P.A. Skantze

Itinerant Spectator / Itinerant Spectacle

Itinerant Spectator / Itinerant Spectacle

P.A. Skantze

punctum books ✶ brooklyn, ny

Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle
© P.A. Skantze

http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

This work is Open Access, which means that you are free to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors, that you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build upon the work outside of its normal use in academic scholarship without express permission of the author and the publisher of this volume. For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.

First published in 2013 by
punctum books
Brooklyn, New York
http://punctumbooks.com

ISBN-13: 978-0615858968
ISBN-10: 0615858961

Library of Congress Cataloging Data is available from the Library of Congress.

Before you start to read this book, take this moment to think about making a donation to punctum books, an independent non-profit press,

@ http://punctumbooks.com/about/

If you're reading the e-book, you can click on the image below to go directly to our donations site. Any amount, no matter the size, is appreciated and will help us to keep our ship of fools afloat. Contributions from dedicated readers will also help us to keep our commons open and to cultivate new work that can't find a welcoming port elsewhere. Our ad/venture is not possible without your support. Vive la open-access.

Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

CONTENTS

Introduction: Weathered Thresholds ‖ 1

I Satisfaction ‖ 11

II Sound ‖ 69

III Structures ‖ 107

IV Senses ‖ 161

V States ‖ 203

Epilogue ‖ 237

Acknowledgements ‖ 241

Appendix ‖ 245

Works Resonating ‖ 249

‖ Weathered Thresholds

As I type these words in order to awake, out of time, and arrest, temporarily in text, examples of performances I have seen, of moments I have experienced, I engage the mechanisms of memory. Whether a memory from an hour ago or a year, it is one that serendipitously gathers up impressions, the impressions of a spectator. How many memories do we have, do they cohabit peacefully, does one push ahead of the other falsifying its importance? Is the working of memory evocative of the famed rooms of the palace articulated by Frances Yates; do we still conceive of our memory as a motion in and out of rooms, of corridors? Or are our memories now adjusted by information received in the centuries since the 15th, the text-dependent culture Elizabeth Eisenstein describes, or by the modern, breathless copia possible through the flick of an idea onto a screen, named, saved and forgotten on an ever expanding pin drive—how many angels can dance on the head of that pin?

How does the memory of the performance I have seen surface through the strange entity of a shared cultural memory, the memory made by a national way of looking, the memory made from the experience of spectating with others? That

stubborn silt Judith Butler named the "sediment of gendered expectations" in her 1990 analysis of performance and gender still tugs at the spectator's feet as she manoeuvres her way through a spectacle performed before her. Such assumptions that make for the ground of assuming also include among them national identity, age, education, race, class. What can be experienced as fluid and at times immaterial to the witness herself, can as suddenly be attributed to her, an attribution that weights what was in motion, tying it to a category and tying it to the collection of characteristics making up that category.

As when Frank Castorf implies in his frenetic and hammering version of *Streetcar Named Desire* renamed *Endstation America*, 'Yo! You American in the seventh row, 15th seat, this is what *you* are like, here's America.' And I observe myself becoming more and more agitated, noting my discomfort with surprise since I am so habitually a fierce critic of my country: haunted by the harried Williams who could no more be said to speak for or represent something monolithically 'American' than could any effete, Southern boy born of a disappointed belle. The violent isolation in the staging and the triumphal narcissism castigates the US—it is 2003 and castigation only seems just. Yet here again the question of memory and the practice of spectating conjoin: my past with my own complexly Southern belle mother; my surprise at my defensive protection of the work of an outsider to the American way being used as if it signified the work of an insider; my surprise at the sudden, sheer pleasure of Williams' extravagant words—a pleasure resurrected only in aural memory since this production was in German with surtitles in Italian—at a time when most performance texts as if bowing to the current

distrust of text-based theatre risked only the shortest words and briefest sentences possible.

How many things, I reflect here, go on when we watch, particularly when the watching comes from an itinerant

movement, corporeal but not only. Of the activity of that semi-conscious wanderer, the *flâneur*, Walter Benjamin writes, "it is the creation of Paris."(263. v.2) A digression follows—Benjamin's writing performs the incidental turnings of the *flâneur's* wandering feet by demarcating his own prose alleyways—the "wonder is that it was not Rome." Delineating things Roman from things Parisian, Benjamin sees Rome as a landscape of temples and cordoned off shrines to the past; he decides that "the great reminiscences, the historical *frissons*—these are all so much junk to the *flâneur*, who is happy to leave them to the tourist." A *flâneur* "would be happy to trade all his knowledge of artists' quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile—that which any old dog carries away"(263).

At work in the romance of the *flâneur* and of the implied anthropomorphism of Rome and Paris—two coordinates in the map of great European cities, one I inhabit, the other in which I act the *flâneur*—is a memory. Or perhaps here more precisely what Joe Roach has reanimated as a kind of performance uncanny: a spectator/ *flâneur* in the cartographical space of playing participates in a space of exchange that is "an improvisational behavior space" where "memory reveals itself as imagination"(1996, 29). Because memory also retrieves what has not been stored. Those weathered thresholds invite more itinerant travel not because they are familiar but because they encourage a dreaming, to use Benjamin's sleepwalking term for the *flâneur* activity par excellence, of what we could not know but strangely do recognize. What Fred Moten by way of Nathaniel Mackey might call an 'insistent previousness,' one with as mixed an unacknowledged heritage, as troubled a moment to moment

present among those whose ruins these were, whose ruins these are and who might yet be coming to camp among them (55).

In this work you are reading, the old dog and the tile play their parts. A recollection of performances gathered because of the particular yellow on the corner of that tile, the way a corner of the stage will allow for something that resists forgetting, indeed will sometimes expect to be appreciated, touched, seen beyond just the first glance of a passer by, collected, shaped by contemplation into a communicated memory. The satisfactions of the itinerant spectator and her fellow travelers will never be those of comprehensive accounts, an honorable method that would seek to account for a large body of work by one company, or to analyze a pattern of social import deduced from a plan to see a certain set of performances in a certain place at a certain time.

For example here in these pages the activity of watching given the place of the seeing might suggest the character of those things and persons we collect under the term 'European.' At its most crude, the reference can conjure something falsely tangible like a sports event with fans: ideas dressed in a kind of intellectual football jersey for a team called Sophistication and its squad of famous players, where indeed Benjamin's retired uniform holds pride of place. Partly one can say these impressions can only hold true for a certain educated Western spectator or her readers. At present the complications of time and history across the landscape of that sedimented assumption that is the European splash new colors of paint—Polish and Romanian—and creative gobs of waste—constitutional confusion and threatened treaties—across the weathered threshold, not to mention what follows the activities of the dog. But what comes into the performance space with an itinerant

spectator presented with an itinerant spectacle always mixes imagination revealed as memory with hearsay and longing.

I remember seeing a Valle Inclan play at the Teatro Valle in Rome in 1995. Probably one of the few US professors teaching Valle Inclan outside of a Spanish department, I did so because I was trying to account for the oddities of the geography of Western theatre history. Why do hot spots appear at certain times, on certain continents from the 16th century through to contemporary performance? So Valle Inclan on the syllabus stands for the lost 19th century in Spanish drama, before Lorca rides his foaming horse into view and after Calderon and Lope de Vega have remade the world. Off I went with little Italian and no knowledge of the play to sit among my fellows and watch, glancing up for the few Italian words on the surtitle screen I might have learned in my scant three months in the country.

At the interval, I went to the box office to purchase tickets for Societas Raffaello Sanzio's production of *Giulio Cesare* to be performed in November and thus when I would still be in Italy teaching my Michigan students. My stomach knotted a bit on my short walk toward the *signora* at the *biglietteria*; I rehearsed my question in Italian in my head. Her face told me what hearsay I had missed, what everyone but I, the itinerant and out of town/out of country spectator, knew. The tickets had sold out within days of going on sale; the event that was the Cesena-based Company arriving in Rome with their version of Shakespeare had been in the ears of the locals weeks before the tickets became available. Thus in my disappointment I added to my list the name of this group and the intention to go and see whatever they were doing wherever I could. The mix of hearsay, accidentally finding out about the wild popularity of the troupe,

and longing, wanting the tickets more for having been thwarted in having them, created a memory and expectation I took to my first performance by Societas Raffaello Sanzio, *Genesi*, in Rome.

What does it mean to record the impressions of an itinerant spectator, those perishable descriptions bound in time and place to, well, time and place? I pose the question thinking not of the wealth of argument about performance documentation and it uses and counter-uses, but of what our stories mean to one another. Of how I might stand on an imagined promontory looking out over several years of performance across countries in Europe and point out land masses, intriguing groupings, startling shifts in the coordinates of sea and sky. Of how the process of my itinerant wanderings begins to instruct me in a practice of *spectating*, a practice that can be as intuitive, cumulative and crafted as that of making performances, of directing and writing. Can I offer you a place beside me to look/to listen with me? Can I bring into focus without delineating too sharply a contour to be shaped anew by you through my rendering, openly? Will you create narratives having to do with identity and categories of exploration by looking, listening, receiving in tandem with me, categories I seek not to define for the very reason that the contours or shapes of the land mass may create different coordinates dependent up on your own spectatorial coordinates? You might see land masses reminiscent of others you know, some representation of mine may awaken a memory of your own. A methodology of suggestion rather than argument, an invitation to look together rather than a flat rendering of the afterimage, the leftover surface of the remembered performance.

A methodology, I might name it and indeed hope to replicate it, of narrative care, tenderly lifting the boiling beaker from the Bunsen burner to place it on the countertop, infinitesimal movements necessary for the discoveries small and grand. W.G. Sebald practices such a methodology in his work, work not in the disciplinary camp of performance studies, but work I propose that models a kind of observing that facilitates reflection on, in his case, observing and history, in mine, being a spectator. The method has the effect of providing textual 3D glasses, a kind of looking that sees the historical dimensions, often flattened when one looks without such an aid, with the added volumes made by memory and interpretation. Thus the reader sees out to the back, over to the side, here close to the face, and can reassemble what he hears or choose where she looks. I might call Sebald's method a kind of staging of memory, a reanimation with intent, choosing where to exaggerate, where to indicate with a faint nod what those of us reading his hypnotic prose might want to give more attention to for ourselves. I borrow this methodology, one Michael Taussig might call "a love of muted and even defective storytelling"; Taussig claims this kind of storytelling to be a "form of analysis…there has to be a swerve in the writing itself because the writing is the theory and the swerve is what trips up thought in a serpentine world" (vii).

If the flaw in the thinking of our time now, in many cultures now, is reductive response masquerading for critical interpretation—see any segment of news on any major news outlet—then one possible intervention to be made could be that of care, of perceiving and revealing spatial/corporeal volume where the habit is to see as well as hear the doors slamming, another room labeled and shut, another national habit rendered

general and common. One protection against the harm caused by the violent shrinking that is the reductive is the deliberate coaxing of the reduced into a space where it can expand, where care can be taken to invite again a dimensionality, sometimes mysterious and uncategorizable, into tactile view, a 'view' made of sound as well as sight. This book offers an itinerant pilgrimage across spectating in Europe during the period of the Union's expansion and its monetary cohesion. The spectator *flâneur* having lingered in many weathered thresholds, offers a montage of seeing performances in different places, in different languages, with different companies amongst different audiences, patterns in the ways of receiving and of making. Such patterns disturb by implications, violations, hesitations, confusions; such patterns

score the sediment of assumptions or kick up the dried and cracked surface to show newly turned earth. This book invites its reader to cross the weathered thresholds with the particular quality of attention—the kind that comes from a mix of care

and dreaming—Benjamin and Sebald model as a spectator/ *flâneur* at the side of the writer, with her/his own vantage point/ vanishing point of memories and recognition to see what has been going on onstage, in performance all over the place all over these years.

‖ Satisfaction

To get to the performance of Handspring Puppet Company's production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* in Avignon's Théâtre Municipal, I have to cross the large square of time, nodding to the clock that marks its passing in the Place de L'Horloge. While the open space would invite forms of street theatre at any time of the year, in this festive moment groups fill each quadrant, barkers for their brief wares. Festival time exists concurrently with and yet in contrast to everyday time: attending an international festival of music or theatre or dance I abandon consideration of how many performances I can attend, of when I have seen too much to remember and reflect. Suddenly in the excitement of the abundance of potential works I might see, I begin to calculate the impossible mathematics of starting time and duration with the time it takes to get from one venue to another. Gone is the accustomed plotting of tickets within the working week, measuring how many nights one wants to be 'out,' instead the frenzy in the air, the bodies pressing me to see their work, suddenly makes it conceivable that I might see something at 9:00, 10:40, 14:00, 17:00, etc. For the period of the festival the only limit on the number of performances I can see

are those of conflicting hours of the shows, the distance of one venue from another and the amount of money I have left over from my festival ticket buying.

Over the years I have noticed how the advertising that begins my festival experience—the anticipation of going that marks the start of the imaginative process of spectating—the 'release' of the program on the internet or by mail, comes in the form of containers marked by nation. As if festivals hark back to world's fairs, the performances seem to occur in visiting national tents or exhibits. The link between advertising and sales in the performance sphere confirms the insidious and enduring connections between nation and marketing. For many years now, the Avignon Festival has hosted a 'special' group of works from one nation as a subset of the festival program. I remember being annoyed and dismayed at the text on the website the year Avignon hosted works from Japan since it read like nothing so much as an ad for Air Asia. Accompanying the text was a picture of a Japanese woman, and this implication of a country full of Asian babe geishas coming toward you to serve sat oddly juxtaposed to the descriptions of the performances that clearly would not reinforce the stereotype of spectator as pampered male and the nation as a careful, elegant and feminine hostess.

Thus when a spectator arrives at the 'portals' of the international festival, the talk on the street continues the tag of nation by referring to the work as the German offering, or the Lithuanian or the South African. Crossing the square that day, I remember being wholly aware that I was on my way to the South African offering. Plotting a ruthless diagonal through the enticingly festive square, determined to get to the theatre on time, I encounter groups of actors in costume and speaking

assorted languages who seek to gain my attention long enough and effectively enough for me to consider adding their offering to the list of works for which I hold tickets, just one more, just one more performance. An experience not unlike being lured to the gambling table or the slot machine, I hesitate long enough to be enticed; will the work they are offering be the one I might regret missing the most? If I don't roll the dice, will I miss my lucky chance? The mix of emotions reminds me of Tsypkin's extraordinary novel about Doestoyevsky's gambling, the way the author evokes the speedy movement between ruin and its despair and the inexhaustible leap of hope in the breast at the possibility of winning. In the gambler's imagination all previous financial ruin and even the past itself dissolves in the vision of the luxury just a throw away. Such are the temptations of taking one more turn at the wheel of promise that can be performance.

If I am remembering correctly, when I reached the theatre I stepped down into the foyer of the relatively small Théâtre Municipal, its smallness perhaps a false memory taking shape in contrast to Avignon's principal venues, huge courtyards and cloisters and the enormous outdoor space of the Palais du Papes. From my seat close to the very small proscenium stage, I noted that contrasts of size were a part of the cognitive information combining argument and story in the production itself: the two actors playing Ubu (Dawid Minnaar) and Ma Ubu (Busi Zofuka) in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* seemed huge not only by way of costume and physical size but also in comparison to the scale of the theatre. The outsizedness which would in the course of the play move to a kind of metonymic representation of the varieties of oppression also formed itself in contrast to the size of the puppets, larger than traditional marionettes, about

the dimension of a small child. For this production I could listen if I chose and ignore the surtitles: the text spoken mainly in English with a smattering of Afrikaans and the Xhosa of the spoken testimony was accompanied by surtitles with the French translation.

I remember wanting to see the piece because of the reference in the title to the famous post-apartheid hearings. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created in the wake of the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela, marked an event commonly understood to be the most public symbol of the end of apartheid. I am mindful of how 'common understanding' signifies a distinction between the 'hearsay' of national struggles and protest that comes to the ears of those in other countries—many of us in the audience at Avignon shared this form of knowledge about South Africa—and the subtleties more apparent to an audience who experienced apartheid, who know the characters involved, and can more fully judge the evidence the theatrical production reproduces within the frame of the work.

My curiosity about the performance came as well from the reputation of those hearings as they were reported on in various media. In a time, then and now, known predominantly for the velocity of greed and the decay of social structures of care for those not on the fast train to wealth, I heard the reports and listened for what solace the performance of communal reckoning might offer against the prevailing public discourse where 'the appearance of wrongdoing' bears more weight than the ethical consequences of wrongdoing itself. Not surprisingly then, in South Africa the public display of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Human Rights Violation

Committee (begun in 1996) struck those present as "highly ritualized public proceedings" whose troubled theatricality I read about in articles by Shane Graham and Loren Kruger analyzing the interaction between performance and the public ritual of confessing (Graham, 12; Kruger). Thus in South Africa, even the written recorded testimony from the Commission sounded like a performance, and in Avignon direct citation of the transcripts from those hearings furnishes one part of the text for the Handspring Company's production.

Into my seat that night, then, came a spectator already thinking through her memories, political reflections and expectations as the lights dimmed. How performances begin, I reflect, might be considered more often in thinking about the spectator/performer contract, in thinking about the practice of spectating. A friend recently said that she considers the opening of a performance a promise; in my experience even when I want to see a piece I begin in a state of wary attention, perversely testing the very thing I have sought out. Since writing about performance inevitably comes in the wake of seeing the entire piece, it is easy to forget that first watchfulness. As the lights dim or the action begins or the performer appears in the gallery, I suffer an unfamiliar and deep pessimism, my heart sinks as I think, 'oh this might not be good.' (A truth borne out again and again experientially; yet, it would seem I am wiling to forget the scores of bad pieces in the promise of one transforming one.) Perhaps a hold-over from my Catholic school days when I bargained with God for an A by resolutely declaring to one and all I had failed the test, the measure of my distrust is a kind of hope, a gambler's hope no doubt, that by not feeling anticipation and excitement, I will then be brought

up from the end of the spectatorial table to sit at the right hand of God and see a miraculously good play.

Thus when I began to watch the Handspring Puppet Company that night, my spectatorial attention had to adjust itself, not only out of its state of initial worry but into an active state of awareness shifting my reception between animated objects and bodies: allegorical puppets, live actors, marionettes and a screen functioning as a "blackboard" at the back of the stage upon which are projected "crudely jointed paper cut-outs and white chalk drawings of Ubu in the style of Jarry" as the Handspring website describes it. The multiple objects and bodies inhabiting the stage disrupted the "realism" of factual reporting or the replication of testimony and evidence, not least because the gigantic appeared next to the miniature, awakening the audience to the consequences of scale in representation. Like a choric recurrence, small but recognizably individual human puppets appeared in a glass box, a box reminiscent of other famous war crimes trials, where the descriptions of torture and everyday violence juxtaposed the grotesque and sophisticated cruelty perpetrated with the unbearable memory of witnessing it or being the victim of it. This interpenetration of the human actor and the puppet speaker hinted at a permeable realm of fantasy and fact, as much about the mechanisms of the performed memory of atrocities as about a narration of what happened.

In his meditative and catholic work *Memory Practices in the Sciences,* Geoffrey Bowker examines mechanisms of memory and storage as a kind of teleological design we are in the midst of deciphering even as those mechanisms change under the pressures of politics and progress. According to Bowker, "past

iniquities will be forgotten by most people and institutions: when justice has been done in the present, then their memorialisation will be complete (and they can be pushed out of consciousness). Is it possible, Yosef Yerushalmi (1996) asks, referring to the trial in France of Klaus Barbie for war crimes, 'that the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering' but justice?" (25) While [the French historian] Renan observes "that 'forgetting, and I would even say historical error, are essential factors in the creation of a nation; in this the progress of historical studies is often a danger for *nationality*" (26). These observations strike an almost

Jarry-like knell in their now you see it, no you didn't logic, and returned to my mind as I thought about how the Handspring production performed an anti-sentimental work that neither trusted justice nor indulged in a forgetting that might imagine a new nation under construction after apartheid.

Had I purchased a ticket for a play called "Ubu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" what might I have

expected? Anyone familiar with Jarry's work would find the two ideas—Ubu and reconciliation—difficult to credit. In the description printed on the flyer for the play, I read the list the Company gives of the qualities of Ubu "lâche, sadique, vantard, tout en prenant pitié de lui-même" (lazy, sadistic, boastful and full of self pity). The last sounds a death knell for reconciliation. Precisely because Jarry's character exhibits the luxury of great self regarding tears following indiscriminate murder, his bulk—as in this production his size overwhelmed the stage in comparison to the miniature of the puppets—in every sense blocks the possibility of truth or the mutual recognition necessary for even a nominal acceptance of reparation. Displays of excess can have so many different effects on my reception: pleasure in the license of too much, disgust at the bullying of bulk and its thoughtless waste, sheer weariness at being constantly lorded over.

What the gigantic also invokes is a strange lack of specificity: "[r]ather than represent any particular figure from South African history, Ubu stands for an aspect, a tendency, an excuse". Author Jane Taylor's list of the surrogations Ubu's character performs here twists at the end with linguistic irony: to offer reparation is indeed to ask to be excused. But the same word contains duplicity, to make an excuse and thus an empty gesture of reparation, avoiding the 'appearance of wrongdoing' but not wrongdoing itself. If Ubu as a performed character has the ability to be an agent of excuse or a conduit of tendencies, then a kind of agency could be represented here. Not an individual agency but one that can be provoked by an atmosphere the theatre creates temporarily through producing associations in the spectator, a potential coordinate of endowing agency according to what the individual makes of her or his

reception. Such individual associations can contribute to an elusive and allusive cultural/national awareness circulating among members of the immediate community and beyond.

This sense of nationality, of regionality, of belonging or not as something in the air may seem too impressionistic to have everyday consequences; yet, I am reminded of a story about a Portuguese choreographer who was not chosen for a grant by the board of a funding committee dominated by Northern Europeans. According to a friend's story, the Board's reservations had nothing to do with the quality of her work; rather, they feared that she, being Southern, would be too Southern, i.e., too sensual, improvisational, and perhaps unmanageable for Northern audiences, or, more importantly in the case of her need for money to circulate her work, for Northern funders. How unthinking are our suppositions about national character? And to whom do they accrue? How do we assess acts of reparation? And to who are they addressed?

While the Commission's mandate had within it the specific performance of reconciliation for the nation of South Africa, the performative shorthand in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* taken from Jarry's surreal character—whose kingdom is and is not Poland—seeks to conjure the immaterial, intangible influence of cultural tendencies. Whether the theatre can sustain a representation of a tendency in the bodies of well-known theatrical characters, Pere and Ma Ubu, depends not just on the makers and players but upon the audience. Writing about the intent of the Company and the variety of audience responses Lorelee Kippen reports that "most audiences outside of South Africa have found the play's burlesque performance style to be largely incomprehensible and culturally irrelevant…it did not

translate well across the various cultural, linguistic, and political borders it traverses" (4).

Kippen's curiosity about the state of the audience's reception of the production when far from home brought to mind the question and answer session I attended after a performance from a South African troupe in a tiny, downtown New York City theatre in the early 90s. I had seen notices posted, in the way one does passing through the subway, about a production imported from South Africa. Unlike the famous and influential production of Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and many other works staged in the 70s in a climate of escalating awareness in the US about the need for a boycott of South African goods in an effort to end apartheid, the poster for the performance announced a play by and about women in South Africa, and all the actors were female. The story had been harrowing; the delivery humorous. A young American sounding woman, and I confess I identified the accent of my national language because of her earnest almost reproachful questions to the players afterwards, asked "How can you laugh about this?" One of the actors smiled graciously and the answer, not surprising to many who have had the privilege to witness true resilience in the face of daily injustice, was "what else can we do?" So Ubu's cruel irony historically displaced from the shock event of avant-garde Paris appears apt alongside the reports from the Committee's hearings, at least for the South African audiences according to Kippen and perhaps according to the South African actors I saw that night in a small theatre in New York.

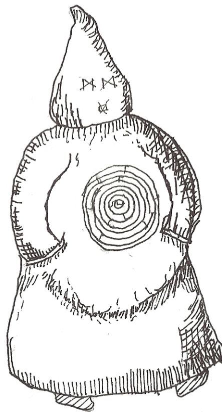
In digressing to that little theatre in the moments of question and answer I find myself struck by the coincidence of my first forays as spectator—when the itinerant came to me

rather than my going to it—in Boston to hear and feel the heat and hold of a certain kind of drama as a physical call to action that was *Sizwe Banzi is Dead.* South African theatre moved me toward my initial peregrinations as a spectator; it seems no linguistic accident that 'nation' forms part of that wandering word, encountering in the drift towards somewhere else the signs of who might be at home here, of whether I might be at home here. Before I knew I would be a graduate student at Columbia University, before I knew I would be on the lawns protesting apartheid, demanding boycotts, before I knew I would wander across the academic hallway from literature to performance, I saw that piece of theatre, that vibrant and harrowing piece of theatre. Thus the historical time of seeing always shifts reception, and it need not be always be marked by a culturally significant moment. The stakes may be modest, delineating occurrences in the shifting sands of the everyday negotiation of affection and afflictions; the temporary we of the audience allows such impressions to hang in the air after the piece, to settle unsuspected in the back of the receiving mind, still shaping perhaps unconsciously the receiving body.

That summer in Avignon, time had clearly passed since the heroes of resistance in South Africa, Nelson Mandela, Stephen Biko and Winnie Mandela, played an inspirational role in the ongoing pledge to boycott and protest. This production made that clear as it deliberately associated the resoundingly unheroic Ma Ubu with Winnie Mandela, whose face appeared in the Ubu drawings on the screen. I could not help but feel the loss again of her as a model of strength and endurance; it does little good to discipline the young heart by revealing the flaws of any model or heroine. I read Winnie Mandela's first book and found in it

many miles away in a white suburb of Boston a mode of being called up higher to look to a cause and to against all odds assume that my responsibility, even hundreds of miles away, was to stand against injustice at home and abroad. I had grown up on the tail end of the Vietnam war protests, had watched the Watergate hearings as part of my 'Democracy in America' class in high school, fortunate in having a smart and wise nun in my last Catholic girls' school who gave us the critical tools to understand the distinction between the democracy preached and the sleight of hand practiced. Thus my cultural heritage includes big public acts of sacrifice, not without complications but just as surely not relentlessly undercut by an immediate nay simultaneous ironic commentary that mars without ever having to make.

In *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, by associating Winnie Mandela with Ma Ubu, the Company reiterated visually the cutting of reconciliation from the title and the execution of the performance. Handspring added "les complices d'Ubu": a puppet dog with three heads and a suitcase for a body and Niles, a puppet formed from a crocodile handbag. In his review



of the London production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* Ian Shuttleworth suggested the dog formed quite "literally a repressive state apparatus" while his accomplice the "crocodile handbag called Niles" "smilingly consumes the evidence" (Shuttleworth, 1999 *Financial Times*). In the action of the puppet Niles I watched a pantomime of an assault on collective memory. How could anything have happened if all traces of an incident just smilingly disappear? The compulsive nature of consuming often represented as banal in late capitalism combines with the strategic hyper-consumption of potentially harmful evidence. In a world where, supposedly, it becomes easier to guarantee everything can be and will be documented, it bears remembering how remarkably often documentation still tends to conveniently disappear, or be disappeared: months of White House emails, interrogation of illegal detainees.

Part of the magic show of power in these last years, perhaps it has always been part of the magic show of power but now the show is telecast even farther, is the ability to make the audience, citizens, think they are seeing one thing—justice—while in reality another—corruption—eventually appears. So the propaganda is that we are living in a time of a massive storage of facts, images, in digital form that in its totality will keep us safe from forgetting and identify any and all threats from the great database in the sky. But in truth according to Geoffrey Bowker often the more developed the electronics of the archive, the less we have the capacity to know how and what to save. So the sleight of hand aides the forgetting.

During *Ubu and the Truth Commission*—at base itself a work of reproducing archived memory, records of testimony, within another container of memory, the Jarry play that stands

for disruption and the avant-garde—I experienced what I can only describe as a kind of spectatorial vertigo. The players and puppeteers demanded of the spectator that we shift, *we* make the transition, between the 'real' stories of horrors narrated by the puppets only then to move into the realm of mean-spirited slapstick from the culpable Pere and Ma Ubu. Caught out by laughter I suddenly see stills of death by burning or other tortures on the screen behind the testifying figures that wrench the heart and stop the mouth. At the end of the production, I could not help but be moved by what I had been asked to be witness to; and yet, the strange almost lightheaded sense of Ubu's historic position as king of unreal Poland and his fantasy tyrannies jarred my senses.

I wonder now as I think back if the makers of the performance did not succeed given that their purpose might have been to invoke a sense of physical and mental exhaustion from the re-enacting of repeated horrors; my state of mind and body at the end of the play was one of numbness resulting from being directed to shift affect from the historical horrific to the mock tyrannical horrific. Such a deadening of emotion might very well mimic the accretion of a kind of communal numbness as the trial of human rights crimes unfolds in time. But that same deadening risked alternative interpretations: audience members might conclude that the act of telling and listening to the suppressed narratives leaves in the end only stagnation and worn spectatorship. And yet this very conclusion was drawn by some in the wake of the hearings.

If, as in *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, the play offers representational commentary on a national crisis, what do playwright, actors, audience share? Was I then being invited to

re-imagine the nation, and in Avignon to make comparisons to the condition of an expanding Europe, after the revelation of truths perhaps known but now openly acknowledged, and secrets unveiled? Am I now? The violence rationalized by the South African state under apartheid to keep autocratic power disguised as orderly peace is theatrically represented as an abuse of power by a minority whose rule is injustice. How then does this work of theatre come to serve the cultural representation of reparation once white rule is overthrown? Time keeps passing, even horrors fade. Perhaps Handspring's offering can reiterate in the repetition of telling that is theatre and expose the fractures, retell stories to plot a course towards the acceptance of not-an-ending but a "momentarily materialized" catharsis, to adapt Randy Martin's phrase, brought on not by the humbling of the hero in the tragedy but by the humbling of us as receivers of the tale (Martin, 109).

Experiencing myself the temporariness of communal watching as Joe Kelleher might suggest, I am also aware of the durability of the theatrical task, not unlike the ongoingness of theatre that Kelleher posits as a contrast to our habitual assumption of the eternal ephemeral of performance. Rather he argues it is we who have to be reminded and to remember because it is us, those spectators, who always forget, who so easily disappear. And indeed the spectator I am at a given performances perishes as surely as any romantically imagined fragile performance; my shifting state can only be conceived of as durable because I shift, so the historical, cultural, political, affective, personal moment of seeing winks out. In its place I offer memories from how I saw what I saw when I saw it.

Adorno feared the repeating and reminding embedded

in the process of making and of remembering because it might deaden, and in the Handspring production that pall is determinedly cast. Yet all of life depends on sweeter forms of repetition, and actions, even temporary, against oppression can never be done once and be done. Political theater ought to make the spectator ready to regroup and try again. Any persuasive act, teaching, performing, speechifying, seeks something like a conversion. The very motion embedded in the word, that speech act conversion as Ann Pellegrini carefully complicates it in 'Feeling Secular': "is not a defense against vulnerability; it admits it as identity's unstable ground." So the need for repetition and our place in it [Your Name Here] depends on "the reiteration of community through the binding power of performance," something Pellegrini acknowledges as always a possibility, never a guarantee (215).

If performance has historically sought to bind as well as support and encourage, the contemporary 'polis' who can be called to witness expands to include an unimaginably vast citizenry who lament and protest and affirm in an "amphitheatre" constructed through the international media, through the portals of the internet. Perhaps a form of theatrical *flâneuring* can exist across the thresholds of those internet portals, but idly tracing the tactile worn and treaded upon quality of a weathered threshold, I suspect not. So theatrical productions addressing the citizenry in the immediacy of place now perform before citizens whose sense of place, whose scale of place and number, whose sense of the time it takes to respond and the physical cost of being present has forever altered. Jacques Rancière warns against the presupposition that "the theatre is communitarian" in and of itself. What makes as it were for a 'full' amphitheatre

"in a theatre or in front of a performance just as in a museum, at a school, on the street," is the "collective power that is common to these spectators… the power to translate in their own way what they are looking at… the power to connect it with the intellectual adventure… the power of the equality of intelligences" (278). At Avignon, in Rome, in New York, the adventure includes the sensual intelligence created by acts of non-passive spectating, and the stories that accrue.

To translate what I had been looking at and hearing I contemplated the unsatisfying in Handspring' s production: the shifting asked of me also meant accepting odd and disconcerting juxtapositions, the 'falseness' of the closing invitation in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* when over and over we hear as the play ends that South Africa looks "towards a bright new day." Yet the wrong chord worked a kind of atonal magic if I did not close my ears to its reverberations in a desire for an immediately comprehensible harmonic: to accept all that had been represented was to enter back into a world acknowledging how humanly made and imperfect are all such endings. I was invited to acknowledge scale. The impossibility paradoxically opens a space where audience and actors together might acknowledge the limits of a fully satisfying conclusion, given the intricacies of eliciting conscious responsibility from a resisting party, while admitting the need to go forward even when all the wrongs of the past have not been fully excised. "We can't go on; we must go on." The language of reparation, words like "amends" and "forgiveness," "bear witness" and "give testimony," suggest that explorations of retribution and reconciliation must address an intangible quality of national relations, the very intangibility that can potentially coexist in private and public and be evoked in

theatrical production, an intangibility reproduced for spectators to remember, again. An intangibility essential to apprehending, while necessarily in motion across the transitions from act to retribution, from revelation to repair.

In responding to a question about how she came to write the text for *Ubu and the Truth Commission* Taylor lists the purposes of the process of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "To retrieve lost histories; to make reparation to those who have suffered; to provide amnesty for acts which were demonstrably political in purpose. One of the larger purposes of the Commission is to create a general context through which a national reconciliation can be made." This "general context" itself must be conveyed through reports of the Commission, both heard aloud and witnessed and then published and read. The effect or experience of this context coming or not coming into being can only be manifested in the reception of the nation to acts of reconciliation. All of the hopes of those creating the Commission rest on performance but perhaps most crucially on reception, what the audience will hear, how they "translate in their own way what they are looking at" and what they are hearing.

Like the border between the story enacted and the memories of those receiving the testimony during national tribunals, a border exists in theatrical performance in the time between the moments in reception of the performance and later considerations outside the hot space of the live. This divide makes palpable the essential and ever mutable question of audience: who we are, what do we think, how does it make a difference to the performance and to later reports circulated about the performance. Experimenting, I try to imagine the

perfect audience to *Ubu and the Truth Commission* who have access to all manner of information about, for example, South Africa, the system of apartheid, the tradition of drama in South Africa, the question of true reparation in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the code used in the production that refers to people, places and things in the cultural life of the country at any given time. Even in imagination I can see how *Ubu and the Truth Commission* would be a different play in Johannesburg than in London or Avignon at a festival of international theatre.

Perhaps the gaps then become more apparent, become more instructive for an active spectator trying to interpret the theatricalization of reparation. Loren Kruger in her analysis of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* stresses the conclusion reached by many involved in the hearings that "testimony from survivors and perpetrators was mediated representation rather than direct expression" (Kruger 556). Acknowledging Kruger's authority about the particular conditions of South Africa and its history, I puzzle over whether direct is always better than mediated. While the Hearings depended on the anonymous perpetrators coming into focus for the victims, and vice versa, the spectator often benefits from anonymity, from the very distance Kruger decries. Rancière suggests that the emancipation of the listener/watcher rests in the "capacity of the anonymous, the capacity that makes anybody equal to everybody. This capacity works through unpredictable and irreducible distances" (279).

Wandering across thresholds, thresholds also filled with the weathered evidence of wrongdoing, is an act at a distance, an act of anonymous attention and reflection. In a very few sentences, Kruger makes it clear that the seeking of 'truth' and the offer

of reconciliation could be spoiled by acts of bad faith, "by the possibility of omission, if not outright lying, and by attempts to play confession as a sinister replay of torture techniques" (557). She narrates a scene between Tony Yengeni, "a black activist turned Member of Parliament," and "ex-torturer Jeffery Benizen where the torturer 'demonstrates' the method only to turn to Mr. Yengeni and state that "it took only 'thirty minutes' of this treatment to get Yengeni to talk" (557). Kruger's article sharpens our awareness about the "theatrical" and sometimes duplicitous nature of the hearings, but also raises the question, a question posed to me by Harry Elam in conversation, what do audiences without this intimate knowledge of South Africa, without the cues and the historical savvy to 'hear' the testimony in its many valences hear when we and they go to a theatre where parts of such testimony are reproduced? But then what do we want 'them' to hear? What desires do spectators or makers have for other spectators and makers?

As in all forms of artistic, cultural works in circulation internationally, the specific knowledge of the events in South Africa during apartheid transforms into the applicable particulars of that experience to the current crises in the festival host country and/or its need for reparation. About *Ubu and the Truth Commission* Jane Taylor insists, in contradiction to Kruger's emphasis on the specific, that for the artistic creators of this work "this is not just a South African story. Ours is an era of singular attention to questions of war crimes, reparation, global peacekeeping." We are, it seems, increasingly aware of the obligation to hear testimony, while we are yet defining ways of acting upon what we have heard."

: | : | :

In South Africa, the temporal marking of the event of the hearings invited things locked away, stored away, even half forgot into the air of an open forum. In the haunted house of Europe more than one event of restitution would be necessary to organize a complete sweep of the various piles of unacknowledged wrongs heaped in corners. Instead the doors creak while from some hidden corridor ghosts continue to moan from wounds inflicted a century, a decade, a week ago. When I see theatre produced here, I sometimes have a sense of wandering past those ghosts to get to my seat; I hear them moaning in the plays that continue to be revived and circulated as part of a reworking of the texture of national pasts. Such haunting, both in the theatrical sense as Marvin Carlson evokes it and in the national sense, passes through the body of the character of the 'actor' in Hungarian playwright Hristo Boytchev's *Il Colonnello e Le Ali* (The Colonel and the Birds). Accustomed in her acting career to taking the role of Nina in *The Seagull* whenever the Chekov play is revived,

the 'actor' begins her nightly news report in the madhouse with the words "I am a seagull." Her translation of the nightly news, performed for us as audience as well as for her fellow inmates in a psychiatric hospital somewhere in an unidentified Balkan country, is necessary because the sound does not work on the ancient television the patients gather around in the crumbling hospital in a deep forest. So everyone relies on this character who can read lips to supply the words of the nightly report about the continued bombing and casualties in the Balkan war, the Balkan wars. But her first identifying phrase I recognize as an exchange of the impression of loss, of longing, of despair and hope furnishing the haunted house of modern European theatre: "I am a seagull."

