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# Recasting Ovid: an interrogation of the rhetoric of status dynamics and its analytical purchase in performance pedagogy and textual analysis

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Chapter 1: **"On the Shoulders of Giants"[1]: an Introduction.**

"TIRESIAS: King though you are, – one right,
To answer, makes us equal; and I claim it.
It is not you, but Loxias[2] whom I serve."

Sophocles: *Oedipus Rex.*

[1] The title of this chapter is drawn from Sir Isaac Newton's letter to his peer, Robert Hooke. An analysis of this letter, as a response to appeals for re-conciliation between the two scientists, reveals how status operates through interaction and exchange and the rhetorical assertion of superiority is exemplified in the references to bodily and spatial configurations.

[2] In his response to the "King", the priest and seer Tiresias invokes Apollo who is interested in "all matters affecting law and order […] He presides not only over the arts and all that manifests the well-springs of man's conduct, but also over much public activity, such as the establishment of cities, constitutions, codes of law and their interpretations" (Warrington 1961:53). The confrontation between two powerful representatives of two domains, the secular and the spiritual, is further delineated by what Samuel Weber (2004) suggests are two representatives of antithetical views on autonomy and authority: Oedipus 'believes' that he is the 'self-made man', the author of his own speech and edicts, Tiresias 'knows' that his certainty is produced by an authority beyond his own 'natural' capacity and that Apollo 'writes' his utterances.

**Towards defining a field of interactions and encounters: the aims and scope of this study.**

Through the interrogation of interactive status relations, this study addresses the rhetoric and expressions of dominance or submission, positions of agency and affect or lack thereof, that arguably underpin all everyday encounters, but in the interests of social order are conventionally under-played or tacitly ignored. As Keith Johnstone observes*:* "Normally we are 'forbidden' to see status transactions except when there's conflict. In reality status transactions continue all the time" (1997:33). His statement introduces the tensions that are central to my study of the rhetoric and dynamics of status relations as socio-cultural realities embedded in a range of representational media of which performance is one. Tensions between what is seen and heard, between what is revealed (represented or presented) and what remains undeclared (invisible, anonymous or even unacknowledged) extend to shaping modes of interaction between performers as well as between performer and the audience. According to Samuel Weber,[3] theatre is inextricably bound to a display of power which is lodged in the medium and the mode of live transmission, reception, interpretation and construction of meaning. *If* theatre proposes visibility in the public domain, the extent to which "oppressor and oppressed" and representations of iconic figures (whether so-called 'heroes', 'victims' or even the 'ordinary citizen') and as crucially, relationships between disparate groups and figures and their representation are significant political and cultural questions.

This thesis seeks to expand Keith Johnstone's notion of status interaction as outlined in *Impro* (1997), first published in 1981. In this seminal work, he introduces his training method and his ideas regarding status dynamics both as structuring principles and as a means of generating nuance and credibility in spontaneous performances. Developing improvisation skills is committed to forging an autonomous approach to performer training in addition to serving as a basis to stimulate emergent writing. On these grounds, formulating and implementing a training model within the South African pedagogical context (both pre- and post-1994) may well have drawn productively on the modality of improvisation (and particularly Johnstone's formulation of a socially orientated approach to this model) and continued to do so as a means of liberating performances from a reliance on culturally inscribed dramatic texts.

Johnstone documents and explains the efficacy of a series of exercises which mobilize the understanding of status positions and momentum between these positions, observing that these patterns typify real social interactions. As he acknowledges, his improvisation model was developed in response to the unsatisfactory flatness of new dramatic writing. In his assessment, the latent dynamics of interactive exchanges remained largely undeveloped. On the basis of this observation, he set about establishing a more thorough interrogation of individual and human behaviour through improvisation workshops which aimed to invigorate both performance and writing. Within his paradigm, Johnstone posits a matrix of status markers and determinants through which variables in capacity surface during the course of routine exchanges and operate to reveal status differences. Throughout his writing, however, status positions are articulated in terms of "high" and "low",

[3] Theatre "entails a *place* in which *events* take place. [...] although these events are generally defined as either 'dramatic performances of spectacles', they can also be of a quite different nature: 'significant events or actions...of public life,' for instance medical demonstrations, lectures, or more alarmingly, military events, such as those involving 'nuclear weapons.' [...] The dictionary confusion or confounding of theater with spectacle is surely as significant as it is symptomatic: the allusion to 'nuclear weapons' brings to the fore one of the striking and distinguishing factors affecting the notion of 'theater' and' theatricality' today, namely, the preponderance of energy over matter, of force over bodies, of power over place" (Weber 2004:98).

indicating either superiority or inferiority in *relations between* parties and suggesting a vertical hierarchy congruent with class-based social structures. It is this discourse of hierarchies that indicates a need to modify and adapt his model within the local context which is palpably fraught by divisive inequities. The process of developing and offering classes in improvisation technique during the final decade of an Apartheid governed society and subsequently in the context of transformation to a fully democratic social structure committed to the restoration of basic human rights, has provided a perspective that opens up ways of augmenting, even re-defining, core components of Johnstone's vocabulary and approaches to its implementation.

There are several strands to the primary assertion that any application of Johnstone's method calls for reformulation in a South African teaching and learning context. Firstly, within a contemporary multi-disciplinary approach to performance training, the degree to which status-interplay is *culturally contingent and discursively constructed* invites the explicit foregrounding that Johnstone's writing is obliged neither to address nor to interrogate. His book documents exercises and games that *he* has deemed generative together with their objectives and descriptions of *his* ways of implementing them. Moreover, his work is produced within a specific context, culture and referential idiom. Despite his emphasis on ways in which performance variables establish asymmetrical relations, it is difficult to ignore how shared cultural values and frames of reference are presumed as an underpinning linking participants. This underlying assumption cannot reasonably be sustained in a context in which diversity and multi-cultural pluralities increasingly define the dynamics of the interactive teaching and learning laboratory. The historian Ian Knight, introducing his recent study of iSandlwana and Rorke's Drift, *Zulu Rising,* makes the point that present socio-cultural perspectives are anchored in 'problematic' aspects of South African history, broadly one of a series of unmitigated conquests. He implies, moreover, that this history encompasses not only contemporary but more distanced events and their consequences. He suggests that:

> … – political divisions, economic disparities, the stripping of the rural areas of human resources and consequent social dislocation and rootlessness – are the direct result of the complex conflicts of the nineteenth century, and have created between them a dark undercurrent that still profoundly affects life (here) today. […] In the 'Rainbow Nation'[4] (the) recourse to violence is the unglamorous underbelly of the historic 'warrior tradition' of colonial interlopers and indigenous societies alike, of *a society built on overlapping layers of conquest and dispossession* (2010:5, my emphasis).

The continued circulation of diverse, or even antagonistic, cultural perspectives and values constructs the medium in which pedagogy and cultural practice take place in contemporary South Africa, defining a field by which to negotiate both practices, which cannot be glossed.

While Johnstone stresses multiple practical performance concerns (and explicitly affirms the need to eliminate the reliance on verbal utterances as the primary objective of improvised performances), he frequently resorts to reproducing fragments of improvised dialogue in order to convey the material substance of status-based interactions. Although his express purpose is to stress that it is the performance delivery of dialogue that ultimately acts as an index or marker of high or low status, he nonetheless relies on dialogic exchanges to exemplify the performative and behavioural patterns

[4] The epithet was forcefully introduced by Bishop Tutu and deployed as a key trope in the Inauguration address of President Mandela on 26th April 1994 as central to the "miraculous" transition to a democratic dispensation.

that he aims to clarify. In South Africa, issues linking the interplay of dominance or subservience to the spoken utterance are compounded by fundamental disparities and facilities in the use of a shared linguistic medium as a means of communication. Discrepancies in literary facility and oral expression persist as the legacy of social engineering which entrenched disparities in opportunity and capital. Prior to 1994 racially defined categories of entitlement or disenfranchisement were compounded by the legislative authorization of two languages, English and Afrikaans, effectively rendering all other languages 'inferior'. A training method that introduces, *as part of its practice*, the 'playing' of asymmetrical relations cannot ethically bracket off the underlying politics of spoken language since the medium of expression and communication is itself inextricable from inculcated asymmetries. Status interaction cannot be segregated from language politics since the act of speaking is already defined by differences grounded in speaking in either first- or second-languages: the medium of communication itself operates as an index of entitlement or obligation.

The performance training project, dedicated to refining capacity in communication and expression, is compelled to interrogate the interplay of oral and visual languages, spatial configurations, physical gesture and verbal utterance. At this level incorporating status-play into performance pedagogy may prove a productive, if somewhat mechanistic tool of vocational training. Beyond its instrumentality in addressing primary, technical accomplishments in crafting performances, it would seem that understanding assertions of position (with their affective capacity) seems to offer ways of de-coding everyday situations and behaviour. Emancipatory education objectives include harnessing training to advancing a genuinely informed creative and critical practice. The nuanced appreciation of relations between language and agency (embedded in status interaction) appears to offer scope for advancing the understanding of what it means to be socially and actively engaged.

The second set of concerns emerging from reviewing Johnstone's writing through grafting his status discourse onto modes of textual analysis more thoroughly than he undertakes, leads to the recognition of the multiple reference points deployed in articulating both status and the value systems to which either an utterance or a gesture refers. The multiple metaphors articulating positions and movements between points suggest various geometrical inscriptions rather than being restricted to motifs of ascension and demotion. The assumption that status is articulated and plotted exclusively in terms of verticality may, accordingly, be challenged. The spatial relations through which 'positions' are defined are not confined to this axis. The practice of mapping asymmetries and movement through spatial axes stimulates the interrogation of territorial metaphors. Sustained textual analysis will reveal the *horizontal co-ordinates*, implied through motifs of centres and peripheries, which prompts further interrogation into representations of positions and movements. What is at stake in this rhetorical dimension implies nothing less than the articulation of insider and outsider positions which may inscribe status relations just as vividly, and perhaps more insidiously, as overt hierarchical ordering: the political dimension of individually (or collectively) experienced advantage and disadvantages, inclusion or exclusion, is an interactive field as invocative of differences as a vertical hierarchy. The close reading and analysis of a sample of dramatic monologues and texts reveals how motifs of centre and margins are consistently interwoven with the dominant motif of vertical determinants of position, but are either set in contrast with (or even obscured by) positions above and below along with the rising and falling motif. Moreover, despite the prevalence of hierarchical tropes in ordering relations, as this essay aims to demonstrate, the motif of relations between the centre and margins (as indices of agency) are not unique to post-colonial discourse, but are embedded in the Modernist Western literary and

dramatic representations. Hence my interest in what I term the rhetoric of status-interaction, and commitment to a study that presumes the evaluative properties of language but focuses on the referential implications of the tropes that circulate and re-produce differences.

Thirdly, the enquiry into the articulation of status-relations and status dynamics registered in lateral dimensions suggests its usefulness in understanding *relations between the individual and a social group or community.* The implications of this proposition are twofold. On an instrumental level, developing technical competencies and confidence in improvisation may prove the foundation for developing an ensemble as a democratically engaged performing unit which valorizes the agency of the collective rather than being subject to an external authority, a director or choreographer. What is implied in this manoeuvre is nothing less than a radical transfer of ownership and agency in the process of creating performances that are at odds with orthodox practices which stress the singular authority of playwright or director. In addition, the extent to which markers of acceptance and rejection operate in both Western and African narrative representations suggests the rewards of analysing literary texts, specifically the so-called canonical works, through a fresh critical lens loosely aligned with a post-colonial position. The ability to deploy this understanding and practice would seem to institute genuine empowerment through integrating learning and thinking with 'ways of being' in the world.

A final issue to address relates to the dangerously *reductive tendency to reify the notion of status.* Superficial exposure to status discourse produces a reductive and formulaic understanding of a more complex phenomenon through flattening the interactive dynamics by disconnecting status from interaction and repressing the underlying power play at work. The phenomenon of over-simplifying quite what status means is possibly a characteristic of a materialist society in which acquisition and ownership is equated with the need to hold onto *and display* signs of advancement. The emphasis on social restructuring and redress that is congruent with the political programme of socio-economic and cultural transformation perhaps lends creditability to the notion that "status" is a desirable asset. The truncation is problematic in denoting positive attributes of dominance and neglecting ways in which the term equally refers to (or designates) positions of subservience or inferiority. Both the materialist notion of an abstract entity like status and the notion of implied fixity, neglect the dynamic dependence of identity markers as being relationally constructed, an understanding which lies at the core of Johnstone's propositions.

