use of clerical symbols for the construction of secular political power could also be detected in the countries of the socialist block. These countries, however, were in an even more difficult position than the Fascist and Nazi regimes, since the ideology of socialism was built on atheism. The rhetoric employed to cover that contradiction is described in one of the scenes of Milan Kundera's novel, *The Joke*. The novel is set in a small rural village, from where the narrator originates. The narrator returns to the village in the hope of secretly meeting the wife of one of his old enemies. Waiting for the woman's arrival, he revisits his old haunts, and he discovers that the village has changed. He strays into the parish hall where a ceremony is just taking place. Here he meets one of his ex-classmates and gets into conversation with him about the actual ceremony. To the narrator's suggestion that people should give up their ceremonies, the ex-classmate replies with the following:

people would never give up their weddings and funerals. And that from our point of view (he emphasised the word "our" as if to make it clear to me that he too had joined the Communist Party) it would be pity not to use them to bring people closer to our ideology and our State.

Kundera 1992: 173

Based on the human desire for the ceremonies of life, the power of the Communist Party legitimated itself by the re-interpretation of these former religious rites. The Communist rhetoric, however, separated itself from direct religious references, and presented its own ideology as if it meant both 'natural' continuity and radical 'progress'.

Apart from the suppression and/or the reinterpretation of the earlier pagan and clerical rites and days of celebration, dictatorial regimes create their own celebrations to legitimate their origin and their present power. These celebrations are also organised as theatrical spectacles. Like the Nazi and Fascist marches, celebrations, and rallies, the celebrations of the Revolution on 7<sup>th</sup> November legitimating the Soviet regime, or the Day of Independence on 4<sup>th</sup> April assuring the 'rebirth' of the socialist Hungary can also be mentioned among these spectacles. These celebrations were expressions of the dominant ideology, visual representations of the regime, as well as the manifestations of the authorities' power.



Analysing the recent events in Yugoslavia, Dubravka Knežević pointed out the basic genres of public theatricality used by dictatorial regimes for the organisation and maintenance of everyday life. For Knežević, the dominant ideology of Slobodan Milošević's Yugoslavia for instance was presented by (1) 'gatherings and manifestations'; (2) 'burial ceremonies'; and (3) 'celebrations with purely ideological content, usually disguised behind cultural and religious purposes' (Knežević 1996: 409). The first genre was the most important in the rise of Milošević, and followed two basic patterns. On the one hand, it was the pattern of the 'counter-protest' realised by particular communities or social groups against another country's 'inhuman' nationalistic policies; or against members of political opposition in Serbia. On the other, it was the pattern of 'meetings of support', 'providing the necessary legitimacy of the so-called "people's will" to the official Serbian policy' (Knežević 1996: 409). The second genre was also popular, and consisted of mostly pagan rituals of 'second entombment' legitimating the present nationalist ideology by the re-internment of the bones of a dead and until recently forgotten 'father of the nation'. And the third genre was based on a newly rediscovered interest in religion: old national symbols were reinvented and misused on a national scale. In connection with these, Knežević drew attention to the fact that the Serb nationalist ideology utilised the possibilities of these public theatricalities with the result that politics 'have become a self-sufficient, para-theatrical spectacle. [...] Our politicians have cast themselves in the roles of heroes, playing the "real drama" in front of an audience, permanently confronting individual enemies, political rivals, and universal foes – war, sanctions, NATO, hunger, poverty, disease' (Knežević 1996: 410).

From the insights of Berghaus, Griffin, Kundera, and Knežević, it is possible to conclude that the rhetoric of political direct theatre in dictatorial regimes, organised on national (as in Serbia, 1930s fascist Italy and Nazi Germany) or international (as in the former socialist countries) scale, attempts to unite the (inter)national past and present as a coherent, linear, and seamless narrative. At the same time, the rhetoric of political theatre reorganises everyday life according to the interests of the international (communist/socialist) or the given country's national ideology. The constant construction of that (inter)national reality is manifested as a visual spectacle aiming to align the united block or nation behind its (inter)national leader. Characterising

dictatorial regimes in general, the notion of theatricalised society thus serves as the total organisational force of everyday life, and thoroughly defines public thinking.

In dictatorial regimes, the rhetoric of political direct theatre used for unscrupulous political propaganda constructs everyday life as theatricality. Knežević also pointed out that 'the street, indeed all public space, always has been the place for unquestionable, obvious, and strictly controlled manipulation of the masses' (Knežević 1996: 407 and 409). The regime strictly controls the construction of reality, and attempts to erase different views and voices from the ones officially available. In spite of obvious stage-management, the regime usually claims that these officially constructed realities are 'true' and 'genuine'. Due to these theatricalities, a so-called counter-rhetoric can also be realised claiming that 'real' reality can still be found 'elsewhere', where the regime cannot extend its influence.<sup>143</sup> In that case, 'outside' is usually conceived as *the* genuine reality, uninfected by 'evil force' of official stage management. Public consciousness under dictatorial regimes is usually characterised by the bipolar system of outside/inside and us/them, and everyday life is also organised along the structural power of these binaries. In fact, for a long time 'outside' featured in the imagination of many East Europeans as an idealised version of Western Europe, materialised in such status symbols as a Western car, a Western holiday, Coca Cola, Levi jeans, etc.

The bipolar system of dictatorial regimes is built on the fact that domination is gained by force, and maintained by violent actions and institutions such as imprisonment, censorship, and secret police. As domination can be held by force only for a short period, the regime needs to cover its own violence, and to represent itself as 'normal' through the theatricalised cultural, political, and ideological tactics and practices of cultural hegemony. Once legitimisation is gained, the regime is accepted by both the inside and outside world. Then its maintenance and constant renewal depends mostly on the maintenance of the myth of the (inside and outside) 'enemy'.<sup>144</sup> The myth of enemy is one of the main organising forces as it keeps the various forces of society together, uniting them as enemies or against the enemies. Parallel to this, the dictatorial

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<sup>143</sup> On this issue see Kundera's novel *Life is Elsewhere* (Kundera 1987).

<sup>144</sup> The myth of the enemy is not confined to dictatorships. Developing into the state of superpower during the cold war and against the USSR, the US administration also depends on having an external enemy – the 'evil empires' or the 'axis of evil' etc. – see Tim Raphael's article on the Reagan



regime can also claim that the state maintains order, looks after its citizens, and is alert to defend itself and its citizens from these enemies.<sup>145</sup> The function of theatricality in these regimes is to cover their authoritarian power, totalitarian hierarchy, held by sheer military forces; and to legitimise the status quo as cultural hegemony.

Even in totalitarian regimes, however, dominance is never absolutely exclusive. Neither the strictest censorship, nor the cruellest secret police, nor the abundantly theatricalised propaganda can erase different voices. Hence, various forms of alternative or directly oppositional culture-politics exist, while the regime attempts to keep these forms of cultural politics under control, to threaten their members by sheer violence or accusation, or to incorporate them into the official system by force, blackmail or by offering them privileged status. As these resistant voices are erased from the officially controlled public domain, these voices need substitutive mediums. The cultural sphere, most of all the arts, is thus politicised in these regimes, and often interpreted as the public demonstration of unofficial voices.

By demonstrations, riots, and marches, the different views visually re-present and criticise theatricalised society under totalitarian regimes, and reveal the various stagings of that society. The Yugoslavian theatre researcher, Sanja Jovičević, drew attention to the resistant practices used in the protests in Serbia during the winter of 1996/1997 (see Jovičević 1998). At one of the actions, activists distributed printed tickets for the protest free in advance.<sup>146</sup> With that simple action, protesters drew attention to the theatricality of the Milosevič-regime. The Milosevič-regime, like other totalitarian regimes, theatricalised the streets and other public places and forums of everyday life. The rhetoric of the protest action accordingly also publicly declared its theatricality. Re-theatricalising the practice used by the regime, that action revealed the ideology of the regime and also expressed a desire to get rid of that sort of theatricalised regime.

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administration (Raphael 1999).

<sup>145</sup> One of the most elaborated practices of creating (the myth of) the enemy can be seen in the fabricated and overtly political trials in the 1930s USSR, and the 1950s Hungary for instance. These events called trials only with huge exaggeration were scripted in advance, employing people as actors and actresses; their testimony and accusation were also scripted, and the judgement of the 'trial' was also set in advance. The accused were of course condemned as the enemy of the people's state. That example also highlights that anyone could easily become an 'enemy' one day (see István Szabó's film, *The Taste of Sunshine*).

<sup>146</sup> For further examples, see Jovičević (1998) and Knežević (1996).

### *Political direct theatre in postindustrial societies*

Without any attempt to identify dictatorial regimes with the postindustrial democracies of contemporary Euro-American world, these democracies have also recognised the power of public theatricalities. Postindustrial democracies can be characterised by a plurality of voices, multiple representations of reality, and the theatricalisation of a fragmentation of individual desires. These voices, representations, and fragments are realised by visual frameworks in which information is dispersed verbally, textually, visually, proximally, and spatially, and presented by performative means. In these democracies, we can witness the conscious impression management and the aestheticisation of the visual representations of individuals, groups, and entire societies in the name of persuasion.

The theatrical occasions of everyday life are nowhere more obvious than in politics. Drawing on Nyikolaj Jevrejnov's concept of theatre instinct, Goffman's theory of presentation, and Burke's practice of dramatism, Art Borreca argued that 'ever since theatre emerged as an aesthetic mode, both theatre practitioners and politicians [...] have had to deal with the affinities between politics and theatre' (Borreca 1993: 56). The discipline investigating the relation between theatre and politics is called dramaturgism.<sup>147</sup> Dramaturgism is based on the premise that 'human beings are symbol-using animals and all human actions share the property of symbolising, therefore human actions enacted in space and time, realized in the three-dimensional management of language, clothing, gestures, and objects' (Borreca 1993: 58). Early political dramaturgism analysed theatrical aspects of politics, because it attempted to demonstrate the ways by which politics had become corrupted by 'the evil forces' of theatre. Behind that approach, there are at least two assumptions. On the one hand, the real world of politics and the fictional world of theatre are separated phenomena. On the other, politics is not theatrical at all, or if it becomes theatrical, it is the consequence that the forms of theatre infected politics. Early political dramaturgism thus defined its (otherwise illusionary) aim to de-theatricalise politics.

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<sup>147</sup> For a short introduction to dramaturgism and about the connection between dramaturgism and theatrical dramaturgy, see Borreca's article, 'Political Dramaturgy' (Borreca 1993), and Dennis Brissett's and Charles Edgley's introduction to their book, *Life as Theater: A Dramaturgical Source Book* (Brissett



Borreca<sup>148</sup> pointed out, however, that another line of thinking can be found in dramaturgism based upon the assumption that politics is in its core and *par excellence* theatrical. Political representation is theatrical, because 'political society comes into being when society organizes itself as theatre, by producing representatives who are intended at most to act for the people and who at least act before them, are observed by them (are objects of spectatorship)' (Borreca 1993: 67). Politics realised as theatricality, however, only reflects the phenomenon that postindustrial society is organised by theatricality in general. That society develops its stages (mass communications systems) that 'compile a theatrical organization of the world (places where politicians, activists, etc., can be observed by mass audiences); and moreover, that compel a theatrical consciousness of political reality, a sense that some degree of performance skill is essential to the attainment of political goals. With its impulse of representation, [...] politics contains the seeds of theatre within it; but only 'becomes' theatre when it manifests itself as such, when representatives are provided with stages where they become observed by audiences, and when spectatorship – a demand for stage performance – becomes the norm in political interaction' (Borreca 1993: 68).

The inherent and unavoidable connection between theatre and politics became obvious for the American voters and the international public when the former Hollywood actor, Ronald Reagan, was elected as the President of the United States.<sup>148</sup> As Joel Schechter pointed out, 'Reagan's progress from Hollywood films to White House press conferences attested to theatricalized society which has praised politicians and office-seekers for gifts previously appreciated in actors. Reagan's rehearsals for press conferences and his reliance on media advisers called attention to the inherent theatricality of political events' (Schechter 1990: 154). Recognising this, Schechter also took part as political candidate in the Connecticut local elections in 1985 and in 1986, and ran for the state senate in 1988. In his third campaign, he developed a detailed satirical tactic using a theatre group, issuing satiric press releases, organising demonstrations and protests, and writing political satiric columns in newspapers. Each time he ran as the representative of the New Heaven Green party, and each time he lost

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and Edgley 1990: 1-47).

<sup>148</sup> For a detailed analysis of Reagan's use of theatrical means, see Raphael 1999.

to a Democrat.<sup>149</sup>

Reagan's and Schechter's cases demonstrate on a different scale that although the theatricalisation of politics and everyday life is extremely strong in dictatorial regimes, it does not belong exclusively to them. It is a general tendency in which the theatrical dimension can be found in the core of politics. In postindustrial societies, the rhetoric of theatricality is used and utilised to form and manipulate public and private opinion, as well as the persuasion of voters; to legitimate the presented reality; and to obtain consensus by appealing to people's emotion, fantasies and desires. Though Schechter consciously applied the practices and strategies of theatre in his campaigns, his defeat reminds us that 'electoral theatre by itself will hardly change the constitution of power, although it provides the illusion that an electable alternative exists' (Schechter 1990: 163). His defeat also drew attention to the fact that though politics is obviously not theatre, it is difficult to decide when it is not, and raises the following questions: who controls the means of production and reception, and how is resistance possible?

### *Protest as political direct theatre – Reading June 18*

In contemporary postindustrial societies, resistance needs conscious rhetoric in order to be expressively performed and effectively delivered. Streets and other outdoor public places are transformed into stages where alternative practices, collective reflexivity, and oppositional views are visually displayed; where actions are exaggerated, and ritualised; where masquerading encourages experimenting with behaviour and identity slippage; where rulers or ruling ideas are either exalted or attempted to be overthrown. These are the stages where protests against dominant socio-political forces are also performed.

In his book, *The Radical in Performance*, Baz Kershaw defined radical protest as performance 'wrestling successfully with the entropic resistance of histories shaped by dominant socio-political forces' (Kershaw 1999: 90). Analysing the major post-war rallies, demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, peace-camps, and vigils, Kershaw argued for a dramaturgy of protest, and detected its major changes in the past forty years. He differentiated between the modern and the postmodern versions of protest dramaturgy.

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<sup>149</sup> See the details on Schechter's own campaign in his article (Schechter 1990).



The former, characterised by directly violent confrontation against a known and well-defined enemy in the name of revolutionary 'progress', recommends direct action, and its development draws on primarily political sources like political theory or ideology (see Kershaw 1999: 103-106).

In opposition to that, the postmodern version of protest is usually played out in the realm of the sign, sometimes in anger but mostly in an atmosphere of celebration, giving opportunities for revulsion, and leaving the interpretation of the nature of any action used open to the spectator. In this version, the imaginary and the possible are more important than the real, and the visionary is more persuasive than the rational. For Kershaw, postmodern protest is still directed against 'authority; increasingly it aimed to produce for both participants and spectators an image or an experience that gave a glimpse of the future as pure freedom from the constraint of the real, a hint of Utopia at the very moment in which it engaged in the messy business of street marches and peace camps. Hence protest, whether in the form of procession or occupation, became multi-vocal, polyphonic, as much an expression of difference as of unity' (Kershaw 1999: 105-106). Postmodern protest is organised reflexively, taking into consideration the plurality, multivocality, and flexibility of events, tactics, and strategies. It is characterised by non-linear forms, polyphony and heteroglossa; multiple referenced images; slogans aphoristic and punning; satire and caricature. Postmodern protest does not attempt directly to subvert dominant ideology and hierarchy, but rather it shows how resistance is possible.

Though Kershaw considered modern and postmodern versions of radical protest as two entirely distinctive phenomena, the 1999 Protest Against Capitalism (*June 18*) used elements from both protest versions and displayed a mixture of modern and postmodern forms, tactics and practices. One of the important features of *June 18* was that it mixed the elements of previous protests in its organisation. The earlier protests (the Grosvenor Square (London) demonstration of March 1968, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Tiananmen Square occupation of 1989 for instance) were usually organised locally, though sometimes not for local, not even national, but rather for international cases. Though *June 18* was organised globally, involving more than forty countries, it was acted out locally. Its rhetoric was international, intended to speak cross-culturally and cross-nationally, but delivered by local and national means and practices. For the

first time in the history of protests, *June 18* was organised on the internet by various alternative groups providing information on its global and local built-up, order, strategies, etc. ([www.j18.org](http://www.j18.org), [www.gn.apc.org/june18](http://www.gn.apc.org/june18), [www.messages.to/the\\_people](http://www.messages.to/the_people), [www.i.am./transnational](http://www.i.am./transnational) for instance). For the first time also, these groups could continuously offer information on the events and actions on the internet on the day of the protest itself thereby by passing the control of the authorities ([www.j18.org](http://www.j18.org), [www.greennet.org.uk/june18/news](http://www.greennet.org.uk/june18/news), [www.nodo50.org/reclaim](http://www.nodo50.org/reclaim), [www.xinet.com/rts](http://www.xinet.com/rts), [www.bak.spc.org/j18/flyers/boston](http://www.bak.spc.org/j18/flyers/boston), [www.j18.cat.org.au](http://www.j18.cat.org.au) for instance). Later they could also re-play the events through photos, reports, action-updates, video and audio sketches (see [www.bak.spc.org/j18](http://www.bak.spc.org/j18)). The globally organised *June 18* movement could thus utilise local practices and conventions, while its aim was to express the protestors' dissatisfaction with global capitalism, utilising the means and methods realised and preferred by global capitalism. Keeping local cultural differences, the rhetoric of *June 18* could thus realise resistance – at least in theory – as a global possibility.

The London *June 18* – corresponding to the principle and practice of other local *June 18* protests – transformed the symbols of capitalism and postindustrial economy into props, and the streets and other public places of inner London to stages where resistance was acted out. The London *June 18* started at Cannon Street underground station where six hundred bicyclists gathered at eight in the morning, proceeding to the financial centre of London, the City. It ended late at night with protestors partying and dancing in the fountains of Trafalgar Square. The rhetoric of the protest built up as a postmodern carnival with parody, mockery, and caricatures, continued with modernist-type violent attacks on known enemies (shops, banks, restaurants, etc.) and between protestors, consumers, workers and police forces, and ended as postmodern celebration of fun and happiness. With the mixture of modernist and postmodernist tactics, the dramaturgy of protest reached a new stage. Until a protest based on postmodern tactics is performed in the realm of the sign, the authorities take it as play, entertainment, spectacle, and fictional direct theatre. When protest, however, employs violent attacks against the status symbols and the main institutions of the given order, it threatens to destroy the fetishes of postindustrial economy and corporate capitalism. In that case, the authorities cannot stand back, and, the protest steps from the world of fiction into the accepted world of reality.



### *June 18 and the media*

Apart from the fact that *June 18* was acted out on the various local public stages of the cities involved, it was also replayed on the stages offered by the media. Like its organisation, the practice of the media again separated, but also connected *June 18* to earlier protests. Earlier protests can be characterised by the fact that usually local protests were transformed by the media globally; television channels and newspapers presented the most theatrical and spectacular actions of the protest on their local stages. The locally realised events of *June 18* were organised globally, and the media replayed these events and reflected them both globally and locally. The intertextual references to the local concerns and the global issues, and the mechanisms of the alternative and established media situated *June 18* in a complex network of references, both international and national.

