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Undressing and redressing the harlequin: An Australian designer's perspective

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UNDRESSING
AND
REDRESSING
THE
HARLEQUIN:

AN AUSTRALIAN DESIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

In undressing and redressing the Harlequin from an Australian designer's perspective, the question is why has the Harlequin costume endured for over 500 years and in locations far away from its country of origin? Why do we associate its lozenge pattern with energetic joyous mischief? What are the Harlequin costume codes and how have they been manifested in Australia?

The thesis components are divided as follows:

The Designer's Notebook is a pictorial and historical review of the iconic costume, which is made up of a complex patchwork of triangles where colour placements form a diamond pattern called a lozenge. The Harlequin, a stock character from *commedia dell'arte*, who emerged in Italy and France during the 1500s, wears the lozenge costume.

The notebook traces possible connections and reasons for the emergence of both the costume and the Harlequin figure prior to his catalyzation as a character in *commedia dell'arte*. Having arrived at the manifestation of Harlequin and his lozenge costume, the focus moves to the forms of expression in which he has participated and the mutations which have occurred in the costume.

Harlequin High Jinks Down Under is concerned with the manifestation of both the harlequinesque figure and its associated costume codes in circus and the harlequinades in Australia from the 1850s, when a kind of Australian larrikinism began to develop as the national identity. From this unique environment a century later sprang the satirist, Dame Edna Everage and the social and political comic, Joel Salom, associated with Circus OZ.

On the international front, these Australian performers have joined comic book characters in keeping the harlequinesque costume codes alive, but something deeper is happening with the Harlequin and his lozenge attire. For instance, some philosophers have come to accept Harlequin as a visual code for the union of multi-nationalities.

The Research additionally explores the enduring contribution of the lozenge code not only through the historical tracing of harlequinesque imagery but also through the designing of a 2 square meter art–piece created at an international residency in Vietnam to reflect the energetic universality of the lozenge form. Here Harlequin's liminality is explored. Finally two new costume designs have been created for the Australian performers, Everage and Salom, to further the design of the harlequinesque into an imagined future.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not to the best of my knowledge and belief:
(i) Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
(ii) Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is not made in the text of the thesis; or
(iii) Contain any defamatory material.
(iv) Contain any data that has not been collecte3d in a manner consistent with ethics approval.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I acknowledge that although painted in different mediums, in some instances works have been copied for the purpose of historical reference and connection.

INTRODUCTION

In undressing and redressing the harlequinesque the question is why is the Harlequin costume so enduring? What is it about the lozenge pattern that compels humans to associate it with all the fun of a mischievous clown and his environs?

This question is explored from the ancient practice of ritual mask wearing into the Dionysus festivities and through into Greek and Roman satire and farce with the influences of Etruscan and Phonetician merriment on Roman theatre as expressed through acrobatics, clowning, dance and music making.

The harlequinesque ball keeps rolling throughout the middle-ages with the advent of costumes for jesters, minstrels and fools sometimes intertwining with the Christian message in playing devil-like characters in mystery plays or the diabolical king of dead souls in carnivals, or sometimes the buffoon in the wealthy courts or perhaps as a travelling *Guillaire* (the Italian term for a jester with shamanistic characteristics) dressed in a brightly coloured costume.

These influences lead into the Renaissance and the birth of *commedia dell'arte* with its costumed stock character types in both Italy and France. One of these stock characters is Harlequin dressed as we now know him. The *commedia dell'arte* practised a kind of improvised comedy which followed pre-set themes. The genre was immensely popular and soon spread over Europe and into Britain where it merged with pantomime to become the harlequinade. Over time, the complex triangles changed to a single diamond shape of colour or lozenge. The costumed stock characters also found their way into the new ring circus of the late eighteenth century, with some also finding their way into ballet and later into fashion and the comic book.

However, the Harlequin of the nineteenth century also travelled to the British colonies. The course of events in Australia led to a different expression of the harlequinesque with mutations and costume codes scrambled. Two distinct artists and conventions emerge: Dame Edna Everage on the stage as a satirist and Joel Salom in Circus Oz as a political and social activist comic.

With these Australian artists pursuing careers on the world stage and the term harlequinesque "characterised by variety in colour" (Whitehall, 1950, p.788) now being academically associated with the movement and intercultural relations of peoples all over the world, a deeper and perhaps more dynamic meaning behind the character and the pattern is emerging.

An Investigative Designer's Process

When designing a costume, a designer must make an analysis of the character, as represented over time in the historical and future contexts according to available materials: this is recorded in image, word and musing as encountered in that adventure/ process.

The designer's process is both practical and intellectual. First the character in question is researched to obtain a clear understanding of the personality/character traits, situation and social position in relation to the many variables that may arise. Dress is after all a declaration of a human's position in the organisation of social, cultural and political life. The designer searches for vital visual clues and sources of information, which can further expand his or her developing understanding. Much of a designer's activity depends on the availability of historical imagery in all its imaginative expressions. It also depends upon personal experiences as well as impressions gleaned from authoritative written accounts. For design to be adaptive and socially responsive, a full gamut of visual and intellectual experience needs to be absorbed.

Often fabrics are sourced so as to inform the nature and direction a costume designer might take and also to provide direction in deciding a colour palette for the final garment. Design is the combination of these threads, which eventually lead to the shapes and textures of a new costume. In this case, the work has also prompted the intellectual exploration of new manifestations of the harlequinesque figure as it has evolved in Australia and indeed internationally.

THE HARLEQUIN *(the character behind the costume)*

When designing a costume, an analysis of the character wearing this costume is imperative: this is the beginning of that process.

Harlequin (or French, Arlequino; Italian, Arlecchino), as we know him today began as a stock character in the late 1500s with *commedia dell'arte*. *Commedia dell'arte* players were famous for their themed improvised performances. Each of the stock characters are said to come from or represent different areas of Italy and their personality traits.

Harlequin is said to have come from Bergamo, a town with an amphitheatre in the hills of the Bertano valley, in northern Italy. Duchartre, a recognised scholar specialising in *commedia dell'arte*, suggests the lower part of town is said to be the birthplace of simple folk and fools while the upper end of town is said to be the birthplace of intelligent folk. However the Harlequin, it is said, claims to come from both upper and lower strata of society.

Harlequin's motives appear to have been driven by either fear or love, both of which provoke adrenaline excitement and which lead this particular character into much mischief. Harlequin's polarities don't stop there. This character's charm is all about his ability to change to suit the environment he occupies. He is a chameleon though

with no clear documentation, it is difficult to draw any obvious conclusions as to this facility in spite of the abundance of fanciful stories about his early years. However, his iconic costume, the lozenge suit and black mask do hint to his ambiguous as well as his inclusive nature.

Duchartre writes of the possible origins of Harlequin as interpreted from the pages of history. He draws links with "the *lenones* of the ancient satire plays" chiefly because "they wore the same sort of motley as Harlequin". (Duchartre, 1966 p. 125) Lenones are keepers of brothels; likewise the phallophores are the keepers of the phallus.

> The *lenones*, or flat feet, of Roman Theatre are plainly Harlequin's ancestors, and likewise the phallophores who, their faces blackened with soot, played the parts of foreign slaves. By the same token Harlequin's mask was black, and some of the older documents on the subject sometimes show him wearing a phallus. But who can penetrate the mystery that is Harlequin? He has much of the divine in him, and like all the gods, it has pleased him to remain aloof throughout the centuries, which have enveloped him in a cloud of legends. The droll and whimsical god, the gliding, supple, and black Harlequin makes one think of a dolphin, appearing and disappearing in the sea, bounding and turning and capering. He is always volatile and elusive. Not until the end of the sixteenth century does he take a definite shape. (Duchartre, 1966 p.124)

Barry Grantham suggests there is a possibility that Harlequin originated in medieval France from the demon Herlequin. Grantham tells a story of a priest who claims to have seen a "troupe of demons led by the Devil Herlequin driving the souls of the damned to hell" (Grantham, 2000, p.183). Apparently around 14th century in medieval France, local youths impersonated Herlequin with "outlandish costumes and masks." (Grantham, 2000, p.183) This approach then saw Herlequin appearing in the French medieval mystery plays associated with Hell's mouth or Hellequin. Grantham says once "he no longer terrified people he made them laugh" (Grantham, 2000, p.183), a shift to a more humorous position took place and possibly continued into *commedia dell'arte.* This medieval devil is said to have worn a black mask.

There is also another association, which may affect Harlequin's character. This is the Blackamoors or Negro slaves bought to Venice, the then centre for world trade by the Arabs. The Italians dressed their Blackamoor slave/servants in extraordinary exotic costumes. This association may reflect a political current of the day, and explain the black man face of his mask, but is unlikely to explain Harlequin's patched suit beyond an exotic costume.

Ducharte has gathered quotations from other authors describing Harlequin. Riccoboni makes the following claim:

> The acting of the Harlequin before the seventeenth century was nothing but continual play and extravagant tricks, violent movements, and outrageous rogueries. He was at once insolent, mocking, inept, clownish, and emphatically ribald. I believe that he was extraordinarily agile, and seemed to be constantly

in the air; and I might confidently add he was a proficient tumbler. (Duchartre, 1966 p.125)

Harlequin is again described by eighteenth century author, Jean-Francois Marmontel (1723-99).

> He is both rake and overgrown boy with occasional gleams of intelligence, and his mistakes and clumsiness often have a wayward charm. His acting is patterned on the lithe, agile grace of a young cat, and he has a superficial coarseness, which makes his performances all the more amusing. He plays the role of a faithful valet, always patient, credulous and greedy. He is eternally amorous and is constantly in difficulties either on his own or on his master's account. He is hurt and comforted in turn as easily as a child, and his grief is almost as comic as his joy. (In Duchartre, 1966. p.132)

By the twentieth century, Harlequin's environments are as diverse as his character traits and costume deviations, but what has emerged is a phenomenon, the harlequinesque.

THE HARLEQUINESQUE *(in a world of make-overs*) simply means in the manner of Harlequin.

An Investigative Designer's Questions

If harlequinesque pertains to the unique idiosyncratic qualities of a 500 year old, heavily costumed, theatrical character of European heritage, called Harlequin, how does this phenomenon apply to Australia at the other end of the world in the 21st century and indeed then back to world at large?

The thesis addresses how and why the harlequinesque is translated in contemporary Australia by examining possible pathways derivative from ancient ritual traits, social farce and satire, acrobatic skills and mythologies about the fool, which led to the emergence of the late 1500s figure called Arlecchino or Harlequin. Subsequently, the costume codes and 'threads', which have come together to form the iconic Harlequin costume, are explored from their transference to 1850s Australia, through to his counterparts today. Who are these harlequinesque counterparts and how are they recognised in Australia's version of the harlequinesque? Does Australia's version contribute to a changing world view?

These counterparts or mutations are seen in the habitats of the Harlequin in Australian circus and the Australian harlequinade, which have gone on to inform the harlequinesque transformations as seen in Joel Salom (Circus Oz) and Dame Edna Everage, currently working in various locations throughout the contemporary world. Identifying the now fragmented harlequinesque costume codes and behaviours brings forward many questions about Australia's renowned trait of larrikinism.

Also at play is the significance of the costumed figure as a kind of world symbol for a new inter-ethnic humanity, but is there more to this than meets the eye?

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ILL. 1. Lady who swollowed glow worms. Mixed media on paper, Artist: Julie Parsons, 1990. 86x 66cm. Private collection.

ILL. 2. Trap-eased artist. Mixed media on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 1990. 122x 86 cm. Private collection

A DESIGNER'S PREAMBLE

My life long companion, a harlequinesque figure, made her very public debut just prior to the turn of the 21st century, as the identifying icon for the biggest women's festival to be held in Australia. The month long celebration was held in the southwest of Western Australia. The festival was created to empower women and was run by wives, mothers and career women alike. Its aim was to increase self-esteem through joyous celebration and learning.

My job as designer was to come up with the festival icon and to invent various images and events pertinent to that conceptualisation. Ruby May Fox, a performance artist with circus skills, was flown in from Sydney for the initial event and subsequently every year there upon after to become the real life costumed icon and performer of the mistress of ceremonies.

ILL. 3. The act of balance. Mixed media on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 1999. 86x66cm. Private collection.

ILL. 4. Costume design for Ruby May Fox. Designer Julie Parsons, 1999. Artist's possession.

In 2000, the department of women's interests and the women's policy office employed me to create a postcard for *International Women's Day*, and the feminine Harlequin appeared again, both as a postcard and electronically. The image was so overwhelmingly popular that supplies of the postcard swiftly depleted the first edition of their postcard production.

ILL. 5. *2000 Painting for postcard 'If the shoe fits'. Mixed media on paper.*
Artist: Julie Parsons. 66x86cm. Private collection
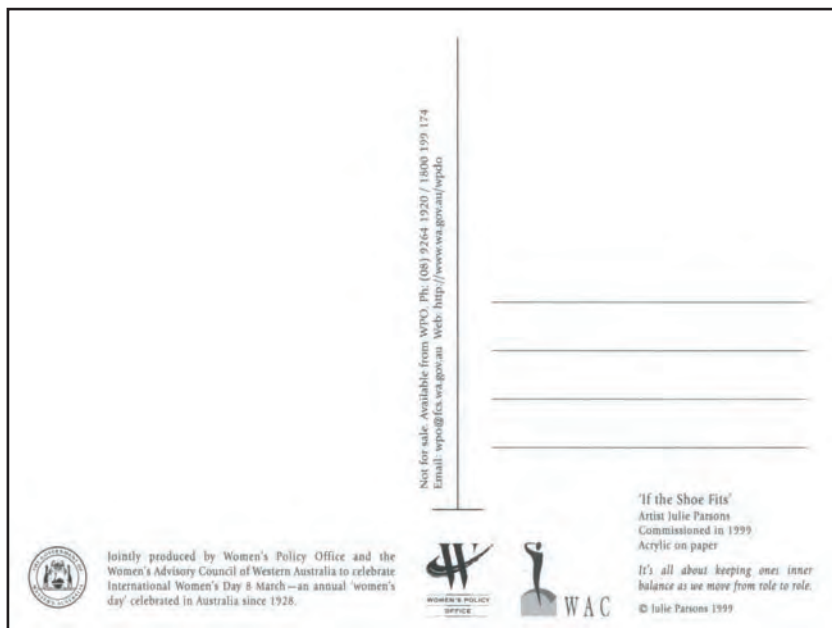
ILL. 6. *Reverse side 2000 Postcard 'If the shoe fits'.*

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She hit a chord with the Australian people, especially the women. Perhaps she represented something to people, an archetypal figure of some sort? I entered a period of artistic exploration out of a desire to understand from whence she had sprung.

ILL. 7. *Table service. Acrylic gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2001. 27x19cm. Private collection.*

ILL. 8. *Exercising the dog. Acrylic gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2001. Artist's possession.*

I pursued this artistic exploration of the enigmatic woman for more than two years. Then in 2002, I took the resulting exhibition, *Life's a circus,* a show of female harlequinesque antics, to Melbourne, to celebrate another *International Women's Day.* Ruby May Fox again appeared to open the show with a comedy circus performance piece.

ILL. 9. *Belly laugh. Acrylic gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2002. 31x23cm. Artist's possession.*

ILL. 10. *Get cracking. Acrylic gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2002. 31x23cm. Private collection*

As I reflect upon this circus-like harlequinesque figure, I see that reoccurring images of her have accompanied my artistic career from its inception, disappearing and reappearing at key points throughout the years.

ILL. 11. *The domino effect of the still small voice.* Mixed *media on paper. 75x66cm. Artist Julie Parsons, 1987. Private collection.

ILL. 12. *Have a slice of art dear. Mixed media on paper. 86x66cm Artist Julie Parsons, 1987. Private collection.*

I realized a life-long thread had been planted all those years ago when a travelling circus passed through the small Australian country town, which supported the wheat-belt property my parents owned. Within this isolated childhood of paddocks and sheep, of radio stories and picture books, I encountered the unbelievable world around and inside the circus tent.

ILL. 13. *Trap-eased artist. Oil and plaster on cut-out hardboard. Artist:Julie Parsons, 1989. 150x100cm. Private collection.*

ILL. 14. *Walking on the light. Mixed media on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 1988. 75x66cm. Private collection*

THE BIRTH OF MY NOTION OF THE HARLEQUINESQUE

There is a striking impact gained in seeing a storybook illustration being made manifest in a simple life. The presence of an almighty elephant on the vacant lot we crossed to get to the town playground changed my view of the world forever, as did the huge tent, which appeared from nowhere and disappeared over night with the same intensity. All these things and more drove the "Circus" deep into my subconscious mind. Circus imagery became something I began to apply to things I did not easily understand. I am to use this connection all my life.

As I work, I am remembering … staring into the darkness at night.

"I am a child on the farm. I go to see what my mother is doing in the little shed beyond the washhouse in the back garden. She tells me she is going to make a puppet. I don't know what a puppet is. She shows me a picture of an ugly doll. She says the strings make it move. The birds and flowers disappear from the garden and the winds and rain come and my mother still goes to the little shed. She makes one thing at a time until I forget what she is making, I just know where to find her. Then one day I see she has made a small hand. I hold it and compare it with my own. It is stiff like my doll's hands. I don't like it and there is a screw with a ring embedded in it. I find it disturbing. Time passes we are wearing more clothes now. One day I see there are two hands attached to thin pieces of wood. On another day I see these are attached to a square block of wood. The hands hang from their ringed screws at the end of all this. I look at the hands whenever I can. I try to burrow my little thumb into the hand so that it

will hold on like my baby sister does. I feel enormous distress. I am more disturbed than ever. I find myself examining my doll's hands and arms. I think my consternation comes from the space between the hand and the wood and command that my mother fill it. She does not, but tells me to wait and see. I try to ignore what she does in the shed in case I see the hands.

The warm days are coming back. My mother goes to the little shed a lot now. I see her with sinkers from our fishing box. I have seen her with these sinkers before; she has hidden them in the hems of curtains. This time she puts them into an old frying pan and goes to the washhouse where the fire under the copper is burning. She puts her pan in there. She is melting the sinkers she tells me. I don't see this. I am to play somewhere else. Later she tells me the heavy flat feet are made from the sinkers she put in the fire under the copper. They are cold to touch. She is making the face now. She has my plasticine and seems to be trying to make it look like the ugly doll in the book. She covers this with torn bits of tissue paper and the gooey white glue from our cutting out box. I am allowed to tear some tissue paper. Everything looks like blob to me.

When the blob is dry she paints it. This takes a long time. I am asked if I like it. I can't take my eyes off it. She has made a small person's face. My visits to the little shed increase.

The heat and flies are here, no-one goes to the little shed. My mother is doing something else now. She is drying the silk from the corn in the garden to make hair I am told. She is making a small costume from material covered in diamonds like I have seen in the circus. One morning when I get up he is there, hanging from his strings in the doorway."

ILL. 15. *My mother's Harlequin puppet. This drawing is titled Peter. Water colour and coloured pencil on paper. 22x30cm. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2007.*

A
DESIGNER'S
NOTEBOOK

ILL. 16. *This painting is of the Harlequin costume everyone associates with him. 30x22cm. Artist Julie Parsons 2007. Notice how the arrangement of triangles focuses on defining a diamond shape or lozenge through colour combinations. Perhaps these diamonds were intended to remind us of their origin.*

A DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK
PART 1

UNPICKING THE HARLEQUINESQUE COSTUME

> Costume is one of the arts of mankind, a visual art and probably the one which most accurately and vividly depicts the character and social structure of any human society at a given age and region of the world. The history of costume mirrors the outstanding events, discoveries, internecine struggles and technical achievements of the human race and a study of it cannot be divorced from an understanding of the relevant background history. (Yarwood, 1980, p.5)

Doreen Yarwood sums up the intertwined role of costume and history. Such contextual information needs consideration in an examination of the costume/s of the harlequinesque. If costume is 'informed' by the wearer, when did the harlequinesque costume begin to develop?

A stitch in time: [Ad]dressing the GODS

Did the harlequinesque come from early human tendencies to define god-like, demonic, animalistic and supernatural qualities through manifestations in performance or religious ritual?

From the point of view of costume design, that question leads to two interconnected components of the harlequinesque identity, the mask and the costume. Like the partnership of costume and mask, each design component bears a duality of purpose, channels of the sacred and of profane laughter.

Indeed the duality of masks functioning in two seeming opposite ways is an enigma. There is a powerful and confronting belief that a mask may have supernatural powers on the one hand and clowning (making laughter) on the other. Masks in fact seem to operate back and forth between the sacred and the profane. How that has occurred in human history is not clear except, if returning to Yarwood's observation, it is accepted that humans are complex creatures and able in some way to accept contradiction when that fits their purpose.

It is speculated that the word 'mask' comes from the Arabic word *maskharat,* meaning clown. According to M. Wilson Disher in 1923, "[s]ooted cheeks in Ancient Rome, red noses for devils in the Middle Ages, masks in the *commedia dell'arte*, bismuth and rouge in the English Harlequinade, flour in old French farces, and burnt cork in the nigger-minstrel shows" all constitute a form of appearance and (dis)guise which relate

directly to a common concept of a person/archetype who provokes human laughter. (Willeford, 1969, p.52)

It would seem that distortion of the face for the purpose of animation is very much a custom within the clown family, as is the owning of a particular design and style by a specific clan. This custom may have stemmed from shamanistic practices within various groups of people from different parts of the world. The wearing of masks and/or covering the face with the rich palette of coloured clays and/or ash and soot appears to offer the wearer the opportunity of transformation to some higher power of being, sometimes referred to as the supernatural or the sacred. Possibly this transformation was and is for the purpose of empowerment through ritual of exorcism and/or healing?

The facing: Questions about the harlequinesque shamanistic ANCESTOR MASK.

Throughout the long history of shamanism, the mask appears to be attributed with the acquisition of and/or access to desired powers. Harold Blau states: "Although the mask has the power to cure, it is the man behind the mask whose personality becomes fused with the supernatural he is impersonating that makes the curing possible." (Blau, 1966, p.572)

Mask wearing appears to be a favoured activity by much of humanity. Andreas Lommel gives a number of reasons for their development. He suggests masks are used to embody "spirit helpers". (Lommel, 1981, p.77) Some masks are used as a haven for ancestor and animal spirits, while demonic forces and gods are said to reside in others. Masks are sometimes used in dance and mime to exorcise unpleasant situations or evil spirits, whereas others are designed to catch the soul of an animal or a plant, so that it can be sent back to the spirit world, thereby enabling continuing benefit for humans.

Lommel believes that some masks' role is to remind humans of the need to "come to terms with death" (Lommel, 1981, p.216) Is this because the meaning of death appears to be hidden from or eludes the living? Lommel claims that "death, which he (the so called primitive man) overcomes and, in a literal sense of the word, 'overplays', is included in the cycle of life". (Lommel, 1981, p.219) How can a mask help us approach difficult situations like death?

Lommel does say that "masks are always used in conjunction with movement and dance, so that ceremonies demand ever-new creative impulses." (Lommel, 1981, p.219) This statement implies that the ingredient of imagination is never far from the mask. Perhaps masks helps humanity find a physically expressive language about things which are difficult for individuals to confront and/or understand? Is a mask useful for opening up the body to other-worldly communications? Or does the mask itself carry enough meaning that it need only be shown?

To imply that a mask is an object used to define difficult issues or concepts is by far too simplistic and generalized. Dario Fo, Nobel prize winner for his contribution to clowning, says the understanding of masks originates in prehistoric cave painting on "the walls of the cave *des deux freres* on the French side of the Pyrenees". (Fo, 1991, p.18) Fo asks whether the wearing of a goat pelt over the head and back served the purpose of making magic for the hunt or as a disguise during the hunt? The hunter clearly wears a "goat's mask with horns and a beard". (Fo, 1991, p.18)

The question is what did these people believe about the goat's mask? Perhaps they saw imitation of the goat as a way of attracting the goat in the form of a 'spirit helper', thereby ensuring the cycle of life? Did they perceive the sacred gift of death as assurance of the continuation of life? Is this what is meant by a 'spirit helper'?

The image on the cave wall may illustrate an early form of shamanism, which then, perhaps, became a practice in order to uphold the concept of 'spirit helpers' possibly stemming from human fear of death.

Fo supports this explanation with his descriptions of the *mammuttones,* a mythical character portrayed in the north of Sardinia. Fo witnessed this very ancient ritual, which utilizes zoomorphic forms. He describes the *mammuttones* as, "dressed in the skin of a goat or black sheep." The mask worn is black with "protruding horns, suggesting a goat." (Fo, 1991, p.19) The rest of the performers also wear animal like masks and tanned skins, which are dyed black. They appear to resemble sheep and pigs.

Fo says the real meaning of the ritual is distorted but he draws connections with Dionysus, a Greek god of complex status associated with fertility in nature. Dionysus is said to inspire poetry, music and drama. Fo also suggests the possibility of a connection to a Phoenician deity who may have entered the ritual at a later time in history. According to Fo, anthropologists date this *mammuttones* ritual back some eighteen centuries.

ILL. 17. .An example of the significant goat beard on a Dionysus follower or reveller. Reconstruction detail from Thespis cart, Satyr in procession as seen as a black figure on an Attic vase. (Hartnoll, 1972, p.11) Observe a simular affect on an early Commedia dell'arte Harlequin as shown in the illustration of Harlequin executed in 1577 which exhibits the use of a goat type beard worn with the mask (refer Part 1. ILL.34.)

It is interesting to note that the first Harlequin mask worn during the Renaissance had a goat beard attached to the grotesque black mask by a hinged jaw-bone like fixture.

(Perhaps this is where the phrase 'acting the goat' and scapegoat may have come from?)

Fo further defines the links and implies that perhaps fertility rites are a direct response to a fear of death designed to ensure the family and community goes on.

> Be as it may there can be no doubt that those ceremonies were linked to the fertility rites that every people organized, without fail, at the spring equinox and summer solstices and at the appointed date for the celebration of certain myths, like the Eleusian festivals among the Greeks, (The Eleusian mysteries were the most famous of Greek religious ceremonies). (Fo, 1991, p.20)

Harold Blau describes masks as dependant and co-dependant on and with human intervention. "The masks depend on people for care, and the people depend upon the masks to acquire certain states of control over their environment which are normally beyond human means of achievement." (Blau, 1966, p.572)

Blau then accounts for fear of the mask. "Power is an important concept here. If mistreated, the masks have vengeful powers, which act as important sanctions." (Blau, 1966, p.572)

Sanctions, according to Blau signify the rules by which a group of people lives. "The process of traditional socialization, that is, learning the proper respect for the supernatural, is a product of these sanctions." (Blau, 1966, p. 572) The protocols and beliefs emanating from masks thus provide significant means in the generation of respect for the supernatural.

Threading the needle: Costume codes from DIONYSUS FESTIVITIES which inform the harlequinesque

Preceding the development of theatre, as we understand it, was a type of religious procession, which used chant (and dance) to communicate the Dionysus doctrine. Margarete Bieber suggests that participants in religious ritual ultimately aimed for sacred intoxication. However, academics today may question whether this type of event might be classified as a performance?

> the Dionysaic religion is an ecstatic religion. The wine, the gift of the god, and the religious rapture changed the mortal followers of the god in their frenzy into members of the Dionysaic thiasus, the sacred herd of god." (Bieber, 1961,p.1)

Bieber speculates that the "practice of representing someone other than oneself grew out of the ecstasy and led to the development of the mimic art of the actors." (Bieber, 1961, p.1) This may be a presumption on her part but visual records of costume suggest that performers were very concerned with representing or indeed becoming something other than human. She affirms the role of costume in this transformation, saying people dressed according to their perception of what these forms might take, which during the time of Dionysus included demonic animalistic figures:

> the song in honour of Dionysus was originally performed by men in the disguise of the demonic followers of the god, the satyrs with equine ears and tails, as represented on so many vase paintings. (Bieber, 1961, p.6)

Baldry notes that the chanters or chorus often wore masks. Eventually one person, a character who was associated with the Phallus, the symbol of fertility surrounding the Dionysus worship, began the practice of interacting with the chorus. Over time, another character was added to express the God/hero and eventually yet another, as the unheroic comic or *komos* reveller.

> A ludicrous figure with distorted mask, padded belly and buttocks and a large artifical phallus. In keeping with this costume the language of the dialogue was full of frank obscenity, a feature of ordinary life. (Baldry, 1968, p.89)

The procession initially sang unison hymns in a horse-shoe formation round a central alter of Dionysus. Gradually these hymns evolved into interactive secular stories. "They were enlivened by the antics of the satyrs – half men, half goats – who were the attendants of Dionysus." (Hartnoll, 1972, p.9)

> The costume of the comic actor was, as might be expected, less hampering, since he needed to be something of an acrobat. He usually wore soft slippers (socci), flesh-coloured tights and a short tunic, grotesquely padded. Masks were exaggerated for comic affect. The attendants of Dionysus in the satyr play wore short furry breeches to which was attached a tail. (Hartnoll, 1972, p.18)

It appears that the requirement for early comics to be nimble is a tradition, which has evolved and been folded into the term, harlequinesque. However the attributes of the cock is also a consideration. Hugill, tells us along with the wearing of animal heads, some clowns wore the popular cocks' head. "The cock was considered a stupid, vain and libidinous creature and the character wearing this headdress would be interpreted as having the same traits." (Hugill, 1980, p.20)

ILL. 18. *Bird costume c. 500 B.C. The image is taken from a Mycenaecan vase showing an Aristophanes comedy A Chorus of Birds, in which a cloud cuckoo town is built in the sky. The significance of this flows into the following centuries as a costume code. It implies the wearing of feathers about the head to signify the Fool. (Bieber, 1961, p.36)*

Other practices of entertainment are also found to stem from communication with the gods. In seeking perfection, exhibitions of accomplishment be they acrobatics, singing, wrestling, playing a musical instrument, acting in a play or tricks and clowning have been found to be a significant part of life since recorded history. As noted, rituals or designated times of communication with the deities were perhaps an early form of ritualised performance. With ritual came reverence, with reverence came adoration and with adoration came embellishment. However, when precisely the use of organised design as an identifiable costume emerged is unclear.

ILL. 19. *A drawing of a stock character based on a number of images of a grotesque black bearded persona as depicted on the Phlyakes vases. The position of the fingers on the cane "gesture horns (corni) to avert some imaginary evil" (Bieber, 1961, p.142 ref fig 519) The performer wears long underwear under a fat suit covered by a tunic which is always far too short. Notice the device used for positioning the phallus*

A Phlyakux is a player in popular Roman farce /comedy between 400 - 300 B.C. As depicted in paintings on the Phlyake vases, this particular stock character is seen in many attitudes or parts. Sometimes he is interacting with Dionysus or perhaps playing the part of a god with tongue in cheek, but more often this figure is seen playing the part of a comic slave to a master. Some scholars refer to the stock players from the Phlyake period as precursors to renaissance comedy, saying "the characters developed from their farcical takes on the gods are revived in the Italian *commedia dell'arte."* (Bieber, 1961, p.131)

Perhaps the comic harlequinesque fulfils our need for release? Never-the-less harlequinesque costume codes were surely developing back in those ancient civilizations, some characteristics of which may still be in use today. The use of animal ears and tails has been a feature of the early Harlequin costumery. The animal features are normally found fixed into Harlequin's millinery and sometimes the mask. The tradition that travelled through the Middle Ages is shaped by ideas associated with the fool.

Measuring up: The shift from the gods to the HUMANS

In early Roman times, the focus of comedy, which had begun during the Greek period of idealized man, continued to shift towards a more realistic human preoccupation. The Greeks enjoyed poking fun at anyone who was less than an idealised man. The use of a Negro slave mask on a fat body was a popular comic figure. Roman portraiture unlike the idealized attitudes of the Greeks increasingly showed human flaws as did the realism achieved with popular death masks. Popular humour became bawdier as humans further explored their own humanness.