This study aims to identify ways of building productively on Johnstone's ideas by defining a pedagogy that is committed to promoting a rigorously informed, critical and social practice. Actively advancing a performance method and style founded on reciprocal interaction and mutual inter-dependence is a means of addressing the agenda of transformation in its broad political sense. The obligation to revisit curriculum content and research practice is inseparable from the task of interrogating knowledge systems and ideas along with the means through which they are advanced, disseminated and perpetuated. What transformation imperatives demand is a careful re-appraisal of the complex epistemological and cultural heritages comprising work in the academy and in the public domain, in order to extrapolate, and even appropriate, serviceable building blocks or tools that are apposite to contemporary challenges.

The impact and value of Johnstone's publication is signalled by its multiple subsequent editions, suggesting the widespread implementation and circulation of his ideas along with their appeal in

galvanising approaches to performance. Permutations evolve through idiosyncratic interpretations of a programme and its implementation or through 'productive mis-readings' as much as a (creative) consequence of addressing specific circumstances and needs. Local permutations of imported methods are the inevitable (and sometimes inadvertent) result of filtering processes through which fragments are assimilated and foregrounded, while other aspects are rendered less significant. Moreover, contextually founded adaptations of what Johnstone sets out in *Improv* are understandable as legitimate responses to his practice and philosophy which actively endorses and promotes dynamism rather than fixity and explicitly challenges both orthodoxy and authority. It is on these grounds that I expand on what appear to be fissures in his method in the interests of nurturing a future generation of socially meaningful art makers.

Further, my aim is to harness understandings drawn from social theory and philosophy in order to anchor and advance status interplay as something more than a set of tools or skills to deploy in crafting a performance. Status transactions are played out between positions of relative dominance and subservience, empowerment and subjugation. To consider embarking on integrating status play within the local context without interrogating the discourse and implications of doing so (in a context characterized by routine instances of aggression, oppression and victimization) is politically naïve, disingenuous and ethically indefensible. I adopt the method of developing an argument through extrapolating from a series of inter-textual close readings of texts rather than through devising a programme requiring the participation of others. The notion of constructing a viable performance practice as a means of testing hypothetical propositions, or developing a rubric to assess the outcome and findings of an empirical experiment seemed entirely inadvisable. My objective is to lodge "status-based analysis" in close reading and interpretations, offering this very mechanism as a form of practice through which labile differences may be apprehended as generating and sustaining tension within texts, be they performative, visual or literary.

Since collective improvisation, whether in pairs or in larger groups, is a departure from text-based actor-training exercises, the choices and behaviour of the performer (as a psychological and social subject or as a 'player') is overtly presented through engaged participation in a studio class. Performances are self-authored and effectively a "presentation of self"[5] or a declaration of subjectivity in terms of the personae or roles that are adopted. This phenomenon introduces the need for an appropriate analytical or critical framework that supplements considerations of technical competency and the assessment of performance criteria according to aesthetic objectives. Clearly, adopting either a psychoanalytical or sociological apparatus (or aspects of both) are reasonable alternatives, but since Johnstone's method expressly advances inter-personal rather than intra-personal strategies, and in the interests of distancing class sessions from tendencies towards drama-therapy, the latter seems more serviceable. Erving Goffman's writing, which adopts dramatic discourse as a language through which to analyse "everyday life", not only suggests ways of incorporating a critical analysis of situation, behaviour and routines but prompts reversing his tactic to explore the usefulness of sociology within performance studies. The extension of this strategy is to expand reading and research activity into the literature of social theory and philosophy. Pursuing the studies and literature on the interface between play and performance, via Johan Huizinga and Thomas Henricks, leads inexorably to the seminal social philosophy of Georges Simmel. My study gains analytical gravitas from testing the appeal of, and extent to which, Simmelian concepts serve

[5] The title of Erving Goffman's publication lends itself to this truncation.

as tools through which to probe the spatial dimensions of status rhetoric, to formulate socially generated subjectivity and to identify mechanisms of group exclusion and inclusion.

In addition to adopting the inter-disciplinary modality implied in this manoeuvre, I pursue the potential for assimilating an embodied understanding of playing status dynamics conjoined with a critical framework, to advance the means of reading and interpreting classical texts in a manner that dismantles and destabilizes conventional readings. In other words, I aim to demonstrate the efficacy of social philosophy to developing a nuanced appreciation of performance languages. Specifically, I am interested in testing the capacity for the vocabulary of improvisation technique to intervene in established modes of reading or what Catherine Belsey terms "common-sense reading practices". My objective is thus to link aspects of improvisation pedagogy to modes of reception and interpretation of texts that resist the assertion of a single authoritative reading and not only allow for, but actively promote, the recognition of polysemic nuances embedded in literary and performance texts. To approach classical dramatic texts as a form of sustained collaborative close reading, within class or rehearsal situations, is a practice in which the text remains a field for constant exploration and transformation always subject to its contextualized reception and constitutes a site in which the exchange of diverse cultural perspectives may surface.

As Johnstone suggests, the matrix of possible status shifts is defined by the interaction between a single individual and at least one other. Status shifts in the upward direction can be effected in one of two possible ways, either through self-promotion, or through being raised through the action and/or utterance of another. Correspondingly, lowering status is managed either by the individual effort or is imposed on the individual by an exterior agent. In both instances what is important is not just the single manoeuvre, but the response to that manoeuvre. As the blind priest Tiresias reminds Oedipus, the rights of response are embedded within the language itself. Dialogue produces positions and its generative capacity is defined by physicist David Bohm:

> What we need is to be able to talk, to communicate. […] What is needed is dialogue in the real sense of the word 'dialogue', which means 'flowing through', amongst people rather than an exchange like a game of ping-pong. The word 'discussion' really means 'to break up everything', to analyse and have an exchange, like a game. We need this dialogue, and the spirit of dialogue is not competition, […] The basic idea of dialogue is to be able to talk, while suspending your opinions, holding them in front of you, while neither suppressing them nor insisting upon them. Not trying to convince, but simply to understand (1990:33).

The pedagogy of drama, theatre and performance may profit from being re-conceptualized through extending the exchange implied in dialogic relations to re-conceptualizing 'acting', in other words, redefining *acting* as *inter-action*, as an outwardly focused model of improvisation technique such as Johnstone proposes. This reformulation of acting appears to be an efficient means through which a collective project may be advanced. Foregrounding the instrumentality of *re-action and response* to a pronouncement (or gesture) reveals the extent to which reciprocal inter-dependence may be advanced as a performance strategy. These pronouncements and gestures may be interpreted as status markers (revealed as contingent on specific circumstance and value systems) and their deployment may be described as a means of negotiating diverse relations.[6]

[6] This kind of emphasis with an engaged critical practice stresses contextualized interpretation and analysis of a literary text rather than perpetuating the classic literary tradition as an underpinning for realization or delivery in performance.

Status positions are ordinarily defined and understood largely in terms of binary opposites,[7] which has the effect of separating and isolating individuals countenancing a performance mode in which each individual is solely responsible for crafting a persona and a performance. A practice that stresses the formative principles of modes of reception and the function of reciprocity in crafting relations between individuals counters tendencies towards self-expressive modes of display. Moreover, through countering the tendency to assume that any actor, or performer, is a sole author of their own performance, a range of goals may be accomplished. In terms of the individual, the scope opens up to develop a nuanced ability to deploy status dynamics with flair and confidence through being urged to experiment with unfamiliar idiomatic indices of assertion or submissiveness beyond customary boundaries of observing social 'niceties' or political correctness. More crucially, sustained opportunities to improvise as a collective, using the building blocks of improvisation (the tools and techniques of status-play and spontaneity advanced by Johnstone) may prove a means of forging an ensemble whose strength lies in an informed appreciation and understanding of both the dissociative and, alternatively, the integrative consequences of different forms of status manipulation.

Ultimately, the performance laboratory, like the rehearsal room and the stage, is a demarcated zone dedicated not so much to creating real life situations but to sharpening the skills required in the spontaneous and collaborative creation of performances informed by astute observations of behaviour, but nonetheless, like play, separate from consequence and damage to the individual psyche or extant inter-personal relations. Both improvisation studio and rehearsal room are spatio-temporal settings that are bounded, even though porous relations with the real world persist while participants engage with each other without the protective shield of scripted situations. The demands of spontaneous experiment in inter-personal relations entail a willingness to subject the self to some levels of emotional and physical risk, however carefully these might be framed. Discovering limitations in terms of one's personal being – physical, emotional and intellectual – and actively working to extend beyond those limits, is a potently generative but, equally, a potentially fraught process. As Simmel posits:

> For grasping the full significance of "boundaries" in our existence, the property of determinacy forms only the point of departure. For although the boundary as such is necessary, every single determinate boundary can be stepped over, every enclosure can be blasted, and […] finds or creates a new boundary. The pair of statements – that the boundary is unconditional, in that its existence is constitutive of our given position in the world, but that no boundary is unconditional, since every one can on principle be altered, reached over, gotten around – this pair of statements appears as the explication of the inner unity of vital action […] we are able to express our essence with a paradox: we are bounded in every direction and we are bounded in no direction (1971:354*).*

Johnstone's emphasis on reciprocal inter-dependence in the performance encounter emphasizes the importance of responses as a key mechanism through which the structure of a scene can be negotiated and interpreted. His insight that "Status is established not through staring, but by the

[7] The sets of antitheses are readily listed: active/passive; dominant/submissive; super-ordinate/sub-ordinate; superior/inferior; empowered/subjugated. These are markers at either end of a spectrum and tend to obscure the ambiguous and volatile continuum of the positions between these points.

reaction to staring" (1997:42)[8] has considerable implications. Since the response confirms or resists the initial utterance or gesture, the importance of genuinely interactive collaborative modes of performance is crucial.

While the concept of status invites an extended analysis of the rhetoric through which positions are articulated, played out and apprehended, the more extended instrumentality of improvisation technique lies in the capacity to embody and render these performatively. The heightened capacity to play radical social differences (generating an ensemble of competent and confident improvisers) may be deployed in two ways. Collective improvisation that stresses the generative capacity of self-authored improvised sequences patently serves as a basis for devising an original production which may then, however, acquire a quality of fixity in presentation to an audience. The second, and possibly more extreme, application of improvisation skills is to deploy them in collective interpretation and application to an existing text and develop a mode of presentation which remains improvised in its staging and presentation to an audience. This second application resists 'fixity' and retains the dynamic properties of that which is contingent. The shared construction of fresh shifts in spatio-temporal rhythms 'destabilizes' orthodox theatre-making conventions but depends on a shared conceptual map and technical proficiency. My contention is that taken to an extreme, this mode of investing the actor as an individual and the actors as an ensemble with the agency of shared spontaneous staging is a means of challenging authorial presence (either playwright or director) and directs the attention of the spectator towards languages of performance and interaction. To achieve this objective (and include the scope for spontaneous translation of the dialogue into vernacular) would constitute a radical shift in ways of presenting texts that are already stigmatized by colonial association, through empowering the actor and interrogating the medium of theatre itself.[9]

The scope of this thesis does not include developing a specific curriculum for implementation nor auditing any carefully conceived creative work, its rehearsal methods, presentation and reception. To attempt the former would contradict the central tenets that will emerge through the course of this study: any possible formulation of a curriculum geared towards implementing status-interaction within the pedagogy of improvisation could only be reliably regarded as provisional. The efficacy of

[8] "If we wish to humiliate and degrade a low-status person we attack him while refusing to let him switch his space off. A sergeant major will stand a recruit to attention and then scream at his face from about an inch away" (Johnstone 1997:59). Tolstoy, In *War and Peace*, structures an encounter between military personnel in Tsarist Russia and Napoleon's army along these lines. The personality and behaviour of Dolokhov on the parade ground conforms to Johnstone's observation.

> 'Call that standing to attention? What's that leg doing? That leg, what's it doing?' the general roared with his long suffering tone, and he was still five men short of Dolokhov, the man in the blue greatcoat. Dolokhov slowly straightened his leg, and looked brazenly with his clear eyes at the general's face.
> 'Why are you wearing a blue coat? Get it off! ... Sergeant-major! Change this man's coat...the filthy sw...'But he wasn't allowed to complete the word.
> 'General, I am bound to obey orders, but not to put up with..." Dolokhov spoke rapidly.
> 'No talking in the ranks! ... No talking there! No talking!'
> '...not to put up with insults,' Dolokhov persisted in a clear and confident voice. The eyes of the general and the private met. The general demurred, angrily pulling down on his tight scarf.
> 'Be so kind as to change your coat,' he said, and walked on (2007:119).