My above narration however is also haunted; I did not actually *see or hear* this take place on stage. Instead I read these lines of Boytchev's first version of the play only after seeing a production of the second version directed by Toni Bertorelli in Rome. I puzzled over the evidence of Boytchev's website—a site that participates in its own signs of grabbing for cultural attention by having a repeating, floating graphic that says Eastern European Wave. From the archive available on the site it seems clear that the play remained unproduced in all but a few nearby countries until the author began to circulate the second version, the one I saw, which substitutes mostly male characters for the female ones in the original.

No matter how much I move itinerantly and how much the mobility of what I see marks changes in those weathered thresholds and attention to the once ignored haunting moans, some performance practices remain remarkably fixed. Wherever I roam, I read programs, I see theatre, I hear interviews in which men, overwhelmingly white men, continue to dominate the

imaginative space as protagonists, actor/makers, and directors. You might be a white man reading this, and the statement may have frozen your reception the way I find often in conversation with others that mentioning what is so patently visible, the tiny proportion of women in charge, the tiny proportion of people of color as actors, directors and writers, tends to create an uncomfortable pause unless the conversation takes place among those who find themselves under-represented. So the conversation across borders, across countries, creates a pause, a moment's recognition quickly followed by a desire to get "back to the subject," indeed, to get back to the subject as he has been constituted for centuries. I hear the scholar Katie Gough saying to me "visibility does not equal representation," and my own experience tells me that is true, but I also think about, for example, a theatre filled in London for a performance of an opera at the English National Opera where in the 100 chorus members, the several principal singers, there is not a person of color among them. So visibility is not enough, but without even visibility as a start, how do we imagine ourselves as protagonists, instigators, revolutionaries?

I cannot know why Bertorelli chose the second version of the play or whether he even knew another existed. He may work with more male actors than female or this version of the play may have made sense in that unconscious or semi-conscious way these things work in a patriarchal culture. Would a female doctor in a mental hospital made up mostly of women seem odd to an Italian, or understood as a play whose main appeal would be to a "female audience?" Would it seem to 'limit' the potential audience who historically have been more likely to both see and expect to see men center stage? Throughout history women tend

to be cured, in those famously dubious ways like Charcot's and Fleiss', by male doctors and male theorists. All these possibilities occurred to me when I discovered the original text, a kind of delayed haunting of what I could not have known I was missing.

Like haunted characters themselves, two historical moments from the 20th century stubbornly recur in performance and in texts for the stage disrupting the strategically deployed notion of Europe as a global actor, albeit a reformed one, for good and for civility: the Holocaust and the Balkan wars. Although theatre makers have played their part in uncovering and representing the history of genocide in the Second World War, interventions beautifully explicated by Freddie Rokem in his consideration of the stage and the telling of histories, the Balkan wars of the 1990s remain an uncomfortably contemporary reminder of Europe's inability to intervene. In his play Boytchev renders the specific general while keeping the characters singular by establishing a time of news reports about the Balkan wars in a setting awkwardly poised between the coming modernization of Western late capitalism and the dated paraphernalia of a country from the 'former East.'

John Borneman in his *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe* articulates the residue in the air, the lingering doubts about reform, and not only in Eastern European countries, a sensed but invisible pollution caused by "what legal theorists call 'moral injuries'—deeds, like attempted murder, that did not result in actual harm but were nonetheless wrong"(viii). Posthumously 'arraigning' such deeds through public display, representing the crime again, awakens the haunting moans and can risk the perverse danger of creating a fetish for the past evil; the resurrecting can prompt a repetition

of heinous crimes. Now as I think back perhaps *Ubu and the Truth Commission* avoided this fetishization by the clash of genres, by blocking any sentimental reception on the part of the spectator for the reports from the Hearings and for the effects on the audience of those Hearings.

In the disinterring of the ghosts, modern observers, from both the generation too young to have endured the moral injuries and the generation unwilling to let them go, might be perversely drawn toward the violence and tempted to recreate it. Rather than treat the need for reparation specifically, Boytchev in *Il Colonnello e Le Ali* conjures a forgotten group of psychiatric patients into existence to show the general aftermath of disaster and neglect in the Balkans. As I think of the way the story is told, I can't help but sense underneath the narrative the genre of fairytale—a tale from Grimm in its relentless bleakness—of the isolated hospital in the forest and the dream of intervention and succor from some supernatural power, one that will in the naïveté of the group be named Europe.

While weathered thresholds are inviting when weathered only by the largesse of time and the accumulation of riches for the explorations of the passersby, such richness contrasts with other entryways, corridors, zones on the periphery, that display only the corrosive effects of years of neglect. From my place of observing, of the 'moral injuries' Bourneman defines perhaps few are less addressed and more acute than the culture of neglect in the 21st century. The litany of carelessness encompasses: the continuing catastrophe in the wake of the occupation in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, the enforced neglect engineered in the occupation of Gaza, the criminal neglect of the poor and the displaced in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, the

ongoing dilemma in Europe of the neglect of the Rom and the refugee camps at the corners of the Union, and the untended infrastructure everywhere. To intervene in these catastrophes requires a consistent, bodily work at odds with that elusive and dangerous attention to the incorporeal realm that is the war on terror, a distraction exacting an escalating price. Thus the practice of allowing members of the community to simply fall away from any social or governmental care becomes a kind of laissez faire genocide.

As a spectator I have experienced how theatre can reveal not only the hidden from view, but the quotidian too familiar to be seen. Writing about borders of time, place and action, Joseph Roach reminds us of how Brecht "speaking of the historical specificity of the social subject as a 'character on stage,' suggests that 'if we play works dealing with our own time as though they were historical, then perhaps the circumstances under which [the social subject] himself (sic) acts will strike him (sic) as equally odd; and this is where the critical attitude begins.' Roach suggests, perhaps a bit optimistically, that "crossing the border from the habitual to the critical illuminates the historical situation of the modern subject…" (113). Becoming habituated to neglect, I notice, takes surprisingly little time, facilitated by the shift of attention toward the virtual realm on a screen or the displacement of the heart and mind to the beloved on the mobile while the body moves across a landscape at a loss to capture our attention. Tending to substantial items that wear and break requires noticing their progressive decay, acknowledging the transitions of time, and repairing requires more time and effort than the habit of the two-second select and delete, and even here I wonder about the habit of accumulation, thousands

of messages in the inbox unanswered, piling up, becoming unmanageable. To break the seal of custom and show what neglect countries tacitly (or worse) condone can be one form of intervention by drama about reparation.

Boytchev sets *Il Colonnello e le ali* 'somewhere in the Balkans,' a choice that underscores the vagaries of frontiers: potentially only an impression in the minds of spectators in the principal EU countries while for international spectators often a vague boundary for all things east and former Yugoslavian. Bertorelli sets his production at the *Teatro India* ambiguously: a lost hospital space in an unidentified nation, a room determinedly bare and ugly with three metal bunk beds on a plain, dark stage. To take my seat, I have walked through an outer room piled with detritus, a passage infelicitous to a spectator's expectation of theatergoing and a reminder of the untended and the untidied, though oddly housed, and therefore inevitably a bit artistically staged, in this public and commercial foyer space. The room of the set could be in any punitive institution, a hospital, a prison, an orphanage or barracks. Various forms of neglect mark the characters, and the association of character to symptom to nation or lack thereof becomes clearer for the audience as the play sets up the opening scenes of the inmates particular species of madness. As in the first version of Boytchev's play though now with a male protagonist, our portal for news is Hacho, the deaf character who reads lips. How long has this old television set been broken? Part of its ancientness is communicated by its size, a behemoth in the world of flat screens. Things broken and unfixed, things with which those without money must make do, continue to signal the larger neglect at work in the recent history of Europe. The news begins with the same sentence

every night: not the suggestive theatrical haunting of 'I am a seagull,' but a monotonous and banal sentence that deadens the real harm underneath about the continued fighting. The 'actor' goes on to speak of attempts by UN humanitarian workers to succeed in their mission of dropping boxes of aid, although it suggests the planes are usually thwarted. Hacho performs the same words each night; on the one hand I suspect I am not hearing the 'truth' from the lip reading communication, what the announcer is 'really' saying, on the other, the nightly report establishes quickly and theatrically the deadly and deadening sameness of news from ongoing war.

If the television stands in for something like news, the doctor stands in for something like healing. Admitting himself to be a morphine addict and not a real doctor, this figure whose presence in the community should signal aid, instead doubly enacts the lack, the lack of help and the lack of trustworthiness from one trained to serve. It hardly seems to matter, however, since there are no supplies, no medicine and no authorities to whom he himself might appeal for the missing items. This is a world lost from the attention of the media or the leaders, the characters shattered by experiences actively fighting in the Balkans war or simply caught in the vicious and swift turn from neighbor to enemy repeatedly enacted in villages across the Balkans.

Just when even I as a temporary witness have begun to weary of the torpor of madness, neglect and stasis, the announcement comes. Outside in the forest, boxes have appeared from the sky, boxes marked UN. In a sudden reversal of hopeless static sameness, the stage fills with all the characters who hunt through the cardboard boxes; each item they retrieve is displayed, first

to each other, then to us (not self consciously for the audience but rather as a byproduct of their sudden excitement). Odd how immediately recognizable to all of us are those powder blue uniforms with the symbol of the United Nations. Flags, berets, supplies, and the equipment of peacekeeping soon litters the stage. The pilot who dropped the boxes obviously lost his or her way; this official material should not be in the hands of a few forgotten psychiatric patients lost in the woods of what might be Serbia or Bosnia. Yet even those sequestered in a freezing hospital, with little food and less water endow those blue uniforms with meaning and potential.

Thinking back I wonder when I first saw such uniforms, when I myself endowed the 'peacekeeping forces' from my place far away from the conflicts with a hope that someone, some country could maintain peace in the broken world, war-torn in every sense. How different my response to such uniforms might be if they were being worn by a force entering my own village. A small version of the manufactured joy in the repeated ceremonies of watching the Allies land on the beach during WWII, that first surge, perhaps, of pride and here come the good guys, depends on physical distance. Such distance creates a dependence that the mucky day-to-day will be sorted out in those lands where we send peacekeepers, those 'troubled' regions. And in these last years the revelation about the sexual conduct of peacekeepers towards young girls and women in the places they have been deployed to protect makes the reception of those blue uniforms ever more wary. Yet, the play seems to profit from the initial momentum of a perhaps always theatrical desire for a force for good.

The patients begin to band together. Their various

symptoms suppressed by the sudden order and purpose provided by the goal of forming a peacekeeping unit of the United Nations. Identity bifurcates visually. We have been watching indistinct patients in drab discarded clothing who might be ethnic Serbs or Croats; now those patients place UN blue bits over the costume of the mad. As I watch the production in Rome, styles of acting complicate meaning because I am accustomed to the habit of Italian actors to portray a psychological symptom in Commedia-like exaggerations, the indications of illness a 'bit' performed by each member of the troupe. What comes through even the irksome exaggeration is how what we have been witnessing is in desperate need of repair: the harm done and the result of that harm marches before us in the confines of a staged hospital room.

Supplied with uniforms, the players enact the process of acquiring an identity through an ancient ritual of nation formation. The echo of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* sounds as I watch, the enacting of national identity in the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the larger entity that is the nation. While the soldiering on stage is playacting, and the discipline a discipline in the service of peacekeeping, the 'leader' of this crew is a male ex-Colonnello from the army recently engaged in the conflict between ethnic members of a fractured country. I watch as the patients do the drills the Colonnello leads, and the military drill forms them into a unit. The sight is familiar to me, both because I grew up in a military family and because the lingering tradition of national unification still parades across Rome one day a year in honor of the soldiers and warriors past. Boytchev transforms the singular national into the transnational because the characters state their intention

to serve "Europe." The recurrent echo of the question of these last years occurs; if the Balkans weren't Europe before, are they now? To the mad the answer seems clearly no; the becoming of a force united happens because they move from a fictional space outside of geography and time into a fictional space of intervention for good.

An odd collision occurs here for me that will be echoed at the end of the play. While I see on this night in the Teatro India the theatrical nature of playing soldiers unfold before me, I have been hearing escalating rhetoric and reading about attacks on Afghanistan, a country whose borders are closer to the former east represented here than the more distant West. The stories of those killed and the stories of those serving often show young men and women doing something that still looks, and to them may well feel before combat and its consequences, a great deal like playacting. While the play we watch shows the perhaps frightening ease with which people become a proud and connected unit, my unease remains in thinking of both the global consequences of playing soldier, and the relatively local consequences. The stories from Bosnia and Servia tell tales of how seemingly easy it is for people to ban together and become a proud unit with an intent to exterminate across an invented border of place and time where neighbors turn out to have actually always been enemies

For the staged story as for the real, the solution, the reparation imagined by the characters will not come from European intervention, nor will it come from inclusion of the 'East' finally in the EU states, though there is no doubt the play hints at this longing to be a part of the frequently conjured mysterious, civilized, orderly, sane entity Europe. Freed from

confinement by uniforms and drill, the crew decides to go to Strasbourg, the seat of European justice, even though their initial salvation came about courtesy of that more global savior, the UN. The patients' dialogue clearly infers that 'sanity', the reparation to the neglected and the mad, the injured and the wounded, will reappear under the sign of Europe, will reappear when they themselves gain shelter under the entity of Europe. I suspect Boytchev's setting where any modern technology, TV and phone, exist in a 'primitive' state at least thirty years out of date deliberately provokes for the audience forceful and enduring stereotypes of the East slowly rousing itself from the condition of a communist sleeper woken up tardy into this modern capitalist world.

While the absent seagull haunts me as I write, another form of avian haunting fuels the central scene that gives the play its name. Frozen in anticipation for some otherworldly sign about when to begin their trek toward 'Europe,' organized now under the leadership of the Colonel whose growing sanity is in direct proportion to the purposeful cadets in semi-uniform before him, the group decides to use carrier pigeons to send messages to Strasbourg. Several borders in performance are marked out before me in the theatrical gestures used to create a late play dénouement between the sane and the insane, the rural and the city, the included and the excluded as the actors signal the flight overhead of a flock of birds, by mimicking the sway and swoop in their own bodies. In a kind of natural analog to the humanly made disciplined drill and straight lines of the battalion, the actors embody and evoke the birds convinced they have received the sign. Thus they make their way to Strasbourg, admittedly a journey only across the stage, which in the interval

is emptied of the trappings of mental hospital, in order to offer themselves—the lame and the mad—as a peacekeeping force.

Yet the dénouement does not bring a deity in machina or on foot. Like *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, Boytchev's play unfurls in an ending uncomfortable and inconclusive. The group camps out, homeless outside the European Union Court of Justice, no longer dreaming of being a peacekeeping force as their unsuitability is clear to all but them, instead they appeal for care and asylum. I am reminded of Richard Sennett's apt diagnosis of 20th-century society in Western Europe where the habit of revealing personal and private lives to one another blocks the public anonymity necessary for strategic public action: here I watch the helpless confusion of these characters who having no service to offer are rendered infantile, refugees needing protection rather than participants and potential citizens.

The ending suspends all sorts of conclusions, but it also literally suspends the narrative because we are all waiting outside an institution for some form of response. One of the marks of powerlessness in the 21st century I see in Europe as well as abroad is to be always waiting. The asylum seeker waits, the neglected patient waits, the paperless clandestine waits, the dark skinned suspect of terrorism waits and waits and waits. Waiting, while generally not a theatrically interesting condition for the actor or for the spectator, can demonstrate on stage an often invisible if prevalent condition of being for many who we as spectators rarely see and whose condition we as spectators free to circulate cannot share. The consequences of extended waiting can only be repaired by attentive action that brings resolution. Such resolution, Boytchev suggests in the theatrical turn he makes of

transforming patients turned peacekeepers into buskers asking for passersby in Strasbourg to contribute to the outstretched hat, continues to elude the main stage, shunting those who are waiting to a marginal existence of street entertainment, a group neglected and accumulating in numbers.

: | : | :

Peter Sellars wandered into my spectating life some thirty years ago or perhaps I wandered into his itinerant life as director when he directed the Boston Shakespeare Company, a position he managed to maintain for a year before he was dismissed as too unorthodox for the Boston Shakespeare traditionalists. He would face this fate more than once in the following years even as he also became a celebrated international director of theatre and opera, though his title always seems to require the obligatory adjective “controversial” as a prefix. So when I noticed the articles that appeared several weeks before his production of Euripides’ *Children of Herakles* describing how Sellars had chosen immigrant children from public schools in Rome to play the part of Euripides’ stateless band of refugees, I was not surprised. A kind of anti-theatrical announcement, the opposite of the more common media fanfare given to notices which stress the inclusion of a famous actor in an upcoming production, these advertisements marked the coming night of theatre as inherently political, including as it did a cast of ‘real’ immigrants/refugees. The persuasion possible by staging the real also underscored the intent of the production; where several fine actors indicate the possibility of a bravura performance, the cast of those truly dispossessed could not help but suggest that here with real refugees the audience would witness something

closer to the true pain of dislocation, wandering, racism and poverty onstage. Whether Sellars had a hand in creating such expectations in advance of the production or whether the newspapers sought to portray the director—no stranger to Rome as his work has frequently appeared in the annual festival RomaEuropa—as primarily driven by political concerns, the scene was set for our participation in a night that would mix the pretend of theatre with the real of the daily life of exile.

Representing the tension of contemporary crises onstage always involves traversing a border Michal Kolbialka designates as existing between the real and the utterly made up. I found myself in a swirl of questions and doubts before, during and after this production. What is at stake in presenting something 'true' in drama, something that happened, really happened? Can a theatrical presentation of a 'real' incident retain the real, remand it into our custody? Since I enter the theatre/performance space from my 'real' life in a contemporary European world, where do I and my fellow spectators draw the boundaries crossed or kept inviolate from the 'real'?

Of course I remember that from its inception players and writers employed the theatrical medium in the West to question the 'real'. A modern understanding of realism as a 20th-century movement is only the end of the long history in the theatre of the search for authentic acting, pertinent to each period, each cultural moment. Yet I reflect how, at least to my ears, these last years have seen an increase of documentary theatre receiving quite a lot of media attention, more than most theatre generally receives. *Guantanamo*, *My Name is Rachel Korrie, Black Watch*, *Stuff Happens* all take up the consequences of the US/UK coalition and the action taken to ward off perceived

terror threats as well as the war in Iraq itself. Knowing too well how no conclusion I draw can be conclusive, I cannot help but suspect that the influence of the impotence of the people to change the decisions of the politicians has fed our need to show and to hear the "truth" of "what is happening" to one another when so much of the public language of intervention obfuscates it. Here however might be a mix of the forward nature of remembering, thinking back through the first years of the war, with the moment of the performance just before the Iraq war when such collective frustrations were beginning to build.

The narrator Luca Barbareschi introduced the evening at the Teatro Valle by assuring the audience that before them stood *veri* (real) refugees to tell their stories. I took the handout distributed by ushers and read the explanation of the structure of the event: in the first part of the evening (40 minutes), there would be an interview and discussion about the global condition of refugees, and then in the second part (100 minutes) we would see the play. Appended to the traditional announcement signaling the beginning of a performance in Rome, *signore, signori fra due minuti inizio lo spettacolo, vi preghiamo spegnere i vostri cellulari*, comes the count of how long the performance will last. As few as four or five years ago, this was not part of the aural information welcoming us to the production. Now it elicits responses, not much noise for relatively short works uninterrupted by an interval, but sometimes a groan when the piece runs longer than 2 hours. I have often wondered how this announcement of time affects our reception; whether we shift our expectations according to knowing how long the production is, when it will end, whether

anyone checks their watches or phones to see if the estimate is accurate. How odd it seems to me to have the experience of the live bounded by this pre-emptive parameter offered to us all.

One of the strangest features in that evening designed for us by Sellars and Euripides—reminiscent of the unsettling mix in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* of jarring Jarry figures and earnest puppet representations of true victims—was our greeter cum narrator. Marked by his large gestures and hyper-theatrical manner as a 'real' Italian actor for any of the audience accustomed to bourgeois Italian theatre, Barbareschi moved up and down the aisle smirking and suggesting *we* were certainly not accustomed to *this* kind of theatre. In doing so, of course, he made division in the audience between those who are indeed accustomed to a certain kind of political didacticism in live performance and those who choose the theatre they see according to established theatrical canons as well as whether they have a subscription to a particular establishment. Either audience can find the didacticism a strain or the traditional theatrical bigness a delight depending on mood and generosity, but his insistence reminded me how the choices we make in buying theatre tickets does indeed form a basis from which we see and receive.

Like the MC he imitated, Barbareschi handed the first part of the evening over to Paula Boncompagni whose book *Rifugiati* recounts the testimonies of refugees in Europe. She spoke of appalling conditions, gave examples, and as she did the audience grew more and more restless. I wondered, unable to ignore the growing distraction in the theatre, whether a method exists for disseminating information about numbers and injustices done that does not at some point create a inevitable distance between the horrors narrated and the audience's sympathetic

understanding or even active interest.

The narrator, no doubt responding to the impatience in the air, intervened as he might not have had the writer been a man. Many, many Italian men famously cede the stage to no one and as famously ignore any suggestion that they might have been going on too long. Yet Barbareschi stopped Boncompagni mid-sentence to suggest she let the refugees themselves talk. "Give us the real refugees, speaking out of genuine experience." Two women walked to the front of the stage, on the same level as my seat in the platea rather than higher up on the stage itself: this young Iranian woman and older Columbian mother, according to our handout, had both fled their countries because of their political beliefs and were now residing in Italy. Throughout the discussion with the women, one could hear comments, some audible, some less, while the theatre continued to fill with the air of impatience and a bewildered weariness. As with the Avignon production of *Ubu,* one sensed the uneasy shift between borders of reportage and theatrical performance, and the audience reception, dependent in general on the clues we are given, met the uneasy combination with its own confusion and frustration at not playing the accustomed role of spectator to performance.

During the break between discussion and production, young people came around with hot, sweet tea. Most of us stayed in our seats, unusual for an Italian theatre audience, as if we were acknowledging our confusion about when the show began, what part of the evening was intermission and what part, a continuation of the unusual mix of information as the instructions on our handout describe the first part as "an important moment for listening" and thus the spectacle

by perverse implication as not an “important moment for listening.” Finally the audience sighed with audible relief as the universal sign of all indoor theatre since the early 19th century signaled the beginning of a play: the lights went down, the audience fell into its habitual mode of silence in a darkening theatre.

I remember as I think about the opening of *Children of Herakles* how in the aftermath of 11 September and the subsequent bombing in Afghanistan many festival organizers and theatre directors began to import and display traditional music and art from those nations under siege and suspicion, seeking, I assume, to undermine the cardboard cutout versions circulating of ‘Muslim’ and/or ‘terrorist.’ It speaks of an incredible hubris that so much effort seems necessary to re-establish to the forgetful Judeo-Christian mind the cultural offerings in the Arab world and makes me think of Patti Smith’s furious lyrics for her furious song about this very blindness: “We invented the zero/but we mean nothing to you” (“Radio Baghdad”). Suddenly many festivals began offering evenings of ‘ethnic’ music from traditionally Muslim countries. I find myself inevitably recalling Edward Said’s complex consideration of the exotic pleasures created from the ‘idea’ of the orient. How pointedly then did this importation of familiar folk music from Afghanistan to the stage in the RomaEuropa 2002 festival in a time of war and crisis conjure the schismatic, colonized world. Yet the circulation of music has changed even since Said’s *Orientalism*, is still changing by means of the internet, itinerant samples available from countries once aurally bounded by the recordings that never traveled.

Sellars complicated such importation often moving under

the category 'world music' by having a true rarity for Western theatrical presentation, at least a rarity in terms of my experience in theatres, a female bard (*jyrau)* sitting in the middle of the stage on what looked like an improvised altar. Costume enhanced the foreignness of her difference since she wore an astonishing hat—astonishing of course perhaps only to me since I am not accustomed to the dress of Kazakhstan—a turban topped by braided extensions forming two horns adorned at their peak by puffs of fur. Ulzahn Baibussynova began to play what I assumed was Kazakhstani music while before her sat boys of different hues collected inside the boundary of florescent light set out on the stage floor around the altar. While the choice of a woman bard might mark one deliberate gesture towards the contemporary moment, I remember thinking how this introductory song could just as well constitute a recuperation of Greek tragedy in its original performance ritual.

In retrospect I recall the many interruptions Sellars, perhaps deliberately employing a Brechtian mode of undoing audience habit, made throughout this night of theatre. Open the theatrical event with a discussion of refugees by experts and refugees themselves, reinterpret the choreography of Greek tragedy with the addition of a bard from Kazakhstan and then dramatically offer a less absolute, more floating border between young (and amateur and refugee) and old (and actors and experienced). Onto the stage where the children sat in an enclosed cell of light listening to the music, the drama itself began as an old man appeared in a wheelchair, Iolaus, played by Czech actor Jan Triska who I have seen in other works directed by Sellars. Wheeled in by an African-American soldier (Albert S.) with a gun slung over his arm, dressed in camouflage, Triska

begins to speak and for the first time in the evening surtitles appear since the actor speaks in English. While displaced and in exile, the two women from Columbia and Iran spoke Italian, narrated their out of placeness in the language of their host country. So I am startled to remember that Euripides will come in English tonight, that the production itself while negotiated by groups of refugee children in Rome will make its political topography the United States and the US's effect on Europe and beyond.

Iolaus speaks in a voice full of resentment, rhetorically exaggerated, a deliberately antique style. His sense of the injustice paid to his old friend Heracles' children comes in part from his warrior's sensibility; the children deserve protection under the accords of war. I have a particular relation to this rhetoric as my father employed it in the home and in active duty. While we fought constant battles at the table initiated out of his past hurt and disgust at the Vietnam protests and my serenely righteous adolescent position as standing for peace, justice and rock and roll, the one aspect of the military I did come to respect through him was that of service and actions one might endeavor to perform regardless of personal feelings or sacrifice. That in 2002, the military and my usually loyal Republican father had quite clearly advised against war and would do so up until the invasion of Iraq had much to do with my reception of Iolaus' anger and therefore with the 'relevance' of the little known Euripides' text to my spectating in this moment, local and international.

In a time of the willful breaking of all the codes and conventions of warriors and captives by the US and its allies, a breach that would become worse and worse with revelations of

rendition and torture, this old man's words echoed in the then and now. His vulnerability stressed by the chair, he nonetheless makes a forceful oration on behalf of his charges. While *Ubu* took up reparation, successful or not, as a forthright subject, and *Il Colonnello e le ali* demonstrated the effect of neglect and ostracization from European protection as a condition in need of reparation, Sellars staging of *The Children of Herakles* reaches back to the territory of the past for theatrical invocations of the polis, occupiers and occupied, in order to warn of actions that will in the not very distant future call for substantial reparation. As I write the damage continues, the need for reparation escalates. Few countries in Europe in the 20th century avoided being occupied or occupier, and while studies show how much the youngest generation of 'new Europeans' have lost the knowledge of this history, the reawakening of the bordered world of war and its aftermath came through very strongly in Sellars' production. Unusually this particular play focuses on the unmoored human lives left homeless by the battles between nations, echoing Boytchev. Sellars stressed allusions to the immediate moment and the heated debate between the US and its former allies about the bombing in Afghanistan, and the rattling of trumped-up inspectors' reports that signaled what we now know in retrospect to be the already decided plan of attack on Iraq.

Any deliberate political staging of a Greek tragedy seeks to create for the time of the performance an atmosphere of immediacy: I am a citizen being appealed to by my leaders. I must listen and theatrically I am charged with the responsibility of advising on action. Surely there were those members of the audience who were bored and those who refused the invitation

to inhabit the space of citizen/witness. But Sellars through his performative interventions challenged us as spectators to see in the re-enacting how countries make decisions, how false the narrative drive of history—*our country has always cared for the oppressed, protected the weak, [fill in the blank]*. We witnessed again before us the current and ancient nature of the trap of knowing no way out but violence and the breathtakingly cruel strike of power that rejoices in an act of violent attack as a show of might.

An idea of myself as a member of a polis made me think of the onstage version of my participation, the Chorus, which in turn brought to mind Erica Fischer-Lichte's articulation of the late 20th-century phenomenon of "that rebirth of tragedy out of the chorus." Sellars in an interview in *La Repubblica* suggests that the public will participate in the play as the 'chorus.' Whether what was offered was accepted, i.e., that we would agree to the audience contract and take the part of a chorus, the modern "permanent tension" Fischer-Lichte designates "between the individual members and the community they formed," became part of the bordered space in the Teatro della Valle (245). In one way clearly Sellars' intent was to create a chorus like that Fischer-Lichte describes as a "searing critique of the late capitalist, post-industrial societies" (243). And yet Sellars also articulated his sense that the play itself needed no translation to contemporary Europe in 2001: "Euripides has written a tragedy [2400 years ago]… that could have been written this morning."

In keeping with the bordered tensions of today and yesterday, of occupiers and occupied, Sellars sought a relation with the audience through the production in which they were not invited to participate in order to make a work of the

imagination, but to taste and see directly the work presented. [“I hate the imagination: I prefer to have things represented directly, to be tasted and seen”] I could only surmise that in an effort to achieve such directness, Sellars staged a very static production, intentionally blocking the motion of fictive action, by placing microphone stands towards the front of the stage where the actors stand to deliver. Do I ever see a microphone the size used by a reporter or in a press conference without shifting to a mode of reception created out of the saturated now of 24-hour media? By the deliberate staging of this contest of wills among members of the governing class speaking their piece into the microphone, Sellars conjured the constraints, the bordered constraints of something at once live and mediated. Even when the actors took the microphones in their hands, the staging remained deliberately static. As the polis we were addressed in a contemporary fashion from the odd conjunction of the far away, that is, someone anywhere in the world speaking to a microphone, and the near, that is, the scale and distance of our screens. The evocation of a community gathered in one place at this one time came only when the actors used the main aisle, the spatial conduit for news, entrances and exits, just as the two sides of the Greek amphitheatre represented port and city, the ancient fonts of all news.

Elaine Tse played Copreus, the envoy of Eurystheus, he (in Sellars’ version she) who has been chasing the children from town to town, keeping them on the run, a journey where every border they tried to cross before arriving at Athens has been closed to them. Only writing now, remembering the production does it occur to me how much this Asian actor resembled Condileeza Rice, the same manicured and coiffed poise that

makes her look like corporate everywoman and renders any ethnicity almost invisible, certainly visually tame. Sellars cast Brenda Wehle as the president of Athens, her hair in a contained bun, Madeleine Albright-like, she is older than Copreus, a matriarch with furrowed brow, the daughter of Theseus (which would be enough to worry anybody). Iolaus turns to these women of state to remind them of the reputation of Athens as a 'free' country with a 'free' people; the echoes of the current rhetoric in America could not be clearer.

The story takes place 'in media reparation'; the post-war world a world where damage has been done, and damage must be repaired. Playing out this earlier episode from another country's history in the crux of crisis offered, to those of us interested in contemplating the parallels, a way of seeing the unfolding of a crisis and its resolution (or lack thereof). "By performing history, theatre," writes Freddie Rokem, "at times even more forcefully than other discourses about the past like historiographic writing or novels about historical events, engages in…ideological debates, frequently intervening in them directly" (Rokem 3). In *Children of Herakles* the leaders appear bewildered as well as bullying. Euripides presents them in the midst of the dilemma of choice about acting and consequences. While I experience the staging as static in the manner of 'talking heads' television news, the Italian critic Maria Bonano suggests Sellars intends the performance to work as a thawing of the "glaciale" and removed medium of TV where the spectators become anesthetized from the pain paraded before them. Strangely, this desire seemed to me to have only reinforced the glaciale response in the audience as it listened to the refugees' stories before the play began, and the coolness of reception

carried through the playing of Euripides.

One of the most delicate negotiations a director/performer makes comes from the paradox of intent and representation; often the mechanics employed to display or affect the audience in a certain way will create the reverse. I remember a moment in a class when a group who, taking on the mantel of avant-garde artists at the turn of the twentieth century, were to imagine a performance in a space in order to give life to a tenet of a particular group, Futurists or Dadaists. They proposed a work where everyone could choose to participate as he or she wanted, where there was absolutely no pressure on the makers or the receivers to care about what was happening, and they set it in a new gigantic commercial mall in London. Quite instructively for me, this was the most animated discussion in the class where their fellows became frustrated, critical, and rebellious in response to something that so deliberately purported to be without intent or direction. The piece that broke the students' passivity was the piece that offered them a passive paradise.

In Euripides' tale, Demophon, president of Athens, does presumably the right thing as he takes action to grant asylum to the children. In relief at this invitation to finally take shelter, the refugee boys from Rome chosen by Sellars to represent the children of Heracles break the container of the proscenium stage to come down into the audience and shake spectators' hands, to thank us, the 'Athenians,' for our largesse. In this moment depending on where you are sitting the audience is made chorus—for those not on the aisles or available to the children's reach, we still watch theatre being made albeit now closer to us and unmediated by microphones—encouraged to be the welcoming democracy loving Athenians in contrast to the

countries who have expelled the boys from their lands. Iolaus calls out to Heracles' mother Alcamene who has been protecting the refugee girls in the temple, and the space of the city widens out further into the space of the spectators. Remembering hearing a voice, not sure who spoke or from where, I looked in the direction of the sound of a second-floor box on the right of the stage. Slowly as the lights went up a woman who also appears to be Asian, Julyana Soelistyo, appeared surrounded by eight refugee girls, some African, some Slavic, some Columbian (ethnicities I discovered when I read the descriptions of the children provided in the program).

Alcamene covered from head to foot in the costume of a burka with only her face showing moved to the front of the box. This costume doubled, at once theatrical and a current visual trope, accurate or not, of the oppression of women by the Taliban through the prescriptions of fundamental Islam and by extension a reason for the 'West' going to war. Nothing comes without cost in the world Euripides designs, an antique reminder of immediate consequences in this age given to wars at a distance from the countries waging them and those of us remaining supposedly unscathed. Having given asylum, taken an action to cure the dispossessed condition of the children, Demophon admits to Iolaus that she has consulted the Oracles who all suggest victory will not come unless a virgin is sacrificed. I cannot help but sigh inwardly, Muslim or Christian, Greek or Roman, sooner or later it seems every story will include some god or another who wants an 'unspoiled girl' for himself, in this world or the next. While Demophon can give shelter, she cannot implicate her own people so intimately as to ask one of them to make this sacrifice. A strong young voice startles the

audience from the aisle: Julyana Soelistyo, tiny now that we can see her out of the box and on the aisle of the platea, doubles as Macaria, daughter of Heracles. She offers herself as sacrifice, in a widening arc of community, her first concern her family, her brothers and her sisters, and then she offers her death as an act to save the city that has sheltered them. Her one request is that she be surrounded by women when the deed is done.

I am mindful here of how sacrifice as an act of soldiering has historically been bolstered by the rhetoric of patriotism; depending on the country they serve, soldiers also sign up for the job. The act of sacrifice is complicated by the strained bond of a latter day mercenary remunerated for the service and yet still acquiescing to a system in which she or he pledges an allegiance to protect the nation. I could feel that night how watching this bloodletting changed for a moment the detached quality of reception in the Teatro Valle in contrast to the mood in the theatre when we were presented with numbers and the casualty figures of war's aftermath in the count of the homeless and exiled. Here the numbers overwhelming and insubstantial made sudden sense in this scene of one woman's sacrifice whose passage from proud youth and sentience to corpse we witnessed before us.

All that remains on stage after the sacrifice done by women and in a protective circle of women is a plastic sheet. Two soldiers assist, the African-American soldier in charge of Iolaus' chair and a blonde woman whose physical contrasts—feminine but also bulky, awkward and suddenly tender—reminds the spectator of pictures of the relatively new phenomenon in the US of women serving in combat. They perform the ritual of the necessary showing of the death and its aftermath. A collision

and collusion of memory occurs, and I deliberately shift it to the side as I re-remember and replace the past previous to the past nearer to mind; the near-iconic status of the first pictures from Abu Graib and the standing body of the woman soldier taunting. On this stage the soldiers accept Macaria's blood poured down in libation as it spreads onto their bodies. Afterward the women take the body tenderly, and the sacrifice is complete.

Like Antigone, Macaria chooses death and that choice has consequences for the community. By its enactment Macaria's sacrifice will protect a city, enact a reparation, and yet, inevitably it will call for another as the cycle of sacrifice and appeasement continues. Sellars' staging of this very simple story, the strange and awkward juxtaposition of the everyday condition of refugee, of exile from home to the characters in the story meant that at times in the story the children came into focus in their singularity, not cast because of how they looked, how they acted but chosen for who they were or more precisely the condition they inhabited. Their insertion into the staged story in an odd way reminded me of Zola and Company in their zeal to enact a realism using recognizably authentic everyday objects on stage.

With the scene of Macaria's death, however, the energy on the stage intensified and the craft of acting reclaimed the space as she and the soldiers enact the ritual before us. What kinds of turns did my spectating take that night? Why did the scene with Macaria change my way of watching so markedly? Was it witnessing the one to one relationship of suffering to body, of loss to witness—even as I turn my head so as not to see the cut of the knife—as it causes an empathy nearly impossible in the repetitive sight of a panning shot of many bodies left in a

market square after a car bomb, in a roadway after a firefight?

Later thinking again about the creakiness of the evening, the strange scaffold of the beginning, the odd shift of static 'this is important now' delivery and the sudden moments of grief and power, I recognized how Sellars' production invited me to inhabit the position of emancipated spectator Rancière advocates for since I came away thinking the work had demonstrated not only that sacrifice and reparation often co-exist, but that neither is necessarily graceful in act or transition. The move toward repair and truth telling usually means someone must step away from the position of power that is the protected space of not admitting or actively hiding wrongdoing. Obviously the notion of 'willing' in the sacrifice sits uneasily with the lives taken, the families, the loved ones sacrificed in war, in violent clashes between those in power and those not. But Erika Fischer-Lichte's writing about how the theatricalization of ritual and sacrifice has a particular resonance for us in contemporary audiences joined up the odd hot and cold of this performance. When I went back to look again at the passage with the description Fischer-Lichte gives of Eysoldt, a German actor, who played Sophocles' Electra at the beginning of the 20th century, I could not help but think of Macaria's staged death:

> Her "phenomenal body did not disappear behind her semiotic body". Rather it "came to the fore" as a "vital, organic, energetic body whose sensuousness works directly on the phenomenal body of the spectators…the events stormed past… like a dream fantasy… [Eysoldt] transgressed yet another boundary—that which separated theatre from ritual. Not only was a ritual of sacrifice represented on stage but, moreover, a ritual was actually

> performed. The performance was realized as a kind of ritual—the ritual of the [actor's] self-sacrifice which created a temporary community of actors and spectators." (5, 9-10)

Sellars' use of the refugee children in the play seemed to me as a spectator to suggest his desire to return to ritual in a time of global and local distraction. Yet the mix in his production of agitprop and civic sacrifice made aesthetic brings to mind what ritual, at least as it has been theorized by anthropologists studying communities, takes for granted: that the participants in the ritual are either known personally to us or we know them to be members of our own wider community. In the Teatro Valle, I only have the word of director and of theatre management that the children I see before me are really refugees. This is theatre after all and the contract is one of pretend, so why should a spectator assume a body on the stage plays a condition rather than a role? Oddly as the play unfolds, I forget which parts I am to receive as a doubled performance of the theatrical narrative infused with the power of the actual condition of the children in their every day life as wanderers and exiles.