ILL. 20. *A comic as a Negro slave from a Pompeiian wall-painting, 79AD. (Hugill, 1980, p.27) Note the similarity between the masks in this drawing and that in illustration 19. (refer Part 1 ILL.19)*

Early established forms of social structure were refined, re-defined and emphasised through costume. Costume defined status, rank and, of course, membership of a certain group. An emerging group of performers (as distinct from ritual participants) were not high on the status ladder and were often selected from communities of slaves. Thus the practice of wearing a mask took on a different meaning and instead of signalling the presence of higher beings, masks became the mechanisms whereby slave actors could play the parts of other humans and their stories and actions. These actors wore human specific masks, which developed into stock theatre masks. A stock mask signals a personality or type.

ILL. 21. *A slave mask signifying stupidity, probably worn by a slave actor who might appear in the company of Bourgeois characters (Bieber, 1961, p.104). In Roman comedy the comic figure is often the slave, later named Stupidus, a clown commonly in an underdog position. Stupidus is also known by his brightly coloured costume in ludi scenici. (Note the similarity to Harlequin in this description)*

Bieber describes the four main comic masks of the Roman farce, as being "revived in the Italian *commedia dell'arte".* (Bieber, 1961, p.131)

The first of the four main characters is Bucco, a braggart, who is played by the god Iolaus. Bieber says Hercules plays the clever hunch back, Apollo plays the greedy blockhead and Pappos plays the stupid old man.

Masks have additional functions in some instants as noted by Dario Fo and the Greeks, the large funnel mouth in these masks, which according to Fo acts as a "megaphone, an implement which, plainly, amplifies the voice. [Thus i]t is worthwhile recalling the sheer scale of the Greek theatre, which could hold up to 20,000 spectators." (Fo, 1991, p.25)

Fo's description of the masks as musical instruments indicates their capacity to produce different tones "to link them to different physical types". (Fo, 1991, p.25)

ILL. 22. The character Bucco, a braggart, is played by the god Iolaus. It is interesting to note the harlequinesque like hat shown here is simular to a recent hat, the bicorne, worn by Harlequin from the 1800s. (Hugill, 1980, p.15) (refer to Part 2, ILL. 62)

Fo tells us that cavities on the inside of the mask would appear on the outside as a bump.

Images of the terra cotta Punic masks clearly show a circular bump on the forehead, something which has been carried on in traditional *commedia dell'arte* mask making and interpreted as a mole or wart. Punic masks have their origin in the Phoenicians of Carthage who inhabited the North African coast now called Tunisia and who invaded Italy in the so-called Punic Wars. The practice of the Phoenicians was to essentially imitate the Greek masks while adding small characteristics of their own. These masks in turn influenced Roman mask making.

ILL. 23. Grotesque Punic mask made during the Phoenician inhabitancy of Tunisia, a major trade route between 814 BC and 146 BC (Bieber, 1961, p.22)

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However Fo does attempt comparisons with the red stamp or lump on the Harlequin mask's forehead which is often described as a boil. Duchartre offers another interpretation of the lump as "a wart on the cheek". (Duchartre, 1966, p.135) But this description of the location of the bump is not consistent amongst the commentaries of other academics.

For Fo, the red lump or mark is similar to that of "many of the oriental masks, perhaps under the form of a golden disc or of a coloured mark between the brows," which may indicate demonic figures but the "third eye can also be found in Chinese and some Japanese masks." (Fo, 1991, p.23) However these cultures are amongst many that portray the shamanic figure as being able to see beyond human sight by focusing on the centre of the forehead. It is interesting to note that without the association of shamanic practice, the lump becomes a wen, boil or wart. In one perspective, the marking signals a superhuman attribute, in contrast to the other where the lump is a very human defect.

ILL. 24. Balinese mask from theatre topeng half mask used by Dario Fo to demonstrate similarities with commedia dell'arte masks at Volterra ISTA 1981. (Gough, 1991, p.118) Notice the lump between the eyes, which is also a feature of the Harlequin mask.

Drafting the pattern: The harlequinesque humanised in the ROMAN REPUBLIC

Bieber observes that among other significant theatrical innovations, the evolution of costume and mask offers clear evidence of early clowning traditions during the Roman Republican period that, later, evolved into the medieval devil.

Among the dancers is found a masked harlequin, in the Tomba degli Auguri

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(tomb of the Augurs) and in the tomb del Pulcinella (tomb of the buffoon), with pointed headdress later used for clowns, and a short dress often composed of multicoloured pieces like the one later used for harlequins. His name is Phersu. (Bieber, 1961, p.147)

ILL. 25. *A reconstruction drawing of Phersu from the tomb of the Augurs 530 BC. The name Phersu is believed to have come from an Etruscan word meaning mask which then evolved into the Latin word persona. However, the Greek per sona means "to sound through". (Bieber, 1961, p.147)*

ILL. 26. *Etruscan dancer during the early Roman Republic. There are many similarities to the masked Harlequin. Notice the costume in illustration 33 is decorated in torn cloth patches as was the first Harlequin costume of the late 1500s and this costume is transformed into a formalized patchwork as was Harlequin's later more famous costume. (refer Part 1 ILL 33) Both Etruscan performers wear the circus hat popular on 20th century Harlequin circus clowns. (Bieber, 1961, p.147)*

Duchartre draws harlequinesque links with "the *lenones* of the ancient satire plays" chiefly because "they wore the same sort of motley as Harlequin". (Duchartre, 1966, p. 125) "The *lenones*, or flat feet, of Roman Theatre are plainly Harlequin's ancestors, and likewise the phallophores who, their faces blackened with soot, played the parts of foreign slaves. By the same token Harlequin's mask was black. (Duchartre, 1966, p.124)

Bieber likewise describes the masks for the leading slave of the 'new comedy' as having "distorted eyebrows and broad flat noses with wide nostrils; the mouth is surrounded by a kind of megaphone, on which hairs of a short beard are indicated."(Bieber, 1961, p.102) This description of the masks particularly the nose, brow, forehead and whiskers, appears to match the descriptions of the original *commedia dell'arte* Harlequin mask.

ILL. 27. *Comic slave mask worn by an actor which shows the now common grotesque features, and the diamond patterned undergarment possibly made from course fabric. (Bieber, 1961, p.161)*

Bieber also cites the Etruscan influence in a character called Charun, who not unlike Harlequin carries a weapon, although not the slapstick associated with the later renaissance character, but a hammer. Charun, like Harlequin has connections with servants and devilish figures. It would seem that the under-classes often produced comic forms of entertainment as they parodied their masters and mistresses. However the role of Charun is a little more sinister.

> Another Etruscan figure is Charun, a demon with hammer and grotesque features, found in the Tomba del Orca (the netherworld) in Tarquinii and in the Tomba Francois in Vulci; he is also represented in terracotta heads. He became a model for the servants who burned the defeated gladiators with a hot iron to make sure that they were dead and who removed the dead gladiators in the Roman amphitheatre. Charum later also became the model for the medieval devil. (Bieber, 1961, p.147)

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ILL. 28. *Charun's image is taken from an Etruscan tomb painting in the Tomba dell Orco. Although he has wings and a halo, as was common in those days, he is essentially grotesque, with his features resembling a vulture. (Bieber, 1961, p.147) Both Charun and Harlequin share the role of servant but it is not until medieval carnival that we see Harlequin embrace Charun-like qualities in his role as the diabolical King of dead souls.*

The Etruscans are a curiosity in Italy because although they lived in central Italy from eighth century B.C., they are not indigenous. Etruscan costume "retain[ed] similarities to the Greek styles" but also "shar[ed] many features with the Minoan costume of Crete" (Yarwood, 1978, p.152) in their use of bright exotic colours on a fitted costume which often included a collar.

Of course this description inspires thoughts of the popular Harlequin costume of the last 500 years but it is the practice of mime, music and clowning, which consolidates a sense of resonance with the harlequinesque more than anything else.

Descriptions of Etruscan dancers, who mime satirical situations, abound in Bieber's account of the times. This was particularly so once the dancing and flute playing Etruscans influenced these activities in everyday life in Italy. Bieber suggests clowning was part of the Etruscan mime and goes on to cite a small bronze statuette of a female clown figure engaged in a self-accompanied song and dance. Bieber describes a costume which has survived even today in its basic format. "Again we are reminded of the coloured triangle patches on harlequin's suit by the long triangular pieces on her costume." (Bieber, 1961, p.249) However, it is also easy to see the connection to the medieval jester.

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ILL. 29. *Female centunculus or mime, performing in a clown costume made of different coloured patches, during the time of the Roman Empire. Observe the bells at the end of triangular points, the high peaked fool's cap and frilled collar. Note the similarities to the jester of the Middle Ages. The drawing is inspired by a small bronze (Bieber, 1961, p.249).*

The wandering minstrels of medieval times embody the idea of clowning as an attitude towards and behaviour within the world embedded within the psyche of humankind. The tradition is so strong that it still goes on today with street performance and circus. Costuming also reveals lineages that can be traced far back in time, like the ancient tradition of scallops hanging on the hips of the female statuette, which can then be seen again in the costume of the medieval jester, this in turn connects to the costumes of *commedia dell'arte,* and so on into many other forms of comedy through time*.*

Laying out the cloth: The Harlequinesque in the MIDDLE AGES

After the Roman period, mime and pantomime were suppressed along with all other forms of theatre during the surge of Christianity, which followed.

Robin May explains the fate of theatre during the Middle Ages in the western world from the Roman period into the Dark Ages.

> With the growth of Christianity all forms of theatre came under attack, and in the sixth century Justinian ordered them all to be closed. The Church in the Byzantium element of the Roman Empire also reacted against theatre, closing all theatres there in the seventh century. (May, 1986, p.23)

May suggests that the forms of theatre, which survived were very basic indeed.

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[Theatrical forms] survived through wandering minstrels and actors who gave performances in courts and halls, market places and fairs. These custodians of theatrical tradition had many names: Mimi, jongleurs, histriones and so on, and they sang, danced, mimed, made music and performed acrobatics. Their stages were open spaces and raised platforms, and they ranged the whole of Europe. (May, 1986, p.23)

Although the Church suppressed theatre it also was responsible for its revival, which began slowly from the tenth century A.D. The Church authorities eventually came to see the potential of producing plays based on biblical stories as a means of teaching and converting. They strove to illustrate lessons in morality and were keen to achieve the provocation of realism.

A feature, not commonly associated with church liturgical traditions, Morality or Mystery Miracle Plays, is the use of impromptu comic scenes within the biblical stories. A fusion of tragedy and comedy provide a means of engaging the community's attention, through the use of contemporary comic situations.

And always the greatest comic character was Satan himself, with his attendant devils……they wore masks as horrifying as any of the classical masks and they probably provided interludes of acrobatic dancing and farcical miming between scenes………leather provided supple suits for the devils (Hartnoll, 1972, p.45-46)

Along for the journey came the quintessential fool. Although the fool, as a performer, was a secular figure who remained outside of the Christian doctrine, he did bring with him the preserved traditions of the wanderers.

There is evidence that some professionals – descendants of the wanderers who had kept theatre alive – took certain leading parts, which must have improved the comic scenes and helped develop the tradition of the Fool. (May, 1986, p.32)
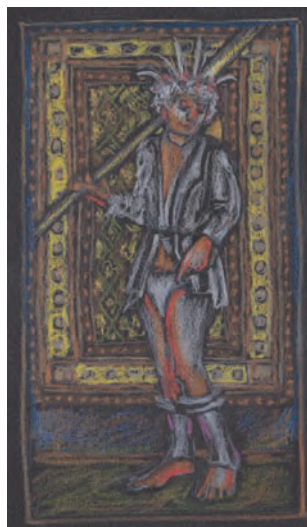
ILL. 30. This drawing is of the oldest surviving Fool card. It is from the Visconti-Sforza deck of tarot cards, dated to about 1450. (www.fromoldbooks.org)

Perhaps there is a connection to April Fools' Day falling at the same time as Lent, and the fact that the oldest surviving Fool card shows the Fool, as Harlequin once was, dressed in light coloured rag-like garments with feathers in his hair reminiscent of the zoomorphic origins or devilish horns of early buffoons. There may also be connections within the evolution of the archetypal fool figure, which extends back to the Dionysus festivities, where ecstatic animalistic trance-like behaviours were looked upon favourably.

The image appears to suggest an austerity often observed during Lent, but may in fact have a closer relationship with these pre-Christian rites. Feathers on the head might suggest someone who is not only a fool but also "the butt of ridicule." (commedia-dell-arte.com, 2007) However on another level, Bergholm observes that "Eliade writes of birds as psychopomps, stating that 'becoming a bird oneself or being accompanied by a bird indicates the capacity, while still alive, to undertake the ecstatic journey to the sky and the beyond'". (Bergholm, 2005) So the feathery adornment may point to the possibility that the fool is looked upon as a magical being. Harlequin, like the fool in this card, can still be found with feathers either in his hat or in his hair in the Christmas harlequinades played in England in the early 1900s. (see Part 1, ILL.18 for the *Chous of Birds* and compare with costume design for the Christmas harlequinade Part 1, ILL. 49)

It is interesting to see the card character evolve, as Harlequin did, into a Giullare (the Italian term for a jester of the Middle Ages with shamanistic characteristics often found with the wandering players) dressed in the brightly coloured costume. The image of the Fool, on the tarot card, gradually transforms from a static pose to that of setting off on a journey using the symbolic stick to carry his bag of tricks. He is accompanied by a small dog, a symbol of loyalty and faithfulness, but fails to be looking where he is going. The card shows the fool heading for a precipice as if innocently taking a leap of faith. The card is both the beginning and the end. The card is never numbered. It has always been a zero entity.

The medieval Fool card seems to predict the coming of the circus Harlequin with his propensity to play the fool in a ring, accompanied by a small performing circus dog, of course. The Fool card also is the Joker, and numbered zero, in a set of playing cards. Connections between the Fool, the Joker and Harlequin continue into the twenty first century.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, satirical revues became popular. Francois Boucher points to the *Basoche,* (a medieval French theatre company) where "important characters often wore brilliantly coloured costumes." (Boucher, 1987, p.188) He adds that "fools and stupid characters wore a traditional costume of scalloped or tooth edged *pourpoint* with yellow and green striped hose, to make them easily recognisable to the audience."(Boucher, 1987, p.188) A further description from the Duke of Burgundy's *Feast of Fools* in the fifteenth century elaborates parts of a costume still recognisable today with its, "wide tooth collars and hats decorated with long ears". (Boucher, 1987, p.188)

ILL. 31. *The court fool of 15ᵗʰ century with bauble or fool's staff is dressed in an ornate motley costume. (Hugill, 1980, p.53)*

This sort of approach to the costume of the Fool seems to reflect a direct lineage from the early Etruscan performer through to the Harlequin circus performer. Subtle differences in the Fool's medieval costume slowly emerged as the dress of that period moved towards the idealism of Renaissance tastes.

However, Bieber makes no concessions in the link. In referring to *commedia dell'arte* she says "these figures inherited the patchwork costume of the later Roman mime, the centunculus." (Bieber, 1961, p.254)

A set of costume codes which signal Fool/comedian/clown have been active throughout history and usually follow a design overstatement of some sort. In the case of the medieval players it was colourful patterned tights, the long triangular points hanging from the main garment and a double pointed hat resembling the ears of an ass. These appeared to be finished with a bell, in much the same way as the early Etruscan tradition.

To arrive at the evolution of the Harlequin costume of the *commedia dell'arte,* it is also useful to examine the costume of the late fourteenth century servant class of labourers and peasants. These people wore their chemise or undergarment out over their breeches perhaps with their hose rolled down the leg for coolness when working. Otherwise a long tunic was usually worn over the breeches and undergarment. The silhouette of the undergarment worn over the breeches instead of or as well as the tunic meant the tunic no longer needed to be long. The tunic or *pourpoint* eventually became shorter and less cumbersome.

The act of shortening the *pourpoint* became a significant innovation not only because the tunic was now shorter but it also now opened at the front. This new front-opening jacket went on to not only signify Harlequin's front opening jacket but to also dominate male fashion for over 500 years in its various forms.

ILL. 32. *It should be noted here however that a technique called counterchange design was also very popular with the English around 1380. This design essentially creates a trellis affect on a doublet or jacket where "a certain colour of motif and its ground are reversed on another part of the design. A form of decoration especially fashionable in the fourteenth century parti-coloured garments." (Yarwood, 1978, p.122)*

With the initial Harlequin costume made from a light coloured cloth and in a loose fitting style, like a peasant or servant might wear, this fashion may well have laid the ground-work for the yet to come smooth transition from the random application of patches on a loose costume to the geometric design on the tighter fitting costume, now associated with the Harlequin costume.

Boucher observes that, "[f]or men in Italy as elsewhere, the new short costume transformed their clothing and gave them a sharp, sinuous outline. Tight garments, new hairstyles and the first peaked hats showed a clear military influence". (Boucher,

1987, p.205) This description affirms why Harlequin's costume inclined toward a defined fit with an opening down the front. In contrast, Venetian male fashion favoured full long loose "sack-shaped" sleeves hung from below the shoulder. Boucher says this look was "popular among elegant men because they stressed the idleness of their way of life". (Boucher, 1987, p.204) This type of oversized sleeve appeared to have influenced the popular later version of Pierrot's costume with its loose 'water' sleeves which contrasts well with Harlequin's more fitted garment usually worn by a man in service.

Cutting the pattern: Harlequin and COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE in the Renaissance and beyond.

As Europe emerged from its dark ages into the fourteenth century, "a revival of interest in classical Greece and Rome" accompanied the process." (May, 1986, p. 34) This resulted in new forms of theatre, particularly in Italy. "Something of the old Roman mimi (performance combining mime, music, dance and acrobatics) had survived, and out of these and the new surge of interest in theatre came the *commedia dell'arte* improvised plays". (May, 1986, p.38)

With the rising popularity of the *commedia dell'arte* in the 1500s, also came keen interest from foreign courts and nobility to have performing troupes. Perhaps taking the performances to non-Italian speaking audiences really did increase the need for mime as communication? The French comedians soon developed mime as an art form, possibly as a consequence of Catherine Medici taking an Italian *commedia dell'arte* troupe to France when she married the French King Henry 11.

The pivotal point in the establishment of a Harlequin as an identifiable character emerged through the work of the sharp-witted actor, Domenico Biancolelli, who played Harlequin from the mid to late 1600s. Harlequin's individuality is entirely supported by the development of his iconic costume. The iconic costume outlived all the actors who have played the part over the next five centuries.

In the histories written on the *commedia dell'arte*, Harlequin wore "a costume heavily and irregularly patched: during the seventeenth century the patches become formalized, and in the century following his characteristic costume becomes ever more elegant." (Duchartre, 1966, p.23) It was not until the seventeenth century that the patches took the form of blue, red, and green triangles, which were arranged in a symmetrical pattern and joined together by a slender yellow braid. (Duchartre, 1966, p.134.) Yarwood supports this development, reporting Harlequin's initial *commedia dell'arte* costume was a "jacket and fitting trousers of a light coloured material which was covered with patches of different brightly-coloured fabric placed randomly to represent a tattered costume." (Yarwood, 1978, p.223)

ILL. 33. This painting is inspired by an early engraving of Harlequin by Guiseppe-Maria Mitelli 1634 -1718. There were varicoloured patches, darker than the background of the costume, sewn here and there on the breeches and the long jacket laced in front. A bat and a wallet hung from his belt. His head was shaved in the same manner as the ancient mimes'. His soft cap was decorated with the tail of a rabbit, hare or fox, or sometimes with a tuft of feathers. (Duchartre, 1966, p.134)

These hat decorations were a leftover from the medieval practice of using animal flare (badge like additions fixed onto an outfit) to imply the 'fool'. This custom, of course, may have even come from the practice of Dionysian ritual, where animal spirits were an accepted part of proceedings. This connection appears to enable the human to become part of 'the sacred herd of the god'. (Bieber, 1961, p.1)

Fo has a completely different view of Harlequin's first costume and indeed of the emergence of Harlequin's character. Fo, who has also professionally played

Harlequin, believes that Harlequin is a combination of both French and Italian heritage, tracing the lineage to a thirteenth century figure of a popular devil in the French tradition, whose character is scurrilous and apt to play tricks and practical jokes. Fo thinks this character gets crossed with the 'homo selvaticus', "who, depending on the season and locality, went clad in animal skins or in leaves." (Fo, 1991, p.46) The 'selvaticus' could be cunning, agile, violent, uncouth, naïve and foolish. These traits when combined with the French devil Harlik, perhaps served to produce the Arlecchino of Tristano Martinelli.

> As is well known, the Harlequin character is the result of the cross-breeding between the Zanni from Bergamo and the farcical devil-like characters from the French popular tradition. We first find Harlequin in Paris towards the close of the sixteenth century on a stage run by an Italian *Commedia dell'arte* company called the *Raccolti*. The actor who played Harlequin was Tristano Martinelli, a native of Mantua. (Fo, 1991, p.46)

ILL. 34. *This painting is based on an image made around 1577. It shows a tight fitting garment, which may be an attempt to imply near nudity with a covering of forest leaves as in the French*

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'homo selvaticus'. Notice the Satyr Dionysus goat like beard. (Hugill, 1980, p.73)
Arlecchino, or Harlequin, comes from a medieval character, Hellequin or Helleken, or in later forms, Harlek-Arlekin. Dante refers to a devil by the name of Ellechino." (Fo, 1991, p.46) However it is Fo's description of the Harlequin costume, which is enlightening.

> The costume was of rough cloth, with leaf-shaped forms scattered on a white base. The leaves were green, yellow, beech red and brown. The reference to 'homo selvaticus' is unmistakable. The lozenges and the traditional multicoloured patches with which we are familiar came sixty years later with another great Arlecchino – Domenico Biancolelli. (Fo, 1991, p.46)

The needle in the haystack: Where is the real LINEAGE?

Although this has been an area of fascinating research by theatre historians, actors and designers alike, Harlequin's actual lineage still remains under a veil of mystery with many discrepancies amongst the accounts. Belief in one version over another gives way to acceptance of something in each account as a possibility in the complex formation of Harlequin.

Masking the truth: The black faced Harlequin MASK used in commedia dell'arte.

> The first Arlecchino wore no mask, contenting himself with black paint marked with red wavy lines. Only later did he appear in public with a mask of brown leather wearing a sneer of an anthropomorphic monkey, complete with heavy eyelashes and a great lump on the forehead. (Fo, 1991, p.46)

There is evidence that initially Harlequin's mask was made from wood, as was the case with many primitive masks. This wooden mask was used until a more sophisticated type of mask was made from leather. There are traces in the emergence of the Harlequin mask of the look of the animalistic devil masks mentioned by Lommel, as well as of the distinct features of the Punic masks and the slave masks of the 'new comedy'. The slave mask may well have inspired the creation of the Harlequin mask as he took his new place in the *commedia dell'arte* in the part of an Italian Bergamese servant.

ILL. 35. *Early wooden Harlequin mask. Wooden masks may have been worn for the first two centuries before the leather mask became popular. Hairy eyebrows moustache and beard were added according to Rudlin. (Rudlin,1994, p.254)*

Duchartre claims that

> Harlequin's authentic mask consisted of a half mask and a black chin-piece. The eyebrows and beard were bushy and covered with stiff bristles. The forehead was strongly lined with wrinkles, which accentuated the slightly quizzical arch of the eyebrows. The eyes were tiny holes beneath, and the *ensemble* gave a curious expression of craftiness, sensuality, and astonishment, which was both disturbing and alluring. The huge wen under the eye, the wart and the black colour completed the impression of something savage and fiendish. The mask suggested a cat, a satyr, and the sort of Negro that the Renaissance painters portrayed. (Duchartre, 1966, p.135)

Duchartre sums all this up with "[i]ndeed the potentialities latent in the mask of Harlequin are various and without end." (Duchartre, 1966, p.135)

ILL. 36. *Harlequin Mask showing chin-strap, whiskers and eyebrows together with a skull cap. Taken from an etching by Claude Gillot showing Harlequin's mask during the 1700s. (Hugill, 1980, p.84)*

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Duchartre refers to many colourful and perhaps fanciful stories about the evolution of the Harlequin mask but he does declare that "there was scarcely any noticeable change in it during the entire time from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century". (Duchartre, 1966, p.135)

Fo speaks of the *commedia dell'arte* masks as being zoomorphic and derived from the courtyard animals of the day and linked to the low social status of the 'downstairs' society or lower class of that age. The "classical Harlequin mask, which is both cat and monkey" when donned by the actor, who "will proceed in a series of springs and jumps, lazily moving his arms and legs and occasionally leaping forward in a giant bound", makes the social class associations apparent. (Fo, 1991, p.22)

On the other hand, Fo cites a monkey-like mask from India, "with definite anthropomorphic connotations, which resembles the archaic masks of Harlequin", (Fo, 1991, p.23) but he does not overtly draw links to the Harlequin mask.

> [F]rom the Ganges in India is a monkey mask; there is another monkey mask, this time from Sri Lanka. Both have a hinged jawbone, which jerks with the movement of the chin. (Fo, 1991, p.22)

Nonetheless, the hinged jaw is a characteristic of the early Harlequin mask in *commedia dell'arte*.

Fo's version of the possible meanings of the zoomorphic nature of masks in *commedia dell'arte* appears credible, considering his point that in theatre the upper classes are never portrayed in a mask, unless they were known to be scoundrels. It was always the servant who wore the masks. This concept also aligns with the practice of using slaves as the players in Greek and Roman theatre where they often wore large stock masks.

Another black mask appeared at the end of the 1500s which by the early 1600s was popular with ladies who wore it as a protective mask while travelling in open carriages or when out walking. These masks were said to protect their desire for delicate white skin. It also became the practice to wear such masks as a disguise at some social events. With all this as a common practice, it would not have seemed unusual to see a *commedia dell'arte* actor performing in a mask.

> The mask could be shaped to the face and was pierced at the eyes, nose and mouth. At the end of the seventeenth century half masks, with slits for eyes were fashionable for street wear with hoods. These were held in place by ribbons tied round the back of the head. Venetian half masks were called loup masks, after the wolf, because they had a frightening affect on children. This was anglicized to 'loo'. A lightweight mask was held in place by a button or bead held in the mouth. (Yarwood, 1978, p.282)

ILL. 37. *Wolf like loup mask. (Yarwood, 1978, p.282)*

This simpler and lighter type mask (the half-mask) appeared to be taken up by Harlequin in the later centuries, so by the time the Harlequinade became popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Harlequin character was wearing a mask, which was more cat-like than that reminiscent of a monkey.

Patchworking it together: The LOZENGE

Marino Pallesche writes of Arlecchino's origins, saying it was Tristano Martinelli who not only was thought to be the first to play Harlequin in a mask, but was also the actor who changed the costume from the first dull random patched costume, which perhaps depicted fallen leaves from the forest floor, to the smart brightly coloured geometric designs of the medieval fool's costume. "He tricked out the Zanni's grey costume with the variegated colours of the Mediaeval buffoons and took the name from old French fables." (Palleschi, 2005, p.15)

Exactly why this came about is unclear, but it may have been through Tristano Martinelli's desire to be accepted by the royal courts of the day. However, he was not the only actor to adjust the Harlequin character through costume. Giuseppe Domenic Biancolelli did another revamp after the 1650s. It is said he gave Harlequin a more elegant presence.

> Giuseppe Domenico Biancolelli, who reached Paris in the second half of the 17th Century, and is said to have endowed Arlecchino with a more refined sense of irony, a more elegant presence, that met with great favour in France. (Palleschi, 2005, p.17)

However the juxtaposition of a geometric design over the organic form of the body becomes a feature of interest. Another perspective focuses on the 'chaos' aroused by Harlequin's sudden actions, which metaphorically were best framed against moments

of stillness or 'order'. Willeford suggests, that "when geometric pattern is emphasised in the fool's costume, it represents the *order of* or *in chaos.* The rush of Harlequin's movement, focused for instance in stylised attitudes, was part of the life of his costume." (Willeford, 1969, p.21) According to Willeford, the order in the costume appears to be in direct contrast to Harlequin's nonsensical folly.

> At the end of the seventeenth century the triangles became diamond-shaped lozenges, the jacket was shortened, and a double pointed hat took the place of the toque.
> The costume of the Harlequin of the Renaissance illustrates in general the later garb of the character, but there are many details about both which are still shrouded in mystery. (Duchartre, 1966, p.134.)

Cross-stitch: When did Harlequin find ANDROGYNE?

In terms of Harlequin's gender duality, references to Dionysus, the god of fertility, himself bisexual in nature, are necessary. Of interest is the disposition of Dionysus's female followers called *maenads*. Here again there is conflict in recorded history, with some commentators saying maenads were women with strong masculine traits who danced possessed and ran naked in the hills, killing animals as a sign of their devotion, while other historians claim the maenads were effeminate men, because it was forbidden that women had such liberty. Never-the less, women are featured as part of the Dionysus empowerment and revelry. Without them life does not go on. All this relates to the Harlequin and his antics around playing the nurturing role of a woman as shown in a series of images titled, *The marvellous malady of Harlequin*. (Hartnoll, 1967)

ILL. 38. Harlequin breastfeeding inspired by The marvellous malady of Harlequin, an illustrated Dutch scenario of the eighteenth century. Another eighteenth century print shows Harlequin trying to decide which suits him best, a large skirt or a pair of pants. The image of a breastfeeding Harlequin inspired Picasso to make some significant drawings from it, but the real fascination is in the act of androgyny. Artist: Julie Parsons.

Meanwhile, not to be overlooked is Columbine, Harlequin's female counterpart. At times, she appears to merge with Harlequin in antics requiring an interchange of costumes. This action saw her sometimes referred to as Harlequina complete with a costume in the same fabric style as Harlequin's suit. At times she may have even appeared in his suit and he in her dress.

The first Columbine was played by a strong, voluptuous, middle-aged woman in a costume identified by its apron. The presence of Harlequina in a Harlequin costume is significant and may account for a possible androgyny sometimes attributed to the Harlequin figure. However, further images in *The marvellous malady of Harlequin*, distinctly show Harlequin as carer of their children. These have contributed a great deal to the notion of androgyne.

The activity of role reversal appears to be an age-old prank, which serves to alleviate tensions between the sexes. In this light, the mask's function is further complicated by the misleading disguise of the costume.

ILL. 39. *A 1600s Harlequina or Columbine dressed as Harlequin holding her mask in a position of reveal. Inspired by an etching by F. Poilly. (Duchartre, 1966, p.283)*

Embroidering the facts: Are Harlequin's balletic STANCES his or did he learn them through dance?

Did commedia dell'arte contribute to what we now term as ballet? What was termed ballet de cour (court dance or spectacle) from the renaissance through to the 1700s

was in fact an extravagant concert of not only dance, but also vocals, music, poetry, allegorical floats, pantomime and sometimes carousels and fire-works.

According to Marino Pallereschi there is every possibility that the expressive techniques and antics of masked actors in a politically volatile environment or in a foreign country, playing out a story, would have indeed inspired the further development of ballet.

> To make themselves perfectly understood in foreign climes, the Comici developed a multifarious language, that was in the main, the language of gesture. Their study was further encouraged by the fact that the players were masked, as perforce, they had to use not the countenance, but the body, to convey whatever their personage was to think or feel. (Palleschi, 2005, p.9)

With the probable influence of gesture informing movement within dance and storytelling, stock characters became of interest.

> Their expressive theatre was greatly to influence the ballet de cour, Molière's reforms of French comedy, and through Molière, the ballet d'action, thus lending the dance a fresh range of expression and choreographic means. (Palleschi, 2005, p.10)

Harlequin largely relied upon gesture to express his motives in performance. To do this he assembled a collection of balletic type poses which alerted the audience to a situation. With this in mind it seems there were two-way influences between the aristocratic class involved in ballet du cour and the lower class' parodies as in commedia. The result has provided performance with a rich palette of movement.