[9] Initiatives and outcomes of applying this proposition are informed by, rather than documented in, this study. *Much Ado About Nothing* (2006) and *The Julius Caesar Project* (2013) presented in the Wits Amphitheatre both experimented with this mode of staging Shakespeare. Both projects comprised a component of my teaching obligations, although they may be regarded as creative projects developed from research questions. Despite the possibility for either to serve as case studies for a "practice-led" research exercise, my determination is to exclude this mode of documenting my own creative practice in favour of a more broadly based scholarly enquiry into principles associated with and, indeed, partly underpinning those projects.

any methodology depends entirely on responding to the constant changes in the composition and dynamics of group participants. The alternative of implementing a set of research questions through a creative project and submitting an extended research report building on the outcome of that process was a tempting and well-considered option which, for multiple reasons, I elected not to pursue. A research model that grapples with documenting personal creative practice holds little appeal despite the imperatives of archiving work and disseminating the research objectives and methodologies deployed in that work.[10]

My interest in the generative capacity of improvisation and performance-making does not, I submit, preclude tackling that project through an entirely theoretical and abstract basis.[11] Rather, the practice of status-based improvisation pedagogy seems to invite extended reflection, discursive deliberation and evaluation. The project of engaging in a sustained scholarly and philosophical undertaking that demands reflection on accumulated practice and interrogates its principles and assumptions (via subjecting and articulating that practice through a specific framework) seemed more productive. The attractions were twofold: firstly, the paradigm, boundaries and concepts of the field may be expanded or modified through this philosophical and discursive scrutiny. Secondly, the scholarly undertaking afforded the potential to revisit familiar theoretical texts and expand the scope of the field through actively identifying a body of literature and theory in order to approach pedagogical and creative practice from a new angle. The rationale of undertaking a theoretical enquiry founded on experience of practice allows for reconsidering what a rigorous approach to improvisation pedagogy may offer in a South African context, simultaneously affording the opportunity to re-evaluate the disparate "fragments" of an eclectic engagement in scholarship and professional theatre in order to address three aspects of that practice, namely an interrogation of established models of performance training (as in Johnstone's programme), the socio-cultural realities of a contemporary South African experience and pleasures derived from a range of texts that constitute a literary and visual heritage. Focusing on interpretive and performative challenges asserted by a range of texts, would seem entirely consistent with academic protocols and research freedoms. While the proposed focus and register of this document requires shifts in modality and discourse, these shifts are seemingly inseparable from objectives that have been outlined since the thinking and writing straddles the pedagogical practice, close reading and interpretive exercises, theoretical explication and philosophical speculation. This lack of uniformity in focus and register requests some tolerance and accommodation from the reader.

My core concern lies in demonstrating the usefulness of status construction and interaction as an analytical tool, but also as an enabling mechanism in the improvisation component of performance training. Key to this project is the task of defining different sets of asymmetrical relations in social

[10] I acknowledge that this is a widely accepted and reputed form of academic practice and may well reflect efforts to "fix" that which is ephemeral, but recourse to such an approach simply does not appeal to me. I claim the scope to apply abstract critical response to an eclectic range of texts as a means to formulate an argument, if for no other reason than any attempt to "fix" that which is transient and spontaneous strenuously resists archival storage without recourse to a different medium, as Jonathan Miler so systematically argues. I am equally cognisant of the polysemic readings that accompany the interpretations and analyses through which this survey of status rhetoric is advanced: I readily concede that mutable permutations and "transformations" may shift the meanings and values that the selected texts suggest.

[11] My focus will indeed be predominantly literary since my aim encompasses demonstrating the extent to which a range of supposedly "literary texts" are constructed around the improvised or unexpected encounter. Semiotic theory alerts me to the distinction between the "dramatic text" as a form of literary expression and the "performance text". It may be supposed that improvisation is exclusively contained within the parameters of "practice", but that very assumption is being interrogated by the analysis that I adopt.

organizations and groups. Further, any enquiry into group dynamics must engage with questions pertaining to the position of the individual in relation to a collective. A close corollary of this focus, indeed inseparable from it, is the need to clarify what is implicit in 'position' with its association with fixity and, more importantly, the resistance to the constraints such fixity might impose. Status shifts may be revealed through the temporal aspect of the action but are equally dependent on articulation through spatial configurations which are made visible in a series of unfolding tableaux. The spatial and temporal components of performance can be understood in Ernst Cassirer's terms: "Space and time are the framework in which all reality is concerned. We cannot conceive of any real thing except under conditions of space and time" (1992:42). The extent to which status is shifting, with a focus on relations between points and individuals, rather than it being a static and fixed entity, becomes a means of approaching the concept of inter-action and action and transfers the analytical focus from narrative content to the manner in which transitions take place.

Shifts between positions are at the heart of social encounters. Transitions between positions suggest transformations which range from overt and extreme to negligible and subtle markers of changes produced in time and space. These *transitions between points*, as clumsy as the term may be, serves to introduce action (the concept central to the Western dramatic tradition)[12] with its attendant implications and consequences, debates and repercussions that reverberate from it. The arc of tragic action in its trajectory invariably entails levels of extreme demotion and promotion in status. Lear, the archetypal patriarch, father and all powerful king, will be dispossessed of authority and reason, learn to inhabit the condition of the "basest beggar" and discover affinity with "poor naked wretches"; Cleopatra, dynastic Ptolemy Queen and mistress of a Roman triumvir, will identify herself as "no more than e'en a woman" on a par with "a maid that does the meanest chores". The motif of transcendence in the resolution of their respective narratives depends on the loss of political and personal authority as a necessary precursor to restoration and redemption. This trajectory traces what can be termed "maximum status gaps"[13] and makes rigorous demands on an actor's expressive apparatus in materializing or presenting these extremes modes of being to an audience.

Maximum status gaps may be explicitly articulated in relations *between* characters, or between an individual and a group: Mark Antony, in the course of his funeral oration to Julius Caesar, 'improvises' an appeal to the plebeians in a register and discourse that masks the discrepancies between their position and his. The Western canon consistently pronounces the hero through the theme of differentiation and distinction, reproducing a discourse of singularity. It is axiomatic of the liberal humanist dramatic idiom that this hero, while standing out from his community, nonetheless emerges from that collective as a representative who engages in an active dialogue with its members. Action and interaction continually challenge or negate a maximum status gap, and,

[12] Samuel Weber, in *Theatricality as Medium*, (2004) argues consistently that the "obsession" with occupying a place from which one can take in, at a glance, the totality of the dramatic narrative – at the point of *synopsis* – is fraught with fundamental contradictions. In his view, *Oedipus Tyrannos*, far from endorsing and exemplifying the core principles of dramaturgy posited by Aristotle, actually serves as its "theatrical dismantling" and challenges notions of autonomy and the unified subject. Oedipus' desire for fixity is conflated with this sense of autonomy and presumes a present moment that will remain inviolable. This disallows the key insight that enabled him to answer the sphinx's riddle: a riddle that demanded recognizing the condition of man as subject to transformation.

[13] Keith Johnstone's term is an alternative to more explicit 'dominant/equal/submissive' relations. These terms are potentially highly charged, but even the more neutral, if clumsy terms posited by Simmel, "sub-ordinate/co-ordinate/subordinate" stress specific points. Johnstone stresses 'the relations between' rather than the individual points.

through doing so, arouse and sustain dramatic tension. The antithetical model of minimal status gaps, close affinities between members of a collective and the nodes of tension in the small status shifts in this type of formation, is perhaps an even more productive terrain with which to engage. This field describes more egalitarian social relations and structures, and subsequently, more readily reflects contemporary social organization and custom.

**A provisional definition of status.**

Status positions are continually and discursively produced through inter-personal expression and encounter and may be provisionally defined as "a set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations" (Shepherd and Wallis 2004:78). Accordingly, status markers inhere in, and may be communicated through, physical appearance and manner,[14] in posture and gesture, in spatial organization and relation to territory. These embodied attributes of status, operating visually and spatially, are sufficiently rich in conveying denotative and connotative meanings that entire media and genres of cultural expression (mime, dance and silent film) constitute a field in which narratives, replete with indices of status and status shifts, are available for analysis. In everyday life, as in the medium of print and dramatic performance, exchanges may depend on dialogue in which both semantic and para-linguistic (or non-semantic) indices of disposition communicate the relations between the speaker and the implied listener. Register, tone and inflection traceable in the written text as in the spoken utterance, may serve to augment, or contradict and undercut, the verbal contents of the statement being made. The basic model of status transitions pertains to silent physical languages as much as to the multiple media of oral communication.

The study of status relations converges with, and is underpinned by, questions of autonomy and agency and the conventions, systems or structures that constrain freedom of expression. The simplest communication model proposes a sender or transmitter as the 'author/agent' of the utterance, the message (transmitted in a particular medium) and the receiver. Each of these, as Thompson (1990) sets out, is contextually situated and these contexts may coincide or be distinctly separated. The hermeneutic exercise of attributing meaning to any gesture, utterance or text, is informed by, and dependent on, the process of evaluation, making a judgment which valorizes or discriminates in response to that utterance or text. The exercise of valorization and discrimination is framed and informed by the ways in which power and meaning become inseparable because both operate socially and are consolidated in "structures and social institutions" of a particular context, producing and reproducing a particular discourse. Within this circuit of communication, in symbolic forms as in everyday life, status inflections may emerge as one of the mechanisms through which subjectivity itself is produced.

Status is literally defined as "state; condition; standing; position, rank, importance, in society or in any group" (*Chambers English Dictionary).* Alain de Botton, in *Status Anxiety,* traces its etymology: it is "derived from the Latin *statum* or standing (past participle of the verb *stare*, to stand" (2005:3) and suggests that the "narrow" or literal sense refers to "one's legal or professional standing within a group" distinguishing this from "the broader – and here more relevant – sense, to one's value and importance in the eyes of the world" (2005:3). In *Politics*, Andrew Heywood writes:

[14] The body is a tool in a (culturally contingent) expressive language. Symbolic markers proliferate across bearing and posture, patterns of eye contact between individuals, indices of attentive listening, gestural vocabularies, proxemic relations, conformity to dress codes and the "ideal body", or not, as the case may be.

> Status is a person's position within a hierarchical order. It is characterized by the person's role, rights and duties in relation to other members of that order. As status is a compound of factors such as honour, prestige, standing and power, it is more difficult to determine than an essentially economic category such as class. Also, because it is a measure of social respect (that is, a measure of whether someone is 'higher' or 'lower' on a social scale), it is more subjective. While traditional societies typically possess clear and fixed status hierarchies, these are more fluid in modern industrial societies in which status often correlates, if *imprecisely*, with wealth and occupation (2002:191, my emphasis).

This definition stresses ways in which status is both relational and dynamic. Heywood, in distinguishing status from class, articulates a more nuanced and complex set of determinants of agency or subjugation, pointing towards ways in which status positions are constituted and constructed through multiple and potentially conflicting variables. It is precisely because the concept of status cuts across the categories of class, caste or race, that it offers a means of challenging reductive notions of personhood lodged within these socio-economic indices of personhood.

The articulation of status positions is inseparable from a specific context or the "politics and ideology, social custom and beliefs, folklore and religion, habits and conventions, all the other mental bric-a-brac that constitute a culture and a way of life" (Figes 2003:xxvi). Processes of valorization and discrimination are culturally and contextually contingent, framing encounters by specifying the terms through which status is raised or lowered. The determinants of status are variable and provisional and, operating as a matrix, may be deemed "the specific contents" through which positions are negotiated.[15] The underlying grammar of status positions and dynamics can be extrapolated and understood as patterns independent of these particulars.

De Botton and Heywood both stress ways in which status is relational and dynamic. When it comes to exemplifying instances of how multiple economies operate to produce and reproduce ideals cross-culturally (and historically) in diverse media and social practices, the exercise takes on the quality of a game. In words, images, and deeds individuals either gain credibility and stature, or lose face, through representation as in life. Status dynamics animate the narrative of contemporary newspaper cartoons in the same way as they inspire Peter Paul Rubens' painting *The Judgement of Paris;* they sustain the momentum of creative narratives in lyric idiom and in prose, from Homer's *Illiad* to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Leni Riefenstahl's black and white *Olympia* (1938) documents the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936 (celebrating Hitler's supremacy) while Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Downfall* reconstructs the Fűhrer's Berlin bunker during the final days of the Second World War. The dramatic reconstruction depends on the artistry and technical accomplishments of Bruno Ganz in a re-enactment of historical record. Battles for dominance in territorial possession and displays of skill are played out between rival packs in public sports stadia before capacity crowds; un-witnessed teams endure extreme conditions in order to be the first to reach the South Pole. Physical prowess, strength and stamina along with technical skill determine the outcome of these contests. On Rubens' canvas, as the loveliest and most desirable amongst immortal women, Aphrodite steps forward unhesitatingly to claim the prized golden apple from Paris, just as annually beauty pageants from Miss Soweto to Miss World promise the crown to that one beauty among the

[15] The relation between form and content is made by Simmel, for whom the distinction becomes a tool enabling analysis across categories that would not otherwise avail themselves to consideration because of the apparent anomalies that distinguish and separate them.

aspiring finalists whose 'natural' attributes best conform to (contestable) ideals of beauty. Intellectual prowess and artistic excellence are inherent in the very notion of genius and its celebration. The persistence of the Renaissance conflation of singularity with supreme mastery and excellence endorses the value of intellectuals, scientists and artists alike, and secures for each a place in the historical record. Status-based trajectories structure a range of comedic forms, from the silent antics of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton to the adventures of Sacha Baron Cohen in *Borat* and *Bruno*. They define the arc of tragic action, from the epitome of Western tragedy, *Oedipus Tyrannos,* to the death of Willy Loman in 20th Century America.