The parts the various children play are largely made of gesture and they do not speak, so what might prove a jarring sense of their amateur skills as against the seasoned actors who play their elders never occurs. For that matter who knows what condition the professional actors inhabit in their daily life? Could they not be voluntary exiles, ones not suffering the dire straits of most refugees, as I am? While not at all at risk in my position of being far from home, I did receive the work from the doubled state of having been raised in the US and having

lived in Europe for many years. What catharsis or more aptly Martin's "momentary materialization" of catharsis might be instigated at this remove from the recognition of members of a shared, intimate community?

In retrospect, in the collecting of the tiles tossed to the side of the doorway of the mind, I remembered particulary the suitableness of the ending of Euripides' play for Sellars' purpose of showing how then tells about now. The victims of the aftermath of the ancient war set the stage for the modern-day dénouement of a cycle beginning again. The narration of the story shifts to the almost entirely silent Albert S. On that night I understood the shift to facilitate an aural reception of the rhetoric of war told in a rhetoric recognizably African-American marine speak. Even now I wonder what it would sound like to hear the cadence of this speech without understanding the words. Would the rhythm have an affect on those in the audience who might have seen the numerous films from the US with harsh sergeants verbally roughing up the recruits for, it is always implied, their own good? This rhetoric with as many rules as any political or sophistical one comes to Albert S.'s aid as he plays the ancient Greek part of reporter, the theatrical part that requires the speaker to offer 'images' by sound and analogy, to make us the audience 'see' the battle, 'witness' the triumph. A narrative partly of heroism, Albert S. tells how Iolaus, insisting upon getting out of the wheelchair, became young for a day, a fighting god, and how the group triumphed.

Alcamene, however, listening carefully for the political meaning within the soldier's description of the dramatics of war, is distressed to learn that Eurytheus was not killed but taken prisoner. She insists the Athenians put him to death, but

Demophon assures her this is not possible. The same principles that require the Athenians to protect the boys require them to imprison rather than kill Eurytheus. Brought before Demophon, and thus before the whole audience, Cornel Gabara's Eurytheus enters dressed in the outfit that visually marks him as a part of our war news, the outfit those prisoners alleged to be members of Al Qaeda in Guantanamo Bay were required to wear then in their eternal encampment: jumpsuit, handcuffs, darkened goggles. I pause and remember the explosion of commentary such a move made that night: I think it was the first time I had seen the 'costume' of imprisoned 'Islamic terrorist' imported onto stage. I pause as well because the ongoing imprisonment set to be dismantled at the very instant of Obama's tenure as President still exists in a limbo—closing, closing, closed?

As a spectator I am charged with past and present and future in the words of Demophon who tells Alcamene that even if she kills Eurytheus, it is written that the children of these children of Heracles will wage war on Athens and on him. The violence will continue. She chooses to kill him and let the violence come. The resonances are many. The Athenians/children of Heracles are saved by a recognizably American soldier, who will it seems easily turn from savior to oppressor. The bitter feuds continue generation to generation, each violent act calls forth another; the threats from those made to wait in prison have apocalyptic certainty, the sacrifice of one victim for another will in the future take its vengeful toll.

However disjointed and disorientating I might have found the mix of realpolitik and fiction that evening, I think now about Sellars' intent to dissolve the very solid walls of the traditional theatre so that what was playing on stage partook directly of

what was 'playing' on the street. We, the audience for *Children of Heracles,* witnessed daily news of the international protests against and diplomatic struggle about the war in Iraq; in Europe I had spoken again and again with friends and acquaintances who felt unjustly and inevitably subject to the will of the US president they did not elect. Writing now from a distance of a decade on, it is strange to recognize how the body politic appeared in the aftermath of the beginning of the war to be wasting away on intravenous feeds, barely able to lift its head. The success of the right in Europe, the anxiety of climate change met with the ineffectual sense that we are already too late, the witnessing of remarkable wrongs perpetrated with brazen confidence because though there will be an outcry, there will be no one ultimately to answer to. Though decisions made across the Channel and across the Atlantic and Pacific have always effected Europeans, the now well-documented growth of terrorist plots aimed at the vague border of the West from the equally stereotypical and shifting border of Islam means that Europeans have a sense of heightened danger while being without the choric power of speaking to the community making choices about how best to protect them. While the internal workings of the Bush administration remained somewhat obscure before the war, figures like Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld and Condileeza Rice became as recognizable in Europe as Merkel, Berlusconi or Sadam Hussein. Sellars' staging mimics the sight of leaders and their seconds in command endlessly before the microphones, endlessly reiterating arguments for why the 'war on terror' is now a global phenomenon in need of a united strike.

However static in the main then, I experienced the movement in the play between the all too human scale of

personal sacrifice and the decisions made by leaders who have systematically hedged their bets as an invitation to consider the strange form of participation and passivity of being a citizen in a time of a supposed global, supposed community (though neither can Greek drama be said to be naïve about the complications of being a citizen in Oracle-swayed Athens). Perhaps I experience that movement as meaningful more fully in the remembering and the recounting than in the watching; the itinerant nature of spectating includes a wandering away from the experience, the wandering thoughts that occur in the wake, the way bits of the piece wander back into mind when recounting in order to show, to tell, to listen again.

Yet that present and palpable sense of unease and confusion in the audience for *The Children of Herakles* cannot be attributed to only the most obvious and large cause of war and impending war. The chorus we were could only respond to what we saw, what fate was implied for the characters, what implications for the wider community are created in the story and its non-resolution. But Sellars decision to disorient the spectator by the mix of 'real' and tragic narrative enacted in a Brechtian key produced a discombobulated and disturbed spectator. As Freddie Rokem suggests, in Brecht's description of the "V-effekt," the spectator in a theatre resembles the witness to a "traffic accident" who watches "an actor, a demonstrator, act the behavior of the driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident" (8). Rokem's apt substitution of "historical event" for "traffic accident, because—and this is not an irony—they have many characteristics in common" could not be a more perfect formulation for what Sellars presented to me and to my fellow

travelers. And we were left with the impression that night in 2002 that the reparation, the clean up in the wake of the 100 car pileup currently in process in Afghanistan and about to be underway in Iraq would be incalculable.

Leaving the Valle that night, leaving the Teatro India after *Il Colonnello e le ali*, leaving the Theatre Municipal in Avignon after *Ubu and the Truth Commission,* I came away in a strange spectatorial condition. Each production had taught me new ways to receive a mix of genres, of the factual and the fiction it relies on, of the metaphorical and the damaged real. Yet, none of the performances 'worked,' the disjointedness made it impossible to depart with a sense of having seen something extraordinary, a work of art moving artfully and engagingly between references to the moment and a world created out of its own imaginative power. Still my dissatisfaction in the immediate aftermath of seeing the work did not, obviously from what you have been reading, keep the plays from haunting my memory: the juxtaposition of puppets, marionettes and truth, the sad little army of would-be peacekeepers, the cluster of children left waiting and the violent assertion of violence to come at the end of a revival of a Greek play. So I wonder, might there be a category for plays that do something other than 'work' in the moment of their presentation. I remember thinking, trying to account for what seemed like a change in perception, that perhaps the dissatisfaction about the work as a coherent and well rendered performance echoes what I considered when I thought about *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, how beginnings and endings can be rendered in such a way that they release what they appear to contain.

Reparations like performance itself are iterative—they

are periodic, necessary reminders for organisms, human and communal, prone to forgetting. The grammatical seduction of a specific, singular pronoun—”the”—attached to a process less reified and more sporadic than the single will bear—”nation/audience/West”—can make me as a writer and you as my reader susceptible to the “one and only-ness” of those things dependent on taking shape and changing shape very much more as a practice than an outcome. If we are to make alliances in an imperfect world, then we must make sense of imperfect alliances. There are, I muse, direct and indirect theatre pieces about reparation not unlike the one in which I learn again with Gogo and Didi that the political world requires waiting, that the incremental is often, against all odds, worthy of celebration or at least appreciation, that while waiting, in waiting, I can pay attention, attention an expenditure that performance requires and repays, if not always at the moment of the offering.

Sound

In his book *Musicophilia,* the neurologist Oliver Sacks recounts the story of a man hit by lightning who in the aftermath of surviving that celestial jolt found he could suddenly play the piano as if from memory. When I heard the story, I thought piano knowledge would be one of the two boons I might ask of a violent, supernatural intervention; the other would be a comprehensive knowledge of many languages and the ability to speak them fluently. Our common phrase a 'gift for languages' captures the nature of something out of the ordinary about a talent for foreign tongues, something at once innate and granted to the fortunate by some friendly genie of genetic makeup.

As if in acknowledgement of such enviable fortune, in those unblessed with this gift a kind of resistance can be buried in the psyche, a hidden stubbornness that surfaces as a defense when the speaker or auditor senses with fear that her mother tongue may not be enough for or adequate to every task. Such resistance can be reinforced by habits and attitudes inculcated perhaps at a barely conscious level; though such responses might be instilled unconsciously, they are paradoxically all the more likely to flare up unexpectedly. I remember being in

high school in the US Midwest, to take only one example of an Anglo-Saxon nation resistant to foreign tongues, and how we formed the impression as vague as it was tenacious that if a book, a play, a movie must be translated either in content or by specific linguistic assistance such as subtitles, the fault is with a distant, foreign pretentious fanciness and not a deaf ear/blind eye willfully, and I think now at times strategically, imparted to youth by formal and informal education. Though in the present US climate some transformation has begun to occur with the large number of Spanish speaking citizens, for the most part my native country does not encourage itinerant experimentation. I can never quite believe the national lack of curiosity implied in the figure that only 14% of the population have applied for a passport, but such resistance to new languages, to other nations can still be figured as 'natural' to many children in the US, and of course in other countries as well.

No surprise then that one form of resistance to a culture willfully indifferent to multilingual nuance can be to leave home for those very foreign lands. I remember the examples set for me by Henry James, James Baldwin and Gertrude Stein, to name only three famous expats, who took long refuge in foreign parts, even as they sent missives in return to their country that contained some of the most insightful revelations about the American psyche ever written, insights no doubt made possible by looking back at a distance and by conscious comparisons to culture and daily life in Europe. My longing to go in order to see and hear better what I had taken for granted, or what grated on me and I did not yet know why, also fueled the heightened awareness of how language, sound, interpretation works as I, with an aptitude less flexible than that of a school child abroad,

began to learn a 'foreign' language for use and not just for understanding.

Many spectators will according to their geographic, financial and cultural circumstances never be invited to overcome the resistance, if such they have, to seeing a performance or a play in another tongue. Even the avid or willing spectator must surrender to the possibility of non-comprehension; at the very least at the level of meaning in the words and then again often in those other registers of meaning subtly coded and requiring complex knowledge of a country's associations with phrases and idioms, ways of saying and responding. It strikes me that surrendering while you also pay for something like a theatre ticket seems an odd contractual agreement. Yet many established theatres and international theatre festivals have either taken for granted or carefully cultivated a population who will give over to the risk of hearing and not understanding, of seeing and interpreting predominantly by gesture and sign.

In New York, in the 80s, my first invitation to a world of theatre in other languages came by way of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Had I been more cool, more contemporary, it might have been La Mama in the East Village, but the better funded and more magisterial BAM first caught my newly awakened attention. BAM's position in New York City had increasingly been one of experimental alternative to Broadway theatre, though not as experimental as PS122, say, or the Performing Garage. Since I had only come lately to the appreciation of those movies with subtitles while a graduate student at a prestigious University where everyone else seemed to have learned foreign-language movie going in the stroller, what caught my attention about BAM's announcement was the name of the director.

Heretofore for many of us in the States Ingmar Bergman meant Swedish cinema, and a particular kind of cinema at that.

Thinking back now about how BAM emphasized in their advertising the relative novelty of 'imported theatre' by stressing the ubiquitous and over-stretched tag 'international,' I am reminded how much the history of theatre—even before the contemporary means of locomotion created a subset of cultural tourism in theatre festivals—is a history of itinerant movement. Companies always traveled, texts traveled, acting styles traveled. In Germany, Shakespeare was 'new' in the 18th century, the discovery that fueled Goethe's early work, while in England at the same time the works of Shakespeare were being organized and arranged textually with an eye toward containing their unruly theatricality by rendering them primarily poetic and instructive. Plays often migrated to new settings, in new theatres, sometimes crossing the mysterious plains of translation to arrive at the other side transformed into another work, while at other times companies simply offered a play in the original for audiences to make of it what they could. So while BAM's presentation of plays in Japanese, in Swedish, in German did not mark some new innovation of imported theatre, the manner of presentation most certainly did.

In those past days of itinerant theatre, aids available to the spectator might have included her/his having read the published text of the play in anticipation of the production, or being provided at the performance with a synopsis written in the language of the host country, or being able to recognize a well known, canonical spectacle. Three witches around a cauldron, for example, hardly need to be comprehensibly understood for most theatergoers to hear the echo, in whatever their native

tongue, of 'when will we three meet again,' or failing a memory of the text, a general recognition that here we are and the play is *Macbeth*. The aid to translation at BAM for the Bergman plays, however, introduced a relatively new technological innovation borrowed from the street, headphones, and a manner of simultaneous translation strangely reminiscent of those tense pictures of the gathering of different races, faiths and tongues in the hall of the United Nations, each dependent on the voice in their ear for the meaning of the words of the speaker. At BAM I handed over my driver's license, an odd exchange of identity for identifying language, and received the temporary loan of a headset.

Over the years I have come to see the art to reception of theatre in foreign languages as a craft, if one where the apprenticeship occurs in steady attendance at performances rather than one passed on from one artisan to another. I do not mean to imply levels of proficiency here, a black belt in spectating, but rather a recognition of the skill gained with application over time: the time it takes to undo the habits of resistance to experience, to be patient with the emergence of the queasy sense of disappointment in the self who does not know more languages, to accept the nagging suspicion that one has not understood everything or worse a vital part, and to continue to strive for the balance, almost dancer-like, of using translation aids and abandoning them when necessary in order to be fully engaged in this form of spectating. This craft, in my experience, involves the revaluing of sound as a source of meaning thread through words and yet also independent of them.

On my first night of three successive nights of plays directed by Bergman I took my seat, and contemplated this odd

creature I had in my hands with its two earpieces extending from a small black rectangle with what seemed like an unecessary ornament, a small red bulb. One discovered the importance of the red bulb by turning it first in the wrong direction and fiddling with the volume knob, becoming disgusted almost immediately because there 'was no sound' or more accurately no intelligible sound. Just at the point where I would have gotten up in a huff and demanded a working set of headphones, I tried it other way around, the red light lit up, and I could hear the anticipatory movements of the translator, moving papers about while waiting for the performance to begin. I was not alone in my technical confusion. The people who seemed most sanguine were the older spectators accustomed to using such aids in theatres in order to enhance the natural sound for those hard of hearing. Other spectators twisted this way and that, asked their neighbors whether 'yours is working,' in general disturbed the tradition of spectator anonymity—my seat is my castle—and quiet talking between friends before the show begins.

When the play began we who had headsets had to adjust. A boundary became palpable between Swedish speakers, without headphones, and we who were totally dependent on meaning coming from the voice translating the play. Questions of interpretation explode in this method of translation—and I would suspect these very questions are the reason methods of simultaneous translation evolved very quickly to visual aids such as surtitles. As you hear the voice in your head what you want to hear is the voice of that extraordinary actor Bibi Andersen playing O'Neill's endangered and endangering Mother in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. I knew the play, I had even written an entry for a Dictionary of American Plays

about the play, still I fell into a kind of passive dependence immediately as if I were being fed the very morphine that ruins O'Neill's Mary and could not unhook myself from the delivery mechanism.

Being a spectator under these circumstances is not unlike practicing the very piano the lucky lightning survivor suddenly mastered; at first, no matter how adept, you are rusty, your fingers are sore, you're a bit sleepy, you have not found the rhythm. With simultaneous translation both spectator and translator have to find a rhythm in the face of, the ear of, the initial moments where it is all intrusion and annoying difference. The words come too fast or too slow. The gestures need to be matched to the words issuing forth from the actor and from the earphones. Then, slowly, you get it, your scales are cleaner, your partnership with the translator works more smoothly. You relax and then you can attend to sound as if you have discovered a talent for listening in more than one direction. I slowly developed an ear for listening to *both* Bibi Andersen and the voice speaking English in my ear; I heard the 'gist' of linguistic meaning from the headset. I listened for the spectrum of sound that made up interpretation and meaning from Andersen, pitch, speed, tone, pauses. I learned to push the English way back in my head to merely a soft echo and have it return as a reverberation of information to be referred to in the reception of Andersen's gestures, sounds, speech.

Of course the translator's voice furnished not just the lines of Andersen, but of her sons and her husband. Herein followed another level of interpretive adjustment, the gender of the voice in the ear, the gender of the voice on stage. While voice can make all the difference in theatrical rendering and reception, we

tend to remark upon it only in the extraordinary circumstances. Voice always carries extra information, gender and class and national accent, Olivier, Burton, Gielgud, and then again Ashcroft and particularly Maggie Smith. Then there are the voices that offer another set of imbricated associations like that of Paul Robeson, a voice that sings when it speaks and vice versa, a voice with the bass baritone of acoustic associations with race tracing through the vowels and the consonants. But at BAM the female voice spoke with an even, undramatic tone into my ear whether she was translating the weary, fearful, angry aged voice or the whiney, self-absorbed, pleading young one. Like the flat and consistent cadence many poets learn to adopt in readings as a camouflage covering the imparting of a particular meaning to a particular phrase, so this simultaneous translating where the voice must say without telling.

Another species of intrusive sound occurred in that auditorium at BAM when I took my headphones off. Even though the partnership between my ears and the voice of the translator had reached an easy back and forth, at some point I became tired of this foreign object on my head. So I put my headphones down in order to just listen and enjoy the particular porch-swing-like oscillations of Swedish. Instead I entered an aural world of buzzing insects intermittently quiet and then bursting to life in response to the lines uttered on stage. How, I wondered, did this affect the native speakers? To be surrounded by this buzzing instead of the cocoon of accommodating quiet in the theatre that still obtains in the 21st century, intermittently broken fourth walls notwithstanding? Ultimately the relatively predictable and often pristine nature in the aural experience as a spectator on this particular occasion became fractured into

hindrances, the one of a machine I depended on, the other the sonic byproduct of that machine multiplied hundreds of times when I removed it.

Headphones for simultaneous translation in performance rather quickly gave way to the furnishing of visual text, though such a method brought its own set of disruptions, less aural but still intertwined with the sound in the performance space. At this point in my apprenticeship to theatre in foreign languages, I had moved to Italy and from this move came another layer to the process of making meaning, a process I have come to think of as a kind of doubled spectatorship. All spectatorship offers the possibility of the opening of an avenue of interpretation between the performers and the audience, even where the goal of the actors is to assault and keep at a distance or at the other extreme when the banality is so intense it quells the spectator's desire for animated watching. The position of a spectator who a) hears and sees a production in a language foreign to her and b) has the option of reading explanatory surtitles in a language she is newly studying entails an intense participation in making meaning during the time in which the performance unfolds.

In my first years of going to a great deal of theatre at festivals and at theatres in Rome, the scene in my head at times seemed straight out of a Buster Keaton film. If I was fortunate, I would be seeing a play I knew, so I could concentrate on action and acting rather than trying to add the third term, understanding what was being said. But when everything was new to me, bits of my receptive apparatus would like vaudeville clowns bash into one another on their way to trying to retrieve the information needed for comprehension. So I would listen, look up at the rectangular box suspended above the stage where

the Italian surtitles appeared, take in those Italian words and, while the clowns in my brain tried to make sense of that verb we did not know, I would already be looking down to the stage to see/hear what would happen next.

If the nature of reception time seems to expand when you are listening to a translation in your ear and listening to the words being said in choreographed time on the stage, the time of reception also changes shape in a performance when you add the task of reading. That shaped time then oddly stretches and compresses simultaneously when while reading you have to scan your modest repository of Italian words in order to make sense of the meaning. In my experience of learning a language as an adult, I have noticed in the process an odd, backwards logic. Keaton's form of comedy did not come to my mind as an analogy arbitrarily. Sometimes trying to understand what I have just heard in an Italian shop or a garage or a theatre involves mental motion not unlike that of Keaton on one of those hand-cranked railroad trolleys: his frenetic motion ever increasing as he sees that the train is moving not away but towards him, his arms flailing up and down with superhuman speed. So with interpretation: the mind runs backwards over the phrase to see what you have missed. Sometimes fortunately in this backward review the mind finds the part missed or misapprehended—ahh not *cavállo*, a horse, but *cávalo*, an expression not unlike the response of 'oh my' to a narrative of woe—hastily reassembles the phrase and moves again in forward motion. All the while you are trying to complete the operation before the wreck that will undo the conversational contract of an acceptably brief pause in an interaction between speaking, listening and responding.

In general with this process I hope for sympathetic interlocutors on the street or on the phone, but when it occurs *while* I am watching, the frenetic motion in memory and the "ahh" of recognition can mean I find that while I have been

engaged in an action of memory and recognition, the next three lines of the play have been spoken and are gone. So construction and reconstruction coincide in reception. Though a heightened and particular event of spectatorship, of itinerant spectatorship, the effort of making sense of a performance in a foreign language has awakened my sense of how much construction and reconstruction I discount or engage in unconsciously in any moment of reception and interpretation. While the "equality" of my position as spectator, to think in Rancière's terms, might be hindered in that I do not know the language of the play and I am new to the language of the surtitles, indeed there is "a new stage of equality" in my spectating "where different kinds of performances [could] be translated into one another," where it "is a matter of linking what one knows with what one does not know" (280). Though Rancière does not use translation here in its most literal sense, his sense still works in the context of reception, hearing, reading and interpreting. Struggling, I am also emancipated, not at all passive in my Keatonesque seat; traversing the distance between my place and the action and sounds before me, I am in charge of my senses and of making sense.

As I had become aware of the vexedness in air in the Teatro Valle when Peter Sellars' opened his performance of *Children of Heracles* with a discussion about contemporary refugees in Europe, so I often become aware of a different atmosphere in the theatre when a majority of spectators are doing this kind of translation work. Bert States theorizes the phenomenology of theatre as an "affective corporeality" of the live performance that works as a "carrier of meaning." States suggest that the spectator receives through her and his senses the combination of "literary, pictorial, and even musical images constantly interpenetrating

each other" in the performance, a work of reception Rancière might include under the heading translation. Such "affective corporeality," in my experience, makes for the difference in the space of the theatre between actors and audience. The more corporeal the reception, the more the space takes on dimension: full and vibrant in a willing audience, thin and strained in an unwilling one. To the various strands of interpenetration in a phenomenological moment in performance States suggests, I can add that of acoustic interpretation. Sometimes a coolness in the air comes not from a withdrawal deployed by the audience, but rather caused by an unintentional injury to the timing of the piece, not because of the actors' skill but because of delayed comprehension, the disjointed reception affects the sense of the audience as an integral part of a collaborating unit that inhabit the same time as the performers.

Since those early days at BAM, the use of simultaneous translation for theatre and opera has steadily increased, particularly at European festivals of international theatre. However the method of translation almost universally comes in the form of liquid letters across a bar placed high above the performance space. If the startling sound of a voice in the ear took some getting used to, so does the corporeal dance of shifting the eyes from the action on the stage to the scrolling words and back again. I see a woman enter, close the door, go into the kitchen and begin breaking eggs; she makes sounds to accompany the crack and slurp, then a man at the counter addresses her in German: 'Hey there, Stella baby.' Now, though the woman continues her action and the man leans forward towards her, I take my gaze from the scene to quickly look up and read: 'Ciao, Stella mia cara.' So the movement of my gaze is

a bit like a perpetual nodding, up to the words, back to the stage. Accompanying this constant shifting of my eyes from stage to text is the aural reception, because I still hear the words spoken while reading what they mean.

If the comic scene in the head of a spectator reading in a second language, watching in a third, makes for a certain frenetic experience of the play, it also can paradoxically ruin the comedy happening on the stage. I have attended performances in English, ignoring the surtitles unless I am curious about a particular word or phrase and how it is translated into Italian, watching the play only to be startled by laughter in the theatre three seconds before the actor has finished the joke. A border arises among us, the audience members, between those who 'get it' from reading and those who get it in the time of performance and the actors' delivery, who get it by ear not eye. What can be extrapolated or assumed depends on the haste with which I make judgments about native speakers. I remember how when I was first going to theatre in Europe, I naively assumed everyone who 'gets' the German was German, and so in a semi-conscious fashion ascribed national identities to those in the theatre all around me.

'Reader-spectators' function in the doubled time of reading, taking in the language all at once, and then watching the actions stretched across the lines, because customarily the surtitle screen allows for about three lines at a time, lines only rarely calibrated to be in tempo with the spoken word. Meaning, then, happens in clumps: a comprehension to be referred to, as I did when I pushed the voice of the translator at BAM to the back of my conscious mind, as I watch and apprehend the scene.

The pace of the translation appearing above the scene

varies according to method. A third manner of comedy, maybe not funny to those dependent on the translation in the moment of performance but certainly funny in retrospect, happens when the surtitles "get behind" the action. Suddenly now the movie I inhabit becomes more Chaplin than Keaton as I have to read very quickly, usually too quickly to actually read all the lines; the conveyer belt continues to run even though I am imperfectly twisting bolts, quite literally only able to perceive the barest nuts and bolts of what is going on if I am reading backwards to see what just happened and forwards to try and more fully receive what is happening now before me.

As my Italian has improved I can add to the time of interpretation my taking time out for a linguistic curiosity about the choice of one word over another. How interesting, I might muse, that's how *in somma* is used as a sonic gesture to avoid having to spell the underlying meaning out. In some cases the lumpenness of the translation makes me annoyed and again I can miss action because I am searching for the better word I would have used. I laugh to think of Susan Melrose who offers a quite judicious and careful definition of the 'expert spectator,' where expert means not our black-belt spectator but someone who has a lot of experience as an informed spectator, in contrast to my protected position of watcher in the dark where I can become overconfident and judgmental about the translation. As a nouveau expert in language acquisition, I have the leisure and anonymity to consider better word choice while not having the task of translating the entire play.

Yet, these shapers of the time of reception by surtitle, the rushed, the leisurely, the inquisitive, the lost, certainly do affect

the space of reception. A muted snort of frustration can be heard in the audience when the surtitles malfunction. One becomes aware of the communal nature of the task of understanding by reading while watching. As on the opening night of Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes* performed in French at the Teatro Valle in Rome when the power went off during the performance three times. For as much as ten minutes at a time the surtitle box was blank while the actors continued the play in the semi-dark. Like the partnership I create with the simultaneous translator that develops out of the initial awkwardness into a true collaboration, so I develop the habit of reading surtitles in the course of an hour or two of performance. Such a habit comes into sharp relief when it is broken as it was that night.

I remember the stunned, slightly confused silence permeating the theatre, an atmosphere with a palpable suspension of time as spectators shifted and waited, not for the performers but for the explanation of what they were seeing and what they were hearing. Again the addition of surtitles or any translation aid seems to enforce this strange forgetting, a forgetting of a well-known oft-performed text, a forgetting of one's own knowledge of French. Filling the space of the forgotten knowledge is our dependence, the communal waiting for the translation to be restored, even if we do not really need it. A mix then of the active spectator who reads and interprets and the habits of dependence that lead to passivity. A form of passivity inextricably tied to screens, I suspect, the way one's eye will stray to a neighbor's telephone screen or the image on her computer, the way distractions, sadly usually not delightful, can still exercise an automatic pull and then cause a stopping to look, a losing of one's place.

In theory, then, I can choose whether to make reading the surtitles a part of my reception of the performance. Even though the language of the performance may be incomprehensible, a spectator can still ignore the surtitles. However, the ease with which I can ignore surtitles depends upon the arrangement of the theatre itself, and where I am sitting. In a relatively traditional theatre, the most expensive orchestra seats, ironically, make the spectators work the hardest to look up and down. Balconies and galleries often are on the same level with the surtitles. The higher (and cheaper) the seats, the more difficult it is to ignore the words. I wonder often whether refusing the 'aid' of surtitles makes for a more 'authentic' reception of the performance in progress? Just the additional stage of making the choice to refuse shifts the intensity of the reception. And a great deal depends on the duration of the reception: I can become tired of both efforts, tired of reading and looking back and forth or tired of concentrating on the language I am hearing in order to translate its meaning into the performers' actions.

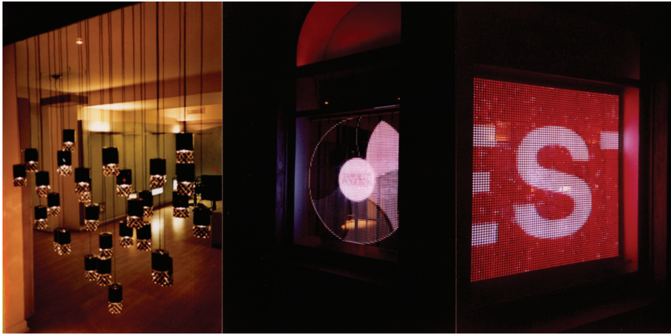
The construction and reconstruction at work in this form of spectating echo more general quandaries involved in any act of translation—faithfulness, exact translation, colloquial rendering, and authenticity. In Avignon, in a year in which the festival hosted a set of productions from Russia, I remember particularly a production of Shakespeare in Russian. The translation the company used was that of Boris Pasternak, presumably for most Russians the sound of Pasternak is the sound of Shakespeare. That same play were it transferred to a festival in Italy would usually have surtitles not created from the secondary echo made in the translation of Pasternak's version of Shakespeare, what the players are speaking, but the standard

Italian version, such as Giorgio Melchiori's, of any of the famous plays. I am reminded that had I grown up and been schooled in Italy these phrases of Melchior's would have been as familiar to me as "I am all the daughters of my father's house," a phrase that sighs its way through me each time I hear it. So if for example I am watching and listening to the Russian *King Lear* by way of the Melchior version in Italian, Cordelia protests, 'I cannot heave my heart into my mouth,' a phrase I have recognized by looking up to see: 'non riesco a sollevare il peso del mio amore fino alle mie labbra' (I cannot lift the weight of my love up to my lips) even as the players *speak* Pasternak's Russian approximation and I 'hear' in my mind the original.

The sonic quality of languages, the weight of the stress, the speed of the conjoined vowels and consonants can seduce the non-native speaker. I have noted how because the sound is not attached to meaning until I read or until I interpret by gesture, the volume of the sounds themselves increases when I watch and decreases when I read. Russian, oddly, is a language in my ears that over the course of a play seduces me into thinking I actually 'know' what is being said. The force of conviction in the phraseology, the thrust and animation of the speech conveys something like meaning. This can happen as well with Lithuanian and Swedish. Conversely, though I understand a great deal of French, I am always running to catch up with the meaning, taking the sound directly to my reservoir of English equivalents rather than having the intuitive sense that I will know what it means. I don't trust the sound of rhetorical French, it is too clipped and measured, whereas Italian offers accumulation, every syllable pronounced, rolled, held until the next. I suspect here too are regional differences; Southern drawls exist in most

nations whether they be Neapolitan or Provencal or Georgian (the Central Asian and the US versions). I learned a mode of speaking growing up that only later I recognized equips me more easily for speaking Italian than French, the mouth open and the phonemes long, no swallowed vowels, no emphatic lip clamping. Itinerancy of the spectator or the spectacle includes the discovery and then accumulation of such experiential knowledge; in performance such knowledge has traditionally been reproduced for comic stereotype or parodic commentary on nation and the characteristics of identity supposedly embedded and easily decoded in habits of speech, food, dress and bearing.

Sound can decrease in volume for the reading spectator—subordinated as unnecessary for comprehension—and our Western habit to overvalue the seen means that surtitles cannot help but emphatically remind me as a spectator that there is a text at the heart of the performance I am watching and hearing. Peter Sellars' 2000 production of *Story of a Soldier* performed in the Teatro India in Rome comes back to mind as I remember the varieties of heard and inferred text and sound in the evening Sellars curated for us as spectators. The sound of the night began with a reading of a long poem by Gloria Enedina Alvarez—who Sellars had commissioned to write a modern version of the libretto for Stravinsky's music, a libretto in English, the action set in East Los Angeles. While Alvarez spoke/read her poem, a woman stood next to her echoing her words in the Italian translation. Since the poem had Spanish scattered through it, the two versions seemed to meet from time to time in the Latinate similarities between Italian and Spanish.



These rhetorical traditions bifurcated in sound. The punch and thrust of a vivid contemporary Spanish poem alternated with the naturally overblown style of Italian staged reading. As with Russian cadences so with the speech act of the overblown, a word I think of as re-coined by Fred Moten in its wild state of "unprecedented sound" when he writes, when his writing sings of Eric Dolphy (83). In my wanderings I have often noted how the slide from things Southern to things 'other' occurs more frequently than at first I understood, though I remember noting early on in my transient life in the US how when stupidity needed illustration, the narrator almost always slipped into a Southern drawl. In Italy the racist saying, "Africa begins at Naples," conjures the same prejudice, though of course it can be turned on its supposed slur to intone, 'oh yeah, it does, thank god.'

A 'fear of feeling,' a desire not to sound overblown, causes not only actions but pronunciations to be contained. Much in Italian life would sound and look silly if imitated by non-Italians who tend to strain and overdo or to withdraw and under-say. While I can hear how the national characteristics of Italian speech and life are undergoing change from the

effects of hearing one sort of Italian on television and the aural influence of minimal dialogue in popular film, the tradition of daily speech remains one of narration by rhetorical question, and encouragement by interspersed ejaculations. The first time I carried on a conversation and someone punctuated an idea of mine with "Brava," I assumed they were only praising my ability to string ten Italian words together without stopping. But as I came to hear and participate in more conversations, I understood that "Brava" or "Bravo" is a natural spur to the continuation of rhetorical flow, a generous interjection that leaves me feeling remarkably insightful no matter how much I know it is a common rhetorical unit of exchange. And it seems now no surprise that the word is the same as the one used at the end of a theatrical, musical or operatic performance, a sound from the throat as percussive as applause.

In an opera one might argue the spectators can be particularly unaware of the text of the libretto since the individual words embellished by music stretch out across the notes. I often find when seeing Benjamin Britten's operas some passages in English escape me as I listen to the sound of the singing and the elisions that make music but not necessarily orderly linguistic sense. With the script available to the eye above the performance, those words appear 'intact' before the notes change their cadences and tempos or before the performer selects syllables to emphasize and hold.

Surtitles also instruct the reader/spectator about the crossover of language historically documented in texts of plays or in letters from at home and abroad. Translators in contemporary theatre rely on the expanding sonic repository of music and audio sound shared via the internet as much as

on the bilingual dictionary to convey meaning for a watching audience across Europe. In contemporary performances I am often instructed about the expressions that have slipped into a common vocabulary because, despite the language of the production, they remain untranslated. In the Sellars' production the Italian translators decided to render 'Yo bro' in English, a decision I took to mean that they assumed the expression to be a common one as well as one that had no Italian equivalent or that if rendered into Italian would lose its racial and generational connotations. I am reminded of the habitual use of the word 'injured' to denote a bad translation as if the original text maintains itself like an athlete's body, in form, carefully sculpted, and thus also vulnerable to injury, to careless wounding by hasty or inexpert trainers.

During *Story of a Soldier*, the mechanics of surtitles were not hidden up behind the audience in a box or at the back by means of a projector. I could see the movement of the young man at the machine on a desk next to the stage, his hands on the keyboard of the Macintosh laptop. As I had been wandering from surtitled production to surtitled production I had begun to see changes, experimentation with the placement of surtitles. Well-funded opera houses moved the surtitles out of the *mis en scene* by placing small screens on the back of each seat, a viewing experience not unlike the individual screens on planes, though we have no mechanisms to rewind or pause. As I think about it now I wonder if whether in the first years of surtitles in performance, the companies arriving in a foreign country would have been dependent on the theatre or festival to supply a standard method of providing the translation for the audience. Over time, however, some performance makers

have seen an aesthetic opportunity in the interpretive snags and dissonant reception of surtitles, integrating potential audience incomprehension into the show.

Standing in an open, abandoned railway station in Florence, I watched as the Catalan dance troupe Fura del Baus, already politically engaged in the distinctions of a minority culture and language, created a dance/spoken work where they deployed a structure meant to imply a Tower of Babel rolled through the space. We stood watching and from time to time dodging the structure, water and flour all being liberally hurled about the space while the performers shouted in different languages, repeating phrases in Spanish, in Catalan, in English, in Italian. A living version of the ubiquitous signs on trains and in stations in Europe that offer instructions in four languages, always beginning with the language of the country one is currently in—*acqua, water, eau, Wasser*—Fura del Baus made sense by the repetition of the words and vigorous gesture. At some point I would hear the 'clue' about what was going on, just enough in a tongue I knew to create an impressionistic sense of what they meant—a kind of linguistic pointillism.

When Christoph Marthaler's company from Zurich brought *Twelfth Night* in German to Rome (November 2001), the standard surtitles of the Italian translation appeared above the stage. However, I recall my momentary confusion when a pause occurred in the performance as an otherwise minor figure came forward to the end of the stage to speak. While he spoke the surtitle box remained blank. The third time he did this in the course of the play, it occurred to me that he was speaking a sonnet; not because I had understood the

words, not because I had read the program, simply because the rhythm of the language and the fact that this was a Shakespeare play sent me searching for the clue to identify these mysterious but metrical pieces of monologue. I have no doubt that the sensation of an aural recognition prior to deduction came about because of the lyricism, the sound, of this particular German translation of the sonnets by the poet Paul Celan.

Over these years, sound as a conveyer of meaning not only became heightened for me as I wandered and watched, wandered and heard: these spectatorial experiences of aural reception, textual translation, and a mix of the two fed directly into my work as a director and scholar. I no longer can remember whether my curiosity about cognition, reception and sound began from these experiences watching and hearing in translation or from the consequent discussions with friends, colleagues and students about the acoustic history of live performance. I do recall the fortunate occurrence of seeing a performance first without surtitles and then a year later with them and the opportunity it gave me to reflect on my own reception in response. In December of 1999 the Teatro Taganka from Moscow performed *Marat Sade* directed by Yuri Ljubimov in Rome at the Teatro Vascello. The Vascello, a small theatre not funded by the typical regional government monies, was packed. On the narrow stage the set looked like a lion's cage in a zoo; but while such bars had served in Peter Brook's famous production of this play as a medium through which the players could goad the audience and bring attention to the inside/outside, the frame dimension of traditional theatre, for the Teatro Taganka those bars provided circus apparatus on which to swing, walk the tightrope, tumble. For this performance the Vascelllo supplied

no surtitles: the text was presumably a Russian translation of Peter Weiss' play. The company incorporated words of the text into song and four of the performers (dressed as inmates) played instruments.