The pin cushion: Dressing as a SERVANT for a laugh

In contrast to a probable development of stock characters for storytelling purposes, the complexity of the Harlequin costume can be explored from the angle of heroism. Duchartre's book points to George Herman's account of "the Harlequin costume's emergence from defeated Swiss mercenaries who retreated from the battle field tearing their flags and standards into strips. Subsequently, they sewed the strips over their tunics as a vow to revenge their defeat." (Herman, 1994, p.119) Herman goes on to say, "Those many-coloured rags often covered scaled armour after the style known as brigandine." (Herman, 1994, p.119)

This notion of championing the weak through humour is not new. The peasant classes in Renaissance Italy were certainly receptive to release from the pressures of their daily lives through the use of clever humour. Harlequin soon became their champion with his satirical jibes on the false airs of nobility.

Contextually, this affinity with humour aligns with Aristotle's view that, while the upper classes enjoyed tragedy, the lower classes preferred the poking fun of comedy. From the early days of *commedia dell'arte*, the Harlequin figure made fun of his masters and mistresses. Davis says, "dating back to medieval and early modern Europe, clowns lewdly impersonated the clergy and nobility at annual feasts and fairs." (Davis, 2002, p.173)

All this seems rather strange when *commedia dell'arte* enjoyed the support of the nobility, except that Harlequin played a clever duality by appearing equally as an incompetent stupid servant one minute and the clever triumphant servant the next. His blundering unpredictable nature is why he is so funny.

However, in the passage of time, Harlequin does not maintain his servant position but, by contrast, in post-revolutionary France, he becomes aligned with the lost upper classes where he takes on many false guises, one of which is that of a marquis.

Up-braiding: The Harlequin as MARQUIS in the late 1600s through to displacement in the late 1700s

The French Harlequin became "prettified in porcelain by figurine artist, Kandler" (Banham, 1995, p.472). At this stage, Harlequin is cast as the leading character in French fairground plays. Pauline Baggio considers that this phenomenon of the servant transformed into or reflecting the master is also reflective of the political and social climate of pre-revolutionary France in the late seventeen hundreds.

Baggio calls the odd reversal, "the process of social de-characterization" (Baggio, 1982, p.618), and reports it as commonly seen in Lesage's Theatre de la Foire which was "the only theatre of the time to enjoy great popularity both among the nobility and the common people of Paris." (Baggio, 1982, p.618)

"Harlequin has become an intrigant and has often raised himself to the rank of bourgeois, marquis, baron or chevalier." (Baggio, 1982, p.618)
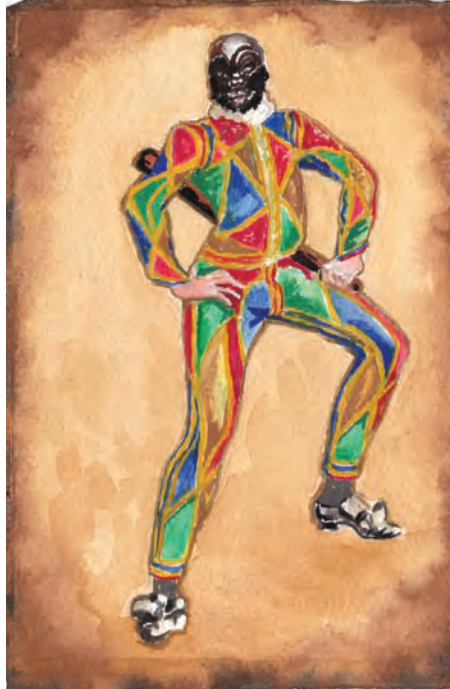
ILL. 40. *This painting shows a Harlequin suit and mask very simular to one painted by Claude Gillot titled The Tomb of Maitre Andre 1716-17. The same type of costume can be seen in Picasso's Parade. The geometric shapes are different sizes across various parts of the body. For example the triangles on the legs are larger than those on the arms. (Menaker Rothschild, 1991, p.232).*
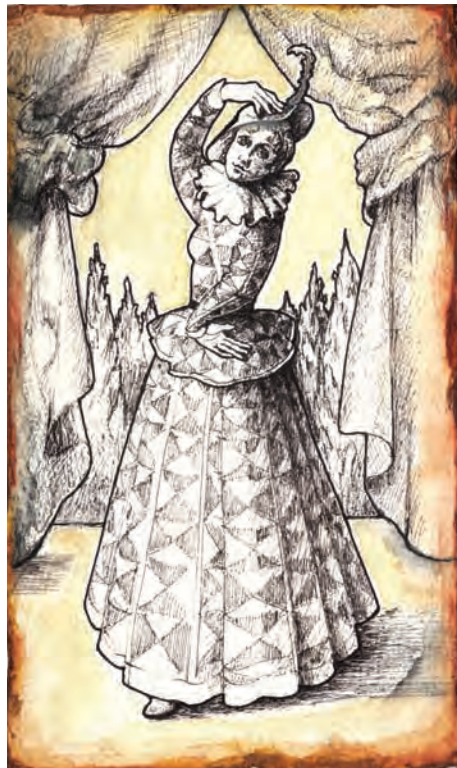
ILL. 41. *Drawing of "Madamoiselle Harlequine" from The Italian comedy (Duchartre, 1966, p.282). Notice the use of the frilled neck piece, as a reflection of position and complement to Harlequin, about 1695.*

Later in post revolutionary France, Arlequin appears in the Variety Theatre plays, where he is displaced from his role as the leading character by Pierrot, a former peasant, who assumes the position of top player in accord with the mores of the new citizenry of the middle classes.

Satin stitch: The Harlequin as MAGICIAN come outdated fop

In the changing circumstances, Harlequin's transformation is reflected in his costume. He is now presented as a

> pretty simpleton. While in the Harlequinade he was first a romantic magician and later a languishing, lackadaisical lover, foppishly dressed in a close fitting suit of bright silk diamonds (derived from the patches on his original rags), sometimes with lace frill and ruffles. He retains from his origins the small black cat faced mask, and a lath or bat of thin wood, which in English pantomimes served, when slapped lightly on the floor or wall, as a signal or the transformation scene. (Hartnoll, 1967, p.429)

As if by magic and reflecting a change of social position, Harlequin appears in a range of opulent art objects which were all the rage from 1740 to 1750.

ILL. 42. *Harlequin in his new diamonds. This drawing is taken from a small porcelain figurine modelled by Kaendler in 1738, Victoria Albert Museum Collection. (Boger, 1971, p.510)*

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These figurines were an entirely new type of artwork and were made as features set amongst flowers in ornamental table centre pieces used for elaborate banquets. "When Kaendler introduced his first independent small figurines toward 1736, it ranked as a creation of an entirely new type. (Boger, 1971, p.510)

ILL. 43. *Harlequina taken from a porcelain figurine by Franz Anton Bustelli 1759, Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection. (Nicoll, 1963, p.97)*

Matching materials: The changing THEATRE environment and its affect on costume

The change in Harlequin's costume can be explained with the development of theatres. As theatres moved into their lavish constructions of the 1700s, so costume changed to suit the new conditions of the feminine nature of Rococo society.

Costume was less visible outdoors because candlelight is soft and imprecise and it deadens some colours. Blue looks black, green darkens to brown, so it was important to use strong bright colours in theatre costume such as white, yellow, and scarlet or orange. Moreover costume could help increase the amount of light if they acted as reflectors, so that gold and copper had practical application. Alongside the ideal that the theatre should be richly costumed was the assistance clothes could give as another source of light. Gold, silver, copper, jewels and crystal all sparkle, which was appropriate for the social status of heroes and heroines, but it would also increase the illumination available. The result was that costumes

were covered in spangles and sequins to make them shine all over, and the few examples of Baroque theatre costumes which still survive are so thick with copper embroidery, sequins, braid, spangles and loops, that the underlying material is invisible. (De Marley, 1982, p.24)

In both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, actors were certainly responsible for providing the whole or part of their costumes. "Given the cost of theatre costume it is not surprising that French actors tried to make the same costume do for several productions." (De Marley, 1982, p.25)
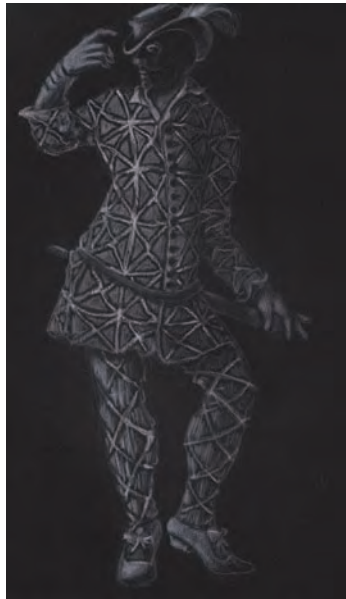
ILL. 44. *This drawing is taken from a 17ᵗʰ century engraving of a Harlequin in Austria. It is interesting to see the loose pants have been made to look tight by criss-crossing ribbon over the legs to form a diamond pattern.*

This custom is verified with the date of the pledge made by actors to continue with the production of their own costumes. "On 3 May 1700 the actors again pledged to supply their own costumes". (De Marley, 1982, p.25)

The bobbin case: Harlequin travels to ENGLAND

Although evidence of Harlequin's visits to England appear as early as 1684, it was a French troupe of comedians who finally delivered a new form of Harlequin to the shores of early eighteenth century England, which made the greatest impact. Speaight notes that

> [t]heir style derived from the Italian tradition; in 1702 a French troupe performed *A Night Scene by a Harlequin and Scaramouche after the Italian Manner* at Drury Lane, and acts similarly described were presented in several theatres during the next twelve years. (Speaight, 1980, p.22)

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The tradition of the dumb show (mime), as we see it arriving in England from the French fairgrounds, appeared to arise due to issues akin to copyright regarding the scripts used in the traditional French theatre productions involving *commedia dell'arte*. These scripts were eventually restricted but the fairground players could mime the story. The dumb show techniques, mixed with the *Night Scene* techniques of *commedia dell'arte,* evolved into a very specific form of English theatre. A night scene is played so that the actors appear not to be able to see each other but the audience can see everything.

Once the English began to enjoy the experience of this new form of pantomime, they merged it with their love of Harlequin antics to create the *Harlequinade*.

ILL. 45. *Inspired by an image of Hester Booth as Harlequina or Columbina from the Theatre Museum's Collections. (www.peopleplayuk.org.uk/collections, 2008) Hester Booth (nee Santlow) is a dancer of acclaim whose Harlequina dance was so popular her image was reproduced on snuff boxes and other memorabilia.*

Hester Santlow danced in Drury Lane in 1706 aged 16 but, in 1719, she made her debut as an actress. The women who danced and acted the part of Harlequina usually danced in the entr'actes. The part of Harlequina went to young, seemingly innocent, pretty performers who were essentially dancers. Curiously, the personality of the French Arlechinna began to consolidate as a smart, quick moving young woman who was ahead of the plot. She had dignity, grace and poise.

Hester Santlow and "the roles created by these women were integral to the phenomenal success of these new afterpiece genres." (Brooks, 2007, p.200) "As both actresses

and dancers they needed to deploy all their beauty, charm, and sexual allure". (Brooks, 2007, p.199)

ILL. 46. *Watercolour of David Garrick as Harlequin 1740. Garrick was a famous English actor, who also asserted theatrical influence as a playwright, theatre manager and producer throughout the 18th century. (www.earlydancecircle.co.uk 2009)*

Gradually *Commedia dell'arte* began to decline in popularity but the genre continued as the entr'act or as a diversion during scene changes or as light entertainment before but mostly at the end of another type of theatrical performance. Basically it appeared to revert to the type of clowning diversion that may have began in ancient times.

As time went on *commedia dell'arte* recovered a following and began to combine with the popular English pantomime.

Trimming the threads: The HARLEQUINADE

Banham describes Harlequin's costume in the early days of pantomime in England as "the close fitting costume bespangled with glittering lozenges." (Banham, 1995, p.472) It is at this moment that it seems his bat or slapstick becomes a magic wand.

ILL. 47. *Mr Eller as Harlequin in second position wearing a bespangled suit. Inspiration taken from The History of Theatre. (May, 1986, p.39)*

Harlequin's bespangled costume and his complementary persona settled into a life in the English harlequinade, adapting to the demands of the day and integrating into the fables of pantomime. Here Harlequin's use of an expressive body established a series of stances and set of codes, which became identified with his costume and was fully explicable to the audiences of the time.

ILL. 48. *Drawing of Harlequin taken from an engraving by D. Dighton in 1812. Note the innovation of the close fitting full-length suit with side buttons to enable the actor to get in and out of the costume. (Hugill, 1980, p.83)*

Speaight suggests that the *commedia dell'arte* component of the developing pantomime revolved around the "love adventures and misadventures of Harlequin and Columbine." (Speaight, 1980, p.24) This usually consisted of dance and mime punctuated by "comic and grotesque incidents." (Speaight, 1980, p.24) At this time, Harlequin's bat took on the powers of a magic wand and involved working with spectacular new technical innovations in scene changes. Coincidently, spectacular costume changes were also affected and usually took the form of key nursery rhyme or fable characters changing to the stock characters of *commedia dell'arte*.

Stitching it up: John RICH

The French fairground tradition of the dumb show was refined by an actor named John Rich (1692-1761), who had "a natural genius for mime." (Speaight, 1980, p.24) Rich invented mime routines that deliberately used physicality to affect the story line and which are still famous today as tried and trusted 'routines' often used in circus clowning acts.

Rich went on to become an eccentric theatre manager who established and promoted this new English tradition of pantomime now called the *harlequinade*. However, the following Harlequins were not as talented as Rich and the role deteriorated.

> Harlequin was a gorgeous figure in a skin-tight costume of red, yellow and green lozenges, effecting magical transformations with a touch of his bat, but basically [was] little more than a striker of elegant attitudes. (Speaight, 1980, p.32)

Reversible seams: Harlequinade THEMES

Often, as noted above, transformation scenes were achieved through costume. Perhaps the first half of the pantomime was played as a nursery rhyme or legendary story where a character like the Fairy Queen would transform actors such as the lead love pair into Harlequin and Columbine. In this case the actors often wore large papier-mâché heads and big loose costumes which, when removed during the transformation, revealed characters like Harlequin and Columbine from the *commedia dell'arte*. The *harlequinade* had no real plot. It was fast and called into play full acrobatic antics, which were matched only by the engineering and construction feats of elaborate stage carpentry and mechanics.

ILL. 49. *Taken from a 1901 costume design by Edward Gordon done for the commedia dell'arte section of the Harlequinade for the early twentieth century British stage production of the Masque of love. (Fisher, 1989, p.40)*

ILL. 50. *Costume design for Cinderella played at Drury Lane in 1885 and reused in the 1900 production at the Princess Theatre Melbourne. This design is from the Tait Collection. (Tait, 2001, p.45)*

Sewing it all together: Finishing the COSTUME

The costume to date is now almost ready to travel again, this time to the colonies of the British Empire, but what about accessorizing, trims and embellishments of the enduring costume?

ILL. 51. *This painting is of the traditional Harlequin mask associated with the costume. 30x22cm. Artist Julie Parsons 2007. It is an example of the main part of a leather mask, the type of which was worn for a number of centuries. There are many variations according to the actor and the maker. Most would also have a section over the top lip and a chin strap.*

A DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

PART 2

ACCESSORISING and EMBELLISHING THE HARLEQUINESQUE COSTUME

Leather faced: Harlequin MASKS

The first type of Harlequin specific mask was made from wood and had fur eyebrows and moustache. The actor either had his own beard or wore a chin-strap covered with fur.

ILL. 52. *An example of an early 1600's wooden Harlequin mask. (commedia-dell-arte.com, 2006)*

Following the use of wooden mask later in the 1600s, came leather masks usually finished in black or very dark brown leather dye in keeping with the blackamoor servant status. These leather masks were moulded and made to fit the actor's face exactly. (Refer to illustration used at the opening to Part 2, ILL. 51.)

After the 1800s came the fashionable invention of the travelling mask, which was designed to protect the face during open carriage or horseback travel. This mask was simple and supple and served to influence and inform Harlequin's costume design particularly in the British Empire, into the twenty first century.

ILL. 53. Travel mask used after the 1800s, and favoured in the English harlequinades. (Yarwood, 1978, p.282, Mask only)

By the 1900s, the corners of the mask had lifted and begun to take on the famous cat eye look. This mask became very popular in the harlequinades, ballet and fashion. This style also influenced a range of eye-glasses called Harlequin frames.

ILL. 54. Cat eye mask of the 1900s. Artist's impression from various sources.

The correct *commedia dell'arte* Harlequin mask survives in use today, with revivalist enthusiasts like Antonio Fava, an internationally acclaimed teacher of performance methods and costuming for *commedia dell'arte.* The mask is made using a death mask imprint of the actor's face and building onto this the harlequinesque components. The final mask can then be made of leather or papier-mache.

ILL. 55. *Contemporary traditional Harlequin mask made and used by Don Smith, performer, and lecturer in commedia dell'arte method as taught by Antonio Fava, Italy in the 1990s.*

Mad Hatters: Harlequin HATS

The character and status a hat offers its wearer is indisputable. In some cases the hat extends the facial character or perhaps even brands the wearer. The hat and its wearer might suggest some association with the qualities of the mask. An example of this deliberate combination of the face and the hat is the curious fool's-cap and its wearer.

ILL. 56. *The head of a small bronze statue found in Olynthus, which shows the use of a mask and an early version of the foolscap used in Greek old comedy. The mask and hat belong to the character of a cook's kitchen slave, therein producing a simular scenario to Harlequin's beginning in commedia dell'arte. In many cases the part of a servant championed the weak, as is reinforced by Bieber, who says slaves of old comedy acted out "the pompous bearing of their masters." (Bieber, 1961, p.40)*

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Etruscan travelling performers wore conical hats with a roll above the rim based on an oriental style. This hat shape may have inspired the mystery of the oriental associated with magicians and with clowning.

ILL. 57. *The Tutulus 7 B.C, a classical Etruscan conical hat as seen in numerous art books. This type of hat was also worn by commedia dell'arte Pulchenelia and later translated into circus as the hat of the white-face Harlequin clown.*

The fool's-cap appears very early in the history of costumes worn by the travelling mimes of new comedy. "The mimes did not wear masks, but actors with grotesque faces were used." (Bieber, 1961, p.249)

> Grotesque heads found on the Agora of Athens wear the peaked cap, which out of the headgear of travellers and peasants has become the fool's cap of the Roman mimes, of mediaeval buffoons, of Shakespeare's jesters and of modern circus clowns. (Bieber, 1961, p.249)

ILL. 58. *Fool's-cap on terracotta stature of a mime from the time of the Roman Empire. Note the grotesque face under the hat, now takes the place of the mask. (Bieber, 1961, p.249)*

It would seem that the single-pointed fool's-cap may in some instances have had ears added to it during the medieval period. This reflects the use of animal flare previously used during the Dionysus festivals of old. Being an ass, acting the goat, or creating a stupid cock up, have roots from the Dionysus period. The single-pointed conical hat now gives way to the three pointed cap with bells attached. . However the adding of ears, a tail or a feather to his hat was not uncommon in the earliest manifestations of this hat.

ILL. 59. This illustration is inspired by a costume design for Jack Point, a character in a 1984 Gilbert and Sullivan production. The cock's head signifies stupidity, vanity and playing the fool while the droopy ears represent the ass. Taken from, Gilbert and Sullivan: the official D'Oyly Carte Opera Company picture history, p.146. London.

Although the Harlequin costume changed only slightly throughout each period, Harlequin's hats certainly changed more frequently. His choice of hat was probably from the actor's contemporary wardrobe. George Herman constantly refers to Harlequin as wearing a hat, which was peaked with pointed brim ending in a beak. This type of hat was worn in Italy from 1420.

ILL. 60. Here is a hat with beak from the 15th century which may have been used by Harlequin. Drawing derived from Encyclopedia of world costume p. 225

The traditional adornment on Harlequin's torque or soft cap as described by Sand: "This animal tail is another tradition from antiquity. A fox's brush or a hare's ears were

attached to anyone who was the butt of ridicule." (In Duchartre, 1966, p.135) This explanation is a little too simplistic and probably has far deeper origins than is implied by Ducharte.

ILL. 61. *Arlecchino in 17th century hat with feather and worn with a full face mask. (Yarwood, 1978, p.225)*

The hat that appears on Picasso's circus Harlequin seems to be derived from the black felt *bicorne* of the early 1800s often worn by gentlemen in the military. This fashion was possibly led by Napoleon when he donned the hat in 1803 by way of restoring the *Academie Francaise,* an authority on language, after its suppression during the French revolution. The *bicorne* was part of the official costume worn by its exclusive members. The academy only ever had 40 life long members at any one time. In 1855 a 41st seat was made in jest for those famous writers who missed their opportunity. Moliere, creator of *commedia dell'arte* plays in France, was one such writer. Perhaps this is why Harlequin now wears the *bicorne* hat, a kind token gesture to Moliere. The shape of the hat lends itself well to performance because the face is easily seen. The shape of the *bicorne* may also be reminiscent of droopy animal ears seen in the fool's cap of the Middle Ages. (De Marley, 1982)

ILL. 62. Drawing of bicorne as worn by Harlequin in the early 20th century. Drawing taken from Circus Family by Pablo Picasso. (Menaker Rothschild, 1991, p.27)

Harlequin's associations with the fool do not extend to the fool's-cap as such, until the Harlequin appears in modern circus.

ILL. 63. *The circus conic cap on the harlequinesque white-faced clown from 20th century European circus. Drawing inspired by the famous white-faced clown, Francesco Caroli.*

Cobblers last: Harlequin SHOES

Harlequin's shoes were also varied according to the period in which the actor lived. Many favoured a flexible low-heeled shoe befitting the acrobatic antics. However, as the role of Harlequin changed into one of positioned stances in later pantomime or the harlequinade, the shoe often had a shaped heel, which added height and elegance.

ILL, 64, 65, 66. Some examples of shoe styles taken from a variety of early engravings and later paintings.

Frilling: Harlequin NECK PIECES

Collars on the early Harlequin costume were initially non-existent or else a featureless simple collar.

From the 1620s onwards, it became fashionable for the well to do to wear a small frilled collar called a ruff, which appears to have originated in Holland. The round collar was usually made of pleated white linen. As time went on the collar became bigger, with anything up to 15 metres of fabric. At this stage it was called the millstone ruff. (Yarwood, 1978)
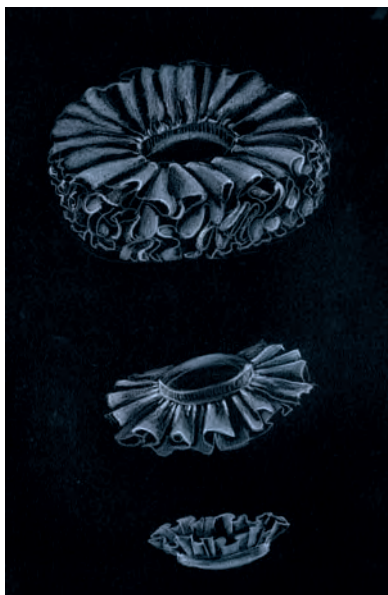
ILL. 67. *Millstone ruff, which in later years became associated with the Harlequin costume and clowning apparel. Three styles taken from early engravings and later paintings.*

ILL. 68. *The combination of a collar and ruff as seen on an Arlecchino in the 1700s (Yarwood, 1978, p.225)*

During the harlequinades and the late 1800s and early 1900s ballet period, Harlequin was often seen with a large loose bow or scarf about his/her neck.

ILL. 69. *Artist's impression of harlequinade Harlequin figure from 1800s showing the combination collar and bow as seen in Picasso's Parade. (Menaker Rothschild, p228).*

Props: Harlequin's SLAPSTICK

Phallus, bauble or bludgeon?
The slapstick is actually a stick split into two but formed as one at one end where it is held. The slapstick is designed to make a starling sound upon abrupt movements. The art of using a slapstick may have contributed to Harlequin's unique sudden actions.

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Harlequin's slapstick may be derived from the Italian word *batocchio*, meaning clapper inside the bell.

Given the importance of the phallus during both ancient Greek and Roman farce, it is not surprising to find Harlequin maintaining the tradition to some extent and affecting an apparatus, which can be used as a phallus, or even a weapon like the hammer as used by Charum in ancient Rome. The slapstick could also be associated with the jester's bauble, or "Finovulo", meaning little puppet character carried by a jester, which enabled the jester to say things normally forbidden by social mores. It is said that Harlequin's "Finovulo" is his slapstick. Tim Shane suggests that its origins may have been "as a comedic device [where] the batocchio was derived from the Bergamese peasant stick used for driving cattle." (Shane, 2001)

> Two thin pieces of wood are kept apart at the handle and slap against each other when a blow is stopped at the moment of impact. It is stuck through the belt worn low on the hips. This belt often also has a pouch carrying bits and pieces. In Antonio Fava's opinion, the bat is Arlechinno: he never puts it down, not even when somersaulting. It is a phallic symbol, but without menace – which is also true of its use as a weapon, usually against Pantalone, though often the tables are turned and it's Arlechinno who finds himself on the receiving end. (Rudlin in Shane, 2001)

As the harlequinade evolved, the slapstick was often replaced with a magic wand wooden sword.
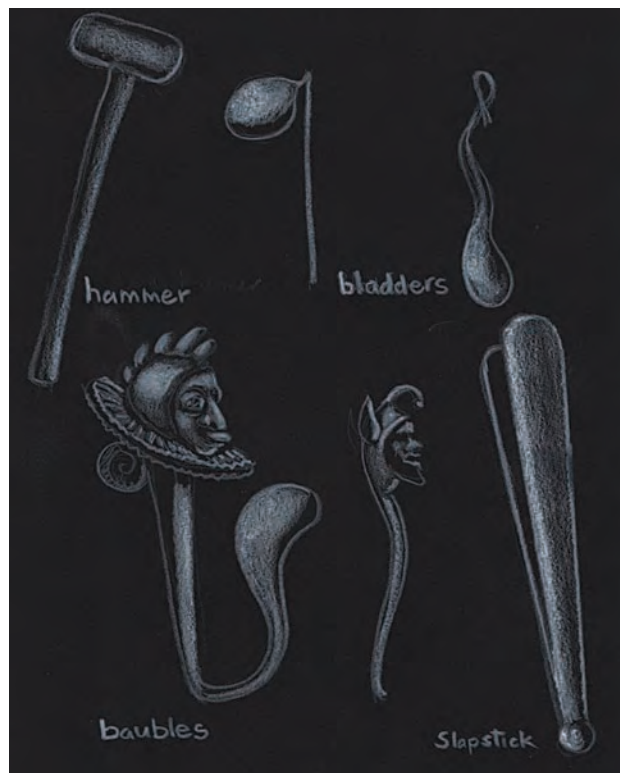
ILL. 70. *Phallus, hammer, bauble, slapstick styles taken from a variety of early imagery.*

Threaden: What part did the TEXTILE INDUSTRY play?

To further an understanding of the costume, attention needs to be given to the very fabrics from which Harlequin's costume was made and how these may have informed the costume in its various incarnations.

Costume invariably depends on the nature of fabric from which it was made. For the most part the early fabric choice was flax. As Harlequin rose from his status as servant to that of Marquis so his costume changed. This was dictated by the materials available at the time of manufacture, as much as it was by the fashion of the period.

According to Hudson, Clapp and Kness, European use of flax for cloth-making began around 8000 B.C. From the information in the Old Testament and the writing of Herodotus and Pliny, these authors deduced that "between 450 B.C. to 80 A.D." natural fibres were being produced into textile products in domestic situations and "by slave labour in production centres". (Hudson, 1993, p.3)

The crusades and the advent of the 'Great Silk Road' introduced silk as another available fabric for use by Europeans. Italy established silk production and weaving in twelfth century A.D. England also began importing wool fibres at this time, but more importantly and sure to affect the Harlequin costume was the importation of "dyed and printed cotton fabrics from India". (Hudson, 1993, p.3) Cotton imports began after 1500 A.D and were extremely popular in Europe until the Industrial revolution when the English began to manufacture their own cotton.

On the other hand, Yarwood argues:

> From the seventeenth century, painted cottons were imported into Europe from India and became very popular. Supplies were limited, so the fabrics acquired a scarcity value and became the 'in' mode with the well to do. Elegant society, with an inverted snobbery, prized such cottons more than silk and used them especially for dressing-gowns. (Yarwood, 1978, p.122)

The scarcity of the colourful cottons provokes thoughts about the making of Harlequin's patchwork costume. A poor actor expected to create his own costume might have collected the colourful fabric off cuts from a tailor's or pattern cutter's workshop floor and created a spectacular costume from these remnants. Or perhaps the pieces of fabric were corner cuts off the length of fabric?

Norah Waugh reiterates the nature of the textile industry as follows.

Fashionable seventeenth century suits were made from silk materials—satins, damasks, velvets, etc., as well as gold and silver cloths. These, as well as the best laces and braids, came from Italy. The financial situation in both England and France was such that the cost of importing these materials was prohibitive and   many edicts were passed against their use. (Waugh, 1964, p.16)

Such edicts were commonly ignored and Waugh argues that the French silks were inferior to the Italian silks and were often used in wide bands, narrow braids and as ribbons. This is certainly the case on the Harlequin suit. Yellow strip braiding is a popular choice between the bright triangular colours of red, blue and green. This situation with the silks again reinforces the practical probability of the French version of the Harlequin costume being made from inferior silks utilizing ribbons or wide bands.

Velvet, originally from India, was "made in Italy from the Middle Ages". The Italians also "set up workshops in France from the about 1500 onwards." (Yarwood, 1978, p.428) These fabrics were readily available as were corduroy, chiffon, velvet brocade, cisele, a velvet on a satin ground, and so on.

A costume custom in the church was to stitch designs in reflective metallic thread of pure gold. Another trick was the creation of appliqué for rich colour affects, which could be seen from a distance. This appliqué was both inlaid and overlaid and used in conjunction with other decorative stitch techniques. These religious garments used for affect with big audiences in vast dark churches lit only by candles, in turn, influenced theatrical costume.

Actors began to use colourful bold appliqué, sequins and paillettes, which are larger than a sequin and with two holes. These were stitched onto costumes along with glass beads and purls of finely coiled metallic wire. The colourful and reflective effect was eye catching.

However it is unlikely that Harlequin's initial costume favoured such richness. The position of servant would have seen him in a simple cloth such as flax or the like.

Dye lot: The PARTICOLOURED Harlequin

Once the production and availability of fabric is understood then the colour of the fabrics used to make a Harlequin costume requires consideration. According to Horn, colour reflects "more complex dimensions". (Horn, 1975, p.321) Horn goes on to suggest that the choice of colour is made through unity and organization of hue or perhaps through the restriction of a colour palette but finally is decided upon by

determining the colour areas.

In the case of the Harlequin costume, the colours used include two warm colours, as in red and yellow, and two cool colours, as in blue and green. Yellow is an atmospheric colour because it radiates. Placing this colour as a border to the other three makes the costume seem light and buoyant. This is a great choice for an acrobat. Red is an energetic colour and so when placed within a triangle in various positions on the Harlequin costume it adds to the vibrancy of movement. Blue and green, on the other hand, offer stability and support. Green is associated with growth/food, and blue with sky/air, both of which convey a sense of security. Despite being placed in different triangles, the qualities of blue and green seem to settle the costume, inviting focus and consideration.

The initial colours of the first Harlequin costumes appeared to reflect the leaves of the forest floor. They were in the colours of green, yellow, beech red and brown. The look might have also provoked a sense of a poor servant dressed in rags or, as Herman suggests, perhaps a Swiss mercenary draped in the shredded strips of the Swiss flag or "particoloured banners of the livery colours charged with a badge or with the arms". (Chambers Encyclopedia, 1970, p.678)

The later complex geometric design of triangles attracted a richer colour palette and a costume that would not be forgotten for five centuries and beyond. The main colours here were yellow, red, blue, and green. These colours signify an extrovert personality, a real party goer, but also someone of depth, someone whose character appeals to a general audience.