Reports on the events of the London *June 18*, for instance, differ in the way in which the events were framed and understood. Both established and alternative media agreed that the proceedings started off with a carnival-like atmosphere, led to confrontation and violence, then returned back to carnival again. Newspapers like *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Mirror*, *The Independent*, and even *The Guardian*, and television channels like the *BBC* and *Channel 4*, i.e., established media, accused the protesters of causing the violence, while alternative media accused the police of turning the peaceful demonstration into violent confrontation. The alternative media ([www.bak.spc.org/j18](http://www.bak.spc.org/j18) and [www.infoshop.org/octo/j18\\_reflections](http://www.infoshop.org/octo/j18_reflections) for instance) framed the events in which police brutality was the sheer sign of defence of the established order based on global capitalism. The established media arranged the events through another frame in which the focus was on violence, caused by the protesters. The established printed media described the protesters with negative and pejorative expressions like 'drunk', 'pin-up-nosed' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June, 1999), 'body-pierced' trouble-makers (*The Times*, 19 June, 1999), and 'mob' (*The Mirror*, 19 June, 1999), while their photos emphasised the clashes between protesters and the police, the serious injuries, and the bloody, fearful, and order-less actions (see *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June, 1999). The articles of the established newspapers (see *The*

*Guardian*, and *The Independent* 19 June 1999 for instance) argued that the violence was caused by demonstrators, and illustrated that by photos showing demonstrators throwing rocks toward a police line. Apart from that, they also emphasised the symbolic danger the protest posed towards society in general by placing these abnormal and deviant pictures among the usual articles, describing the 'normal' working of everyday life. Though there were slight differences, the established media in general represented the violence of the protest as – in Turner's terms – liminal performance which inverted the established order for a while, but could not succeed in subverting it (see Turner 1982: 20-60). Apart from that, the established media described the London *June 18* through the metaphor of the volcano. For that metaphor, the micro-events of the protest were seen synecdochally as the protest in general, and interpreted as instability in the structure of society. The implied function of that view was condensed into the image of the volcano that suggests that protest is somehow always within itself out of control. 'The sources of [its] radicalism [...] are always by implication then associated with the irrational, the uncontrollable, the dark side of human' (Kershaw 1999: 120). The protest thus represented by the established media implicitly suggested that frightening chaos is the only alternative to the present established order. Hence, the established media played its role in the system of hierarchy as it replayed the protest of the London *June 18* in which the violence synecdochally represented the danger of the protest towards society in general, and the present status quo in particular. In general, however, the established media thus created a theatrical representation in which the protest implicitly reaffirmed the present order. The rhetoric of the established media discredited the event with its alienating mechanism, pursued it to the margins of political influence, and diverted readers'/viewers' attention from the real aims of the protest. The representations on the protest created by the established media meant that people stayed away and condemned the protest. Consequently, the established media created such theatrical representations of the protest that finally prevented *June 18* from making connections with people outside the narrow sub-cultural ghetto of the activists, and building alternatives to the present social order.

Reading the articles of the alternative media, however, another aspect of theatricality can be detected: theatricality is not reserved exclusively for any social groups. It can be effectively employed not only by the establishment, but by alternative



forces as well. In case of *June 18*, the alternative media created another representation of the protest. There, most of the authors were concerned with the effectiveness of the protest and argued that it was a failure caused by its chosen rhetoric. For them, the basic problem of its rhetoric was that it consisted of only modernist protest techniques, used in the student protests of 1968, and earlier in the trade union movements. These techniques consisted of breaking into and occupying financial buildings, restaurants, shops; setting fire on streets; breaking windows; chanting slogans; marching with slogan boards; throwing rocks; damaging cars and of course causing violent confrontation with the police. Former protests usually used these means for a single issue (animal rights, wages) or against known enemies (specific nations, institutions, or shops). In *June 18*, however, the enemy was global capitalism. As an alternative commentator clearly pointed out, 'global capitalism is not a place ("financial centres") or a "thing" ("multinational corporations"), but it is an exploitative social relationship which is dependent upon wage-labour and commodity exchange where profit is derived from unpaid labour' (see *Reflection on J18*). As Andrew X summarised it, the protest could not achieve its aim to attack global capitalism, since 'the content of the campaign activity has changed, the form of activity has not' (Andrew X, *Reflection on J18 – [www.infoshop.org/octo/j18-reflection](http://www.infoshop.org/octo/j18-reflection)*).

In contrast to these views, the protest was not an absolute failure. *June 18* drew attention to numerous oppositional groups, individuals, political views, and sub-cultures, built up a working relation among them, organised an event globally, and reflected and replayed it locally. Its resistance towards established order was expressed by mixing the elements of both modernist and postmodernist protest rhetoric. The most theatrical aspect of the protest was reflected in the fact that protesters used giant masks, dressed-up as fake city traders in suits with a label 'slave'; others danced to live music on the streets. Apart from these, the protesters built a brick wall in front of a bank building and occupied the centre of the City by bicycles. The protesters were dressed in bright and different colours, wearing various types of dresses, hairstyles and other accessories, and behaved according to their own habits without any central organising force. Through these, the protesters demonstrated their freedom, choices, lifestyles, and multivocality: that waving, curving, and multiple-centred aesthetic was in opposition (even in visual terms) to the 'straight' aesthetic employed by the official rhetoric of the police, moving

in geometrical forms and wearing uniforms.

Though the entire protest could not realise its initial oppositional aim, there were moments that demonstrate that the organisers of *June 18* were aware that they were rewriting the rhetoric of previous modernist protests. The London *June 18* replayed for instance one of the best known non-violent modernist protest actions. In the early 1970s, Abbie Hoffman's group scattered dollar bills from the public gallery of the New York Stock Exchange, during business hours at the Stock Exchange. Trading stopped as the dealers collected the bills from the floor. The action of Hoffmans' group was first built on spatial division between 'them' downstairs (regular participants – brokers and dealers), and 'us' upstairs (temporary visitors, i.e., Hoffman's group). To the spatial division, ideological and moral division were connected too. Hence, the brokers and dealers 'down below' became the very epitome of greed and selfishness, while above, Hoffman's group, working together and scattering largesse, expressed the exact opposite. That opposition was based partly on the modernist illusion that the members of her group could be 'above' physically and symbolically in that situation, and partly on the illusion that Hoffman's group can be independent of trading, money, and economy.

In the London *June 18*, that action was replayed with considerable modifications. At a given moment, unknown construction workers in yellow jackets appeared on the top of a financial building, and cast silver banknotes down on the mass gathered there. While the action of Hoffmans' group demonstrated what they thought of the Stock Exchange, that action drew the attention to the fact that money and capital influence workers, traders, brokers, and protesters alike. While Hoffman's group played the role of the visitor, taking part only temporarily in the system, here the unknown construction workers, casting themselves as employees and locating themselves on their 'proper' place, on the top of a building, emphasised that they were also as integral parts of the system as city tradesmen, and left the decision open for both protesters and city workers alike whether or not to scramble for the banknotes. As the banknotes were deliberately and visibly fake, however, only the signs of real banknotes, scrambling for the money took place on the level of the sign, and its meaning was realised in the imagination of the participants. These modifications draw the attention to one of the main organising principles of the protest: it is not possible to be independent of the system, the position of the 'outside' is illusory, and resistance is to be executed within the dominant system



of representations, reversing their initial aims and claims. That highlights another important feature of contemporary theatricality: it does not deny its past and its history, but utilises their elements with a sharp critical edge criticising both their previous usages and the present order and status quo.

Consequently, though alternative commentators declared *June 18* ineffective, established institutions presented *June 18* as serious threat towards society. This way, the establishment not only discredited the aims of the protest, but also utilised its representations for their own hegemonic purposes. It is understandable, since – as Baudrillard pointed out in *Simulations* – power and dominant hegemony require for their working a matrix of significant oppositions, because capital can only function behind a moral superstructure (see Baudrillard 1983). Therefore, *June 18* was exaggerated and simulated with the effect that it became the representation of the protest used by agencies of power and capital to regenerate a reality principle in distress. The protest was represented by the established media as a danger through which the moral superstructure and the reality principle could thus be strengthened and re-established. That process draws the attention also to the fact that any hegemonic social institution and/or historical group is alert and responsive to alternative voices and the signs of resistance questioning and threatening dominance.

The rhetoric of power, explicated by established media, constructed representations of the real that were probably familiar to readers and viewers from theatre, films, and television soap-operas where representations are staged as safe entertainment. In these representations, established order and society are defended from the danger of being destroyed by the usual heroes, e.g. police officers, FBI, CIA or other secret agents. Though order, hierarchy, and the status quo are constantly threatened in these representations, they are finally strengthened and re-established. This way, the representations of theatre, films, and television soap-operas and of the rhetoric of power mirror each other by simulating danger in order to control socio-political relations and to stabilise dominant ideology. In the case of *June 18*, however, the rhetoric of power was not absolutely effective, since the segregation of the protesters as local/global economic criminals could not erase their resistant voices. The erasure was not successful, because protesters could also have access to and effectively used the alternative means of production in the given locations, in TV and radio studios in editorial rooms and on the

internet.

#### **2.2.4. Conclusion: theatricality and resistance**

In the contemporary bazaar of realities, the emphasis falls upon representation, legitimisation, and the constant negotiation for power and authority. The continuous and conscious reconstruction and representation of reality employ rhetoric, and give opportunity to persuade audiences. Hence, everyday life needs to be performed in consumer-oriented societies. On private and public stages, lifestyle, individuality, and personality are (p)reserved in the visible, and expressed by performative manoeuvres. In the contemporary masked ball, the body is in the centre. Though stimulated and simulated, the body needs to be kept beautiful and young with fitness, diet, make-up, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery.

The constant negotiation for power and authority is also valid for dominant ideology as it can maintain its legitimisation only through cultural hegemony. Dominant ideology needs to be flexible and alert to the challenges of alternative politics and culture. Hence, dominant ideology cannot be successful by silencing, suppressing, and erasing the various voices available in postindustrial societies. As Michele de Certeau argued in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, when he investigated the possible, the dominant and the realised interpretations of social discourses,

*a way of using imposed by the system constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimisations. [...] Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game, that is, the space instituted by others, characterise the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. People have to make do with what they have.*

Certeau 1984: 18

This is the core of postmodern resistance: how do people make do with what they have? How do people create something for themselves in their everyday life using the possibilities offered by dominant ideology, but without subjection to their forces? As dominant ideology is unable to restrict and totally control the usage of its own products and working mechanisms, it might give the chance to develop alternative uses, practices,



and tactics. The theatricalisation of private and public spheres thus realises a never-ever seen improvisatory play of theatricality in which power very rarely manages to gain absolute dominance, and is very rarely able to suppress, silence, and destroy the various different voices available in society.

Realising dominant expectations, however, individuals and social groups usually give up even the possibility of resistance (see Susanna Ford's case). Mere alteration to convention cannot be conceived as resistant (see royal wedding). Direct opposition to dominant ideology and the status quo often reassures and strengthens the very fields protestors intend to attack and overrule (see *June 18*). In the age of postmodern fragmentation and media culture, resistance needs careful and conscious planning; and relatively safe territories on which its tactics and strategies can be tested. Postmodern resistance thus seeks phenomena in which experiments can be delivered and in which everyday life can be relatively safely criticised and challenged. Postmodern resistance prefers the phenomena called liminoid by Victor Turner. Exactly, because liminoid phenomena can generate 'a plurality of alternative models for living [...] which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles [...] in the direction of radical change' (Turner 1982: 33). Though the liminoid genres of literature, sport, cinema, and theatre are generally conceived as leisure and entertainment, they can also be seen as experimentation with variable repertoires. Seen as experimentation, the liminoid genres 'develop apart from the central economic and political processes, along the margins, in the interfaces and interstices of central and servicing institutions – they are plural, fragmentary, and experimental in character' (Turner 1982: 54).

Theatre, the familiar art form, does not play a very central role in everyday discourse (see Chapter 1). The theatre of today consists in the various forms of theatricality that take place inside each human being and outside on the streets and other public places. As theatricalisation seems to be fundamental, due to the constant (re)construction of reality, theatricality also leaves open the possibilities for alternative voices and their practices, normally erased from contemporary conventional theatre. Against that improvisatory, highly specified, and extensive everyday theatricality, conventional theatre based on calculable and fixed rules is hopeless. Who wants to go to the conventional theatre when theatricality is so much more interesting, colourful, and

exciting? Especially, who wants to go to the theatre, when its most popular practices are mostly built on re-assurance, offering images of fairy-tale-like societies; when theatre is regarded as edutainment based on universally codified values, and illusory social criticism based on moralistic principles. In general, the practices of conventional theatre are unable to offer strategies, practices, and territories for exploration and resistance. In spite of these problems, theatre can still be seen as a liminoid phenomenon reflecting the multiple competing tensions of the surrounding world, visual culture, the aestheticisation of the everyday, and offering resistance and counter-hegemonic practices towards order, hegemony, and social hierarchy. In the following chapter, I shall analyse some of the practices of resistance in the theatre.



**ACTING**

**ORS**

**ROUS**

### 3.0. Staging resistance

Media researchers, sociologists, and cultural theorists, theatre historians and theatre theoreticians all share a view of theatre's limited and shrinking role in society. The American performance theorist, Richard Schechner, for instance proposed in a 1992 article that theatre would be 'the string quartet of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a beloved but extremely limited genre, a subdivision of performance' (Schechner 1992: 8). Five years later, he still argued that 'theatre is no longer a conveyor of basic information or the primary locus of social debate. C-SPAN, the Sunday morning talk shows, and all the apparent immediacy that television offers has moved in on one side, even as the intimacy and particularity of performance art has on the other. Movies fill the bill for large-scale narrative entertainment, and pop music takes care of sheer limbic drive. Seen this way, theatre has been muscled out of its former niche. It is much diminished and shrinking' (Schechner 1997: 5).

Like Schechner, Baz Kershaw also pointed out the diminishing role played by theatre in society and its severely restricted range of activity. Instead of the restricted function of theatre, Kershaw – like Schechner – favoured the radical in, and expressed by, performance. Building on Raymond Williams's analysis, Kershaw considered radical as 'a way of avoiding dogmatic and factional association while reasserting the need for vigorous and fundamental change' (Kershaw 1999: 18). Hence, the radical can appear only in those performances which set out

to create various kinds of freedom that are not only resistant to dominant ideologies, but also are sometimes transgressive, even transcendent, of ideology itself. In other words, the freedom that 'radical performance' invokes is not just freedom from oppression, repression, exploitation – the resistant sense of the radical – but also freedom to reach beyond existing systems of formalised power, freedom to create currently unimaginable form of association and action – the transgressive or transcendent sense of the radical.

Kershaw 1999: 18



Kershaw argued that theatre is opposed to radical performance. Analysing the London production of *Miss Saigon*, Kershaw pointed out that theatre is ‘a kind of social engine that helps to drive an unfair system of privilege’ (Kershaw 1999: 31). Theatre audiences must submit themselves to the disciplines transforming them into consumers, and live performances and performers into commodities, finally leading to the commodification of culture in general. The power of theatrical performance ‘is sucked dry by the peripherals of theatre (performance related commodities, customs, occasions) as [theatre] is transformed into a service industry with subsidiary retail outlets’ (Kershaw 1999: 47). The pleasure of theatre-going has become the most important element of the entire theatrical event, erasing even the impact deriving from the stage. As a result, theatre stages fewer and fewer new works and more and more previously proven successes, and performance related commodities have grown in number, replacing virtually the entire event.

Apart from *Miss Saigon*, Kershaw also investigated *Richard III*, directed by Richard Eyre at the Royal National Theatre (London), and Mark Ravenhill’s 1998 play, *Shopping and Fucking*, at the Royal Court Theatre (London). Kershaw admitted that ‘these plays appear to be attacking the injustices produced by late capitalist hierarchy and exploitation in modern democracies, but in the process of being staged in theatre buildings, in submitting to contemporary theatre as disciplinary machine, they succumb to what they attack’ (Kershaw 1999: 54). Due to its commodification and disciplinary mechanisms, for Kershaw, theatre – even its version attacking the injustices of contemporary society – is limited and incapable of articulating any kind of radicalism and expressing radical criticism towards society.

Though Kershaw’s claims are persuasive, their application to theatre *in general* is problematic. One problem is that Kershaw builds his argument about the limits of theatre on examples taken exclusively from mainstream British theatre. Though his examples are drawn from a rather limited area, he identified them with theatre *in general* without taking into consideration that there are practices beyond mainstream theatre and, indeed, beyond British theatre.

The other problem is that Kershaw’s assertions are based on the premise that like performance theorists (see Phelan 1993, Schechner 1994, and George 1996), he too conceives the relation between theatre and performance as a binary opposition. In that

binary opposition, theatre is characterised as the alienating, fixed, closed, and limited Other to which the limitless, open, and radical performance stands opposed. The contradiction underlying Kershaw's argument can be clearly detected when he investigates radical performance in the second part of his book. His examples include not only a wide range of performances and cultural performance-events (riots, protests, politics, prison activities), but rather surprisingly *theatrical* productions as well. The contradiction in Kershaw's theory of radical performance and limited theatre is that he demonstrates the boundlessness of radical performance through examples taken also from *theatre*. Kershaw refers to the productions of the Wooster Group's *LSD (...Just the High points...)* and *Route 1 and 9*, the street theatre of the Welfare State International's *Glasgow All Lit Up!*, the Pip Simmons Theatre Company's *The George Jackson Black & White Minstrel Show*, and the Fair Old Times Company's Reminiscence Theatre productions as if these theatrical performances were radical performances.

The terminological confusion over performance and theatre has a long history emerging from the 1970s debates on the presence of happenings, performances, and other experiments in contrast to the pretence of theatre. It was Michael Fried who first spelt out that contrast in theoretical terms in his 1968 article 'Art and Objecthood'. In that article, Fried rejected theatre as an evocation of an 'absent' reality through mimesis (see Fried 1968). As in later writings on performance, that rejection resulted in the refusal of the narrative, discursive, and mimetic qualities of theatre, as well as the negation of the status of theatre, i.e., its conventional practices as deployed in the American and European culture of the 1970s.

The terminological confusion can still be found in contemporary theorizing. The Wooster Group's *LSD (... Just the High Points ...)* for instance, emerging as one of the key subjects of postmodern theorising on theatre and performance, was considered by Gerald Rabkin (1983), David Savran (1988), John Rouse (1992), and Philip Auslander (1997) as theatrical performance, while Nick Kay (1991) and Kershaw (1999) regarded it as performance.<sup>150</sup> The task of the present work is not the clarification of that terminological confusion; rather, it aims to elucidate the principle causing that

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<sup>150</sup> The terminological confusion is also fuelled by the fact that in English the term performance is often used as a metonymic abbreviation of theatrical performance and of performance-art, without clarifying the different semantic fields covered by these terms.



confusion. That confusion is fuelled partly by the rejection of theatre, characterised by mimesis, narrative and discursive qualities, and regarded as a disciplinary system of dominant ideology; and partly by the invocation of an art form, embodied in the image of radical performance, characterised by criticism, invention, and radicalism. What connects the rejection of conservative theatre, and the invocation of radical performance is nothing less than the theory of *postmodern resistance*.

The theory of postmodern resistance is also extremely important in a situation in which American and British theatre theorists (see Aronson 2000, Kershaw 1999, and Dunn 1994, for instance) argue that theatre is no longer able to fulfil its counter-hegemonic role, resulting in the death of the so-called avant-garde theatre. In *American Avant-garde Theatre*, Arnold Aronson for instance claimed that due to the lack of funding, the ever-widening gap between theorists, practitioners, and spectators, the invention of new technology in home entertainment and the media, and the changed cultural situation in the 1990s, have all made avant-garde oppositional works impossible. Having functioned as the antithesis of the status quo, and stood in opposition to the practices and postures of mainstream society, 'the American avant-garde [theatre] that began in the late 1940s faded away in the 1990s' (Aronson 2000: 211). Aronson is right in the sense that in a cultural situation where there is no establishment, no fixed boundaries, no clearly marked official culture and no sense of forward motion, theatre built on opposition and transgression comes to an end. That does not mean, however, that the role of avant-garde theatre in undermining habitual patterns and social norms also dies out. Rather, theatre practitioners and theorists need to reconsider the working mechanism of theatre through which the theory of postmodern resistance can open new ways for theatre to reflect the changes in the world around us.

In his article 'Towards a concept of the political in postmodern theatre', Philip Auslander presented a schema of the practices of theatre to offer alternatives to dominant discourses through the theory of postmodern resistance. Based on Fredric Jameson's and Hal Foster's comments on postmodern culture, Auslander proposed that the postmodern political artists' primary function is pedagogical. In this sense, the artists' task is to provide cognitive maps which will help us 'to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle' (Auslander 1997: 60). For Auslander, criticism can only realise this aim when it takes up a

comprehensive role incorporating 'the functions of positioning the subject within dominant discourses and of offering strategies of counter-hegemonic resistance by exposing processes of cultural control and emphasising the traces of non-hegemonic discourses within the dominant without claiming to transcend its terms' (Auslander 1997: 61). In order to fulfil that comprehensive role, criticism must position itself within dominant discourses and practices, and it should investigate 'the processes which control [given representations]' (Fosters 1985) through the examination of iconography and the effects of mediation on political imaginings. Operating within the terms of postmodern culture conceived as a conjuncture of adversarial practices and discourses, criticism thus encourages 'a mode of perception that will enable the spectator to make sense of the dislocating postmodern sensorium (Auslander 1997: 70-71).