Keith Johnstone suggests that it is crucial to privilege status markers in interpreting **t**he dramatic text as status shifts are central to articulating dramatic action. He writes:

> Many writers of great talent have failed to write successful plays (Blake, Keats, Tennyson among others) because of a failure to understand that drama is not primarily a literary art [...] A great play is a virtuoso display of status transactions...we are pecking order animals and this affects the tiniest details of our behaviour **(**1997:74).

Even *Waiting for Godot,* the High Modernist text, in which 'nothing happens', Johnstone suggests, is animated by a series of status relations: "The 'tramps' play friendship status, but there's continual friction because Vladimir believes himself higher than Estragon, a thesis which Estragon will not accept. Pozzo and Lucky play maximum-gap master-servant scenes" (1997:72). The exchanges between Vladimir and Estragon are premised on a relationship of close affinity where a minimal status gap, or, in other words, ostensible equitability exists between the two characters. Affiliation and likeness pattern an exchange in a register entirely different from that of the classical tragic paradigm. If, at its basic level, the dramatic rhythm in comedy, tragedy and variants in modern idiom is shaped by transitions and shifts in status, the same motif serves to texture the surface level of the text, serving to colour the smallest unit of dramatic exchange. Miranda's timorous advocacy of Ferdinand implicitly contradicts her father, Prospero, and is met with the stinging retort: "What, I say, / My foot, my tutor?" (*The Tempest* I. ii). Age, wisdom, experience and patriarchal authority are fiercely dismissive of the naïve challenge of youth. The complex determinants of position are continually enforced in social relations and their representation and are constitutive of these structured relations. Encoded in myth and enshrined in metaphor, absorbed into the clichés of everyday conversation or flagrantly displayed in advertising promises, a cultural hegemony announces value systems through conflating the tropes of desirability with prominence or centrality.

Since Johnstone's work has been the starting point for my deliberations on status, spontaneity and performance training and since his ideas are central to my thinking, it is to his definitions and their application that I turn. Status play, and status interaction occupies a pivotal position in his thinking and work. The first chapter of his seminal and influential text *Impro* is entitled "Status" and most explicitly addresses issues developed in the course of his practice. At the outset Johnstone articulates his preoccupation with problems attendant on the improvised reproduction of the casual encounters of everyday life. He was dissatisfied with dialogue and the situations being generated, which he criticizes as dull and uninteresting, and ultimately 'theatrical' in the pejorative sense. This led to experimenting with the first of what he terms "status exercises". In honing the definition of status, Johnstone makes an ostensibly simple observation: "Status seems to me to be a useful term, providing the difference between the status you are and *the status you play* is understood*"* (1997:36, my emphasis). Understanding the nuance here is crucial for any sustained application of ways in which status is implicit in behaviour (lodged in dispositions of the body as much as the

utterance) rather than being a fixed or acquired condition. Crucially, Johnstone delineates between "playing status" and "*having* status".

Johnstone explicitly links status interaction with drives that underpin the desire to dominate or to adopt a submissive position. But as he suggests:

> Status is a confusing terms unless it is understood as something one *does.* You may be low in social status, but play high, and vice versa. For example:
>
> TRAMP: 'Ere! Where are you going?
>
> DUCHESS: I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch...
>
> TRAMP: Are you deaf as well as blind? (1997:36).[16]

Equating social rank with status dispositions results in presenting a flattening of identity in performance and in dramatic writing: it produces little more than a stereotype. The definition of status that serves the purposes of the political scientist, student of economic history or even feminist historian may be too abstract in calibration to have any value in activating performance training with the contradictions that typify the everyday enactments of asymmetrical relations. The determinants of race, class and gender readily extend to incorporate discrepancies in age, physical strength, intellectual and creative prowess, educational and occupational identity, and ways in which the individual accords with particular sets of ideals. The polarities and dynamics of how positions of agency are constructed through these categories can be identified and scrutinized productively.

**Contextualizing a personal position and this project in pedagogical and creative domains.**

My critical, creative and pedagogical position is informed by the accrued experiences of teaching and theatre-making in South Africa: 1982 – 2013. Highly influential approaches to developing and presenting new and specifically local texts have formed a core understanding and appreciation for collaborative means of arriving at a public presentation. The approaches to text and performance associated with the multiple partnerships whose work was showcased at the Market Theatre during the 1980's requires brief explication as an indication of the practice-based work that underpins an otherwise entirely analytical and philosophically focused enquiry.

The 1980's was a fraught period of South African history during which a series of States of Emergency were imposed as increasingly draconian means of constraining sites of resistance. Despite the implementation of these measures, the Market Theatre gained recognition as a fulcrum for emergent and experimental work, advancing hybrid forms of dramatic and theatrical expression. The impetus to forge productive allegiances, collaborations and fertile oppositional platforms operating in direct antithesis to the State and its apparatuses, united a small fraternity of individuals from different cultural backgrounds and geographically disparate parts of the country. It also provided a well-spring of diverse experiences on which to draw in terms of developing new material and its presentation style. This body of work is characterized by a preoccupation with personal testimony and the gritty observation of the interplay between individual subjectivities and collective understanding of the multi-faceted dimensions of life in South Africa. The corpus of Barney Simon (Artistic director, writer and theatre maker) is distinctive for its eclectic range which seamlessly blended a repertoire of new South African drama with re-staging classics of world theatre.

[16] The contradiction between social class and the status played reiterated in this example invokes the character of dustman philosopher Alfred P. Doolittle of *Pygmalion*. The antithesis of the distinguished phonetician, Professor Higgins, born to social privilege, imbued with a reputation as an eminent professional pioneer, is notably without emotional intelligence or tolerance.

Similarly, the critical writing and thinking of Njabulo S. Ndebele is informed by extensive reading practices and his cogent arguments (advanced in essays collated in the anthology *Rediscovery of the Ordinary*) are developed from close readings of the writing of Sol Plaatje as much as his thinking draws on the ideas of Brecht and Walter Benjamin along with being grounded in wide and subtle reading of Western classics. As Ashwin Desai's *Reading Revolution: Shakespeare on Robben Island* documents, the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (along with Shakespeare's plays) circulated amongst political visionaries during their years of incarceration. These texts initiated literacy projects and stimulated analysis of the political and cultural future of South Africa. The point is not made in order to defend the veracity of my drawing on the repository of the Western literary archive or epistemologies, but in the interests of establishing the extent to which two cultural and analytical territories, to cite Edward Said, "intertwine and over-lap" as part of a historical liberation discourse and continue to do so.

It is beyond my present ambit and my primary concern to return to the much celebrated dramatic and theatrical texts (acknowledged as central to an emergent canon of South African plays) which continue to underpin contemporary practice. In any event, these texts (through which South African theatre and its dramatic tradition have been developed) are the primary subjects of drama studies or are revived professionally in varying degrees of frequency. I invoke these texts briefly, less as valued literary artefacts, but rather to stress that it is the mode through which these plays were derived that makes them valuable. Devised through research, improvisation and workshopping on the part of an ensemble, this body of work may well have served as experiments anticipating a citizenship of the future predicated on a culture of human rights and equal agency under the law, idealized as that may have been. The ethos of intercultural engagement and the commitment to the equitability of all participants seems to provide a template worth re-instating as it offers much to the pedagogy of transformation that stresses promoting the agency, responsibility and accountability of all players. Oppositional theatre practices of the 1980's were undergirded by a tacit understanding of the need to respect all contributors to the collective project as much as engaging with the value systems and cultural frameworks, or the life experiences from which they were derived. Working on the plays being developed during 1986 meant dealing with the multiple perspectives of a society characterized by profound asymmetries and the divisive experiences of life in South Africa. Dullah Omar, then Minister of Justice, introduced the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act in Parliament 17 May 1995. He described not only the goal of the period of transition but also the socio-political consequences of Apartheid, stressing the need to "leave behind the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice" (TRC Report 1998:48). The implementation of that goal, despite legislative intervention, policy formulation and guidelines, remains a process fraught by multiple embedded inequities that continue to structure social relations and cultural formations.

At least superficially, the inclusion of modules of improvised play within a performance training programme appears to circumvent favouring any particular cultural heritage associated with a specific corpus of dramatic literature or any specific performance style. But the assumption may prove fallacious and inexpedient in disavowing ways in which behavioural routines and the presentation of self cannot be considered neutral but are, rather, discursively constructed and the mechanisms of this process routinely naturalized. Improvised interaction has little option but to draw on the repositories of individual experience, socialization and acculturation. Spontaneously generated performances frequently emphasize how the body (and the self as subject) is culturally

produced and imprinted through multiple indices. The incorporation and reiteration of current social experiences reproduces, albeit unintentionally, the prevailing discourses that are recognizable in the very patterns of social action and behaviour within the ostensible tabula rasa or a text-free zone.

The cultural historian Orlando Figes, concluding his introduction to *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, writes:

> Using art and fiction, diaries and letters, memoirs and prescriptive literature, [this book] seeks to apprehend the structures of the Russian national identity. 'Identity' these days is a fashionable term. But it is not very meaningful unless one can show how it manifests itself in *social action and behaviour*. A culture is made up not simply of works of art, or literary discourses, but of unwritten codes, signs and symbols, rituals and gestures, and common attitudes that fix the public meaning of these works and organize the inner life of a society (Figes 2003:xxxiii, my emphasis).

To the extent that "social action and behaviour" are the building blocks of drama, dramatic performance depends on their inscription in either text-based interpretations or spontaneous improvisation. Both modalities articulate the "unwritten codes, signs and symbols" embedded in social relations and, in both instances, the construction of meaning and value depends on contextualized interpretation. Figes itemizes cultural artefacts, texts and objects which combine to shape and announce an evolving national identity. He expands on this to incorporate the reception and value accorded to these texts in which "unwritten codes, signs and symbols" are inscribed. Unlike Figes, this thesis makes no attempt to grapple with cultural forms as expression of the contestable concept of national identity, but is rather concerned with reformulating the purchase of status dynamics within the context of teaching, learning and cultural expression. The attempt to articulate a monolithic sense of a national South African identity is forced to begin by acknowledging the pluralities and diversities of what this might be. As Barney Simon observed of the mid-1980's:

> In the beginning there was work. Work of a specific passion, relevance and commitment. Work intended for all the people of South Africa, work that attempted to address our place and time….When we began in 1976, we lived in a terrible but deceptively simple time. Today complexity is our given. The world we live in changes every day – marked by States of Emergency, news clampdowns, strikes, stayaways, sanctions and cruel factionalism…to penetrate any kind of truth that speaks for all of us is virtually impossible (Schwartz 1988:205).

The proposition that advancing "any kind of truth that speaks for all of us is virtually impossible" in the teaching and learning domain (as in the public arena of theatre-making ) is no less true of South Africa today.

The increasing practice of re-defining the stage as a platform for the expression of personal experience and individual psychology is a manifestation of the encroachment of a therapeutic discourse pervading Anglo-American culture on the one hand (as persuasively accounted for by Fank Furedi in *Therapy Culture: cultivating vulnerability in an uncertain age* (2004), and the institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, its mandate, structure and processes, on the other. One consequence of this form of theatre and assembling the irrefutable integrity of subjective testimony is a valorization of emotion which inculcates a particular range and mode of responses on the part of an audience. This bias may restrict our understanding of the capacity of

theatre to engage us on other levels, specifically formally (or aesthetically) and politically. It also seems to circumscribe critical interrogation and evaluation of the formal and artistic merits of the presentation through asserting the need to respect both subjectivity and content which are valued over the manipulation of the languages of performance. While there may be much that has been gained by pursuing the notion of presenting personal testimony in the public domain along with the subsequent experiments in intensifying the tenor of these theatrical presentations, this model, arguably gaining hegemonic credibility, is not the only model for theatre-making and performance scholars profit from being alerted to other paradigms. It is thus partially in response to the encroachment and colonization of the stage by performances that appear exclusively focused on individual subjectivities, that the need to re-assert the social dynamics of interaction on the part of an ensemble seems crucial. Furedi's critique of "therapy culture", advanced from the perspective of the sociologist, informs the position towards generative creative practice that I adopt. In his view, the intensified preoccupation with "mental health" and well-being promotes a heightened sense of individuality, isolation and even "morbidity" at the expense of "a sense of common purpose, unity or commitment to fight" socio-political constraints (2004:16). As he demonstrates, recourse to therapeutic paradigms can "overwhelm other more traditional codes of meaning" through promoting the value of "exploring and engaging with the inner-self" (2004:17).