ILL. 71. *Designer's impression in gouache of David Hockney's designs for Parade 1980, a troop of actors and acrobats. (Friedman, 1983, p.44)*

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Running parallel to this parti-coloured approach was the approach inspired by the rich harlequinade Harlequin costume but taken to a new level by the circus Harlequin. Harlequin, the circus clown, began to apply a delicate overlay of paillettes, sequins and/or glass beading. The glitter overlay not only suppressed the particoloured fabric but also the particoloured personality. What emerged was an elegant arrogant Harlequin with very little need for the iconic lozenge, which slowly began to disappear under decorative swirls.

Putting it all together: All DRESSED and ready to go

All dressed up, but where to go? A trip to the colonies perhaps? As implied Harlequin moves with the times sending us postcards from many destinations, but where has he been?

PART 3

ILL. 72. *This painting is of a circus environment often associated with the Harlequinesque. Artist: Julie Parsons.*

SOME ALTERNATIVE HARLEQUINESQUE ENVIRONS

Stepping out: Ballet DANCING Harlequins

Banham's view of Harlequin moving into the twentieth century is not a promising one. "In modern times, Harlequin has become emblematic of a bygone theatre, despite attempts to revive him." (Banham, 1995, p.472) His fate in the 1900s was to appear in ballets such as Arlequinade and Carnival, as a "dandified character". (Banham, 1995, p.472)
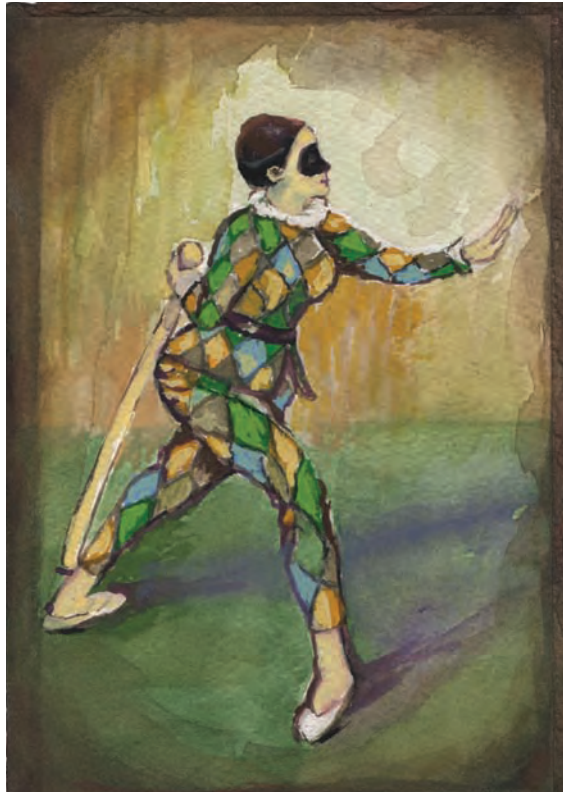
ILL. 73. *Inspired by a Harlequin ballerina painted by Degas 1886. At this time Harlequin was played by both male and female dancers.*

I***LL 74***. *Taken from a costume design by Leon Bakst in 1911, for Le Carnival*

ILL. 75. Taken from a costume design by Leon Bakst for the 1921 Ballet Russes production of Sleeping Beauty.

ILL. 76. Harlequin costume for the 1991 Australian Ballet production of Le Carnival. This costume is worn by Steven Woodgate and is taken from Leon Bakst's original 1910 design.

Jean Cocteau produced the scenario for *Parade* in 1917 for the Ballets Russes. Pablo Picasso was the designer and although it was not strictly a ballet about Harlequin it did however bring Harlequin to the attention of the public in a mix of modern art and theatre design.

Face facts: The multifaceted faced Harlequin in CARNIVAL catharsis

"Hypocrisy and lies never laugh but wear a serious mask." (Lane Bruner, 2005, p.136) To complicate the trajectories of mask and costume through time, there occurs, parallel to the development of theatre, the performative phenomenon of carnival.

Likewise with roots in ancient Rome, carnival essentially became a mix of "Catholic and pagan ritual" (Lane Bruner, 2005, p.136), during which time people are permitted to behave without restriction, pretending to be what they are not. This release from normal social behaviour may have given the community a sense of being in a liminal realm, where political suppression can be expressed with humour and in relative safety. Masks provided anonymity for this release.

Lommel makes no attempt to research the theatrical mask of ancient Greece and Rome as precursors to the carnival mask but he refers to some surviving European masks as having connections with devils. "Devils are also portrayed by animal masks or by human faces with animal attributes, and these conform to the Christian idea of the devil." (Lommel, 1981, p.213) This concept moved into the carnival as a potent way of chasing away devilish elements before and during Lent. Over the course of time, Lommel observes that "European mask-traditions are no longer truly representative of the original significance of masks. Here the meaning that lies at the root of old customs and mask ceremonies is too deeply buried to be defined." (Lommel, 1981, p.213)

Masking through make-up has been widely practised as another form of masking. Karl Groning, like Lommel, views this phenomenon as present in the *Shrovetide, a* festival/ carnival before *Lent.* The original meaning of this carnival, "carne vale: farewell to meat" (Groning, 1997, p.240), indicates a time of abandonment set apart from the regular day to day activities and behaviours. At *Shrovetide*, in bygone days, before the fast of Lent "the barriers of status and class were removed" and replaced "with lavish feasting and dancing, plays and masked processions." (Groning, 1997, p.240) "The carnival becomes a colourful masquerade that disguises bodies and unveils fantasies. Through playing a role people can experience a transformation which takes them out of themselves." (Groning, 1997, p.241)

ILL. 77. *Mephisto as White faced carnival Harlequin clown as inspired by image in A Decorated Skin (Groning, 1997, p.245)*

Mephisto of Germanic origin who appeared about the time of the Renaissance developed from medieval belief and carnival traditions. He became a fiendish character, who is said to be a "Fallen Angel" but whose original 'Godly' works of creation included ocean mammals.

It is thought he became jealous of humans and later joined Lucifer. Faust, a German Alchemist and magician, sold his soul to Mephisto in the belief he would receive power and knowledge. Mephisto appears in the carnivals of Lent as a character whose white face is a death mask and whose connections with the underworld represent temptation, which of course is tested during Lent.

In later carnivals, Harlequin seems to share some characteristics of the fallen angel Mephistopheles. "The elegant sweeping black line above one eyebrow gives the pale face of the white-face clown something of that intellectual arrogance that is also found in Gustaf Grundgens' famous Mephisto make-up". (Groning, 1997, p.245) Gustaf Gundgens is a well known German actor of the twentieth century who played Mephistopheles in Faust's "Mephisto".

ILL. 78. *Inspired by children dressed as Harlequin and Harlequina during a 20ᵗʰ century carnival in Cologne (Orloff, 1981, plate 3, p.101)*

In taking on a carnival character the general populace often mimics Harlequin. Groning's book shows recent pictures of children professing to be Harlequins. They are dressed in costumes of patch worked rags, their faces painted like circus clowns.

According to Alexander Orloff, Harlequin becomes a leader of processions of phantom-like ghost creatures, "the King of a diabolical army of dead souls" (Orloff, 1981, p.41), which terrified and delighted carnival crowds. "Harlequin's fame and popularity spread through European folklore making him a universal figure of carnival." (Orloff, 1981, p.41) Orloff also says, that "Harlequin, a descendant of an ancient god, is part man, part supernatural being, who can command the elements. He is both quick and clumsy, sharp witted and stupid, playing the dual role of devil and fool." (Orloff, 1981, p.41)

This tradition appears far removed from the wily servant of *commedia dell'arte* though the two lineages eventually become fused into the Harlequin and other stock characters from *commedia dell'arte,* who are in turn assimilated into the circus. In the contemporary imagery in Orloff's book, figures from *commedia dell'arte* can be seen to have merged with circus clowns and indeed with each other. This merging often appears between Harlequin and Pierrot, with consequential confusion. The

Harlequin make-up thus becomes that of the white-faced clown, without being therein confined.

Let's make-up: The white faced Harlequin in CIRCUS

"In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when stage and circus mingled" (Hartnoll, 1967. p.178), Pantaloon, Clown and Harlequin found their way to the circus ring. Harlequin played the arrogant straight-faced clown to the others' antics. Clown makeup was an important element in this transition of the Harlequin figure.

Beryl Hugill, a clown historian, suggests a link between Old Comedy, grotesque masks and modern clown make-up. Groning, on the other hand, argues that the contemporary white-faced clown is a descendant from masked Harlequin. That much may well be true and can indeed be traced in some respects; however, what is curious about this statement is that Harlequin wore a black coloured mask that was more related to the animalistic features of the monkey or cat than to the white-faced elegance of the circus clown.

The white-faced clown, whose elegant expression is animated by the arch of an exquisite single black eyebrow, is nothing like the monkey features of the black leather mask. The character-changing journey of the Harlequin into the white face clown may have more to do with the performers, actors and writers who portrayed him over the years than the style of applied make-up or mask. However, it should also be noted that the social response to a black face also seems to have changed over the intervening time. With the impact of wars, notions of North Africans and Arabs as infidels arose, while dark-skinned gypsies who lived under their own moral code were perceived as thieves. This undoubtedly had a profound impact on people, leading to alternative conventions about the use of masks and make-up and finally a preference toward a white face.

Facial distortion through white make-up (and masks) also extends to relatives of the clown family like, the fool, other *commedia dell'arte* characters like Punchinello, or pantomime characters, mime artists and many others, some of whom had appeared in carnival from time to time.

Another aspect of interest is the change in costume from a brightly coloured tight fitting suit with the distinctive lozenge pattern to a sparkling suit with exaggerated hips and shoulders. When investigating this new silhouette it would seem the main costumes of *commedia dell'arte* morphed into a single circus clown costume. Punchinello's white face and cone hat, Pierrot's make-up and feminine shoes and Clown's swollen bloomers creating a full hip look finished with leggy tights.

ILL. 79. *Commedia dell'arte pantomime character called Clown from a drawing by J A Fitzgerald 1877. Notice the big puffy sleeves and bloomers. Clown also experimented with some extraordinary decorative face makeup applications. This drawing focuses on the eyebrow which later became associated with the arrogant look of the circus Harlequin.*

ILL. 80. *A costume combination of commedia dell'arte's Pierrot and Punchinello as seen in a painting by C. Lagar 1920. Notice this costume is now a single suit with fullness in the hips. The cone circus hat was originally Punchinello's.*

ILL. 81. *An early circus Harlequin costume as seen on a French circus poster during the late 1800s. Notice the puffy bloomers and hip roll which feminises the costume. Also notice the Harlequin wears his hair back brushed into a point to fit under his cone hat. Many Commedia dell'arte costume codes have combined to create the circus Harlequin of the twentieth century. See illustration 116.*

Harlequin's circus cousins developed vastly interesting variations on the white-faced make-up theme. An interesting connection between the black face and the white face is seen in American circus. Eric Lott states that "the American clown—particularly the *Auguste* clown—borrowed heavily from the slave trickster, an integral figure in the African American folk narrative tradition". (Davis, 2002, p.172-173) However Davis also remarks that that even Negro circus clowns whitened their faces. Davis says the clown, along with the trickster, were both "lovable butts of humour and devious producers of humour. Both stood for champions of the weak who slyly defeated the strong through sheer wit". (Davis, 2002, p.172-173) This view again reflects a commonality with the early servant Harlequin of *commedia dell'arte*. Perhaps the original dark monkey-faced mask of the 1600s was supposed to reflect a Moor or Negro slave/servant?

Davis claims that clowns provoke emotion in a circus. Painted onto a clown's face, emotion swings up against the intense rationalism of circus acts that require great skill. Davis refers to Raymond Williams when she explains that: "[by]y tapping into 'structures of feeling', clowns often played unconscious racial stereotypes that helped reinforce the social norms". (Davis, 2002, p.174)

Clowns often inspire child-like associations. To help maintain the innocence of the child, clown make-up emphasizes looks of surprise or forlorn looks of hopelessness. In contrast, the Harlequin clown maintains his look of superiority, which signals the potential for a fall from grace of his associates like the devil displaced in another social setting.

ILL. 82. *Impression of circus Harlequin, the arrogant white-faced clown. Notice this Harlequin clown has the black make-up applied to the tip of the nose and has two arrogant eyebrows.*

Use of distortion to animate a desired character trait assists in the perpetuation of an intention, finally resulting in the formation of a preconceived belief about the performer. Perhaps, because of the make-up, the performer appears to be very arrogant or naively stupid, very sad or irresponsibly happy, or even a victim who smartens up to become a perpetrator. Either which way, the audience is primed not by the actor's costume but, in these instances, by the expression applied with the clown's make-up.

The important thing here is that as society changes and perceptions shift, so does the costume and mask of the clown. What was once an effective social tool of clowning communication of ages past, no longer delivers the same impact in the 21st century. As we witness in this discussion, the power of the mask worn by a shaman clown of old has transformed from the sacredness of the mask, to clan style clown make-up and finally to exaggerated human facial expression. If fear of the unknown – albeit death/ evil -- belies the original reason for putting on a 'face', does this mean humanity's evolution and belief systems have empowered individuals to such an extent that they are now able to fend off the perceived fearsome unknown with their own sense of power?

There is no question that donning a mask, for whatever reason, is an act of deception and/or transformation, however, as Fo implies, it is the wearer who gives a social context and life force to the otherwise innate object called a mask. It would seem that in fact all this masking is related to a political response. There is a great deal associated with the safe representation of a people's sense of identity and associated ideas of empowerment.

In the 21st century, most comedians do not require a mask to protect their identity. Indeed the trend is a make-up free performer, as is the case in street performance clowning by comedians like Joel Salom, who maintains the pretence of a fresh faced country boy in his facial attitude. He appears to make no attempt to hide or deny who he is, right down to using his birth name. It is also the same with satirists like Edna Everage even though she engages her audience with a consistent persona who is definitively not Barry Humphries.

All pomp and flair: Harlequin FASHION

As Horn proposes

> clothing is a powerful tool of communication. As an art image, it registers attitudes and emotions; it manifests social criticism; it provokes reaction. Not only does it reflect and interpret the patterns of culture, but it establishes visual value models that can help to show the way the wind is blowing. (Horn, 1975, p.345)

In the twentieth century for instance, the influence of the Harlequin costume on fashion and design continues. The popular Art Deco Style drew upon the strong Harlequin patterns to complement the geometric designs of the movement.

ILL. 83. *Designer's copy replicated in gouache of Georges Valmier's 1929 Art Deco design titled Decors et couleurs. (Robinson, 1990, p.140)*

The couturier and costume designer Paul Poiret, inspired a kind of exotic orientalism when he launched his fashion designs at the time when the dazzling Ballets Russes was staged in Paris in 1909. The designer for the Ballet Russes was of course, Bakst, who like Poiret, both delighted and inspired the public. Poiret's passion for "lavish entertaining and the exotic fancy-dress soirees….became legendary."(Garner, 1978, p.130) His designs subsequently influenced interior design of the period.

ILL. 84. Designer's copy of Georges Lepape's 1915 Arlequin costume design. Georges Lepape was a designer and collaborator with Poiret (Garner, 1978, p.126)

Sonia Delauney designs for fashion and interiors, set and costume are influenced by the strong diamond patterns of the Harlequin costume.

ILL 85. Inspired by film frame of a Delauney costume design for dancer Lizica Codreanu in the film "Le P'tit Parigot".1926.

ILL. 86. Inspired by Wayne Wichern's 1970s Harlequin hat Design.

Vivienne Westward, a contemporary fashion designer who delivered "punk" fashion, also draws heavily from Harlequin and Harlequina. Westward acknowledges going to the London Tate Gallery to make studies of the costume from paintings of Harlequin/a. A search on the latest Vivienne Westward releases reveals that she is still working from the Harlequin lozenge for inspiration in a new range of accessories.
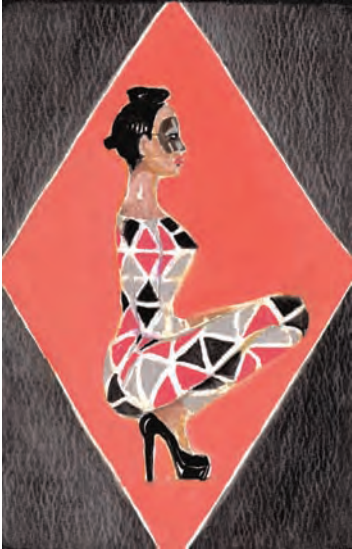
ILL. 87. *Inspired by Vivienne Westward's famous Harlequin fashion design in grey red and black. (Wilcox, 2004, p.99)*

ILL. 88. *Inspired by Vivienne Westward's Harlequin and Harlequina fashion designs in grey red and black, both worn by women. (Wilcox, 2004, p.98)*

Not to be outdone, the House of Dior released a new Harlequin range in 2007.

ILL. 89. Designer's copy of the 2007 Harlequin Romance, a John Galliano design under the Dior label. This design was part of the Dior's sixtieth birthday range.

ILL. 90. Designer's copy of Miu Miu cutout Harlequin bootie 2008. The attractive shoe is described as being made from black suede with pink and silver patches. The heel is black and clear with rhinestone detailing.

The modern fashion industry constantly reflects aspects of the Harlequin in the designing of garments for the twenty first century. However it is not just the Harlequin costume which has inspired artists, it is also his body language or stances.

Examples of the persuasiveness of Harlequin's body language is tabulated by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, who have put together examples of theatrical illustrations from all over the world in an exploration of the expressiveness of body and costume traditions.

ILL. 91. An example of Harlequin's stances influencing fashion in the 20th century. It is a wind which animates the performer's actions." It's not the costume so much as how it is worn. Harlequin movements often see him "where the neck is sunk down between the shoulders 'creating' a series of tensions not only in the shoulders but throughout the performer's body. (Gough, 1991, p.83)
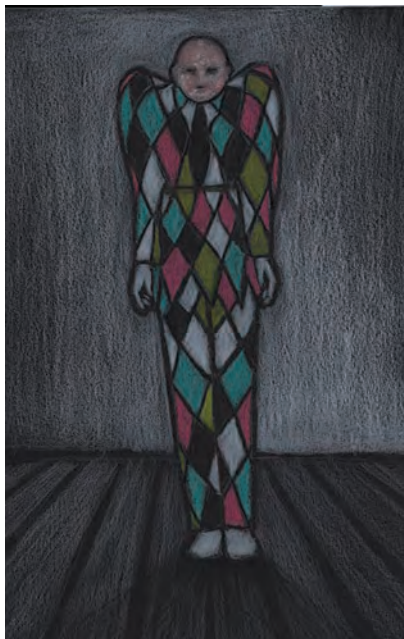
ILL. 92. An example of a Viktor & Rolf 1998 Harlequin inspired design using the raised shoulder look. The real jacket and pants are made in cotton and silk and are in the Groninger Museum collection.

The art of being Harlequin: Harlequin ART

Images of *commedia dell'arte* "had a profound effect on art and literature in the years between 1890 and 1930, influencing a staggering array of artists, writers and musicians. (Fisher, 1989, p.30)

Twentieth century paintings of Harlequin began to appear as artists found themselves allured by the performance phenomenon. Some artists/designers/craftsmen were attracted by pattern and shape, some by the mystique of circus or theatrical existence, while others found and added a deeply symbolic meaning to all that is harlequinesque. Harlequin appears to be an important visual subject and tool as artists embraced modern art in the twentieth century.

Above all else it is Harlequin's geometrically designed costume, which defines him in art.

Picasso began painting genre paintings of Harlequin and his circus family at the turn of the 20th century and continued to do so all his life. He carried this fascination with the performer through to the birth of cubism, when he discovered and painted under the influence of African masks being bought to Paris.

Picasso appears to show a preoccupation with performance, which may have been expressed as a desire to see the movement of many parts of the subject as can be portrayed on the two-dimensional surface of his canvas. Perhaps he could correlate physical acrobatics with the geometric shapes of Harlequin and the African masks, within a single visual image conveying movement towards human animation.

Exploring Picasso's apparent preoccupation with the expressiveness of the triangles/ diamonds/colours that are encapsulated in the original Commedia Harlequin costume could reveal what it is which attracts us to the iconic pattern. To start with the powerful dynamic interplay of criss-crossing diagonals juxtaposed across a human organic form is at best impressive. A diagonal line immediately implies dynamic movement which radiates beyond boundaries. This knowledge is an artist's /designer's tool.

Colour too plays a role. Picasso manipulates the colour used to either settle the dynamic diagonals or further amplify the optical illusion of colour receding or advancing. Red reaches the retina before any other colour, while yellow recedes into atmospheric space unless outlined where upon it glows.

Picasso's discovery of the African mask and his inclusion, through visual links, of mask-derived concepts with images of Harlequin bring us back full circle to the inception of the costume along with its black Negroid mask (long since replaced with the simple cat eye mask).

Picasso's cubist paintings from 1907 onwards, include the now abstracted Harlequin, and lead the way into the world of modern art. Harlequin is often described as Picasso's

alter ego, coined after he designed the ballet "Parade". Picasso paints the Harlequin all his life. In doing so he immortalises the Harlequin costume. But he is not alone. Harlequin has been an astoundingly popular symbolic image for many contemporary artists.

ILL. 93. *The designer's copy in gouache of Picasso's abstracted 1915 painting titled Harlequin. This style of painting, which utilized overlapping flat planes appeared to have inspired Picasso's costume and mask designs for the 1917 Parade. Parade is a colourful production in which Harlequin appears. Observe the comical mask on Harlequin and the realistic but blank profile on the final flat plane.*

Always a Comic: The masked woman in an ANIMATED world.

Harlequin's two-dimensional life is not confined to the world of visual artists. Cartoonists and animators also enjoy an encounter with the malleable character. These artists tend to link and unite the figure to a type of mythical environment which overlays the rational parameters of the contemporary world.

As changes in society took place after two world wars, women repositioned themselves within the political fabric and, especially for the purposes of this costume trajectory, in imaginative terms. The western world reflected such changes in many ways, however in the United States, still a relatively new society in this period, new mythological forms and iconic figures derivative of the Harlequin character began to appear through the interplay of imagery portrayed in comic strips.

Amongst the first female super heroines to be established in the popular visual medium

was Molly Mayne, a mousy secretary to the justice fighter, *The Green Lantern*. The Mayne character emerged in 1950's America. Molly Mayne's mask consisted of a pair of Harlequin-mask-like glasses, which she wore when she was transformed into the powerful 'Harlequin'. Molly's glasses had special powers, which enabled her to hypnotize people and project visuals onto a television screen. Why such an imaginative leap from circus, pantomime and carnival to the comic book was accomplished is beyond the parameters of this study and arguably more complex than the switch of gender involved. These comic book transformations are noted here to demonstrate Harlequin's pervasive presence and transformative agility as firmly stitched into the immediately recognisable harlequinesque costume codes.

ILL. 94. *Designer's impression of Molly Mayne, note the Harlequin glasses, soon to arrive as a fashion statement and the conical hat now associated with both clowning and parties.*

Following the emergence of this first female Harlequin in the 'new world', a long line of Harlequina-type characters each with a persona relevant to women of that time emerge. These comic strip Harlequinas were equipped with the customary cat-eye mask of their distant progenitor. There was even an attempt to create the first 'gay' comic strip with Harlequin as its main character. This Harlequin wears a mask of red triangles

ILL. 95. *Designer's impression of androgynous Harlequin as seen in Superman comics. Note the mask, which is now coloured make-up, and the use of the Finovlo or jester's bauble.*

In the US, Harlequin is a shape-shifter in the comic world, seemingly landing in the body of whoever represents the weak at a particular moment in time. Through the use of secret powers s/he, once the servant commentator, again becomes the champion of the weak. Although Harlequin stands for the underdog in society, s/he does not always stand for good. A possible back-flip to the devilish side her nature is ever present and indeed is well explored as a tension of polarities between male/female, angelic/demonic, beautiful/ugly and so forth.

Postcard from the edge: All the WORLD is a stage

Ah but what of the life in the former British Empire colony of remote Australia? Without all the traditions of Europe how would Harlequin and indeed his costume manifest in distant Australia?

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Chapter One

LOOK OUT HE'S BEHIND YOU:

THE AUSTRALIAN HARLEQUINADE AND EDNA EVERAGE
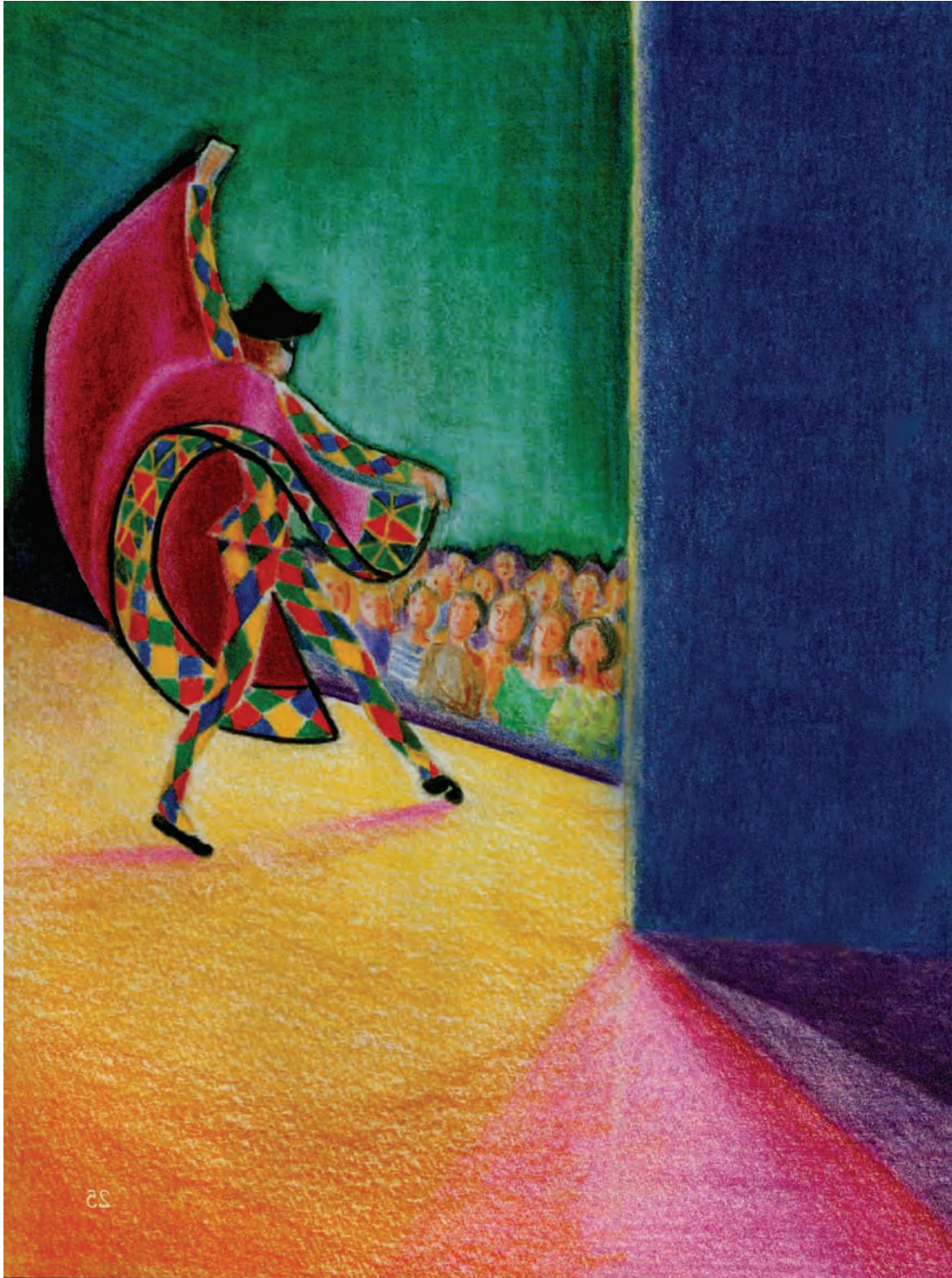
ILL 96.a. Drawing of a performing Harlequin for a children's book titled, Nina Rose and her dancing prince, written by Sandra Wise. This contemporary illustration indicates the popular understanding of Harlequin as both a theatrical and mythical being, whose presence lives on through imagery, movement and costume.   Illustrator: Julie Parsons 2009.

New scenery machinery: From Pantomime to HARLEQUINADE

A *harlequinade* is essentially a comedy or pantomime, which features Harlequin and became a genre unique to the British Empire, customarily also practised in its colonies, specifically Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Harlequinades were initially performed around the Christmas and New Year holiday season and some times over Easter.

Before the harlequinade reached Australia, its evolution as a pantomime form had been established, drawing on the merging of popular theatre with the French mime/ dumb shows. Although often considered a new form of entertainment, fusing mime with other forms of theatrical practice, pantomime is an ancient art form. Its English evolution arose from the harlequinade's first appearance as an afterpiece and continued until the time when the genre itself became the main attraction.

The pantomime usually focused on a myth, which, according to Speaight, was translated into "song, recitative and dance with very little dialogue. And the whole thing often carried a parody of contemporary entertainment, in which the new craze for Italian opera provided an easy butt ." (Speaight, 1980, p.24)

Harlequinades dated back to the late eighteenth century England when John Rich, an excellent mime artist, played the Harlequin as a mute. Rich created a combination of *commedia dell'arte* stock characters and techniques with the popular dance pantomime. However despite the quality of mime, the harlequinades were not always played mute. Joey Grimaldi joined the English harlequinade in the early 1800s to play Clown and added something to the developing nature of the harlequinade. As a traditional *commedia dell arte* stock character, Clown was never a particular favourite with the audience. However, Grimaldi was very vocal and developed a technique of encouraging the audience to participate in comic songs and little catch phrases that became a trademark of the harlequinade.

The first part of the performance characteristically presented a classical myth, a folk story or legend, a nursery rhyme or a popular children's fairy tale. Harlequinades were famous for the transformation scenes, which followed the introductory narratives, usually but not always as an entrance into the second half, which characteristically morphed into *commedia dell'arte***.** The transformation scenes were impressive examples of the developing theatre mechanics of the day.

However, as is the changing nature of pantomime, people eventually grew tired of the tinsel and spangle transformation scenes of anything up to 35 scenery changes until the final scene, where a splendid vision, accompanied by a great fanfare, heralded the appearance of Harlequin with Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon.

Enter Harlequin: Harlequin in Colonial AUSTRALIA

Harlequin and Harlequina arrived in style in Melbourne on the 13th of May 1850. This very precise date was the opening night of Melbourne's first pantomime, *The Goblin of the Gold Coast* or *Harlequina and the Melbournites in California*. "Hurray! Hurray! For the Gold!" was the curious prophetic catch cry of the show. "The curious omen was in fact two-fold", writes Margaret Williams, who explains that not only was gold fever in the air, but it was on the Melbourne stage, with its new affluence and respectability. (Williams, 1983, p.56)

Harlequin had however already been busy experimenting with audiences in Sydney and Geelong, some years prior to the Melbourne debut. "Sydneysiders and Geelongites were early accustomed to see Harlequin and Columbine dancing through their own streets as part of the fantasy of world of pantomime." (Williams, 1983, p.60) This 'feat' was achieved because the scenery for the harlequinades was often painted onto a diorama and frequently featured well known scenes within the local community. The transparency of the diorama meant that lights could be used to reveal or to make the scene vanish. Generally the harlequinade scenery was lavish and painted generously onto the canvas.