When I received the schedule for the 2000 Avignon Festival and saw the announcement of the production by the same company, I immediately made plans to take my partner who had missed the production at the Vascello. My praise of the piece had been extravagant, though justified; expectations were high, and no doubt this preparation too affected our reception. But what most affected my reception were the surtitles in French over the stage—Avignon is very strict about including translations of all the works it imports. I find it hard not to assume a national characteristic in this insistence, the demand that those things travelling to France to be performed must assimilate. Of course the difference in my experiences of *Marat Sade* may have been less intentional: perhaps the Vascello did not have the wherewithal to organize surtitles for the production in Rome. As spectators our stories, the ones we tell afterwards, can provide background and motive for chance, but then this is part of the pleasure and license of being an itinerant spectator—in retrospect, the stories tell on one another. Interpretations, our translations of events mutate for watchers and makers over time. For the collector of authentic data, this uneasy truth about inaccuracy injures the quality of the recollection. For me as an itinerant spectator it acknowledges the humble status of gathering and arranging the memory of the heard and seen, an act fully aware of its limitations, and yet an act that if left undone out of fear of remembering wrongly risks willfully pushing aside what might be retold and appreciated.

In Avignon, as I watched from bleachers the action on the stage taking place in an open courtyard, the extraordinarily communicative actors, whose voices and bodies choreographed meaning as surely as any language, suddenly seemed stilled and separated by the lines they were saying. Where the ensemble in Rome had seemed to be making an intricately woven performance, with surtitles, with individual lines attributed to individual actors where there had only been a kind of soundscape in Rome, suddenly the work seemed more of a play, less of a dance/opera. I know the play; my response I think had less to do with not knowing the story the first time than it did with perceiving how the 'aid' to understanding had a strangely stilted effect in this case.

The idea of humble gathering as a task for the spectator desirous of communicating memories of work heard and seen has its mimetic other in the practice of making. The invitation to admire the random opportunism of the makers of performances who tend to collect discarded bits, acoustic, textual, visual and introduce them into the production provides one of the great pleasures, aural and sensual, of lingering in the weathered thresholds of live performance. Think how the Western god of all plays Shakespeare incorporated work like the 'upstart crow' he was, any shiny bauble found its way into his play. And rather than hide the thievery, theatre as a medium of performance seems to rejoice in stealing in plain sight as when Shakespeare cheerfully mauls Marlowe's "a face that launched a thousand ships" for his own use in the dirty rivalries of *Troilus and Cressida*. So the medium of performance also offers almost instantaneous commentary on the changes happening in and to elements of its own form. As with borrowed language, so with

newly introduced technologies.

In the initial stages of surtitle use and to a great extent still, 20th-century theatre etiquette remains intact: we pretend that the box with the words is not there. The actors do the same, moving and speaking as if directly to us and not mediated by the extra frame of the surtitles above them. However, I recall being surprised upon entering the Teatro Argentina for The Volksbühne Berlin Company's production of *Endstation Amerika*, at first confused by a large object suspended from the top of the proscenium. The shallow and rectangular surtitle box, only identified as such when the production began, swung freely above the performance space at least three or four feet lower than normal. Generally in order to maintain the fiction that the surtitles are not there, the box tends to be nestled up under the frame of the stage, slightly hidden against a curtain, certainly not suspended freely in the playing space forming part of the stage picture. From the moment I saw the translation box light up, I understood this was no discrete aid to understanding but an incorporated part of the harshly plain contemporary apartment the designers had made for the set and the harsh and loud production Castorf planned for his audience.

An adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire, Endstation Amerika* was performed in German with surtitles in English and Italian. Again like a pattern emerging I thought of the rhetorical flourishes of analogy and metaphor I grew up hearing when I went South with my mother, of the deliberate, emphasized meter. I remembered those voices as I sat listening to the German, reading the Italian, and thinking how numerous are the varieties of what is termed English. The language of Tennessee Williams' plays is a lush, lyrical

Southern idiom, suited to the Italian. One can imagine Blanche saying, 'Good mooore-ning' with something like the elongated 'Buon gioooorno'. One can imagine the doctored reminiscences she indulges in being punctuated by Italian rhetorical tilts like the word 'pero' as it works to both acknowledge the common information and then pivots towards its own intent. While it might have been interesting to 'hear' a Bavarian accent in the German translation, Castorf's intent had little to do with an interest in the associations of sound to regional inflection in the text.

The Volksbühne's adaptation cut Williams' opening scene with a 'Negro Woman'; in fact the production removed the play from any setting of African-American or Creole New Orleans and concentrated the tensions of race on those between the countries of the former East Europe—the Polish Stanley now an ex-member of Lech Walesa's Solidarity Party—and the West. Strangely, having not thought of the play since I had seen the re-released and uncut version of the movie in Ann Arbor, Michigan years before, I found myself reacting to the changes to the setting made by the Volksbühne. Unbeknownst to me all sorts of information about the cultural world of Williams' intrigue had been lodged in my memory. Castorf's set consisted of only one room where there was a kitchen at an angle to the lounge with a screen on the back wall. Behind that wall there was a bathroom and a videocamera to project what was happening in the bathroom onto the TV screen in the main room.

Unbidden, memories provoked by Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1949) began to reconstruct the out of doors of one of the only cities I still miss in the US, New Orleans, with its balconies and the backsteps down from those balconied

second floor apartments—those essential steps reproduced in the film down which Marlon Brando descends in a state of such extraordinary sexual satisfaction that the whole of the audience in the cavernous old movie theatre where I saw the restored version in 1998 gave a collective sigh of longing. That sigh might have been in response to a movie and to a star already imbued with the sexiness made from the longing of his public. The sound of longing in Williams' play, on the stage but also audible between the music in the lines is the music from blues joints on the same street; a music that a nervous middle America doctored to try and make it white and make it theirs but never succeeded in doing so, a music that, in Williams' time, lay in wait to change the identity of a nation about to face it. Yet while this complicated and layered memory floated up through my senses, I sat watching the set of *Endstation Amerika* enclose the characters into the claustrophobic box of studio apartment: television, bed, bath and no life on the street.

Extending into this strangely heated relation between my memory, me and what I was hearing/seeing/reading, the surtitle box intruded, ignored by the cast for most of the play, but insistently present for me as a spectator in an orchestra seat. Occasionally, the box reproduced Williams' own stage directions in Italian between the scenes. These citations from the play script created a dissonance first simply by inserting the invisible textual into the representation on stage and second because they described a time and place often entirely unrelated to the production we were seeing. 'It is early the following morning. There is a confusion of street cries like a choral chant' (Williams 1959: 156). I then read this direction translated into Italian, without the lyricism of the phrase 'choral chant'.

Meanwhile I only hear street cries by being prompted to supply them in imagination after reading since when the players enter by the door that is the single entrance to the stage, the spectators see nothing beyond it but darkness and hear nothing other than the loud, miked noise of the boxy set.

Towards the end of the production when Stanley has uncovered Blanche's delicate perversions, her shame is broadcast even further than the local rumor of the stories of a 'man down at the plant,' or a 'merchant' who lived in the town where she was dismissed as a school teacher for having an affair with a 17-year-old boy. I watch all the members of the cast, except Blanche, move to the corner of the stage and look up to see the 'evidence' of Blanche's guilt written across the box. Like looking up to note the news from the ever-moving letters on the side of a

building in Times Square, the characters read along with us, the spectators: 'this woman is morally unfit for her job' 'the Hotel Flamingo' '17-year-old boy'. The words at first scroll across in

the conventional manner of surtitles and then begin to flash like an announcement or an advertisement.

Commenting on the changes in its own form, the performance elicited the linguistic 'fourth wall' behavior accorded to surtitles by experienced audiences only to break it. No longer did I participate in a fiction of pretending the surtile bar did not exist. Instead my reading transformed into something voyeuristic that I shared along with everyone on stage. Indeed only Blanche ignored the bar; her character's Southern belle obliviousness shielding her from the attack taking violent visual place before the rest of us. As I remember the scene now I wonder, fancifully no doubt, whether Williams' character became for a moment a stand-in for her medium in her determined obtuseness and stubborn resistance to such an obvious, such an indelicate form of technology too new for the faux genteel world of performance and pretending Blanche inhabits. Meanwhile Castorf's employment of the surtitle box bullied us in the audience into joining the judgmental crew who strive only to sin where no one can see, whose pleasure comes from a public exposure that leaves them safe, us safe.

Over the course of the wanderings detailed in this book, I have observed how gradually in concert with the commentary upon and incorporation of the external, visual prop of translation in surtitles makers and receivers of the performed works have found themselves frustrated by a perceived separation between reception and interpretation. At a dinner party in Rome a few years back I fell into conversation with a director who had brought his company from Cairo to perform what he called a 'twenty-four hours in the life of a city in Egypt' play in Italy. He spoke impatiently about having to use surtitles in Milan

where the Company had performed the night before. When he had suggested to the artistic director that the nature of the play would provide enough comprehension between one scene and another, the director responded that if the Company did not provide the Italian for what was being said, no one would come. The Egyptian director and his players have decided in the wake of that experience to insist on not having surtitles as he told me it creates a coolness and distance between players and audience anathema to their work. He is not alone, one of the trends in internationally traveling theatre is to return to a seemingly less mediated form of playing, the performance a direct conduit of the spoken and played to those watching and hearing.

While many of the productions I have seen accept the technology of surtitles as part of the modern itinerant contract of circulation across linguistic borders, Tim Supple's production of *The Dream* refused the comprehension clause of the touring contract, replacing it with a vigorous demonstration of what theatre in multiple languages can do. Of course one of Shakespeare's most produced comedies as the base for a production allows a license to rely upon common knowledge that more obscure or newly written texts do not; and yet, when I watched the play I was struck by how the joys of momentary confusion, of sudden and rash misunderstandings, of drugged fantasies could develop out of the mixed languages of English, Hindi, Punjabi et al.

Like the Volksbuhne's deliberate visual commentary, *The Dream* challenges the audience to enter into the world the play establishes through the proliferation of seven tongues in dialogue and by the particular speaking physicality employed by the actors themselves. I remember how from the first Supple makes

watching as much about the sense of hearing as hearing becomes strategically entwined with watching; Puck, a small brown figure naked except for a loincloth walks down to the edge of the playing space, dips his hand into water and wets a drum, which he then begins to beat. Three sensations, physical attention to the exposed physique of a player, sensual comprehension of the element of water, not usually incorporated into the dry stage, and the sound of the drum, its whine and thrum, affixed me to the ritual to come but also placed my ears in readiness before a word had been spoken. While ubiquitous advertisements that speak of the 'magic' of theatre can by their very hysteria render the well done performance banal, the plays *Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* tend often to conjure up—the evidence of centuries of reviewers suggest—the pleasure of this promise kept. Experiments with these plays begin then from this strength, and the creation of *The Dream* by players, musicians and director transported me not only into the particular revelry possible when the work works, but to new interpretations of the play by way of the sound of multiple languages performed as if they were comprehensible to every ear in the house.

One of my rare wanderings where I could return to a production, I saw *The Dream* in two very different venues, though the crowd at the play in both places included an inordinate number of UK schoolchildren. For my first encounter I perched up high at the back of the beautiful, ornate Richmond theatre in the south of the south of London. For the second, I sat at the back in the last row set off by an aisle from the rest of the orchestra in the main theatre at Oxford, a modern, smaller theatre. At the Richmond the swags and the red and the cavernous arch of the room played architectural circus tent to the traveling players, in

Oxford the setting gave the players no help; they had to conjure the world out of a plain box.

Both performances offered the remarkable experience of watching and listening to characters speak with urgency to each other about love or duty to the father or acceptance of defeat and mastery with one character speaking the original Shakespearean lines and another responding pointedly in Hindi while still another might comment sotto voce in Punjabi. I tried to remind myself at the time that I do know the play, and I remind myself as I remember now, but I suspect the force of communicative physical embellishments made by the actors would have conveyed certainly the fairy tale if not the text of the play even to the first-time spectator.

Strangely, much as my unruly memory augmented my reception of *Endstation Amerika,* I found myself while watching *The Dream* drifting back to my first teaching experiences in relatively traditional English departments when I began to have the students 'do' the scenes. These first experiments strike me as a bit elementary in comparison to the way I use practice now in my research in the classroom and as a tool for research among my students. Yet I made those first timid forays desperately seeking to change the dynamic of standing, moving lecturer and sitting still in the seat students. Amazingly even the simplest change of having the students come to the front of the class to do a scene as I went to the back to sit among them and watch meant that I saw my students moving in their own bodies in a way their seated selves never revealed. That day as I watched the, to me, extraordinary physical beauty of the actors' well-trained bodies making *The Dream* before me, I was struck as I had been all those years ago in the classroom, at the gift of being able to

watch physicality inhabited, and not only by the beautiful and the trained. Like a particular voice that may not be sonorous in the conventionally lauded ways, so with bodies that may not be shaped in ways that suggest model or actor, suddenly you see the idiosyncraticness of the body, you hear the tiny hum in an otherwise flat voice.

Of course the players in *The Dream* had the kind of training I could only imagine came from a mix of training formed of Eastern and Western practices: the movement and the acrobatics and the flexible postures all spoke of years of physical practice of which my Midwestern students had not even a shade. Yet I remembered those students as I watched the play because it was an awakening in my reception, pedagogical at that moment rather than spectatorial, being re-invoked in this very different place and time. And what I heard reordered my sense again of the apprenticeship of being a spectator of performance in foreign tongues. Because the sound that made meaning came for the most part from the lower registers of the performers' bodies: the 'taut line' Glenda Jackson spoke of that good actors never let slacken in a scene between them became an aural, elastic band that these actors made stretch and twang through their delivery of lines as sound.

I tried to imagine what the production might have been like had the company added surtitles, and I could not. It would not be impossible. After all the seven languages on stage would none of them be the host country language of French or Italian; a theatre might indeed fall back on the traditional text translated by a literary figure of the 19th or 20th century. But I thought often of my conversation with the Egyptian director as I watched listening, of the energy moving between the quickening on stage

and the answering quickening of the audience, the way for a time we can revel in the gift of the physicality and musicality of virtuosic bodies on stage without forgetting the rough edges, like the fact that one of the lovers never wakes up or that the Queen of the Amazons and the Queen of the Fairies are paraded as tamed by their conqueror Duke and King.

Thinking back now I suspect I heard the sound as sound more compellingly because the foreign words struck my ear and reverberated in my body without requiring a one to one correspondence of word to meaning. Still I remember how even when the few characters who only spoke in English spoke, the language surged up from a font at least a foot lower in the performer's body than usual and struck some resonating chord lower in my body as well in that constant odd mimetic dance that comes from engaged spectating: I am not doing the action, but how the action is done affects how I receive it, where in my body I receive it.

In terms of performed story, the power of vocal register and physical delivery had the happy effect of making the lovers interesting—no small feat in a production in which Bottom became quite literally a kind of phallic god of comedy on stage, with audience members of every age giggling uncontrollably as, translated, he swung his girth around adorned by a wooden phallus that he unselfconsciously swiveled at the mechanics, at Titania, at the fairies, at us. The lovers meanwhile sounded like powerful warrior women and men; so their pettiness and obsessions came through as torments to be understood rather than as an annoying naïveté to be tolerated or, more often as lodged in my memory of other productions of this play, plodded through. When they got mad, the entire body trembled; they

picked each other up and twirled each other about variously ecstatic and dismissive. And somehow even as this might read like a description of all good performing, of all good physical theatre, I know the power came from that mix of sounds, of language that called me into an active practice. Unlike the practice I have been describing in the interaction between miked voice in my ear, surtitle, language and my immediate translation, this one actually somehow required me to do all that without the external instrumentation and therefore made my reception a mimetic feat of physically retrieved meaning from the sound, from the sound of the sounds, from the bodies enacting the sound.

‖ Structures

Benjamin's weathered thresholds frame acts of incidental discovery, of aimless wandering, an invitation to linger, an invitation to cross over. A common, sometimes even weathered, threshold many an itinerant spectator traverses, whether incidentally, aimlessly or full of intention, is the foyer of a theatre or auditorium, the first of many frames for the space of playing. When I pass through the entrance doors to the theatre, conditions around these doors tell me if I am late, my anxiety increases when I see only a very few bodies rushing towards the ticket takers, or if I am about to attend a sold-out performance, with the crush of bodies retrieving tickets and the somewhat desperate look, one I know well, of those hoping for a return ticket or a miracle. In a conventional European theatre I might then pass through more doors to the orchestra, the balcony, the auditorium, or into the box.

In *Places of Performance*, the gifted itinerant spectator and theorist Marvin Carlson marks not only the context and surroundings of the performance space but the sentient affect caused by the urban or pastoral spaces surrounding performance and the architecture housing it over centuries. Many who engage

in studies in cosmopolitanism have also recounted walking the city, passing in and out of those urban thresholds, as a shared performance. I think of the meandering theoretical feet of de Certeau whose own feet follow in the impressions made by Benjamin's *flâneuring* steps. In the architectural organization of the European city, constructed from an architectural language distinctly of this continent, theatre buildings have played a speaking part in subtle tones, communicating to audiences subliminally, supplying context out of contours for the drama we have entered the space in order to see and hear.

While I can meander by buildings for months, years, without noting much more than the scale of the structure to the street, to my body, a newly constructed edifice announces itself in stages, coming more clearly and sharply into relief in its inception and in the first years of its existence. Later the architectural information and the associations it conjures diminishes with familiarity and habit as the audience ages beyond Ledoux's original intent for the theatre at Besançon or continues, endlessly, to debate Denys Lasdun's design for the National theatre in London. Like all nationally marked projects, theatre buildings import stories often at that level just below conscious thought, or sometimes more audibly in conversation as the spectator experiences how the building works, and how it might have been made as a particular aid to certain kinds of performance. Over time, as with the National Theatre in London, audience and makers can weary of a building, find it burdensome and unworkable, and seek to modify or reinvent it.

I remember vividly the accumulation of affect upon my experience as spectator at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Though the United States has never created or funded a

central national theatre, it citizens, encouraged by tourism and by the annual Tony awards, tend to think of the capital of theatre in the US as New York. In New York the official theatre district, today a mix of buildings and giant screens winking ads and news in the aura of a theme park, insists against the evidence of a Hollywood identified culture that theatre (though sometimes itself dependent on the film industry's model), in this place, in these buildings is the center of vibrant national entertainment. BAM, instead, thrives on the 'edge' of the city, outside the midtown hub of mainstream theatre and the downtown vibrancy of alternative performance spaces in Manhattan.

After the border crossing from Manhattan to Brooklyn marked by crossing the river that any Manhattan spectator must make to get to the site, I can attend productions in the Opera House (main building) or the relatively new BAM Majestic. Strange though it might seem to non-New Yorkers, I remember how Brooklyn used to be a bridge and a world and a country away from New York, which is to say Manhattan. For many years the theatre ran a BAM bus door to door in order to transport squeamish theatergoers, who thought of Brooklyn as some wild outpost. Time changes neighborhoods as does the housing market and now Brooklyn has become as expensive to live in as Manhattan, so consequently the Brooklyn wildness has been pushed farther out and the movement across the bridge now has a trendy rather than an adventurous character, and indeed many people now walk to BAM from their neighborhoods surrounding it. The BAM Opera House borrows 19th-century European grandeur, indicating to audiences the formality and protected space of theatre going. The Majestic, on the other hand, offers decaying walls and open ruined spaces as an authentication of a

particular kind of modern, foreign and imported experience of theatre as empty space. Both theatres 'look' European to me, but the Majestic's distressed quality marks it out from the rococo of a large opera house.

A little like returning to an opening musical motif, I find myself remembering how and when I began to consciously wander as a spectator. And the passage of time oddly renders what was an exciting opportunity into a mythic memory of a cultural moment: so with my first step through the weathered doors of the Majestic at its inauguration in 1987 for the production it had been designed to stage, Peter Brook's importation of *The Mahabharata*. New York had been no stranger to the intriguing and critically controversial imports of Brook's semi-anthropological explorations such as *The Ik* premiered at La Mama. But the Majestic now spatially echoed the Bouffes du Nords in Paris; strangely even though I had never been to the Parisian theatre, I could sense the echo as if a description of Brook's cavernous warehouse space in the north of Paris came alive in the affective, mimetic spatial character of the Majestic. The crumbling plaster with its variegated layers of paint left showing from different epochs of the life of this Brooklyn building seemed to purposefully frame this mixed event of the English born director residing in Paris whose company brought a production of the play that chronicles founding myths of Indian society, religion and theatre.

Thinking back about the nine-hour production, I remember how as *Mahabharata* spectators we found ourselves in unfamiliar Brooklyn at the break for dinner. One popular restaurant choice, Juniors, served traditional African-American food that is for me home cooking from my childhood, helpings

of fried chicken, of fried potatoes and greens. Familiar as I am with the deployment of stereotypes that cement half-formed and usually harmful prejudices and assumptions, I cannot deny a form of identity or identification persists in what can so quickly becomes a clichéd symbol of national affiliation: so with food, the enduring sense that how we eat and what we eat does make for a sturdy kinship. My recollection of food's emblematic power to signal home and foreign, the association this has with theatre because so often I am both watching and eating in a foreign city, comes particularly from times when I have been without food from home for some time and then encounter it among others.

As with the ephemeral ties that bind subtly, a nod of recognition as we sit down next to our neighbor to partake of a meal made communal by what we are eating as much as by the proximity of our chairs, so with the cooler, more etched information carved into buildings and out of the setting that offers interpretive hints and clues about theatre and performance more subtle but perhaps as insistent as a national flag. This became clear to me in my own inaugural year in Rome, 1999, when I absorbed information and discerned differences in Italian theatre and more particularly Roman theatre in the process of attending performances throughout the year at the newly opened Teatro India. Reception of the space where a performance occurs forms a part of the training of the itinerant spectator, calling forth an art of attention before the piece starts, combining active and passive skills, conscious or unconscious choices. To the general consent I give when I agree to be a member of an audience, agree to watch and to hear for a period of anywhere from 45 minutes to nine hours, is added

the work of being a spectator from another country. As with surtitles so with the space that creates the audience around us, the construction of buildings and adjustments in response to the affect created will include hints about identity and culture, an architectural second to the primary influence emanating from the bodies in the room.

Fluid monikers and self described aspects of identity can work by accretion (and of course by attrition). If notions of one's national culture, or the one you are presently borrowing for a time, proceed as much by hearsay and happenstance as by planned indoctrination, accumulation of what you begin to know you did not know you knew builds over time and by repetition and expectation. When something "new" occurs, then the announcement of its advent entails an adjustment, a transition from what has gone before and a shuffling about of what has been to make room for what is coming. A spectator *flâneuring* over performance thresholds notes such impressions but does not collect them, letting the silt that shifts in the notion of identity and place float.

Here over the floating I pause to think of Brian Massumi who argues by way of Spinoza that our identity occurs out of transition; we are defined in terms of 'relations of movement and rest.' Massumi offers a correction of the too general understanding of Spinoza's meaning by emphasizing how he did not mean "actual, extensive movement or stases" but instead "a body's *capacity* to enter into relations of movement and rest." This capacity is a "*power* (or potential) to affect or be affected. 'Relation between movement and rest' is another way of saying 'transition'" and for "Spinoza, the body was one with its transitions. Each transition is accompanied by a variation in

capacity: a change in which powers to affect and be affected are addressable by a next event …the body coincides with its own transitions" and those transitions often intensify in relation to space, in relation to the unfamiliar and the new (15).

In the summer of 1999, wandering across a new threshold in Rome, new to Romans as well as to me, I was aware of the coincidences of my transitions. Indeed the space seemed to invite me to regard my capacity to enter, and that in entering I entered into relations of motion and rest, made transitions through the potential to be affected. The adventure I thus set off on began when I saw the strategically timed billboards alerting theatergoers to the new theatre season and encouraging us to think ahead about tickets and choices while also announcing news of the soon to be opened Teatro India. Seeing the picture of the new theatre, I realized the "newness" of this edifice had nothing to do with new architecture or modern design.

Instead the pictures appeared to be nostalgically rendered in grainy black and white: in retrospect I wonder if this was a

bid for the authentic and minimal in a conventional theatrical culture comfortable with the super baroque and, in theatrical terms, the overdone. The weeds against the building in the photograph communicated country and, like a sacred sign from an industrial church, the pictures almost always showed the nearby abandoned storage tank for gas, its steel skeleton rising up over the Tiber river, as did all the subsequent flyers for productions to come. The name became part of the curious anticipation: why the name 'India' in Rome on the Lungotevere Papareschi, an industrial site with abandoned buildings?

Then the "narrative" of the publication of the first season arrived: whether in an advertisement for a festival or a flyer for a theatre, the choices artistic directors make about a season construct a story about the theatre, and the spectators can become characters in the story when we choose to attend it. I remember hearing the opening phrases of the story of the Teatro India created by Mario Martone its director as a mix of some fragments from Italian theatre culture interspersed with bits from international festival culture. The inaugural spectacle in September 1999, three Shakespeare plays directed by eminent Italian director Carlo Cecchi could be seen separately or, on the weekends, all in one day. I would realize only in retrospect how this choice suited the space and Martone's intent to offer Romans theatergoing in a new key by commencing with a Brookish marathon. From the outset Martone intended the work of the Teatro India to break the habit of a certain kind of after-dinner theatre—where patrons, dressed to the nines, watch Italian playing broader than the original Commedia—by offering anthropological, challenging, site-specific (in the sense that this was a site one traveled around within productions) theatre.

Over the years I have willingly made the transition from one beautiful, classic theatre in Rome to another to see a wide variety of spectacle and performed prose. In the large Teatro Argentina, the parent theatre of which the Teatro India is the experimental offshoot, the space forms the half circle of the traditional amphitheatre with the main floor of the orchestra surrounded by tiers of boxes going up to the gods. The Teatro della Valle, a smaller theatre built on a similar plan to the Argentina, creates a more intimate setting, though the architecture remains formal with boxes, frescoes and filigree. Several independent theatres, the Teatro Vascello and Sala Uno, break with this architectural standard entirely. However within the habitual spatial context of theatre going in Rome, the design of the Teatro India, or the deliberate non-design, signaled a departure from the customary form of spatial decorum between audience and players. First of all, to most visitors and for that matter most Romans, the words Lungotevere Papareschi left a blank in the map of the mind as the site provided no landmark; I could see where it was on the map, but having found 'it,' the mode of actually arriving remained obscure. In the beginning of the India's season, it was clear spectators needed extra time just to locate the theatre, about fifteen minutes outside the center of town, a fact made conscious by the India's habit of beginning a generous 20-25 minutes late in starting as compared to the usual 15 minutes of the more traditional Roman theatres.

As I think of the spatial negotiation of arriving at the India and the consequences for the timing of performance, I think again of the odd way information about culture, nation and belonging permeates particular habits. If food marks one kind of kinship, relation to time marks another. For me, habitually

late, the practice of Italian largesse in beginning performances about fifteen minutes after ‘curtain’ time means that I can relax into my natural pace and still not miss the beginning of a show. An itinerant spectator accustomed to seeing theatre in Italy must adjust expectations when she/he travels to other countries. I am always struck by how ‘early’ London theatre seems to me with a starting time often of 7:30 in contrast to the Italian 9:00 in the summer and 8:30 in the winter, a half an hour shift that marks the change in light after the shift to daylight savings time in October. The stricture or largesse with time succeeds in sustaining the easy stereotyping of South by the North in Europe. While in some sense these observations strike me as quaint, anecdotal or even trifling, the containers, architectural and temporal, erected in our minds do have consequences for far more important decisions made about funding works, forming coalitions and fighting wars.

In newspapers such as *The Guardian* articles with a dateline of Rome without fail open with a dismissive phrase about the ‘la dolce vita’ attitudes, a lament laced with envy, or perfunctory pejorative remarks about Southern disorganization. To be sure the world of journalism applies its tone of slightly world weary, seen it all been everywhere, to a range of countries and political situations, but hidden or half-formed assumptions can prevent us from seeing what is actually happening because we drop it into a readymade container marked ‘to be taken seriously’ or ‘not to be taken seriously.’ The more benign result of such implied information in theatres in Rome means that visiting spectators can often be identified just because they are in their seats from about 8:30, resulting in a wait of at least 45 minutes, and often resulting in a spectatorial attitude less generous than

one might desire if you are the player about to enter. Of course this also means that foreign spectators accustomed to Italian time are just as likely to be the ones waiting outside the door to be let in at the first interval at the Barbican.

Once I found the India, as the new theatre quickly become known, another shift in habit announced itself as I walked toward the place marked upon my map. A dusty unpaved road provided the only access to the theatre—a road lit by the ubiquitous candles in flat, round tin pans that denote *festa* and party in Italy—thus the spectators could not be dropped off at the door. A contingency grave to those whose footwear either by reach and ambition with heels high enough to cause injury or by brand and price with Ferragamos gleaming and pristine would be altered by the time they reached the threshold of this new space. Subtly but persuasively this plan initiated an egalitarian crossing of a new kind of border to arrive at the theatre; we all walked in the dust, the high-heeled and the flat-heeled, the privately driven and the publicly transported.

Walking down a set of cement steps onto more grassy, dusty land, on that first day when I arrived at the complex of buildings that formed the India, I saw a smallish hut for the ticket booth and the bar—no matter how rustic, food and drink, indeed good food and good drink, accompany any act of social intercourse in Rome. Beyond the hut was an open stage built on what looked like an old loading dock and to the right of that stage several picnic tables. Then, continuing to kick up dust that coated my feet, I moved through a ruined arch towards the main factory building. It was warm; I remember wanting to slip off my sandals. This walk towards the theatre also felt a bit like being at the beach, in the country, the preparation I made not

the formal one of slipping a skirt or jacket under me as I sat in a plush chair, but the tucking of my bare and dusty feet up under my thighs in a crossed-legged attitude of relaxed attention.

In its first year the building for performances was barren of ornament. The initial Shakespeare play of Carlo Cecchi's three-play marathon, *Hamlet*, began at two in the afternoon on a September Saturday. We spectators on bleacher seats watched a play unfold in the natural, stunningly beautiful autumn light of a Roman day, a transportation of the cold Danish court to warmer conditions. I marvel, thinking of Sebald writing about the particular light on the west coast of England or the particular gloom of the North counties, how we might indeed be able to identify native places and adopted homelands simply by the quality of the light. The change of light during this performance came not from electrical manipulation but from time passing as pigeons cooed in rafters, as the back door, a huge factory door the width of the space, was opened on occasion for actors to pass indoors through the late afternoon sunlight from the outside space at once industrial and semi-rural.

Measure for Measure followed after a break for plates of pasta and beans and chunks of bread with wine and water. Out of doors, as with *The Mahabharata* those many years ago at BAM, we spectators saw each other, mingled, slowly becoming that particular entity that occurs in any marathon theatre going, a group joined by the experience of multiple viewing and rests between. I have at times been surprised how even a mediocre or bad marathon performance creates a particular kind of bond; if we are not joined together in the grip of a powerful and unfolding experience of reception, we are nonetheless joined together in the bond of being the strong, those who endure

the hours as a feat in and of itself. I returned to a theatre still lit relatively naturally, even when the lights came on they were single lights clipped to beams, no strips of lighting, no technical paraphernalia of the theatre. The same actors now cast in Vienna, now playing against their director/actor who of course played the Duke. Voices spoke the Italian translation unmiked, projection of the natural voice part of the actorly task. No surtitles, no following along for the spectators who did not know Italian: this absence acknowledged that those watching might receive the play without understanding the words while implying a trust that most spectators who pass through Rome and are not Italian know Shakespeare well enough to get the story.

Recollecting that first day in the space of the India watching something I thought of as 'Italian Shakespeare,' I observe how interpretation in reception can divide across experience, knowledge and willingness among spectators. Until the last two decades with the introduction of surtitles in performances of spoken drama, most European productions of Shakespeare played in the language of the host country. Such practice implies that the stories of the plays and the plays themselves are well known by playgoers in Europe. But this very assumption also complicates the reception depending on the spectator and the question of 'which' Shakespeare or 'whose' Shakespeare. The plays of Shakespeare reappear so consistently on European stages that the varied interpretations and incarnations of the works from country to country almost always offer comment about the particular cultural, national moment in which they are played. Sometimes it seems as if these early modern conduits of news continue to function as 'the Rialto,' not in what news they bring, once that of James I or Elizabeth, but rather in the way the

director and players adapt the scenes to tell about now, about a now very much marked by national and international events.

It occurs to me that I often find the national characteristics of a production, in so far as anyone can suggest such shifting contours, appear more vividly against the background of canonical works by Shakespeare, though I wonder if this may be due in part to my own familiarity as a teacher, director and scholar of works from the period. Considering the complications of what we receive as national culture and how we receive it, theatre historian Bruce McConachie articulates how "[though] some cultural uniqueness does reside in every nation, especially when national boundaries also encompass the center of a language group…most of the national cultures of the world are a mix of many cultures [and] their theatre is a mixed breed…" (120). Even as I write about 'Italian theatre, Italian productions', McConachie's caution echoes timely because these words never signal a settled entity but just such a 'mixed-breed' theatre, and one ever in motion as Massumi suggests unsuited to the 'positioning' that words considering something particularly national tend to fix in print. The word 'Italian' can even seem foreign to natives since many Italians identify themselves most particularly by region, that living subset of a national culture.

My memory of Italian productions of Shakespeare makes me consider now how often the companies perform Shakespeare plays in a manner closer to the tale than the theatrical five-act drama where words make and manipulate and remake the action. The story becomes simplified tale: Duke leaves town, boy gets arrested, Provost oversteps, and the characters appear as type, good Duke, bad Provost, womanly Isabella. I cannot linger detached, I confess, at this threshold. Into a performance

of Shakespeare in another tongue, I carry with me a host of suppositions and facts: scholarly knowledge of the early modern period and moments from many performances past move out of the shadows of my memory and into the interpretive action of the present watching. I am remembering the shock to the novice spectator of the Italian genre of Shakespeare in 1999 when I found myself agitated rather than moved, and astonished by the evidence being acted out before me that from their very first meeting in *Measure for Measure* Isabella flirted with and swooned over the Duke.

What has been considered a "problem" play for scholars and spectators became a fairytale of good paternalism, re-establishment of the family and budding love: each girl got her man, and there seemed not a shade of discomfort that Angelo was a dubious gift or that Isabella might indeed feel pawned off to the overlord. While I can imagine another kind of spectator wandering into this scene and finding it quaint and easygoing in contrast to the more fierce and radical productions of recent years, for me, trained by feminist scholars in early modern studies, this *Measure for Measure* appeared far more than antiquated. If we were guaranteed one thing in contemporary productions of the play over the last thirty years, we were guaranteed that to varying degrees of horror, discomfort, outrage or at least pointed silence, audiences saw the transfer of Isabella from convent to Duke as a manifestation of the lack of choice women had in early modern England and early modern Europe, a lack of choice a young woman can still have today depending on her culture and its practices.

As an inaugural piece of theatre for the India, the choice challenged everyday theatregoing by the manner—the

marathon—in which it was played. But Cecchi like previous master Giorgio Strehler and disciple Luca Ronconi and India director Mario Martone himself reinforced the male lineage of the father/director as instigator in the new space, a lineage firmly rooted in the accepted culturally high status of that male hero of the theatre, Shakespeare. In the case of the onstage romance, the "contextual theatricality" of the production, as Wilmar Sauter names it, further fueled these assumptions as the actor playing Isabella, Iaia Forte, is married to Carlo Cecchi: director, duke, husband, all paternal roles to the female actor, subject, wife. The three-play marathon had been on tour—the night ended with a romp through *Midsummer Night's Dream*—playing most recently in the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. Perhaps Martone's decision to open the India with these plays had as much to do with the splash of marathon, Cecchi and Shakespeare and the availability of a production on tour, as with a critical judgment about the interpretation. It would become clear to me, and to others, later in the season that Martone himself preferred more political and more radical treatments of canonical texts.

After spending an inordinate amount of time over these last years collecting advance notice of performances and festivals, time not only to look but to debate with myself how far to go to see something, to see it again, I realize how in the exchange of theatrical work and styles, and for most of the history of those exchanges happening in Europe, one of the arbitrary influences on what comes to make a season, perhaps even comes to make a statement for the meaning of the season, is what is on tour, what is available for transport. An announcement of the appearance of a Commedia dell'Arte troupe in the court of Burgundy might elicit an invitation to Navarre in the 17th century. When the

Wooster group plays the Festival d'Automne in Paris in 2006, the company's manager has no doubt secured venues in other countries in Europe to give the work the widest circulation and to recoup on the expense of the travel. Though these festivals do not operate on the commercial scale of a Disney generated musical like *The Lion King* as Susan Bennett describes the phenomenon of theatrical tourism, they do reflect a "strategy that relies on the peripatetic consumer" (411).

The India season did indeed reflect an ongoing participation in the culture of touring as well as specific choices meant to imbue the space with a particular kind of theatrical memory and history. In October, Martone opened the space to the annual RomaEuropa festival whose offerings have formed part of my itinerary every year I have lived in Italy. The name RomaEuropa always strikes me as apt in its 'city state' demarcation with Rome standing in for the nation as against the larger entity Europe. In some ways the relatively young nation state of Italy sits precariously atop the ancestral strengths of the antique regional entities, the empire under the modern Europe, and the enduring identities of the protectorates and city states of earlier centuries. So Rome is Italy in a southern key and when joined to Europe erects a border at the city gates very different than that of streamlined Milan. Famous for being chaotic, though as nothing to the alternately joyous and tortured chaos of Naples, the center of Rome might seem more so because its traffic seems wedged into spaces built for horses, and the dusty oldness redoubles the intrusive sound of the internal combustion engines. Thus the India, theatre of Rome and in Rome, married the tug of something pastoral, ancient, quiet offering space to the energy of the mixed media, the contemporary, and the amplified.