The critique of therapy discourse should not be interpreted as a negation of the value of therapeutic intervention in the real and crucial instances in which mediation and intervention is urgently required and proves enabling. What is at stake, rather, is the extent to which the idiom of therapy and therapeutic methods may pertain to, or pervade, the project of collective endeavour in honing improvisation skills and creating performance texts. It is in this context, and as an alternative to the prevalence of improvised personal narratives, that the exercise of textual close reading occupies a marginalized position. Rigorous critical practice and reference to multiple artworks may as productively demonstrate and promote the understanding of how social dynamics operate to shape performances. Introducing the wide range of texts available for analysis and critique on the basis of content and form in an improvisation class thus modifies the Johnstonian model of improvisation and serves to expand "cultural capital" within the practical class. The process of enabling the capacity to create performances arguably profits from confronting (rather than refuting) the dualism embedded in its own practice: critical reception and analysis of texts (authored by others) may invigorate creative practice. The inter-changeability of roles in processes of generating or receiving and interpreting texts, between formulating an aesthetic and responding and critiquing the treatment of a theme and forging a critical appreciation of how the performance speaks to a contemporary context and through what register , seems axiomatic to a pedagogy founded on praxis. Linking the pleasurable aspects of improvisation to the project of textual analysis as a correlative activity may well be the means of circumventing solipsistic tendencies and facilitate a focus outwards from the self not only towards fellow participants in the creative project, but also towards the instrumentality of cultural expressions.

The reinforcement of personal narrative central to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process operated in conjunction with a larger project which was to construct an archive of diverse and previously unacknowledged South African experiences. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was founded on four inter-related definitions of truth: empirical data or evidentiary truth, personal or subjective truth (proffered and recorded as a form of personal narrative), "social and dialogic truth" and "healing or restorative truth". The order suggests a complex layering which operates in

the interests of transforming society and forging links between individual and collective experiences. It is difficult to ignore the interplay of multiple narratives implied in "social and dialogic truth" with its emphasis on exchange and reciprocal recognition as a precursor to the reconciliatory goal implied in "healing and restorative truth". This understanding, grounded in recent political and historical events, begins to problematize relations between the individual and the collective in a manner that may be socially unique to the post-Apartheid context. The tensions between celebrating the individual subject or that which is communal once again renders this study vulnerable to a critique of setting up binary tensions attached to psychologically, sociologically or politically formulated views of subjectivity and the collective, from either an African or Western perspective.

Current imperatives of empowerment and redress currently dominate curriculum planning and pedagogical practice within the academy as much as within the broader socio-cultural sphere of professional creative practice. The analysis of status dynamics locates the pertinence of this study to both domains. Status interaction, predicated on a more complex matrix of determinants than categories of race, caste or class, offers a way of addressing aspects of agency or subjugation that are central to dimensions of life in South Africa today. In so far as social institutions and cultural practices are structured through individuals occupying designated positions and roles, the modality with which the individual embodies that role is relationally and socially contingent, subject to continual affirmation or challenge and multiple variables. The understanding of positions of agency (or, conversely, disempowerment) manifested in relations between subjects emerges as a major theme of representations in multiple media expressed through a variety of motifs. Issues of autonomy or constraint are as embedded in the processes of interpreting and performing extant dramatic texts as they are in evidence in the project of devising new works.

To the extent that antagonism has a "constitutive role in social life" (Mouffe 2005:2) and is manifested in a competitive engagement between players, the theoretical apparatus of play theory along with sociological analysis of dominance and subjugation, provide ways to acknowledge and contain assertive or aggressive impulses in favour of inculcating a collaborative ethos in improvisation. Johnstone proposes that status positions are embedded in social behaviour and values, cultural habits and routines. This observation profits from thorough theoretical articulation and interrogation, specifically in relation to the notion of a self at the centre of multiple subject positions as a sociologically framed enquiry into behaviour and interaction proposes.

A pedagogical practice undergirded by dialogic participation and exchange, overtly serves the objective of increasing the agency of the performer and serves as a means of reinforcing ways of dismantling traditional hierarchies and boundaries. This approach to pedagogy, creative practice and art-making embraces the contingent and provisional while simultaneously underscoring the practice of sustained active participation in a joint venture. Moreover, this modality locates the task of generating and debating possible meanings and values within a local and specific context and is aligned with views advanced by Chantal Mouffe in *The Return of the Political.* She writes about:

> … the rehabilitation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis.* This 'ethical knowledge', distinct from the knowledge specific to the sciences (*episteme),* is dependent on the ethos, the cultural and historical conditions current in the community, and implies a renunciation of all pretence to universality. This is a kind of rationality proper to the study of human praxis, which excludes all possibility of a 'science' of practice but which demands the

> existence of a 'practical reason', a region not characterized by apodictic statements, where the reasonable prevails over the demonstrable (2005:14).

The interplay of dominance and subjugation is by no means a prerogative of Western culture as both pre-colonial and post-colonial African historical accounts attest. Perhaps the most definitive disavowal of the colonial project is for contemporary South African artists, cultural practitioners and theatre-makers to address the idiom of a colonial culture and, through readings that foreground questions of power and status, to understand how these texts may be interpreted through the prism of a post-Apartheid lens. The reluctance to engage with literary and dramatic traditions that have their origins elsewhere, as much of the denial of the validity of such a method on the grounds of so-called relevance, risks perpetuating a form of wilful subservience to that which remains beyond comprehension and assimilation – a premise that is both patently unpalatable and defeatist.

Setting the question of provenance to one side, the issue of interrogating disparate modes of expression with their impetus and affect assumes a significant dimension in this study and requires accounting for and establishing the 'value' of the texts addressed. Since my project negotiates intervals between theoretically reasoned or interpretively advanced propositions and the values that are produced through ways in which behaviour embedded in texts and artworks construct the very fabric of ways of being in the world, the integrity of cultural expressions and symbolic forms (as products of the imagination rather than as objects of a systematic scientific scrutiny) is an aspect of creative and pedagogical practice that I foreground.

Since the experience of difference has divisive connotations in a local context and invokes volatile, disputatious and even uncontainable dimensions it seems crucial to identify some means of detachment and distance from this aspect of social relations. For this reason, this study will be largely confined to the *representation* of status dynamics across a number of texts rather than be confined to the sustained analysis of either a particular creative project or pedagogical experiment. The juxtaposition of a series of close readings of these texts affords the means of constructing a deeper and more comprehensive appreciation of ways in which a young performer can be guided towards different ways of embodying dominance or subjugation in relation to another or a group. Integral to developing this skill is the concomitant understanding that the way in which status is represented is constantly subject to reception and interpretation by spectators or audience with whom yet another relationship is established which is likewise underpinned by status determinants.

I propose that the ways in which status interplay may be manifested profits from the reflexive and analytical processes of engaging with a range of literary texts rather than relying on the live encounter or an account of various class exercises with their achievements and limitations. In both instances, the inter-personal or outward-focused close observation of the nuances of interaction and social behaviour comprises the core area of analysis and discovery. As Njabulo S. Ndebele argued in his Sol Plaatje Memorial lecture at the University of Boputhatstwana in 1984:

> The written word, being so central to the experience of the modern world, and the vast possibilities for intellectual development that it offers, must be brought to the centre of modern popular consciousness. The path of real liberation lies in that direction (2006: 97).

The method of sustained inter-textual close reading – whether a fragment of a real life encounter on the street or in the improvisation studio, a 'beat' within a performance or the more orthodox

scholarly analysis and interpretations of a literary text, or a hybrid of these – depends on attention to the minutiae of what transpires or unfolds in order to engage with the processes of social encounters rather than merely assimilating surfaces. It is my observation that in a multi-lingual teaching and learning context, in which the English language is the medium of communication, many second language students, in translating fragments of text into mother-tongue for the purposes of familiarization and ownership of that text, offer fresh insights to the texture of an encounter and that the improvisation studio and rehearsal room destabilizes assumptions of cultural capital customarily defining respective participants. It is through sustained close reading, repetitive play with deliveries and interpretations that purposes, meanings and values are recognized as variable and culturally contingent.

To the extent that 'ways of knowing' about the world and the human condition are the subject of art, the kinds of perceptions and insights that art can produce differs from knowledge and research paradigms that are the outcomes of abstract thinking.[17] My argument will be constructed through drawing on a range of sources, extrapolating from theoretical literature pertaining to models of performance training, shifts in dramaturgical paradigms and philosophical perspectives in order to establish and delineate a conceptual framework.[18] A grid of ideals and objectives that charts shifts in paradigms of presentation (together with their ideological bases) is closely bound up in fundamental aspects of creating work to set before an audience in South Africa today. My recourse to, and reliance on, insights drawn from a re-assessment of Western authorities culled from disparate contexts and discourses (Aristotle and Shakespeare, Artaud and Brecht, Simmel and Huizinga)[19] provides the means to demonstrate that the Western tradition is less monolithic and more flexible than the simple categorization of 'Western vs. African' allows. It may be that in my reception and interpretation of these texts I am 'displaced' by virtue of occupying a de-centred position from the cultures from which these texts originate. Equally, if incongruously and invidiously, I occupy an outsider rather than insider position in relation to a heritage of 'African' performance cultures, despite my long term and on-going collaboration with eminent black theatre-makers, writer and directors. The privilege of some thirty years of experience in professional and community theatre alerts me to the realisation that I am as inadequately attuned to nuances and

[17] Marx's critique of Hegel in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* begins with defining logic as "the *currency* of the mind […] *thought externalized* and hence *thought* abstracting from nature and actual men. It is *abstract* thinking." And a few paragraphs later: "The *philosopher* – himself an abstract form of alienated man – sets himself up as a *measuring rod* of the alienated world. The entire *history of externalization* and the *withdrawal* from externalization is therefore nothing but the *history of production* of abstract, that is, of absolute, logical, speculative thought"(Easton and Guddat 1997:319).

[18] Plato's Socratic dialogues, according to Cassirer, introduce a "new activity and function of thought which is a distinctive feature of the philosophy of Socrates. Philosophy, which had hitherto been conceived as an intellectual monologue, is transformed into a dialogue" (1992:5). This thesis has the formal attributes of the monologue but adopts the use of extensive footnotes. The reasons for this are pragmatic and conventional but also intrinsic to the core ideas around inter-active encounters. Observing conventional use, the footnotes substantiate and contextualize a point being made; they serve to incorporate an observation tangential to the trajectory of the argument or anticipate links and connections with material to be addressed subsequently; they provide the reader with ready access to textual material being analysed and just as rehearsing a scene allows for multiple interpretive and performative expressions in delivery, footnotes are a means of resisting closure and allowing nuance to be retained. The footnotes become a formal solution to resisting the implications of a monologue and provide an opportunity to make explicit the heteroglossic dimensions of scholarship along with demonstrating the ways in which meaning may be generated in the spaces between phenomena.

[19] The conceptual framework is based on the premise that far from having been rendered obsolete, core theoretical texts may be cast in a new light and re-examined in the light of contemporary experiences and needs. The project of recitation and re-interpretation of extant texts is as central to the project of theatre-making as writing a new work that incentivizes scholarship and research.

vacillations within that idiom as I am set at a distance from the 'Western tradition'.[20] Michael Vaughn, in addressing an equivalent dilemma, writes:

> As one white academic critic, I have certainly felt myself drawn more and more to the position that most socially significant developments in literature in South Africa are taking place in black township literature. To engage with this developing literature in a social-critical spirit has come to represent an absolute critical priority. At the same time, this engagement raises the question of critical 'address'. Black township literature is written by and for the inhabitants of black townships: its concepts, and the criticism and self-criticism that sustain and correct it are derived largely from the ideological and political milieu of the township – a milieu I do not share, except in the form of certain texts, which furthermore, come to me divorced from their normative contextual associations
> (cited in Ndebele, N.S. 2006:11).