Based on Auslander's theory, radical criticism in the theatre can be achieved by using the structures, methods, and means of hegemonic culture and conventional theatre to reveal cultural control; to demonstrate strategies and practices that help spectators to reflect their own situation as individuals or as a community; and also to reveal how the dominant discourses, hegemony and hierarchy of the surrounding world are constructed, governing both inclusion and exclusion. In this sense, theatre is seen – in Turner's term – as a liminoid phenomenon. Though the area of use and the circle of users of theatre are much more limited than theatricality, theatre can serve as a relatively safe territory for experimentation towards reality-, and identity-construction, expressing the radical in both resistant and transgressive senses. Theatre as resistance is thus seen as Boal conceived it: an event where those marginal opinions can also be heard and seen which would be otherwise silenced and suppressed from public discourse; and an occasion which brings the visible and invisible, known and unknown, and utterable and unutterable social, ideological and political obstacles and boundaries of a certain community and/or society into the spotlight in which these are 'exposed to view'.

In this sense, resistance in the theatre is not meant by the Marxist terminology in which it refers to political theatre as agitprop aiming political judgement and political analysis of society. Rather, as Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer expressed in the introduction of their *Staging Resistance*, resistance is considered 'as a cultural practice that self-consciously operated at the level of interrogation, critique, and intervention, unable to stand outside the very institutions and attitudes it seeks to change' (Colleran



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and Spencer 1998: 1). Though a range of theatrical activity can be placed under the rubric of theatre as resistance, here, the theatrical practices – I shall analyse – attack the conventional elements and the basic assumptions of the established theatrical system, – those elements and assumptions, which are widely used by theatre practitioners, and familiar to audiences. By destabilising and deconstructing familiar elements and typical assumptions, these theatrical practices challenge the basic suppositions and working conditions of the entire theatrical system, the strategies through which conventional performances are constructed, and the worldviews these performances reveal and foster. Therefore, these practices present resistance by questioning the conventions, the basic suppositions of what theatre is, and how it functions in contemporary society, as well as by offering alternatives on what theatre can be, and what kind of role theatre should fulfil in postindustrial society in general and consumer culture in particular.

Though earlier conventional theatre was analysed as process, institution, and phenomenon, that approach cannot be applied to these practices. These practices often organise their tactics and strategies to change dominant concepts by playing together or even playing out the interpretation of theatre as process, institution, and phenomenon. Since theatre as resistance in American and British theatre has been well documented and researched (see Reinelt 2001, Colleran and Spencer 1998, and Auslander 1997 for instance), I choose Hungarian theatre as my prime example. First, I shall demonstrate some of the practices of theatrical resistance in Hungarian theatre, and then I shall deal with those practices, which can all be seen as integral parts of Auslander's postmodern theory of resistance.<sup>151</sup>

### *3.1. Resistance in Hungarian theatre*

The various practices of resistance can only be grasped properly if we are aware of at least some of the criteria, working mechanisms, and ideological functions of Hungarian theatre. I shall therefore locate Hungarian theatre within the context of East European theatre, then analyse how resistance worked in the social and political milieu of the

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<sup>151</sup> For a detailed analysis of how resistance works in performance-art see Carlson 1996: 165-186.

socialist regime before 1989. Finally, I shall attempt to interpret resistance as it surfaces in contemporary Hungarian theatrical performances.

### *Theatre in Eastern Europe before and after 1989*

Before 1989 theatre in Eastern Europe was not regarded merely as art and/or leisure, but as a public forum with various organising forces – political, cultural, and social – reflecting the life of the community. Theatre functioned as a cultural, political, and social institution, closely connected to everyday politics, and the formation of everyday life, the state, and the life of the individual.<sup>152</sup> Before 1989, theatre operated under centralised control: there were strict regulations concerning the presentational framework and there was textual censorship. Performances were expected to express the appropriate Party line: socialist ideology striving for a classless society. Theatre was generally seen as (socialist) realist, directed to show how things *officially* were, and used as an official weapon against pluralism. As the social hierarchy was maintained by armed force, theatre was utilised to legitimate culturally the power of those in political charge. In exchange, the state fully subsidised the official theatres. The Romanian director Ion Caramitru summarised the complex social, artistic, cultural, and political functions theatre fulfilled in Eastern Europe. For him, theatre ‘used to have a very special kind of importance, not only in Romania but everywhere in the former Communist bloc. Sometimes it was a place to worship, sometimes a forefront of resistance. It created a special language, being clever enough to escape the censorship through metaphors, double meanings and allusion’ (Caramitru in Delgado and Heritage 1996: 58). Though Caramitru’s remark has a nostalgic tone about the exclusively resistant function of East European theatre, he demonstrated that theatre in the region was generally considered significant during the years of socialist regimes as a public place offering opportunities to present both dominant and oppositional voices.

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<sup>152</sup> In Eastern Europe, the direct connection between theatre and state is a much earlier phenomenon. In the nineteenth century the idea of the ‘national theatre’ – often a country’s very first official theatre – was frequently conceived and realised as part of the emergence of the nation state. As these nation states often emerged in resistance to foreign domination, theatre, especially the national theatre, was central to the expression of resistance. After World War II, that convention was also utilised for official communist and later socialist propaganda.



As the channels of politics, industry and media were under centralised control and political censorship, other – highly symbolic – means were utilised to express resistance, i.e., those views that were not tolerated by the regime. In spite of control and censorship, a resistant, especially political art and theatre, could thus emerge in Eastern Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Writing on the Russian studio theatre movement, Ekaterina Salnikova argued for instance that these theatres brought a fresh spirit of experimentation, revived informal, friendly relations inside the ensemble framework, avoided bureaucracy and rejected official Soviet policy (Salnikova 1998: 77). Dubravka Knežević pointed out that these theatres in Yugoslavia ‘took responsibility for interrogating reality, unmasking prejudice, negating dogma, and slapping awake society’s atrophied moral sensibility’ (Knežević 1996:408). Dennis C. Beck revealed the communal function of these theatres, arguing that the small theatres in Czechoslovakia ‘realized a dream shared by many theatre radicals of the 1960s – to establish communion with their audiences and to help change the world outside the theatre’ (Beck 1996: 420). Theatres in Poland also fulfilled the function of resistance: they developed a special language of allusion and were seen as places for reflection and ideological argument (Baniewicz 1996: 467). These theatres were not subsidised by the state. They were all to be found on the social and institutional periphery (in small youth clubs, university camps, or in small provincial towns) and were appreciated by their audiences mainly for their oppositional role.

Eastern European theatres of resistance were also fertile, vital and inventive in aesthetic terms. In order to express their oppositional views, these theatres had to introduce effective dramaturgical techniques: their productions were double coded, and the interpretation of their coded messages depended on their interpretative community. Due to their oppositional role, these theatres had to create newer and newer means, tactics, and strategies to conceal their social criticism and their radical views on political and social change from the censors, while making it clear and comprehensible to their audiences.<sup>153</sup>

Around 1989, the regimes in the region collapsed, generating serious turmoil in the everyday life, the art, and the theatre of the region (see Klaič 2000, 1998, and Beck

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<sup>153</sup> For an excellent analysis of the strategies of the Czech community theatres, see Beck’s article (Beck

1996 for instance). With the collapse of the regimes, the bipolar system and its polar counterpart, the parallel polis were also destroyed. As the channels of communication were liberated, pluralism emerged and theatre lost its central position, political context, oppositional function, and was situated in a sudden vacuum.<sup>154</sup> Theatre became free as there was no longer any political censorship. But that freedom also introduced serious economic and institutional problems, and also resulted in the restructuring of East European theatre's social and ideological function. As the state no longer offered full support of theatre, most of the theatres were obliged to become commercial enterprises. As the state no longer controlled art and theatre, the formerly oppositional theatres lost their political functions and their oppositional roles. These theatres were thus either closed down or were built into the system of the dominant practice. Some of them, however, managed to reassess their counter-hegemonic and oppositional functions.<sup>155</sup>

### *Hungarian theatre before and after 1989*

Like the other East European theatres before 1989, Hungarian theatre was a public forum and acted as an important conduit for official propaganda. In spite of strict stylistic and political control, a new so-called alternative, especially political art and theatre, developed in 1970s. Though the history of Hungarian alternative theatre is less known and even less researched (see Bérczes 1996, Várszegi 1993 and 1990) than that of conventional practices, it can be said that the concept of alternative theatre was defined by the gesture of opposition. As one of the leading Hungarian alternative theatre directors, Tamás Fodor, explained it in an interview: 'Alternative theatre meant opposition to dominant practice. [...] Alternative movements usually refer to the

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1996).

<sup>154</sup> In his lecture, Caramitru also conjured up the moment when theatre lost its privileged status in Romania. As he argued, 'the action on the street was more spectacular, more important, and more vital. We had elections, demonstrations, a parliament, trials and the arrival of the miners. There was television for fourteen hours a day, not two or three hours as we had before. Theatre lost its audience, lost the people. Could you imagine that before 21 December 1989 we had a full house when we were playing *Hamlet* or *The Tempest* or *Home*? Immediately after 5/6 January 1990, we opened the theatre. No-one came' (Caramitru in Delgado and Heritage 1996: 58).

<sup>155</sup> Many theatre practitioners of the formerly oppositional theatre either went back to their 'normal' profession, as theatre was only a mode of expression of their dissatisfaction with the regime, or joined the dominant system mainly because of economic reasons. Very few theatre practitioners can afford (and are willing) to be in alternative theatre today.



movements that are in opposition to official forms and practices' (Fodor 1993: 63). Due mostly to the political contextualisation of everyday life, alternative theatre was based on radical or less radical cultural, social, and political opposition; emphasised 'outside' positions, and offered cultural, social, and political criticism. Therefore, alternative theatre aimed to transgress the terms and conditions of everyday life, and favoured a sort of counter-cultural existence for theatre practitioners and audiences, as well as the wider strata of society.<sup>156</sup>

The year of 1989 introduced several changes in Hungarian theatre. One of the changes is that Hungarian theatre – like the other East European theatres – lost its political function and central position. The other is concerned with finance: the state does not support fully the theatre anymore. Today, the Hungarian theatre system is financially (i.e., structurally) divided into two groups: the state/city council owned theatres and the independent groups. The former theatres receive support from the state and the city council for infrastructure, administration, and maintenance, and from various public bodies and state/council funds for their productions. The latter groups receive support only for their productions from the same public bodies and state/council funds. Often without rehearsal room, infrastructural background, and financial support for administration, the independent groups are in a worse (financial) situation than the state/council owned theatres. The situation is frustrating, because the renewal of Hungarian theatrical conventions usually derives from these independent groups. Nowadays, these theatrical groups are, however, in such a difficult financial situation that they can hardly survive.

Though financial support for theatre is relatively high, most of the state/city council owned theatres (and also some of the independent groups) have become commercial enterprises: they organise their repertory in a way to satisfy their audiences' expectations. As the everyday life in Hungary, as in Eastern Europe in general, is going through serious political, cultural, and social changes, the social expectations of theatre demand that theatre support and reassure society in general, and its spectators in particular. In Hungary, theatre is expected to be an apolitical institution. Theatre in

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<sup>156</sup> From the 1960s to the 1980s, József Ruszt's Universitas Együttes (University Group, Budapest), István Paál's Egyetemi Színpad (University Theatre, Szeged), Péter Halász's Kassák Stúdió, and Tamás Fodor's Stúdió K. represented Hungarian oppositional theatre. See their analysis in Várszegi (1992),

Hungary is thus falsely placed on the 'pedestal' of art offering distanced slices of illusionary fantasy worlds, ultra-safe commodities, and entertaining trick-tracks, simplified social problems with obvious moral messages. In general, Hungarian theatres – like the conventional theatres of the Western world – are not expected to deal with the hard issues of everyday life: they are regarded as entertainment with some artistic merits.

The social, political, and cultural context that evolved after the 1989 changes also made it necessary to reinterpret the elements, mechanism, and function of alternative theatre. After 1989, the outsider position that previously characterised alternative theatre became untenable, and parallel to this, the alternative movement suddenly lost its oppositional and counter-cultural principles. In the course of this reinterpretation, another tendency has emerged. Instead of opposition, contemporary alternative theatres can be found today *not outside* the official Hungarian theatre system, but rather *within* that system. Thus, any theatrical performances can be regarded as alternative when their practices present poetic, social, cultural, and political alternatives considered as resistant to dominant theatrical and everyday discourses.

In general, contemporary Hungarian theatre can still be characterised by the *structural* and *poetic* criteria developed under the socialist regime. Structurally, Hungarian theatres are usually built on the *company-system*<sup>157</sup>; *repertory-system*<sup>158</sup>; and *factory-like working methods*<sup>159</sup>. Poetically, Hungarian productions are usually centred on *text*; *actor*; *story*; and articulated by the *assumptions of theatrical realism*. In spite of the social expectations and the financial difficulties, there are still theatres in Hungary that regard the social functions of theatre (leisure and entertainment) and its poetic criteria (text-, story-, actor-centrism, and realist assumptions) as problematic. These theatres question the social function of theatre and offer resistance by reinterpreting the well-known poetic criteria of Hungarian theatre.

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Bérczes 1996, and Buchmuller and Koós (1996).

<sup>157</sup> The term 'company-system' refers to the fact that Hungarian theatre is built on the more or less stable companies, located in permanent theatre buildings.

<sup>158</sup> The company and repertory-system characterise the theatrical structures of the European countries, while the Anglo-Saxon practice prefers an 'en suite' system, and the formation of temporarily engaged companies, though there can be found in each structure elements of the other.

<sup>159</sup> The term 'factory-like working methods' refers to the fact that Hungarian theatres are expected to give more than three hundred performances per year.



The reinterpretation of Hungarian theatre can be achieved by *renewing* the poetic criteria of theatre *within* the convention. In order to renew the text-centred practice of Hungarian theatre, certain performances open up texts considered as fixed and closed unities. These performances insert so-called guest texts into some (hitherto) well-known realist texts. Their intertextual network not only modifies the conventional interpretation of the initial text, but it can also suggest further associations and references through a chain of textual games. That process ultimately opens new grounds for the possible interpretations of the 'new', 'compound' text, and reconsiders its realist implications (see Krétakör Színház, and productions by László Bagossy, Sándor Zsótér, Eszter Novák, or Béla Pintér). Another practice does not reduce, but rather disperses the text. In this sense, the verbal text in performance becomes 'alive' in its own right, realising Derrida's claim that 'there is nothing outside the text'. The overflow of verbal information gives the impression that textual games, jokes, puns, allusions, and verbal references organise characters, situations, and the entire fictional world of the performance (see János Mohácsi's productions). Recently, a new element has appeared: the spatial separation of the verbal elements and their interpretation. In Szabolcs Hajdú's 2002 production, *Tamara*<sup>160</sup>, for instance, the jabber dialogues of the players were dubbed live by Hajdú during the performance. This drew attention to the fact that meaning is not already given, and never coded in the performance in advance, but rather is supplied with the elements used in performance; meaning is not found, not neutral, but constructed, and is always someone's property.

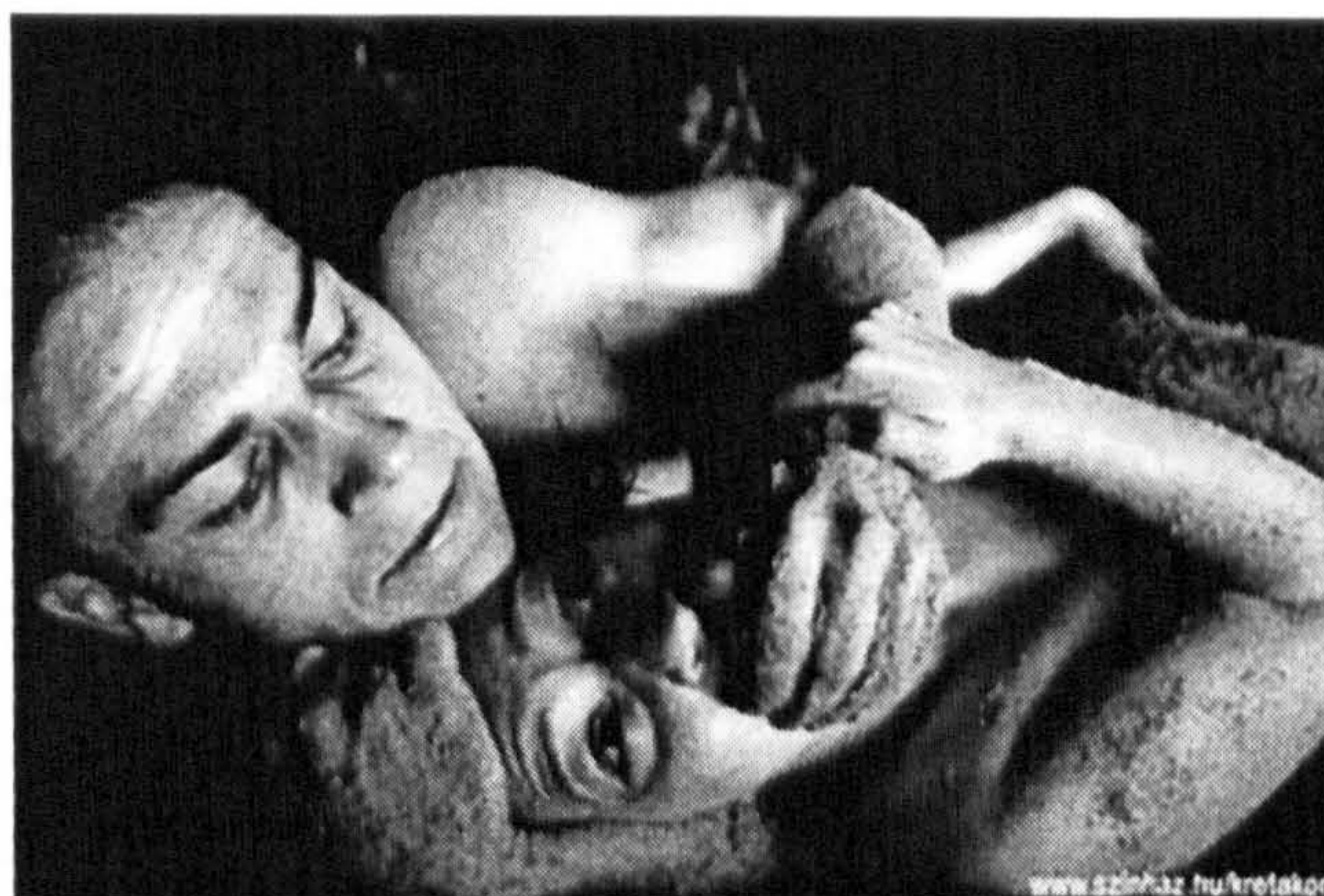
Experimenting with the text often comes with attempts to change realist patterns of acting. The change can be achieved through the intensity of the actor's physical presence, when the actors' bodies and their physical actions in and with the environment create the situations and define their relationships (see Krétakör's *W – munkáscirkusz*<sup>161</sup> in the picture below).

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<sup>160</sup> Based on the players' and their friends' improvisation, *Tamara* was written and dubbed live by Szabolcs Hajdú. It was premiered in 2002 at the Stúdió K Theatre in Budapest.