The building of the India evolved over the course of the year, at each performance the shape of the rooms, even the number of rooms the building could house seemed to alter, as if the space had a structural costume box and could change its habit at will. Though one building, the structure of the Teatro India as I look at it from the river appears to be split into two long rectangular halves with a central beam running down the roof. The audience usually entered through a door that gave on to a long empty space, not a foyer exactly more of a conduit from outside to in than a place to wait. To the right of the small entrance door was a roughed out section in what immediately became the 'back' of the theatre in my mind with a corridor leading to the bathrooms. At the door the personnel dressed in their formal suits appropriate to the Teatro Argentina took our tickets, though their suits suddenly seemed too visible, anachronistic against the rustic theatre. If we entered from this small side door facing the bar area across the yard, then usually we went directly into a main space where the bleachers had been erected for the Cecchi Shakespeare and where individual seats would be placed in graded rows for most of the other productions. Yet the divided spaces also could be employed to affect our entering. For example the night I saw *Il Colonnello e le Ali* I passed into the door expecting to be shown to a seat only to find the room full of trash, piles of plastic bags, refuse scattered about, a visible and spatial introduction to the social and psychological costs of waste and neglect that play would expose. Or the arresting *Hamlet* for which I remember stopping, startled in the foyer space because before me stood a circus tent erected in the long corridor 'outside' the theatre space. I cannot remember much from the production except that sense

of sitting inside, inside and the brilliant visual trope of Hamlet entering wearing a 19th-century woman's costume of mourning; yes I thought, good for you director, Hamlet's grief does seem sometimes to be a costume from another time adopted precisely because it loudly announces his inconsolable, isolated sadness.

At other times I would enter the India through the doors that faced the river, either a little human-sized door on the corner of the building or the horse drawn-cart-sized double doors at the middle of the structure. Here too the mode of entering affected the mode of reception. With the RomaEuropa production of Peter Sellars' adaptation of Stravinsky's *Story of a Soldier* not only the site of entering but my continuous moving through the space would alter my reception again and again. I remember how unseasonably cold that October night was—maybe 9 Centigrade—as I stood amid other spectators wanting to get into the warm theatre, find my way to my row and seat, take my accustomed place. All the tickets had sold out; there were signs everywhere indicating *esaurito*—exhausted *biglietti*. So the agitation among us as we waited grew, our suspicion laced with a sense of unfairness—*who* was already in there if not we who had gotten our tickets before they sold out?

Finally the door opened, we had been instructed to wait at the small one on the side facing the river, one of the factors in making the cold night seem even colder since the damp of the Tiber rose against the embankment on that side of the India. The press of bodies forward pushed out into a bare room, not the large open space used for the Shakespeare marathon but rather a room now cut into half that length; in retrospect thinking about the space rather than becoming aware of it by being in it, I realize the management must have begun to use partitions to

create out of the building a changing series of smaller theatres and studios. In this open empty space, the first of three we inhabited as a moving audience that night, we were invited to sit on the floor (the well-heeled and the jeaned). In the front of the room two women stood at two microphones, one began to speak, the librettist for *Story of a Soldier,* Gloria Enedina Alavaraez, read her poetry, a mix of Spanish and English. The woman at the other microphone, unidentified by name, rolling her rrr's so richly the rest of the word almost disappeared in the wave, spoke the same lines translated into Italian. They alternated between stanzas.

If you knew who he was, whether through experience or by the pictures in papers and magazines currently covering the festival, you could watch the delight on the face of the director Peter Sellars—a diminutive figure with a brush of hair standing straight up who resembles to my eye nothing so much as a postmodern version of a sprite—as he watched the active interest displayed on the faces of his audience. We were moved again, gently but firmly out of the same door we had come in and then around the corner into a space the length of the India in order to enter a studio-sized room at the back. Here we listened to the Ensemble Avanti! Chamber Orchestra whose names on the program indicated they were from Denmark or Norway, whose fair hair and fair faces certainly confirmed this national designation, but who were at the moment dressed in US Western cowboy outfits playing Klezmer music while we stood or sat, again, on the floor. This method of shifting the audience across the threshold from room to room reminded me of the egalitarian entrance enacted by walking up the dusty road because those who had been first in the impatient line to enter

for the reading of poetry and whose haste procured them a place on a mat on the floor were now at the back of this studio space having been ushered out last from that first space of playing.

How strange now to have the mix of memory that thinks back toward this inaugural year of the India by way of Sellar's later production *The Children of Heracles* at the Teatro Valle where, as I have noted earlier in this book, nervousness, confusion and, finally, impatience emanated from an audience who were confronted with a work in three parts—polemic, tea, and spectacle—while they remained in their traditional seats. At the India on that October night in the last year of the 20th century, as I sat on the floor, stood at the back, sat in my seat, the general tone of reception around me seemed one of engagement, a willingness even a cheerfulness about being disrupted.

The difference as I reflect now rested in part on what the space created; the India in its whitewashed and open space signaled clearly even to an audience who might the next night attend a Goldoni play at the Teatro Argentina that we were in the territory of experiment, of the imported, of the new. At the Valle, such an invitation must be made despite the surroundings. Only on rare occasions as when two theatre companies, one a young experimental group from Ravenna and one an accomplished troupe from Moscow, reconfigured the relation of audience to stage in the Valle have I witnessed the necessarily passive relation of sunken orchestra seats to raised stage disturbed. At the India as I followed the directions of my usher/guides, shifting places, I understood how the political dimension of an invitation to change, literally, your spectatorial position can by physical shift be an invitation to change your mind through the unaccustomed motion your body must make. As we move

about, we mix together, often surprised by juxtapositions that are not at first clear, juxtapositions received through the senses before anything else as we arrange ourselves in space against each other, toward the action, around the building. Through this mix of motion, languages and musical genres, we were prepared in the first half of the event for the coming performance of Strindberg as political commentary with pathos and power.

After an interval, I was ushered into a third space recognizably one of audience and stage. By this time I had become disorientated and unable to be sure whether I was on the west or the east of the building, to the north or south; the space itself held a full audience in graduated seating that ended close to the ceiling. Sellars created a kind of ritual blessing for this brand new theatre on this night of movement, as we processed through all its rooms. Unlike the Cecchi marathon when the communion came as much from the duration as the space, on that October night the bodies became part of the inauguration and the implicit communal understanding acknowledging the space's potential to facilitate vital theatre, theatre engaged in the here and now, theatre offering an invitation to cross over several thresholds, structural and metaphorical. While by this ritual the India became 'sacrilized' to use Marvin Carlson's term, I did not so much feel it evoked memories of other theatres—though the echo of Brooksian spaces of an ex-soap factory certainly did affect my regard—as I had a sense of anticipation, of a rite of harvest where future productions would increase in abundance because the space had been blessed by this particular ritual of purposeful movement. Brian Massumi might name this a virtual moment, the multiplication of potential not captured and/or fixed but evoked and unpredictable and therefore affective.

As I sat on my bleacher seat waiting for the main event of the Stravinsky *Story of a Soldier*, I noted how the colors of the night up until now had been white plaster and exposed beam, the colors of the European south. Here in this space a backdrop transformed the white wall into a vibrant canvas, a mural very like those of Diego Rivera, surrealist graffiti, and the blood red images of ritual; color, I note remembering the mixes that evening, can like light induce subconscious connections to nation, red moving from Pompeian faded rust to Southern European Provencal or bright red that bleeds down into Spain and beyond. A young woman, African-American perhaps, perhaps Latina, dressed in sweat clothes walked to the front of the stage. The opening musical phrases of Stravinksy's *Histoire du Soldat* began and she spoke: "From the Gulf to Panama, from Kosovo to Iraq…" Thrust immediately into a mixedness we had been prepared for in our moving, the production combined masques from the Mexican tradition, border language from the troubled US border of Mexico and California, and Stravinsky's 20th-century musical story of the price of greed. Sellars found a modern evocation for the story in the tale of the mercenary soldier, lost and roaming in a world still too ready to give a mercenary work.

Now stationary, I watched the performance enact the condition of roving; the nomadic nature of soldiering allowed Sellars to draw his borders. Those borders in 1999 included the intention to tell a US story, one of border injustice across NAFTA (North American Free Trade Act) territories, Mexico and California, played out across a fundamentally European aural memory, Stravinsky's music. As if in an echo chamber of associations, the spectator wandering across thresholds

receives architectural whisperings, color and light as affective indicators and then music, not just the notes of the score, but the genre of the composition. I am always amused at how easily, for example, an animated cartoon can provide a national signifier for a character in a way that permeates the receiving consciousness as the sound designer adds a few notes of flamenco or blues or high-pitched, reedy Peking opera in order to evoke an instant recognition. Of course the man who gave us 'Rite of Spring' with its distinctive opening notes that broke apart the habits of a Parisian audience could be well known to ears trained by his own avant-garde innovations. But I did not have to know either the notes composed by Stravinsky or that the notes were composed by Stravinsky to hear the productive dissonance of characters before me who look like they will break into Latin hip hop at any moment accompanied by early 20th-century European avant-garde sound.

Hearing those notes played on the strings of their classical instruments by those blond guys still dressed in their odd cowboy suits—for the Klezmer players had wandered with us into the space and become the band for the production—offered a dissonant visual corollary to the aural information. Still, virtuosity played its part, an affective power not acknowledged often enough in our accounts of spectating; perversely the virtuosic produces a kind of quiet in me as spectator, a rest in the knowledge that I will not have to flinch from a badly played note or a sloppy interpretation. Into this quiet of real skill such subtleties as the half submerged recognitions of nation, of type, of story as situated story can even more swiftly enter and reverberate.

Thus "Kosovo" in the opening lines sent me to memories of recent European border conflicts, religious wars and the

duty of intervention. On this cold night in 1999, the mention of Iraq addressed the first Bush and the first Gulf war, remarkably unopposed as a venture except by a few sages, among them the extraordinary cultural critic Michael Ventura writing his frighteningly prescient 'Burners of Eden,' a brilliant essay that would come back to haunt me when the invasion of Iraq by the US and the UK began in 2003. As the libretto continued, it acquainted us with that unaffiliated figure, the mercenary for hire, for hire to protect US oil interests, for hire to subdue perceived darknesses, his own, Mexican-American in Sellars' production, and others, Arabs/Iraqis. In this private story of army life and longing for monetary release from it, the production created an aural map with the signs of European history in the American way plotted through the various human trade routes, Spain to Latin America to the West Coast, Europe to England to the North Coast. Sellars' juxtapositions, Stravinsky's music kept us in the spirit of the nomadic even while seated. When the doors opened to signal the end of the pilgrimage through this space and across this time, the Teatro India had become a space I wanted to return to, one that did promise the future fruits of that harvest blessing, and one that had re-formed and released those Roman spectators around me whose excitement filled the stream of parting bodies as we walked back out onto the dusty road.

What can I really know about those bodies and what they were experiencing as they left the space? Could my own excitement, my sense of being at home with Sellars' work and with his way of making it, reveling in the aesthetics of a furiously political theatre about a country where I vote and whose politics I follow even from abroad, rather than in New York among an audience accustomed to a Peter Sellars' production, have been

projected entirely on the communal experience? To say 'no' in answer to these questions would be folly, but to say 'yes' would hide the complexity of sharing the space of seeing and hearing performance. In her work to account for how the space makes the spectators and vice versa, Gay McAuley suggests just such an oscillation in which a spectator may form "part of a subgroup within the whole as well as being part of a collectivity, that of audience for a particular performance at that particular place and time" (McAuley 251). Nick Ridout might dwell more longingly at the physical/psychic entrances and exits, the weathered edges in the solitude of spectating, a solitude aware of the others and yet, like me, cognoscente of the singularity of our affective experience as it becomes memory, as I retrieve it from memory.

In her catalogue of attributes, habits and roles a spectator might bring to a performance, I do not remember McAuley mentioning nation or for that matter the potential of being an 'outsider' or foreigner, nor is it her project, in her comprehensive study on space in performance, to do so. Yet I remember the sensation of how theatres not given over to the project of representing a national or regional theatrical tradition, theatres instead participating as points on a map for visiting companies, for international work, place the spectator for a time like a pulsing push pin on a metaphorical map where the coordinates do actually combine into interpretation. Even as she or he might enter into the space as part of a subgroup—tourists, family visiting on vacation, not Italians—through the course of the performance, through the invitation to recognize and participate in crossing borders throughout the work, the spectators might create a larger collective entity without losing

the multiplicity of identification of home, mother tongue or alternative tradition.

I confess freely how my recollection here has become alchemically mixed up with the weathered nostalgia of loss; the India and I were both new to Rome that year. Years on now as I write I remember the intensity of getting my Roman bearings, how the productions Martone scheduled for the India rearranged the architectural space again and again, how I learned my way around the city. At the India, the malleability of the performing space reinvented created a sense of potential by being many things at once, and while one might say this is true of most empty stages, the license with which to change an audience's entire perception of what room they are in, of where they are marks a particular kind of theatre making, a piece with the history of theatre as an aesthetic creation that can make of its space a political and ethical force. While I acknowledge with Rancière skepticism about the utopian notion of theatre as communal because live and crowded with bodies, my own experience of this building, this place did teach me spatially a form of the active spectating I have been recalling. Such wandering made me part of the refiguring, with choices offered by the space as well as time and content.

In May of 2000, into this space now rich with the silt of the accumulated productions of the year, a master of theatrical ceremonies arrived with his company Odin Teatret. Here I experienced a collision of memory and of the reassessment of those memories. As soon as I entered the performances offered by Odin, I realized in an instant that I had been seeing Eugenio Barba's influence on theatremaking not only at the India but in other venues in Europe over several years. Martone designed

the culmination of the season as a one-month residency for Odin Teatret. The company arrived for a set of workshops, lectures and performances given at the India and at the Teatro Argentina. Then, I only knew Barba's work from the illustrated *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology,* and I had somehow vaguely categorized him as a performance ethnographer and director from the far North, a denomination partly gleaned from the name of the troupe, Odin, and from the descriptions of his residencies at Hostelbro in Denmark. What I had to learn backwards, not unlike the manner of my running back mentally to find the clue to the translation I had missed in a sentence, was that of course Eugenio Barba is an Italian name, and indeed I had been seeing his influence in performances in Italy for years, but did not have the experience to make the attribution. This too marks the development in the skills of an itinerant spectator: I have learned to leave room in my reception for what I don't know, for what might be at work that I have yet to link to its origins or influences. Work can be appreciated with or without such knowledge; memory can be adjusted or not. A performance world in love only with what appears new can cause a spectator to enter onto the dangerously barren land of disappointment where what appeared to be wholly inventive may instead be revealed as something very like someone else's work from years before. In general in my wandering I find Massumi's encouragement for us to 'augment' rather than dissect apt for the life of a spectator as much as for the life of a critic: even when the inventive is revealed to have been derived from other sources, I can choose to explore nuances rather than shut the experience up in the fixed category of the 'derivative.'

At the India, the Odin mini-season felt carnivalesque. Traveling players had arrived with their caravan; the opening performances moved from outside to inside, with a day of clowning for children. Barba gave lectures at the vast Teatro Argentina and some members of Odin gave demonstration/lectures as well. While audience numbers and global recognition for Odin cannot be said to be a mass phenomenon like that of Cirque du Soleil, they do tour within a certain community of theatergoers and theatre makers with a fame Bennett might find a miniature of the excitement produced by the blockbuster Canadian troupe: productions sell out quickly and a line always forms of the desperate and the hopeful looking for returns on the night of the performance.

The experience of seeing what is now an aging group of legendary performers did mark for me as a spectator a transnational exchange and a sense of an unique opportunity to immerse my spectator self in a particular company's work. Never before had I lived anywhere where I could either see or afford nine different performances, solo and group, by Odin in one month. One of the essential components of being a spectator in Rome, and particularly that year at the India, was the cost of tickets. In 1999 we were still in the final days of the lira, and the choice of 'abbonamenti' or subscriptions meant that most of the shows, from the big Sellars' spectacle to the small three-person drama cost about 10,000 lira or at the time 6 US dollars, by the following year it translated to 8 euros.

A kind of giddy license then attended my buying. I could experiment because I could afford to experiment. This monetary reality creates a willingness to explore as surely as any critically driven dramaturgical argument. I remember often leaving truly

bad performances with no sense of financial ire; whereas I can as well remember the feeling of being cheated in New York when I saw something rickety, made in bad faith or just plain bad that I had paid a great deal of money to leave. If, as I have commented elsewhere in my work, the exchange in the theatre space can at times replicate a gift economy, the closer the transaction comes to hyper-marketed consumer exchange, the more the spectator becomes the assessor of his or her stocks. 'Is this spectacle performing well enough' that my investment in the share of a ticket is worth it? I consider other relations equally damaged by placing them in the realm of market rather than service or gift: for example, the change in relation between professor and student in many a strapped University foolishly running on a business model. The expectations of the student or spectator when the fees rise to a height comparable to buying a 'big ticket' item not surprisingly change to those of a speculator who calculates worth rather than a collaborator whose participation will form part of the experience, whose return gift will enrich the production.

For me now I see how impossible it would be to imagine that Odin festival/residency at any other theatre space in Rome than the India. In the summer-like weather of May in Rome, I and my companion spectators moved inside and outside the theatre easily, lingering on after performances to sit at tables with the Odin actors who came out to eat and drink. Rather than the customary disappearance of the makers of a performance from audience view, at the India the area surrounding the building offered a space where all the participants could reassemble in the evening, extending our interaction with each other. Front and back stage allows spectators generally to participate in

the fiction that nothing happens until the performers appear before us.

Odin circumvented the theatrical contract of actors hidden offstage, unapproachable, and the space of the India facilitated casual meetings as well as structured ones. I note however that these potential meetings also depend for an itinerant spectator on ease with the language and courage. Many of my friends who work in the theatre speak often of having talked to the director or actors after the show in the bar. I, on the other hand, haunt the edges of those spaces of meeting, divided between wanting to talk and wanting to watch and remain anonymous. Though my fear may have its origin in a childhood of constant moving and readjusting to being new, I also recognize some of this reluctance comes from the gradual creation of a mode of spectatorship, modes we fashion unbeknownst to ourselves even as they become part of a habit of spectatorship. Mine includes a desire to preserve something Rancière writes of as distance and the freedom found in anonymity; sometimes for me it is simply the freedom of time to think, of needing to dwell in the experience of having seen without the demand of trying to articulate what I have to seen to someone who has just made it.

As the cost of the tickets permitted a theatrical splurge, so the number of performances playing simultaneously in several rooms in the old soap factory continued this sense of abundance. I recall how on the 16th of May, I could have chosen to see Julia Varley in *le farfalle di dona musica* or Roberta Carreri in *Judith.* On the 19th, either Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Jan Ferslev and Kai Bredholt in *Itsi Bitsi* or Julia Varley in *Il Castello di Holstebro II*. Many of us attending the performances went from one room one night to the other the next, peregrinating from one piece to

another, seeing what Odin creation and research had produced, gathering experience as their interlocutors/spectators.

The large-scale piece *Mythos* had introduced me, the uninitiated Odin spectator, into the full effect of the method at the heart of their creation of performance: a choreographed configuration of revelation as measured as a sonata. The word sonata leaves me unsatisfied; I would like to have a set of terms like fugue, sonata, minuet, symphony, chaconne to use for performance, a way to hint at the combined work of measure, of harmonics, of duration as much a part of a piece without music. Then I might be naming what the actors did that night differently as I describe how during the time of performance, the actors introduce each object, each voice, each movement simply, in one dimension so that in the duration of the performance object, voice and movement can be built upon until what had appeared as a thing in itself is transformed into something else entirely, by a change of position, by change of an object's employment, by an accompanying sound and by reinvented gesture. The names of the two main performance pieces reflected the ritual nature of the work: *In the skeleton of the whale*, *Mythos*. In *Myth*os, I watched as the initially innocuous sand covering the playing surface of the floor became a marker of time, passed through the hands, through objects. What had been sand, had been time sifting through imaginary hourglasses, then changed character to become time done, a grave, a cradle where suddenly there were bones to be plucked by the actor and employed as instruments of lament and warning.

The actors began by speaking softly, I strained forward to hear the way one does, and then found myself pushed back aurally by their sounds; no longer speaking not exactly singing,

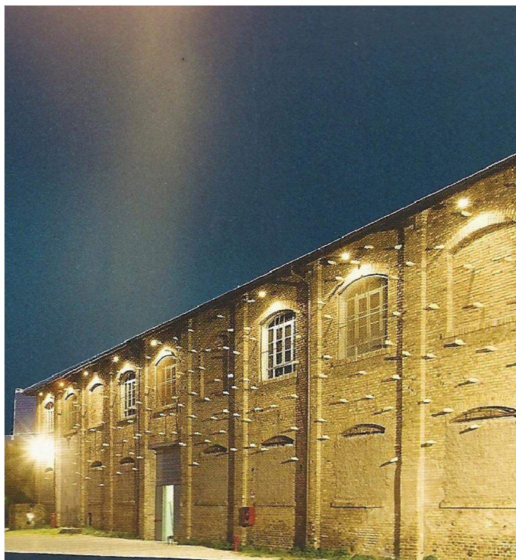
a kind of keening instructing the audience in a language not recognizable as words and yet intelligible as units of meaning strung along a cord and a chord of sound. Where the sound combined a communication of mystery and comprehension, the movement of the actors' bodies constructed the stages of the revelation. The space of the main theatre of the India created for Odin's visit was not large—as I know it could have been quite large indeed I assume Barba arranged the space so that it held players and audience in close proximity. The eight actors filled the rectangular room where we were seated on bleachers on either side slightly above the long playing space. The action moved out from a long, formal dinner table, a prop that Odin also transformed throughout the play by dismantling and reconstructing the top and legs. The audience perched above the playing space, like a quorum of deities that caused me to remember, perhaps prompted by the myth taking form in front of me, those fleshy watching giants Guilio Romano painted on the ceiling of the Sala dei Giganti in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, a wonderfully topsy turvey position from which to witness something called *Mythos.* A relatively small group if a large number for a jury of gods, we 100 or so spectators watched in intimate proximity to each other and the stage.

Later allowing the memory of the performance to linger for a bit I read Eugenio Barba's description of the piece printed in the program where he distinguishes myth from history, though the borders of both categories were invoked by a shared set of characters from the Western tradition of Greek myth, Odysseus, Cassandra, Oedipus, Medea. Barba suggests that the characters from myth cannot be understood simply by their own stories, instead less tangible than narrative and yet more

effective, they are, he says, "action and energy." A way of thinking about myth that makes the theatre of the telling more alive and more apt for the actor's embodiment. Yet Odin did set the piece historically; we see first the soldier Barbosa who marches across Brasil in 1925 fighting for the "dignity of his true country," a place that was, as seems to be the case more often than not, in "the hands of a corrupt government." I began to understand Barba's intent of mixing nation, character and myth as I watched the transformation of this character's uniform of a soldier, one I could recognize as antiquated but not one I could identify with a particular country, into outrageous and wild feathered costumes of the mythic characters. Thus Odin transformed my watching as if I were one of the objects poised for revelation, bringing me through something like my time or my time past and then moving me out into mythic time. Barba's questions at the end of his program notes manifested themselves in the playing: "What is myth for us? An archetype? A sacred story without holiness? Hope without faith? Where is it hidden today myth? Why has it died? How has it been buried? When will it rise again?"

Throughout the month of May, the presence of Odin in the India, the lectures and demonstrations given by Barba and the actors in the Teatro Argentina turned those who attended this theatre event into a temporary community, and here I do not forget Rancière or fall into Odin worship but mean quite precisely the kind of community that happens because we keep company together engaged in a similar project. Over the days I began to see people I recognized, we would nod to each other outside the theatre, we would smile in shared pleasure if we saw something moving and found ourselves exiting the space in joined reverie. I heard several languages spoken around the

tables outside, in the foyer, on the stage. The space vibrated with life and the audiences were younger than I had seen in any other Roman theatre save the experimental Vascello. As we crossed the borders of different rooms in the old factory with its stucco and white walls, it seemed to me that each room, in a reverse process of the sand on the floor in *Mythos* where bones and beads were retrieved from under the smooth surface, received relics, words, sounds as they sank into the space, became part of the memory in the walls absorbed from the different configurations of Odin productions constructed there. Here was the harvest promised throughout the opening months of the Teatro India season; the space by now did more than allow, it seemed to be part of the conversation I had when I entered it to see a work, when I exited to see another, when I sat at a wooden table to drink wine and think.



Such a rich offering of varied playing and exploration of theatre in the space of a brand new theatre required a finale. Mario Martone had not created something that felt like a ritual, a project, a journey without considering how to design an ending. If I am remembering correctly, I almost did not go on that final night. I was tired, the marathon had been intense, the event was free and therefore no ticket bound me to use it. The evening honored an Odin tradition of barter, a tradition the Company keeps wherever in the world they play in which the local community offers performances of their own to the members of Odin now made audience. Though my ambivalence that night lingered, I recall walking around the back of the space to enter, where outbuildings and a garage mark the unused quadrant of the factory once used for receiving deliveries of goods. As I turned the corner and walked into the yard I saw in the distance a platform stage constructed in between the bar and the entrance to the theatre on the open ground to the left of the theatre doors. The consequences of my ambivalence became clear: the ground around the platform was full, and I sought to find a patch of dust to call my own way in the back. Even the natural world seemed to participate in the protocols of ritual because, as darkness fell, into the empty skeleton of the gas storage tank across the river rose an almost full moon.

The coupling of folk and nation have a long and a tortured history. The spectre of *volk* haunts with its aural echo behind the activities probably most common to us all in the binding of place to our notion of home and of nation, folktales, folk dances, folk songs. Clearly the delicate nature of belonging tips one way or the other, now into a warm gathering of memories of being a group, now into a collectivity created to define the

outsider, from there into the violence of maintaining such fictive boundaries. Martone's goal for this night of barter appeared to be the reproduction of a kind of Roman folk culture, the daily joys of dance, song and speaking in Rome displayed for the visiting guests. Different members of Odin reciprocated with dance and the playing of instruments, keeping the circulation of exchange alive.

The offerings from the Roman contingent ranged from the skilled to the cheesy, from the touching to the embarrassing. A group of dancers from a center for seniors adjacent to the India performed with a seriousness matching Odin's own professional creations; a group of teenagers under-rehearsed and awkward offered a stilted hip-hop indulged by their elders. I thought of the term motley and how patchwork is the nature of national identity with its bits of traditional clothing, identifiable instruments, and traditional songs and how those bits fall into place in juxtaposition to age, to sex, and to the eternally heterosexual analogies to the family that nations employ to portray themselves. The performance of Roman, even to me the newly arrived expat, that night of barter gave rise to an almost familial feeling, though not one that includes a definition of family as father, mother and children. Affection and embarrassment, indulgence and impatience, an intimacy created, thinking back now, partly by space, partly by the ground on which we sat in the strange country-like space around the India where Rome could be urban and rural with its rushes, weeds and dirt.

Happily rid of my initial ambivalence, even in the most embarrassing moments of bad performances, I did not regret my last-minute decision to come. I inhabited the space of someone who had made the Odin pilgrimage with others; we

had visited and profited from various forms of performance and story, now here we were saying goodbye and thank you principally to Odin but also in acknowledgement of that shared journey. Of course on the night of that free event there would have been those who had not seen any of the Odin pieces as well as those who had seen all of them. The potential for gift exchange in performance generally remains acknowledged only at the realm of metaphor when used to describe the experience of having received. Barba's creation of a tradition of barter, the exchange of gifts among a community, materializes the relation of gift giving and performing. For the audience, it is rare that we as spectators have a chance to express gratitude beyond the moments of applause. That night I was surprised and pleased to see an offering that in its scale tried to express the extraordinary aesthetic, communal, inspirational gift Odin had bestowed: on the top of the riverbank behind the stage, the flame of what at first seemed simple fireworks, those transnational markers of finale, became instead wheels of flame that spelled out "Grazie Odin"; they turned and turned as people embraced and applauded, as the members of Odin received our thanks. Such a display relied upon the rural and open nature of the space around the theatre; the fireworks might have as easily spelled out Grazie Teatro India for the contribution this new performance space made to the creations its buildings and land could host, could encourage.

After two years of tolerating his direction of the Teatro Argentina and the Teatro India, the right-wing regional government of Lazio, in which Rome is a province, dismissed Mario Martone. Immediately the tenor of the program for the theatres in 2001-2002 changed, offering mainly large set pieces for Italian actors and translations of Pinter, Shakespeare

and Bernhard by directors known in the traditional Italian theatres. In retrospect I see how this change surprised me by demonstrating how dependent I am as a spectator on the invention and commitment of artistic directors to create seasons that offer me the opportunity for discovery, that challenge and demand of their audiences our engagement in participatory spectating. In 2002-2003, a new artistic director, bombastic actor and director Giorgio Albertazzi, not only programmed the traditional shows by established Italian theatres but several of his own annual productions, such as an adaptation of Marguerite Duras' *Memoirs of Hadrian* with himself in the title, imperial role.

Meanwhile, from time to time the India, as if the building reverberating with the dust of past hopes rebelled at being used in unimaginative ways, changed shape in inventive productions. But more and more this invention was relegated out of doors and around the building as the directors of the theatre chose to transform the inside of the India into any ubiquitous studio/theatre space by painting the rooms black and by introducing standard lighting, sound boards and theatre tech.

Around the theatre, the space remained ungroomed, retaining that odd juxtaposition of rural to ex-industrial. When in July 2003 I went to see *Ta'ziye*, I remember being curious both about what an Iranian passion play might be and about this first theatrical effort by the famous Iranian film director Abbas Kiarostami. My heart lifted to realize I would be outside rather than in the Teatro India where the spirit of the theatre seemed to have been subdued by all that black paint and plasterboard dividers. That evening, outside against the wall of the theatre five rows of platforms with chairs divided into six

sections surrounded the ring of a stage. Into this structure built around the ring of seats were fitted six white screens. I entered into this built circular playing space at the India as if I were taking my seat at a kind of circus, but now the circus like a rock concert had a host of screens bringing a strange modernity to a spectator's assumption about the ancientness of passion-play theatre practice.

Unavoidable and imposing, the video projections complicated my sense of myself as a spectator at a live performance. Each screen, about six-feet high, extended the width of each section, filling the steel scaffolding. Walking toward the space from the arch between box office and main theatre, I saw an enclosed structure, the screens blocking the usual open space of an amphitheatre. Even before I reached the entrance I could see the faces and bodies that filled the screens. Thus the 'play' had begun or at least the event of the performance was underway before any bodies entered the playing space. Dazzled for a bit by the screens, I slowly noticed that the sound was live, coming from a band of four men in white. Suspended on a small platform above one of the four entrances for the circular space, they played flute, trumpet, drums and tambourine. The center stage, a raised platform, held shields and swords; encircling the stage at the level of the ground was a ring of sand.

Advertisement for the evening made much of the fact that Kiarostami was an acclaimed film director trying his hand at live performance. So the truly beautiful videos being shown above the space did not exactly surprise me. I picked up the visual code quickly: two different videos were showing; the screens alternated in an imitation of the purdah of traditional

Islamic society with the audiences separated between women and girls and men and boys. Thinking back on that night now I recognize how a spectator, like a *flâneur*, can go looking and wandering and watching without being open to change. Like teaching, attending a performance can, to the open minded watcher, expose my own prejudices, ones I may very well have buried far enough down to deny. Thus do Rancière's lessons of the emancipated spectator emanate from his theories of knowledge and the ignorant schoolmaster. The moment of challenge in theatre space or pedagogical space comes in the flash of uncomfortable recognition: what will I do with this unsavory bit of internal news? I can scatter some rationalizing dust over the top, and let the queasy sensation settle without change. I can as well welcome the news, taking the invitation to risk discomfort that spectating and teaching in another key offer.

My choices on the ground outside the India were clear: I could mutter and shake my head in disgust at the video intrusion on my live experience, ignoring righteously what I don't prefer. Or I could seek to let go of my first reaction to screens, one that comes from the private joys I take in being a spectator for live performance with the freedom to look at what I want to. I can become really interested in the talent for quiet that a minor performer exudes and simply watch her for the whole night. I can ignore the main event. But with screens, unless the filmmaker by inventive camera work allows more largesse to the watcher than usual, I suffer the physical constraint of being in the same position as the camera, moved about, panning, sweeping, but seeing solely from that one perspective.

Still that night I admonished myself not to be a boar, to try and relax into the performance Kiarostami created, experiment with seeing what the interaction between these screens and the bodies entering would offer. From the point of view merely of the space I inhabited, it felt odd to try and decide where to look, and that was interesting. Inevitably my eye moved toward these large screens where I watched another audience; an audience who also watched something I was, in the course of the performance, led to assume moved in the same time as the performance of the play unfolding before me. As the night went on I found myself intrigued and disturbed by these visions of watching Iranians (or whoever they might be since we were left to make our assumptions based on the dress, the faces and the fact that the play was from Iran and its director, Iranian).

A disembodied voice narrated the gist of the story in Italian. Perhaps in the history of the West, of the Ottoman Empire, Christianity and Islam have rarely enjoyed a period of accord and respect. But on that night in 2003 in the first year of the occupation of Iraq, Italians, like many in the UK, Spain, and the US, had not been able to stop their government from supporting the US/UK coalition forces, and the word 'Islamic' inevitably called up its consort, 'terrorist.' Thus I suspect many audience members from Europe curious about this play that follows the martyrdom of Hossein sought in its story an understanding of the origins to those words repeated endlessly in the media reporting the war, the "split between the Sunni and Shiite Sects."

The break in tradition made by the insertion of the videos did not transform any of the other traditional modes of performing the passion play. All the parts were played by men. The boys playing the children and women entered in

multi-colored veils very unlike the black-veiled women on the screens. Their voices singing and speaking their parts made no attempt to imitate one gender or another; no effort was made to hide the facial hair of the young man playing Hossein's wife. The cast sang with voices arresting and affecting, sometimes in trance-producing chants, sometimes in suffering wailing, beautifully pitched in the minor keys of traditional Iranian song.

As with surtitles, so with these videos, I alternated looking up and down: up to see the response of the filmed audience, down to the action on the stage and down further to the entrances of the characters made onto the circus sand. It comes back to me now how at some points in the play I forgot to look at those other projected watchers, particularly when the three protagonists, our hero Hossein and the evil Yazid and his generals flew around the ring on horses, riding so fast, halting with such presumption and speaking daggers to one another. Then it was as if the screens melted because what was here, now in front of me demanded all my attention. Against the modern of screen, I thought of the incongruous element of a passion play or a re-enactment of faith and its mysteries, of history and its injustices, where the representation allows for unashamedly high stakes, the urgency not at all forced. The split between Sunni and Shiite that will cause violence to happen again and again can be mourned anew as if it had just begun its eternal work.

At the points of greatest pathos—when Hossein accepts his path to martyrdom, when the children are killed—my ambivalence about the projected audience increased. While a large part of the audience in Rome could be assumed to be from a

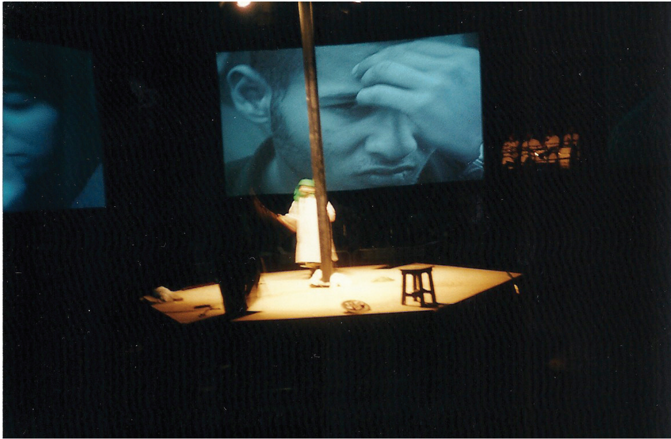
Western Judeo-Christian tradition, the story of Hossein's sorrow at his six-month old son's dying from thirst, a thirst engineered by the withholding of water by the emperor's chief Yazid, needed no common set of beliefs to communicate the pain. In fact, who could not think of the children in 'post-war' Iraq very possibly suffering the same fate while awaiting the restoration of water and the electricity that might purify that water? Who could not have the chill of the future brought into the present moment as we were reminded that wars will be fought over resources and that in the coming years one of the most valuable will be water? Yet the pictures above our heads seemed calculated to show us the difference in response between those watching something that has for them an intimacy of pain not unlike the "way of the cross" for devout Christians and the audience on the grounds of the Teatro India for a night of theatre. I thought then of my friend Roya, how she would talk of her own ambivalence about the culture of mourning she inherited from growing up in Iran and the cost of that culture for women who must be the keepers of loss, frozen in it, even while men who mourn visibly also have the freedom to move away from that mourning towards action.

I must confess part of my unhappy relation to large screens comes from my inability to remember that what I am seeing is not in fact actually happening in that moment. While this engagement can have the character of pure bliss when what comes to life before me does so in the figures of Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant, the same response means I cannot watch any violence and cruelty being projected without feeling I should put my hand through the screen to intervene. So involuntarily I found myself shying away from looking at the faces on the screen with tears streaming down them; not out

of discomfort at open mourning, I had left my own country in part because I had tired of a culture afraid of the expression of emotion, but because even as I knew those bodies were being reproduced technologically, I felt uncomfortable breaking the privacy of their grief.

Paradoxical as it may seem such grief shared does supply a kind of privacy of response, a sense of at once in communion and yet truly alone, but Kiarostami insisted the theatre audience watch from a position almost of clinical interest, anthropologists of emotion. And it split my spectating as surely as those screens split women and men. I understand the contract of spectator to performance in most settings includes me watching not watched. No that is not right, of course in certain performance contracts I am watched, but that night the audience I saw seemed to have been surveyed in order to be shown to others, to me. Generally I am anonymous as spectator, as Rancière encourages us to be, and the anonymity provides space to receive, interpret, re-adjust. Of course some theatre performances openly confront the audience or include our seeing each others' responses as part of the playing, but I enter into that contract by way of theatrical cues or descriptions of the method of playing provided before hand.

At the same time when I did look up because the decorous moment of leaving grief to the griever had passed, I also found myself mesmerized to see those faces on the screen, the sheer aesthetic beauty of a well-made video. The screens could not be separated from the experience of watching; the spatial configuration would not allow it. Again though I 'knew' I could not violate people who were by now only projections, who had been those spectators some time in the recent past, I still felt the



voyeur as I watched someone who did not know I was watching them. It broke the threads John Webster in the 17th century suggested bind the ears of the audience at the theatre to the body of the actor by inserting between us and the players those other watchers and their reactions. I have in my wanderings as a spectator profited from many a Brechtian break or interruption, but here the break seemed only to serve a hyperconsciousness of fictive narration about a community of spectators whose culture, whose world remains projected before me while I sit invited to make naïve assumptions.