Unlike Vaughn, writing in 1982, my primary role is not that of scholarly critic, but that of creative collaborator (in the professional domain) and educator in creative practice (within the academy). My position vis-à-vis making decisions on a critical framework and electing to analyse a nominated range of texts is, however, not exempt from the difficult questions that he poses. Thirty years have elapsed since Vaughn's articulation of the personal and ideological considerations bound up in cross-cultural critical analysis of emergent literatures. Those years have included the seismic transition from a fascist violation of human dignities to one based on enfranchisement and equal opportunity for all since the first democratic elections of 1994. The work of archivists and historians is occupied with assembling cultural artefacts previously devalued and the efforts of socially committed literary and performance traditions have tended to develop in two directions: resuscitative operations which seek "to reveal and restore" works and practices that had previously been prohibited from widespread dissemination, or "progressive socially engaged" works that hybridize innovation with tradition in the commitment to democratization (Ndebele 2006: 128 -131).

I submit that while improvisation training offers the scope to develop the facility to embody the rhythmic structure of either an improvisation or a scripted text, what excites me beyond this set of outcomes is that it seems to provide scope for a genuinely radical intervention in theatre today. If so, its implementation depends on formulating stringently clear concepts and the methods through which to implement them. Improvisation is a mechanism for resisting notions of fixity and closure, and informed status play offers a means to negate the automatically reproduced routines replicating a studied delivery between actors that are resolved anterior to the presentation itself. Uncritical replication of pedagogical methods that reproduce a surface imitation of a method developed by another and in a different context can only reduce the vigour and relevance of that approach to muddied incoherence. By linking performance training (in its technical sense) with critical and engaged social theory, improvisation may become a tool for probing distinctions in performance styles, and engage with contemporary debates and the distinctions between representation, play and theatricality. Improvised status inflections and a command of the play ethic unsettle the "dull"

[20] The uneasy tension between a subject and cultural expressions and forms is an issue that Simmel offers some insight into, as will be outlined later in this document. I acknowledge an inherent distancing mechanism vis-à-vis my own professional position and the subject of this thesis: my primary areas of teaching and professional practice are firmly anchored in visual languages and theatre design. The opportunity to diversify into the field of performance studies in the late 1980's was one that presented challenges regarding which method and mode I may reasonably advance. Improvisation pedagogy remains a secondary aspect of my teaching portfolio.

imitative performance modes which may be little more than a series of well-rehearsed, drilled and externally imposed gestures. This may signal a means through which actors, as an ensemble, acquire genuinely radical agency in inter-acting with each other and, as importantly, an audience. It is these propositions that I deem pedagogically, creatively and philosophically stimulating.

**The structure and method adopted for this thesis.**

I adopt the method of a critical interpretive analysis of a range of literary and dramatic texts (in the medium of English, or translated into English) to test the efficacy of an analysis focused on (although not entirely restricted to) status dynamics. In the interests of expanding the conceptual framework of status interactions beyond the parameters of the body of literature associated most overtly with performance and theatre training, there seems to be merit in hybridizing approaches to the discourse of power relations with concepts drawn from social philosophy which extend the languages of performance construction. Expanding the vocabulary of dramaturgy and performance through shared cognitive mapping depends on acknowledging multiple frames of reference since the heterogeneity and demographic mix of any group of learners is yet another manifestation of complex subjectivities.

My premise is that the analysis of symbolic forms (dramatic texts, poems, images and musical extracts as 'case studies') will enable a sustained enquiry into different aspects of status dynamics at the micro-level of reciprocal encounters, along with the discursive implications of their representation. The rationale for constructing an argument via a series of close readings and analyses draws on the views of Ernst Cassirer who probes the distinction between two types of logic: the "logic of the imagination" and "the logic of scientific and rational thought" (1992:137).[21] Art and aesthetic experience contribute to our experience and understanding of the world in addition to comprising a part of that world. My argument will proceed through inter-textual close readings of selected plays, poems and fragments in accordance with the proposition that the exercise of close reading and analysis is a tool for empowering educator and learner, director and actor alike. Developing the facility in engaged critical analysis, as a counter to superficial reading and assimilation, may be particularly pertinent to a multi-lingual constituency embracing new electronic technologies, screen cultures and the rapid assimilation of information. The task of analysing artworks meaningfully and productively may require a different disposition to rapid consumption as responsive and interpretive strategies are activated in the requirement to decode products of the imagination.

As Cassirer recounts, the "logic of the imagination", in the wake of Baumgarten's deliberations, comprises "the sensuous part of human knowledge" (1992:137). Cassirer makes the case that customarily we negotiate the world and social inter-action on the basis of "ordinary sense perception" or the "ordinary sense of experience" (1992:144),[22] but, he argues, art takes us beyond

[21] "Like all the other symbolic forms art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality. It is one of the ways leading to an objective view of things and of human life. It is not an imitation but a discovery of reality. [...] Language and science are the two main processes by which we ascertain and determine our concepts of the external world...." (Cassirer 1992:143).

[22] The affinity between Cassirer's line of argument and that of (the young) Karl Marx is readily apparent. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)* Marx writes: "Every one of his *human* relations to the world – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, perceiving, sensing, wishing, acting, loving – in short – all the organs of his individuality, which are immediately communal in form, are an appropriation of the object in their *objective* relation or their *relation to it."* And a few paragraphs later: "The *senses* have therefore become *theoreticians* immediately in their *praxis*. They try to

this level of awareness. Art and arts pedagogy entails an engagement with form, with structure and convention, not for the sole purpose of facilitating analysis or to study its effects but in order to develop skill in interpreting and appreciating "innumerable and multiple perspectives." It is, accordingly, in his view, "more complex than ordinary sense experience." Cassirer further submits that "the work of art [...] implies an act of *condensation* and *concentration.* Language and science are abbreviations of reality: art is an *intensification* of reality. Language and science depend upon one and the same process of abstraction:[23] art may be described as a continuous process of *concretion*" (1992: 143, my emphases). Setting aside, momentarily, the potentially contentious affinity between science and language, this approach to artefacts produced through "the logic of the imagination" suggests that underlying principles governing social interaction will be more readily apprehended in a range of representations of that behaviour. Moreover, Cassirer's terms "condensation", "concentration", "intensification" and "concretion" point to ways in which the use of a particular medium facilitates the circulation and dissemination of a set of views within a culture. The formal manipulation of that medium is central to an "aesthetic experience" and to the extent that art is a mode of constructing and disseminating knowledge, the manipulation of a medium then becomes bound up in the process of knowledge production of a particular kind: provisional, positional and subject to interpretive processes.

Cassirer concedes that the impulses from which the text or artwork originates need to be acknowledged as subjective and largely "intuitive". He asserts that "art is neither an imitation of physical things nor a mere overflow of powerful feelings. It is an interpretation of reality – not by concepts but by intuitions; not through the medium of thought but through that of sensuous forms" (1992:146). A productive and appropriate pedagogical practice within the arts is compelled, by its own terms or frame of reference, to acknowledge and value the tensions implicit in "intuition" and "sensuous forms" in order to sustain an enquiry into both structure and experience, or the structure of that experience, and thus arrive at a theory of practice. This does not, however equate with an entirely objective or scientific paradigm, as Cassirer suggests when he submits:

> So long as we live in the world of sense impressions alone we merely touch the surface of reality.[24] Awareness of the depth of things always requires an effort on the part of our active and constructive energies. But since these energies do not always move in the same direction, and do not tend to the same end, they cannot give us the same aspect of reality. There is a conceptual depth as well as a purely visual depth. The first is discovered by science; the second is revealed in art. The first aids us in our understanding the reasons of things; the second in seeing their forms. In science we try to trace the phenomena back to

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relate themselves to their *subject matter* for its own sake, but the subject matter itself is an *objective human* relation to itself and to man, and vice versa. Man is affirmed in the objective world not only in thought but with *all* his senses" (Easton and Guddat 1997:307). Marx, as Thomas Henricks suggests, adopts a humanist perspective whose intellectual debt to Hegel is clear in "the ever-changing nature of societies, the importance of collision or dialectics, the legitimacy of institutional analysis, and the certitude that history is equivalent to progress. […] his adoption of the Hegelian viewpoint that history is ultimately a project of self-realization, an attempt to make the changing relations of the world conform to a deeper logic. To be separated from this logic, to live a life that denies its very foundations, is the essence of another Hegelian concept, alienation" (Henricks 2006:31).

[23] Cassirer puts it like this: "If a chemist knows the atomic number of a certain element he possess a clue to a full insight into its structure and constitution. From this he may deduce all the characteristics properties of the element. But art does not admit of this sort of conceptual simplification and deductive generalization. It does not inquire into the qualities or causes of things; it gives us the intuition of the form of things" (1992:143).

[24] Cassirer's view is that aesthetic experience is "incomparably richer", "pregnant with the infinite possibilities which remain unrealized in ordinary sense experience" (1992:145). This corresponds to Jameson's assertion that "aesthetics have also tended to project symbolic or disguised meditations on social or political dilemmas or ideals" (Jameson 1999:46).

> their first causes, and to general laws and principles. In art we are absorbed in their immediate appearance, and we enjoy this appearance to the fullest extent in all its richness and variety. Here we are not concerned with the uniformity of laws but with the multiformity and diversity of intuitions. Even art may be described as knowledge, but art is knowledge of a peculiar and specific kind (1992:169).[25]

Jacques Lecoq, pedagogue and founder of his own training system and School, provocatively declares "neither belief nor identification is enough – one must be able genuinely to play" (2009:17). The structure of an improvisation class is founded on a general physical and vocal warm up which requires that all participants be equally involved and introduces core criteria to be "played" within the course of the session that follows. This kind of play is inherently generative and precedes a series of multiple vignettes and partnerships that follow in the course of a working session. The format does not consistently follow a linear trajectory: rather the core focus is activated through a series of diverging explorations and expressions between players, each of which may reveal hybrid aspects of the theme being addressed. These multiple performances, separately and in combination, are available for reflection and further expansion. The overall structure of a class may loop backwards to re-incorporate earlier material or leap forwards in acknowledging future objectives. The argument that develops through the course of this thesis will be presented in a manner that attempts to take the reader on an encounter that follows the structure, format and mode of an improvisation class. The participatory mode of a performance class ideally assumes mutual engagement at all points. "No [one] thing is complete in itself," Bohm proposes, "and its full being is realized only in participation.[…] In participation, we bring out potentials which are incomplete in themselves, but it is only in the whole that the thing is complete" (1990:29). Accordingly, this document constitutes a site of multiple interactions and rather than attempting to proceed in a strictly linear fashion to address a single set of ideas, building from thoroughly embedded theoretical underpinnings, a series of close readings of texts will exemplify and "relay"[26] the specific aspects of status relations being addressed. I aim, in the theoretical chapter to advance a proposition that I consider central to my project, namely, that Simmel's focus on multiple intimacies and encounters is a productive alternative to the psychoanalytical framework. This thesis also advances the merits of introducing the modality of play as a means of breaking with the structure of neat theoretically founded geometries. The play paradigm will also be theoretically interrogated in order to assess its merits in transforming a group from operating on divisive and competitive lines into an integrated unit or ensemble. In a demonstration of the principle that artworks produce knowledge this chapter concludes by drawing on Brecht's *Life of Galileo* which integrates the introduction of new knowledge systems with play.

The following four chapters range broadly across a spectrum of literary genres, chiefly dramatic and theatrical, artworks and historical incidents. The inclusion of each text has, however, been governed by the extent to which it allows for furthering the investigation of the aspects of status

[25] In Cassirer's view, art is inseparable from ethical considerations. He suggests that beneath its "its sensuous form [art] conceal(s) an ethical sense" (1992:137) and consequently will always be open to moral and theoretical interpretation. But Cassirer qualifies his claim acknowledging how central reception and response to the ideas transmitted: "The aesthetic experience - the experience of contemplation – is a different state of mind from the coolness of our theoretical and the sobriety of our moral judgement" (1992:147).

[26] Roland Barthes defines the term in his essay *Rhetoric of the Image* (1990:41). Relay operates in conjunction with anchorage, but serving a different function. Whereas anchorage tends to delimit meaning and guide a reader towards a preferred reading, relay activates extended references to an image and specifically a sequence of images.

under discussion, together with ways in which it facilitates a different perspective and thus augments (or counter-points) the analysis being advanced. The socio-cultural philosophical enquiries of George Simmel articulate different nodes of enquiry for each chapter. The formal ordering of the material analysed adopts Johnstone's organisation of exercises around a specific aspect of interactive dynamics and the means of applying them through improvisation: Johnstone forges links between games that are similarly focused in order to allow for a layered and variable approach to a particular aspect of social encounters being addressed. Similarly, the four chapters (dedicated to close reading and analysis) are more coherently ordered than the randomness of their contents might suggest: the first and last sets of close readings address encounters accentuating either self-promotion and, conversely, honouring another. The self-promoting strategy embedded in initiating a challenge is not quite the same thing as demoting another through "Insults", one of the thoroughly enjoyable games of Johnstone's repertoire. Insults are subsumed within the broader pattern of the contest. Paying tribute to another is clearly the pro-active and outwardly focused form of raising another which may or may not be accompanied by signs of deference or abasement. Gestures of affirmation in various modes invite another grouping of analyses. Lodged between these complementary sets of analyses the focus on group dynamics in representations of the collective is followed by a corresponding scrutiny of texts that isolate the individual from inclusion within a community, introducing different dimensions to status dynamics.