Transformation scenes are a phenomenon of the harlequinade and very much part of the experience. The scene might be set with the fairy tale couple on a revolve in the centre of the stage, surrounded by other performers on multiple platforms which are suspended by ropes and counter poises. Some performers might be gliding up and down with the aid of some ingenious French machinery called a *parallele,* while others may be lying on the edge of clouds and floating along above the scene "by means of wires in rows along the wings. A blaze of red and blue fire, almost shuts the scene off from view as Clown, Pantaloon, Harlequin and Columbine dash down the stage and begin their antics." (Irvin, 1985, p.305)

The harlequinade was now in a new environment where it was forced to take on something of the nature of the colony if it were to survive. What happened next perhaps provides a clue about Australia's distinctive style of absurdist humour, complete with political overtones. However, with this suggestion acknowledgment must also be given to the attributes of "Clowns [who] maintain their distinctive characteristics despite, not because of tradition … and at each metamorphosis the world has to hatch another (clown) from the clod". (Willeford, 1969, p.13)

What did happen was the development of an Australian brand of brash humour targeting local circumstances. The home-grown Aussie harlequinade practised "open lampooning of public life and figures, especially politicians". (Williams, 1983, p.58) Williams' glossary of unbelievable titles given to the Christmas harlequinades of the mid 1800s reflects this developing characteristic.

A curiosity is the traditional reference to Harlequin in many of the titles. Some of these titles include:

1845 Geelong:	*Harlequin in Australian Felix; or Geelong in an Uproar.*
1850 Geelong:	*Harlequin Separation, or the Demon of Sydney and the Fairy of Victoria.*
1852 Geelong:	*The Gigantic Nugget, or Harlequin and the Monster Gold Gnome.*
1855 Melbourne:	*The Magicians Daughter, or Harlequin King of the Golden Island and Fairy Rifle Corps.*
1868 Melbourne:	*Harlequin Robinson Crusoe, and the Nimble Niad, the Lonely Squatter, and the Lively Aboriginal.*
1871 Sydney:	*Trookulentos, the Tempter, or Harlequin Cockatoo!! The Demon of Discontent; the Good Fairy of Contentment; and the Four-leaved Shamrock of Australia.* (Williams, 1983, p.56-73)

It would seem that the Australian larrikin had emerged against a backdrop of the traditional pantomime of old England. Traditional English pantomime was prone to deliver moralistic and educational material, while the developing Australian larrikin version was quick to characterise, with tongue in cheek humour, the nation's new settlers, native plants and animals, and bushrangers, integrating them with English themes and the characteristics of *commedia dell'arte*.

"The most absurd and the most Australian of pantomimes is Garnet Walch's *Australia Felix, or Harlequin Laughing Jackass and the Magic Bat,* staged at the Opera House, Melbourne, on Boxing Night 1873." (Williams, 1983, p.69) *Australia Felix* is a character who begins to make many appearances in pantomime as a young lad, son of Old Australia and the Missus. (*Australia Felix* was a term coined by Thomas Mitchell, when he discovered the rich pasturelands of western Victoria in 1837. It translates into the more commonly used term of the twentieth century, *the lucky country.)*

ILL. 96. Harlequin announcing a transformation scene in the Melbourne Royal Theatre 1858. Inspired by an image in the Dictionary of Australian Theatre p. 220. Notice the classic lunge pose indicating pantomime magic is about to occur.

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In the productions from the 1870s onwards, a renewal of mechanical effects, panoramic scenic art, costume and masks, gas and coloured fires, tricks, dances and theatrical trips and stumbles occurred, all orchestrated to especially composed music. Harlequin's magic bat eventually became a cricket bat used to win the day against the All-England test team, which happened, of course, to be visiting Australia at the time.

Although only a handful of pantomimes were written around the 1870s, these productions appear to demonstrate a release from mother England's apron strings. Urban pride seemed to be developing as Australia reflected upon itself during Christmas pantomime seasons. A nation born and now solid in its formation can afford "the civilized luxury of taking the rise out of them[selves]". (Williams, 1983, p.73)

Veronica Kelly also approaches the phenomenon of Harlequin in the colonies through Garnet Walch's *Australia Felix, or Harlequin Laughing Jackass and the Magic Bat.* Kelly examines this curiosity in the analogy of the "Young Australian", with the emerging nation state. (Kelly, 1993, p.53) She states that Australia was made up of a complex "political grid" comprised of tensions between many factions in the "settler invader community". (Kelly, 1993, p.53) Such tensions were complicated by England maintaining her position of authority. Kelly considers that colonial Australian pantomime and melodrama establishes "motifs of anarchy, criminality and more or less subversive anti authoritarian comedy". (Kelly, 1993, p.52)

For Kelly, Australian pantomime became something of an oracle through which *Australia Felix* acted as a precursor to events, which followed. She uses the *Australian Felix* to illustrate the incipient nation's need for a kind of home-grown outlaw figure wherein the pantomime predicts the then unheard of national folk hero Ned Kelly who, some years later, was martyred under a British system, no longer completely cherished by colonial Australia. Ned Kelly swiftly rose to the status of a national icon as his story "speedily passed into Australian folksong, vernacular, art, theatre, film and literature". (Kelly, 1993, p.56)

Kelly points out that "country" Australia was tagged with a "country naivety encountering urban craftiness". This pattern has served comics well in embellishing the "New Chum misfortunes and native knowingness". (Kelly, 1993, p.58) Nevertheless our boy from "the land" (Harlequin?) navigated his way through "the carnival of crooks and predators so comically dramatised in the cricket scene." (Kelly, 1993, p.60)

The harlequinade mirrored the political tensions and mistrust of the day. "The colonial stage was a primary site of such discursive contests, and what better locus for their display than pantomime, colonial theatre's most deliberately consensual spectacle." (Kelly, 1993, p.61) Perhaps, the playground antics of pantomime helped the nation to see itself more clearly and, as suggested earlier, the uncanny nature of its predictive text helped ease Australians into a future that was their own, not Britain's.

Kelly suggests that Australia's experience into nationhood has been recorded through colonial melodramas. This, according to Kelly, may in part be due to the use of

journalists, not poets, to write the very topical commentaries in the harlequinades. However, although the colonial battles with British authority subsided, Australia's battle with authority is still unresolved as it faces an "age of transnational capital and corporate raiders". Kelly implies we remain caught in a juxtaposition where the system is both "the very best and the very worst ever evolved" enticing us as a nation of larrikins to further play it out. (Kelly, 1993, p.54) In an attempt to define comedy, Enid Wesford says it is the "expression of the censor". (Welsford, 1935, p.321) This may well be the underlying fabric of the Australian harlequinade.

In Helen Gilbert's essay "Dressed to kill: a post-colonial reading of costume and the body in contemporary Australian theatre", she discusses the very serious nature of costume as signifier of imperial authority. In a colony of settlers, convicts and Aboriginals, it would seem that the costume as signifier was played out by the town dwellers as they experienced and developed a different form of survival to those of the landholders and land dwellers. Indeed many sub groups formed under the prestigious Imperial costume banner of authority. Gilbert notes that "settlers", often through dress, attempted to maintain English standards and custom. This action immediately defined "the others". Add to this the use of smart military and police uniforms and you have potent colour contrasts to the natural environment as a visual reinforcement of rank and position within the colonial society. Gilbert says, "the conative aspects of clothing – that it encourages people to act in prescribed ways is at work here." (Gilbert, 1995, p. 105) Thus costume acts as a signifier of the hierarchies of power in the colonial environment. It delineated "civilized from savage, self from other, and Christian from heathen." (Gilbert, 1995, p.104)

It is against this imperialistic use of costume that we strive to understand the symbolic play of ideas within Australian pantomime. An interesting feature evidenced within costumes is the use of Australian flora and fauna as characters, which on stage, are designed to both compete with and confuse the use of powerful imperial dress. It appears to be a kind of staged uprising indicating the subtle ways in which the flamboyantly dressed natural inhabitants of the Australian continent overwhelm the "invader settlers". In *Australian Felix – or, Harlequin Laughing Jackass and the Magic Bat*, a tradition of helpful Australian flora and fauna personalities emerge which "culminates in a Kookaburra character that [-] along with Mirth, is instrumental in ridding Victoria of English gloom". (Parsons, 1995, p.425)

In amongst all these negotiations is the Harlequin figure. And the question is why? What does the Harlequin represent in a young Australia? Perhaps he brought the magic needed to see all is not as it seems? Perhaps his magic shows us that Australia is in fact a "Lucky Country"? Was the physical stage presence of Harlequin actually delivering some kind of angelic force, a kind of romantic notion, which paved the way for a young nation to attain its identity?

At the time Harlequin took up residence in Victoria, the gold rush was taking place simultaneously in Ballarat. Harlequin enjoyed a flourishing entertainment period. Melbourne was governed by Sydney until 1851 and as more and more people of different nationalities flocked to the gold fields in their quest for gold the population

exploded. Colonial bureaucracy ruled with outdated restrictions. Never before had gold fever been experienced in this way, there was no role model from which to maintain order. In just three years the population went from 80,000 to 300,000. The resulting tension and unrest amongst the diggers eventually erupted into the 1954 Eureka Stockade. The rebel leaders were of different nationalities as were the multitudes of workers and followers, but all were united against the unjust treatment they were receiving by the outdated aristocratic rule. (Gilbert, 1995)

About face: From harlequinade to pantomime in MODERN Australia

In 2006, Alison Croggon, a Melbourne theatre critic, describes the characteristics of the pantomime in her review for *Babes in the Woods*, directed by Michael Kantor and starring comedian, Max Gillies. It is interesting to note that Croggon admits the necessity of explaining the history of pantomime in her review which suggests that present day audiences have long since lost significant knowledge of pantomime. Her lengthy description observes that a pantomime is made up of a number of elements some with "histories stretching back to Roman traditions of masked clowning performed by a dancer called *Pantomimus….*These traditions later collided with variety, introducing song and dance routines and vulgar jokes to amuse the adults who are accompanying their young charges." (Croggon, 2006, p.1)

The suggestion that vulgar jokes were put in to amuse the adults sitting amongst the children may well have misled her readers, as pantomimes were not always played to a young audience. She clarifies her view by focusing on recent themes. "It is always based, sometimes very loosely, on a fairy tale - Cinderella, Dick Whittington and Babes in the Wood are all favourite themes." (Croggon, 2006, p.1) In this context, it is interesting to note the *Malthouse* press release describes the event as an "adult's only" affair. (www.malthousetheatre.com.au)

In true Australian tradition, the work, *Babes in the Wood,* is an adaptation by Australian playwright, Tom Wright, who according to a press release used "lots of irreverent political commentary" tied "together with a laconic satirical viewpoint that in, itself defines a national character." (www.malthousetheatre.com.au)

It is also interesting to note that Wright, in his research on Australian pantomime, "finally found some nineteenth century pantomime scripts amongst the rare books in the State library." (www.malthousetheatre.com.au, 2008). This information along with my own difficulty in locating academic writing regarding the Australian harlequinade appears to indicate that we have only just begun to locate and air the old and dusty costumes for the secrets they can tell.

"Essential characters include the Dame (who is always a cross-dressing man), the Principal Boy (always a pretty girl in tights), and actors in unconvincing animal costumes. The plot always features a villain and a misused innocent, and a romance

involving the Principal Girl (who is actually a girl) and the Principal Boy". (Croggon, 2006, p.1)

With the strong English tradition of pantomime dames, who were usually middle-aged men and principal boys, who were usually attractive young women, comes Australia's own Dame Edna Everage accompanied a short time there after by the cult character and television series titled *Aunty Jack*. Aunty Jack, a boisterous male in a wide frock and sweet hairdo befitting a ballerina, complete with whiskers and boxing gloves, footy socks and boots was a challenging cross dresser.

Why, in the twenty first century, do Australians still consider themselves a nation of larrikins? Perhaps Harlequin's identity, which seemed to reinvent itself in the larrikin *Australia Felix*, now resides deep within the very core of national identity. The lithesome Harlequin has gone but is he now transformed into 'maiden aunts' like Aunty Jack and Dame Edna Everage who appear to bounce larger than life as the keepers of the harlequinesque grail?

ILL. 97. *Impression of Aunty Jack in costume concepts borrowed from the pantomime Dame. Coloured pencil and gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2009.*

Although the Harlequin costume is now packed away, the spirit of Harlequin still lurks not only in pantomime dames but also in the 'larrikin' clowns of Circus OZ.

"She's a man!": Dame Edna EVERAGE

Could it be possible that Dame Edna Everage carries the spirit of Harlequin in her handbag as s/he dresses up to dress down the audience?

To answer this question, a description of Harlequin provides a point of departure. "From antiquity to the present, Harlequin has been a product solely of popular entertainment and is always of low status. He is dedicated to flouting authority, shaking up the *status quo* and undermining entrenched beliefs." (Menaker Rothschild, 1991, p.177) The actuality of Harlequin's "low status" is not, however, strictly adhered to. He appears to stand for the oppressed, and this does not always mean people of low status.

In eighteenth century French theatre, the Harlequin character rose to the status of Marquis. This knowledge sheds light on the possibility that Harlequin adapts very well to the social environment of the day. In this regard, there is every reason to consider a reinvention of the harlequinesque in the landscape of a country in the Anglo-European sense relatively unburdened by the traditions of past civilizations and all their trappings.

Circus and the harlequinade, popular forms of entertainment in Europe, arrived simultaneously on Australia's shores. The harlequinade eventually gave way to the pantomime, but not first without affecting an 'Australian style' to be reckoned with. Circus also took its own course and eventually returned itself to the rest of the world as *new circus*, influencing the development of world circus into the twenty first century.

It took less than one hundred years before Australian pantomime began to wither. However the larger-than-life pantomime 'Dame' was not to be forgotten. In the traditions of the British harlequinade, the Dame is the character Pantaloon, derived from Pantalone, an original character from *commedia dell'arte*. His nature is essentially that of an old miserly man whose whole persona is played in the physical position of protecting his money pouch and projecting his male pride. Once the blend of pantomimes with harlequinades began to evolve the approach was simular to the customs of the pre Christian carnival … to turn the world upside down. The hero was played by a woman (Harlequin) and the old woman was played by a man (Pantaloon).

ILL. 98. *Impression of Pantalone as might be seen in the harlequinades.*

ILL. 99. *Impression of the old woman or panto Dame as might be played by the same character who played Pantalone. Artist: Julie Parsons*

After a period of rest and reinvention, a new form appeared to emerge in Australia. Just as Harlequin and Pierrot seemed to merge in the twentieth century through public confusion, so I believe Harlequin and Pantaloon merged in Australia's own popular Edna Everage, a character dreamed up by Barry Humphries in the 1950s.

Goody two shoes: The harlequinesque costume CUES

Mrs Edna Everage is said to have hailed from Moonee Ponds, a lowly suburb in Melbourne. Mrs Everage emerged from the service status of housewife to entertainer during the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956. Her heritage is suggestively revealed in a costume clue. Edna/Barry had selected one of her/his mother's millinery delights, a felt cone shaped harlequinesque circus hat like that worn by the arrogant Harlequin clown.
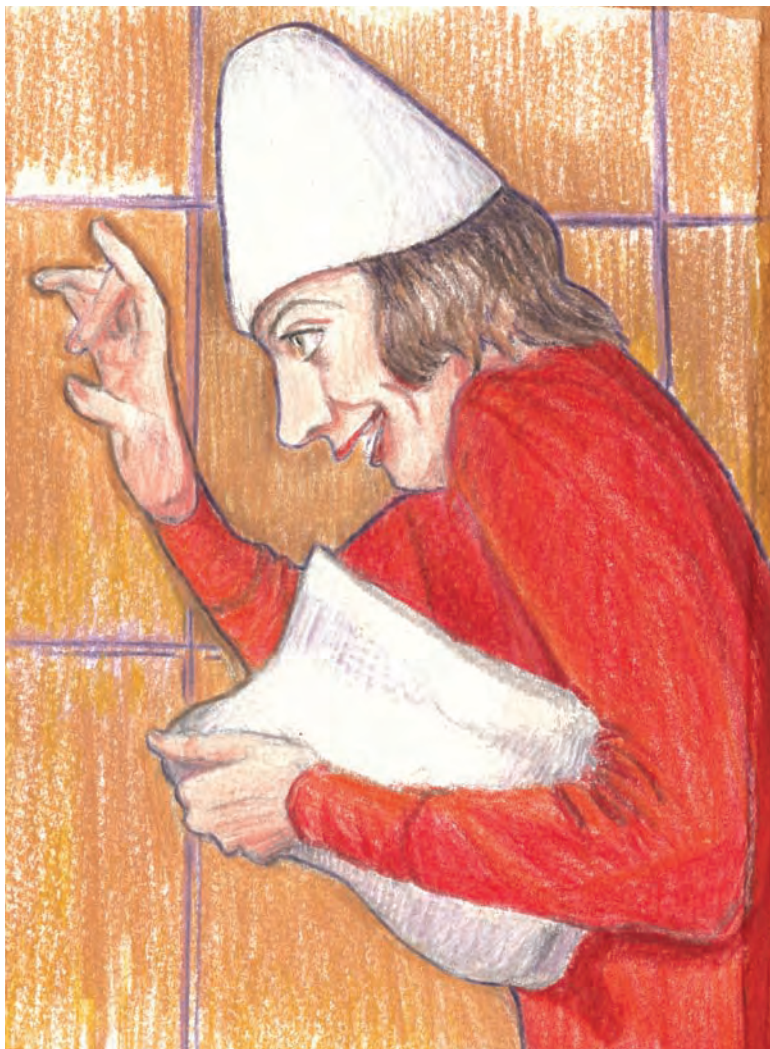
ILL. 100. *Edna/Barry in her/his mother's hat in 1956. This image is derived from a photograph reproduced in Humphries' autobiography. The hat bares an uncanny resemblance to a circus Harlequin hat. (Humphries, 2002, p.85)*

At this time, women's liberation was emergent so the housewife was still very much undervalued when Humphries, in true harlequinesque form, elected to perform dressed as such a persona. While women were struggling to be accepted as equals, Humphries appears as a smart-talking cross-dressing Australian male actor. His chances of being accepted in this guise appeared slim, but the character Edna Everage has not only demanded acceptance from her fellow country people but also from the world in general. Ian Britain says Mrs Everage "has evolved into a diabolonian woman-of-the-world."(Britain, 1997, p.22) (There are echoes here of a classic description of the carnivalesque Harlequin as the 'diabolical king' of dead souls, but perhaps Britain is referring to a colonial woman-of-the-world?)

Further costume clues that may link Mrs Everage with Harlequin, immediately arise with the cat-eye glasses or is that a cat-eye mask? Harlequin's evolution in pantomime and the circus saw the development of a new costume all of a glitter with sequins and rhinestones, aligned to his elevation in social status from servant to marquis. Could it be that the glittering jump-suit has been exchanged for a glittering frock? But what about Harlequin's famous slapstick, which was also used as a wand in later years, could it be that Edna's famous gladioli is that very thing? Ian Britain thinks so, "The same flower serves as a 'wand' which uncannily leads her to her victims on *Neighbourhood Watch*."(Britain, 1997, p.23)

ILL. 101. *Impression of Edna as the essential eighties woman, in her glitter gladdie frock as seen on p173 in Barry Humphries flashbacks.*

The Performing Arts Museum at the Victoria Arts Centre in Melbourne has been privy to exhibitions of Dame Edna's costumes. The titles of the three exhibitions reveal a suburban intent but the costumes themselves are not what you would find in the average suburban woman's wardrobe.

The Fashion Diary of a Victorian Housewife (1986)
A Peep in Dame Edna's Closet (1986)
Dame Edna's Frock-a-thon (1999). (St. Pierre, 2004, p.30).

Many of the early costumes were designed by Bill Goodwin to reflect all things Australian, including the Australian flag, the Sydney Opera-house, and Australia's flora and fauna. This is also a tradition begun in the Australian harlequinades and continued in Australian pantomime.

ILL. 102. *An example of a bush blossom, flora design taken from a 1910 Atlilo Comelli costume design for Mother Goose. Although Comelli was the house designer at the Royal Opera House in London from the 1880s to the 1920s he was contracted by J.C. Williamson to design the costumes for the annual Christmas pantomimes performed at Her Majesty's Theatre Melbourne from 1910. These sorts of designs were often reused over decades. Notice the simular feel to some of Dame Edna's Australiana themes.*

The costume journey runs from the simple house frock of the 1950s, to the "upscaled makeup and costuming" of a perceived Dame of the twenty-first century (St. Pierre, 2004, p.30). Ian Britain says, "During the 1950's and 1960's, Barry Humphries as Edna Everage, did a good imitation of a pantomime dame in search of a pantomime". (St. Pierre, 2004, p.30) Failing that, it would seem Humphries has invented his own form of pantomime.

Humphries tells us in his autobiography, *More please,* that he, as Edna, playing in an early revue in Sydney, "was encouraged to do what she had never done before; chat intimately to the audience. There in her twin set and pearls, frumpy blue floral skirt, hairy legs and flat shoes and with a rudimentary maquillage beneath her yellow felt hat, she expatiated on her favourite obsessions: her family, royalty, culinary matters and interior decoration." (Humphries, 1992, p.177) The pantomime/harlequinade characteristic of audience participation came naturally to Humphries. However much more was happening than was apparent. The trickster came out to play.

In an attempt to throw light on Harlequin as the trickster, Menaker Rothchild quotes Robert Leach: "The trickster's singular potential is to underline the absurdity of social structures in such a way as to open up a more expansive, creative reality, marked by delight in the uniqueness of self." (Robert Leach in Menaker Rothschild, 1991, p.229) This reads well as a description of Dame Edna.

This trickster's relationship with the character of Dame Edna Everage is immediately understood when one examines the core of the material with which Humphries works. Edna's ruthless descriptions of the interiors of Australian Homes serve to undermine the 'status seeking seriousness' attached to the business of homemaking. The home and its interior is indeed an unusual topic for comedy. It took Australians by surprise, but soon had the nation laughing at itself. "They'd never heard their own houses described in the theatre" says Humphries. "In a nation of avid homebuilders," he adds, "no one had served them up suburban Melbourne before." (Britain, 1997, p.41)

Ian Britain includes a quotation from one of Humphries' sternest critics, the Sydney journalist Craig McGregor describing Humphries as "an extraordinary artist to have sprung unheralded and fully armed from the subsoil of Australian culture." Britain further comments that "in Barry Humphries we are dealing with one of the most erudite comic performers of our century." (Britain, 1997, p.33)

Although Edna Everage is a character invented and played by comedian Barry Humphries, she is not the only one. Barry Humphries is an entire theatre company in a single performer. He is a "player of men and women not only on stage but also in the audience. Given his versatility as a stage performer, and his elusive personality as a biographical subject … one might posit various persons named Barry Humphries, a whole company of Barry Humphries." (St. Pierre, 2004, p.4) For the purposes of understanding the possible manifestation of the harlequinesque, however, the focus will be on his world famous character Dame Edna Everage.

St. Pierre says "Humphries is a pantomime Aristotelian", (St. Pierre, 2004, p.5) and observes that "John Lahr has stated that Humphries 'is almost single handedly bringing the vaudeville tradition into the twenty first century.'" (St. Pierre, 2004, p.5) Also Gilbert Adair has noted, "though it is firmly anchored in a music hall tradition, there is a terrorist dimension to the act which relates it to what used to be called the Theatre of Cruelty: Dame Edna is the sole offspring of Artaud and Max Miller." (St. Pierre, 2004, p.10) Humphries himself acknowledges the link to the music hall in many of his interviews and biographical notes. St. Pierre cites Max Bell's observation

that Humphries is "a comic actor who survived the death knell of music hall", forging "a series of characters perfectly suited to a post music hall TV generation" (St. Pierre, 2004, p.10)

Humphries claims that an inability to learn lines (or perhaps it is his reluctance to sacrifice an opportunity of 'an in the moment performance response'), led him from the Melbourne Theatre Company, where he held a tenure, to the music hall.

Perhaps Humphries' childhood love of what he calls the "old fashioned jester", was what he really needed to express. Humphries recalls that "[t]here were humorous interludes on the radio: mostly pre war British vaudeville comics……I would lie there in the darkened room through measles, mumps, whooping cough and scarlet fever with my calamine lotion and Vicks Vaporub, laughing at those wonderful old fashioned jesters." (St. Pierre, 2004, p.16)

Either which way, the title *pantomime Aristotelian* seems to have its roots in the Edwardian seaside pantomimes of old England. Although the term *rattle the Aristotle* was coined when money was collected from the audience in a bottle, Humphries appears to rattle more than than the *Aristotle* in his audiences.

In his subsequent career, Humphries, rather than positioning himself behind a stand-up mike, has concealed Dame Edna's microphone in her wig. Given that microphones are associated with the death of music hall, he effectively utilized a modern tool of the trade for his enduring creation.

St Pierre describes something of the dual nature of the harlequinesque in Humphries' Edna. "Edna Everage has distinguished herself as the headliner of Barry Humphries' bill of characters. She is his most serviceable, charismatic, memorable, and celebrated role; but she is also his most chilling creation, a creature whose life and whose fame sometimes seem to have taken over his own." (St. Pierre, 2004, p.25)

Working within the traditions of the pantomime dame and of cross-dressing, Humphries engages Dame Edna Everage "in a saturnalia of performance, gendericity, and merriment; a carnivalesque of classlessness, clothing and comestibles … turning the 'establishment' upside down." (St. Pierre, 2004, p.31)

Humphries' genius for defining suburban Australiana and thereby defining a nation of urban dwellers, seems to give Australia a national identity that is both delightful and distressing but, above all else, Australia is moved to laugh at itself often out of relief and reprieve from the serious business of home-decorating. The response of laughter in a Humphries' show is never canned or forced. It is absolutely real.

> In inducing a theatrical state of Bakhtinian carnivalesque, evident especially in his gender and class-cross costuming and his anti authoritarian revelry and fantasy, Humphries makes people laugh, and even politicizes them; but the laughter that bursts out in his shows is an independent force. (St. Pierre, 2004, p.133)

Humphries has always been a Dadaist, and has considered many of his creative outpourings to be acts of Dadaism. Humphries describes this quality from the onset of Edna's performing career. "Able to talk fluently on any subject what so ever without drawing breath, Edna became a living, glittering incarnation of Tristan Tzara's famous Dadaist dictum, 'Thought is born in the mouth.' " (Humphries, 1992, p.177)

Ian Britain presents us with the possibility that the set design for Dame Edna Everage's T.V. show *Dame Edna's Neighbourhood Watch,* is in fact a play on Marcel Duchamp's nude descending a staircase. However, the use of stage machinery to affect absurd spectacle is very much a harlequinesque affectation from the English harlequinades. Edna also uses an 'as if by magic' device on her television shows where a guest may suddenly disappear through a trap door.

Dadaism, among other things, is a movement that "went to extremes in the use of buffoonery and provocative behaviour in order to shock and disrupt the complacency of the public which lived by traditional values." (Osbourne, 1975, p.296) Veronica Kelly alerts us to a simular use of irony, cynicism, and anarchy as she describes the "anarchy and surreal metamorphoses in the harlequinades" (Kelly, 1993, p. 53) when discussing their influence on Australian pantomime. Humphries' set design, which is provocative of a Dadaist image, is very much in keeping with the absurdism of the harlequinades. The absurdist's constancy in reinvention in this case presents a curious interlude where theatre and visual art theory arrive at the same destination from completely different routes and happily co exist in and around the personage of Everage.

Make do and mend: Has anyone seen Harlequin's COSTUME lately?

As a designer, I am driven by visual clues. It is a designer's job to collect visual data and to create and continue the lineage of visual codes into the future. In order to create and yet connect new and wonderful imagery all designers draw upon past lineages, making connections between the new and the old. They have a duty to excite and inspire with new aspects of design but also to make sense of things by connecting the new designs to visual codes from that which has gone before them.

If the harlequinesque is present in Edna Everage how can the trait be determined without its usual costume as a visual cue? The symbolic lozenge design as a significant icon associated with the harlequinesque is not a constant presence in the Dame Edna's wardrobe, but other codes lie in waiting. Significant amongst them is the Harlequin mask/glasses.

The Harlequin and his costume, has certainly responded to the energy of each generation and has successfully survived for five centuries in as many and more different countries. Perhaps there is an energetic component of character and costume that moves and transforms with each generation? The interesting thing is that when

Harlequin arrived into the twentieth century, he became a sought-after subject for visual artists. The Harlequin came to represent the symbolic motives of the artists who painted him. The burning question is why has the costume been discarded by Harlequin's theatrical family, and taken up by his artistic cousins?

The more the Harlequin entered the canvasses, sculptures and fashion plates of the modern artists and designers of the twentieth century, the less he appeared in his theatrical form. Perhaps as the imprint of his identity was hung on the walls of society, so he hung up his costume?

Harlequin's early costumed life in Australia is linked with pantomime and circus and pantomime is, of course, linked to fairy tales. Pantomime in Australia evolved to become the vehicle for the often, repressed expressions for a wide range of political concerns. The harlequinade seemed to be a safe haven/arena in which to air the concerns of minority groups of the growing nation against the backdrop of imperialism.

In another twist of the story, the harlequinade's traditional association with the world of fairy tales finds resonances in the comic book of the twentieth century. Psychiatrists Lauretta Bender and Reginald Lourie describe "comic books as modern folklore, noting that the omnipotent superheroes had their parallels in fairy tales; replacing magic with science." (Fingeroth, 2004, p.23)

Does this mean comic books too have taken on the role of the harlequinades in airing the concerns of the populations for which they were written? With comic book scripts fulfilling the role of the harlequinade script and reaching out to an international audience, what has happened to performance?

It would seem somewhere amongst each nation's expression of itself is the possibility of the manifestation of age-old energetic patterns. Each nation appears to choose a mascot for a period of time, a visible personality to play out that country's perceived role in the world, much like the gods of Olympus?

Ah but the gods of Olympus have appeared in comic strip form long before comic books were conceived. The pages are the vases of Phlyakes 400 BC. On them appear comic strip images of stock characters believed to be fundamental to *commedia dell'arte*. These stock characters play out roles including those of the gods and goddesses in hilarious tragedies. There is evidence the actors both worship and play Dionysus, however many depictions on the comic strip vases revolve around the activities of Hercules (upon whom the 20th century *Superman* comic strip hero was modelled). Farcical situations, concerning the gods were popular and so was the playing out of daily scenarios, which released the stresses of daily life through comedy. The early stock actors also appeared to be airing the concerns of the population.

The story content on the vases may be read through the pictures and perhaps enjoyed in laughter or engaged at a tongue in cheek moralistic or political level. Although the masks make the actors into comical caricatures, they are clearly in the business of hilarious story telling. The result is akin to the comic books of today.

Bieber tells us the Phlyakes influenced Oscan Farce, which in turn influenced Roman Farce, which some believed to have finally informed the Italian renaissance's *commedia dell'arte.*

In amongst the stock characters we find a grotesque black bearded slave behaving in a harlequinesque manner, possibly he is Harlequin's forbearer? Another stock character is a grotesque woman who also plays the parts of goddesses, wives or old women. Perhaps s/he, for all actors at that time were men, plays the goddess Hestia.

ILL. 103. *Female comic stock character playing a goddess. Although she/he wears a mask there is something very Edna about her/him. Inspired by an image on a Phlyakes vase. (Bieber, 1961, p.138)*

Hestia is the Greek goddess of hearth and home, credited with the invention of building houses and with overseeing the state. Her Roman equivalent is Vesta (credited with the vestibule, a popular area in the homes of the 1960s). These goddesses appeared in image form in the homes of many Greeks and Romans in antiquity. There is something familiar about this goddess. Perhaps to see her being played by a Phlyake masked comic stock character is to see Edna at work. Likewise, Edna's image is flashed into homes on television screens throughout the western world, as she draws attention to all that is domestic, in a comical way of course. (Not to mention Humphries' own penned comic strip about another comic stock character in Barry Mckenzie.)