At the end of the play, I heard audience members around me commenting on how while the play and the performance were not very interesting, the videos were beautiful. I have heard this comment more than once from others who saw *Ta'ziye*—the performances were consistently sold out—and I wonder how an audience might have responded had there been no screens, no faces, no cues, no place to distract attention from the performance of story to the watchers on film. That night

and even now I cannot rid myself in memory of the odd sense of having witnessed a private act confounded by the watching eye of the camera. No doubt the persistence of this memory came in part by what struck me as a creepy if apt finale. During the ovation, Kiarostami joined the cast in front of us. As he walked from section to section of the seats, his took pictures with a handheld camera. The flash of light in the dark came as a reminder of the static nature of pictures taken and the man's face obscured by the camera a reminder of the distance between who has power in the seen and the shown. Master of the lens more than the stage, Kiarostami perhaps perceived us as one more audience ready to be recorded, documented, reproduced, our responses circulated to other venues in other cities in other countries. Or perhaps he simply wanted to make sure we perceived ourselves in relation to those watchers projected above the stage.

I recall strangely how the staging of *Ta'ziye* caused the space of the Teatro India to recede, as if outdoor movies had disrupted the scale of building to production. But in truth as I recognize now, between 2003 and 2005 the India already stood like an awkward theatrical relic, neither one thing nor the other, alternately used as a theatre space and as a space available for private rental for weddings and parties. In 2005 Mario Martone returned to the India to stage his sequel to *Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus*. His first production in the cycle, *Oedipus Rex* (1999) shocked my spatial expectations not simply by undoing relation of audience to orchestra seats in the huge Teatro Argentina in Rome, but instead vividly and decisively rendering the staid and seemingly unchangeable red, plush orchestra section a space of destruction. I remember clearly entering as usual the formal

and well-maintained setting, walking up the beautiful circular stairway, up and up to my seat in a box. Stepping through the door of the box section, I moved forward, sat down and looked out on ruin: most of the seats had been removed from the main floor, some of the plush velvet chairs lay about the emptied orchestra section turned upside down, burned, blackened and discarded. The actors moved between the stage and the ruined floor while I sat in a box above them. As if an extension of our bodies leaning out over the railing of the box, outsized wooden hands hung off the bottom section of the boxes arrayed in such a way that they seemed to stretch towards the wrecked city in the middle of the floor.

Three years after his dismissal as artistic director, Mario Martone's Teatro India production of *Oedipus at Colonus* brought to me, in mourning for the space's original vibrant energy, the return not just of its guiding spirit Martone himself but something of the original purpose of the India as well. This time instead of hands, Martone covered the outside long wall of the India with clay feet. Up and down the side of the theatre one could see the body of a foot and its heel, as if climbers had left their corporeal marks, or as if heroes had left the sign of their imperfection behind them in feet of clay. Strangely and perhaps as a testament to the confusion about the spirit of the space, those feet remain on the outside of the building even today. Walking by the footed façade on my way to *Colonus*, I entered the courtyard and saw a huge hole in the ground with a rock set in the midst of it. I took my place nearby, standing with others attracted by the sight and felt relief since no matter what happened in the performance, I would again be participating in the peregrinations that had first animated the space of the India in its opening months.

Even while caught up in my own memories that evening, I found myself wondering how many of those in the audience for *Oedipus* at the India knew the theatre from its first incarnation through its transformations and how many were those seeing a performance at the India for the first time. Nothing about the experience would signal loss if a spectator encountered the movement through the India during the performance and assumed this to be a habitual use of the space. But for those returning, the memory of the flat and predominantly unimaginative productions seen between 2002 and now were swept aside in the power of Martone's directorial choices.

Grief and desperation came howling out of the hole in the ground; the actors in threadbare and worn costumes provided visual cues about the incessant wandering of our protagonists, Antigone, Ismene and Oedipus. Myth collapsed into the everyday as the three appeared as characters outside the state, without documents and home, standing in for the bodies of immigrants newly ashore, asylum seekers in political limbo, and economic refugees from the 'former east' appearing on Europe's metaphorical doorstep, the threshold and the border. Oedipus and his daughters resembled just such refugees, dusty, tattered and in need of care. When the scene moved inside to the main room of the India, the actors playing the citizens of Colonus ushered the spectators in—we too were to be the jury for Oedipus' plea.

As with Sellar's *Story of a Soldier,* Martone used a promenade style of production to powerful effect. Often in promenade theatre, at the transition of moving from one space to another I have found myself directed by the ushers into a new space, a continuation of the relation of theatre patron to

those whose job it is to show me to my seat. Instead that evening outside the India when the actors moved us with urgency, speaking hotly whispered Italian, into the building and into the first room, we were invited not to step back over the border of playing into intermission or break but instead to accompany the citizens towards the colloquy about to take place concerning Oedipus' fate. I remember how the audience neither talked to one another nor surreptitiously checked their cellphones for the time or for messages. Instead we took our cue from the seriousness, the in-characterness of the players and remained inside the fictional world.

I took my seat on the bleachers to hear the arguments for and against accepting the plea from Oedipus to be buried outside Thebes. As the arguments were laid before us, each of the actors speaking their piece, a sudden breathtaking coup de theatre interrupted the judicious speaking of those for and against. Those big wide double doors so prominent in the first year of productions at the India, the spatial border between enclosed theatre space and the out of doors, flew open. I heard the startling noise of a car. I then saw the equally startling sight of it hurtling into the room. I remember clearly breaking the habit of silence to exclaim; I think I might have said 'bravo' in acknowledgement of the theatricality of the shock, but it is equally possible I let out a much more vulgar, 'fuck me' as an admiring acknowledgement of the theatrical power of the intrusion of the street onto the theatre floor.

The breaks screeched, the car doors were flung open by armed men, bodyguards for the smoothly dressed Creon. Swiftly the modern national symbols piled up one upon the other. The car was dark blue with tinted windows, the kind of

car I know well from living in Rome since it tends to travel in a convoy of motorcycles or police cars escorting the blue sedans to and from the Parliament or the Prime Minister's house. The guns appeared to be the same as those brandished at Fiumicino airport, a sight familiar even before the increased security after 11 September as Rome and Italy had been the site of attacks and bombs during the earlier *anni di piombo* (years of lead). The technology and the costume created a dramatic contrast to the tattered Oedipus and the simply adorned citizens as Creon stepped out of the car in a symbol of Italian male power, the ubiquitous dark blue suit, a sartorial mark that in 2005, and again now, could not help but be associated with the corruption and callousness of Berlusconi's government. Creon's silky menace also reminded spectators of the current government, and his bitter exit promised the continuation of the tragic cycle to come for the children of Oedipus, a perhaps no less tragic cycle the production implied continues here with the remarkably eternal return of the corrupt and the corrupted.

Finally, having been witness both to the pleas of the children, the arguments of the citizenry and the bullying of both by those in power, we were led, again by the actors, to a long rectangular space adjoining the first one where we set on benches that lined the walls of the room. In this space too, the back double doors remained open, the rushes moved in the wind and the actors created a ritual sense of community as the story drew to its close. I witnessed the representation of war and the wreckage of war, arms and the harm caused by them and the threat of war between brothers, between the city states of Athens and Thebes played before me. While Oedipus does find a kind of shelter with Theseus' pledge of assistance, the players hinted

at those not yet incorporated in borders, not yet welcomed nor protected. Creon's crass cruelty threatened still; the memory of the sudden power of technological intervention, by weapon or by vehicle, echoing vibrantly through the temporary pastoral.

And then there was my own sadness, a species of sadness far less grave than that of loss of family or home, the mourning triggered by the return to the India of a manner of performance made only intermittently during the years of the more banal productions in the space. By 'doing the theatre in different voices,' to maul a phrase of T.S. Eliot's, the India could not be said to be unique in Europe or even in Italy, though perhaps at one time it was indeed unique in Rome. Martone coaxed a narrative from the structure, though it would be folly to say he was the only engineer of such power as many different directors and performers seemed to take inventive inspiration from the space, the building of the theatre offering aesthetic, ethical and moral invitations to a nomadic citizenry, as well as a more pointed invitation to the local theatergoers to 'hear' the building as a structure of malleable possibility. Part of the power came from motion and flux, a quasi-literal challenge to the generally moribund institutions of the *teatro stabile*, or stable theatre that is the name used for the major theatres in cities in Italy. Motion, I am always surprised to remember, demands that the work and those who make it risk imperfection, since perfection has historically been proven through the condition of the still and unchanging.

Dust had in its perfect imperfection moved us towards the original India, always in flux between our clothes, our shoes, in the air as we moved and the particles we disturbed with our feet. Paved roads tame the contamination and the motes in the

light creating a clean carapace over the unruly, as it did in 2006 when the City administration paved the dusty road leading to the Teatro India in oily, black asphalt. Suddenly those blue cars, no longer an unique Oedipal *deus ex machina*, appeared ubiquitously, dropping off the privileged and well heeled. Other cars having nothing to do with the space of playing passed through on their way, profiting from this new shortcut. Indeed, they had paved paradise, and my feet could no longer raise the sign of equable surrender to the elements, the moving and clinging sign of worn shoes and old stories retold among dusty wanderers; the threshold had become a parking lot.

‖ Senses

Like Greek dancers moving across the stage singing the call and response of stichomythia—the pattern of one line crossing while speaking/singing, the other waiting its turn to cross back again—so too meditations on performance and theatre perform a retracing of the alternating demands of stillness and motion, of lasting and evanescent, of exceeding and being contained. As I embark on my reflections here about bodies dancing, I find myself turned towards sound again, knowing any detour into sound will lead back to motion. If it is in the nature of sound to diffuse, it seems in the nature of people, and not just critics or spectators, to respond to the diffuse by supplying a container, by collecting. One method of containing sound involves creating an analogy: pressing the unbounded into a frame to form a more manageable allusion through supplying an image. To awaken our somewhat atrophied or simply unexercised listening muscles, a cognitive prompt seems to be required: what do you *see* when you hear this, what picture comes to mind? Such translation of the acoustic experience by way of the visual container can aid but can also work like limiting captions, as Walter Benjamin describes them and their overly "directive"

effect upon the work of art. As with captions so with explicating images, a visual analogue for sound works as a container, an emblem, an approximation to store in memory, in order to collate and to collect.

This kind of translation, this importing of the formless into the intelligibility and temporary fixity of a form that happens in the course of writing and thinking about sound, happens too with dance, a performed form often received as fluid and in need of an explicating legibility, a narrative or a picture. Of all the performances I attend, I am most likely to overhear someone say, “but what does it mean?” at a dance performance. And the answers or responses such a query elicits will be a conjunction of the seen and the kinetically received translated into a story, a vignette whose image becomes a part of the speaker’s attempt to describe what has happened in a kind of moving slide show, now a duet, now a solo, now an ensemble.

I remember Justin Hunt’s emphasis in his work on queer memory of Rebecca Schneider’s words about archive and knowing as a ‘body to body transmission.’ Evidence in motion making and unmaking the world of archive pertains as well to the world and the practice of spectating. Body to body transmission happening from moving bodies on stage to relatively still bodies watching seems to call forth a full-body reception in a way different to performance with text or performance from the neck up. It may be a very simple relation, we are reminded of our corporeal response because the dancers’ bodies moving in front of us stage the whole body at work. But there is no solid (static) evidence for this, only a body to body knowledge of heightened physical awareness and the cognitive connections between what I am watching and what I experience physically.

I linger on this threshold as though its frame is my body and the saddle of the door transforms under my feet into a sprung dance floor, rather than the evocative, sturdy entryway Benjamin construes. Some evidence does support my intuition about the effect of dance on the spectator, evidence provided in the results of scientific studies conducted with dancers who watched a dance performance while wearing wires that measure the brain's response. Susan Melrose describes this experiment and its findings in her investigations of practitioner intuition. In her account, the accomplished dancer Darcy Bussell watches a performance of dance with wires set to transmit her brain's response to what she is seeing on stage, machines at the ready to record the neurons firing. In time to the execution of difficult moves by the dancers on stage, Darcy Bussell's neurons fire; the scientists posit that the neurons firing signal her body's expertise, setting off little charges in response to the movements it knows how to make even as she sits to all appearances relatively still watching others dance. In her position as spectator, Bussell, according to Melrose, inhabits the space as expert spectator and as a dancer with a practitioner's intuition, a performer's or director's corporeal knowledge of how to make things, a performance, a jeté, an improvised solo. The figure of a body sitting still while neurons fire and somewhere in the imagination moves are executed in time to the moving body on stage provides an apt emblem for the work of this book which suggests that what might seem a spectator at rest can in fact be a spectator in motion, practicing with what she sees and hears, exchanging knowledge, body to body transmission.

So I wonder to myself what part of my neuron collection remembers being a four-year old in the Washington Ballet

School with my Russian ballet mistress and her cane that beat both time and small bodies into shape? Or the girl who had to stop dancing because her body ballooned in high school? Or the woman who loves to just dance? Are we all sitting together in our spectatorial position, the harassed, the embarrassed and the free?

Such considerations interrupted me as I began to review how and when I noticed many more dance performances appearing in the programs of 'theatre' festivals. In the wake of this gradual change, I chose performances not out of an interest in dance—the lingering anger at the Russian ballet mistress kept that at bay—but out of a curiosity about what place dance might have in an international theatre festival. Two trends converged in these years, this increase in the presence of dance at theatre festivals and the references to a style of theatre termed 'physical theatre.' My memorable initiation into the conjunction of the physical, the gestural, dance and theatre came before my travels when the Theatre du Complicite appeared in New York with their piece *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* based on *Pig Earth* by John Berger.

Perhaps spectating resembles *flâneuring* most in a developing instinct for what will be a particularly rich experience of performance. Some performances are like Paris, the capital of *flâneuring:* as Benjamin tells us, you can *flâneur* anywhere, but some encounters reciprocate more than others and some cities provide an abundance of such encounters. So with the performances one passes back over into, just after I have seen it, and then as it comes back to me on other occasions years and years later. As Andre Lepecki reminds us by way of a quotation from Henri Bergson, "the past is that which acts no longer." For

Bergson, according to Lepecki, "any act, as long as it continues generating an effect and an affect, remains in the present" (129). Moving us from the melancholic attachment critics have had as they keen over the ephemerality of performance to the demanding and recurring possibilities of an "intimacy" with the "expanded and always multiplying presents in dances, in performances," Lepecki also offers what I take in relief as a gentle corrective to the methodology of Sebald. Admirer though I am, I often find Sebald's melancholic remembering can at times seem to damn up the past into past, interring the affect inside the sepulchre of the language of loss.

As I sit here remembering that performance of *Lucie Cabrol* the exactness of the coordinates, was it 1991 or 1992, was I still living in New York, or was I back from Michigan for vacation, remains vague. But that performance continues to generate an affect and an effect; I can smell the moist earth, a smell so incongruous in the golden, acoustically sensitive wood and the plush of Alice Tully Hall. When a stir happens in the theatre going world of New York one can feel it by the mood of the crowd and see it by the recognition of those who attend the 'important' work, at that time Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Hardwick, John Lahr. But there is also a very keen difference between being somewhere because I read in the *Village Voice* or in another journal a review suggesting that the performance must be seen and being somewhere because I have been told by other itinerant spectators I trust that 'you have to see this.'

That night the hall was thrumming. We sat smelling earth. Alice Tully Hall has no curtain as it is usually a concert hall so the moments of spectators entering, chatting, waiting commingled with looking at the earth-filled stage. Water dripped from a

spigot on stage, the lights dimmed. There in New York long before I came to Europe to live, long before I came to the UK to teach, I encountered 'physical theatre.' Rarely had the physical training acquired by attending Jacques LeCoq's school in France been seen on US stages, or at least by me; certainly the majority of US actors I saw in performance tended to be trained from the neck up, a kind of acting made for screen and not for the corporeal demands of time and space on stage.

Of course these reflections partake entirely of Bergson's notion of time not past as I am certainly remembering what I now know backwards travelling by means of affect and effect. I have used LeCoq's exercises in my classrooms; I have seen Complicite's work again and again. But the pull towards a kind of theatre of the whole body, reanimated certainly when I saw the month-long season of Odin Teatret at the Teatro India, began in that incongruously formal setting as the actors revealed actions in gesture, themselves a living scenography.

These memories of the world made by body in performance in New York came back to me as I booked tickets for performances at festivals in the late 1990s where names known to spectators of the dance world but new to me began to appear more frequently. At Avignon there was Angelin Preljocaj and of course in part in consideration of the name of her mixed genre, dance theatre, Pina Bausch. I had seen Bausch's company at BAM, choosing the piece because it leaned more towards theatre than towards dance, a method of choosing I once habitually exercised only now becoming clear to me as I reflect on these years where the genres became more mixed.

I wandered across those thresholds into a state in flux, once an occasional spectator of dance I soon became an impassioned

one. So much of the 'training' in the itinerant practice of spectating happens by accumulation, by the first curious move towards something, "the touch of a single tile—that which any old dog carries away," that catches my eye, my ear, my body. The *flâneuring* becomes richer with an accumulated collection of experiences, my growing recognition that the performances that 'spoke' to me the strongest spoke through choreography and sound. Yet the spectator/collector has no cabinet of curiosities

beyond her own memory, more of a storage space marked by potential than a box to open in order to see an object, moments come alive again in reprise by the affect of what I am seeing or any of the coercive conjunctions that reignite memory.

Of course I realized over the years I attended performances, festival organizers might have begun to incorporate more dance into their planning for more prosaic purposes. Most dance does not need surtitles or translation; it can unfold in front of an audience in France one night and another in Poland the next, displayed in the same manner no matter the mother tongue of the dancers. Yet this mix of memory and accumulated experiences in my watching and making of performance meant that many dance performances remained present to me as Bergson suggests, continuing to affect my memory and have an effect by way of the sensorial communication in the medium itself. Somehow the genre of dance mimicked the strange mix of my contemporary moment: the half visual, half aural, half formulated, half communicated form of information we currently receive and return in the present live and the present virtual.

I took my most intense instruction as an itinerant spectator of performance and dance in Europe, indeed I continue to take instruction, from the Belgian group Les Ballets C de la B. Like watching a funhouse come to life in the bodies of characters, the members of this troupe incarnate oddities and particularities of corporeal personality and of racial and ethnic heritage and dance in, through, around, out and back into them again. Michel Kolbialka justly reminds us of how in a moment of performance a kind of border can "suddenly [be]erected in the process of conscious or accidental crossings performed by the actors on stage and the words they enunciated"(Kobialka 5-6).

His words echoed back in tandem with my memory of an early instance where Les Ballets C de La B showed me how powerfully national differences can be provoked by a small vignette in a performance of something called dance.

In a beautiful setting in a complicated show with dancers' nationalities pinned to their bodies in the accoutrements of accent, of language, of gesture, a group of dancers come together under a faux rainfall. Audiences love it when it rains on stage. Wondrously incongruous, the very same meteorological occurrence met with bad natured grunts and the shifting of the weight of things carried in order to raise the umbrella, produces delight when transferred by the distance of seat to stage and by the distance of the unexpected outside being produced inside. Standing under an umbrella the dancers began to sing together *les temps du cerises.* While not a song I know, the tune and the lyrics elicit a semi-conscious recognition of something 'very French,' lilting, light, lyrical to be sung in a gently drunken night at a brasserie, even if you have never been to one, even if you do not have the faintest idea what separates a brasserie from a weinstubber or a pub.

The singing occurs at a moment in the piece after I have watched a series of intense dances where the movement, the ground on which they are operating, shifts continuously between extraordinary flips and physical turns and duets of connection and disconnection. So at first we hear the singing and cannot help but be soothed; the voices are pretty, the singing is choral and heals any rift of isolation or disjuncture between the dancers. Then one of the singers stops the others, turns to the dancer whose face 'looks' Asian and exaggeratedly pronounces for him, "le temps du *cerises*." That thing with the voice that French

speakers and those who have learned their second language well can do, the half swallow of the *r* into the gully of the *i* on its way to the concluding ssss sound at the end of *cerises* flows out into the audience.

We laugh, I laugh. Who has not been corrected in their travels in France, particularly in Paris, by a French woman or man upholding the spoken word standard? Even those guilty of doing the correcting probably laugh. The song starts again from the beginning, the sensual pleasure of choral singing and the simple repetition of the ballad overtakes the room. Then, again the dancer, now whatever his nationality unmistakably French, or even better a French-speaking Belgian more invested in his Frenchness than the Lyonnais, he corrects the Asian fellow: they sing again, they stop again. Such a small moment in performance, perhaps five minutes at the most, but perhaps also the most vivid representation I have seen of the daily practicalities of national identity, belonging and what marks one as an outsider. By the end of the vignette, the sweet softness of the singing has paradoxically become an uncomfortable power game of correct and not, of expert and not, of colonizer and colonial.

Tempus Fugit incorporated other outsiders in its crew of dancers, for all I know they were all outsiders. I remember a very tall African-American dancer, deliberately marked as American because draped in the stars and stripes, identified as American and therefore African-American when he began to speak, and when he began to sing. In retrospect as I have now seen this company's work for six years or so, I think how the changing collection of dancers, except for three or four founding members, makes me think that Alain Platel goes to the dancer's equivalent of the corner where 'dayworkers' are waiting to be

hired, offering their diverse skills, a physical motley of tall and not, of ethnicities native to Europe and not. Thus the ensemble work often creates its power out of the wild difference in body and style and pigment and idiosyncratic physical talent.

Wild difference, what do I know about the bodies from looking at them? A fundamental question for a traveling spectator. As a spectator I am constantly watching bodies whose attributes like puzzle pieces invite me to combine them and make a picture, but the easy sliding of one piece into the curve of another may prove to have been too easy or may prove to leave gaps in between—even white can be more complicated than it looks on stage. Honoring the possibility that the puzzle pieces may exist side by side unmeshed, marked by gaps, Les Ballets C de la B insists on what gets created between. They set up moving landscapes, the patterns dissolve, a distance also remains, one made from respect. I look but I do not touch. I learn but I do not conclude as Massumi has instructed. I see/hear/feel concepts but no one applies them, and yet something about nation and encounters remains, floating on the air.

In its history as a form, dance paradoxically collects and displays, a temporary museum, an elapsing encyclopedia. I am thinking here of Mark Franko's evocative study of the text in the bodies of baroque dancers, the show of power. So with Les Ballets C de la B the traces of the way we make nation and exclude the imperfect speakers from our linguistic shores. More recently works of dance demonstrate a catalogue of new technologies in sound at times resembling something that might be thought of as sound art.

I am thinking of the one hundred metronomes in Anna de Keersmaeker's homage to Steve Reich, three revolving objects

on stage that look like decapitated gramophones in Rachid Oursmadne's 'Loin,' just two recent instances where to go see dance was to go see sound. Thus the deceptive sweet song of the deceptively pronounced *les cerises* mixes into other moments in memory made from sound and music through the bodies of those dancers. I remember beginning to feel acoustically assaulted in the course of a few years by the suddenly ubiquitous use of insect-like microphones at the mouth of actors and dancers. Not least because when those mikes are in use the sound, even the sound of speaking to and fro in dialogue, issues only from one point in the theatre, the speakers. Recorded music in performance followed the miked bodies lead, increasing in frequency in both senses, having something of the dimensions and volume of an Ipod in a room full of spectators without my being able to choose what to hear or able to control its volume.

For the most part the actors and dancers I see who have trained in Europe play a musical instrument as well as learn to do things with their voice, things that include singing, but not only. The fortunate can play an instrument well, but even the less fortunate can contribute to the making of music on stage by some form of instrumental intervention. The visual/aural cognitive convergence of hearing ensemble music played, of seeing the instruments employed, of experiencing the sound in the air all around me changes my reception of the work.

In accord with this attention to corporeal sound, Les Ballets C de la B does more than have musicians as ancillary accessories; Platel and Company incorporate musicians as players in the scene. During *Tempus Fugit,* a musician who had along with the other members of the ensemble playing 17th-century instruments been sequestered in a small balcony at the

upper left of the playing space, appeared suddenly on the floor of the stage playing his lute. I don't remember precisely how he got there, but I remember suddenly seeing this very large man with a very large stomach, now a small mountain on stage protruding from his prone figure, holding a lute high up on his chest. A member of the company, a small Asian woman with a very high, thin voice, stepped up onto his chest, singing something that sounded like a piece from the genre of Peking opera– do I remember her as Asian because I collapsed the association of the nation and its music into the body making the sound? The musician then, continuing to play, began to revolve himself on the floor, slowly moving his body in a circle by means of his feet while she sang and adjusted herself on his stomach in time to his rotation. Memories, sounds, images collided: 'early music,' physical heft, the sound of singing something Asian in its high, reedy operatic tones, a human music box with the tiny dancer, that plastic one who always fascinated me not because she twirled in a tutu in time to the music but because she folded straight up and down from the feet when you opened and closed the box, surrendering herself wholly to the vertical or the horizontal. That dancer brought the plastic ballerina to odd contemporary life rotating on the top of a giant lute player.

Wandering across dance's threshold in the company of Les Ballets C de la B I found myself buying tickets at festivals for the dance performances first where I had once chosen one or two out of curiosity about the form. Dance as a genre, as the enhanced, split, and thoroughly remodeled genre it is now, offers me as a spectator such unforgettable surprises with remarkable frequency. Such surprises can of course in the most simple way offer what Bill T. Jones' described to me in an interview as the

'more likely to be funded' "Ahhh" moment, the exhalation of wonder a child might make at a circus as the acrobats progress in ever more complex movements. Yet such surprises move out of the "ahhh" to register in my body through the co-production that such revelation demands. Reception neurons fire: I am at first struck dumb by the sheer overwhelming wonder at what can be done with the body, with the bodies; then the force of my reactions gather, I begin to participate by letting all the possible interpretive connections collect and fall apart, a co-dancing in my spectatorial way. Pieces of association with meaning, with past dances, with national monikers, with racial reminders, with story, with confusion all circulate in and out of what feels not but nothing other than as Fred Moten might say an improvisation I make from the reception I did not even know I had the capacity to experience or extend.

Seduced and converted, I began regularly to visit the websites of a dozen dance companies touring Europe in order to calculate which cities it might be possible for me to travel to in order to see them. Inspired by Les Ballets C de La B, I sought out this thing called 'dance theatre.' I remember a September day, hot and sunny, standing in line at the box office of the Teatro Argentina in Rome, waiting for the sales to begin to Pina Bausch's piece 'O Dido.' At that moment still a new inhabitant of Italy, I stood among a group so familiar I could have been home years back in the dressing room at the Washington Ballet School. Dancers, dancers everywhere, every age, beautiful young women and men turning their ankles this way and that, older women hair stretched back (the dancer's ponytail, an androgynous marker of the traditional dancer), bodies an aging grace of one long line, new bodies too, tattooed,

differently shaped and yet still with that physical consciousness of the instrument at rest. Our notions of beauty, formed both of oppression and desire, come so clearly from what we see when. In my case physical memory includes my mother the dancer, her lean frame a standard I despaired of when a teenager, I profit from as I age. But also that rock and roll world of long-haired men in flamboyant clothes, so close to the dancer's eroticism as they rolled across the stage with screaming guitars and gleaming taut bodies.

Lost in recollections of this sort, I stood in line waiting. Remembering now I think about the paradoxical loss convenience causes, how online ticket buying 'saves' me the trouble of standing in that remarkable line that morning. Under a Roman sun we waited and were rewarded with tickets to a dance performance that sold out in two hours, a doubled satisfaction for the spectator as the sense of anticipation mingles with the flash of triumph at having succeeded just in getting the ticket. What comes back to me, in between the snatches of memory of breathtaking beauty and prowess on the stage that was the 'Tanztheater Wuppertal,' Bausch's company, is the contrast between two very different nights in the Argentina. That one, the theatre with its bursting tiers of boxes resembling nature-program beehives where small buzzing bodies dip into impossibly tiny holes one after another, and the other night, with Theater Basel where the theatre sat cold and unforgiving, the orchestra seats only half-full and emitting sounds of boredom and disapproval.

Being a spectator, as these pages attest, is often 'on the job learning,' a craft as I have implied not in terms of the competition of who accomplishes it best, but in the demands loosely offered

without pressure to accept, demands made on those who are willing to try and answer the craft of the performers in kind by learning how to see and hear. With dance, I watched in confusion: was that good, was that really good? If the habitual question 'what does it means' accompanies dance performances so too does the spectator proviso, 'I don't really know anything about dance.' Interestingly people rarely say, "I don't really know anything about acting." The distance between what the performers can do when dancing and what the audience can do contrasts with the performance of a text where an actor may barely 'act' and an audience can have the sense that what is being done before them could, with some training, be done by them. But with dance, especially dancers in the companies I have mentioned, the distance between what the performers' bodies can do and what most of ours can creates part of the spectator-performer relation.

Our relation to what we see and hear, how it moves us while we engage in the practice of spectating brings to mind a work aslant to these pages on a famous art historian written by a film critic. Writing about an unpublished musing of Aby Warburg's on the relation of spectator to movement in images from late Renaissance Florence, Philippe-Alain Michaud demonstrates how according to Warburg "in these works, the figures…depicted in rigorously static poses" contain motion because "the question of movement did not… disappear. It became internalized, designating not a body's displacement in space but its transfer into the universe of representation, where it acquired a lasting visibility. Henceforth, for Warburg the question of movement became associated with the subject's entrance into the image, with rites of passage, and with the

dramatizations affecting his or her appearance" (31). I have been haunted by these words since I read them. Something of the notion of the subject's entrance into the image rings true for the spectator of performance who watches dance where static-ness is at most deliberately temporary. I am struck by the prescience of Warburg's denotation of the activity of motion by both, *and* in both the beheld and the beholder having fundamentally to do with the transfer into the universe of representation. In the activity of spectating, I note how the singular of transfer that Warburg posits in the position of looking at a figure in a work of art must be augmented, made plural—would it be transference or transfers—to imply the exchange of receiving and returning throughout a performance unfolding and therefore the constant making and unmaking of a universe of representation.

Transference of a certain kind happened during the Bausch production as the watchers brought their relations as fans to the theatre. To be a fan, to be an enthusiast is a spectatorial position most writers about performance, especially scholars, tend to bury under an analysis of the phenomenon of popularity or to contain masking the surge of affection by the tone of the writing, cooling down the language to make it sound impartial. But as a fan, I can sometimes be more discriminating, my expertise born of love is still active, and sometimes I demand more of the beloved because I have made it my devoted business to see and hear every production. The heat of that room full of Bausch fans came back to me two weeks later as I entered the palpably cool Teatro Argentina with plenty of unsold seats to see another dance theatre company do a production called *The House of Bernarda Alba* as part of the RomaEuropa Festival. I had forgotten the Lorca play and

had never seen it staged, so I reread the text in anticipation of the production. Such an action prior to seeing also changes the shape of reception; I 'hear' the words echoing from my reading as I watch or hear in the theatre. I remember being curious about a dance performance that announced itself as an adaptation of a single play, wondering what the relation of the choreography to Lorca's text might be.

A festival like RomaEuropa that occurs every year during the autumn months in the same city attracts both regular theatre subscribers and those waiting for the 'international' season as well as tourists passing through. The Bausch had not been part of RomaEuropa as I might have expected, but instead had come to Rome following its premiere in Palermo. Tickets to *House of Bernard Alba*, however, a part of the RomaEuropa (and therefore more experimental) could also be purchased as part of the year-long Teatro Argentina subscription in which most of the offerings were more standard Italian theatre fare.

So there I sat, only a week or so after seeing the adoring Bausch fans in supplication from box to orchestra, sitting in the same theatre now transformed by the lack of buzz, reading the description of the work I was about to see. The program anticipated a work that would include music played on electric guitar influenced by Jimi Hendrix as well as an attention to the unspoken spoken not only of the written text danced, but of the spoken in signed text. Composer Helmut Oehring, the program narrated, grew up in a household with two deaf parents; in the choreography of the work he added two characters onstage to represent his deaf parents. As I read the mottled connections the program described, my heart sank while the signs of disinterest around me fed my misgivings as I waited for the

performance to begin.

Thinking back to that night, dwelling here again in the affective present Bergson posits, I consider how mistaken the festival organizer's choice to stage this production in the Argentina. At its finish, I sat stunned and then rose to applaud wildly among the desultory sound of indifferent applause. All the way home we talked of the brilliant performance we had just seen, of the work and how it surpassed in so many ways that of the Bausch; unfair as comparisons are, we were like friends of the losing team, fervent in our outrage and in our praise. Lorca is a master of longing, infused into his transvestite creation of women characters who articulate his own suppressed desires. On stage, Schlőmer played the grandmother, embodying himself a contemporary and visible representation of Lorca's crossdressed interpretations. He had choreographed a piece that crept up under my intrigued watching banishing any fear of the odd mix not working. I heard those distinctive, harsh-sweet, Hendrix-like riffs, and found it an incongruous and apt music for a population of women perpetually in mourning for the lives they may not have, have not had, will never have.

Dance both told and repressed the girls' story in *Alba*, appropriately articulating and disarticulating as the confusion of desire and the inevitability of maternal control grew. The dancers who danced the daughters, moved away and against the stern control of the mother. The mother was danced by a woman who could not have been more than three-foot tall. Dressed in a 19th-century Spanish habit of black widow's weeds, she had stepped, intentionally or not, out of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, this Swiss group invoking for a moment the baroque Spanish court for an Italian audience, and inevitably for me a

visual trigger to the memory of Foucault's dioramic essay at the opening of *The Order of Things*.

Like the slowly turning figure on the revolving mountain of a lute player in Les Ballets C de la B, so in this production one emblematic moment lives vivid in my memory, the affect and effect enduring. I watched in dread and wonder as a simple, visual movement, and not only visual since accompanied by the dissonance of the concentrated chaos in homage to Hendrix's style of guitar, broke open Lorca's story. The daughters from the first had danced their varying relations to the mother, some submissive, some reluctant, some rebellious; at some point she orders them to the back of the stage. They stand as if caught in a lineup in a police station, frozen, guilty. The mother raises her hand and rests it against the back wall, at first it is not clear what she holds, but then she begins to draw her hand along and as she does a white line forms. She is holding chalk. As she reaches the first of her daughters, one by one, the women all drop down under the line she is drawing at the height of her shoulder. They have to bend their bodies, contort their true physical length in order to fit under the mother's chalk rule. And as I watch the line implacably drawn catch and subdue each of the daughters the multiple inferences appear, at first the most obvious followed by the interpretations provoked beyond the obvious: I see a dance that infers the condition of stilted, misshapen, broken female bodies under patriarchal, Catholic, Franko fascist regime, and then the inference extends into associations of women caught under the regime of ballet/modern dance and its cadaverous customs, of girls still under the thumbs of disappointed women everywhere. As always the choice will be ours as spectators, to receive the piece as just a dance, meaning nothing or little, or to

let the possible connections reverberate in time to the amplified strings, shape changing, revealing new sounds in time and space.

Was this the moment that hooked me? Did I from then on follow dance like a convert? I cannot remember now exactly but the change in my habits as an itinerant spectator did indeed happen because I found myself admiring what dance could do. The shaping of spectatorial taste, as I began to learn with Mario Martone's programming of the first year of the Teatro India, depends upon collaboration with artistic directors and theatre managers as well the more acknowledged influence of the work of performers and the accumulation of experience in seeing different forms, different genres. A regular spectator for the RomaEuropa festival, I buy the *abonnamento*, the Italian word for a subscription, but a word that always pleases me in its echo of the English, abandonment, not the one you suffer at the loss of another, but the one you initiate by surrender to what is coming. So I abandon myself to a set of performances as I choose my list; for RomaEuropa, if I choose ten works inevitably three or four will be dance as Monique Veaute, the artistic director of the festival until 2007, created the narrative of her festivals, now continued by her successors, from the international companies bringing dance theatre, contemporary dance and all the dances in between.

What is it I think now that dance can do? And is it dance or is it the companies who move in the ample and suggestive space between the forms of art employed in dance such as performance, music and sport? I return to the moment in *Lucie Cabrol* when it seemed to me that I began to profit from a form of watching like an echo or reverberation. A performance delay that rather

than producing disconnection or extraneous noise became for me a line tossed out for my imagination to grab and then be hauled into another space, of recognition but a recognition only possible in a collaboration often threefold: a moment of confusion, the dawning clarification, the interpretation(s). Words can do it too. But the writer must know how to obfuscate what we think we know in order to produce delay or be able to create a story whose arc includes the delay of surprise.

On stage with *Lucie Cabrol* it came in the contortion of several of the performers' bodies, as the actor playing Lucie occupied herself strangely, seeming to pick nits off their arms and backs and legs. I watched, confused, waiting for some sign or word of clarification, then she swung her imaginary bucket and moved to the next body and I thought, perhaps just in the moment in which the actors themselves revealed it in words, blueberries. It could easily sound like an obvious LeCoq exercise, make yourself a blueberry bush for your partner to cultivate, and for those who knew Complicite's work for years no doubt it might have looked like one. But for me this memory articulates the awakening of another form of translation—not unlike the one I have considered earlier about language and the varieties of watching, hearing and making meaning across tongues or space and the collaboration of spectator, container and meaning—a translation of physical energy into the temporal accumulation of meaning. Girls trapped under Catholic mothers and their priests, the implications then move out into a more reverberating form of revelation, the line thrown towards my imagination that can be grasped as I am pulled into interpretative reflections about matters more weighty and more current, matters existential and consequential beyond the 'subject' of the piece I am seeing.

Oddly I return to the early modern notion of the emblem to account in some sense for the form of memory I store and retrieve in these sound/image/action moments of performance. Or perhaps more precisely a 20th century version of the emblem multiplied and put into motion by Abby Warbug in his 'montage-collisions' of drawings of triumphal arches juxtaposed with a wheel of a chariot next to an apse with a round window under an architectural drawing of a simple doorway. You have to put them next to each other to see them, and then your eye moves, you move, the motion across forms—forms perhaps created centuries apart—animates what you know so that what you know encounters what you don't and

sits down for tea. When I saw the figure of the dancer on the stomach of the musician—I cannot even precisely remember whether she did more than make the incremental movements with her feet that kept her balanced as he turned himself in a circle —I remembered the folding feet on pointe of the little plastic dancer in the music box. I heard an impossibly high Asian opera-like tune, and I heard the staccato plunks of the little raised metal knobs hitting against the tips of metal fingers to play a faded and outmoded tune of an era of ballerinas.

Through the practice of spectating and in particular while at performances of dance, I learned to look for the line thrown out towards my imagination memory, to let the seemingly unrelated images, moves, sounds be set next to one another, to see what they would make. In a like manner, scholars of dance had released me from relying on the false security of the object of the play text, the object to be understood, when I had been trying to account for what performance could do in early modern theatre. Such a position of *flâneuring*, of the collaboration of allowing oneself to be found by an interesting doorway, began to affect my reception of any kind of performance; I no longer let the lead offered in performance dangle ungrasped—unless I consciously dropped the line because the force of the tug was weak or too jerky to provide the steady pull into revelation and reverie. The motion of the collaboration I describe does not have to be initiated only by wild energy in choreography, rather the 'still-act' that Nadia Seremetakis describes in her work of a "reflexive anthropology of the senses" can offer this line in an exquisite tension as it pulls taunt over time, a pressure consistent and promising, that makes us change our own time in our seats to accommodate

how what is being made is coming to us and being returned.