<sup>161</sup> Using the *Woyczek-fragment* of Georg Büchner and poems by Attila József, the production of *W – munkáscirkusz* (*W – Worker's Circus*) opened at the Berliner Festspiele (Sopienseale) on 20 September, 2001. For more information see their website: [www.kretakor.hu](http://www.kretakor.hu)





Krétakör's *W – munkáscirkusz* – Annamária Láng as Marie and Zsolt Nagy as Woyzeck, directed by Árpád Schilling

The change of the realist patterns of renewal of acting can also be achieved when the performance plays with text, actors' gestures, and movements in such a way that these elements are not connected in a logical fashion supplementing each other. Rather the connections of these elements produce deferred and sliding associations when gestures refer to specific associations, while movements juxtapose both the interpretation of the text and its deferred associations (see Krétakör's *Leonce és Léna* in the picture below).<sup>162</sup>



Krétakör's *Leonce és Léna* – Annamária Láng as Major-domo, Sándor Terhes as Peter, King of the Empire of Popo, and Zsolt Nagy as President, directed by Árpád Schilling

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<sup>162</sup> Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*; Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*, and *Woyzeck*, as well as on poems by William Blake and Heinrich Heine, Krétakör's production of *Leonce és Léna*



Hajdú's previously mentioned *Tamara* embodied another alternative approach to acting. The separation of the verbal elements and their interpretation forced the actors to re-think the realist clichés of their own movements, gestures, and intonations.

The above-mentioned practices can all be characterised by the fact that though they constantly challenge realist assumptions, they leave the primacy of the (more or less coherent) story untouched, and only slightly modify the implications of realist acting and the importance of the actor. As these practices do not break the poetic criteria of Hungarian theatre (text-, story-, actor-centrism, and realism), they can be more easily accepted into the Hungarian theatre system than those performances that attempt to rewrite radically these criteria.<sup>163</sup>

The reinterpretation of the poetic criteria of Hungarian theatre can also be achieved by radically *rewriting* the conventions. These productions often dispense with the coherent story, and unfold from the interplay of intertextual fragments. In these productions, seemingly unconnected elements are juxtaposed, often simultaneously, and the performance is held together not by the causality of the plot, but the constant play of fragments (see Andaxínház and Pont Műhely). Other performances reduce the privileged status of the text by incorporating the other elements of performance (i.e., lighting, set, masks, etc.) into it as its equals (see Sándor Zsótér, and Andaxínház). In these performances, players are also integrated into the performance in such a way that they become one of the elements (see TÁP Színház, and Andaxínház), but not the most important. The deployment of the above-mentioned elements can also bring together dance, music, text and visual art. In this way, the hierarchy of the performance is only temporary and soon disintegrates, immediately creating new formations (see TÁP Színház, Goda Gábor, and Andaxínház). Following the practice of earlier alternative theatre groups (see Arvisura Színház for instance) some companies also use ritualistic elements in their performances. These rituals, however, work not on the level of the text, but are constantly deployed together with the popular images of (post)modern culture. Apart from these practices, certain performances, following the practice of the earlier happenings and performances, create representations which play the game that they are

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opened at March, 2002. For more information see their website: [www.kretakor.hu](http://www.kretakor.hu)

<sup>163</sup> For an analysis of the renewal of Hungarian theatrical conventions see Kékesi Kun 1998: 85-104, and Kiss 2001: 163-203.

not (playing) theatre, but life itself. In the Szentkirályi Színházi Műhely's performance, *Ernő*, the players' non-matrixed presence challenged conventional realist illusions of unity, coherence, and psychological motivation. As these practices radically break the premises of Hungarian theatre, they hardly ever find their way into the Hungarian theatre system.<sup>164</sup>

### 3.2. Resistance in contemporary theatre

So far, I have dealt only with those theatrical approaches that attempt to renew or radically break with the poetic, social, and cultural premises of Hungarian theatre. Here, I shall now deal with theatrical practices that, although interpretable as resistant, are none the less very rarely, if at all, found in Hungarian theatre. These practices all take up a comprehensive role described by Auslander as they reveal the processes of cultural control, and emphasise the traces of non-hegemonic discourses. Though these practices all aim to produce cognitive maps, they do it rather differently. The Hungarian theatre company, Mozgó Ház Társulás, for instance rewrites one of the archetypal stories of Western culture; the performance of *Slava's Snowshow* takes a marginal figure to attack the working mechanisms of dominant theatrical discourses; while Robert Wilson uses installation as theatre for reinterpreting the fetishes of contemporary Euro-American consumer culture; and Fura dels Baus attempts to get beyond the conventional ways of perception. Before the analysis of these practices, I would like to draw attention to the fact that as the theatrical practices of resistance are of course much wider, the aim of this chapter is to indicate at least some of the tendencies of and approaches to resistance in contemporary theatre.<sup>165</sup>

#### 3.2.1. Theatre as deconstruction: postmodern bricollage and *1003 Hearts*<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Imre 2002a.

<sup>165</sup> For a detailed analysis on the range of theatrical practices of resistance see Colleran's and Spencer's book, *Staging Resistance*. The topics of the articles presented there extend from political theatre, intercultural theatre, gender and national politics to civic and radical democratic theatre (see Colleran and Spencer 1998).

<sup>166</sup> Trafó, House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, 22-24 October, 2001, and 10-11 January, 2002. For a



Though the Hungarian theatre company, Mozgó Ház Társulás (Moving House Company), has recently participated at major theatre festivals (Berlin, Belgrade, London, Nancy, Avignon, Caracas), their productions have often met with a rather negative reception from the Hungarian critics (see for instance Perényi 2001, Farkas 2001, and Csáki 2002). Here I shall attempt to give a brief introduction to their practice through the analysis of their latest production, *1003 Hearts or Fragments from a Don Juan Catalogue*. For that, I use a theoretical framework based on deconstruction, reader-response and reception theory. I would not claim to have discovered *the* method for reading the practice of Mozgó Ház. What I shall present here is not the only possible analysis, but *a* possible way of trying to understand that practice. Analysing *1003 Hearts*, I shall concentrate on the possible resistant functions of theatre offering counter-hegemonic practices.

#### *Intertextuality and audience participation*

Every performance (like every text) is intertextual. As such, every performance consists of the fragments of other performances at the same time as referring to these other performances. Hence, a performance can only be approached through intertextuality: it can be understood only in relation to other performances. Intertextuality has (at least) two basic interpretations<sup>167</sup>: (a) we can speak of the relation of text and pre-text when the signification of a given performance crosses its own borders in any explicitly recognisable form; and (b) we can speak of the relation of text and context when the relation of a given performance to other performances is not marked explicitly, but is realised through parallel implicit associations (see Kulcsár-Szabó 1996: 267-287). The theatrical practice of Mozgó Ház consciously plays with both types of intertextuality.<sup>168</sup> The performance of *1003 Hearts* reconstructs and rewrites the canonical interpretations of one of the archetypal story of European culture, the story of Don Juan. Hence, I shall first deal with the relation of the text (*1003 Hearts*) and its pre-texts (Molina, Molière,

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detailed analysis of *1003 Hearts* see Imre 2002b.

<sup>167</sup> For the notion of intertextuality, see e.g. Julia Kristeva (1969) and Gérard Genette (1982: 7-17).

<sup>168</sup> In this text, I do not deal with the significant differences between the intertextuality of the theatric(al performance) and that of the text. For this, see Marvin Carlson's article (see Carlson 1994).

da Ponte, and Mozart). As the performance of *1003 Hearts* also refers to and then deconstructs Hungarian theatrical conventions, I shall take into consideration the relation between the text (*1003 Hearts*) and its context. Through these approaches, I shall demonstrate that Mozgó Ház's *1003 Hearts* not only deconstructs these interpretations and conventions, but exploits them to express their own way of looking at the contemporary world through rewriting the myth of Don Juan.

Apart from intertextuality, the practice of Mozgó Ház also involves topics familiar from reader-response and reception theory (see Rabkin 1985, Carlson 1990, and Bennett 1990). The performance of *1003 Hearts* undermines the conventional importance of playwright, written text, and performance, and stresses the importance of the spectators in the realisation of performance. The various intertextual references the production offers cannot be realised without the active contribution of the spectators. Therefore, through the analysis of Mozgó Ház's *1003 Hearts*, I shall also demonstrate that the understanding of that theatrical practice seems to presuppose the reciprocal application of these very different theoretical considerations.

#### <sup>v</sup> *Text and pretext: a postmodern opera and its spectators*

The performance of *1003 Hearts* is consciously built on citations. Citations are never exact. Jacques Derrida pointed out that 'any citation [...] can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable' (Derrida 1988: 79). In the method of citation used by Mozgó Ház, previous contexts are recalled, while the new contexts deconstruct and rewrite them. At the same time, that rewriting remains open to reveal the borders through which it is organised. The performance of *1003 Hearts* thus utilises the textual, musical, and theatrical references to earlier versions of *Don Juan*. The performance-text incorporates fragments from Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla*, Molière's *Don Juan*, and da Ponte's libretto; music and arias from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; costume, hair, and makeup styles allude to French classicism and Viennese baroque, as well as the paintings of Velázquez and Goya, while the gestural and proxemic references recreate the atmosphere of French classical and Viennese court theatre. At the same time, these elements are mixed with images, music, movements, and gestures imported from contemporary music, dance and



physical theatre. Though these texts, images, musical scores, gestures and movements can be concretised in themselves; they can be understood much more productively through their intertextual connections and references within and outside the performance. The fragments have no fixed meaning in themselves, but various, even parallel, meanings can be *ascribed* to them through intertextual associations.<sup>169</sup> The practice of *Mozgó Ház* is consciously built on the recognition that meaning does not exist *a priori* in the performance, but is *constructed* and *attributed to* the performance and *by* the spectators.



*1003 hearts* – Balázs Vajna and Erika Pereszlényi , directed by László Hudi

In one of the final scenes<sup>170</sup>, for example, a blind couple sits side by side in theatre seats on stage, remembering their sinful but delightful love-affair (see the picture above). Their dialogue alludes to the affair of Don Juan and Donna Elvira in Molière or Mozart ('our love broke down the walls of a convent'), but immediately turns that reference inside out as the spectators listen to their mutual memories. The dialogue is organised in such a way that when one of them is remembering, the other questions his/her authority, and then the roles are reversed. Their dialogue is thus a constant questioning and rewriting of their own memories, while their movements and gestures consciously reflect the theatricality of the situation they are in.

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<sup>169</sup> The set for example cannot be concretised as a temple, or a cemetery, or Hell, because it is all of them, or none of them, at the same time. These 'places' are only recalled and not presented.

<sup>170</sup> It is very difficult to segment the performance of *1003 Hearts*, because the scenes do not close one after the other, but one slides into the next. I chose this scene since it is relatively simple, but through its





*1003 hearts* – István Göz and Júlia Bársony, directed by László Hudi

That scene, however, has its parallel. In that, another man, dressed like the blind man, stands in the middle of the playing area covered by sand and delivers a monologue about sin, punishment, and death. The man's speech welds fragments of Molière's dialogue between Don Juan and the Statue (before Don Juan falls into Hell) into a monologue. Thus, the newly created monologue recalls the familiar story (Don Juan's punishment), and immediately turns it round, as the man, i.e., Don Juan, tells it to himself. Such rewriting would not go beyond a drama *à thèse* without the couple's dialogue and its own *mise-en-scène*. As he speaks the man approaches another woman, dressed like the other woman who stands in the playing area, holding up a mirror. That image is symbolic (expressing that one can see oneself only in the Other) even without the blind couple's dialogue and the man's monologue. As the visual images, the dialogue and the monologue are interwoven, their common topics (sin, punishment, death, love, and life) are not arranged in such a way as to explain each other, but rather to thematicise and confront their common elements and their interpretations. All these are embedded in Mozart's music, offering another angle on the reinterpretation of these themes. Hence, the couple's dialogue, the man's monologue, the visual references of the scene, and the music reverberate and multiply each other, and can only be understood by being read *through* each other.<sup>171</sup> The practice of *Mozgó Ház* is thus built on the endless displacement and play of meaning: namely, that meaning is always *deferred* by the play

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analysis I can demonstrate how the intertextuality of the entire performance is organised.

<sup>171</sup> No consideration has been taken of what happened before and after that scene. That would make the analysis unendurably complex.



of signification and only temporarily *arranged* by the spectator's perception via these *deferments*.

Utilising such intertextual games, the performance of *1003 Hearts* does not serve to create a unified fictional universe, like some Wagnerian 'Gesamtkunstwerk'; rather, it is presented on a theatre's real stage and the spectator's virtual stage as a sort of multimedia bricolage: a postmodern opera. The bricolage-technique makes it possible to present the various canonical interpretations of *Don Juan*, and deconstruct them through rewriting. That technique is based on another characteristic of citation: everything has already taken place, in the past, and is now merely recalled and reconstructed in the present through the dyadic process of remembering and forgetting. Time is thus remembered and becomes the gesture towards memory in which the present is valid in so far as it refers to the past. The fictional universe presented by the performance cannot appear as presence, but rather it becomes a sort of distanced presence: the object of remembering through references and utterances. The myth of Don Juan is present only as a reference in words, set, costume, music, and so on, and conjured up and collated by the spectator. The tension (as well as the meaning) is not located within the borders of the performance, but rather it is placed between the expectation of a dramatic *Don Juan* convention, brought into the theatre by the spectator, and the performance of *1003 Hearts*, which is post-dramatic and citational. *1003 Hearts* confronts the spectator with the canonical interpretations of the Don Juan story and states that such a great narrative (*grand récit*) can no longer be used, is no longer available. Its fragments, however, can reveal something entirely different in that citational form from what was the 'organic' whole.

*1003 Hearts* as multimedia bricolage forces the spectator to reconsider and rewrite his attitudes and expectations. The reading of that type of performance is radically different from the reading of a conventional performance of *Don Juan*. When the spectator enters into the fictional universe of the performance of *1003 Hearts*, his reading is no longer teleological, since he cannot find any general message. Each spectator misreads the performance every time. A misreading, however, is not a mistake, as there are no longer any 'wrong' readings, but it is the only way of entering that world. Each time a scriptable performance is thus created which, according to Roland Barthes, 'is active, productive, playful, and it really involves its readers [spectators] in the

pleasure of writing and re-writing, while realising their own text' (Barthes 1997: 39). Since a performance interpreted as multimedia bricolage exists only its own intertextuality and multiplicity; its temporal and sequential order cannot be structured in advance. Consequently, the author(s) of that type of performance accept the viewers as collaborator: the performance can appear only through the interactive reading of the people sitting in the auditorium.

*Text and context: theatre of recalled past and its spectators*

Like Western theatre, conventional Hungarian theatre generally adopts a structured, linear and hierarchical production line (see Constantinidis 1993: 7). In the last hundred years of its history, Hungarian theatre has been defined in relation to the genre of literature. In this model, dramatic text is regarded as a stable, self-contained, and autonomous unit, existing as a permanent presence in historical consciousness, and the convention of its staging required performance to (re)interpret the dramatic text by transcoding its linguistic signs into visual and aural images. Conventional theatrical performance is little more than the illustration of the things read out of the text, concentrating on producing a double of the text in performance, and read through by the director according to (or even without) the intentions of the playwright.

Like other postmodern theatre groups and artists (the Wooster Group, Jan Fabre, Pina Bausch, Robert Wilson, and others), Mozzgó Ház's production departs from both the conventional production line and the dominant method of staging. Though they had Molina's, Molière's, and Mozart's narratives at their disposal in advance, they did not simply use their dialogues and adapt their actions to the stage with the appropriate visual images as background locations. Their starting point was reading through these 'texts', cutting out small chunks of them, and improvising them into Japanese-style haikus. The material thus gathered did not consist simply of text, but rather of situations, images, and movements. These elements were not regarded as subsidiary, as secondary information only to illustrate and/or illuminate the above mentioned 'great masterpieces'; rather, they were treated as essential to the creation of their own performance. Without integrating these elements into a unified whole (as in Ariane Mnouchkine's *1789*), or centring it on a main character (as in the Théâtre de Complicité's *The Street of*



*Crocodiles*), the performance was arranged as deferred fragments to produce further intertextuality in the spectator.

As in Mnouchkine's company in Paris, or in Simon McBurney's Théâtre de Complicité in London, Mozzgó Ház's method of producing such an intertextual performance was achieved by a collective process of devising.<sup>172</sup> The actors, the director, the designer, the composer and other members of the company worked together and the process went through various stages. The members of the company, though not without conflicts here and there, jointly invented the performance together, using their individual skills, through research, improvisation, and drawing on their different cultural backgrounds and experience. That does not mean, however, that the performance was not organised along a very strong directorial conceptual spine. It means only that the relation of the participants to the performance changed, since they were not mere executioners of a (transcendental and omnipotent) will – whether that of the writer, the director, or the designer – but rather they were conceived of as creative collaborators and co-creators.

The conventional, text-based Hungarian performances of *Don Juan* are based on the assumption that the characters, regarded as real people, can be psychologically thoroughly motivated and organised around a centre (the title character) within the fictional universe of the performance. The plot is usually arranged linearly to capture the underlying unified story and reveal the closed world beyond. Rational logic, or its binary, illogical emotionality, drives the characters' decisions and makes the(ir) story more or less comprehensive and comprehensible. In these performances, the main story is usually a generalised message, and it signifies its teleological aim to which the scenes and the characters are oriented, as well as referring to the way their signification can be organised hierarchically. Fictional time is also sequenced linearly, and locations serve to illustrate and motivate the main characters' deeds and decisions. Thus, the fictional universe of conventional *Don Juan*-performances is built on the assumptions and methods of bourgeois illusionist theatre (see Fischer-Lichte 1990: 159).

According to the canonical interpretations of Hungarian productions, *Don Juan* is a dominant heterosexual womaniser, or an individualistic hero revealing the anomalies

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<sup>172</sup> On devising in general see Oddey 1994, on Mnouchkine see Bradby and Sparks 1997, especially 21-

and hypocrisy of his society, or a disillusioned intellectual. Conventionally, these productions reinforce these interpretations by casting as Don Juan the most dominant and charismatic actor in the company whose life outside the theatre can also be characterised with these practices ('difficult guy-type'). Fusing the inner and outer charisma of the main actor, these performances are thus built on the absolute presence of that dominant male, while the spectator witnesses the struggles, love-affairs, and psychological journeys of the main and the subsidiary characters.

In *1003 Hearts*, there was no characterisation in the conventional psychological sense. The protagonist was represented by three male actors, representing versions of (fake) Don Juans. As the scenes were not about presence, but rather about a distanced presence, remembering and recalling the past in the present, these Don Juan versions were also based on the actors' distanced presence. In contrast to convention, these fake Don Juans could not control and frame the situations, but rather they found themselves accidentally in strange situations and were produced (with great effort) even by the woman characters. Neither the Don Juans, nor the women were arranged around a single (psychological) centre, but were recalled through various patterns, movements, practices, and masks. What was important in *1003 Hearts* was not a more or less coherent story told mainly in terms of the inner emotional, psychological, and moral struggle and journey of the individual characters, but that the various fragmented representations were recalled and collated by a company of characters, objects, and by various performative means (sounds, music, conversation, lighting, mime, dance, icons and symbols). These elements referred to other texts, events, actions within and outside the performance. Of course, other performances may also employ references to other texts, pictures, and performances, but the productions of *Mozgó Ház* are usually based on conscious interplay with and between these references.

*1003 Hearts* does not possess a continuous and seamless story, rendered palpable and meaningful by a metanarrative. Instead, it is based on chance, accident, and temporarily co-occurring fragments. Conventional performance hierarchy, which prefers verbal information, concentrates on the performer's oral delivery, and organises non-verbal elements as subsidiary illustration of that delivery, was constantly interrupted,



temporarily frozen, and then (re)arranged. The performance was thus not organised linearly, but rather as a hermeneutic circle, manifested in constant *repetition* and *differance*. That circular process was achieved by ensuring that different events on various levels took place at the same time, very often using disconnected and juxtaposed elements. Order was not established *a priori*. Order, if created at all, was created *by* the *spectator*, rather than in or by the performance.

Apart from the constant reference to the past, circularity was also emphasised through repetition. Certain fragments of scenes, topics and events appeared again and again. Each time, these repetitions were a little bit different, appearing in different contexts; therefore their interpretations were constantly deferred. Thus, the dramaturgy of *1003 Hearts* permits multiplicity, encourages misreading, and denies us a metanarrative. Consequently, the constant play of signification produced multiple interpretations. As there was no fixed point from which any of these interpretations can be entirely either justified or negated, the spectator could produce only various (mis)readings. In this sense, the spectator was to discover that each reading of the performance was not only an interpretation of the performance, but also its partial interpretation; therefore, it was a distortion. The spectator has to recognise why he prefers his individual interpretation over and/or against other possible ones.