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It seems the morphing of these stock characters is constant throughout history so why not now? Is Dame Edna a morphed version of these early stock characters attempting to immortalise herself as goddess of the state and home? Has the curious parallel manifestation of the 1950s female Harlequin comic strip identity, wearing the very same type of Harlequin eye wear as Edna and using the very same power of the home television, become another manifestation of Harlequin?

Although the new comic book mythology was born out of America's need for a super hero as part of its identity as a powerful nation, an international audience of readers joined the throng. It seems as if America needed the super hero and the world needed America to provide this notion as an attribute of being a super power.

Who then has stood for Australia? What kind of hero would Australians manifest if Australians felt the need for a hero? Who would Australians prefer to represent them on the world stage as a national icon?

Is that icon the masked bandit, Ned Kelly, immortalized by artist Sidney Nolan but predicted in the early harlequinades years prior to the actual event? Kelly writes, "the Ned Kelly figure had in fact been 'invented' many decades before his birth" (Kelly, 1993, p.52) Perhaps Ned Kelly is just one in a long line of scapegoats and anti heroes who demonstrate a society expressing itself against the stronger presence of Mother England. Could it be that a hundred years after Ned Kelly, Australians have now vested their 'identity crisis' in the work of Barry Humphries, a cross dressing smarty-pants who plays the now world renowned *Dame Edna Everage?* Did Edna take on the position as national icon or Ambassador of Australia or both?

Big Fairy: Australia's IDENTITY crisis in Nationhood as expressed through Edna Everage.

In a strange coincidence in 1977, just prior to the release of the first *Superman* feature film Dame Edna actually flew to America to offer herself to the American public as *Housewife/Superstar* (or a two faced Australia disguising her aspirations in servitude and humour). However, s/he was too challenging for the American aesthetic, particularly since they were looking for a *Superhero* not another *Superstar.* Curiously, however, s/he returned to the United States in 1998, soon after Christopher Reeves' (their real Superhero) debilitating accident. This time Dame Edna was met with open arms and received rave reviews with the San Francisco Press acclaiming her as "savagely entertaining".

ILL 104. *Artist's impression of Dame Edna, Housewife/Superstar, in full flight. Gouche on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2009.*

If we use the coincidences demonstrated above, the 1950s' Mrs Everage represented the notion of 'Australia as Housewife' a servitude position under the thumb of the British Empire whilst, at the same time, Australia (and Edna?) was clearly looking for a mentor, keenly leaning towards America and the 'American way'. Not to forget that the American audience was well prepared/primed for the harlequinesque because comic book characters were now manifested in human form on the big screen.

If we align Australia as having 'Housewife' status, as portrayed by Humphries on the international stage, we are aware he is using an absurdist manner to poke fun at Australia's national immaturity. As 'housewifely Australia', Dame Edna demonstrates Australia's struggle to be accepted in his or her own right for who she or he has become. And as with the Women's Liberation movement, Edna is confronting.

Bloody nonsense: Will the real COMIC please stand up?

At the very same time in the 1950s, the first Harlequin in American comic books emerged. The interesting thing here is that although comics were chiefly the domains of male creators of male figures for male readers, this new Harlequin was very much a female. Her name was Molly Mayne (notice the same use of double capitol letters as in Edna Everage. Duella Dent is yet another female comic strip Harlequin in the lineage). Molly too wore Harlequin cat eye spectacles, but through the powers in her spectacles she became the Harlequin. Is this also not true of Edna? For Molly, these spectacles had other powers, particularly around a television set (very homely). However, Molly was not a housewife but a subservient mousy secretary to Alan Scott the real hero (who is actually the superhero, Green Lantern). Perhaps the comic books were presenting us with a glimpse of the in coming 'battle of the sexes' in which Harlequin stands with yet another underdog, women?

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ILL. 105. *Designer's copy of Molly Mayne as Harlequin in the 1950s comic books. Curiously her costume does not have a single lozenge, however, the mandolin (slapstick) as a weapon does connect her to the traditional Harlequina.*

ILL. 106. This image is taken from a 1954 film about commedia dell'arte by Jean Renoir titled The Golden Coach. The lozenge pattern in this costume was screen- printed not appliquéd.

Are there any parallels in Molly Mayne, who appears to have been a love-struck, badly dressed and ageing villain prepared to sell her soul because she was not getting any younger, and Edna Everage, who certainly skirts the parameters of good and evil in absurd frocks, shunning the aid of plastic surgery? Edna's power is also in her glasses. They bestow the power of her savage wit and the ability of Australians to laugh at themselves or each other. Her glasses add a humorous touch to her agonising but astonishing dress sense; they set her apart from all other stars and are all the public needs as visual clue to anticipate what will follow.

ILL. 107. *a) Dame Edna's eye wear. Sydney Opera House style.*
b) Harlequin glasses which were very popular in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Humphries wears his cat-eye Harlequin designer frames like a club badge or a complement piece of jewellery to match his frock. This affect creates the illusion of a far greater mask as we are met with the affectation of ornamentation from his eyewear to the tip of his toes. Although other later female Harlequins (comic book characters) were quick to lose the glasses and don the more traditional black cat eye mask, not so Dame Edna, she and her collection of eyewear endure

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Edna also used the television set as a tool of power. She made many appearances on screen and finally was given her own show on London television, which was aired in the 1980s. Regular appearances on American TV in the very popular *Alli Mcbeal* and another UK series followed, all of which were also, broadcast on national Australian television.

As for the battle of remaining youthful, well? "Maybe we, as a society, just weren't ready for a superhuman woman who could be good and powerful at the same time," says Danny Fingeroth in his book about superheroes. (Fingeroth, 2004, p.80) Superwomen only emerged in comic books during the war years when women had to be and do all the things men did. However, most comic book female characters after that did not have to "fight the good fight. They just had to put up a good fight." (Fingeroth, 2004, p.81) To 'fight the good fight' the commonly used superman phrase, returned to the male domain after the war, while the role of superwomen like Molly, as the Harlequin, became a role where they had to fight for what they already had. That's where Edna, a man, makes a contribution, because Edna makes it all appear carnivalesquely ridiculous.

As the momentum of women's liberation swept the western world so the comic book

Harlequin heroine role changed. However, Australia seemed to have found its own harlequinesque advocate in Barry Humphries and the persona of Edna Everage who caught the world's attention. Humphries, alias Edna Everage, emerged as a self appointed Ambassador for Australia the moment s/he landed in London's West End in 1967, thus beginning a pendulum like movement between Australia and England that continues to this day. As a now vital element in Australia's identity kit, s/he seems to be 'keeping up a good fight' whilst setting trends in harlequinesque optical wear.

It would seem the harlequinesque energy of the 60s and 70s, which appeared in female comic strip form found power in the expression of mental instability or more correctly, as the *fiendish* capacity of women, perhaps this accounts for the seemingly vengeful Edna Everage gracing the world stage. Still this interconnection remains cryptic, since Edna Everage is, after all, a man as were the comic strip creators.

"Oh no he wont. Oh yes he will": The return of Harlequinesque to Mother ENGLAND

Did Barry/Edna leave Australia's shores to challenge the Mother country in some way? Is s/he challenging England in its acceptance of 'the Australian way'? Is Edna, in declaring her rightful place as Diva also declaring Australia's rightful place alongside, not beneath, mother England? Alas no, Dame Edna, despite her bravado, still plays by British rules, but perhaps this device will ultimately succeed in achieving the desired respect and acceptance for a grown-up larrikin nation?

ILL. 108. Dame Edna Everage eye wear. White pencil on black paper. Artist: Julie Parsons,

2008.

Dame Edna is a social creature. She interacts with her audience and invites people to interact with her … at their own risk. What does she epitomize that Australians wish to realize in themselves as a country? It certainly has not been all 'gladdies'. Why does Edna/Barry appear to only visit Australia whilst now living England? Did we Australians push her out of the nest because she was too big or because we needed her to get bigger?

In the article "The Mythical Australian: Barry Humphries, Gough Whitlam and New Nationalism", Anne Pender gives another slant on Edna's status.

> Gough Whitlam's decision in 1974 to appear in Barry Humphries's film about a larrikin abroad, *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own*, marks a potent moment in Australia's post-imperial history — a moment when the politics of Australian theatre and the theatre of Australian politics directly coincided. In their different spheres, Humphries and Whitlam dramatised the waning British connection felt by Australians. Whitlam's own version of "new nationalism" was brash and confident enough to embrace the eccentricities and vulgarities of Humphries's satire. Yet Whitlam's "new nationalism", like Humphries's satire, was highly ambivalent. Humphries's first film, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, was a direct product of the new nationalist enthusiasm that had brought Whitlam to power. Although the critics savaged it, the film was a box-office success. Intellectuals such as Patrick White, Manning Clark and Geoffrey Dutton lavished praise on Humphries and his satirical portrayal of Australian anxieties about culture and national identity. Humphries portrayed the underlying dilemma that Whitlam faced in refashioning the image of modern Australia: how to throw off the symbols of colonialism and find meaningful symbols to replace them. In the process, both the politician and the humorist rediscovered a particular and enduring affection for the mother country. (Pender, 2005, p.67)

Peter Raggatt writes about Humphries from the perspective of theory and psychology arguing that there is an eerie connection between social and political events occurring in Australia with the life of Dame Edna. He says "Dame Edna's history miraculously mirrors, in certain respects, recent celebratory accounts of Australia's social history since the 1950s---increasing affluence, greater social and class mobility, and an engagement with the world. Dame Edna has herself transcended the suburbs to become a global 'brand'." (Raggatt, 2007, p.375)

Raggatt uses Edna's outfit to illustrate his point. "At first dressed in a dowdy cotton dress shaped like a potato sack, she appears to have strayed onto stage by accident." (Raggatt, 2007, p.368) This is precisely the sort of costume the first Harlequin wore when he played the part of a servant, who was a crafty fool, in the 1500s. The former frumpish housewife (servant) now wears intensely glittered gowns, similar to the French and English costumes for Harlequin after he rose to the position of Marquis. The greatest similarity, however, is in the intensity Edna's costumes now share with the bespangled costume of the circus Harlequinesque arrogant white-faced clown.

What does this mean in respect to Edna's alignment with Australia and nationhood? Indeed the glittering outfits do not align with the unruly nature of Edna. Could it be that Australia is dressing itself up to disguise its real identity or is it an act of false ambition?

ILL. 109. *Designer's impression of typical bespangled circus Harlequin clown in the twentieth century. Coloured pencil on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2008.*

"In Edna's 'act of aspiration" (Raggatt, 2007, p.370) we see her behaving like royalty "coming down from the stage, as it were, and appearing everywhere—at charity functions, at parties, on TV chat shows, and at schools and hospitals."(Raggatt, 2007, p.370) "Edna has evolved into the 'grandiloquent and imperious' Dame Edna, who is now a favourite of the British Queen, hosting Royal Command performances at Buckingham Palace." (Raggatt, 2007, p.368)

But there are many strange echoes to ad/dress in the lineage of the harlequinesque into a persona like Dame Edna Everage. Could it be that she wears the diamante dazzle of the Harlequin cat eye spectacles to mask and distract the world from real and meaningful eye contact with the true Australian identity? No, we all know she is really a shabbily dressed man, trying hard to impress us with his extraordinary powers of observation and intelligence.

Has that man, Barry Humphries, used the court jester technique of the puppet bauble to give him bravado and permission to say and do whatever he wants as Edna because people don't take a man in a woman's dress seriously … or do they? Perhaps the people of Australia need the bravado of repressed notions of nationhood delivered as nonsense. Nevertheless, s/he appears to have commanded the role of court fool to the British royalty.

Glorious gorgeous glittering garment: The ARTY Farty costume party

There is no doubt that the Harlequin costume has disappeared into the world of art,[1] comics and fashion in the twentieth century, however, if we examine the world of art, comics and fashion as the new wardrobe in which the Harlequin costume now hangs, we find that the Harlequin costume portrays or evokes a kind of alter ego for the artist or the viewer. The animated costume seems to gaze out at its spectators from the seemingly surreal worlds of carnival, circus or theatre. The Harlequin costume stirs something in the human psyche. Its lozenge design is associated with environments of tricks, jesting, acrobatics and other feats of human physicality in performance and suggests the possibility of super humanness, which coexists well next to the likes of superheroes and a cross-dressing satirist with aspirations of grandeur.

"Look out he's behind you" shouts the audience to the seemingly unsuspecting heroine Dame Edna, for it is after all, the brilliant Barry Humphries who is behind the highly successful Dame Edna Everage. However, not to be distracted by all this, we must be vigilant in keeping our eyes peeled for any manifestation of the harlequinesque entity hood or embodiment of the harlequinesque energy, or more important, we must learn to recognise what such trickster forces might be wearing this season.

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1   Refer to part 3 in a Designers Notebook.

ILL. 110. *A potential costume for Dame Edna which owns up to the harlequinesque. The costume emanates light. Starting from the top of the head we see a star made from two three dimensional triangles the rays of light from the star form a traditional circus hat, albeit transparent. This is to also verify Edna's mega star status. While the diamond shape framed eyewear is a departure from the traditional cat-eye look, it is intrinsic to the lozenge. From here the under garment is in the classic shape of the circus Harlequin costume and made from highly reflective fabric finished in reflective surface decorations, such as the new glitter (small multicoloured light emitting diodes or photonic textiles powered by a battery which recharges with movement). The overgarment is made from light transmitting fibres which form a complex geometric line pattern which recreate the sacred or intrinsic lattice of triangular shapes. Designer Julie Parsons, coloured pencil on paper, 2009.*

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Chapter Two

" LET THE CIRCUS BEGIN: "

THE BEGINNING OF AUSTRALIAN CIRCUS TO CIRCUS OZ AND JOEL SALOM

The circus comes to town: A brief BACKGROUND of circus

Circus (Latin. ring or circle)

Dr von Franz explains "the circle as [a] symbol of Self. It expresses totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature." (von Franz in Jung, 1964, p.266) It is, as Carl Jung observes, generally accepted that the circle "always points to the single most vital aspect of life – its ultimate wholeness." (Jung, 1964, p.266)

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the word "circus has the same root as circle and circumference, recalling the distinctive environment in which such entertainment is presented—the ring, a circular performance area usually bounded by a short fence (or "curb"). The ring may be enclosed in an arena." (www.britannica.com, 2007)

The word "circus" as connected to "circle" also appears to have its origins in the ancient Greek hippodromes used primarily for chariot races. According to Dirk Bennet, the earliest known form of such racing can be dated back to 13th century BC and "the course resembled a stretched U". (Dirk, 1997) Racing of horses brought with it the practice of faction colours, which were attached to the horses. Bennet adds that the "intervals between the races were filled with performances of jugglers, pantomimes and the dance of factions." (Dirk, 1997)

Circus Maximus was developed by the Romans, modelled on the Greek hippodrome. In Rome it was "rebuilt in the time of Julius Caesar (first century BC) to seat 150,000 spectators." (Miron, 2003, p.446) By the fourth century AD the seating capacity had increased to 250,000. Miron notes that booths were set up outside the circus to serve food and provide entertainment for citizens.

ILL. 111. *This image taken from a mosaic depicting circus games in an arena. The figures in this image are engaged in independent performance and activities around the chariot races, displays of trick horsemanship and animal blood lust. (Croft-Cooke, 1976, p.19)*

In a similar vein, Joe Nickle claims that the entertainment business can be seen in operation as far back as 2400 BC, through ancient Egyptian art depicting "jugglers, acrobats and clowns along with parades, entertaining the nobility and citizenry". (Nickle, 2005, p.2) Nickle also verifies the presence of this type of entertainment in and around the *Circus Maximus.*

ILL. 112. Detail from a Greek vase showing an acrobat. (Croft-Cooke, 1976, p.8)

The torture of Christians did occur in these types of venues, like in the private *Circus Caligulas*. Caligulas created this circus very near to where the Vatican stands today. According to Miron, Nero unfortunately used it for violent Christian martyrdoms.

With the fall of Rome, *Circus Maximus* continued to function to a lessor degree until 500 A.D. after which the entertainers who used this type of venue did not formally use a circular arena again until the 1800s. Entertainers continued to perform as they drifted into the Middle Ages. They often lived a nomadic lifestyle perhaps working as independent acrobats, animal trainers, equestrians and jugglers who followed the trade 'Fairs' performing their skills.

Bieber describes an early group of travelling entertainers, known as 'mimes', who travelled throughout Italy during the Roman Empire. A statue of a female 'mima' illustrates the clever use of bells and foot clappers with her dancing and clowning act. The description shows the durability of this type of entertainment into the Middle Ages

> The mimes associated themselves often with joculatores, jugglers, like the statuette of a Negro in Berlin, tossing with the head, hand, knee, three balls at the same time, said to have come from Thebes. These merrymakers—mimes, dancers, rope dancers, jongleurs, jugglers, acrobats, and sometimes boys leading animals like monkeys or bears—lived on through the Middle Ages. They transmitted their skill as small wandering troupes or as individual actors. (Bieber, 1961, p.249-250)

111
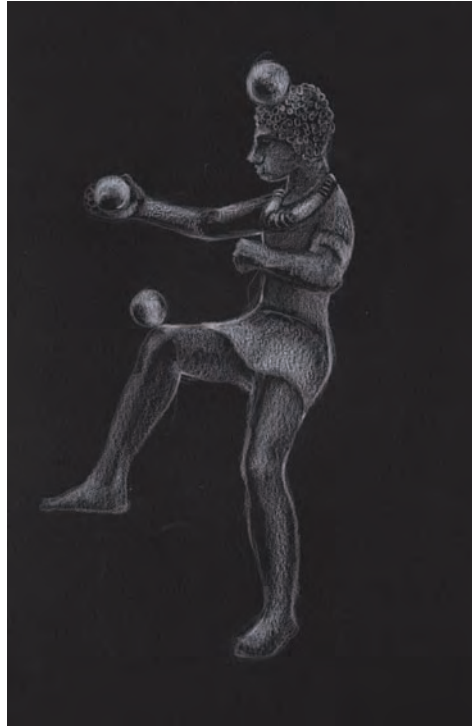
ILL. 113. *Drawing of Negro slave as a juggler using his knee, head, and hand to toss the balls. Jugglers were associated with the mime of the Roman Empire (Bieber, 1961, p.249-250)*

The grouping together of people with these sorts of skills has always provided them with a shared safe haven. It also fosters an environment in which an embryonic harlequinesque persona can be seen to emerge.

Some roaming poets or minstrels with quick wit took the fancy of the aristocrats and soon became accepted amongst the well to do, perhaps gaining placements as court jesters. Dwarves or others with rare growth deformities were also often considered delights of the court. Perhaps the real reason for their popularity was the age-old belief that these types of people diverted evil. Many of these wandering minstrels not only had the gift of word crafts but also had a number of entertainment skills such as juggling, acrobatics, clowning and the like.

The *Guillaire,* as these minstrels were called in Italy, may have influenced the emergence of the *commedia dell'arte* in the late 1500s. *Commedia dell'arte* was a performance genre developed by professional groups of actors and acrobats, who followed a plot but interacted and improvised along the way with witty, clever antics blended with acrobatic skills. Arlecchino (Harlequin) was one of the main stock characters. According to the tradition, this character seemed endowed with a complex set of attributes, revealing his co-existent stupidity and undeniable cleverness. As such, he stood for the servant class with resonances generated from both French and Italian medieval traditions, integrating a French devil-like character with an Italian nature spirit. Consequently, Arlecchino appeared to function in between two worlds being both capable of dark and light actions. He sometimes appeared to have supernatural powers but, at the same time, played the fool. This arrogant fool was later absorbed into the world of circus.

Circuses as we now understand them do not become manifest until the 1760s when Phillip Astley, an equestrian, gave exhibitions of trick riding in London and France. He built permanent circus buildings throughout Europe (the ring). Astley's riding tricks were performed whilst riding in a circle, a practice which determined the establishment of the standard circus ring and its thirteen metre diameter.

Around this period, mime became a standard form of performance in the fair grounds of France. Following a custom of appropriation, the fair grounds' theatre groups stole the themes of the very popular mainstream theatres' *commedia dell'arte* productions. The authorities solved the problem by directing that the fair ground players perform mute or by using "grammelot" (Fo, 1991, p.63), a type of stage babble. The art of mime was reborn and travelled successfully to England where it became transformed into the harlequinade (a type of English pantomime featuring Harlequin and other characters from *commedia dell'arte).*

Equestrian rider Andrew Ducrow appeared on horseback as the Harlequin in the circus of 1849 in Astley's *Carnival of Venice.* At this stage, Harlequin had established himself in England as a charismatic but mute acrobatic performer known for his magical tricks on the harlequinade stage.

Andrew Ducrow's manifestation of the Harlequin met with the audience's expectations and more. "Apparently god-like in his control over his horse, in his 'miraculous' marshalling over the 'forces' of physics, we are told he maintains the appearance of an unearthly dreamlike being." (Stoddart, 2000, p.168)

ILL. 114. *Designer's impression of Harlequin as circus equestrian. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2009.*

It was not uncommon for some of the popular harlequinade's stock clown characters, such as Pierrot, Harlequin and Clown to appear as a distraction between acts in

equestrian circus events. Harlequin slowly appeared to merge with Pierrot and Clown becoming a white faced arrogant clown in the circus and modern circus as we know it was born.

ILL. 115. *Designer's circus costume silhouettes from top right: an oriental performer's costume showing a possible influence in pant style; commedia dell'arte's pantomime character Clown; an early circus Harlequin showing influence from Clown's costume; a combination of* commedia dell'arte *'s Punchinellio and Pierrot costumes; a combination of a Pierrot and Harlequin costume; a twentieth century circus Harlequin costume. Designer Julie Parsons 2009.*

ILL. 116. *Designer's impression of white-faced arrogant clown in typical circus costume of the 20th century. Inspired by an image of a German Harlequin clown. Note the costume attempts to delineate a hip line typical of the female pelvis. Also, note the width of the pant legs make the costume skirt-like. Perhaps this clown costume was a safe haven for the trans-sexual?*

As circus arenas grew in size so the intimate stage appeal of the spoken word was sacrificed. The circus and audiences moved more toward the 'spectacle'. Stoddart discusses this change, which began to focus on non verbal communication:

> the use of circus techniques and conventions fuels the absurdist foregrounding of non verbal forms of theatre such as ritualized actions (in clown routines for example), exaggerated gesture, manipulation of objects and mime so that ideas and character functions are expressed externally and visually or through music rather than the spoken word. (Stoddart, 2000, p.92)

Despite television appearing to be a means of mass communication, it is not as worldwide as we might believe. Circus on the other hand is an international form of entertainment. The international language of circus is built entirely upon the movements

of the human form as seen in fairground performances, carnivals, community events, street performance and the circus itself. Performers have often travelled far in pursuit of work in circus, festival and carnival. This has always made the environment of circus a very cosmopolitan habitat. Contemporary western circus has moved from single act displays of human and animal feats into storytelling using circus skills. This engagement of our senses implies we astutely take on the reading of multiple signs. James Skidmore calls this form of speechless performance language a "multimodal construct". (Skidmore, 2000, p.1)

Perhaps this 'multimodal construct' at the core of the circus genre, with its thrills and spills evokes a response from people who like not just to watch but to sensuously experience performance? The spectacle of circus seems to generate a type of mass voyeurism where audience are positioned close to but still at a safe remove from the action. People gasp in wonder at the risky fearsome feats of each performer (or is that hero?) interspersed with the release of this tension through laughter at the antics of the clown (or is that the Fool?). Are we really participating in an experience of archetypal figures at play? Are the gods still with us as part of us?

With the advent of film and television, a community now has greater exposure to the spectacle of performance and has developed into avid but also possibly more discerning watchers of circus. Pressure from animal liberationists, for example, assisted in the decision-making process to shift the focus onto performing people and away from animals.

A further development of twentieth century circus saw a convergence of circus with other theatrical genres, commonly known as 'new circus'. Performers from other disciplines were bought into circuses all over the world to add professional flair. Andrew Burnstine writes in *A history of costume design for the big apple circus from 1985 to 1998*, that it was not until the 1960s when "circus acts which had nothing to do with each other were first bought together by the single catalyst of costume design". (Burnstine, 2001, p. 51) This move is, of course, consolidated through the implementation of a consistent theme or storyline. Cirque de Soleil, a French Canadian circus took this concept and initially transformed it through the application of design in the 1980s. In 1993, in a country far removed from the traditions of Europe, America's *Big Apple Circus*, revived *commedia dell'arte* as its theme. Once again the connection with circus and *commedia dell'arte* becomes an intimate one.

At the forefront of New Circus is Australia's own Circus Oz

On the Bandwagon: The beginning of AUSTRALIAN circus

In 1847, Tasmania was host to the first Astley style circus in Australia, when Robert Radford, himself an Englishman, organized a successful presentation of equestrian and acrobatic acts to appreciative audiences. What is of interest here is that the

stock characters of *commedia dell'arte* were also presented as circus entertainment, embedding Australian circus with this sort of humour from the start.

Out of this humble beginning came two of the big names in Australian Circus, St Leon and Ashton. James Ashton was a descendant from a circus family who performed in the old English "Cooke's Circus". John St Leon trained as an equestrian after migrating to Tasmania in 1843. Both men worked for Robert Radford and moved to mainland Melbourne in 1849, when the Tasmanian circus closed.

St Leon created his own troupe and was later engaged by Sydney's first circus entrepreneur, a Mr. Edward La Rosiere. In the meantime, James Ashton set up a travelling bush circus of performing horses and dogs, trapeze artistes, acrobats and jugglers. These performers were mainly people that he picked up and trained along the way. His descendants still run Ashton's circus as it travels the country into the 21st century, making it possibly one of the oldest circuses in the world.

St Leon also made his mark with an established circus on the outskirts of Melbourne. He imitated the razzmatazz of the visiting American circuses to promote Australia's own biggest show and its travelling menagerie. His sons Alfred and Walter were considered hot property for any circus with their all round skills.

The establishment of Australia's circus dynasties as well as of smaller family circuses ultimately grew from necessity, simply because circus people train and travel more effectively as family groups. It certainly was a common phenomenon in other countries. The conscious decision to breed circus performers has fascinated Australian historian, John Ramsland, whose book *Children of the Circus: The Australian Experience* was written with Mark St Leon, himself a child of a circus dynasty.

Of course not all children were born into the circus; some were given away to the circus as it travelled through the countryside. If a child was young enough they could learn the physical skills very quickly and then become an asset as these skills were built upon.

Grandstanding desparately dangerous dislays: Circus OZ

As world circus networks shifted so did the nature of the circus dynasty. Travel opened up these networks and gave family members the option of leaving the circus because a replacement could be brought in more easily. The Russian Circus, focussing on the physical skills of human performers rather than animals, came to Australia in the 1960s and this alternative style of virtuosic performers proved to be a very popular event.

Circus Oz opened its tent flap in 1977, re-defining circus forever when it launched itself into the world as a contemporary circus. In the 1980s, they appeared to single-

handedly change the face of circus with their humanitarian philosophies, tongue in cheek humour and circus stunts. The mix of theatre, cabaret-style satire and circus emerged in different forms around the world and became know as new circus. Circus Oz members, observes Ramsland, view themselves ideologically as "a 'collective of performers, technicians, artists, show-offs and very ordinary people' who live and work together in a 'tribe' rather than a nuclear family/production unit' … a radical departure from the traditional family-centred travelling circus". (Ramsland, 1997, p.51)

The emergence of Circus Oz bears no small resemblance to the group of performers who emerged during the Counter-Reformation in Italy and called themselves the *commedia dell'arte.* In both examples, people began to experiment because they had something to say or to perform about the social conditions of their times.

Dario Fo brings to our notice a perfect description of the historical players made by Cardinal Borromeo during the emergence of *commedia dell'arte*. His description demonstrates the Cardinal's concern for the players' influence on people's sense of morality.

> These players do not repeat by heart written sentences, as do children or actors who perform for pleasure. These last invariably give the impression of being unaware of the significance of what they repeat, and for that reason fail to carry conviction. The players, on the contrary, do not employ the same words at every performance of a new work, but prefer to invent on each occasion, learning first, by a series of cues and headings, the substance, then playing by improvisation, thus training themselves in a free, natural and graceful style. The result is to involve the audience to the highest degree. That effortlessly natural style kindles passion and emotion that are a grave peril, since they offer approval of an amoral celebration of the senses, of lasciviousness, of the rejection of sound principles and of rebelliousness against the sacred laws of society; these are matters that create great confusion among simple folk. (Fo, 1991, p.62)

Circus Oz too, had something to say about what they perceived to be social shortcomings. Their circus was no longer about the best act to sell the show. Circus Oz was and still is different. The following quotations show how Circus Oz defines itself

> Circus Oz has for many years engaged in issues associated with social justice and a good time for all. This has taken many forms, including Aids benefits and ticket give-aways to Indigenous Australians, the Starlight Foundation for seriously ill children, refuges for the homeless, shelters for the victims of domestic violence, families living on housing commission estates, the Red Cross, the Royal Children's Hospital, Anglicare Kids in Crisis program and other similar programs.

> Circus Oz has also had a long-standing connection with refugees and asylum seekers. …… Since June 2002, Circus Oz has raised over $225,000 in donations to support refugees and asylum seekers. We believe in tolerance,

diversity and human kindness.

However, although Circus Oz made and continues to make a profound impact on the world it is not the only circus in Australia. To find out more about circus in Australia and more importantly how the harlequinesque might be expressed in Australia, I attended a circus conference in Woollongong, NSW in 2006 and a Circus Fest in Gonalado in Tasmania in 2007.

Side show bally ho: Harlequin ARCHETYPE and a Tasmanian Circus Fest

This is a story from my search for a contemporary Australian version of the Harlequinesque or Harlequin archetype. It is February 2007 and I am headed for the Circus Fest Gonalado, Tasmania, joined by four other travellers. I have never been to a circus festival and am keen to investigate if a contemporary Australian version of the Harlequin archetype might find the environment of a Circus Fest habitable?

It seems rather unusual to be holding this Circus Fest in a remote quarter of Australia, however, I soon learn that the event had already moved into the realm of a tradition which attracts international performers to a remote acreage of natural forest somewhere in the small state of Tasmania. The event appears to be socially significant, because of its parallel focus on environmental concerns at a global level.

In examining the social engagement with the environs of the Circus Fest, I found a description of Victor Turner's work by Richard Schechner in which, Schechner says of Turner:

> He taught that there was a continuous, dynamic process linking performative behaviour—art, sports, ritual, play—with social and ethical structure: the way people think about and organize their lives and specify individual and group values. (Schechner in Turner, 1987, p.9)

Was the Circus Fest a chance to identify values of the fringe dwellers? Do these particular fringe dwellers recognise the need for social change or indeed does the impetus for change reside within the concept of circus itself?

Anni Davey, from Circus Oz spoke at the circus conference Fabulous Risk, Woollongong, (2006) and expressed her sense of understanding of the role that circus plays in today's society. She sees circus performers as gypsies whose role it is to hold up a mirror to society. She feels that once individuals become part of mainstream social organizations, they form part of the problem and thus are constrained to look at any social concern from outside the circle. As the centre of the circle called society grows, so the perimeter of fringe dwellers expands. Davey sees this expansion being filled with a new wave of street performers who weave in and out of work within the circus community. Davey's concept, applicable to Circus Oz, might also apply to the

ecologically focused and thus political event of the Tasmanian Circus Fest?

With the concept of circus belonging to the fringe dwellers of society and in doing so appearing to perform a very distinctive political role in society, how do we place the Harlequin? Has the Harlequin's journey through the last 500 years in and out of various environments been a result of social change as performative traditions are absorbed into the mainstream?

Does the Harlequin character figure in the shifting forms of circus as part of the performing group now focussed on social issues? Has the modern day Harlequin changed costume or has he simply left the circus? I am looking for the answers to these questions at this Circus Fest in the isolated state of Tasmania.