Thinking of lines thrown out I am reminded of deliberate lines made on stage in 'Paper Doll' a work by Padmini Chettur juxtaposed in my mind against the chalk discipline of *Bernarda Alba*. The heat and extroverted power of repressed and suppressed female bodies corralled by Lorca's evocation of confinement shapes the energy of frustration in contrast to another group of women, also in line, who make the most minute gestures and small actions of motion across the space often connected one to another by the hand. In *Bernarda Alba* the women hit up against each other like dodge'em cars, the angles sharp and cutting, in 'Paper Doll' connection and contact progress minutely: the hand of a dancer against the cheek, the head bent to the side and then slowly rotating in the hand so that the head comes to rest on the palm, an action happening over and over again in a defining of the space inch by inch, the bodies barely moving. The confinement here is shared by watcher and makers alike; we have to learn again how to go slow. The work uses repeated gestures made excruciatingly slowly like the silences William Forsythe describes in his Company's work Forehand, silences that "were designed to make the audience aware of their collective attention." The sound, some kind of metal scraping against metal, filling the smallish auditorium used for dance performances at the Parco della Musica in Rome inevitably invokes Cage as the dance inevitably awakens memories of Merce Cunningham's precise minimal choreography.

Who knows whether my associations match those of the choreographer and dancers? What is clear from the disquiet around me as we watch is that the Italian audience expected

something else from this 'Indian' choreographer and her 'Indian' dancers. People leave; the line thrown out and pulled taunt slowly, slowly, the pressure almost indiscernible might be one of the most difficult for a spectator to accept, to have the patience or trust to wait. On previous nights I had seen two other works of dance in this dance festival Equilibrio, both banal and relentlessly obvious. Watching Chettur's dancers, I remember having the spectatorial experience of resting, undoing one of my habits of watching in its need to be stimulated, exercising another that found the 'still-acts' about women, about community and separation, about the danger of the one-dimensional and flimsy in a world of scissors and rocks slowly accumulating.

Among those refusing the line, I surmised later when I eavesdropped on conversations around me after the performance, were many who had expected a dance resembling the cheery exports of the most commercial Bollywood genre: bhangra made in time to catchy, loopy music, beautiful South

Asian women in sparkles, silk and ankle bracelets made of bells. What a moment of 'montage-collision' then when the group of women already on stage when we entered begin to sketch the slightest movement with their elbows, or stand transfixed moving a foot forward and to the side again and again, dressed in simple white shifts and accompanied by metallic echoing coming from the speakers. Had the dancers' intent been to awaken us to the shallowly buried national assumptions made by the most shallow of encounters in a moment of film caught on television—a section of a traveling Bollywood extravaganza, the incorporation in British contemporary film of the contact between Asian and Anglo-Saxon cultures of soccer and dancing —it would have done its work within the first ten minutes. My own instinct and my participation in accepting the offer of the recognition of the still told me that this was a group doing its aesthetic work, a work having political and cultural effects, but one focused on concentration and precision in craft.

The program notes I read, translating from the Italian, itself probably a translation of Chettur's speaking, seem to confirm this intent as she is quoted describing the dance in its evocation of the "line of paper dolls like those we played with as children taking life in front of us…they represent a perfection but one that is two-dimensional in a form that can be torn easily, the figures can be separated, fragmented…the dancers are perennially suspended in tension between closeness and distance… each dancer makes her own moves in isolation but the moves affect those near her." In an odd addition transforming momentarily the program note into the intimacy of the epistolary, the choreographer adds her cautionary P.S. "For every concept I want to express, I choose the language of dance. I hope this text does not project a significance

where none exists. Instead the significance is created in an almost casual way inside the dance itself." Indeed if the music animates memories of Cage then the choreographer's insistence on the casual may be in homage to Cage and Cunningham's dedication to the random and to chance. Thus in a visually direct way the lines thrown out to me in these moments of performance become the hands joined to make closeness and distance in a line of paper dolls, as Chettur reminds me the offer of such collaboration between spectator and performer can be remarkably casual and entered into as a flexible contract. Or as seemed to be true for many in the audience, the tension of possible revelation was never on offer, blocked by lack of interest or by expectations of another kind of encounter entirely.

When I began writing about performances in Europe, I remember too well my own expectations of a categorical nature. Armed with a project and the funding for it, I watched for hints about the nature of a 'new Europe' performed for and to its conjoined citizens in member states and states awaiting member state status. Instead my encounters at festivals, watching performances in many different countries in Europe, in the UK have always been inflected by moments implying a representation of nation sometimes erupting violently or as often seeping through the production implying nation but rarely becoming the set contours of a delineated border. Ironically what remains is not categorical, but the category itself, a pile of ideas, movements, sounds, traditions organized in a specific corner called France or Italy or Europe. So my supposition that many in the audience for Chettur became restive and finally impatient because their expectations of an offering from an Indian choreographer were not met remains a form of spectatorial intuition, a trained

guessing based on years of seeing performances in mixed national company.

Another early moment in my experience of watching a mixed national company amidst an audience of mixed national company comes back to me, juxtaposing itself again like a Warburg visual project on memory and association to the written lines about choreographically shaped lines you have been reading. This moment in performance had more to do with my entrance into a space of willing spectator, or more precisely my reluctance and resistance to it, and fear. At the time I was teaching in a villa owned by the University of Michigan outside Florence. I remember that night I went out into Florence, a trip of about 20 kilometers though depending on the increasing traffic from suburb to centre a trip that could take up to 45 minutes or as little as 15. On the west side of the city in an abandoned train station the dance company Fura del Baus were performing in a festival with the suggestive title, FabbricaEuropa, meaning Europe made up, fabricated or even the factory of Europe. I had yet at this point to move from the academic tenure-track trajectory of critic to the trackless independent scholar with the desire to make performance, had yet to know the pull of the concentration for days on end I explored with performers not knowing what would come of the physical work, the textual explorations into sound. I watched as my companion entered the cavernous space of playing for the performance of Fura del Baus and immediately moved forward toward the action while I hung back and assessed the space for a place to stand. Only a few minutes into the piece the nature of interaction between performers and audience had become clear: as the dancers wheeled the tower of Babel through the

vast, abandoned space, we had to cede our bit of the floor or be caught under the wheels of the machine of the multilingual. While playing with language, comprehension and bafflement, the performers also seemed to commit acts of violence on their bodies and, at least potentially, menaced any bodies in the way. Flour was thrown, water dumped, whips cracked.

I remember being frightened, it seems so odd to me now these many years on, but I remember my primary concern was not to find myself in a space where I would be a) visible as an entity picked out by the performers and therefore suddenly made visible as well to the audience, and b) required to interact with the performers spontaneously. As a teacher I improvise all the time, I did then, I do now; but at that time I had yet to experience the freedom of caring more about the potential of what might happen in a moment of encounter than about my inability to overcome my shyness at the idea of an uncontrolled, unscripted interaction. So I scanned the room and with a cunning born of desperation realized that the huge speakers necessary for the noise Fura del Baus were making demarcated spaces where the company certainly would not be dumping water or hurling flour, the economy of replacement would not allow the nightly ruin of equipment as it might were they rock stars in a stadium of thousands.

I am struck again thinking about my instincts that night of the ways our own habits of self presentation and self protection figure in spectating. Can I sit quietly and without agitation during a durational performance that unfolds as if it were a casual encounter in a subway tunnel? Can I move around a space observing without needing to leave as soon as a lull occurs in the perceived action? These questions half formed

and always reforming accompany the spectator engaged in seeing different kinds of performances, under the banners of dance and live art, as the contracts, the lines thrown out by performers for the spectator's imagination to catch, the casual nod of possibility, "yes I might enter into this or yes I might see what you are beginning to make" pass back and forth, sometimes acknowledged in the moment, recognized later or consciously refused.

The confrontive nature of the Fura del Baus 'dance' performance in Florence reveals to me these many years later my own distrust then of my capacity to survive being visible in an encounter which generally I could experience hidden, if not in the dark, certainly not directly addressed by performers or incorporated into the movement. Again Rancière and his forms of emancipation for the spectator come to mind in the "capacity of the anonymous, the capacity that makes everyone equal to everybody." Rancière moves this idea of anonymity along by suggesting such a capacity, for freedom and for engaged interest, comes "through unpredictable and irreducible distances" (279). In my experience, a workable distance has nothing to do with the actual spatial configuration: one can be "too close" sitting at the back of a theatre and at a distance while standing beside the performers. But often confrontation as a mode of making performance stops at the self-satisfied point of seeming outrageous, a point that does not offer the kind of distance Rancière delineates as a space of anonymous freedom. In that Fura del Baus performance many years ago I had not yet learned a capacity for either the freedom of the anonymous (which fears neither being visible or invisible) or the pleasures of unpredictable distance.

Fura del Baus themselves cultivated an aura of being outrageous, a contemporary and in our age more deliberately market-savvy version of the rumors of experimental playing accompanying the tour of 'Il Living' in the 60s as the Living Theatre were known in Italy. I remember reading the day after my night in the ex-stazione Leopoldo in the Florence section of *La Repubblica* about the spectator who had been taken to the hospital having been injured at the performance. She exhibited the kind of appetite for experience that often makes seeing experimental theatre and performance in Italy a joy, telling the reporter that her injury did not matter at all, it had been an astonishing experience to be at the production and she was content, if a little bruised. Working as I was then teaching a group of young students who had been trained by their culture to look for opportunities to find fault and prosecute someone for it, I wondered how 'the risk factor' in the US would be costed out by the insurance company of any theatre for a Fura del Baus piece.

What Fura had provoked in me those many years ago came back to me when I entered the entirely conventional vestibule of the Teatro Valle in Rome to see a piece by the Romanian director Silviu Purcarete about Rabelais. Though it had not been so many years since that night when I established my safe, if extremely loud, haven of giant speakers as a space from which to look without being involved, a combination of spending several years in Italy as an independent scholar and spectator and beginning to work again as both teacher and director meant that I had assumed my equal place in a performance space, comfortable with moving, waiting, watching, leaving and staying. I had an extra lilt in my step as

I walked into the foyer that night; I had seen Purcarete's *Titus Andronicus* in Stockholm years back. A performance always recurring in my memory from back to front because of the truly shocking experience at the end when, assuming the play was over—we had applauded wildly, people had bowed—I exited the double red doors only to find Aaron the Moor writhing on the floor, trapped in a huge fishing net, the one he had been captured in during the finale, the one that provoked memories of Iago suspended over the crowd in the opening and closing of Orson Welles's film *Macbeth*.

One might say Purcarete takes Brian Massumi's formulation of Bergsonian notions of space as a retrospective construction and places it, startlingly, in practice. The foyer after *Titus Andronicus* became in the surprise and discomfort of the outcast Moor, that non-heroic Shakespearean moor, the one who does not nobly die, a retrospectively constructed performance space; the boundaries of having left the theatre and the fiction unsettled and undone. For *Cousin Pantegreul* Purcarete introduced retrospective construction early on: I walked over the threshold, spied intriguing shapes in the usually empty space made for people holding drinks and programs, and moved immediately towards them. Cardboard boxes the size of those made for moving refrigerators and freezers were scattered about the foyer. When I reached the side of the first box, I saw several holes covered by colored plastic cellophane. The invitation was clear, 'look here'. No longer in need of a safe haven from which to watch others interact, I pressed my eye immediately, willingly, to the plastic. A hand holding a flashlight suddenly popped up and made me jump; I hit back at the cardboard box in turn and laughed.

I remember about five boxes, most set on their sides except for one suspended upright. In one I saw a body covered in floating bits of cauliflower, in another, various limbs, in another, a body floating in water and alongside it a mixture of sliced vegetables. The outside of the boxes were painted with designs from Bosch, Arcimbaldo, invoking Rabelsian times with the colors I did not even know until then I think of when I think of Rabelais, red, bright red, orange, and black. Just trying to tell the tale of what happened in this piece I mark the difference between what I think of as theatre, the extraordinary moments visual and aural of the kind of theatre I have seen since I began wandering as a spectator, and what friends, some colleagues and lots of students think of as theatre: a reproduction of domestic scenes of duets, trios and quartets speaking intensely or cynically or blithely to each other. Even the 'extreme' theatre of writers like Sarah Kane or the early work of Mark Ravenhill follows along an action, speech, dialogue trajectory. The mixed categories of European theatre, and here is a rare instance where I think the national term actually holds, complicate what can in the US and UK form the, often snobbish, assumptions contrasting those who only go to see 'performance' with those who go see 'theatre.'

Naturalism as a strategy continues to dominate UK theatre. Even experimental performance work in the UK often strikes an itinerant spectator as a deliberately casual form of naturalism, "it's not real we are going for but we won't pretend we are pretending either." Purcarete like many working on the 'Continent,' an outmoded phrase that oddly still obtains, tends to stage the pretend as a mode of transparent transformation of what we think we know, or what we know at the back of our watching minds, until the alchemy of the expressionist or

experimental or theatrical renders the knowing more clear and less formulaic simultaneously.

Walking through the mists of the alchemical spirit rising from those boxes in the foyer, I entered the next phase of reconfiguration and surprise in the main hall of the Teatro Valle that night. My dance with the boxes an inviting prelude, I took my seat anticipating a Purcarete style of physical performance, extraordinary stage pictures that did not make themselves in order to be admired but made and unmade themselves in a process of suggestion, tender care, frightening supplication, excess and precision. In an extension of the refusal to make a boundary out of the beginning no curtain hung over the stage, instead a pile of rubble, sand perhaps, perhaps corn, and a skull with a bone next to it on the edge of the stage. As I sat about midway back in the orchestra, the space contracted and extended according to the desire of the players, aided by a curious attentiveness from that audience awakened by the preliminary play in the foyer. At the very back of the stage there was a table with a large number of actors sitting, their backs towards us. We waited, some people chatted, some people made that noise so perverse and oddly satisfying in a setting where the performers or the nature of the opening of the production clearly breaks the usual conventions of spectator to stage: despite clear signals contrasting the opening to a traditional piece of theatre, many of the spectators 'shush' their neighbors, compulsively working to produce the proper behavior accorded a body on the stage in a performance space, despite the confusion about whether a 'play has started.' Five actors join those already at table; retrospectively I realize these are the bodies from the boxes, dried off and ready to perform.

The Valle eschews the usual opening announcement, "Signore, signori inizio lo spettacolo, vi preghiamo spegnare i cellulari," nothing but a loud bang on the table then rhythmic slaps like drumming. A ritual sound, a ritual site, bodies joined together at a table for a meal. I think about the heft of Rabelais, the thickness of the book itself, the giganticness of the character, from when I first felt I had to read him in order to understand Bakhtin's welcome theory of the carnivalesque. In this performance, Purcarete and company seem to release this mythic figure out of the implied words, sounds and sights—graphic Rabelais. Called away from the table by a bird trill or a cricket's music, some kind of delicate signal, the players move toward the mound of rubble, where a wee bush sprouts: they discover the skull, the bone and then suddenly a foot, attached to a body, the revelation has begun.

They unearth a skinny, ordinary looking young man who seems befuddled. Most of the actors/performers have eccentric, arresting faces, anything but ordinary. Throughout the performance, the faces continue to astonish. In rest, as they are, they are amazing enough, varied, vibrant, and particular. In action and acting they become masks, transformed and transforming. The body—might he be a corpse we are made to wonder—is picked up, put on a table that with his weight transforms to something like a gurney. Then the entire cast—one holding a huge apparatus (later to become a huge funnel) like a hospital light over the body now draped in cloth—begins to watch as the two men in aprons, surgeons, cut into the body and extract a *morceau choisi*, a tiny little strip of an organ which they dip in sauce and eat, then they cut for the liver, a huge slimy piece of meat extracted.

While watching delighted I am reminded of the motif of anatomical fascinations painted on the side of the cardboard boxes, haunches, incisions, etc. And while hearing the traditional moan of half disgust, half intrigue at the pantomime of cannibalism, I think of the piece I wrote about a comic, indeed almost Rabelaisian 19th-century burlesque play where the cannibal pot figures centrally both in its usual discomfort/attraction towards a cultural other and in its theatrical place as desired communal meal. Here with Purcarete I am seeing the mimed display of the all too articulated feast that forms the vengeance of Titus. The idea of cannibalism tested in performance, what I can not resist thinking of as dinner theatre, has a tradition long enough and frequent enough to give the lie to the taboo or at least to suggest that the 'idea' of dining on one another is appealing enough to play with in an experimental space of representation.

In *Cousin Pantegruel* the extraction of parts works by having all the cast move up around the body and lift the sheet after the sawing to reveal another bit come out. Bodies huddling around something out of view in order to then stand back and reveal may seem an antiquated form of theatrical play and pretending, but I note my own position as I lean forward. My spectatorial desire metaphorically pushing the bodies aside to see what, simultaneously, I do and don't want to see. Especially when the big saw is used on the head (during this violent slicing, we see the feet and legs shake in the air) and a cauliflower like shape appears on a plate that an actor begins to eat with a fork. Like Rabelais's recurring trope of outsizedness, an exaggeration that cannibal-like feeds on itself, so now on stage a body anatomized produces more than human parts. The bits extracted begin to

resemble the miraculous and abundant, first a saxophone, a recurring instrument for the rest of the performance. Next come a cellist and a cello impossibly folded up onto a chair to be lifted high out of the body cavity, then a violinist with a violin. When put down onto the stage both musicians begin to play. All creation comes from illusion/all illusion comes from creation. The actions are a demonstration of invention.

As I think about it now I realize the work had a score, not only a musical one, but a performing score, each section a component of the fugue the work created in its revelation by building. For all of Rabelais' excess, the fugue, while such a controlled and 18th-century notion of composition, seems apt because the excess works by precise repetition, the mess a mess recycled and reinvented into the next passage by the performers. Though all the actors have dynamic presence, two of the older men particularly dominate. One dresses up in half transvestite wear, a loopy hat with flowers, a huge white gown, a cap under the hat that looks like the 17th century depictions of men on their way to bed. Sat at the end of a long table, this figure begins to eat. Having a spectator's need to connect the name of the piece to what I am seeing, I wonder if this is the cousin of the title. As I ponder who he might be, the performers begin a passage, an unforgettable one.

The dancer on the mountain of lute player, the women dropping under the chalk line of their minuscule, monstrous mother, recur in memory alongside another line thrown out towards me, another line made on stage before me. Susan Stewart might identify my fascination with these instances as that pull of desire longing makes in the narratives of the miniature and the gigantic. I know well that longing propels the

flâneur and the spectator, the siren call of the threshold keening at a pitch that draws the body beginning to cross. So I pitched forward in my seat to watch as under the table actors hold two long strips of muslin that look to be about one foot and a half wide, the same two strips of muslin also make runners across the table top. I look at those pieces of cloth, a moment of hesitation where in stillness they look merely like decoration, no hint of what they are doing there—I am in the blissfully suspended state of patient expectation. I know better by now than to rush revelation, instead I can savor the satisfaction that comes from a practitioner's ability to delay my recognition. So I participate in the dilation of performed time by paying particular attention to two muslin strips on a table before me.

Then the movement begins, an ingenuous simplicity: an actor steps onto the muslin strip, makes a noise, and the actors under the table begin to pull. When the strips move, the actor who holds a bucket, moves the length of the table. As each actor reaches the gorging character seated at the head of the table, he or she gives a yelp signaling the actors under the table to stop pulling on the strip. A humanly made machine, no source of power beyond hands and feet, truly magical to watch. Why, I wonder now, why is the scale of the humanly made so attached to revelation for me? Am I as before imagining not my dancing body in this case, but my performing body doing what I see before me? Have the technologically made tricks been rendered banal as they have multiplied on stage leaving the physically made to seem the new invented wonder? Could this be one reason for the popularity, nay the employable category, of 'physical theatre' over the last decade? Meanwhile the stakes rise as the actors upend their buckets into the funnel affixed to

the mouth of the character in white. Each new influx of liquid is greeted with the sound of air pumping as the belly swells under the white gown. When he is almost too large to move, he gets up and begins to dance.

Purcarete's performers punctuate all manner of their play by singing. In one scene, two particularly gifted singers harmonize while with their hands they transform the notes of the song into filaments that they pull out of their mouths and extend into the air, manifesting waves of sound constantly present and constantly hidden. In another movement of this Rabelaisian fugue, the actors employ two goblets and a long plank of wood: two women sing with the plank held in their teeth, they circle around and so does the plank upon which the two goblets balance. Four other planks work like controlled seesaws in the background as the actors add, to the beat of an inaudible but absolute measure, more glasses to the plank suspended between the women. In order to place these glasses, the actors move themselves up the suspended planks and begin to slide down the other side. Actors behind them lift the plank from the ground, momentarily arresting the motion of the seesaw so the suspended actor can place another glass on the rotating, singing wood. When there are perhaps 12 glasses, the plank is set on the head of the actor who heretofore has crouched under the plank at its center twirling the wood on top of his tongue even as the two women keep the ends in their teeth. Now he balances the plank on top of his bald head while the actors tune their glasses and then play a tune, familiar to us since we heard it earlier in the performance, on this glass harmonica precisely constructed in time and out of physical movement.

Completing the symmetry of play before, during and in

the finale, Purcarete returns at the end of the performance, Rabelais-like, to a finale of the stomach. An actor beats his sticks and the others take their cue to prepare. The four table tops are placed at the front of the stage, one actor has a huge baker's scoop full of flour and a pitcher of water. The sight and the sound of excess, mounds and mounds of flour begin to be kneaded into dough, the 'bakers' call for flour or water according to need. We watch the quotidian, seemingly non-theatrical process of bread making while music sounds. Action begins to build behind the bread maker, the actor—whose body produced the saxophone, the musicians, all the wonders before us in the beginning of the piece—is stripped and laid upon the table. The bread maker spreads the dough, now kneaded and rolled out into huge circles upon the naked body of the actor. It's dinnertime again. The company pushes the man encroute into the huge red light of a baking oven offstage.

On our way into the play, next to the last box filled with water, vegetables and a body, I remember seeing a man in a Homburg, a black overcoat and a white scarf and dark glasses. I noted him. Though it was not impossible that this was an eccentric Italian playgoer, in that way that intent is communicated without words, I had a sense he was part of the show. He returns, appearing in the main aisle of the theatre, walks up the stairs and sits down by a huge figure made of bread in the shape of a man. He begins to eat, he throws some bread over his shoulder to the hoard of actors behind him, the act of an aristocrat to his retainers. His presence is menacing and absolute and the performance ends.

I find myself here on a rise over the landscape of dance and physical performance, the path plotted unexpectedly ending

in a theatre, with a piece not categorized under dance and yet using the body as an instrument of making, telling, doing and alluding. Even as I move across the landscape molded out of the practice of spectating, topography created from forms of post-performance reflection that might be considered the reverse of performance rehearsals, I marvel at how often where I thought I might travel, the shapes of the hills and the rolling of the earth beneath my remembering feet, dissolves in the moment of arriving at coordinates plotted by spectatorial attention rather than categories of media or genre. The line grows taunt, I wander on as I remember backwards, making the 'still-act' or fomenting 'temporal insurgency', one phrase Serematikis', the other Moten's, both radicals who insist upon the sensual nature of understanding what has been experienced, what has been sounded, what has been seen, what has been missed and must be lingered over, again and again, at the threshold.

‖ States

The stage is dark, the entirely sold-out auditorium stilled. Then a single voice, later I identify her as one of the dancers, crosses the auditorium coming not from the speakers to the side of the stage, but instead from somewhere behind us near the soundboard at the back; the voice produces a bluesy, rich sound. Singing a surprising and unmusical, unlyrical word: security. The concept, the sound of the word sung, the constriction and the freedom in its promise will recur in repetition and difference again and again during the performance.

In the right corner of the stage, lights come up; I see a man leaning on a frame that makes a doorway, astride a threshold and comfortable in the liminal space. He wears a white tank top and black pants, the surprise about his appearance since he inhabits that unmistakable body of a dancer, comes from the red glow at the corner of his mouth, a cigarette. He begins to move. Then he begins to talk, "I know what you are thinking (pause) I should cut down;" the audience laughs, some in time with his voice others after a pause to read the French translations appearing on the screen to his left. His voice bears a certain authority; even if you are familiar with hearing him talk/

dance, the rich 'join me in this people' invitation of his tone only ignites in the immediate, out of the present sound and time, so you have to hear it again in order to awaken the aural memory. He blows smoke, always a surprisingly effective stage device no matter how familiar, into the air above his head, "with God's help, I will cut down."

I remember the stage design for Bill T. Jones' *Blind Date* as a succession of boxes, the framing of the doorway echoed throughout, frames as thresholds, frames as confinement. Rectangles appeared on the floor of the stage in different sizes, the edges marked in yellow tape. Some boxes were placed perpendicular to us, some horizontal. The doorway where Bill entered formed an upright frame in the right corner. Two long rectangles at the back became screens as did one other small square. On one screen, after Jones' smoky confession and throughout the performance, faces appeared, never identified, varying in the marks of color and ethnicity. As I reconstruct the evening now, I assume this absence of identifying information was deliberate. I remember how gradually these incessantly moving images accumulated meaning in direct relation to how the piece danced out the pitiless arbitrariness of violence, confusion and loss.

Motion is shared by the bodies and the screens. What is on the screens moves and the screens themselves move up and down. The screens also contain, are a repository for, words, as well as the translation of spoken words into French. They project a cacophony of visual noise, a noise integral to the interaction between the physically made moves of the dancers and music and the technologically produced accompaniment, the technologically produced assaults.

As I watched I began to see how intricately the piece combines the contained and the moving, the passing back and forth of these states themselves forming what Massumi conjures as a "back-formation of a path…not only a 'retrospection'… [but]a 'retroduction': a production, by feedback of new movements." *Blind Date* played with feedback of every kind, of sound bending back on itself, the bodies of the dancers themselves passing from motion to rest and back again created Massumi's "dynamic unity…retrospectively captured and qualitatively converted"(10). My spectatorial participation also creates necessary feedback: as if I were the amplifier the electric guitar approaches, my attention bounces back in reverberation, a connection maintained by the recognition of seeing retrospectively these patterns in motion, states of movement and stillness. My electrified senses respond in time to the collaboration of the motion and stillness, a sense of being prepared, not unlike a piano in love with John Cage, to be employed in the work of spectating.

The changing and re-forming of the containers constructed on stage played a part in the promise/threat of security, of the constriction and the freedom. I myself was profoundly moved, another form of motion in performance that occurs at the level of sensation in the spectator and can be signaled, in my experience, through various signs: a body pitched forward in concentrated attention; the hand unconsciously placed on the breast in a sympathetic gesture of compassion or overwhelm; the escaping of the air of a gasp or sigh, not the huge one as when someone triple somersaults on their way to the ground from the trapeze, but the smaller one almost unconsciously produced as a punctuation to what is being received sensually.

While caught up entirely in the commentary *Blind Date* makes on the world as I was experiencing it—am still experiencing it—oddly, I also found myself during and then after the piece periodically thinking of seventeenth-century culture, of my supposition that the period sees something I have written of as 'the rise of the container': containers such as the museum, the encyclopedia, the dictionary, the cabinet for curiosities in early modern performance culture. Though the sophistication of containment between then and now has received its own theoretical exploration in critical work, what frequently strikes me, as it did that night, is how in many mixed-media contemporary works of performance the makers create a similar tension not unlike that of early modern performances: through a strategy where the creator first contains, demonstrating to us the audience the conditions of contained and container, and then deploys the aesthetic power of designing the manner, duration and display of release.

That evening I remember being surprised by an aspect of performance I had not previously thought of as a container, costume. I did so not because of its self-evident use but because it displayed an unexpected covering where previously there had been none. In *Blind Date* Bill T. Jones wore a suit for most of the performance. Throughout the course of his choreography with Arnie Zane and then after Zane's death as Jones continued to choreograph for the Company, he famously placed his tall and muscular body front and center. In interviews, he had insisted on the deliberate manner in which he wanted to provoke an audience's response to his nakedness, his blackness in order to disturb ideas about spectating and sexual excitement, about the visual reception of race, about sexual identity and orientation.

In *Blind Date* in this suit his body now appears deliberately contained. When I think about this I am even more puzzled about why this particular suit should strike me as working more like containment than, say, the tuxedo Jones wears in the famous stills taken from *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I am mindful of the ever-present contradictions that nakedness too can be deployed as a container or the release of one. Perhaps in the case of the tuxedo, the dress suit for some reason seems a costume container more apt to the mode of dancing then a grey business suit.

The power of this kind of containment, one that in its deployment changes the contours of the dancer's body, comes back to me now as I puzzle over the shifting power of the suit because an even more recent memory of Jones dancing happened several months after the *Blind Date* performance. In an extraordinary setting, surrounded by the antique sculpture in the corridor at the Louvre that ends in the rotunda housing Michelangelo's Slaves, Jones danced bare-chested, in bright and beautiful pants designed, I learned from the program, by the famous fashion designer Mizrahi. In that solo too—one commissioned by Anselm Keifer for the Louvre's newly instituted annual season of artists commissioning works by fellow artists in different media to be made at the Louvre—it comes back to me how costume functioned. We, the 100 or so of us swift enough (or in the know, I having been alerted by Bjorn, Bill's partner, on the March night we saw *Blind Date* that this event would take place in November and that tickets would sell out immediately) to have gotten tickets early to the event, sat on cushions arranged on the enormous marble stairway going down to the floor where the corridor began.

I sat gazing down that extraordinary corridor where statues line the hall whose end is the rotunda of sculpted representations of constriction. Only barely could I see at this distance in the center of the round hall a statue lit from behind whose shape I conjured from memory because Michelangelo's Slave remained too far away from us to be truly visible. My friend who sat beside me, a curator at the Louvre, told me that the positioning of audience for the dance in relation to the sculptures had been intensely contested among the curators of the Louvre and those creating this event. I knew my friend's own distrust of the Louvre's push toward trendy marketing and commercializing at the expense often of its research, education and preservation responsibilities. The same friend had sat rapt at *Blind Date* months before, but I suspect had it not been for my insistence, he might have chosen not to see this intervention in the hall of marble.

Strange as it was to sit on cushions in the formidable marble staircases at the Louvre, I found it not strange at all to hear a voice behind me, this time Bill T. Jones' own voice, singing, 'Buddy Can you Spare a Dime.' Costume, that night, at least that of his entrance down those stairs, flashed stereotype: a sweatshirt with the hood up, the sign of the media moment of hooligan, the expectation, often the deliberate suggestion that the face under the hood would be dark, even though in many countries the threatening 'hoodie' can just as easily be white. As Jones walked slowly down the stairs, through the audience, singing, he infiltrated the museum, the hall, the grandeur. Had I been close enough, no doubt it would have been instantaneously clear that the sweatshirt was far too luxurious, far too beautifully made to communicate the easy menace of the hidden threat, but

the song and the hood up over his head made it clear, here was a vagabond, a thief in the house of culture. Again, not unlike Mizrahi, no one can mistake Jones for someone who raids culture from the position of an outsider; an African-American gay man, an artist of the visible and the invisible who speaks of his love of Proust and whose partner is a sculptor and visual artist of complex set designs is no stranger to this house. But the commission came in the time of the anniversary of abolition, and the opening created an ambivalence in a dance that would take him toward the marble evocation of constriction and binding, that would allow him to freely move in its shadow. Through the container of the hood and the shedding of the container came the revelation of the extraordinary dancing black body beneath, the dancing black body now in his mid-50s.

Remembering these two events backwards and intermixed, I recognize the suit Jones wore for *Blind Date* the previous winter clearly did not mark a covering for a dancing body because it is an aging body in need of covering. Rather the suit must have conveyed its use as container, one marking a territory of professional demand and interrogation. In his suit Jones danced with a middle-aged African-American man in another form of professional container, fatigues. I remember how the two danced an awkward, marine-barracks ballet rolling over and over, precise and choreographed to look like a boxy physical match. “We begin again” appeared on the screen, in French, as the two men spoke the words of a dialogue that would repeat three times. Thus I come to expect a return—as all repetition creates out of the first instance of its repeating such expectation—a pause in the action, a gathering of breath and a willingness to do it again, to interrogate again, a reflection provoked by the

questions *Blind Date* poses about patriotism, loyalty, confusion. Repetition too depends on the turn of stillness and motion or in Massumi's words a 'retroduction.' The oscillation between states initiates a moment when the energy on stage drops down into quiet in order for the point of beginning to be initiated again, to be adjusted, a moment markedly different from the first one of introduction, a moment starting again from a vantage point of recognition.

According to the program notes, the piece explores the 'moment we are living in now,' a moment the piece represents as one where we cannot make a distinction—that curious and necessary act of separating one idea/object/kind from another that can be full of enmity and prejudice or full of care and recognition—between 'a time of peace from a time of war.' Even reading these program notes after time has passed I find it is still 'now,' the now the piece addressed, the one where it is difficult to distinguish between a time of peace and a time of war, not yet expired. The notes and the production show us our moment as one in which we lack the transition between the urgent crisis to be dealt with urgently and with extraordinary energy and the moment in which we can let down our guard.

While the textual summation of the purpose of the piece seems apt and relevant, a state of exception such as Giorgio Agamben defines this prolonged one we are in at present does not necessarily demonstrate the consequences of emergency measures deployed despite the confusion to those currently inhabiting it. Thus this undiagnosed anxiety in the air or a queasy sense of living in a place where the rules have changed: not even rules I myself might have fashioned from my politics and certainly not ones I have naively relied on political leaders to

keep to, but surely ones that at the very base kept the operations between a voting public and its governors subject to ratification. In years when the word 'terror' covers a multitude of avarice-driven actions, the word 'security' allows for monies to be distributed away from the care of the everyday, away from the service of caring for the potential of a new generation of citizens.

As I describe it, this is a polemic familiar to those of us frustrated by the governmental manipulations of the 'war on terror' and Ann Pellegrini's crucial intervention reminding us that this usage means it is a war 'on a feeling' brings into sharp relief the actions and strategies possible when employing the terminology. Even as the language of 'war on terror' recedes from the current US administration, the durable restrictions on personal freedoms resist dismantling, remain in place for the unaware citizen to trip over and fall into detentions financial, political and territorial.

On stage the evocation of this queasiness, the revelation of an anxiety founded in the real intuition of the citizenry but unformulated because it wields more power as a miasma comes in a surprising shape. A shape, a mask, a confinement that visually hints at what in the culture has made it possible for us to arrive here now: *Blind Date* makes me see, makes me sense how the language of advantage and opportunity covers over the cynical reality of a maligned civic space. Donald Shorter, a young African-American dancer appears in a spotlight, dancing in one of the yellow boxes. He wears an outlandish, oversized, yellow plastic head of a duck. As he speaks and moves, he describes how he was recruited to be the corporeal advertisement for a fast food chain, Duck Burgers. His dancing turns cheerful in a deliberately 'entertain the folks way' as he describes his

employment, his enviable employment as the dancing duck. The language he uses sounds like the language of triumph, of getting the desired job, the good job.

I watch him; he seems unconscious of how he cannot move out of that little box of yellow on the floor, but the pressure I feel while I am watching, my participation as a spectator means that I find the confines stark and constricting. I hear him against a backdrop of references to loss and violence that recur in various forms on stage in text, picture and spoken word. I begin to make the partially buried connections: duck and cover, sitting duck, streams of 'disadvantaged' bodies, dark, light, white, whose choices for a future bounce between wearing a stupid duck costume and becoming fodder for cannons as Falstaff names them. The language creepily invokes the international language of personal success in its cynical optimism: words like opportunity, chances to better oneself, all the stepping stones to 'getting up and out.' Meanwhile the screen shows a collision of images of a woman's huge exposed breasts advertising burgers, burgers, burgers. As I think of this image now I can almost taste with revulsion the suggestion Michael Pollan makes in his book about contemporary food production and supply that biting into a fast-food joint burger is like biting into a sandwich of pure petroleum; ironically it occurs to me that those enhanced breasts too exist as a product of petroleum.

I remember clearly how that body dancing remained in the box. The movement rendered the exposed body, the moving bit under the still and absurd yellow head of the duck vulnerable and doomed to be used and replaced. The sense of a whole stratum of society being sitting ducks also exposes what James Baldwin brilliantly anatomized in his essays as the costly

naiveté of American society, the proclivity to repeat the ingénue stage endlessly: to be always surprised by racism, by classism, by sexism, by injustice. This habit of surprise Jones' choreography reminds us has been quite literally fatal in these last years; while we pause in surprise—this cannot be happening—warmongers of every stripe, corporate, military, religious, move forward and strip the next city, the next village, the next country.

But Jones suggests his work is also interrogating a more complicated desire, the longing to serve, the desire to protect (so security resurfaces again and again in the piece as a desired state of being safe and a state of exception imposed). This made *Blind Date* for me as I sat in an auditorium away from home, away from the US, an uncannily accurate rendering of the inner state of confusion, frustration, exhaustion and rededication that is the cyclical response to the current political condition in the several countries I inhabit. I gathered the resonances in my own response as I watched the complex movement, the accumulation of expected images of horror, the determined demonstration of the numbers killed in the roll call of crises—natural and human made—that is the last twenty years of history and more, and the reiteration of the sight of dancers themselves, individually and in groups, vulnerable and protected.

I am mindful here as I begin to tell of an extraordinary moment on stage, another extraordinary moment on stage, of how these pages chronicle the mutability of the place of spectator, of my place as remembering spectator. The first analogy that comes to mind is a cabinet of curiosities and my own role as mad collector desperate to make sure you see all the most important pieces, see how they work, let them unfold in front of you as best as I can encourage them to do so. But

while the impulses of the collector are surely at work in the spectatorial passion for reporting and in remembering, another analogy, messier, sillier but somehow equally apt comes to my mind. Imagine these stories as a volleyball, bear with me here: if we are playing together, then each of us has to attend to the entire arc of the movement of the ball towards us. When it arrives, the task is to touch it, influence its trajectory and send it back into the air. At no point can you just take hold of it and keep it. Less elegant than Benjamin's weathered threshold which obtains here too, the volleyball game hints at the mix of solitary wandering and perceiving that then must be put into motion, into a communication of what has been experienced in those corners, or what has been carried away to be remembered out of the particularities of a 'touch of a single tile.'

Coincidentally, the moment I was about to recount, I am about to recount, stems from something that at first looks like a game of solitary and communal as well. All the dancers are on stage, individually or in groups of one or two or three; they move in those duets or trios and a few solos. They are singing, acapella, the US national anthem; some voices sound professionally trained, others make the reedy sound produced inevitably when trying to hit the keening notes of 'rockets red glare.' Suddenly we hear a voice say "me" and see the body of the dancer start to fall. Bodies rush toward the body falling; they catch it, cradle it and gently lay it down. The dancing continues, someone else says "me," the action recurs. The hesitation at the top of the fall gives members of the company a bit of time to get to the body, a mini-ballet of a moment of stillness played in collaboration with the rush of the motion of the bodies running towards the now falling body, a moment that will end

in injury and pain if the body cannot be caught. Then more than one of the bodies sounds “me” and the anxiety of the watching audience rises. Will they make it on time? What if the fallers

outnumber the catchers? The running towards the falling body visibly tires the dancers; can they keep it up? Can they sustain protecting each other from the fall?