### *The production and reception of theatre as deconstruction*

The practice of theatre as deconstruction renders the concept of metanarrative impossible as the spectator constantly (re)produces interpretations without closure. That practice is no longer concerned with the imitation of a unified reality, existing somewhere 'outside', but it constantly (re)constructs fragments of reality in parallel with the play of representation. Through the interrelating de-centred and discontinuous elements of the performance, that practice resists and at the same time reveals that the attempt to render the interpretation of the performance under a single unifying will is illusory. Readings of a performance can thus be multiplied without end, and without producing a singly coherent interpretation. That practice thus draws attention to the fragility and relativity of any coherent interpretation, and at the same time questions the authority for constructing such coherent interpretations. As that practice constantly

produces tears and gaps in the texture of interpretation, it forces both producers and spectators alike to reconsider canonical interpretations, not by imitating and reproducing them, but by rewriting them and showing how they are in fact constructed. In that practice, the conventional concept of creative production and passive reception is transformed into a process of constant creative (re)construction both in the realisation and in the interpretation of the performance. Consequently, the practice of *Mozgó Ház* prefers distanced presence to presence, post-dramatic to dramatic, opera to prose, and representation to 'life'. That practice invites and activates its spectators to a 'lateral dance of interpretation' in a *Mozgó Ház* (Moving House) where the process of signification (at least in theory) never stops. In *Mozgó Ház*, 'the 'music' never stops, the dancers merely walk off when they've had enough' (Leitch quoted in Rabkin 1983: 52).

### 3.2.2. *Theatre as disclosure: circus, clown, and Snowshow*<sup>173</sup>

In the previous section, I attempted to show how the elements of conventional theatre and one of the archetypal stories of Western culture can be transformed into a practice of resistance. Here, I shall demonstrate another potentially subversive practice: circus and clowning. Circus has been in existence for at least two thousand five hundred years, and is found in a wide range of geographical locations around the world. For circus historians, the so-called modern circus was established in 1780 when Phillip Astley (1742-1814), the equestrian, founded his first riding ring in London (see Clarke 1936: 7). Circus soon became popular with the development of the French circus around the 1840s, and then with the organisation of the 'factory-like' English circus around the 1860s. The influence of these circuses and other travelling troupes was soon widespread throughout Europe. By the end of the 1920s, circus had become not only one of the basic elements of popular culture, but also it entered high art by the Blue Riders group in German expressionism, and by the various Russian groups (Sergej Radlov's Popular Comedy or Nikolaj Foregger's group for instance). By the end of the 1950s, circus was also accepted as a 'proper' subject for academic thinking. Though Enid Welsford (Welsford 1933) wrote her book on the history of the fool as early as 1933, it was

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<sup>173</sup> The premiere of *Snowshow* was held in Moscow in October 1993. Between 1993 and 2000, it was



followed only around the end of the 1950s by most of the writings on circus (see Nicoll 1963; Serna 1964, and Usinger 1964 for instance). By the second part of the twentieth century, the widespread cultural influence of circus can also be seen in the fact that the French cultural historian, Paul Bouissac, dealt with it as a cultural model in his 1976 book, *Circus and Culture*. Bouissac pointed out that it is possible to see circus as a cultural model, because it is 'a kind of mirror in which the culture is reflected, condensed and at the same time transcended; perhaps the circus seems to stand outside the culture only because it is at its very centre' (Bouissac 1976: 9).

In spite of this, the social status of circus is still characterised by ambiguity. In his book, Bouissac precisely demonstrated that though circus appeals to nearly all people, regardless of age, social status, and education, its mention also triggers ambivalent responses in which enthusiastic interest is mixed with derogatory laughter. Circus is often associated with childhood, especially with pleasant and dreamlike memories of childhood. In common language, however, there are also examples for its pejorative usages. It is often used for negative, disturbing, seemingly order-less, or merely unpleasant events and situations. These ambivalences also suggest that 'circus has a definite function in our culture, but its relation to it is not clear; it seems to be at the same time both 'within' and 'outside' (Bouissac 1976: 7).

The ambivalent situation and definition of circus can be explained by the fact that though circus uses elements from everyday life, it does so in a way that distorts their common and accepted expectations and interpretations. In this way, it transforms the rules and regulations these elements follow in everyday life. As Bouissac pointed out,

circus freely manipulates a cultural system to such an extent that it leaves the audience contemplating a demonstration of humanity freed from the constraints of the culture within which the performance takes place. Circus tradition, contrary to what many assume, is not an invariable repetition of the same tricks but a set of rules for cultural transformations, displayed in a ritualistic manner that tempers this transgressive aspect. The liberty taken with myths, in the etymological sense of the word, accounts for the ambivalent response to the circus, namely, repression and fascination – enthusiasm produced by contact with freedom from culture, accompanied by the fear that this potential subversion may be generalized.

The liberating role and subversive potential of circus seen in Bouissac's interpretation can be related to Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival (see Bakhtin 1982) and Turner's concept of liminal/liminoid performance (see Turner 1982: 21-60). As with Bakhtin's and Turner's concepts, so in Bouissac's interpretation, circus is a cultural model, in which common rules and regulations of the everyday are temporarily suspended and transformed, producing ambiguity, falsity, ambivalence, and ironical mock-representations. Circus can thus be considered as a practice which effects both liberation from culture, and subversion of elements of culture. Circus can thus be seen as the practice *par excellence* of postmodern resistance, a practice in which dominant culture and its ideology are put in the pillory, distorted and deprived of the illusion of naturalness and self-evidence. Through that, circus can produce resistance right in the heart of culture.\*

One of the central coordinators and impersonations of circus's subversive function is the figure of the clown. Parallel to the development of the modern European circus, the ancient types of comic figure (simpleton, knave, and court jester) were redefined and transformed into various types of complicated clowns by Grock, the Fratellini brothers, Rivels, Dimov, Keaton, and Chaplin. At the same time, the representations of the clown also multiplied. The Hungarian scholar, Miklós Szabolcsi in his book *A clown mint a művész önarcképe*, followed the various representations of the clown and its wider context, circus, through the centuries, concentrating most of all on connections between the clown and art. Szabolcsi's book was not about the history of clown or circus but, as he says in his introduction: 'I was looking for not how and when theatre and circus have appeared in the arts [...], but only how the acrobat, the fool, the clown have become the self-portrait of the artist in modern art' (Szabolcsi 1974: 5). For Szabolcsi, it was exactly the clown's diversity that was suited 'to become a model and alter-ego for the modern artist, and a key sign in the complex system that developed for the demarcation of the artist's place and role in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Szabolcsi 1974: 18-19). Szabolcsi traced these widespread representations in painting, literature, music, and in film.<sup>174</sup> His wide-ranging analysis strengthens the notion that the

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<sup>174</sup> Szabolcsi traced these widespread influences in painting (Watteau, Cezanne, Degas, Picasso, Rouault,



clown is one of the successful archetypes which developed from the humorously portrayed medieval devil via the outsider role of trickster into one of the most often used representations in modern art. Moreover, the figure of the clown has achieved the status of representation outside the borders of the arts. Based on the strength of the clown as comforting child entertainer that encourages multi-national firms like McDonald's to use it as emblem, the clown has also become one of the (inter)national icons of the (post)modern world, appearing in the business world as well as both popular and high culture (see McDonald's advertisements, Yellow Pages, bankcards, etc.).

The strange status of circus and the ambivalent responses to it, drawing on the fear of the potential subversion of the normal world, seem also to regulate the social status and the interpretation of clown. Contemporary culture respects the clown as icon, topic, metaphor and representation. That culture, however, still neglects the clown as profession. Contrary to the acceptance of actors/actresses, the clown is very rarely honoured publicly as an artist, and can hardly ever take his place as public figure. Contrary to the popularity of clown-image, it is still difficult even to imagine that someone with a background in clowning could be elected as the president of the United States or any other states. These phenomena strengthen the notion that, apart from a few exceptions such as Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, clowns remain 'outsider' in the world of high art. These phenomena also draw attention to the fact that clowns are usually located 'outside' even the realm of the academy and social hierarchy.

This interpretation is reinforced by the stereotypical images attached to clown. The clown often appears as a loser, a fool, not ordinary, and not normal, and plays a subordinated role in discourse. The clown is outside social hierarchy, in spite of the fact that the clown as entertainer is often found very near the centre of hierarchy. The clown, however, has no chance or right to occupy and possess that centre.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, the clown's outsider position might give the possibility to subvert hierarchy, demonstrate

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Lajos Gulácsy, Chagall, Frantisek Tichy, Klee, Miró, Fernand Léger, etc.), in literature (Shakespeare, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Hugo, Baudlaire, Edmond de Goucourt, Verlaine, Nietzsche, Alexander Blok, Appolinaire, Frigyes Karinthy, Kafka, Thomas Mann, Vitezslav Nezval, Tadeusz Rózewicz, Tibor Déry, Henrich Böll, Beckett, etc.), in music (Schuman, Leoncavallo, Verdi, Stravinsky, Schönberg, Richard Strauss, etc.), and in film (Chaplin, Marcel Carné, Marcel Camus, Ingmar Bergman, Fellini, and Alexander Kluge).

<sup>175</sup> In English Renaissance courts, for instance, the clown was the 'licensed man', the only person who could criticise the monarch – although comic drama could have the same function. For an introduction to

resistance in the realm of the sign, sometimes in anger but mostly in an atmosphere of celebration, and to give opportunities for feelings of revulsion. If circus can be considered as the practice of resistance *par excellence*, in which culture and its ideology are distorted and resistance is produced right in the centre of the given culture, then clown can also be seen as a (postmodern) protester/demonstrator *par excellence*.

In spite of the widespread representations of clown in the contemporary world, clowns are still confined to the marginal institutions of the arts: they are usually found in circuses, seasonally in pantomime, rarely in small fringe theatres or out-the-way clubs, and hardly ever in conventional theatres. Writing on (post)modern mime, Thomas Leabhart drew his readers' attention to the achievement of the Swiss mime and clown troupe, Mummenschanz. This clown troupe could open a performance right in the centre of the theatre establishment, Broadway, in 1977. Leabhart also emphasised that they 'continued on Broadway through eight performances a week for three years, something which has not happened to a mime company before or since' (Leabhart 1989: 102). And that was exactly the reason why the reviewer of the *Toronto Sun* was surprised when 'an old-fashioned clown [took] centre stage at the Mirvish's lavish King Street theatre – a theatre so new on Toronto's theatrical landscape, that vaudeville isn't even a memory for it' (Coulbourn 1998). Coulbourn's surprise was caused by the Russian clown Slava Polounine's performance of *Snowshow*. That performance filled theatres usually reserved for conventional practices for months not only in Toronto, but also in the largest cities of the world (London, Tokyo, and New York). In this section, what I am interested in is what an outsider clown looked for in a conventional institution, and how its resistance and subversion were produced and perceived.

### *Performative sequences*

The performance of *Snowshow* did not consist of the linear narrative of conventional theatre, nor a web of dream-like images, nor the repetition of a succession of 'turns', used in vaudeville and variety, but performative sequences of scenes, organised and connected by and through a central clown figure. In spite of the clown's central position,

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this problem, see Michele Gelderode's play, *Escurial*.



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this was not a hierarchical central narrative. Rather the scenes were placed horizontally, side by side, continuously confronting and rewriting each other. The miniature stories happened to the clown, but it was impossible to connect them along a metanarrative, which would assign coherency, unity, control, and authority to the world presented on-stage. Metanarrative was replaced by accident. The miniature stories had no definite beginning and end, as they just appeared and disappeared without any direct and logical consequences to each other. There was no logic of cause and effect or rational argument which might interweave the scenes and the behaviour and reactions of the clowns. Logic applied only within the micro-universe of each particular scene. That illogicality reflected the common experience of everyday life, as the spectators could not articulate a continuous and unified story, but experienced rather a sequence of disconnected meetings and discoveries. *Slava's Snowshow* can thus be considered as an attack on a certain idea about the nature of identity as integrated, unified, and centralised. Moreover, *Slava's Snowshow* can also be interpreted as an attack on the very concept of structure as its scenes, hence its centres, were continuously deferred in the Derridan-sense, and constantly interrupted the construction of any stable interpretation.

*A method of juxtaposition and intertextuality*

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The deferred centres of *Snowshow* were organised through juxtaposed images, intertextual references, and by the deconstruction of conventional expectations and popular representations. In the very first scene, described in detail by Gerry Colgan, the central yellow clown

enters like a self-operated marionette, with a kind of rotary walk from the knees down, and the audience begins to chuckle. Hearing this, he turns in puzzlement, and his lugubrious, painted face yields a slow smile, making them laugh. Actually, he is towing a rope with which to hang himself, but, when he pulls it from the wings, another clown is attached, bent on the same errand. The frustration is mutual.

Colgan 1996

Though Colgan accurately described the clown's appearance, his description did not mention the context of the scene. Based on previous information (photos in the lobby,

leaflets, etc.), the audience expected the appearance of a typical red-nosed clown. The first signs of the performance (music, Wagner's *The Ride of the Walkyries*, smoke, and lighting effects) contradicted that expectation immediately. These features opened another expectation, suggesting the *entrée* of a tragic hero. Then that expectation was also contradicted as a typical red-nosed clown dressed in yellow 'sneaked in' from stage left. As the audience started to feel comfortable with fulfilment of the expectation of the typical clown, that expectation was immediately juxtaposed with his emotion: the supposedly funny clown was in suicidal mood. The clown, however, could not deliver his action, partly because of technical difficulties (he could not find a nail or a tree or something at the appropriate height to hang the rope); and partly because of human difficulties (there was someone else attached to the same rope with the same goal). Thus, the very first scene reminded spectators that *Slava's Snowshow* keeps contradicting the expectations of conventional clown and of conventional clowning. The spectators' attention was thus consciously drawn to how the direction was constructed and how meaning is usually created in an endless circle of expectations, predictions, and realisations. The very first scene already revealed that, while realising the *mise-en-scène*, spectators need to deconstruct conventional (theatrical) expectations and illusions of the juxtaposition of simple binary images, actions, feelings and emotions. That reflexivity was also reinforced as the scenes consisted of elements either already used by other clowns, or familiar to spectators from popular operas, pictures, films, literature, and from popular images and representations. The way these elements were related to each other drew attention to the slippages of interpretation and meaning. As the clown played with various recycled elements, it was also revealed that the emphasis in *Snowshow* would fall not on *what* was done, but on *how* it was done. All this was realised in a theatrical situation in which the clowns registered the audience's presence, while they also made the audience reflect on their own situation in the theatre.<sup>176</sup> The

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<sup>176</sup> Transforming the conventional expectations of clown, the clowns of *Snowshow* alluded to Jacques Lecoq's interpretation of Harlequin. For the French teacher and theorist of physical theatre, Harlequin 'has a tragic element on one hand and a comic element on the other. He really unites the two poles' (Lecoq in Leabhart 1991: 93). In one of the scenes for instance, the yellow clown appeared with large white arrows transfixing his body. He could be interpreted as a capering Saint Sebastian (Kellaway 1996), or the anti-hero of a Western, or the caricature of one of the dying swans from Tchaikovsky's *Swan's Lake*. The presentation of the dance of death drove the audience between the ambivalent representation of fun and sadness, life/death, while subverting their everyday accepted connotations and denotations. Through these



transitoriness of means, the contradiction of expectations, and the theatrical situation challenged the audience's usually comfortable position, kept them off balance and in uncertainty throughout the entire event, and introduced a dialogical situation between stage and auditorium, performers and spectators, and meaning and interpretation.

The deconstructive practices, woven into the fabric of the performance, appeared not only on the level of the narrative, the audience's expectations and interpretations, but also in the central position the clown occupied in the hierarchy on stage. After the scene, in which the yellow clown appeared with large white arrows transfixing his body, giving the mock-representation of dance of death, the yellow clown was also ridiculed. It was revealed that behind the role of clown, there was only a performer whose main aim was to leave an impact on the audience to gain success. When the green clown appeared as Cupid, holding a bow in his hand, showing his responsibility for the yellow clown's death, the audience started to laugh. Then, the green clown kept coming back to take repeated bows. The yellow clown furiously re-entered the stage with envy, and first gently then aggressively pushed his partner off the stage. Thus, the hierarchical relation between the clowns was staged. That opened the fictional universe of the performance as it reflected the hierarchy between performers on-stage. Hence, the private relation between the clowns also became part of the fictional world. That meta-theatrical element reminded the spectators of the artifice of the theatrical situation, and of the fact that they are in a theatre and seeing performers fighting for their place in the hierarchy. Apart from highlighting the constructed-ness of the theatrical situation, the same scene also drew attention to the relativity of perspectives and the constantly changing bounds of the fiction on stage. The relativity of perspectives and the fluid borders of the fiction also destabilised the closed physical and mental relation between stage and auditorium, and opened a virtual space in which both performers and spectators could exist in-between.

### *Existence in-between in Snowshow*

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components, *Snowshow* forced the elements of high and popular culture to be seen through each other, contradicting one another and ridiculing their theatricality. At the same time, it highlighted the seriousness of the clowns' playing and the mockery of stage(d) death. Also, presumably the audience laughed but felt uncomfortable that they were laughing at death. They might also be imagining real death as those arrows hurt.

For Lecoq, an actor wearing a mask is ‘without past, without knowledge, without preconceptions, and ready to discover a new world’ (Lecoq in Leabhart 1991: 97). The clowns in *Snowshow*, too, existed without a past and for them previous knowledge and experience disappeared without any consequence in the fiction, and their own existence. The performance was not about serious secrets of their past, and no linear continuity was built up, connecting past and present, or leading to a predicted and calculable future. Therefore, the clowns existed without teleology. There was no progress. The clowns existed in-between. They could not develop, as they could not learn from their own and others’ experience. The clowns appeared as ‘empty space’, empty space into which the spectators could project their own past, experience, and knowledge. The spectators could thus identify with the clowns in such a way that the clowns could become the representations of the spectators’ own experience, knowledge, expectations, and desires. These representations were not realised as the spectators expected, since they were constantly re-contextualised, re-played, and re-interpreted. By deconstructing common experience, knowledge, expectations and desires, the performance could thus present the spectators’ counter-hegemonic practices. These practices liberated the spectators mentally from typical expectations and common interpretations, as well as physically from well-mannered and controlled behaviour. Liberation resulted in opening up the spectators by the end of the performance.

In order to analyse properly the mechanism of liberation in *Snowshow*, I shall use Eric Berne’s transactional analysis. In his book, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*<sup>177</sup>, Eric Berne divided the human psyche into three different though connected inner states of being<sup>178</sup>: Parent, Adult, and Child. Parent is characterised by feelings, thoughts, deeds, and emotions, etc. learned from one’s parents, and grouped as mother-like providers and father-like regulators. Child is described as ‘egy kisfiú vagy kislány, aki pontosan úgy érez, gondol, cselekszik, beszél és reagál, ahogy mi magunk tettük gyermekkorunkban’<sup>179</sup> (Berne 1997: 28). The concept ‘Child’ is not confined to early

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<sup>177</sup> As Berne’s book *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* was not available to me in English, I have used its Hungarian translation (see Berne 1997)

<sup>178</sup> A state of being was considered by him as ‘a coherent system of thoughts and emotions that are expressed in appropriate behaviour patterns’ (Berne 1997: 28).

<sup>179</sup> In my translation: ‘a little boy or a girl, who feels, thinks, speaks, and reacts as we ourselves did in our childhood’.



development, but is always part of one's identity. Berne also suggested that Child characterised by grace, creativity, intuition, spontaneous drives and instincts is the most important part of identity. Between Child and Parent is situated Adult, considered a necessary element for survival, processing data, and valuing one's environment by analysing possibilities and problems on the basis of previous experience. Berne's transactional analysis is built on the proposition that when individuals meet, these states of being are in contact with each other. Berne called the encounters between states of being transaction, and their analysis and classification were the focus of his transactional analysis. For Berne, transaction can be found in the simplest human communication, and he differentiated between supplementary and crossed transactions. The former works between two appropriate states of being, and communication can continue endlessly. The latter occurs when communication is obstructed as two inappropriate states of being reply to each other (see Berne 1997: 29-31).<sup>180</sup> If Berne's observations on human states of being are appropriate, then the direct transactions between the clowns, and the (in)direct transactions between the clowns and the spectators can also be analysed through his transactional analysis, revealing how the practice of *Snowshow* liberated the Child in the spectators.