In looking at this scenario, there is no doubt that New Circus attracts street performers. Surely this is comforting for Harlequin, given his roots in *commedia dell'arte.* If it appears that the new age of international street performers must outdo one another with originality, skill and crowd pleasing ability in order to survive the ever-changing world of performance, where has Harlequin gone? Or perhaps it is only his lozenge costume which has been put away for now. The antics and laughter are still there.

ILL. 117. *Circus Fest Salom, Gouache on paper. Artist: Julie Parsons, 2007.*

During the Circus Fest, I encountered and was able to observe the multitalented Joel Salom. Salom had top billing for this event but I caught him initially practising his skills on the trapeze, something he had learnt during his seasons with Circus Oz in the early 2000s. His long limbed body stretched out like a length of rope. His moves, although courageous, certainly lacked the grace, beauty and compact musculature of other aerialists. This must have appealed to Circus Oz in their quest to break the mould of performance expectations.

ILL. 118. Drawing of Joel Salom as Cockatoo performer for Circus Oz, derived from a number of Circus Oz publicity newspaper photographs. Costume designed by Circus Oz costume designer Laurel Frank.

Salom's trapeze outfit in his time with Circus Oz was that of a cockatoo in lots of white lycra with soft plumes on the important bits. PetaTait describes the cockatoo act*s*:

extremely funny send ups of aerial acts … [A]erial clowns in an inept flying act were dressed as white cockatoos – an Australian bird with yellow crest feathers. Making the bird's distinctive screeching sounds, they delivered a scenario in which a baby bird was desperately trying to stay on its perch in a series of slap-stick falls that ended with the rig collapsing" (Tait, 2005, p.135.).

Tait aligns Circus Oz with *commedia dell'arte* primarily because of the inclusion of female clowning within a social context. She notes that "comedy genres offer socially subversive possibilities, and physical clowning offers females ways to carnivalize authority with *'dialogic body language'*. (Tait, 2005, p.132, italics in original (Bakhtin)). Although Tait's focus in this case is on the female clown, it is apparent that Circus Oz performers do take on the roles as advocates of social justice in general. Tait's description of Circus Oz may throw some light on the performance inclinations of Joel Salom. She observes that Circus Oz are, "[a]cclaimed for their irreverent humour directed at ideas of Australian-ness, [where] the performers present naïve and peculiar character-types doing circus skills, combined with live original music" (Tait, 2005, p.132). With Circus Oz's small cast of twelve performers and musicians perhaps there are also echoes of the structure of *commedia dell'arte* hidden within the seemingly contemporary material.

Further reading of Tait's description brings into question the characterisation qualities Salom currently displays in his live shows.

The one ring Circus Oz show is not a polished spectacle like Cirque du Soleil or confrontational like Archaos, but conveys thrill and risk in part because of its unpredictable theatricality. The physical style of comedy is often an ironic direct address to audience, who are placed in a position of knowing what might happen to unsuspecting performers. Oz performers excel at a burlesque idiocy, at brash self-ridicule and at outright foolishness. Quirky character-types doing accomplished skills typically threaten the slapstick routines and/or fail spectacularly with their action. (Tait, 2005, p.132.)

Later at the Circus Fest, Salom took to action as the ringmaster for the main event in a superb amphitheatre, which was set at the base a naturally occurring slope. He wove his own performances around his introductions to the sophisticated array of acts on this main stage.

Salom's skill and knowledge of circus and, indeed, of performance on the whole makes him a seemingly relaxed but confident and capable ringmaster. He plays with the audience while riggers fix a complex problem. His improvisation is a complete joy to witness. Salom's timing and humour endear him to young and old as he reveals awkward moments and makes little mistakes that appear to mess up his good intentions. When he gets it right the audience exudes a common sense of satisfied adoration. Perhaps this gangly 30-something-year-old Australian, embodies some of the qualities of a Harlequin archetype?

That idea set me on a quest to delve further into the man's personality.

Joel Salom runs away to the circus: Identifying the family CONNECTIONS

Salom, a Western Australian from a dairy farm in Brunswick Junction, began juggling at the age of five, uni-cycling when he was seven and stilt-walking when he turned twelve. He toured with a clown festival when he was but eight in a clown suit purchased by his mother. In retrospect, he views his clowning mentorship beginning at the end of his primary school years when a British circus guru, Reg Bolton and his family, arrived in Perth. Bolton set up a series of circus workshops in Bunbury and Salom soon became a devoted member of the group.

In between Bolton projects, Salom, as a young boy, found there were little or no opportunities for learning circus skills. In an effort to keep up the development of skills, beyond being self taught, Salom joined a jazz ballet class. Salom says of attending these classes, he had to be like a soldier marching into battle, as fellow class-mates chanted judgemental abuse.

Now an adult, Salom, as did the Harlequin character before him, makes use of improvisation around the quirky gestures and actions unique to developed comic routine. Of course, Salom is not working closely with a group of actors like *commedia dell'arte* for he is a solo artist who interacts with miscellaneous groups, some of whom he may only have met during the technical rehearsal. Salom's improvisation skills help him to interface with these other artists. The result is the maintenance of his recognisable persona while appearing as though he were part of their act all along.

Duchartre writes about the ability to improvise within the context of a defined character, such as Harlequin. "The actor never took any liberties in altering his *role,* and yet he was free to infuse into it all the life and colour of which he was capable." (Duchartre, 1966 p. 34) In Harlequin's day, this skill was called a *lazzi*. When Salom infuses humour and colour into his work as a soloist and with others, it is known as his *routine*, which signals a style that is much looser than the term indicates. In spite of the differences of Harlequin's renowned acrobatic gestures and Salom's juggling, improvisation and supposed mishaps connect Salom, Harlequin and indeed all clowns to each other and their audiences.

Salom feels his connection with the audience has blossomed to its present state through his experience of street theatre, which has taken him all over the world. In many cases language was a barrier so he had to learn to communicate through sound and gesture.

Dario Fo refers to this universal language known as *grammelot* in his book *The tricks of the trade.* Fo states that harsh regulations during the Counter-Reformation forced Italian players to seek work outside of Italy.

> The need to develop the standard of the gesture and the agility of the body so as to attain a high level of expressiveness received a boost with the invention

of an onomatopoeic babble which together with mime, brought about the happy birth of an unrepeatable and unparalleled style – *Commedia dell'arte*. (Fo, 1991, p.62)

Salom began moving around the world in his teens, performing at festivals and on the street. This has given Salom a very distinct way of connecting directly with his audience. His concerns are never about image. Instead, Salom brings a big dose of humanity through his rehearsed *accidents* that reach the hearts of all those spectators who have experienced making a mistake. Salom says that working street and festival gigs for your living gives you both a sense of humility and of gratitude. These environments, he says, teach you to speak and act clearly and with confidence. He flirts with young and old, male and female. Although he often wears a big shouldered, three-piece red suit and despite announcing he has a wife and child, he clearly wishes to remain sexually ambiguous as his throwaway remarks and actions towards the men in the audience imply.

Unlike actors playing Harlequin, Salom does not go by a stage name: he is who he is, preferring to use his full birth name "Joel Salom" as his identity thus leaving himself open to varied opportunities and interpretations. While the Harlequin character appears distinctly more devious and shrouded in mystery, Salom's persona is honest and open. At least that is how it appears.

Salom does not disguise himself with make-up either. Instead he uses a variety of facial expressions, which serve to animate his presence. One of his tricks is to alter the shape of his face by moving ping-pong balls around inside his mouth. Once he has his audience's attention with this grotesque face, he develops a persona, who attempts to hold a conversation with his now mesmerized audience. Salom then transforms his face by blowing the ping-pong balls one at a time high into the air above his head. From this action he begins a mouth-juggling act, which continues to impress, but which requires him to turn his face away from the audience's gaze. In doing so he is able to transform back into the face of Joel Salom.

ILL. 119. *The designer's impression of Salom with ping bong balls filling his cheeks. Salom used this type of image on his 2007 business cards.*

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In 2007, Salom compared the Red Hot Strings Performance at the Mandurah Crab Festival in WA. He opened his performance with his mouth-juggling act, complete with botch ups and bungles. With much referencing to the body's process of alimentation, he appears to accidentally swallow a ping-pong ball, which via some suggestive gyrations appears to be produced again at the other end. This harlequinesque gag is repeated as many times as is dictated by the response of laughter.

Later as he is trying to remove his jacket whilst juggling, his pants fall down. Certainly this is another *commedia dell'arte* approach to humour as demonstrated when Harlequin "dropped his pants" (Fo, 1991. p.46) then threw a hand full of chestnuts into the audience. In Salom's case, these antics fade when sophisticated juggling skills take over. The speed of the turning skittles is only outdone by his use of an electronic backpack wired for sound that produces music when the juggling balls bounce off a number of electronic arm pads. This display is preceded by recording three samples of a volunteer's voice, which Salom distorts and installs into his electronic sound pack. He then presents his audience with the spectacular display of juggled, sampled sounds.

This multi-skilling harks back to a small Etruscan bronze statue of a performer during the Roman Empire. The sculpture is of female clown and mime artist who is playing music and dancing. Another curiosity is the harlequinesque nature of her costume. Bieber tells us she is wearing a dress composed of many different coloured patches, which Bieber calls a clown's costume. The addition of a high-peaked fool's cap and a jacket with a frilled collar completes the costume, but it is her multi-skilling, which gives her a commonality with Salom.

ILL. 120. *Drawing of clown girl inspired by a small Etruscan bronze sculpture. The mima is at the same time dancing, gesticulating, and accompanying herself with music. She holds clappers in both lifted hands, throws back her head, beating the rhythm with the scaellum, the footclapper, under her left foot. She also accompanies her dance with bells, seven attached to her cap, three to the lowest points of the scallops of her jacket, eight to the ends of the flaps over the skirt, and four to the strips ornamenting the bukin to which the clapper is attached. Her other foot is bare. (Bieber, 1961, p.249)*

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Juggling is also mentioned in association with clowning. However, this final observation appears intriguingly to relate to *commedia dell'arte* environments as much as to the Tasmanian Circus Fest.

Perhaps these similarities are what Richard Schechner is referring to when he states, "all performance has at its core ritual action, a 'restoration of behaviour'" (Schechner in Turner, 1987, p.8.)

Could a further examination of Salom's antics as a performer reveal, as Schechner suggests, a restorative ritual function common to the Roman dancer, the Negro slave juggler and Harlequin?

Three ring circus: Environmentalist, political ACTIVIST or fool

Clowns were and still are "the voice of the people." (Hugill, 1980, p.19)

At this stage of his life, Salom declares that he is not a politically oriented performer, preferring instead to live outside of the square. Salom exercises this philosophy, at present, through his work with children in *Spaghetti Circus* and in his direction of a touring children's theatre show. The *Spaghetti Circus* performed at the *Fatherhood Festival* in Byron Bay, Queensland in 2007. Here Salom not only performed with his students but also encouraged interaction of fathers with their children through acrobatics and other trust building exercises of a circus nature. He is also back with *Circus Oz* on another world tour in 2007.

> Joel is a highly experienced and multi-talented MC, comic, rapper, juggler, gadget man and creator of Erik the Dog. During the Sydney Olympic Games Joel was a flying Master of Ceremonies on the harbour stage and has performed around the world at festivals such as Livid Music Festival, Glastonbury Festival, The Thames Festival and Linz Straat fest-Austria, Zimbabwe International Festival and the Edinburgh festival where he made appearances on five of the prestigious Live Best Of The Fest Shows. (http://www.circusoz.com, 2007)

Salom also works for the Australian Speakers Bureau from time to time. The Bureau announces his topics as: "Comedy, Entertainment, Humour, Magic, Master of Ceremonies." Their website elaborates further on Salom's international standing.

> Joel has traversed the globe as an MC, comedy juggler, flying trapeze artist and gadget man. He recently returned from 6 months in Seattle and San Francisco performing with Teatro Zinzanni.

> At the Edinburgh Festival, he made a record breaking five invitation appearances on the prestigious Best of The Fest Shows.

> "Joel Salom.. he is not only the funniest improviser, the cleverest tech-head, but possibly our best juggler, too." National Australian Circus Festival. (www.australianspeaker.com, 2007)

Salom's multi-coloured career also includes working with musicians Jim Dunlop and Michael Lira to create a 2008 national tour called *Gadgets.* Together they perform an eclectic mix of pop, classical, death metal and jazz fused with a gypsy swing. Salom has devised the show which also includes wit and juggling combined with the use of technology, a spectacular laser light show and Erik the dog.

For 26 weeks in 1999, Joel's creation Erik, The Robot Dog, was a regular on ABC-TV. Erik the Dog is a 2-foot-tall, fast-talking, arse-sniffing phenomenon. A cult character with guest appearances on Music Channel 'V' and live gigs in clubs, festivals, corporate events and Circus Oz will never be the same again.

Recently in New York with Circus Oz Joel and Erik performed on 42nd Street for six weeks. The critics said, "The wittiest member of the crew is Erik the Dog, a remote-controlled tin terrier who rolls around the stage, chats up the front row and extols the joys of "sniffing all my friends' bums." Predictably, the kids squeal, the parents groan and the critics quietly shut their notebooks." TIME OUT, NEW YORK 2004. (www.australianspeaker.com, 2007)

ILL. 121. *Designer's impression of Erik the dog, remote control puppet with balls. A watercolour inspired by numerous press clippings featuring Salom and Erik.*

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Although Salom currently denies a political orientation, he has made some strong stands on topical issues in the past.

During November of 1998, Salom flew from Sydney to the city of Bunbury specifically to participate in *[Forest] + Rescue Show and Fundraiser* to assist forest protestors in their effort to prevent logging in the Wattle Block Forest. The press coverage at the time focused on Salom's Edinburgh Festival successes with a secondary mention of his support of the forest rescue. (Joosen, 1998b, p.19) More credibility is given to Salom's political stance in *The South Western Times*.

> Salom said there was method in his madness and his performances were all in the name of politics. "I think as a performer you have a lot of power and responsibility," Salom said. "Getting people out of their own existence is what I want to do, it's too easy for people to ignore what is happening around them."
>
> "There is so little old growth forest in Europe and we are cutting ours down to sell wood chips to Japan for $7 a tonne so they can make paper." (Joosen, 1998a, p.26)

What was not revealed were the events of the day after his performance when he and his mother drove to the Wattle blockade camp deep in a south west forest to deliver the money raised. They arrived at the camp without incident but were arrested on the way out. As Salom was from another state, he was not summoned to attend the court proceedings. His mother on the other hand was not so lucky.

On another occasion he was involved in an international network of young street performers in an effort to reclaim Melbourne streets for its citizens. Salom liaised with police on behalf of the street performers. This activity was perhaps sparked by an event early in his career when he self funded most of a trip to Thailand to work in a festival designed to give local children performance skills, thereupon increasing their life choices beyond prostitution or working in the mines.

Another activity with a political edge of a different nature is a performance he was invited to do in Redfern, a then predominantly Aboriginal populated suburb of Sydney. The performance occurred at a time when reconciliation and saying 'sorry' were hot issues. He was one of a few white faces around and writes about the uncertainty of his reception until the show's trouser routine. "I dropped my pants and they all screamed, in a good way." Having found a response Salom was able to reach out and ignite the uplifting experience of laughter in his audience.

Did Salom become their 'champion' because he shared a moment of human vulnerability with them? Is the language of clowning through the body and the costume as universal as the audience's response? "Laughter is defined as wordless communication which moves from the secular condition of thought", writes Maggi Phillips. She then goes

on to suggest laughter puts us in an "altered state of 'being'" where "the transitory moments of altered consciousness can be said to replicate, on a minimal scale, the psychic healing journeys of the shaman." (Phillips, 1996, p.199)

Salom's biography is dotted with works for peace, walks against want, forest rallies and finally the "No Stadium" rally at Bondi in Sydney, which prevented the construction of an Olympic stadium on the pristine coastline of the popular Bondi Beach.

This and the unique and political stance of Salom's sometime employer, Circus Oz, which having appeared on the world stage in the late 1970s, affected a substantial change to circus performance. However, according to Jamie Skidmore, by 1987, *Cirque du Soleil* was claiming it's intent to "reinvent circus". (Skidmore, 2007, p.6) Although Skidmore finds that statement over bold he does sight one particular example where a significant modification has been made.

> One of the major modifications in the evolutionary process for *Cirque du Soleil* was the changes made to the ringmaster. The ringmaster has almost always appeared in the circus as a dominant and controlling figure, but the ringmaster of *Cirque du Soleil* has also taken on the role of clown, jester, and fool. (Skidmore, 2007, p.6)

In this light, Skidmore adds, "*Cirque du Soleil* has described their ringmaster as their "Roi des Fous" or King of Fools." (Skidmore, 2007, p.6) Skidmore then says "This was peculiar because traditionally the ringmaster has been seen as the straight man to the clowns, and in many traditions he is never allowed to play the fool (although he is often made to appear foolish). (Skidmore, 2007, p.6)

Has Salom developed the traits of the fool in order to play ringmaster as a result of his own independent performances?

Run in clown: Shaman, trickster or FOOL

Dr Willeford, a literature critic and psychotherapist, draws on material from ritual clowning in ancient societies, right through to the modern circus clown to explore issues of the archetypal fool. In considering Harlequin's slapstick and Salom's 21st century robot dog, Erik, Willeford's analogy of the fool's sceptre with that of the sceptre of king's begs further attention.

Salom's use of the puppet to say those things he himself would not dare to utter is in keeping with the jester and his puppet of the Middle Ages as well as with Willeford's theory that the hero and the fool are very often interchangeable.

"The border line between courage and foolhardiness, for example, is sometimes very thin … The king at the centre and the court jester beside him are a picture of the result of this process." (Willeford, 1969, p.166) The king maintains detachment from the world and his own foolishness, but the jester is permitted absolute engagement and foolishness.

ILL. 122. *The fool and his bauble. A designer's drawing inspired by numerous images of Medieval Jesters and their fool's staff or bauble.*

It seems there might be two possible and often blurred interpretations of manifestations of the relationship between hero and fool and their symbolic sceptres over the centuries. Through one lineage, courage and foolhardiness appear to separate into authority figure and the fool who, under the cover of non-authority, can criticise his/her powerful counterpart (the clown to comic activist line) and through the other there is a shadow-play of that relationship between the authority figure, the fool/jester/clown/comic who toe an ineffectual political line and their sceptre/slapstick and puppet that being non-human can safely voice criticism and/or dissent.

Willeford's main agenda is to examine the hero/fool relationship in the context of the symbolism of the phallus. The sceptre and/or sword as a sign of authority extends from the hand, as does a weapon and is either inserted into a sheath or capped with a circular shape that he identifies as the feminine. Harlequin has used its equivalent, the slapstick, often in very suggestive ways. Salom too is prone to use his juggling baton with the same slapstick humour, as if it miraculously appears between his legs, gesturing proudly towards the ceiling.

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ILL. 123. *Salom's juggling act. Notice the fool's cap like hair do and the baton played as a phallus. This watercolour was inspired by press release photographs. Artist: Julie Parsons*

However to extend this analogy, is the use of Erik the remote controlled robot dog equivalent to the use of the fool's bauble?

In theory it would appear to achieve the same ends, but the remote control is a flat device with small knobs and the dog seemingly is free to move about and interact directly with people. Unlike the fool's bauble, Erik's persona is perceived as independent from Salom. So much so that it is often Erik who gets the gig. (Virgin Blue airlines have recently signed Erik up)

The predominant use of Harlequin's slapstick as a magic wand of the eighteen and nineteenth centuries to imply magical scenes and costume changes now appears to be personified in technology. Although the wand is technology in its most basic sense, there are resonances with the digital technology of the 21st century. Erik, a named pile of plastic lids and contraptions, is animated through technology and personified by electronification of Salom's voice over. Erik, as does the jester's bauble, allows Salom to say the most outlandish things and get away with it. This pile of innate sprayed-silver plastic appears to be a live wire in the entertainment industry …now that is quite an illusion.

Salom's approach to technological clowning suggests a shamanistic edge. He is held in awe as he displays skills most humans have never seen before. The art of mystery is a powerful shamanistic tool. To keep this edge, Salom needs only to be in the forefront of technology. However Salom's physicality must not be overlooked when considering such a shamanistic edge.

ILL. 124. *Joel Salom, cartoon like in costume and stance, image derived from a publicity press release photograph published in the South Western Times Nov 19th 1998.*

Harlequin also revealed the same shamanic edge with his use of physicality in his sudden acrobatic movements. This coupled with his wit in the part of a servant saw him championing for the weak. In later years, the slapstick transformed into a wand used for magically transforming scenes and costumes, again indeed, a powerful shamanic aid.

In current western anthropology, Linda Miller Van Blerkom writes, "Clowns are like shamans in several ways. Both use weird costumes, props, and behaviours. Common to both kinds of performance are sleight of hand, ventriloquism, music and feats of skill that seem to break natural and cultural laws." (Van Blerkom Miller, 1995, p.472)

Salom on occasion has been dressed in a weird costume, which implies he is not a regular person from our streets but rather someone perhaps from another planet. His use of electronic devices and unexpected behaviours through juggling skills which produce music and his use of an electronic puppet certainly meets Van Blerkom's definition.

Could it be that Salom is unaware of the Medieval Fool and his sceptre or indeed Harlequin and his slapstick? Enid Welsford refers to this unconscious repetition of the "Fool's" antics in the preface of the book. Welsford asks, "Why are we so attracted to clowns and jesters who from widely diverse times and places reveal such similarities? What is the significance of the interactions between the fool actor and the audience of his show? " (Willeford, 1969, p. ix) Perhaps it is an unconscious awareness, as Welsford implies, but it would seem Salom is indeed awake to the puppet as a mouthpiece for dissent.

Puppet aside, it is also what Salom does to produce the effect of being superhuman. For example, the Bunbury newspaper advertisements for the *[Forest] + Rescue Show and Fundraiser* which used a quotation from the Edinburgh Festival, amplifies this aspect of his performances.
.

> Joel has been performing on the cutting edge of circus comedy for the last 12 years. His character, with hair on end, is a 7 foot tall cartoon like futuristic kind of guy "… definitely a cult icon. (South WesternTimes, 1989, p.19)

With this media prepping, the audience was prepared for his image but not his initial action which resonates with Harlequinesque type interplay between the hero and the fool.

On this occasion, Salom opened his show by unexpectedly scaling the full height of the structured foyer at the Bunbury Entertainment Centre. He did this suddenly and at great speed and with a confidence that had the audience gasping. This type of superhuman activity clearly excited awe in his audience. Everyone was spellbound immediately.

Salom displayed to his audience his potential to be their hero. It would seem that once he is sure his audience is captivated by the possibility of his super-humanness, he skilfully offers them many opportunities to laugh at his foolish antics. Once the audience sees him as the fool, they drift a sense of superiority over him. Then he startles them with another highly evolved skill and, so, on it goes.

It could be argued that in a tribal situation, this sort of superhuman behaviour might enter the realm of the shaman. Klause-Peter Koepping suggests a shaman appears to operate beyond "thou shalt not". (Koepping, 1985, p.197)

Salom certainly does appear to operate beyond the 'thou shalt not'. However, Salom does not profess to be a shaman. Neither does he wear a shamanic mask as Harlequin did.

Colossally comic comedian: Trickster or JOKER

Shaman, trickster or fool? Perhaps the union of all three becomes the harlequinesque. Or does it? As a designer, exploring potential design possibilities for a new costume for Salom, I am searching for one that has resonances with the harlequinesque both ancient and contemporary. However, although design may be driven by written historical knowledge it is also driven by visual interconnections over time and place that strike the designer's eye as significant. Let us look again at the Fool as seen on the sacred tarot card under the appointed digit of 'the Fool', the naught. Naught was originally derived from two words, *na* (no) and *wiht* meaning a supernatural being, fairy etc, termed as 'thing'. Together these two words describe 'no thing' from which naught was derived in the 12th century. Naught also meant "bad, worthless: of no value or account; vile, wicked and naughty". (Whitehall, 1950, p.1121)

Related to the 'Fool' card is the 'Joker' card of the late 1800s (also a numeric free card) The 'Joker' is a jester type figure created in Anglo America as an addition to the pack of playing cards, which emerged from central Asia. They were made into suited decks by the Moslems and refined by the French with the addition of royalty to the suits. (The King of Diamonds is of course modelled on Julius Caesar, who amongst other things is associated with *circus maximus*. It would seem in one way or another the diamond pattern is tied to circus or circle)

Curiously Australians substituted the 'Joker' with a laughing 'Kookaburra' (a clever symbol with the age old association of feathers with ridicule, or perhaps a shamanistic animal totem).

ILL. 125. *Australian Joker card symbolised by the Kookaburra. Note the silhouette of the jester's cap with its 3 triangle points surrounding the birds head and the snake itself a symbol of transformation which forms a hint of the eternity symbol in the letter J. but may also signify the jester's bauble. Needless to say Australia's own 'Australian made' symbol sits neatly in another triangle.*

In the 20th century, the Joker has gone on to an animated career in comics and movies often leaving a Joker playing card as his calling card. The curious element here is the complex nature of the Joker's relationship with the Harlequin (now female), purported to be the most complex in the history of the comic book (sometimes her lover sometimes her father, sometimes her foe, sometimes her friend, sometimes one and the same). Perhaps the Joker is the trickster aspect of the harlequinesque?

Following a lineage of female comic strip Harlequins is *Harley Quinn*, whose comic books under her own name are still available. Her costume is a combination of jester (Fool) and Harlequin. She is portrayed as the Joker's lover and has appeared in movies alongside him. She was originally in and out of mental institutions until she cleverly reinvented herself as a psychologist.

> The Harlequin is a highly proficient acrobat and jokester. She acts flippant and mischievous often using novelty gadgets in her capers. She can be dangerous at times as her multiple personalities spike from passive to chaotic because of the chemical imbalance in her brain. (titanstower.com)

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ILL. 126. Harley Quinn, as seen on the front of her popular comic books into the 21st century.

The Joker's costume, predominantly a purple block coloured tail suit combined with a green or orange shirt, finished with green tinged hair and a makeup style which is a mix of circus clown (or perhaps a conglomerate of *commedia dell'arte* stock characters) and tragic villain, inspiring the more sinister or sad clown, response.

ILL. 127. Comic strip portrayal of The Joker. Harlequin is never far from the Fool, who in jest becomes the Joker to Harlequin's next comic book manifestation, Harley Quinn. The Joker becomes Harley Quinn's questionable companion at the end of the twentieth century and so it goes on. If these characters appear in the same comic books/movies as Superman, does that mean the gods are still the stock characters of humanity?

Although Salom's cartoon-like appearance and costume style is more in line with that of the Joker's block coloured suit his major characteristics do not overtly match those of the Joker, but perhaps we are missing something? Salom's character certainly exhibits wit, skill, technological usage, improvisation, superhuman powers but his vulnerability and sense of moral fair play do not align with the Joker at all. However, many of these characteristics do align with the Harley Quinn.

ILL. 128. *Costume design for Joel Salom (perhaps alias Joe Kerr?). Gouache on paper, designer Julie Parsons, 2009. The costume utilizes the colours of the Australian Olympic team as a send up to the gods of Olympus. The ping-pong balls from Salom's act, can be pocketed in breast pockets as a send up of Harley Quinn's perfectly round boobs. The prominent cod-piece reminds us of male insecurities, an age old popular subject for farce. The Kookaburra is electronically animated with movement and voice, as is Salom's specialty. The costume also sends up modern circus costume, perhaps of Cirque du Soleil, although possibly teamed with inappropriate footwear as seen in ILL. 95. The focus is on, clowning about with androgyny, as reminiscent of the Dionysus festivities and the unusual relationship between the Joker and Harlequin.*

Has clowning in fact turned full circle? Does clowning follow the path of the shaman on the medicine wheel? We are reminded of Nietzsche's understanding of alchemy, which in turn inspired Jung's interpretation of the dual nature of the ancient universal circular symbol of the OUROBOROS, a serpent who holds its tail in its mouth signifying the beginning and the end.

What better place for the ancient universal symbol of the Ouroboros to play out its timeless meaning than in the symbolism of the circus-ring or as the numerical naught signifying the Fool or the Joker.

ILL. 129. Costume design and performance concept. Gouache on paper, designer Julie Parsons, 2009. Salom's potential circus costume is a sequined (with reflectors) Ocker style shirt combined with sequined thongs and speedos, hinting at the glitzy style of the traditional Harlequin circus clown. The Kookaburra or jester's bauble, is able to poop on Salom's shoulder, Salom cleans it off but later uses the same cloth to wipe his face, leaving his face smudged white. Salom then enjoys watermelon from his esky which leaves his mouth with an over sized smile. All of which is a send up on the current Joker hype. The fishing rod is the symbolic slap-stick and can be used in the act. At Salom's request the ping pong balls are to be stored in the speedos as budgie eggs an Australian term for 'balls'.

ILL. 130. *Harlequin fabric design detail for Salom's shirt. Gouache on paper, designer Julie Parsons, 2009.*

The interplay between pattern and symbol provides a designer with relationships and connections that form the bits and pieces which can be stitched together to create a new cloth from which another harlequinesque costume is born.

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Conclusion

WO/MAN OF MANY COLOURS:

THE CROSS-RACIAL HARLEQUIN

Curtain Call: Dressing up the costume CODES

Once the Harlequin arrived in Australia with all the other gold-diggers, we can trace how the harlequinesque weaves its way into Australian humour. The harlequinesque became a voice of the Australian colonialists and even adopted the flora and fauna of the unknown or seemingly misunderstood landscape of the continent for humorous purposes. The new manifestations of Harlequin maintained traditional attributes of standing for the underdog, in this instance, against the backdrop of an overbearing controlling Mother England. Political ideas were explored in the public arena of performance, with a sharp style of satire, under the watchful eye of Imperial Britain.

By the 1950s, the well-known Harlequin environs had all but disappeared in Australia and the costume as we know it was cut up and scattered about to be recycled in its bits and pieces. Dame Edna picked out a few bits and the rest is history.

Meanwhile, in 1950s America, after a more public women's liberation movement had emerged we see the harlequinesque leap from the pages of American comic books as 100% female (not a female pretending to play a boy). This lineage of the comic book archetypes playing Harlequins and Jokers, has survived into the 21st century. It would seem the world psyche has redefined the harlequinesque from his early European beginnings and connections with Satan and the Fool, into two contemporary characters seen as the devilish Joker and the brave but foolish Harley Quinn.

Of course, back in Australia during the 1950s and at the very same time as the American comic books were embracing the first women superheroes, Australia's Edna Everage burst onto the world stage at the 1956 Australian Olympic Games, no less. Edna's satiric harlequinesque nature was immediately exposed with her outfit finished with a Harlequin circus hat and of course later complemented by her now famous Harlequin glasses (or is that the Harlequin's cat-eye mask).

Edna Everage is everything Australian and everything harlequinesque. Her career has seen her challenge the American comic book super heroines with her super housewife routine. Perhaps she really is playing "Australia", as a character on the world stage, in a show of championing the underdog amid the superpowers? Not content with that she has now settled herself into the position of court fool amid the British royal family.

Not long after Edna's emergence, in the 1970s Circus Oz flung its tent flap open with a new brand of (political) circus. Circus Oz style and humour is uniquely Australian and has made an impact on the world stage contributing to the changing nature of circus all over the world. Here we find something of harlequinesque persona in Joel Salom. As it was with Harlequin, Salom is not backward in coming forward for human rights and environmental issues.

The quirks, idiosyncrasies and characteristics of the harlequinesque can be troublesome to a tidy mind. With early references to his name being aligned with or

actually meaning demon or Satan, there is little wonder that links to the innocent fool confuse and bewilder. However, as shown in the dissertation, it is all a matter of time and place, of the beliefs of a group of people during the period of reference and so forth.