Such a simple movement; in fact a clichéd one if we think of how many acting classes begin with the ‘trust’ exercise. But in Jones’ choreography the exercise for trust becomes a lesson of sensual apprehension about vulnerability, loss and community. About the limits of protection and the transition from independent to dependent, and the recognition that though the culture suggests we can control that transition, or be done with it only once, we cannot. To show a transition, to offer the audience that line to grasp in order to experience and remember these moments, the choreographer employs this repetition, a repetition that using Andre Lepecki’s formulation “creates a

form of standing still that has nothing of the immobile." An apt definition of a chosen fidelity, a standing still, a standing for something that has nothing of the immobile, the unthinking, the uninterrogtaed. What would it mean to understand this kind of exercised citizenship?

Patriotism, fidelity is enacted under the sign of care and communal support, but the anxiety made by the motion in the spectator and represented in the falling on stage leaves the negotiations between responsibility and injury complex. Who do you go to catch if three dancers say 'me' all at once? What if you loose breath, don't make it, what if no one catches you? These simplest of questions physically mark out the territory of the time we live in; this time when states of peace and war cannot be distinguished. When the number of casualties from something that is not war, New Orleans after Katrina say, and the evidence of the neglect that makes for the worn battlefields many people live in daily contends with the bodies in a market in Baghdad; the echoing sound of 'me' asks of all of us who we go to catch, who can we go to catch, who will catch us. Through the interplay of states of fixity and movement, of sculptural interventions (that duck's head is echoed by Amelan's haunting ducklike sculpture made of rusted and worn iron wheeled through the dancing space by Jones) and feverishly moving bodies, *Blind Date* refuses the reductive conclusions that pass for discourse in contemporary reports of war and peace. And the staging, the dancing of transition between the comforts of resting and the necessity of action as well as the confusion when it is unclear what to do next, unclear how to do next, recreates out of stillness and motion a complexity we can fall back into, saying me, saying us, hoping to be caught, hoping to know when

and how to run towards the falling.

Thinking of this balance of community, sustenance and responsibility brought to mind the space I passed through in order to get to *Blind Date* that night. This dance performance deliberately juxtaposing the commercial to the everyday, the wages of capital and consumer, to the consequences of war and protection, appeared in an 'arts center' on the periphery of Paris. Upon exiting the metro I walked, confused and worried I would be late, through an enormous shopping mall, named more precisely in both French and Italian with the words that demarcate it clearly as a center for commerce [centro commerciale, centre commerciale]. Rather than the customary experience when seeing performances in Paris of wandering down wide Parisian boulevards, Nineteenth-century buildings lining the street, arriving at or near the river Seine and entering a well-designed theatre perhaps old, perhaps new, instead that night I had a sense of being on a field trip.

The metro ride left us out in an urban space that increasingly in European cities has been deemed sufficiently far outside the center of town to allow for the construction of mammoth stores, the kind US citizens have been shopping in for years. I remember rushing through this cavernous, closed, haunted buying space, first thinking I had already arrived, then wondering when I would arrive and where a space for performance in this huge structure would be. Looking for signs, I exited the structure, came around the back and found immediately I knew where 'the performance would be.' The architecture announced itself as a space apart with an area blocked off by benches for reflecting, a small garden, a conscious change in the mode of inviting bodies into a space not given, or not solely given, to commerce.

The sold-out show meant a foyer packed with Parisians and others dressed for winter, a sea of black. I was in black too and had the pleasure of relaxing into listening to casual conversations all around me in a language I understand but speak badly, identifying again in passing the important differences in tones and rhythms of French from Italian. My companions spoke French to each other, though we spoke Italian together having four languages among us but only Italian, a learned language for all of us, in common. My memory slides back and forth over the evening from the middle, to the beginning and now to the end, a memory perhaps in part an echo of the measured uses of repetition with a difference employed in the dramaturgy. The return at the end of *Blind Date* had Jones appear in that doorway again, smoking, the final repetition of "with God's help I will cut down" now something like an anecdote we all shared, but also with a bit of fearful doubt that it would not be possible in the climate of the world made before us to choose to care for ourselves as we might. As if in acknowledgement of the precariousness of individual desire to improve, individual power to intervene, he adds one last word, provoking a sudden memory of falling bodies there, in that night, hearing in ghostly memory their reedy singing: he says "me" and the lights go out.

I remember experiencing a doubled anguish of loss implied by the "me": one the powerful impact of the compelling performer offering a kind of self sacrifice and the other of seeing someone who has become a friend remind me his spectator and collaborator in my seat that he will die, that we will die. I have long been chary of the Freudian and melancholic turn of mind that loves to find the cause of all strong sensation in the relentlessness of loss. Turning the customary habit of

critical melancholy that sees in the spectacle, the performance, the players a shared condition of vulnerability in the dying moment, of losing time in performance, of the ephemerality of the live, Joe Kelleher asks if it is "not the show, the composition, the performance, the spectacle, that is ephemeral, disappearing or un-reproducible, but ourselves, who will not survive the theatre's mechanical and perpetual self-remembering?"

Little deaths occur at the end of an extraordinary experience as a spectator, but these moments for me have never signaled an end, the single experience extinguished, but rather a promise of repetition, an accumulation of spectatorial experience that mitigates against the fear of having lost the moment because that momentary loss makes room for more. That night, despite the fatigue of the sensually demanding, corporeally engaging and challenging journey, I thought 'do it again,' even while my senses were flooded with the bittersweet knowledge of the 'me' that all of us will say that will mark our passing when the time for being caught ends. I am reminded of the inexplicable joy a spectator might feel exiting a production of *Waiting for Godot;* Beckett leaves us no logical reason to feel hope, and yet his play extends the invitation to play the game of life in the full sweep of risk, with a passionate commitment to the action and an ironic detachment about the consequences.

Wrapped up in such a still moving place of again and ending, I joined the crowd on its feet. And the dancers came back, and we called them back, and they came back again, and then to the heat of the applause, Bill T. Jones did an improvised dance resembling something between church ecstatic revelry and center of the floor blues dancing. At the end of his short improvisation, the crowd did something I had never experienced

in a theatre before: they began clapping as one in a kind of percussive union, deliberate and timed, not a call to the dancers to return so much as a spectatorial version of returning the gift of Bill T. Jones' spontaneous dance. This is Paris, I could not help thinking, not a place where audiences I have sat amongst tend to get lost in wild emotional response to what they have seen. This is Paris now complicated in its relation of periphery to centre, I thought again, and this was *Blind Date*.

Forming a part of Kelleher's evanescent we, I left that night through the deserted shopping mall. This time I noted nothing of my surroundings, instead the five of us who had gone together moved back and forth between collecting and remembering experiences, images, instances, interpretations and talking about other things in between. The way one does in the aftermath of a powerful performance, not yet able to touch the still hot places for fear of having the burn wear off, wanting tentatively to hear what others experienced. The way

home through periphery onto the metro into the center of Paris plotted a trajectory repeated in reverse but now seeming short, the time blurred by the excitement of a group talking about something we had experienced together.

That night in Paris I walked over the threshold and into a building pronouncing in its architectural singularity amidst the surrounding shopping mall this city's, Paris, this nation's, France, commitment to art. The arts center built to house performances in Creteil had more than one auditorium for performance and, I noticed when I read posters of upcoming events, sponsored talks and education series as well as providing spaces for exhibitions of visual and live art. As if conjured by a stark contrast between the meticulously planned architectural intervention into the periphery of Paris, my mind wandered to another kind of housing for a performance that like *Blind Date* called into question 'where we are now' or perhaps more exactly reflected the impermanent nature of being anywhere now. For this other performance in a very different City, the structure made for it demonstrated the state of temporariness, spatial conditions marking the precarious conditions of the subjects whose stories made up the drama.

Everything on that September night in Rome was provisional. The knocked together wooden tables, the 'bar' where spectators could get food and drink, the lights strung over the eating area. As I walked further back into the space, I could see the huge white rectangular tent with a board suspended at the entrance on which the word "Ingresso" had been crudely painted. The tent sat out in the middle of what is a space of play in Rome, the green, fountain blessed, museum rich Villa Borghese, oddly bucolic the way that spaces in Italy can be even

in the midst of the urban city. Next to the tent I could see horses' stables, the oval rings and the open paddocks.

As I passed over the temporary threshold made of the fabric of the tent to take my seat, the sense of the provisional nature of the performance increased. I looked to my left to see a group of actors moving about what could itself be a set or a scene from a play. The actors of the Thèâtre du Soleil stood assembling their distinct and colorful costumes, some sat before makeup mirrors, lights blazing, each island of preparation surrounded by colorful lumps of fabric and bright paints tucked under the bank of stadium seats that rose above them. The chaos and confusion was also beautiful, with the sight of contrasting skin colors, swatches of fabric, ballooning pants and shirts. My first instinct was to avert my gaze since I felt as if I had intruded upon the intimate and private space of backstage, but clearly this sight was meant for me to see, each of us moving toward our own craft in preparation for the start of the performance, mine as the spectator, the players as players.

Because of a series of mishaps over the years I had until that night never seen Ariane Mnouchkine's company Theatre du Soleil. Certainly I had tried, at BAM, in Paris, but always the tickets were gone, and I waited in line to no avail. So when the production dates for *Le Caravanserail* appeared, I did something I only discovered later I had through some abnormal Calvinist and stern influence denied myself for years: I bought tickets to two consecutive nights of performance. As simple as it sounds, some internal stricture about excess, about restraint or about jinxing the possibility of a brilliant production by buying two tickets ahead of time had always stopped me from taking the precaution of making sure I not only had one ticket to what

I knew would be a sold-out show, and therefore I could not decide after seeing it to see it again, but two. These years in Italy had by infectious example made it possible for me to exhibit my own enthusiast tendencies without shame, and of course the price of the ticket made it possible as I was not buying $75 BAM seats in New York, but 13 euro seats for a Roman production.

That first of those two nights when I walked up to the door of the large white tent, Ariane Mnouchkine took my ticket, as she does at most performances of Soleil. I knew her from pictures in texts as well as from an interview with her in a video about Jacque LeCoq. There is something profoundly welcoming about having your ticket torn by the famous director of the Company, and the process of moving through Mnouchkine to passing by the actors costuming themselves and on to my seat really did give me a sense of being welcomed into the making more than welcomed into a space where things would be done for me. As I took my seat, down in front since I had bought the tickets the moment they went on sale, I noted a new sensation as a spectator, the anticipatory pleasure of knowing whatever I saw that night, I could see again. Usually when I want to see a performance more than once, it is in the wake of an extraordinary experience after which I conscientiously check the company's website trying to see if they are touring the production anywhere I can possibly get to, to see it again. But that night watching *Le Caravanserail* every time I saw something remarkable, I had the simultaneous pleasure of knowing I would see it again, or if something confused me, I thought how I could pay particular attention at that point in the production on the next night.

On the last night of the run, the second night I attended, Ariane Mnouchkine came round to the front of the bleachers

in order to appeal to us, the audience, for our permission to allow the many, many people standing outside hoping to see the sold-out performance to come in and sit on the steps, on the floor. The audience clapped its approval, or most did, there may have been some not feeling so egalitarian. As I had myself many times stood waiting outside Soleil performances unable to get in, I watched with joy the relief and anticipation on the faces of those taking seats on the steps around me.

The bleacher seats faced an enormous stage as long as the entire width of the tent. Stretched over the stage sections of white fabric bordered in grey darkened as the sunset effect of the orange and yellow backdrop faded and night came on. At first I assumed the fabric to be clouds, thus disappearing into the gloom of night. While the stage darkened, script appeared on the white backdrop; not a jumpy, quick lump of text appearing because a slide projector or computer has been turned on, but script appearing letter by letter as if it were inscribed by some enormous invisible hand in the time it takes a scribe to make the letters, large looping words in Italian. As the words appeared, I heard them spoken in French—though I suspect even in France the writing would have appeared as the words were spoken, it was not just translation the dramatic representation of this writing served. Then the words were repeated in a language I knew to be Farsi; as I listened I could hear my beloved friend Roya's voice, a memory I have of her speaking Farsi long distance to Tehran or to LA, those two cities filled with Iranians.

Perhaps Roya's voice came to me that night in part because of her sadness at the years she remained exiled, unable to return to Tehran to see her family, an exile created not because of her native country's hostility but because of her adopted country's

slow and grueling process of granting her a green card. Thus she like so many in the story about to unfold in front of me suffered the great sorrow of having loved ones die without ever being able to see them again. Such longing opens this play, fuels this play, and closes this play. Longing for one's native home, for an absent loved one, for a new home, for a place, for a time. The stillness of this textual opening with its aural narration belied the coming explosion in the first scene, entitled "A passage."

Bodies rushed by the first row, plucking another huge piece of silk cloth, large enough to obscure the whole stage where it undulated across the width by the manipulations of several members of the troupe. Not clouds as I had assumed, rather the fabric imitated, became water. Slowly out of the stormy silk bodies emerge; the sound made by a group of musicians to the side of the stage creates screaming wind and rushing torrents of water. A basket appears, about the size of the one Dorothy rode out of Oz, attached to a rope strung between the sides of the stage. The 'passage' consists of getting from the raised platform on the right of the stage across to the raised platform on the left. Once in the basket, the purveyor of the refugees uses his arms to steady the swaying transport, which pitches and tumbles on the 'waves' as if ready to capsize. One group makes it across, then another, all the while everyone who has made it is shouting encouragement, the women and child go first, the younger men next, but on the third and final trip, the ferryman refuses to continue, the storm has accelerated and the waters are too dangerous.

Desperate, the last two male members of the family offer him all their money. Finally, when he will not move, they steal the basket and begin the journey. Furious the ferryman follows

only to be lost in the water. The patriarch of the escaping group uses his hands to pull himself across on the rope, while the ferryman's son desperately throws his father a line. In the end the ferryman is rescued, reunited with his sons, and the patriarch arrives on the other side. Not a word has passed other than screaming and encouragement, until the air fills with epithets about Kurds, the ferryman screaming for them to get out of his country.

I remember how I found myself not unlike the basket swept into the power of physically made theatre; the urgency of escape mirrored the urgency necessary to evoke the extremity of the elements out of fabric and sound. The program describes the foundations of the stories created by the bodies before me: Theatre du Soleil collected writing from different refugees, asylum seekers, and illegal immigrants to France and *Le Caravanserail* portrays the second of a set of works based on these stories, these memories. Thus the opening where the journal-like writing appears large on the screen, the origin of the piece in the keeping of a diary, the telling of one's own handmade story. Though I know from reading about Theatre du Soleil that the structure of the Company is communal, with all members being paid equally including Mnouchkine herself, I also know the work the Company has done ranges from working with openly political texts to those of Shakespeare and Sophocles as well as creating a work about the life of Moliere. Whatever the content of the present performance, Mnouchkine directs her players in the craft of the body as 'pop-up' book, LeCoq training shows here as it had shown in Complicite's *Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol*, as a scaffold on which to build visually and aurally something larger than any one body seems capable of demonstrating.

The opening scene with almost no words spoken exhibits the extremity of flight under adverse conditions, and I remember the sadness as I recognized the much too universal signs of desperate refugees and greedy middlemen. Mnouchkine had chosen costumes with an almost comic exaggeration of the 'foreign,' the faces as well seemed to play with the notion of nationality as a mask, with faces that are 'too' Turkish, too Slavic, a caricaturist's outline of the ethnicity. In this production players and their characters travel unremittingly under the sign of nation, and these masks of identity signal a character's history and the implications of her/his position. Here nation plays an inextricable part in the story: fluid as it might be when one does not have to negotiate borders, suddenly nation becomes the fixed category that necessitates the body constantly moving or that sequesters the body in camps and detention centers.

Thus everything is temporary, and everyone is transient. Even detained the stillness of those waiting implies pent up wandering. After the first stormy passage, the flat, wooden stage appears calm in contrast to the rough sea of sheets. At first, I almost don't notice the odd manner in which motion was rendered on stage; thinking back to the nights when I was watching, I must have forced the interpretation of what I was seeing into a habitual one: I thought the assistants were setting up a scene before us, like the opening revelation of the 'backstage.' I saw as I passed the makeup mirrors and costumes, so it would be no surprise to see the mechanisms of scene setting revealed on stage. Slowly as the vignettes unfolded before me I realized that no character appeared onstage under his or her own steam. Each body was wheeled in on a platform by a single member of the troupe. The players' space of ambulatory freedom is only as

wide as the rolling bit of wood they stand on. Scenes requiring structures come with boxes built on top of the dollies, wheeled in. The sets in motion, temporary, mean actors arrive and leave on their trolleys, stepping sometimes across the empty space between two platforms but never touching the stable stage. Scene changes occurred as a turning of the rectangle to one side or the other until it is rolled off and replaced by another.

There is something remarkable about the reception of the in between—the hesitation between platforms, the leg stretched out over a small expanse of space. Something in my body feels this pause as a stretch—a moment over an abyss, the hesitation that marks risk. Seremetakis might receive the hovering foot about to shift onto a new platform across the wide space as in the midst of one of those 'still-acts' in which Andre Lepecki suggests a "subject interrupts historical flow and *practices* historical interrogation… it requires a performance of suspension… the still *acts* because it interrogates economies of time, because it reveals the possibility of one's agency within controlling regimes" (15). In almost every narration of this journey a small spectatorial revelation involves some performance of suspension evoking often my mimetic response, the small catch of the breath, held just enough for the body to experience the difference, but as crucially returned to the steady unconscious rhythm of mandatory motion. These moments as attested to throughout my wanderings do not only come from wonder: violence on stage can cause a recoil that pushes the anticipatory hesitation into something like a protected crouch, the breath held back and away from the action, the body sealed in wariness. But in the 'practicing,' the intense act of paying attention as Seremetakis insists comes the physical consequences and with

them the potential for rejection, change and revelation.

In *Le Caravanserail* magnified to a large exponential performance power I witnessed these machines onstage become performance trope as they demonstrated the precariousness, the temporariness, the lack of decision, the inability to quite literally 'put one's foot down' that is the situation of the nomad, of those who are continually told to move on. The tension between being stuck, feeling trapped that can signal a certain kind of poverty, lack of resources and of choice rubs up against the wearying continuum of not being able to stop, to rest, to stay put without hiding. In these years pictures have begun to be circulated in a kind of copia that produces something to my ears like the fear and wonder of people in the 17th century coping with the new technology of print and what must have seemed like a sea of printed broadsides; thus across the screens private and public pictures of the 'refugee' have become emblematic. The danger of such emblems as they circulate widely before us who watch, either from the countries like Italy which has as I write declared the numbers of those seeking a better life in Europe coming across the sea to Lampedusa a 'state of emergency,' or countries like Britain where the rhetorical category 'asylum seekers' comes to mean everyone and nothing, is that the repetition of the sight and the language used to report upon what we are seeing take on an universal character. No longer each story an example, the circulated and repeated and reified images stand in for a mass that is uncontainable, threatening and a drain on my, your, our resources.

Le Caravanserail reintroduces the motion, the never a fixed story of exile and appeal, of oppression and flight, by performed example, one that follows what Brian Massumi

suggests with Giorgio Agamben's help is "neither general (as is a system of concepts) nor particular (as is the material to which a system is applied). It is 'singular.' It is defined by a disjunctive self-inclusion: a belonging to itself that is simultaneously extendibile to everything else with which it might be connected (one for all, and all in itself)" (17). While Massumi's proposes to reanimate critical invention by accounting for motion, transformation, and transition, his description of a writing offering the singular mirrors the practice of performance. If in "writing practice, exemplification activates detail," so too in performance practice where the example made by the bodies in detail reiterates (I write that word and want another for performance without iterate as its root), a singularity neither so personal it can not matter beyond the second it is made nor so general it will be automatically filed by the receiving body under "refugees, the,"—see under illegal immigrants.

Theatre du Soleil's production tells a story very much from within an exile's Europe. The strange collision of unions in Europe continue to bounce off each other and bounce back on each other according to those who profited from joining, Ireland, and then turned back to say no to the Constitution, those who keep one toe in the control of decision making but most of the foot outside in the right to 'opt out' like the UK. Images of union—most commonly now that of the euro that passes through citizens' hands, often with less frequency than their former currency since the euro has caused serious inflation at the level of everyday expenses in almost all the countries—have an effect, as did the not only material but also metaphorical opening of the Chunnel between France and England. No longer

an island, the rhetoric went, the UK now formed part of the continent. The little hollow tube that made for this connection immediately became a sight and source of UK security worries, French refugee troubles, Fortress Europe's disgust at the porous possibilities of the passage under the sea. And so the name Sangatte became metonymic for a) the danger of 'floods' of refugees entering the UK illegally, b) a holding pen inhuman and overfull c) a launching pad for the desperate act of riding on the bottom of a Eurostar or under a lorry through the Chunnel and out into England's green and pleasant land.

In *Le Caravanserail* the conditions in Sangatte, the bodies who make up this example, stand before us balanced up on a ridge above the train tracks. They have cut a hole in the fence of the camp, it is dark. The stage reproduces the difficulty of the physical conditions: it is hard to effect an escape; it feels hard for the spectator as if I pant in anticipation of the seconds I will have to execute the delicate move of concealment and the sustained effort of holding on for 25 minutes through the

tunnel. If I can remember well, those waiting to grab onto the train include a woman, a teenager, and a young man. The musicians created the noise, the fast and high-pitched noise of a Eurostar train as it passes. All jump but one man has fallen untimely, and when he is pulled back up onto the ridge by those not taking the ride that night, his left foot covered in blood dangles from his leg by the remaining exposed sinews. He must stay behind. Others try again.

The extraordinary thing about the ritual of trying to enter a country illegally is that it includes continuous repetition. A sense the spectator has as I watch the desperate measures before me; how with nothing to lose, the refugees who can will try and try again to get in, which also means to get out. The gendarmerie and guard the camp patrol, others repair the fence. Night falls, someone tries to ride the undercarriage of the train. They are caught at the other side and sent back. Darkness, light, the evening and the morning of the third day.

While much of the text of the performance comes from memories written and translated about the conditions of nomad and foreigner, the stories also tell tales about the choice to leave the homeland or of exploitation suffered in the wake of leaving. Many, many of the stories narrate how the pecking order of survival and oppression remains a thoroughly patriarchal one, the women traded as wives for money and position, the women sold and exported for sexual trade. A particularly haunting narrative takes place in a beautiful shack where a woman dallies with her lover. There are birds and trees, a kind of fecundity and beauty impossible in the scenes in camps and in Sangatte, and then the two are discovered by the imams; we are in Iran. The menace comes from other rolling islands than the one

with the beautiful house; large, hair-covered men in turbans spy on the lovers to discover their illicitness. In the end, not surprisingly, the price is paid by youth for the elders' laws, the house so picturesque is wheeled around to show us the body of the woman hanging by the neck.

Hélène Cixous, whose name for me has been a kind of shield to be taken up and worn in battle since I first read her 'Laugh of the Medusa,' works with Mnouchkine to write the texts for Theatre du Soleil. A philosopher, artist, writer and feminist, Cixous turned to the theatre, I remember reading, because she felt it was one of the only places left to do political work. I have only read but not seen *The Perjured City*, the extraordinary early play Cixous wrote for Soleil based on the crisis of the circulation of blood that the authorities knew had been infected by HIV; in it Cixous moves freely, as freedom is certainly the nature of her work in the world, between the realms of myth and the consequences of squalid everyday lying. For *Le Caravanserail* she adapts the stories, the memories, the tales, and the jokes of the writers into the characters that appear upon the moving platforms before me.

At the end of the production, as the stage holds the accumulation of the stories of harm, hardship, death and exile, the players came out for the 'curtain call.' Slowly in an act that conceals at first the meaning of how they are arranging themselves, the performers separate onto two sides of the stage: women on one and men on the other. I could feel my own residual anger mixed with weariness, having in mind the still vivid scene of the young woman in the temporary shelter of a camp—something that looked like a shipping container wheeled about—beat up by the man who is selling her repeatedly to others in the camp

for the non-existent spoils of refugee life. The haunting memory of the woman in Iranian dress, white flowing robes, long black hair, an inert cocoon hanging from the little house where she had known love, where her father and her brother condemned her to death. The doubled abuse of being nomad and woman, of being refugee and daughter, of being illegal and wife had been building. Now, here, in this final and supposedly neutral space of curtain call the company demonstrated to us what had been a thread through the whole play, demonstrated it by becoming separate camps, even as they had just played several hours of scenes together. The anger in the air and the hostility was clear; the women had chosen the separation, they stood away from those they could not trust. The conditions of rupture showed in that moment as they so often do in a sudden formation across similarity and difference, of gender, of race, of nation. Reconciliation occurred but not before the complaints had been visually, corporeally lodged. We will not hide the divide that happens in the measure of vulnerability doubled for women. We will not take your hand in friendship or in love without being clear that we know how to regroup and remove ourselves from your abuse of an undeserved power.

I admit to a feeling of satisfaction as I watched this enacted before me, partly because in my experience professional and political, women tend to slide towards 'live and let live,' 'forgive and forget,' all the clichés of not making a big deal of things. In private or internally of course this can make for monstrous resentment deployed by women towards themselves and their families as corrosive and deadly as the abuse of physical or social power by men. But the demonstration and revelation of the ongoing injustices caused by patriarchy's firm grip on the

social codes we all live under seemed apt in regards to the stories we had seen, experienced, heard in the course of the evening.

Then there followed, just before the applause released the actors, the hesitation, the tug of wait, see, think, what's happening here, how can we adjust the too familiar contours and risk an unsymmetrical shape in order to form something new, what practices will alter even as we return to the motion of act and abide, of see, of watch, of hear, of listen to the pause and to the breathing again. Gathering in doorways, admiring old tiles, the ebb and the flow of the dust in the corners.

‖ Epilogue

Ann Pellegrini, an apt name for an itinerant spectator, wonders about the derision that comes so quick to the pen of the secular non-humanists as they write condescendingly of those deluded by forms of religious feeling, of religious emotion; Pellegrini finds the automatic response suspect. The United States is a hard place to be subtle about god and those who claim to be *his* followers. Yet, fervour makes the heart beat faster and the desire to serve informs actions not solely undertaken out of duty, or political extremism, or fear of eternal punishment.

Pellegrini's work comes to mind as this book lingers at its last threshold, stands on its last hill hoping you the reader stand here by me seeing what I outline, hearing what I make voluble, and then seeing and hearing other soundmarks/landmarks in the distance that come into audible and visual focus because of your own history as an itinerant spectator or perhaps out of the gifts given to the novice who participates.

In a discussion after a panel where performance scholars Joe Kelleher and Nick Ridout had both read/spoken papers about spectating, on the day after I had heard Pellegrini's talk and on the day of the performance we would be involved in

together, I lay on the floor listening to the papers and suddenly found myself transported back to my adolescent days of religious longing, of the desire to know god, of the goal to be truly good and of use in the world, to the world. Why were those memories happening now, I wondered? So I stood up to formulate a question.

First I responded to the speakers, saying how much I always enjoyed borrowing their ways of seeing and hearing performance, how they convey by conjured phrases the care and attention not just to what happened but also to the mistakes and the overinterpreting natural to the willing participant of a theatrical or performative experience, the way they can tell and then amend, the way they can use the practice of narration to build towards the revelations, the surprises, the… conversions.

And that was it, that is what I said and what I think of now. How entangled all this is with my desire to honour W.G. Sebald's method of staging memory in the flux of the partially recalled and the vividly recounted. What he says of his friend Austerlitz, ghost or spectator manqué that he may be, counts for his own writing: "From the first I was astonished by the way Austerlitz put his ideas together as he talked, forming perfectly balanced sentences out of whatever occurred to him, so to speak, and the way in which, in his mind, the passing on of his knowledge seemed to become a gradual approach to a kind of historical metaphysic, bringing remembered events to life."

So in the collision of Pellegrini, Kelleher and Ridout, I suddenly thought of those books I had read in the fervour of religious desire. First the entertaining ones, Lives of the Saints, which of course really means the variety of amazing deaths of the saints. And then the instructive, the Confessions, the

Meditations, the Teachings. So posing this to Joe Kelleher and Nick Ridout, Kelleher responded with a phrase so resonant for the many varieties of devotion available in spectating, he said something like, "the theatre is the place I allow myself to go to doubt." And Ridout added that he too could see the resemblance as he fashions theories based on the solitude of the spectator in the midst of others, certainly a Sebaldian characteristic as well as one of those often lauded in saints.

But I too thought of how I first went to The Wooster Group aware of the hype, of the coolness of those audience members who never missed a Wooster performance, and, horrified by the technology and the restrictions of the work, left. I almost lost two things that night, a lover and a lifelong passion for a group. But wasn't my leaving fundamental to the conversion narrative that would follow? I have described my experience with the Wooster as one where they "taught me to understand and appreciate the work," but while pedagogy is inextricable from the proliferation of the faith, it is too cool, too controlled a rendering of what was a breathtaking conversion when I saw *Brace Up*. What changed? Me, I think but also, as these pages narrate, I had learned to participate as a spectator, to wait for cues, to grasp the string. What had appeared as innocuous doorways filled with too much detritus became weathered thresholds to be lingered in. A niche? The passageways behind the altars where pilgrims follow a site-specific progression round the central action?

The passing on of knowledge an "historical metaphysic" yes, but also a companion volume worn in the hand, directed to the ear, where the mix of the heat of staged memory and the contemplative action of theorizing offer something not at all religious and something very like devotion.

‖ Acknowledgements

My thanks to all those who offered productions to my itinerant spectating, some who appear in these pages and some who form the invisible fabric of the methodology that makes up what I call the practice of spectating. When this project began as an exploration of European theatre in the wake of the introduction of the euro, I received vital funding for travel from the University of Michigan, and fellowships from the Fulbright Association and the Italian Academy at Columbia University for which I am grateful.

The works that resonate in this book are predominantly works by those I think of as fellow travellers, and I am grateful to the gifts the theories and the thinking aloud together as we travel provide. Rebecca Schneider championed the work as it turned from traditional critical work to a work trying to honor W.G. Sebald's mode of staging memory through tone and reflection, and her encouragement helped me keep faith with the aim of this book. Sometimes the most important collegial and companionable act we can do for one another is to tell the work back to its author thus realigning it while also reminding the author what she loved in it, and for this generosity I thank Jill Casid.

The turn in the work towards a model of care and practice in thinking about spectating comes directly from my work with postgraduate students at Roehampton University's Drama, Theatre and Performance. Every new invention in how practice becomes research, how it stretches thinking and challenges making that Ella Finer, Fabrizio Manco, Eleftheria Rapti, Justin Hunt, Annalaura Alifuoco, and Flora Pitrolo enacted and are still creating enabled me to imagine the worth of the model of methodology rather than a category of a new form of studies. Ann Pellegrini and Joe Kelleher appear in the Epilogue because they have both in their own ways shown me how to move towards a new iteration of this project under the sign of devotion and I thank them.

Emily Orley and Jane Rendell in their distinct and conjoined ways have set me an example of the practice of writing as a practice of thinking. And friends have simply given me strength for the road, among them Roya Kowsar, Bill T Jones, Bjorn Amelan, Vincent Virga, James McCourt, Pierre Yves Le Pogam, Julio Velasco, Laura Flanders, Elizabeth Streb and Troy Gordon. Thanks as well to my early itinerant companions and the beloved companions of the continued journey, Lawrence and Vanessa. For his support of me in every sense, I also thank my father.

Eileen Joy welcomed this book with the board of punctum books and theirs is a threshold I feel honoured to have wandered over. Many thanks for the experience of true editing and open ideas about the scholarly, and for the editing and design labors of Tyann Prentice of punctum as well.

Who you wander with will always influence how you see, and so I thank my itinerant companion whose thoughts,

affections and enthusiasms keep my feet moving. For his photographs which have themselves made me more visually attentive on this itinerant progress and which grace these pages, I cannot thank Matthew Fink enough.

Finally this book is dedicated to my mother who died in 2012 and who taught me early 'what a joy it is to sing and dance.'

Photos by Matthew H. Fink

Appendix: Performances

I Satsifaction

Children of Heracles October 2002 Rome, Teatro Argentina
Euripides, Peter Sellars [RomaEuropa Festival]

Il Colonello e le Ali June 2001 Rome, Teatro India
Hristo Boytchev, Toni Bertorelli

Ubu and the Truth Commission July 1997 Avignon
Handspring Puppet Company [Avignon Festival]

II Sound

Long Day's Journey into Night June1991 New York, BAM
Ingmar Bergman

Manes April 1997 Florence, Ex-Stazione Leopoldo
Fura del Baus [Fabbrica Europa Festival]

Les Bonnes November 2001 Rome, Teatro Valle
Jean Genet, Alfredo Arias [Percorsi Internazionali Festival]

Was ihr Wollt (Twelfth Night) November 2001 Rome, Teatro Valle
William Shakespeare, Christoph Marthaler [Percorsi Internazionali Festival]

Endstation Amerika October 2001 Rome, Teatro Argentina, Volkesbühne Berlin/Frank Castorf [RomaEuropa Festival]

Marat Sade December 1999 Rome, Teatro Vascello, Teatro Taganka, Yuri Ljubimov
July 2000 Avignon, [Avignon Festival]

Midsummer Night's Dream September 2007 London, Richmond Theatre, William Shakespeare, Tim Supple Royal Shakespeare Company
October 2007 Oxford, Oxford Playhouse

III Stuctures

Hamlet, Merchant of Venice, Midsummer Night's Dream September 1999, William Shakespeare, Carlo Cecchi Rome, Teatro India

The Story of a Soldier October 1999 Rome, Teatro India Stravinksy, Peter Sellars [RomaEuropa Festival]

Ta'ziye July 2003 Rome, Teatro India
Abbas Kiarostami

Oedipus at Colonus May 2004 Rome, Teatro India
Sophocles, Mario Martone

Un mese con l'odin teatret April/May 2000, Rome, Teatro India
Odin Teatret, Eugenio Barba

IV Senses

Tempus Fugit October 2004 Rome, Teatro Argentina
Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Les Ballets C De La B [RomaEuropa Festival]

O Dido November 1999 Rome, Teatro Argentina
Pina Bausch, Tanztheater Wuppertal

La Casa di Bernarda Alba November 1999 Rome, Teatro Argentina
Theater Basel, Joachim Schlömer & Helmut Oehring
[RomaEuropa Festival]
Paper Doll February 2008 Rome, Auditorium Parco della Musica
Padmini Chettur
The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol August 1996 New York City, Alice Tully Hall
John Berger, Simon McBurney Complicite
The Cousin of Pantagruel October 2005 Rome, Teatro Valle
Rabelais, Silviu Purcarete

IV States

Blind Date March 2007 Paris, Creteil Maison des Artes
Walking the Line November 2007 Paris, Musee Louvre
Bill T. Jones, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company
Le Caravanserrail September 2003 Rome, Tenda del Galoppatoio di Villa Borghese
Hélène Cixous, Ariane Mnouchkine, Théâtre du Soleil

Works Resonating

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Andersen, Benedict *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *Rabelais and His World.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Baldwin, James. *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings 1927-1930* Boston: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Illuminations, Selected Writings. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanivich, 1968

Bennett, Susan. "Theatre/Tourism" *Theatre Journal* 57:3 (2005): 407-428.

Borneman, John. *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice, and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Bowker, Geoffrey. *Memory Practices in the Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory."

Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. 270-282.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Theatre, Sacrifice and Ritual: Exploding Forms of Political Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*: *an Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Tavistock, 1974.

Franko, Mark. *Dancing as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Graham, Shane. 'The Truth Commission and Post-Apartheid Literature.' *Research in African Literatures*. 34:1 (2003): 11-30.

Kelleher, Joe. 'On Self Remembering Theatres' [Sui teatri autorimembranti] *B.Motion: Spazio di riflessione fuori e dentro le arti performative.* Eds. Viviana Gravano, Enrico Pitozzi and Annalisa Sacchi. Milan: Costa & Nolan, 2008.

Kippen, Lorelei. 'Transforming the Traumatic Space of Witnessing: the Limits of the Burlesque Monster in Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission*.' *Agora* 1:3 (2002).

Kobialka, Michal, ed. *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre History, Practice and Theory.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999

Kruger, Loren. 'Making Sense of Sensation: Enlightenment, Embodiment, and the End(s) of Modern Drama.' *Modern Drama* 43:4 (2000): 543-546.

Lepecki, Andre *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Martin, Randy *Critical Moves: Dance Theory and Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

McAuley Gay. *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in Theatre* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

McConachie, Bruce. "Social Practices and the Nation-State: Paradigms for Writing National Theatre History." *Theatre, History, and National Identities*. Eds. Helka Makinen, S.E. Wilmer, and W.B. Worthen. Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press, 2001. 119-39.

Melrose, Susan. 'Words Fail Me: Dancing with the Other's Familiar' 2005. www.sfmelrose.org.uk

Michaud, Philippe-Alain. *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion.* New York: Zone Books, 2004.

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetic s of the Black Radical Tradition.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Pellegrini, Ann. "Feeling Secular," *Women & Performance* 19.2 (2009): 205-18.

Pollan, Michael. *In Defense of Food: an Eater's Manifesto.* New York: Penguin, 2009.

Ranciere, Jaques. 'The Emancipated Spectator.' *Artforum* March 2007: 267-281.

Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

'Territorial Passages: Time, Place and Action.' in *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre History, Practice and Theory.* Ed.

Michal Kobialka. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999. 110-124.

Rokem, Freddie. *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin, 1985.

Schneider, Rebecca. "Performance Remains." *Performance Research* 6:2 (2001). 101-108.

Sauter, Wilmar. *The Theatrical Event.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000.

Sebald, W. G. *Austerlitz.* London: Penguin, 2002. *The Rings of Saturn.* New York: New Directions, 1999.

Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man.* New York: Knopf, 1977.

Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Skantze, P.A. *Stillness in Motion in the Seventeenth-Century Theatre.* London and NY: Routledge, 2003.

"A Good Catch: Practicing Generosity" *Performance Research International* June 12:2. 2007.

States, Bert. *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Stewart, Susan *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

Taussig, Michael. *Walter Benjamin's Grave*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Ventura, Michael. "Burner of Eden" in *Letters at 3am: Report on endarkment*. US: Spring Publications, 1994.

Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Skantze, P.A.

Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle

punctum books, 2013
ISBN: 9780615858968

https://punctumbooks.com/titles/itinerant-spectator-itinerant-spectacle/

https://www.doi.org/10.21983/P3.0056.1.00