In order to demonstrate how the spectators' liberation was achieved in *Slava's Snowshow*, I have chosen a scene that is the female theatre critic Kate Kellaway's favourite. In that scene, the yellow clown received – as she accurately described it –

a mysterious bouquet, a gift-wrapped woman in cellophane. It puts him into a most terrible panic. He does not know what to do with her. He puts a plain vase at her feet but is still at a loss. With difficulty, he hoists her onto his tiny bed, shoving the vase on her feet. Triumph!

Kellaway 1996

According to Berne's periodization of the structures of social behavior, that scene can be considered a mixture of rite, governed by dominant social costumes and conventions, and procedure, described as supplementary Adult sequences of transactions, directed towards the treatment of reality. These transactions were realised on two levels: directly

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<sup>180</sup> For a criticism of Berne's model see Saphiro 1969 for instance.

between the clown and the bouquet/woman; and indirectly between the clown, the bouquet, the woman, and the spectators. On the former level, the clown's Adult state of being interacted with the bouquet/woman according to socially coded behaviours. Partly, the clown did not recognise the woman in the bouquet, and logically attempted to put her/it into a vase. Partly, the clown recognised the woman, laid her onto his bed, but could not know what to do with her as woman; hence he treated her as flower. The humour of the scene resulted from the indirect transaction as the spectators recognised the contradicting interpretations of the woman/bouquet scene. Through them, the bouquet could thus become a metaphor, expressing a common concept rendering a woman as a passive and dependent ornament in a man's life; as a desirable object; and as a decoration indicative of wealth. The flower/woman-metaphor could thus compress various contemporary references to dominant expectations of the patriarchal relation between man and woman. The tension between the direct and the indirect transactions derived also from the spectators' Adult state of recognising the tension between the woman and her representation as flower and the clown's behaviour. That tension was finally dissolved by Child-state's laugh, suggesting a possible practice of resistance through which spectators could deconstruct and re-consider the socially coded and conventional images of woman, and the patriarchal relation between man and woman.

In *Snowshow*, the transactions between spectators and clowns were not only indirect as in conventional theatre, but they also took place directly as in circus. In one of the last scenes, when the central clown came onto the stage, spectators could hear the crunch of his footstep in freshly fallen snow. As he repeated his step, the same noise could be heard again. Hence, the spectator connected the two signs, happily recognising that the yellow clown was walking in snow. But then, the clown lifted his foot without putting it down on the ground and the noise came again. He laughed at the audience. Here the spectator's Adult state, instructed by the Parent, handled the situation, and interpreted the clown's action according to the already known realist theatrical code (step + noise of snow = walking in snow). When the clown's repeated step distracted the automatic interpretation of the signs, the organising force of the Adult was suspended by frustration. That suspension gave the opportunity for playful exploration and joyful liberation: it opened the possibility for experimentation, intuition, and creativity derived from the Child state of being. The opportunity for exploration, intuition, and creativity



of the Child state, however, did not end with the restoration of order, established by the Adult, and instructed by the Parent, as the scene continued with small pieces of paper starting to fall everywhere in the auditorium. The central clown first merely enjoyed it, then

he whistles up a wind: a bleak, wolfish, steppes kind of wind. Suddenly the portentous crash of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* starts up, Slava grabs a huge white cotton-wool drape and wrestles with it. Then the whole of the back of the stage seems to burst open to the elements: light, smoke and snow rush in, blowing a blast of Siberia right into the stalls, up to the circle and even getting the bar staff at the very back of the auditorium.

Bayley 1996

In this sequence of scenes, as throughout the performance, the technique of accidents was used to organise the connection between scenes and actions. These accidents destroyed the closed world of the stage, and opened it up for dialogues with the spectators' various interpretations. At the same time, these accidents emphasised that though human beings always attempt to construct reality as if it was controllable and calculable, they have to realise man's minuteness and fragility in relation to nature, and that man is unable to control the forces of nature.

As seen in the above examples, the scenes of *Snowshow* derived usually from simple situations, and then they were pushed further and further into surrealism through first setting up conventions and then subverting them. The means used in these situations were also very simple. In their simplicity, they could be transformed into the expressions of unknown situations, emotions and actions resulting in multiple levels of understanding and a multiplicity of meanings. That way of expression was characterised by Polounine as being like minimalism in music

when you give a very simple image with lots of different layers underneath. For example, let's look at leaves. For Canadians, it's the symbol of their country. For the man who cleans the street, the sweeper, it's just rubbish. For a child, it's a toy. For the conductor of a tram, it's a danger. So, there is a never-ending stream of different ideas. And I do the same on stage. I do a very simple thing, just a step or an expression, or a movement and under that, there is a never-ending layer. (He is holding a fleck of white tissue, used in the show) For a child, it's a toy. For an old lady, it's tear. For a philosopher, it's philosophy. For the poet, it's poetry. I give

them what they want and what they can get out of it.

Polounine in Imre 1999b: 41

These simple means, their unexpected arrangement, and the illogical relation between the various scenes indicated that the clowns were always resolving polarities, balancing between harmony and danger, humour and sadness, life and death, comedy and tragedy, caught up in-between natural and unnatural forces, common interpretations and absurd situations. This way, theatre works by disclosure rather than closure, and by dialogue rather than didacticism.

### *Theatre as disclosure and the spectator*

As seen in *Slava's Snowshow*, theatre as disclosure reveals the construction of supposedly fixed meanings, codes, and interpretations. In this way, it partly opens the theatre up to exploration, and partly questions the mechanism and validity of popular images and natural(istic) representations. Based on the mutual interplay between performers, performance, and spectators, theatre as disclosure uses simple and a limited number of means with which spectators can associate in various ways. They can thus construct their own complex fictional world. That type of theatre does not focus on representation, namely what *is* represented there, but invites the spectators to imagine what *can* be there. Theatre as disclosure plays with the relativity of positions, the reflexivity of perspectives, and leaves the definition of situations onto the spectators. Spectators decide, but that decision is turned back onto themselves. The constant backward references force spectators also to reflect on themselves and to reconsider their own positions and interpretations. Therefore, theatre as disclosure – along the line of its tears and gaps – offers counter-hegemonic practices of resistance through which it deconstructs popular images and stereotypes, subverts the representations of dominant ideology, distorts the 'space of domination' of conventional theatre, and liberates the spectators from the theatre's 'disciplinary system'.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> This was brilliantly expressed at the end of the performance when the spectators played with three giant balloons, given them by the yellow clown, while he watched them playing their version of the game he wanted them to play.



Eugenio Barba claimed in his article, *Four Spectators*, that it is no longer possible to create a community in the theatre (Barba 1999: 25). I would argue, however, that community – however temporal – can still be realised through mutual games, when the game is played as in *Slava's Snowshow*. There, the clowns were caught up in the web of references in the system of accidents and happenings. As the spectators could identify with the clowns, they could also keep deconstructing their own projections and positions. Consequently, what the 'outsider' clown sought to do in a dominant institution was thus nothing more than to reveal the audience's normal expectations and expose the common methods of conventional theatre, thereby giving spectators a chance of freedom through intellectual and emotional play. He posed an alternative space by playing games with the elements of dominant ideology. Playing such games, the 'outsider' can achieve what theatre should be doing, yet rarely does: revealing the Child and restoring child-like wonder, intuitions, and desires in the spectators, children and adults alike. Restoring child-like wonder, intuitions, and desires, theatre can release spectators from their basic routines and controlled roles. Theatre is thus capable of realising creative powers, individual and/or communal, to criticize and challenge the dominant social structural values.

### 3.2.3. *Theatre of imagination: spectator, installation, and H.G.*<sup>182</sup>

In Chapter 1, I argued that theatre is usually seen by its participants as an analogue medium, a disciplinary system, and a space of domination, combining factory and store in one building. In that theatre, the spectator is modelled on the late twentieth century consumer, 'a voyeur in a showbiz society' (de Certeau 1984: xxi), whose perception results in the maximal development of passivity. Analysing Robert Wilson's and Hans Peter Kuhn's installation, *H.G.*, I shall attempt to point out how the voyeur's supposedly passive perception can be transformed into a creative process. Apart from demonstrating spectators' creativity, the analysis of Wilson's *H.G.* reveals another approach through which resistance can be achieved. *1003 Hearts* utilised theatre to re-interpret theatrical, social, and ideological clichés and to offer resistance. *Slava's Snowshow* did it

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<sup>182</sup> Robert Wilson's and Hans Peter Kuhn's installation, *H.G.* was realised in London, January, 1995. For

differently as it took an 'outsider' genre (circus) and an 'outsider' figure (clown), but still remained within the realm of performing arts. By contrast, Wilson's *H.G.* chose visual art installation as a theatrical medium to present resistance. As any (performance) analysis is retrospective, I shall restructure *H.G.* through Goffman's notion of regions (Goffman 1959); reconstruct it through Fredric Jameson's treatise of postmodern installation (Jameson 1991); and re-interpret it through Elinor Fuchs's concept of presence and absence (Fuchs 1985).

### *Structuring H.G through Goffman's notion of regions*

Having defined region as 'any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception' (Goffman 1959:92), Goffman differentiated between three types of regions as front, back and outside in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Front can be regarded as a place where performance (in a cocktail party, for example) is given to audiences (guests), and organised and embodied in certain moral standards and instrumental requirements, concerning how the performer treats the audience, and how the performer comports himself within the visual and aural range of audience. Front region is thus reserved for presentation and conscious (self)management, where performers carefully deliver their actions in order to give appropriate appearances and intended impressions. Front region is where activities are expressively accentuated, and where the audience's presence is noted and calculated in the performance. Front region is associated with front behaviour, consciously produced for an audience. Front region can thus be interpreted as a territory of officialdom.

Back region can be seen as a place where actions occur that are related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the appearance. For Goffman, back region functions as a place where

stage props and items of personal front can be stored in a kind of compact collapsing of whole repertoires of actions and characters. Here grades of ceremonial equipment [...] can be hidden so that the audience will not be able to see the treatment accorded to them in comparison with the treatment that could have been accorded them. [...] Here costumes and other parts of personal front

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a detailed analysis of *H.G.* see Imre 1999c.



may be adjusted and scrutinised for flaws. [...] Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character.

Goffman 1959: 97

For Goffman, back region is, on the one hand, reserved for openness, where behaviour is relaxed, informal and familiar and where those aspects can also appear that are prohibited in the front region. On the other, back region offers opportunities for the expression of publicly unacceptable behaviours, and the demonstration of secrets and fears. Thus, back region is associated with back behaviour, produced in private, and operated as place for self-liberation and secrecy.

To these bounded and connected regions, Goffman added a third: the Outside. He defined it simply as 'all places other than the two already identified' (Goffman 1959: 117) and interpreted its use through a spatial example. Goffman described a building, where various rooms are used as front and back respectively, while the place outside the building can be regarded as outside in respect to these places and the performances within these places. Goffman, however, was very careful with the interpretation of these regions, and emphasised that a particular ongoing performance serves as point of reference for their definition. Therefore, it is possible that those who are outside can be the ones for whom the performers actually or potentially put on a show, anticipating them as their real audience. Goffman also drew attention to the fact that the definition of these regions is only temporary, relational and situational. The outside decoration and appearance of a building for instance 'must in part be seen as an aspect of another show; and sometimes the latter contribution may be the more important one' (Goffman 1959: 117-118). In this case, the expectations of the front region can be realised from the information gained from the outside decoration, and predicted from an outside position.

In his book, Goffman took the concept of his three-party spatial model – as he readily admitted in his introduction – from conventional theatre (see Goffman 1959: ix). In conventional theatre, these regions are usually defined from the point of view of the theatrical performance. Backstage is then regarded as back region, stage as front, and the world outside the theatre and the auditorium as outside, though it is really for those who are in the auditorium that the performers actually put on the show. In conventional theatre, the physical conditions of the building and the characteristics given them by

social custom indicate the accepted usage of front, back, and outside. The signification of Goffman's model lies in the fact that he drew attention to the flexibility of these regions, which conventional theatre attempts to hold fixed. Goffman emphasised just that – even in conventional theatre – there can be an ongoing performance in the auditorium, as well as in those places that are reserved exclusively for the spectators. In the former case, from the spectators' point of view, when they watch a theatrical performance, front can be identified with the auditorium, back with the foyer and lavatories, and outside can refer to either the stage or the territory outside the building. In the latter case, front can be identified with the foyers, the staircases, and the buffet; back with the lavatories, and outside can refer either to the auditorium, the stage, and the territories outside the building. Therefore, in Goffman's model, even conventional theatre's stage-auditorium division can also be interpreted as a mutual space where two fronts – the performance's and the spectators' – can collide, and where spectators – theoretically at any time – can be transformed into performers, and performers into spectators. Though that happens very rarely in conventional theatre, the change between regions and behaviours connected to these regions can be very often experienced in everyday life. Thus, Goffman's model, applied to behaviours and space arrangements in everyday life, not only emphasises the theatrical quality of human behaviour, treating their artefacts as theatrical props, and their places as settings, but makes the conventionally rigid division between performance and audience, stage and auditorium flexible and interchangeable. Hence, the metaphor derived from the analogue model of theatre turned into an interactive model in Goffman's treatise as he emphasised the flexibility and variability of these regions and their relations.

I shall apply Goffman's region-analysis to the scenes of Robert Wilson's installation, since it was a consciously produced event, presented to audiences which supplied the theatrical atmosphere for the event. The spectators entered the site of the installation in single file through a brown wooden front door bearing the initials HG. The door and the initials indicated that the installation would probably be structured as a private region, like a flat, and suggested that the visitor could see a sort of theme park atmosphere showcase on the famous English writer, H.G. Wells. As expected, behind the door the visitors found a Front region: an elaborately designed Victorian-style dining room with stuffed animals, dark oil paintings, mirrors and medical charts. Two candles,



placed at each end of a spectacularly decorated table, lighted the room. The arrangement of the room reinforced the theme park atmosphere and the impression of the visitors that the installation could be read as a theme park on Wells and late Victorianism. That reading, however, was contradicted slightly by the fact that some of the items on display did not refer exactly to Wells, and there were items that did not fit into the conventional picture of Victorianism. These contradictions suggested that the world of the installation would penetrate the reconstructive nature of theme park.

The initials on the door also implied that visitors would meet the possessor of the initials. In this sense, the visitors realised their initial expectation only in part. The half-eaten food on the plates and the arrangement of the cutlery around them on the table standing in the middle of the room gave the impression that the dinner had just been finished when spectators entered. The diners, however, were nowhere to be found. Having spent a short time in the dining room, visitors had to go through a small lobby, furnished with a Victorian-type drawer and a stuffed bull's head on the wall. From there, a small staircase led to a dark, damp and smelly space that suddenly widened out.

Consequently, at the beginning of the installation, the territory of *H.G.* could be divided into three major regions: the outside – London, the front – the dining room, and the back – the vaults of the former Clink prison. At that time, the place behind the front door could thus be seen as designed for presentation; made for performing and seeing, a place where the dinners and the visitors could be or could have been clearly present. At the same time, the vaults of the Clink could be interpreted as back region with opportunities for openness, relaxation, suppression, secrets and hidden things. That initial division, however, later changed. The region identified initially as back was realised as front, in which the hidden and suppressed desires, instincts, and secrets were transformed into (cultural) performances by the visitor's interpretation. In fact, the installation took place in the region seen initially as back, and the initial front region served only to introduce and represent this region. The re-interpreted front region fostered the theme park atmosphere, contradicting it by displaying its own elements and drawing the visitors' attention to these contradictions. Front region thus thematicised *H.G.*'s private though publicly displayed representations, while frustrating the visitors' initial expectations. At the same time, the reinterpretation of these regions deconstructed the visitors' initial 'outsider' position, and transformed them from outsider spectators

into insider specta(c)tors. The territories of *H.G.* became in this sense emptied regions, where the traces awaited discovery and interpretation.

### *Postmodern installation and H.G.*

In his article, 'Utopianism After the End of Utopia', Fredric Jameson drew attention to a new type of spatial art which he called postmodern installation. Jameson described postmodern installation as a sort of collection in which the traumas of the contemporary world are displayed, using high-tech reproductions of their traces. Jameson described that art as a Kantian procedure, whereby 'on the occasion of what first seems to be an encounter with a work of art of some kind, the categories of the mind – normally not conscious, and inaccessible to any direct representation or to any thematizable self-consciousness or reflexivity – are flexed' (Jameson 1991: 157). Jameson called these pieces through which the viewer can experience such mental processes intellectual infernal machines (Lyotard called them perceptual paradoxes) which, unnoticed otherwise, but if not, cannot be grasped through conscious abstraction. In this sense, for visitors the material objects exhibited in a given space, and considered conventionally as artefacts, serve as pretexts for such mental processes. These mental processes are the artefacts themselves experienced in the form of perceptual paradoxes.

Analysing Robert Gober's installation, Jameson pointed out that postmodern installation 'draws its effects from a place not above the media but within their system of relationships' (Jameson 1991: 163). The installation renounces the otherwise impossible imitation of the real 'in order to elaborate an autonomous vision which has no external equivalent' (Jameson 1991: 179). All that is achieved is that this practice does not create representations to be observed in themselves, as their objects would not otherwise attract the observer's *special* attention. Though the installation combining these insignificant objects as a unified exhibition within the space of the museum

certainly awakens representational anticipations and impulses, and in particular emits an imperative to unify them perceptually, to invent the aesthetic totalization from within which these disparate objects and items can be grasped – if not parts of a whole, then at least as elements of some complete thing. This is an imperative, as we have suggested, which is systematically thwarted by the 'work' itself.



The frustration caused by the impossibility of unifying the elements of the installation is achieved not only by using heterogeneous materials and by introducing the differentiation of their abstract contents, but by emphasising the difference between the temporal and even the spatial dimensions of the objects. The frustration is also achieved by the practice that all these are redoubled or reinforced by a more authentic social heterogeneity that is nothing less than the collectively realised mental artefact. That collective artefact, however, does not presuppose any kind of general stylistic rule or cultural polity; moreover it cancels the realisation of these rules and politics.

For Jameson, that process is characterised by splits and gaps, and leads to the reappearance of allegorical interpretation. In such an allegorical interpretation, it is clear that only one thing is certain: no single thought or theory could unite all the elements of the installation. That allegorical interpretation is horizontal rather than vertical, and its objects are connected to each other through their (often contradictory) relations. Allegorical interpretation is thus a sort of 'scanning that, moving back and forth across the text, readjusts its terms in constant modification' (Jameson 1991: 168). Thus, interpretation becomes constant movement, which continuously modifies itself, and in which each element (sooner or later) goes through a process of reinterpretation. In that sense, movement can only be grasped, 'if it is understood that any direction and any starting point are possible and that what is here offered is only one of the varied trajectories and combinations logically possible (and perhaps one of the more obvious ones)' (Jameson 1991: 168). Postmodern installation does not even attempt to achieve a synthesis, as the very system 'on which the older synthesis was based has itself become problematical, along with the claim of any one of the individual fine arts to its own intrinsic autonomy or semi-autonomy' (Jameson 1991: 172). Jameson called this mixed media, and described it as a texture in which 'the 'mix' comes first and redefines the media involved by implication *a posteriori*' (Jameson 1991: 172). The redefinition of the elements of the installation is achieved by deconstructing their conventional place and interpretations, as well as re-contextualising them along their splits and gaps, and placing them in contexts not their own. Consequently, postmodern installation is most of all built on the visitor's creative and performative mental actions and interpretations. Before

attempting a reading of Wilson's *H.G.* through Jameson's concept of allegorical interpretation, I must focus on the deconstructed and constantly deferred centre of postmodern installation: absence that constantly conjures up and immediately defers presence.