This is reflected when something in the 2008 *Circus Oz 30th birthday bash* performance revealed a different Circus Oz. Their characteristic larrikinism was overshadowed by the tight professionalism produced by the many National Institute of Circus in Australia (NICA) graduates now in the troop and the curiously very English vaudeville comedy routines currently appearing. Perhaps it was because their guest director was comic genius Emil Wolk. Emil Wolk's work in theatre and circus as a traditional acrobatic clown appears to bring us full circle as he unites these talents with contemporary performance makers. In short, the combination produces a very harlequinesque gesture.

It would seem theatrical vaudeville comedy routines and comedy circus acts, although under different umbrellas, are never far from each other. However, harlequinesque performer, Barry Humphries in his Dame Edna Everage character is only too willing to meet the public under his/her own umbrella.

Perhaps as Phyllis Hartnoll attempts to define *commedia dell'arte,* she has also defined something in humankind of "that aptitude of the born comedian for buffoonery, farcical comedy, and improvisation" an "indestructible mimetic instinct". (Hartnoll, 1968, p.64)

The outstanding resilience of the *commedia dell'arte* Harlequin costume over the last 500 years is astounding and yet it is interwoven with on-going changes and transformations. Never the less there remains something utterly harlequinesque about the transformations.

The symbolism of the Harlequin costume is so powerful that even a single lozenge calls out its heritage. In this respect, the transition from the costume (and its symbolic and perhaps pragmatic considerations) to re-cycling in contemporary fashion is curious. Both the costume and its lozenge seem to have inspired a type of continuation of timeless mystery on the catwalks.

With the image and the symbols of the costume both preserved and stored in fashion design and also works of art (yet another mysterious realm for their existence), fashion designers will no doubt continue to rediscover the mystery, and this begs the question of why?

The lozenge is a kind of elongated square, 'having two acute and two obtuse angles; a rhomb; a diamond". (Whitehall, 1950, p.1009) Diagnosed as a pure design element, it is made up of diagonal lines forming a lattice. Diagonal lines are never easily contained with the shape they attempt to occupy. However, a colour can be contained inside of the diamond the lines form. The diagonal line is termed dynamic since it is never static. The nature of the diagonal line extends energetically beyond any boundary.

A collection of diagonal lines, which together form the lozenge pattern essentially create an energetic dynamic design which extends beyond its physical manifestation. Another kind of dynamism is created when the diamond shape is filled with colour. Here the movement is in degrees of receding or advancing.

Dynamic design is very attractive to the fashion industry. The eye catching lozenge design is instantly aligned with the Harlequin and all the associations of a mysterious, mischievous figure from an undefined time. Is Harlequin fashion an attempt to conjure the mystery of the romantic past or to uplift the fashion follower through dynamic line and colour or perhaps to inspire a little bit of devilish mischief? Surely it is all three.

Perhaps the harlequinesque is not just a passing fad, but an indomitable energy that just keeps on popping up wherever there is an opening, reminding us to laugh at life's follies. After all, since the Harlequin's life on the stage is presently subdued, you simply cannot keep the effervescent life energy of the harlequinesque down.

In contrast to celebrating life's effervescence, mourning affirms its loss. Humans developed elaborate measures in their initial expression of the fear of death to ensure the unknown is kept at a safe distance. Perhaps the fashion industry's mimicking of the harlequinesque, mask and all, is an attempt to keep something 'sacred' alive?

The practice of shamanism may have been part of that original measure and is clearly a connection to the development and reasoning behind the conception of a mask. It would seem fear is best confronted with fearful objects such as a mask. However the grotesque also has the capacity to make us laugh. In this realisation, we are confronted with polarities expressed throughout the experience of the harlequinesque: good and evil, upper and lower class, male or female, black mask and white face.

"The real difference, mask or no mask, arises from a particular psychological attitude". (Fo, 1991. p.44)

As in the make-up of fashion models, clownish facial expressions tend to be frozen onto the face of a performer as a distinctive style of make-up or mask, which is not to say that the model or performer is limited to these expressions. The issue then is this practice of make-up/mask wearing a type of healing? Do masking devices essentially take us away from our perceived limitations?

Margaret Shannon writes of the healing function which circus offers people. "Circus seems to hold a healing attraction that draws people to it *when they most need it.*" (Shannon, 2003. p.24) Perhaps this idea bears a trace of the healing provided by shamanistic practices, a trace that is still an active component in our lives, but it is just not named.

A mask or heavy make-up provides a disguise. Cross-dressing is an activity not unknown to clowning, but perhaps the reasons for doing so have changed over the centuries.

> In some respects, the clown's gender was indeterminate, obscured by thick pancake white, eye pencil, lipstick, and loud, floppy dress. On one level, the clown's emasculated masquerade rendered him harmless, a friend of children. But on another level, the drag clown explicitly challenged gender norms, because he demonstrated the shifting, socially constructed ground on which "natural norms were based. (Davis, 2002. p.178)

Dame Edna and Circus Oz are no strangers to cross-dress clowning but the clowns in Circus Oz seldom rely on heavy character make-up. This is particularly the case with Salom.

With these new costumed Australian identities finding their way to the world stage, it is in this international context that we must remain alert to the ever-changing harlequinesque costume codes.

As discussed the original costume is made up of a simple and yet complex design, which reflects the equally simple and yet complex character of its original wearer, Harlequin.

The Harlequin appears as a liminal figure presiding over and in performances of many kinds, acrobatics, stage and film productions, improvisation, dance, pantomime, carnival, fashion and circus environments. These environments may become manifest within festivals, community celebrations, events of religious significance, theatre or street performance, all of which may have begun their trajectories in life through ancient traditional ceremonies of seasonal, religious and/or social significance.

With all these expressions to cater for is there any wonder there is complexity? Perhaps that is in fact the appeal. The nature of the triangle does not provide a smooth transition as does a circle, but rather sudden changes in direction.

To take the two parts of a whole lozenge, the triangular pieces of cloth and stitch them down juxtaposed against one another is to see with the tuck of each corner another turn of character on the horizon. One triangle might represent one part of the harlequinesque in its humanity. For example

…the fool/clown as a shaman appearing in explicitly spiritual terms;
…the fool/clown as a rogue/satirist appearing explicitly social and political terms;
…the fool/clown as a comic hero appearing explicitly in dreams and imaginative guises.

The three interpretations cannot be disentangled from each other but rather each adapts different composites of these qualities to different contexts to 'rouse' their audiences.

For example when Harlequin arrived on the shores of the new colony (Australia), in both circus and the harlequinade, he was not only in full lozenge costume (comic

hero) but also blatantly participating in the political parodies (rogue/satirist) of Imperial Mother England. Doing all this may have in fact been a type of (shamanic) healing for the new settlers' fear of the unknown. See Figure 1.

SHAMAN

FOOL / CLOWN

COMIC HERO   ROGUE / SATIRIST
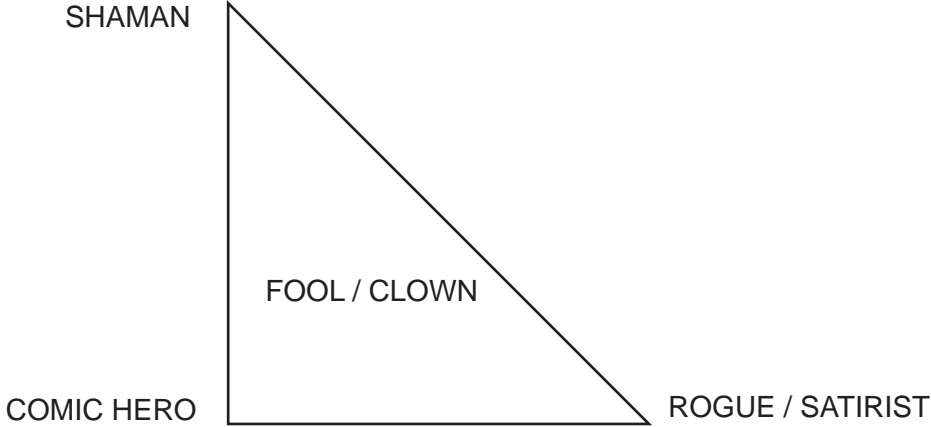
Figure 1

Carnival Harlequin is tinged with the devil but somehow emanates from god/s whilst appearing to be squarely human. It is his/her human vulnerabilities, which make him/her a provocateur of laughter with his/her sense of mockery and compassion. See Figure 2.

GOD

FOOL / CLOWN

HUMAN   DEVIL

Figure 2

The Harlequinesque provides both socially acceptable and unacceptable nonsense, for he or she is a liberator of laughter but other associations may be of a magical nature, where superhuman powers might be perceived. The constant combinations of polarities are indeed united in both the triangular combinations and the manifestations of the harlequinesque. See Figure 3.

```
              GOD

SHAMAN  ┌──────────────┐  HUMAN
        │╲             │
        │ ╲  FOOL / CLOWN
        │  ╲           │
        │   ╲          │
        │    ╲         │
        │ FOOL / CLOWN │
        │      ╲       │
        │       ╲      │
COMIC HERO └──────╲───┘ DEVIL

        ROGUE / SATIRIST
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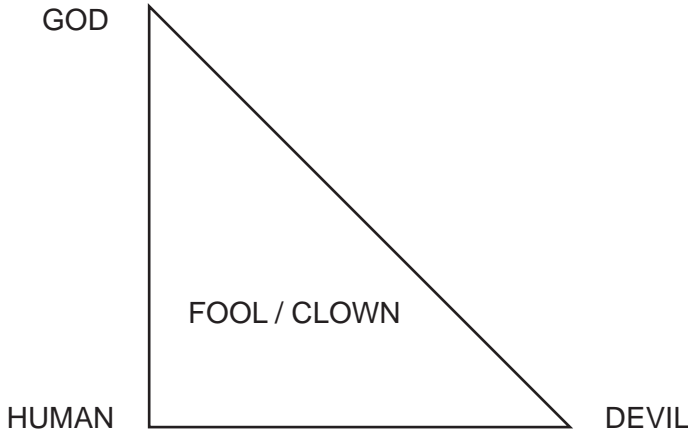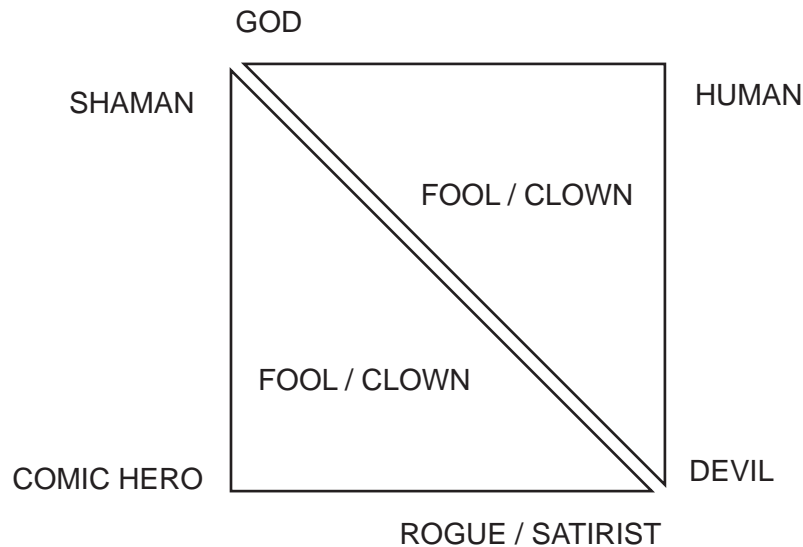
Figure 3

These combinations have also occupied French philosopher, Michel Serres. Serres has selected the Harlequin figure to represent the multi nationalities and complexities of the human race, along the way he also discusses Harlequin's polarities in relation to this view in the preface of his book, *A Troubadour of knowledge.* Serres sees Harlequin as androgynus and neither young nor old but both. The description of Harlequin is one in which

> the angel and the beast, the vain , modest, or vengeful victor and humble or repugnant victim, the inert and the living, the miserable and the very rich, the complete idiot and the vivacious fool, the genius and the imbecile, the master and the slave, the emperor and the clown are joined? (Serres, 1997, p.xvi)

Perhaps as Serres suggests, Harlequin represents an instinctual response humans have for transforming polemic situations with humour. The provoker of humour, the Harlequin, needs those who respond with laughter; one does not exist without the other. The provoker's response to laughter is often in the form of improvised farcical buffoonery. We say s/he is a born comedian.

If laughter is linked to the Harlequin then his geometric costume must be a signifier of the comedic condition.

The geometric lattice of the Harlequin costume is believed by some to underlie all humanity. Could it be that the Harlequin embodies and wears a costume, which is connected to what is believed to be an intrinsic geometric lattice? Could it be this is why such a costume has lasted more than an astonishing 500 years? Some current imagery in metaphysics explores 3D diamond forms, which supposedly surround the body energetically. This proposition coupled with the independent work by some visionary artists such as Alex Grey may give us a clue to the symbolic extent of the geometric lattice.

Grey's early work exhibits highly detailed images showing the complexity of each of the body's systems. From here he moved to external manifestations on the body's surface such as is revealed in race and then he continued into the energetic realms surrounding and interpenetrating the body. His detail throughout the series of life size works titled *The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors* is awe-inspiring. His meticulous examination of the physical, metaphysical and spiritual anatomy of the self leads us from what we know into visions of the unknown. Grey explains a pattern of interwoven energies, which are interpenetrated by demonic and angelic energies to form the sacred lattice, which he believes, connects all living things. Does this reveal something about the complexity of the Harlequin in his lattice costume?

As a practising Tibetan Buddhist, Alex Grey may well see his role as serving the community as an artistic-mystic, perhaps akin to something like a shaman, but his work does implore we see the union in our multi-nationality.

> I'd like to think that the multi-cultural, all gender, all racial kind of truths can be brought into the equation. I think the artist of today can help to midwife this. (Grey in Metzger, 2008, p.1)

As a mid-career practicing artist, the experience of looking at work like Grey's made me wish to get inside the pattern to better understand its allure, intention and place in the world. I also had to acknowledge the continuing presence of harlequinesque type figures in my own work; the challenge was in finding out why?

The consequence of the desire to understand this multi-nationality, multi-dimensional phenomenon at a deeper level, led me to find inspiration in London, which was developed further in Prague and became a working drawing in Italy with the final completion, taking place in Hanoi.

What began to develop was the experience of a world-view of the potential of the Harlequin's multi-dimensionality as seen through my Australian eyes.

In order to spend a focused time exploring the concept of a possible sacred geometric lattice as a symbol for joining all humanity, I applied for and won a position as an artist in residence in Hanoi, Vietnam. I chose Vietnam because of an unusual 'thread' I found in Europe, when I came across a large Vietnamese community living in the Czech Republic. The reason they were there was complex and related to attaining skills particularly concerned with the production of cloth. As a costume designer, this 'thread' was used like the first stitch in the connection to the lattice the Harlequin wore.

My intention during the residency was to design a piece, which defined more than a Harlequin costume and yet was attributed to the costume. I wanted the design to be supported by other abstract elements, which penetrated the space beyond the costume itself. I chose as a vehicle Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian drawing. The Vitruvian emerged from Italy at the same time as the Harlequin of the 1500s. As discussed, the Harlequin's origins are full of implied cross-cultural implications.
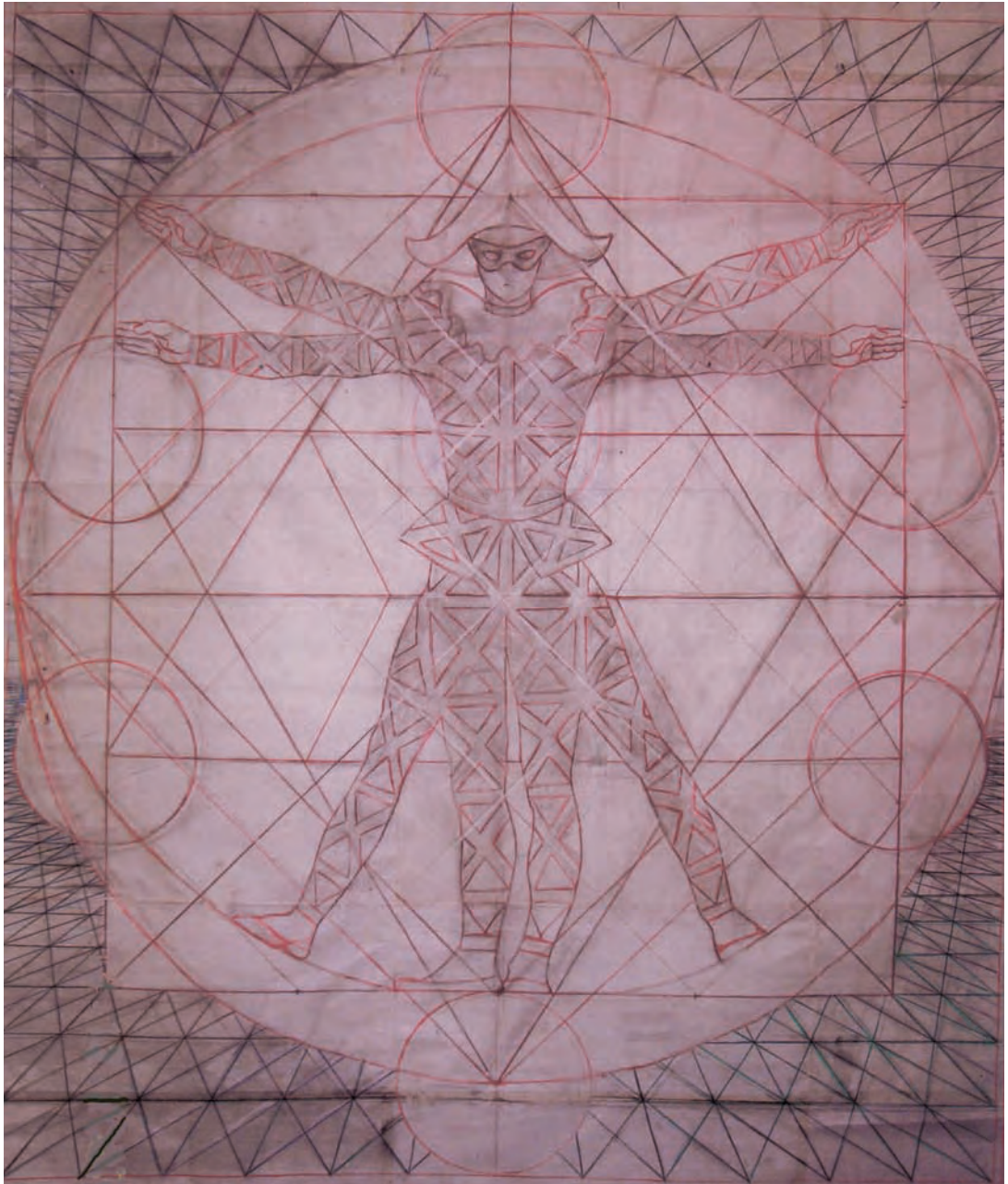
ILL. 131. *First pattern draft of the intended design. Charcoal and red coloured pencil on paper, 200 x 235cm, designer Julie Parsons, 2007.*

The Vitruvian drawing is often used as an implied symbol of the essential symmetry of the human body, and by extension, to the universe as a whole. This concept and that of a multi-cultural Harlequin aligns very well with the philosophies of Michel Serres. Serres uses the Harlequin as the symbol for multiple nationalities. He writes of the Harlequin in a symbolic manner, "when the skin and flesh appeared the whole world discovered his mixed origin: mulatto, half caste, Eurasian, hybrid. (Serres, 1997, p.xvi)

> To be educated is to become a harlequin, a crossbreed, a hybrid of our origins — like a newborn child, complexly produced as a mixture of maternal and paternal genes, yet an independent existence, separated from the familiar and determined. (Serres, 1997, back cover)

An artist who has taken Serres' philosophy and explored multi-nationalities in her non-conventional art-work, is world acclaimed artist Orlan. Orlan was recently in Perth for *SymbioticaX,* an initiative uniting science and art. Orlan's inspiration and reference to Michel Serres and his Harlequin theory, is the foundation of her experiment in the creation of a Harlequin coat. Orlan comments on her work in the exhibition catalogue, *Beap 07, Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth*, Stillness, art + science + technology.

> *Harlequin Coat* presents the realization of a composite, organic coat, made from an assemblage of pieces of skin of different colours, ages and origins. This prototype of a biotechnological coat, consisting of coloured diamond shaped in vitro skin cell cultures in Petri dishes, will be made to symbolize cultural crossbreeding. (Orlan, 2007, p.44)
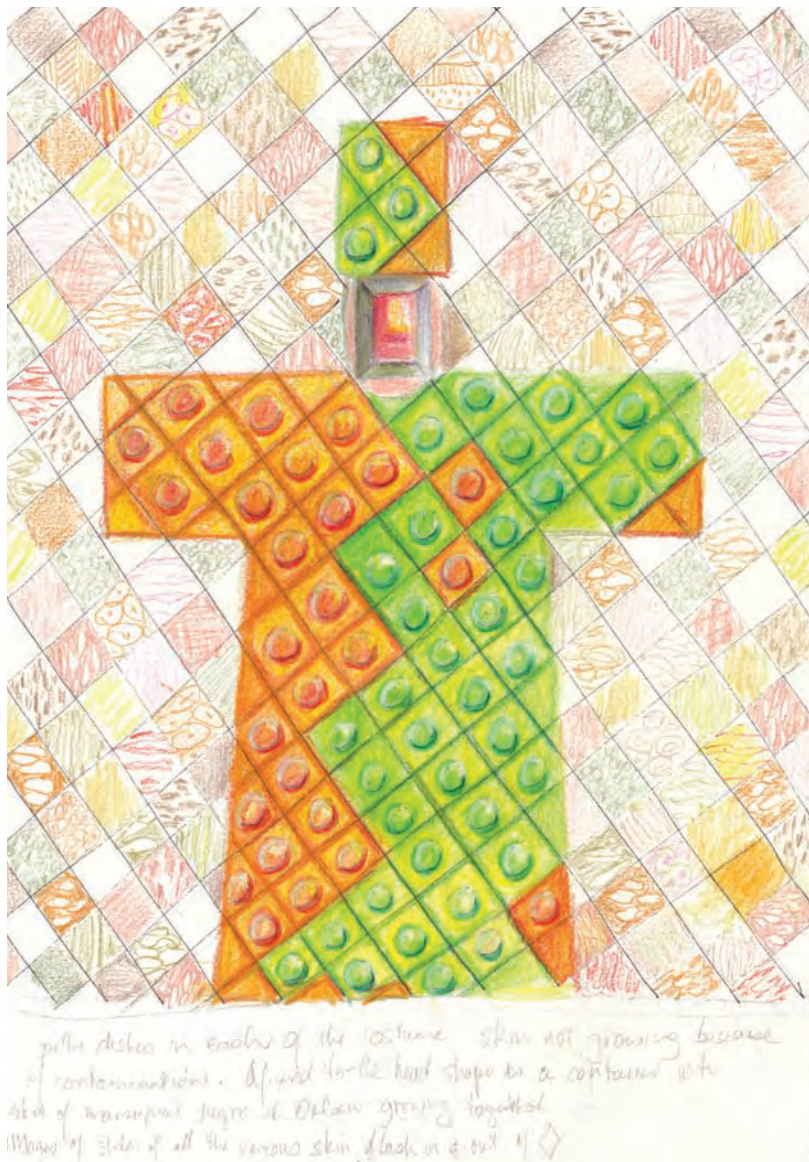

ILL. 132. *Memory drawing done of Orlan's multi media exhibition piece, which shows an overlay of projections of various skin cells and patterns over an arrangement of Petri dishes with growing skin cells. Beap 07, Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth*,

The catalogue further states that, "The *Harlequin Coat* project develops and continues the idea of cross breeding and hybridization, using the more canal medium of skin cells. This work on the figure of the harlequin is inspired by the text 'Laicite' written by French philosopher Michel Serres, in which he uses the Harlequin as a metaphor for multiculturalism." (Catalgue entry: Beap 07, Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth, Stillness, art + science + technology)

As artist Alex Grey suggests, the sacred lattice, which appears as line between geometrically assembled triangles, may represent a universal sense of unity in humanity. Grey is a visionary whose extraordinary detailed works show, the intricacies of the human being through the full exploration and depiction of nervous system, skeletal system, muscular system, skin colour and facial features of every race on earth. With this type of background and understanding of the human body, Grey's visionary progression into the world of metaphysics, reveals a visual mapping as evidence of the sacred lattice linking all living things. In doing so he identified the polarities shown as demonic and angelic forms.

Polarity can also be found in the harlequinesque figures, as both servant and master, both of the devil and of God, both male and female, hero and fool and so forth. Could it be that the Harlequin is a representative of the mix of not only all nationalities but also the complex polarities within?

My experience does not yet extend to visions of polarized parts, so I busied myself with colour and line in the creation of a cartoon for my intended much larger design.
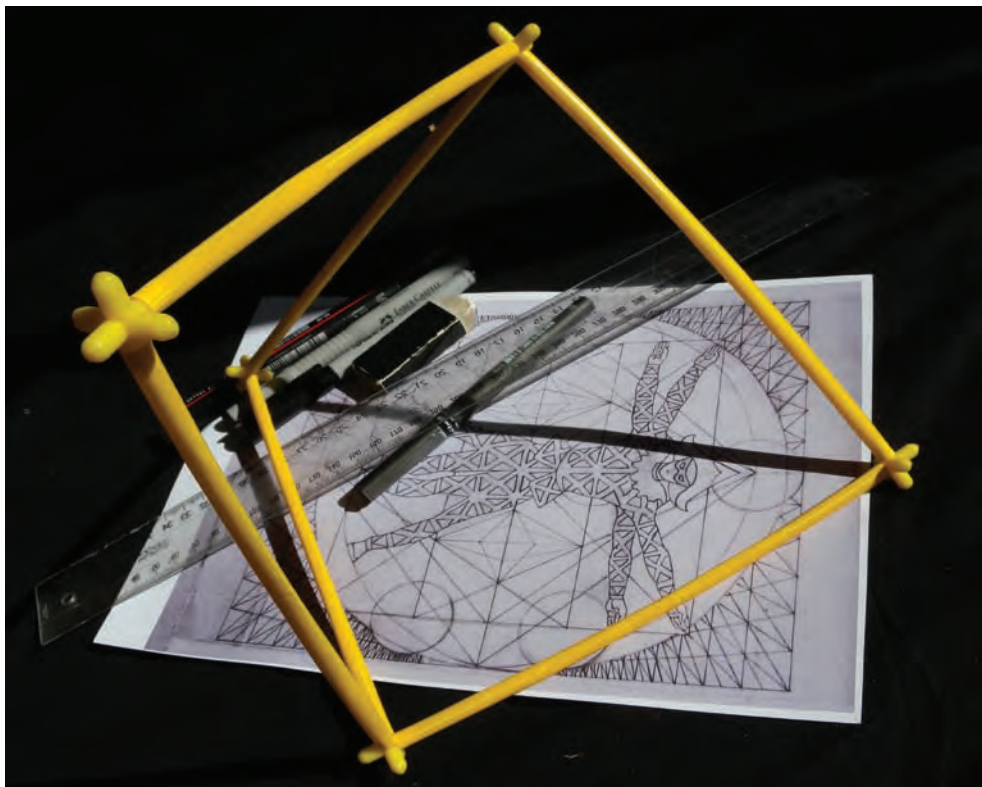
ILL. 133. *The black and white cartoon prior to colour applications with structure exploring the dimensionality of the triangle. Designer Julie Parsons 2008. Photo: Eran Barash.*

ILL. 134. *The coloured cartoon. Designer Julie Parsons 2008. These small drawings, 185mm x 220mm, enabled the colour plans to be made from which the final work was completed. The final full size design created in Hanoi, revealed an average of over 200 individual triangular shapes per sq metre. The coloured pencils reveal the colour palette used. Four hues of red, blue, green and yellow orchre coupled with black, white and a flesh tint. Photo: Eran Barash.*

This cartoon was done in preparation for the residency in Vietnam early in 2008. The main thrust of the residency was to experience the cross-cultural links and sensations. I did this by working with a lattice/lozenge design indicating threads, which, as suggested by Grey, might link the resulting complexity of infinite pattern to all humanity. The central Harlequin modelled on Leonardo's Vitruvian man (created in renaissance Italy, but existing in part prior to this) implied perfection and harmony in the measurements of the ancient Greek's, *Golden section*. This gave me a steadfast European position from which to work. I then added the Harlequin costume to represent the adherence to Michel Serres' philosophy of Harlequin symbolising multi-nationalities.

I was given a studio in central Hanoi, near the old French sector. This was significant because of my interest in the consequential trade in fabrics with France. These exotic fabrics would have affected the Harlequin costume and indeed many theatrical productions in Europe from the 1700s onwards.

Curiously, although Vietnam's rich fabrics were once highly sort after, today the cloth manufacture industry is seeking assistance from Australia in setting up contemporary fabric manufacturing techniques. With local Vietnamese fabric manufacture equipment both antiquated and dangerous by today's working standards, courses are now run

by RMIT, building inroads with an officially recognised educational status, which will support a move into a technological world as the international market moves in to set up fabric manufacture industry using Vietnam's cheap labour force.

Consequently my search for beautiful mysterious and exotic silk fabrics was met with disappointment in a city whose production of cloth is also challenged with fabrics coming in from China. That coupled with the Vietnamese capacity to move with change saw the Vietnamese embracing western ideas of manufacture at a frightening speed.

Thus my quest to create a cross-cultural Harlequin design using exotic silks was thwarted. However, there are small pockets, mostly run by aid agencies intent on preserving handicraft techniques which remain, but I dare to say much of this is at the discretion of the western eye focused on a tourist market.

I did however attend an indigo dye workshop conducted by a Mong elder from the hill tribe area around Sappa. During this process, I learnt to regard the dye as an entity, who had to be spoken to and treated with great respect. I also noted that some Tribal art used pattern resulting from arrangements of triangles, but again trade along the Chinese boarder is bringing in poor quality florescent threads, which the hill tribe women enjoy to weave and embroider into their national costumes. Nothing remains static.

Disheartened but not defeated I gave up on the silks and pursued the two square metre design in designer's gouache, which is no mean feat. By way of attempting inclusion, I then decided to have it made up in cotton by a Vietnamese person, but I was to find that that too was out of the question as the design was so complex it would have taken the makers away from their regular customers thus ultimately losing regular dependable trade. While the aid agencies welcomed commissions they too could not handle the complexity.

Dashed and unable to engage an actual Vietnamese person, I contented myself with those illusive energetic diagonal lines (threads), and then turned instead to the colour play in an attempt to capture something of the interaction between the many cultures (which perhaps even resided within my own being).

The two square metre design created in Hanoi, is not playful like my other earlier harlequinesque works but is contemplative. There is no laughter but rather a quiet sense of seemingly unattainable reunion. It may even be the place where the sad clown resides.

To round off the discussion I return to the circle in which Harlequin stands inspiring a contemplation which brings me back to the moment in my childhood when time stood still as I first gazed upon the circus in all its harlequinesque glory and extended to the moment when I saw the finished Harlequin puppet hanging motionless from the door. To all the Harlequinesque paintings and sculptures that have ever sprung from my fingers, it is curious to land frozen in a work of art.

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ILL. 135. *Harlequin Vitruvian. Gouache on heavy weight watercolour paper. 200 x 235cm, Designed by Julie Parsons. The piece was completed as a floor installation in, Hanoi, Vietnam, January 28th 2008, at The Bookworm Gallery, a space used by international and local artists alike. The centre piece is cut into diamonds which, are assembled into a rectangle, while the surrounding edge is made up of geometric components which form a never ending perspective in space or perhaps hint at the enduring nature of lozenge pattern into eternity.*