The motif of the contest, whether formally constrained as in riddling challenges or the duel, or articulated in inter-subjective confrontations propelled by personal desires, is one terrain in which the assertive drive plays out. A prominent pattern of interaction, it allows for introducing an ideal in the "adventuring" disposition – a prerequisite for risk taking whether through collaborative improvisation or in the competitive arena. This focus also establishes the routine understanding of status interplay and further allows for clarifying the key motifs of dominance and submission in terms of the colloquial understanding of 'winners and losers". As Dutch historian, Johan Huizinga puts it:

> The urge to be first has as many forms of expression as society offers opportunities for it.[27] The ways in which men compete for superiority are as various as the prizes at stake. Decisions may be left to chance, physical strength, dexterity or bloody combat. Or there may be competitions in courage and endurance, skilfulness, knowledge, boasting and cunning. [...] The competition may take the form of an oracle, a wager, a lawsuit, a vow or a riddle. But in whatever shape it comes it is always play (1992:10).[28]

The sought-for reward of coming first, or achieving a goal, is readily exposed and recognized as a paradox by participants playing low status games (in which embodying vulnerability and humiliation is registered as a sign of accomplishment and consequently re-defined as a promotion in stature).[29] Two forms of contests will be analysed as discrete entities. The weaving contest pits two individual female rivals in creative expression against each other (in the presence of witnesses), introducing

[27] The honorific of Premier, Prime Minister and First Lady may have an uneasy relationship with the political tensions between a Republican structure and Imperialism. In describing the political environment of Ovid's adult life Feeney records that "conditions of civil tranquility that the Roman world had not known for a century" prevailed during the rule of Caesar Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, and that "Octavian took the name Augustus and the informal title of 'Princeps', 'First Citizen, in 27BC"(2004:xvii).

[28] Huizinga adopts a position that can be disputed: contests in a late capitalist society are not always playful, nor are they the only model for social exchange and inter-action.

[29] This has a corollary in the colloquialism "the moral high ground" as exemplified by Mother Theresa, or Nelson Mandela, figures that students readily identify as examples.

the maximum status gap between mortal and goddess. In contrast, the close-reading of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* allows for a thorough interrogation of the dramatic positions of protagonist and antagonist in terms of individuals and the collective of the citizens. The motif of leadership (along with that of the singularity of the hero) as construed via the model of the English Renaissance and the extent to which this retains modernist or contemporary currency, invites reconsideration of tensions underlying Modernism and its origins in the First World War (a thesis advanced largely through Modris Ekstein's juxtaposition of *The Rites of Spring)* and how trench warfare enforced anonymity and mass slaughter. The motif of visibility in the public domain – or presenting the self to a group of witnesses and auditors – emerges as a marker of "high status".

Multiple treatments of patterning group formations connect the texts analysed in the fourth and fifth chapters which allow for probing expressions of relations between the individual and the collective more thoroughly. The fourth chapter focuses on dramaturgical conventions of the chorus as a unified entity and its varied treatment in three texts, through which the value of communitas and the ostensible disappearance of the individual within a relatively homogenous group can be appreciated. The gathering of a group of affiliated individuals united by a shared interest undergirds and mobilizes ways in which active participation and membership within the ensemble, rather than the assertion of singular position may be activated. The texts selected for analysis expand on the motif of disappearance or invisibility attached to notions of uniformity and group affiliation. In contrast to collective expression through either unison or fragmented delivery, the fifth chapter sets out to address the theme of status dynamics refracted through isolation and alienation as represented by three quintessential modernists: Artaud, Eliot and Becket. This grouping expressly mobilizes not only a sustained interrogation of ways in which subjectivity is construed in Western terms, but the theme of isolation is expressly conjoined with the advent of modernity and the growth of what Simmel calls "objective culture" in the urban metropolis. The articulation of alienation is moreover expressly linked with individuals isolated within a world in which the setting and the properties that this setting contains become the only 'things' by which the 'soloist' may navigate a journey. The reduction of a world of human interaction to a mise-en-scène in which status encounters are rendered through relationships with inanimate objects, the landscape or a repository of fragments of a past cultural tradition renders the reliability of words, signs and values unstable.

The final set of analyses focuses on how patterns of gifting and paying tributes as a means of honouring another, or as an expression of voluntary subservience or humility, may also be construed as a matrix in which status relations are conventionally and even ritually observed. Concluding the close-reading exercise with a range of examples of presents and praises indicates the significance of this form of interactive discourse. The vocabulary of gifting to another is integral to improvisation training as Johnstone's "game" declares. In Johnstone's lexicon and practice, "presents" function as a means of initiating co-operation, empowering one's 'partner' by recognizing the pattern of reciprocal exchange and obligations. What the encomiastic discourse achieves, in its multiple expressions, invites further extended analysis in relation to performance training and textual interpretation. The texts subjected to close-reading demonstrate ways in which gifting, tributes and praises affirm the subject to whom they are offered or of whom they speak. The *Izibongo* (praise poem) and story-telling tradition was never entirely suppressed or eradicated by colonial rule or Apartheid legislation. The former serves to bind members of a community together and link the present with an ancestral past. In an exact antithesis of the performative and public mode of the

*Izibongo,* the sample of entries in an autograph album belonging to my late grandmother perform the same function despite differences in medium, register and social significance. The *izibongo* of Albert Luthuli is a potent expression of all that he stood for as liberation leader, while the small world of a young and anonymous English girl remains bounded within domestic confines. The return to a Shakespearean text at this stage is prompted by the recognition that this text interweaves the discourse of leadership and rule with levels of intimacy and domesticity. The play stages the motif of territorial conquest – a theme played out on the political level between different powers and also on the level of sexual encounter – generating dense contradictions and tensions founded on ways in which status interplay is inseparable from issues of desire and its gratification.

The conclusion returns to questions articulated thus far and reconsiders performance pedagogy in South Africa today in assessing how status rhetoric is implicated within the larger project of transformation.

**Re-casting Ovid as a metaphor for the dynamics of playing status shifts.**

The lack of fixity inherent within encounters between individuals, or individuals and a group, indicates that status is more of a pattern of action and response than an autonomous or stable entity. This is why I anchor this project in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* a text which radically explores these notions. Intervening in accepted tradition,[30] self-referential and wilfully playful, the poem opens with a tweak at the inconstancy of the linguistic medium itself. Feeney, with his specialist scholastic insights, makes the point in his introduction to the 2004 Penguin edition:

> In anticipation of the way in which the Greek inheritance will be Romanized in the course of the poem, this Greek word for transformation is transformed into Latin in Ovid's first line: *meta-morfoseis*, 'trans-formations', becomes *mutates formas*, literally 'changed forms.' [...] the very word for 'form' undergoing a metamorphosis as it moves across the linguistic divide, while still retaining all of its essential individual elements (2004: xxii).

The contemporary post-colonial South African perspective vis-à-vis literary works, be they dramatic texts or lyric poems, occupies a position analogous to that of Ovid in relation to Greek culture and language and it is precisely this domain that this study sets out to explore.

While it may seem reasonable to suppose that the rhetorical tropes through which notions of position and affect are routinely pronounced circulate through multiple sets of metaphors and practices to reflect the deep structures of the value systems of different societies and their practices, the issue of presumed differences in epistemologies needs to be addressed. Where distinctions in ways of being, thinking and communicating are seen as emerging from culturally discrete sets of practices, this discourse sets up a binary of 'us' and 'them' that the discourse of reconciliation and broad-based social transformation expressly challenges. The notion of a fundamental disparity between the Imperial West reinforced by the hegemonic status of the Northern cultures 'over' the global South produces an untenable reiteration of adversarial polarities in which theoretical frameworks as much as cultural objects and texts may be construed as an expression of alignment with political and ethical issues. Post-colonial pedagogy and artistic practices necessarily grapple with ideological implications of a complex heritage in which empowerment and the 'transfer of

[30] "It was central to Ovid's self-definition that he could never occupy the same ideological niche as Virgil" (Feeney 2004: xix).

ownership' may be enhanced through mobilizing the scope for an exchange of ideas that enforces an interrogation of positions and values along with the hybridization and deconstruction of symbolic forms. To the extent that Ovid "takes ownership" of the classical Greek mythological system and "recasts" its idiom in the cultural and political interests and reference points of his own political and cultural perspectives, his creative strategy establishes guidelines for assimilating or even appropriating and adapting a cultural legacy.

Ovid's panoramic myth is structured through multiple narratives that form a montage of encounters which explore, in various ways, the theme of mutability and change in the wake of a contest between opposing parties of inequitable levels of agency. Ovid's text and theme, the fascination between form and flux expressed in the juxtaposition of multiple episodes in which asymmetries in agency are played out, provides a point of departure for the focus of this project. His resistance to a unified linear structure in favour of disparate, yet connected, examinations of the same motif from multiple angles provides a methodological template. The task of interrogating the manipulation of a medium or practice, through thematic and formal considerations, promises to be productive in promoting the analysis of representations of agency and displays of power within a situation in which different cultural discourses jostle for credibility.

Raeburn makes it clear that Ovid was celebrated for his poetry as performer and as a writer.[31] It seems reasonably probable that to the extent that Ovid improvised with known material in structuring his *Metamorphoses,* (which he may well have done in reciting parts of *Metamorphoses)* he did so in the medium of the written text, even if this was crafted with an ear for oral delivery and public reception.[32] The authority of the written form binds the poet in recital, just as it does the actor in performance – but this is not to say that the performer is bereft of agency, rather this forms a structure which allows improvised delivery and presentation. The skilled actor, present before the audience and alert to the reception of his delivery, has the scope and agency to make subtle and minute adjustments in inflection, stress and timing, rather than reproduce a 'fixed' interpretation of a role.

The dissemination of 'knowledge' in its broadest and earliest sense depends on oral narrative and collective memory being collaboratively incorporated within its symbolic forms. Ovid's role, as author and performer, takes on archival and pedagogical properties. Italo Calvino, in his essay "The Odysseys Within the Odyssey", compares what the loss of memory might mean to Ulysses, with what a level of corresponding amnesia might mean for the appointed poet or story-teller, and by implication for that community. He writes:

> ... the Bard who composes by improvising, the rhapsodist who memorizes and sings passages from poems that have already been sung – they, too, must not forget [....] For anyone who sings verses without the aid of a written text, 'forget' is the most negative verb in existence. And for them to 'forget the return' means to forget the poems known as *nostoi*, which were the warhorse of their whole repertoire (1986:137).

[31] He cites Ovid's claim "that he was known for his recitations of poetry when he was still a teenager" (2004: xv). It seems reasonable to suppose that like any accomplished professional story-teller who is confident in his capacity to craft and shape his material, and well assured of his own rhetorical prowess, Ovid may well have "played" with extemporary or improvised delivery in presenting parts of *Metamorphoses* to an audience.

[32] According to Raeburn, "Ovid says [in *Tristia* 1.7] that the *Metamorphoses* was not quite finished when he was banished, and that he tried to burn it, so that existing copies of the poem were still rough and unpolished" (2004: xix).

In his introduction to Raeburn's translation of *Metamorphoses*, Dennis Feeney proposes that Ovid's elegiac love poems "open up a profoundly interesting theme, [...] reveal(ing) how sex and love, the most apparently natural of all human processes, are experienced through societal conventions that are so deep we cannot recognize them as conventions" (2004: xvi). More specifically he identifies Ovid's "keen interest in the nature of his contemporary society's rituals and power structures" (2004: xvii)[33] which suggests the possibility that the poem may critique the context and discourse from which it emerges and which it challenges. To the extent that the claims being made for Ovid's work can be upheld, these seem to be achievements of radical and provocative proportions, if not a demonstration of a singularly penetrating analytical and creative disposition. And, in as much as his text archives received 'wisdoms' while disturbing formal conventions, *Metamorphoses* is profoundly original.

"Ovid *knows and loves* the traditions of his literary past, but refuses to be intimidated or enslaved by them. Everything is to be invigorated by unexpected perspectives; everything is to be made new" (Raeburn 2004: xxviii, my emphasis). The productive insight into the creative tensions between preserving received practices and breaking conventions in order to generate new and appropriate cultural forms has implications for my own role and practice. I make the claim, in a more modest register, that I, too, "know and love the traditions" of a Western socio-cultural heritage, but resist being restricted by all that this implies. The question of the efficacy and value of my effort to adopt and integrate unexpected perspectives, one informed by contemporary 'African' sensibilities, with the residue of deeply assimilated ways of thinking in order to reformulate methods of producing an appropriate and hybrid critical and cultural practice, is one that I am unable to assess.