*Presence, absence, and H.G.*

In her article, 'Presence and the Revenge of Writing', Elinore Fuchs argued that though drama can be seen as a form of writing, it has been associated with the illusion that it is organised by spontaneous speech and is therefore directly connected with presence. Fuchs pointed out that presence had always been associated with theatre, but it was not given absolute value until the late 1960s (see Fuchs 1985). As a result, theatre theorists and practitioners of the 1960s aimed to reach the centre of human experience through improvisation based on self-exploration of sufficient intensity to redefine identity itself, and they attempted to arrange the theatrical performances around absolute presence. Fuchs drew attention to the fact, however, that by the middle of the seventies a new generation of theatre artist challenged the absolute value of presence, as their work was marked not by presence, but rather by absence. Though Fuchs set up a binary opposition between absence and presence, preferring the former, she did it to attract attention to the failure of the theatre of presence: the impossibility of achieving absolute presence in theatre. As she argued in her conclusion, theatre is realised through the mutual interplay between presence and absence, as they do not exclude, but rather they condition each other. Hence 'theatre is ever the presence of the absence and the absence of the presence' (Fuchs 1985: 172).

Installation differs from theatre (and especially from the theatre of presence) in that it hardly ever uses the presence of performers. Instead, as we saw in Jameson's interpretation of Guber's installation, it exhibits objects in a given space. But even the (presence of these) objects are significant not in themselves, in the sense that they would be important in a conventional exhibition, but in their relations, realised in mental processes in perceptual paradoxes that arise from them. These relations are indeed derived and conjured up, but they are not possessed by the objects themselves. Installation is thus built on the visitor's participation, and that is why installation can also



be regarded as a theatre of relations realised in mental paradoxes. In this sense, installation is conceived as a theatrical practice *par excellence*, which develops through reflection on the presence of absence and the absence of presence.

Seen through Fuchs's theory, Wilson's installation was based on the aesthetic of presence conjured up by absence, and it thematicised the double game of presence and absence. In the outside region, the letters on the door become initials conjuring up the expectation of (someone's) presence; the dining room, while affirming that expectation, immediately dissolved its realisation. In *H.G.*, absence was imagined as (non)presence: absence was materialised in objects as the absence of presence, drawing attention to their absent presence realised by the visitors. The visitors thus became active participants: they were quasi-performers in the regions of *H.G.* The tension between the continuous (non)presence of absent bodies, and the continuous lateness of the visitors' existence, in what had already happened and in what was always missed, lent the visitors' performance the dimensions of space and time, in which the hunt for absolute presence and its continuous deferral could be experienced. Consequently, the visitors can be interpreted as para-archaeologists who cannot excavate exact meanings but only reconstruct meaning again and again in the deferred relations between traces and their interpretations. In this sense, installation is conceived as a theatrical practice *par excellence* in which visitors become performers interpreting the system of relationships of traces left behind.

#### *Visitor / performer – perception / performance*

The (vain) hunt for presence and the archaeological experience of the certainty of presence realised as permanent absence are organised in perceptual paradoxes by intertextual references and contexts with constant slippage. In one of the first loci of the back region, for instance, the central position of the visitor was thematicised in a perceptual paradox, and deferred by its slipping meanings. In the dark vault, the space was full of columns and wooden beams, lit by flashing lights and a search beam, and dust and straw covered the floor. The visitors were separated from the space by a fence. As they moved along the fence, they could discern a shadow of a small animal on one of the back walls. The placing of the animal, the beam of light, the wooden beams, and the

visitors' position drew attention to the fact that – as Arnold Aronson pointed out – ‘no single point of view can predominate, even within a single image [and thus] the spectator is constantly made aware of the experience of viewing and, [...], of the whole history, contexts and reverberations of an image in the contemporary world’ (Aronson 1991: 2). The various segments of the space were brought together and related to each other by the visitors as they changed their positions. Among the various segments, however, neither of them could occupy a central position from which the entire space could have been surveyed. The visitors could not stay in a safe position, waiting for the images, objects, scenes to come and pass before their eyes. Instead, they became part of the environment. The visitors' interpretation was thus realised between the mutual interplay of the installed objects, noises, music, light(s) and their own observation of these. The visitors' performance created their own performance of *H.G.*.

That performance was organised through the conscious deployment of intertextuality. The gesture of placement of the objects of *H.G.* – whether natural, created, or ‘found’ – transformed them into sites waiting for and exposed to signification. Apart from the installed objects, music, lighting, and noises, *H.G.* incorporated into its project the visitors' bodies, which also became installed, perceivable and lighted objects. These bodies were also put on display, i.e., objects for exhibition to the other visitors, as these bodies were also subjected to the play of signification. In this way, the centrality of the visitors' position was challenged and then deconstructed by the deferred play of intertextuality.

The process of continuous de- and reconstruction of the visitors' interpretation is reflected in another perceptual paradox. In a space, reproductions of old and famous paintings were placed at random distances from each other on a dirty, wet floor. The space also incorporated a Snow White-type dwarf standing in the semi-darkness, and a real pine tree at the back, lit with a bare bulb from below. The visitors had to be very careful if they did not want to step on the paintings. From the reproductions the faces of wealthy men and women from a variety of periods in the past stared at the visitors through the dirt and the water. The placing of the pictures did not provide them with the aura they would conjure up in a gallery or a museum, where they would hang on walls, properly lit, with labels to the side, containing appropriate information about their title, creator, and the person depicted, giving enough information for them to be appreciated



as masterpieces. In the space of the installation, these pictures were re-contextualised as ordinary objects, exposed to time, nature and decay. Their dirty surface emphasised that everything man-made is subject to the vagaries of time. Their placement in the darkness of the vaults questioned the authoritative power of such institutions as the museum, gallery, etc., and at the same time it drew the visitors' attention to the authoritative nature of the vantage point. The entire question (and interpretation) of art, masterpieces, and classics was, however, rewritten by the plastic dwarf. The connection between the dwarf as kitsch and the paintings as reproductions of masterpieces made the visitors aware that the nature of interpretation is based on convention. There was no ontological difference between them: the dwarf and the pictures were all man-made objects. That ontological sameness was offered by the pine tree, as it too was subject to the passing of time. As time passed, however, its perfect shape, blossom and shine were fading away. It was dying. The passage of time did not make the pine tree more precious; on the contrary, its alive-ness emphasised both presence and the limiting, the necessary end of dying as absence.

The body, one of the fetishes of the contemporary world, was the theme of another space where the remains of a body were installed, lit by a sky-blue beam of light. These remains could be interpreted as (the representation of) a 'dead body'. Death, absence, disappearance and non-existence were the underlying themes of the installation, since apart from the visitors, the only living creature in the installation was a lizard. The lizard was not a representation of a lizard; it was a real lizard, though its appearance in the space of the installation recalled its own representation. The 'live' lizard was just a short walk from the dead body, from the absent bodies of the dining guests, and the (omnipotent) observer. In this relation, the dead body and the live lizard could be seen – in terms of H.G. Wells's novel *The Time-Machine* – as a prediction about a cruel and dystopian future in which the results of contemporary consumerism was represented by huge heaps of garbage along the main vault. These heaps contained metal cans, glasses, white animal skulls, and general rubbish, as if rubbish was poured over everything.

Apart from the fetishes of the contemporary world, the traumas of the near past were also encapsulated in a perceptual paradox which served also to dissolve the theme park atmosphere. As in Andy Warhol's *Dust Shoes*, there were shoes, slippers, and boots, labelled and arranged in straight parallel lines in the semi-darkness of another

room. The owners of the footwear were also absent. Only the visitors' wandering bodies and bare light bulbs placed at random among the footwear could be seen, reminders of the twentieth century systematically executed massacres of Auschwitz, Kosovo, and Nigeria. The concentration on feet was, however, also a reminder of the children's game of hopscotch. Its playfulness was juxtaposed with the seriousness of the deserted footwear. That juxtaposition was reinforced with a solid wooden pool table, which – an object and space for games – was standing in the middle of the space with one of the legs of the table resting on a bare light bulb. The weight and massive structure of the table and the lightness and fragility of the bulb enforced the power and authority of the table. The juxtaposed images of the ghostly absence of human bodies, represented by footwear, and the massive presence of the table expressed the contradiction between the long-term presence of man-made objects and the short-lived absence of human beings.

### *Theatre of imagination*

The front door with the initials HG, through which the visitors descended, was somewhere in the middle of the vaults where there were various possible routes sealed by darkness. The lights of the installed light bulbs relieved the space from darkness, leaving an atmosphere of continuous struggle between light and dark, between life/presence and death/absence, as well as clearly showing the visitors and their wandering shadows. The space whither the visitors descended was without an end-goal, and therefore without teleology. The installed elements cannot be arranged hierarchically; they were connected through the visitor. There was no right order to follow, there was no developmental narrative, and there was no end to achieve, no goal at which to arrive. The elements used were not ordered in advance, but placed in relation to each other in the same space, and to other elements in other spaces, and the outside world. There was no previously built-in system of relations either for the visitors to decode. *H.G.* utilised one of the tactics with which Nick Kaye identified postmodern works as 'the figures and terms out of which the "postmodern work" is constituted cannot properly be said to be in possession of its "meanings", for here postmodern occurs as a disruption of this very claim to meaning' (Kaye 1991:17). Like Wilson's theatrical works, *H.G.* also rejected any unity by which it could have been interpreted



coherently. The visitors connected the elements on offer, following their own schedule of encounters as they moved on, and introducing their own interpretations, narratives, and connections, continuously deferring and reflecting on their own viewpoints. The cognitive map was thus designed by the visitors as *H.G.* was born in the visitors. Thus was *H.G.* transformed into an individually imagined and created three-dimensional visual space-structure in the mind of the visitors turning into performers. Utilising the everyday experience of the visitors/performers, *H.G.* offered space for resistance on various levels for the play of interpretations, realised in constant slippages and re-contextualising, hence re-writing each other. The visitors/performers were then given the opportunity to challenge and re-write their own system of associations, beliefs, knowledge, and expectations when encountering and relating to the objects, noises, and pieces of music. Therefore, the visitors were incorporated into the installation and their interpretations could not be considered any longer as *the* (unique and perfect) 'correct' solution to a puzzle, hence *the* 'correct' decoding of an encoded message; these were transformed into creative and (self)reflective performative actions.

#### 3.2.4. *Theatre as rite: Artaud, analytical text, and MANES*<sup>183</sup>

How can it be that in the theatre, at least theatre such as we know it in Europe, or rather in the West, everything specifically theatrical, that is to say everything which cannot be expressed in words or if you prefer, everything that is not contained in dialogue [...] has been left in the background? [...] I maintain the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language. I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical, tangible language I am referring to is really only theatrical in as far as the thoughts it expresses escape spoken language. This difficult, complex poetry assumes many disguises; first of all it assumes those expressive means usable on stage such as music, dance, plastic art, mimicry, mime, gesture, voice inflexion, architecture, lighting and decor.

Artaud 1970: 26-28

The above extract from Antonin Artaud's writing on *Production and Metaphysics* is part

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<sup>183</sup>. La Fura dels Baus's *Manes* was directed by Pera Tatiña, and premiered in Spain in 1996. The

of his collected works, *Theatre and Its Double*. In these writings, originally written in the 1930s, Artaud, having been disappointed with the psychologically-based, literary, dramatist-oriented practice of Western theatre, envisaged another form of theatre which he called theatre of cruelty. In his essay, *Oriental and Western Theatre*, Artaud argued that this form of theatre

is not aimed at solving social or psychological conflicts, to serve as a battlefield for moral passions, but to express objectively secret truths, to bring out in active gestures those elements of truth hidden under forms in their encounters with Becoming. To do that, to link theatre with expressive form potential, with everything in the way of gestures, sound, colours, movement, is to return it to its original purpose, to restore it to a religious, metaphysical position, to reconcile it with the universe.

Artaud 1970: 51

The cruelty of Artaud's theatre does not consist – as often assumed – in purely cruel physical actions, violent behaviour, and bloody scenes. Artaud's theatre aims to envisage and present the notion of metaphysical fear and danger. As he pointed out, 'the far more terrible, essentially cruel objects can practice on us. We are not free and the sky can still fall on our heads' (Artaud 1970: 60). Artaud proposed a theatre in which physical and mental actions and images pulverise and 'mesmerise the audience's sensibilities, caught in the drama as if in a vortex of higher forces' (Artaud 1970: 63). These metaphysical actions and images can be connected 'in the same way as our dreams react on us and reality reacts on our dreams, so we believe ourselves able to associate mental pictures with dreams, effective in so far as they are projected with the required violence. And the audience will believe in the illusion of theatre on condition they really take it for a dream, not for a servile imitation of reality. On condition it releases the magic freedom of daydreams, only recognisable when imprinted with terror and cruelty' (Artaud 1970: 65).

The production of *MANES*, created and performed by the Catalan group of theatrical anarchists, La Fura dels Baus, offered resistance rather different from the theatrical practice analysed before. *MANES* was based on the characteristics Artaud

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performance I saw took place at Three Mills Island Studios, London, on 10 July 1998.



envisaged in his writings: sequences of cruel, violent, sometimes sadistic acts, events and scenes organised by a dream representing metaphysical terror and cruelty. *MANES* offered an occasion through which the spectators could experience the sky falling onto their heads. The experience of the metaphysical danger of the falling sky was not presented through mimetic representation, but rather via a mixture of dangerous physical actions, unimaginably strange and unconnected raw images, juxtaposed ideas, and wild techno music. In that fictional world, spectators were unable to identify with the characters to live through their experience, to observe the events calmly and peacefully from a position of safety, and to understand logically the fiction in front of them. Instead, they could experience all these only through their senses and emotions. By way of synopsis, *MANES* offered the spectator 'a personal invitation to the dream world where cocks, fed up with waiting for sunrise, have turned into chickens. A tale in which MEN ARE CHICKENS and CHICKENS ARE MEN; in which fear has an educational value, logic destroys our imagination and security, [and] a few grains of corn has become an absolute value in our lives' (Espuma 1996). As Artaud also envisaged, the performance by La Fura dels Baus was based on an absence of logic, causality, verbal discourse, narrative structure and order: events and actions followed each other at random; actions and events had neither beginnings nor ends; and the performance existed only in the here-and-now. *MANES* offered the spectators a site of resistance where they could receive experiences producing their own space and locate it in the body, pre-logically and pre-rationally, moving beyond patriarchal mimesis while subverting its claims.

### *The theoretical problem of analysing MANES*

Though *MANES* offered a site of resistance, it presents a methodological problem for the present analysis. *MANES* attacked a territory beyond/behind language. From another perspective, the performance was organised not from a logocentric and phonocentric perspective, but rather it displayed a pre-lingual, non-discursive state in which language, if used, was not discursive, but gestural. *MANES* attacked emotions, sensations, and led spectators through various emotions, feelings and experiences. Though Artaud envisaged a theatre of images, dreams and cruelty, situated beyond or before language,

targeting above all the spectators' senses, and through them, their emotions, feelings and experiences, he did not offer a discursive method through which it might be possible to speak and write of these theatres. The basic problem for the analysis of productions of this kind is that there is always an ontological gap between sensations and encountering them in words, both in writing and speech. That does not mean, however, that sensual perception is primary and language secondary; or that may even be seen as neutral compared with the manipulative power of language. Nor does it mean that thinking – as Saussure imagined<sup>184</sup> – would be impossible without language, and that it would be impossible to think of sensual experience in ways other than linguistic. All it means is that the analysis should reflect and overcome – as far as this is possible – the gap between experience and verbal discourse.

The German theatre semiotician Erika Fischer-Lichte argued in her book *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre* that performance analysis is still one of the most neglected areas of academic theatre research. For Fischer-Lichte, the problems of performance analysis arise from the fact that performance is ephemeral, inclusively bound to the action, and existing only for the brief moment of its creation and reception (Fischer-Lichte 1997: 187). Apart from the problems mentioned by Fischer-Lichte, Marvin Carlson listed other difficulties in his earlier article. For Carlson, another problem for theatre research is the complexity of the interrelationships of the channels of communication both in performance itself and between performance and audience. Apart from this, the physicality of the event, and the effects upon interpretation of changing historical and social reception strategies, are also problematic. Difficulties may also arise from the fact that a single written script may have a variety of physical realisations (Carlson 1994: 111).

In spite of these difficulties, various performance analyses have been attempted in the history of theatre.<sup>185</sup> In dominant practice, analysis takes the form of a written text, often regarded as parasitical upon the actual event, performed *a posteriori* and *retrospectively* after the event, and seen as an iconic reflection on the *a priori* event. The

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<sup>184</sup> In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure wrote that 'our thought – apart from its expression in words – is only shapeless and indistinct mass', and 'there are no-pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language' (Saussure 1974: 66-67).

<sup>185</sup> See approaches to performance-analysis through the concept of *mise-en-scène* in Pavis 1992: 24-47,



creation of such an analytical text is concerned with language, clothed in the veil of innocence; and its unity is achieved through rational argument based on logic. The ideal analytical text is expected to have a linear narrative, seamless and coherent, covering all the cracks and gaps, giving its reader the tools to overcome the difficulties it poses, and to progress at a constant rate. Hence, the analytical text is usually interpreted as an exclusively verbal field, situated within the verbal/textual paradigm. This interpretation regards the visual as merely subordinate illustration, and leaves the proximal, the tactile and the other dimensions to one side.

Seen from the viewpoint of the visual paradigm (see 2.1.2.), the anomalies of the verbal-based analytical text can clearly be detected. Though the analytical text is taken as an exclusively verbal field, it is visual, since it appears on paper in a clearly recognised, though neglected, visual form. Though the analytical text is regarded as a textual field, its creation and appreciation also involve performative means and strategies. Coded verbally *and* implicitly visually, even the most conventional text is appreciated in a process of virtual performance through reading. Therefore, writing/reading is always (though most of the time implicitly) picture-writing/reading and needs the use of (implicit) performative means and actions.

In analytical discourse, implicit 'picture writing' can be transformed into an explicit one, consciously using visual elements that have been neglected so far. The technique is not entirely new, for it is found in art beginning with ancient Egypt, through Greece, the Roman Empire, and medieval times, right up to today's (post)modern art. Its range of forms extends from ancient and medieval miniatures and picture-poems to (post)modern collages, artists' books, CD-ROMs, and picture-texts. These forms are built on the principle that picture and text are consciously interwoven, producing a complex system of signification. Meaning(s) can be assigned to the picture-text only when the signs of the various sign-systems employed are interpreted through their relations to each other. These forms are no longer linear, but arranged iconically, topologically, or adventitiously, and read in a way different from the reading of a conventional analytical text. In reading them, readers start by detecting their surface, instantiating the most important elements, even if these are not at the beginning and do

not derive from verbal codes. All these forms involve the collaboration of a spatial artist (painter) and a temporal artist (writer) united in one person.

The influence of the visual paradigm transforms the implicit performative qualities of analytical discourse into explicit ones. As far as writing is concerned, there have already been conscious efforts to make its implicitly creative and performative elements explicit, as in Della Pollock's (Pollock 1998) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1998) excellent work, though their suggestions and advice were situated within the textual/verbal paradigm. Their experiments can also be extended onto the visual field. As far as text is concerned, the conscious effort to create text both linguistically and visually will break up its conventional linear structure, creating spatial and temporal structures. In this way, verbal and visual information is arranged horizontally (not hierarchically) and in co-ordination with each other. When it is read, there is a process of double perception: both sides of the reader's brain are stimulated, and visual and verbal information are experienced and interpreted together in the brain: the left (rational) hemisphere reads the text, while the right (emotional) is stimulated by visual stimuli through watching the images. Thus reading the text leaves an impact on both the rational and the emotional sides. Additionally, the appreciation of such a text is based on an act of choosing as the reader consciously presents – in fact: performs – his interpretation, selecting and arranging the verbal and visual stimuli offered by the text in his own way. The verbal and visual information of the visual-text is mutually transformed through the performance of their realisation by the readers. Thus explicit picture-writing utilises the so-called space-based and time-based arts and emphasises the performative aspects of both writing and reading.

#### *Alternative Texts: Picture-text, Hypertext and Hypermedia*

The performative qualities of writing and reading become obvious when a text is realised as picture-text. A text as picture-text makes picture-writing explicit as visual elements are consciously used. The visual dimensions of a text are no longer neglected and they are no longer subordinated as illustrations. In picture-text, picture and text are consciously interwoven, using these elements as each other's supplements and juxtapositions, and their mutual relations create a complex spatial and temporal fabric.



The form of the picture-text is thus iconic, topologic, and accidental.

The performative quality of text-creation is even more obvious when the text is realised as hypertext on the computer screen. Hypertext is 'an information organising and application system, which makes reading and interpretation between textual information and their parts possible by changing their order through logical and associative connections' (Kiss 1998: 92). When use is made of ideographs, pictograms, photos, films, voices, animation, video-recordings, images, patterns, graphics, holograms, pictures as well as texts, we can speak of hypermedia. Hypermedia consists of 'heterogeneous information arranged in a structure in which it [...] can appear as text, hypertext, graphics, voice, animation, video, etc. in any combination' (Kiss 1998: 92). When the reader clicks on a topic (be it text, picture, part of a picture, and so on) its background information and other sources, information, and materials appear in an endless continuum. Thus text as hypertext and hypermedia are not simply the exploitation of technological advances, but a point where changes in production and perception are introduced and realised by technology.

Text as hypertext/hypermedia loses its concrete materiality, the notion of its complete objecthood, the illusory wholeness associated with it is dissolved, and it cannot be realised even in the physical sense as a unit. Text as hypertext/hypermedia exists only virtually, as a form that is kinetic, constantly changing, moving, and wavering in its constant (dis)appearance. It realises virtually that any text is intertext, existing in its intertextual connections with other texts, though it cannot offer the virtual totality of the intertextuality (if any) of the main text. Text is thus multiplied via its intertexts and intermediums, and its multiplicity and intertextuality are virtually realised.

Reading text as hypertext/hypermedia, readers enter one of the branches of the realm of the text. In his book, *Az irodalom új műfajai (New Genres of Literature)*, the Hungarian scholar Pál Nagy called this type of reading labyrinthine or tabular as it 'uncovers a system of connections and graphs in which readers become aleatoric nomads on the roads of the hypertext. [...] This system of connections is modified by each reading' (Nagy 1995: 372). Labyrinthine reading is not teleological, as its emphasis falls on wandering instead of achieving a (non-existent) final goal. Each time a scriptable text is created which, according to Roland Barthes, 'is active, productive, jouissant, and it really involves its readers in the pleasure of writing and re-writing,

while realising their own text' (Barthes 1997: 39). Since text as hypertext/hypermedia exists in its own intertextuality, multiplicity, in never ending sequentiality, its temporal and sequential order cannot be structured in advance. Therefore its reading is accidental, and it is intertextual, inter pictorial, interfilmical, and intervocal: hypermedial.

As the French physician Philippe Bootz pointed out, the author of text as hypertext/hypermedia must 'accept the reader/viewer as collaborator as certain versions of the text appear only through the manipulations, and interactive reading of the person sitting in front of the screen, in the relationship between the producer/author and producer reader/viewer' (Bootz in Nagy 1995: 357). Thus, writing/reading is no longer sequential as writing is not *a priori* and reading is not *a posteriori*, but simultaneous, changing constantly its roles and practices. Both writing and reading can be replaced by the notion of (re)playing. In this sense, text as a linear, single entity is destroyed, hypertext/hypermedia is realised as performance, and the writer/reader becomes player/performer in that performance.

Performance analysis as picture text/hypertext/hypermedia first questions and then might (re)visе conventional expectations towards an analytical text. As writing and reading are used interchangeably, such an analysis would amount to a sequence of explicit performances. Such an analysis can be considered a multimedia text, though still done *a posteriori* and *retrospectively*. It cannot be seen as iconic, but as a creative recreation of the *a priori* event. The method of creating such a text is not exclusively concerned with language, but is based on multimedia elements, appearing in the guise of persuasion rather than of innocence, organised through interactive rational and associational arguments, visions, impressions based on emotions, feelings, and logic. Its narrative is labyrinthine, interrupted, fragmented, and non-transparent. Such a text draws attention to how it is organised and structured in the here-and-now, disclosing its figures and gaps, and forcing its readers to pause and linger at its difficulties. Fragmentation of the narrative allows its reader to progress with constant jumps and interruptions. The reading of such a text is a non-linear process, following the order set out by the reader/viewer at the time of reading. Such an analytical text is therefore situated within the visual paradigm, and treated as a performative field. Labyrinthine reading can be compared to a turf in which the starting point and the goal are constantly changing; moreover, the field – as picture-text, hypertext, and hypermedia – is also moving



constantly.<sup>186</sup>

These elements and their strategies have been reserved mostly for the arts. Their introduction into analytical discourse, however, might dissolve the strict division currently enforced between art and writing on art, and between artists and scholars, into text-as-art and analytical text, and might lead to different, or even more complex understanding of art, everyday life, performance, and theatre. Here, I shall not use the usual logic-based, structured, and reason-centred discursive argument, but attempt a method that might be called picture-writing. Picture-writing uses words, pictures, quotations, images to create various images reflecting *MANES*.

*MANES as picture-text*<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> For a more detailed analysis see Imre 2001. For further reading and bibliography, see Paul Delany's and George P. Landow's book, *Hypermedia and Literary Studies* (Delany and Landow 1994).

<sup>187</sup> For the analysis of *MANES* as picture-text, I use pictures taken at the performance of *MANES* (see Espuma 1996).



The World – Beyond good and evil – Beyond representation, beyond...

*The dramatics is based on a grammar of simultaneity and no continuity. Zapping of emotions and sensations. Ahistorical dramatics in which the plot is the here and now. A series of scenes set against each other in which different worlds share space and time. A Gothic tale that attends unmoved the clash of several private scenes always caught unawares by an indiscreet light.*  
(Espuma 1996)

No <TEXT>  
Even No reference to text. Instead rite(s).

**Words are not in discourse but as GESTURES.**

BUT wHoSe

gesture????????????????????HIS??  
????????????????????????HER??MINE????????????????  
????????????THEIR??  
????????????????????????YOURS??  
????????.....

No **DIVISION SPACE** = Stageauditorium> Spectators are players, sets and instruments  
= **SPECTA(C)TORS.**  
Observers and being observed at the same time.











survival

- logic is survival –

AND

-survival is logic –

survival logic dictates – BLOOD – ACTIONS

&

**InteractionS = struggle – possession – satisfaction**

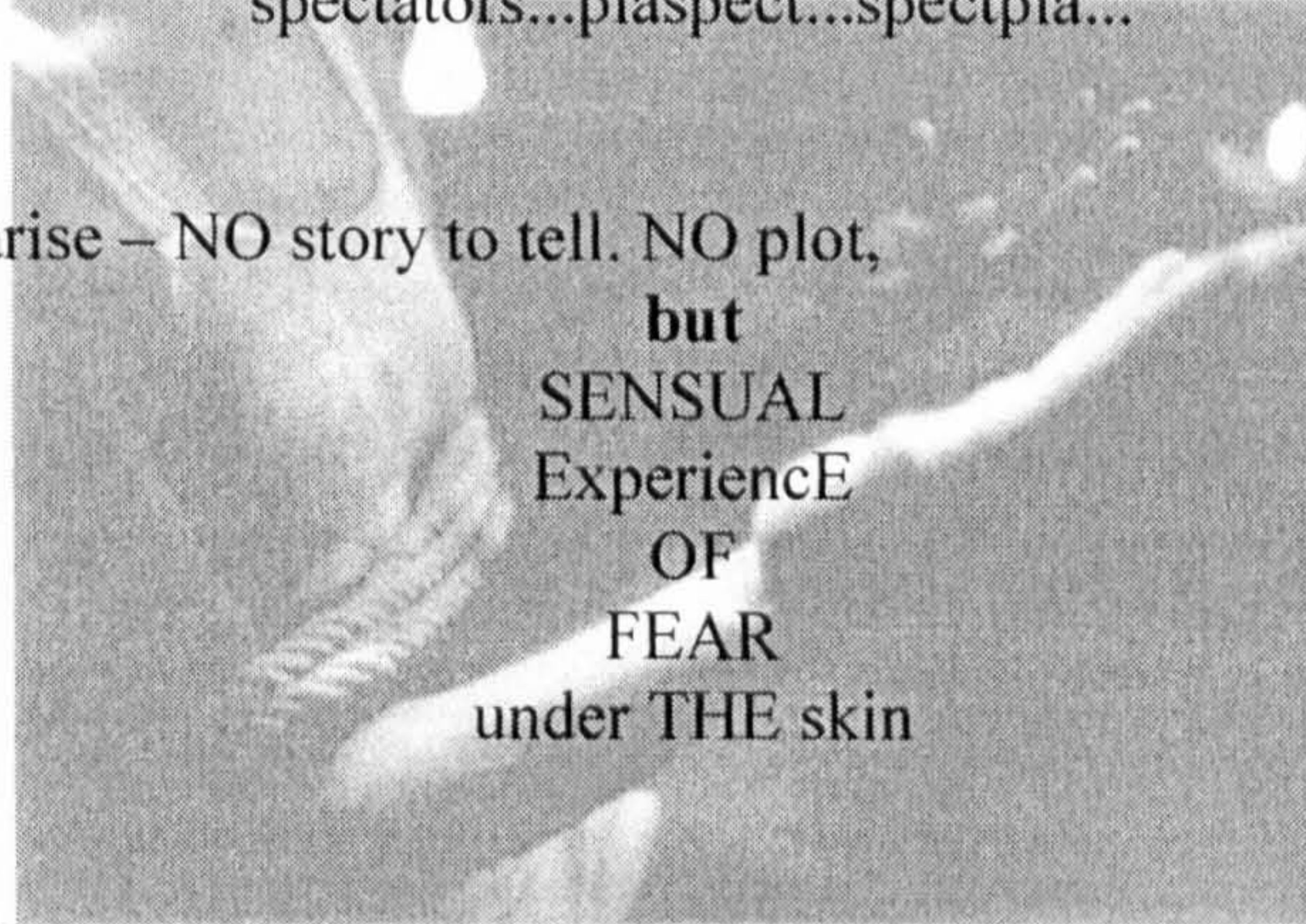
NOT therefore (.....), it COMES back to

survival.

*MANES is not an ideology. There is no ology. There is no truth to be found. If there is no original truth, what does Manes tell us? Nothing. Manes builds and destroys, searches and does not find, asks questions without knowing the hen. It cries laughing and laughs despairingly. Manes is a multitude is a multitude of emotions communicated, dizzily, by means of several stories that cross each other, and in turn generate more emotions. Manes invokes chaos, little devils that, in chicken costume, play disorganisation to make incomprehensible what seems logical, as in a dream. Do we make invisible what becomes inexplicable for us? Here is a legitimate question, with no answer: a MANES-question.  
(Espuma 1996)*



Nothing IS to be **fixed**. Action revolving in, among and around players, spectators, players, spectators, players, spectators, players, spectators, players, spectators, players, spectators...plaspect...spectpla...



NO story to summarise – NO story to tell. NO plot,

**but**  
SENSUAL  
Experience  
OF  
FEAR  
under THE skin

whose

skin?

Skin????????????????????mine????????????????????  
??yours????????????????????his????????????????????  
????????????????????theirs????????????????????.....

THROUGH – SENSES and EMOTIONS,

violent actions, disturbing images, cruel objects, disgusting materials, loud techno music, and crazy rhythm.





**AND**

**SPEED -----**

**RHYTHM -----**

**CRUELTY -----**

**MADNESS -----**

**AND THE BIRTH OF THE DEAD, BOLD, BLOODY CHICKEN =**

**HERE AND NOW**

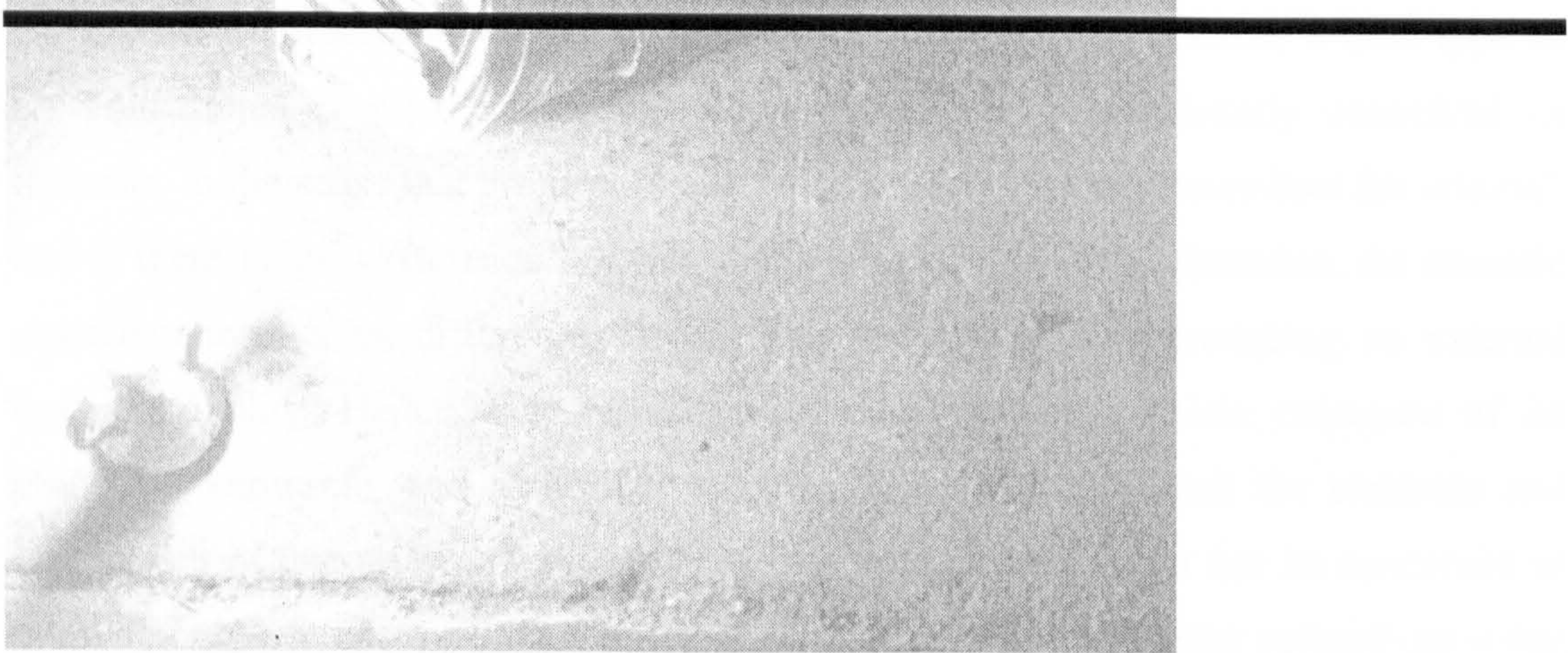
**no thing IS NOTHING – NOTHING IS A THING.**

**Where**

**all this ends or begins?**

**AT THE end of THE EGG BEGINS.....**

**THE rest is SILENCE...**





### 3.3. Conclusion: Theatre as resistance

Artaud envisioned a theatre in which representation ceases to exist. In that theatre, what is presented on stage would be identical with presence. That presence, however, would be life itself, and it would cease to be theatre anymore. In his analysis of Artaud, Derrida pointed out that ‘Artaud kept himself as close as possible to the limit: the possibility and impossibility of pure theatre. Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated’ (Derrida 1978: 249). Derrida drew attention also to the fact that it is impossible to realise Artaud’s vision as it is impossible to step out of representation. Even life cannot escape from representation, though life is always the non-representable origin of representation, ‘because [representation] has always already begun, representation therefore has no end’ (Derrida 1978: 250). Consequently, theatre is always (and already) representational. Built on that conscious recognition, this chapter attempted to describe a new type of representational practice of theatre. Representation is conventionally conceived as mimesis, in the sense that art mirrors and imitates life. The copy resembles the original, and if there is any difference between them, it is subsumed as sameness. As mimetic representation denies difference, it has been understood as *reproducing* an external (outside) reality. Hence, that *re*-production reaffirms the possible existence of an objective, knowable, and authoritative reality, even if it questions the elements and mechanism of that reality. A new type of theatrical representation can be conceived as mimetic only when its reading is based on the recognition – as Phelan pointed out – that representation

always conveys more than it intends, and is never totalizing. The “excess” meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible. Despite this excess, representation produces ruptures and gaps; it fails to reproduce the reality exactly. Precisely because of representation’s supplemental excess and its failure to be totalizing, close readings of the logic of representation can produce psychic resistance and, possibly, political change.

Phelan 1993: 2



In this sense, the close reading of representation discloses the ruptures and gaps of its own discourse, and makes resistant reading possible when these 'excess' meanings cannot be dissolved in the principle of their assumed sameness. Rather, they test, challenge and question representation itself.<sup>188</sup>

Apart from the recognition and the resistant use of excess meaning, that type of representation has also to recognise that theatre based on that type of representation does not deal with the real 'out there', but rather with reality – the mixture of the various representations of the real. In this sense, representation can be supposed to deal with the re-presentations of the already-represented real. Resistance is possible when theatre re-presents the already-accepted representations of the real in the conscious effort partly to draw attention to how these representations were produced, distributed, and perceived, and partly to show how a hierarchy is organised in these representations and what are the accepted and the 'natural' criteria that govern inclusions and exclusions. Apart from demonstrating several practices challenging the text-, actor-, story-centred concept and the realist suppositions of conventional theatre, I also described some of the possible practices of resistance such as (1) deconstruction; (2) disclosure; and (3) theatre of imagination. These practices use the tactics, structures and means of dominant theatre and culture, but these elements are radically rewritten, and thus transformed into their own resistance.

When resistant theatre utilises the means, practices, and strategies dominant culture offers and employs, then – as Auslander pointed out – it creates 'an elusive and fragile discourse that is always forced to walk a tightrope between complicity and critique' (Auslander 1997: 68). The danger of that practice, however, is that resistant theatre seeking to turn established structures back on themselves might re-inscribe and reassure those structures for conventional audiences. In this sense, the practices of resistant theatre 'can turn into their own opposites by reifying the very representations they supposedly attack' (Auslander 1997: 69). The success of these practices is connected to the fact that they can be read not only as resistant, but also as the reassurance of the dominant practice. Though they transform these practices, they leave it to the spectator to decide whether to recognise their subversive nature. This is a

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<sup>188</sup> See the feminist disclosure of representation in Diamond 1989 and 1997.

common problem for the theatrical practices analysed above. Therefore, the techniques of the theatrical practices analysed above were concerned with the demonstration of what sort of conventional structures, methods, and means were u(tili)sed, and focused on the analysis of how they were transformed into their own resistance and subversion.

Apart from these practices, theatre can also produce resistance without mimesis, when it denies referentiality itself. In this case, theatre neither follows, nor represents, nor imitates accepted and expected representations of the real, but creates its own representation. In my investigation, this type of theatre appeared as rite in the production of *MANES* by Fura dels Baus.

Consequently, it is possible to argue that theatre can achieve resistance when it reconsiders social, political, and cultural boundaries perceived as natural in/by society, and when it confronts the basic assumptions of logocentricity and places equal emphasis on visual, verbal, textual, and proximal elements, as well as its audience's active/creative participation. Theatre can thus problematise the supposedly basic assumptions of everyday life; reflect on the anomalies of culture; resist the lure of power; and present alternatives to dominant ideology. Theatre as resistance is political. Political here is used not in the Marxist sense of useful (i.e., propaganda) theatre. The politics of theatre as resistance is to show how the constant re-construction of representation works. Hence, its practitioners can all be seen as protesters and demonstrators, in spite of the fact that they are often situated within dominant culture. They cannot be seen simply as outsiders, as they do not simply negate conventional theatre and its assumptions; rather, they utilise the possibilities offered by conventional theatre for their own resistance. Like Boal in his invisible theatre, these practitioners can also transform theatre into a methodological territory and alternative site where the *status quo* can be reconsidered, and where the constant (re)construction of reality can be demonstrated and understood. Hence, theatre might acquire complexity, danger towards institutions, hierarchies and power, and alternativity to dominant ideology, with which it can fuse popular and high culture, giving visual, verbal, textual, intellectual and sensual pleasure to its creators and spectators. The rest we shall see...



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