Difference and distinctions between forms are crucial to Ovid's paradigm and will emerge as continuing markers of status between individuals, as transient as the encounters that proclaim these points may be. Ovid's myth of origins begins with articulating the state of Chaos: "not, as one might think, a tussle or a jumble, but a great blandness without distinction and differentiation" (Feeney 2004: xxi). Inchoate and inert, Chaos is unavailable to sensory perception or productive of any life or meaning. By definition amorphous, Chaos precludes any possibility of transformation since mutations in form are dependent on differentiation.[34] Nature and God are 'synonymous' and are conceived of as the powerful generative force:

> None of the elements kept its shape/and all were in conflict inside one body; the cold with the hot,/ the wet with the dry, the soft with the hard, and weight with weightlessness./ The God who is nature was kinder and brought this dispute to a settlement./ He *severed* the earth from the sky and he *parted* the sea from the land [...] He *disentangled* the elements, so as to set them free/ from the heap of darkness, then gave them their *separate* places[35] and *tied them/down* in a peaceful concordat"(Book 1: 17-26, emphases follow Feeney).

[33] Feeney contextualizes the life of Publius Ovidius Naso (43B.C.E – 14AD) in a particular political environment: "a boyhood lived against a background of civil strife and the growing threat of a civil war between Mark Antony and Caesar Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar" (2004:xvii).

[34] As Feeney puts it: "without these compartments having identity and separateness in the first place, changes of form would be impossible" (2004: xxii).

[35] Ovid is meticulous in detailing the process of segregation as fundamental to the Natural world: "so with the earth which the sky encloses: the god in his wisdom/ ordained five separate zones or tracts to be traced on its surface. The central zone is too hot for men to inhabit the region; / two are buried in snow; but two he placed in between, / and thus he blended the heat with the cold in a temperate climate" (1:47-51).

Spatial transformation is a prelude to launching animated forms within the disparate elemental realms. Air, water and earth soon pulsate with appropriate forms of life: "Nature had hardly been settled within its separate compartments/ when stars, which had long been hidden inside the welter of Chaos, / began to explode with light all over the vault of the heavens.[36]/ And lest any part of the world should be wanting its own living creatures, / the floor of heaven was richly inlaid with stars and the planets" (1:68-71). The earth, inhabited by beasts and birds, will accrue an extraordinary diversity of new species before Ovid's poem is complete .[37] The population of the earth culminates in the announcement of mankind as a the locus and subject of interest: "yet a holier creature, more able to think high thoughts,/ which could hold dominion over the rest, was still to be found./So Man came into the world" (1:76).[38] It is Prometheus who "moulds" man "into the likeness of gods who govern the universe. /Where other animals walk on all fours and look to the ground,/man was given a towering head and commanded to stand/ erect, with his face uplifted to gaze on the stars of heaven./Thus clay, so lately no more than a crude and formless substance,/ was metamorphosed to assume the strange new figure of Man"(1:84-88).

Multiple narratives of desire and power are liberated as a consequence of this action. Endless flux and transformation is now possible. Physical transformations of the individual and society are set in motion: "of men into women and of women into men; of gods into animals; and of men and women into gods, trees, rivers, birds, animals, fish, amphibians, insects and flowers" (Terry 2001:3). A veritable allegorical amalgam of all possible desires intent on transformation as a tactic of "expressive individuality" is played out in the Ovidian range of metamorphoses. Transformations in form are consistently produced as an outcome of inter-personal encounters in which the power of one party is vividly displayed. These necessitate a considerable expenditure of energy which entails active, even heightened, participation or investment in what the encounter signifies in order to produce or propel any kind of metamorphosis. The articulation of form and mutation, along with the potential to occupy a series of guises and roles (in the pursuit of pleasure) forecasts one of the primary conventions of performance and theatre: the protean identity of the actor and the challenge inherent in embodying diverse identities.

Ovid's narrative archives and disseminates a set of ideas and beliefs. And it does so according to the model of poetry as "the domain of 'heterocosmic' fictions" (Halliwell 2002:9) which are constructed according to aesthetic objectives. In much the same way as praise poems of the *izibongo,* Ovid's poem relates, and comments on, a series of events, namely "the sweep of Roman and world history."(2004: xix) All of these different forms have currency within the community to which they are addressed and to whom they are transmitted. The artist, or storyteller, does not chronicle events in the expository mode, rather he or she is an 'archivist', who's crafting and presentation of material is mandated to both preserve and challenge conventions, laying bare the tension between tradition and innovation.

[36] The constellations are not finite as the story of Callisto (2:401-530) reveals: the Arcadian Virgin, seduced by Jove, is transformed into a bear by jealous Juno, and in the moment of being felled by her (unsuspecting) son, the hunter, undergoes a second transformation into a star. Contemporary media culture has adopted and celebrated the motif and its metaphor. Achieving 'stardom' connotes not only celestial brightness but also distance from the mass of humanity, and 'permanence' of mythic proportions.

[37] The episode of Tereus, Procne and Philomela produces the hoopoe, the swallow and the nightingale.

[38] The morphology of Pope's "Essay on Man" seems reasonably clear and sustains the conception of a hierarchically ordered universe with an aversion to chaos and the irrational. This departs from Ovid's sensual acceptance of mutability and mortality.

Ovid's notions of form and flux and the ways in which assertions of individual will and power effect transformations as a sign of value or punishment for transgression, is congruent with George Simmel's notions of form and life. In his essay "The Transcendent Character of Life" of 1918, Simmel suggests that there is an "unreconcilable opposition between life and form, or in other words, between continuity and individuality […] nevertheless individuality is everywhere something alive, and life is everywhere individual" (1971:367). Simmel's theoretical propositions articulate similar insights to those of Ovid regarding tensions between flux and energy on the one hand, and differentiation and form on the other. He writes:

> A deep contradiction exists between continuity and form as ultimate world shaping principles. Form means limits, contrast against what is neighbouring, cohesion of a boundary by way of a real or ideal centre to which, as it were, the ever flowing sequences of contents or processes bend back, and which provides every circumference with a source of resistance against dissolution in the flux…form impresses on its bit of matter an individual shape, makes it peculiar to itself and distinguished from differently formed items […] Life [...] a cosmic, generic, singular phenomenon […] is a continuous stream […] with profound opposition against form […] a battle of ongoing life against the historical pattern and formal unflexibility of any given cultural content, thereby becoming the innermost impulse toward cultural change (1971:365).

In conclusion, my project aims to identify ways in which the performance training programme may be dedicated to developing more than the acquisition of a set of skills and integrate questions of accountability, social engagement and collective collaboration within the context of larger questions of social transformation and democratization**.** On this basis alone, the project of actor-training undergoes a metamorphosis not unlike that ascribed to classical mythology in Ovid's treatment of that subject matter. Identifying the multiple matrices and markers of status dynamics and their circulation through cultural expression constitutes the focal point of this study but is inseparable from developing reading and interpretive strategies along with a performance language and proficiency. I propose that improvisation affords the scope to develop ensemble interplay and further that a sustained and nuanced appreciation of status dynamics may prove to be a means of dismantling the formulations of stereotypes inculcated by divisive asymmetries of the past which persists as a deeply disturbing phenomenon of South African social life. A theoretically founded and inter-textual analysis of status dynamics and transformations (which foregrounds the embeddedness of power and differences in forms of capital in the encounter between individuals) is a means of active resistance to the perpetuation of residual norms, recycling cliché's or reproducing stereotyped notions of identity through inculcated tropes of behaviour.

Chapter 2: **'Moving In *and Beyond* Aristotle's Web': a theoretical framework.**

"The epistemological paradox of the aesthetic attitude is that one is simultaneously aware of both the symbol and of what it symbolizes. The aesthetic attitude is composed of two contradictory states of mind held together in a dynamic tension: consciousness of the art object as existing in its own right and also as fused with and participating in what it symbolizes. [ …] Those lines on paper become a generalised human face, but only if I know full well that they are not a face but only lines drawn on paper. The actor becomes Hamlet only if I know he is an actor playing the part of Hamlet."

Gene Blocker (1998:419).

"To remain in relation *with* precisely *by parting* is, however, one of the distinctive traits of the 'spectacle' as Debord recognized, albeit primarily from a critical-nostalgic point of view: 'The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but unites it only *in its separateness'."*

Samuel Weber[39] (2004:19).

[39] Weber's insights are those of a professional dramaturge and academic. His ideas are central to the theoretical framework of this thesis. His collection of essays, *Theatricality as Medium* (2004), challenges the reader to draw on a wide range of reference points as he synthesizes insights from linguistics, philosophy, theatre history and analyses of selected dramatic works in conjunction with the theoretical approaches of seminal practitioners of occidental and oriental theatre traditions. His conceptual framework draws on the works of Plato, Aristotle, J.L Austin, Derrida, Dubord, Heidegger and Benjamin.

**Anchoring the theoretical framework of this thesis in contradictions and counter-currents of dramatic and performance theory.**

The need to identify a theoretical framework appropriate to the interrogation of status dynamics within the context of training in post-apartheid South Africa is doubly complex: on the one hand the specialist discipline is itself a compound field that comprises dramatic literature, theatre histories and performance studies, and on the other hand, my deliberations are circumscribed by pressing socio-political realities. Competing ideological and cultural claims are at the centre of attitudes towards tradition and innovation: neither Africanist perspectives nor remodeled broadly European modes of thinking can be presumed monolithic, 'pure' or definitive. So while the conceptual and theoretical position adopted for this study unquestionably reflects an assimilation of the legacy of Western scholarship, I make two cautious assertions: firstly, the proposed framework to be adopted is tempered by what I can only describe as contextually founded 'sensibilities' and, secondly, I am attempting to resist the latent dangers of over-simplification that lurk in reducing conceptual frameworks to a set of binary polarities. The conceptual framework can clearly neither be presumed neutral nor asserted as authoritative; rather it functions as a discursive field in which I can exercise my thinking most fluently, incisively and productively. While the value of the body of literature generated by scholars documenting specifically African performance traditions and practices establishing a specifically local and relevant discourse (from an insider perspective) is indisputable, it is not my primary objective (through this project) to add explicitly to that body of work. My objective is modestly restricted to the attempt to assess what can be filtered from the Western idiom (critical apparatus and selected creative works) and applied within the dynamic inter-cultural field of local contemporary creative practice.

Within the domain of dramatic arts, multiple critical perspectives can be drawn on to formulate a theoretical position and selections from this body of ideas and practice constitute the primary conceptual framework for this study. These perspectives cannot, however, remain isolated or divorced from over-arching considerations that root the creative project within the socio-political sphere and forge a connection between enquiries raised within the humanities and literatures of the social sciences.[40] The dilemma posed by confronting a matrix of potential theoretical positions and perspectives, along with the cultural and political connotations embedded within these choices, can only be resolved by acknowledging that the conceptual framework outlined in this chapter is positional, partial and provisional.

My position as a psycho-social subject (operating within and responding to a complex cultural matrix) along with the theoretical framework adopted clearly have considerable implications for this study. In order to stress the extent to which I am mindful of the ideological implications of the perspectives that frame my undertaking, I draw on Patrick Chabal's introduction to his study, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling.* He describes his project as "an attempt to tackle post-colonial politics in Africa from a different angle [aiming] to get at the stuff of politics from below, or rather from within". Accordingly, he aims to "fix (his) camera at eye level and engage with politics as it is played out in everyday life [eschewing] the macro for the micro, the high for the low, and the elite for the ordinary" (2009:ix). A political scientist engaging directly with post-colonial issues, he

[40] The politics of up-liftment or the trajectory of broad-based empowerment policies remain beyond the analytic scope of this enquiry but nonetheless provides a framework for the wider impact of a study of status positions and dynamics.

advocates a position and method congruent with his field and suggests guidelines for my attempt to "think afresh" the dynamics of interaction at the level of inter-personal encounters within the domain of representation and performance'.[41] Chabal problematizes the issue of articulating a position, perspective and methodology. Advancing a network of ideas that develop from the ground up suggests direct engagement and close proximity to the subject of his enquiry. The ideal of working through a similar method to advance aspects of status rhetoric through systematic exemplification and analysis in practice within a field of interaction, in the particularly labile context of contemporary tertiary education in South Africa, would seem to be precluded on ethical grounds. I am compelled to formulate a means of addressing discrepancies in resources and agency via an alternative mode of enquiry, namely a series of close readings and textual analyses which enable me to interrogate the representation of status dynamics from the ground up albeit that this very analysis focuses on representational practices and is consequently interpretively and hypothetically modelled. The proposed method of textual analyses, far from being a compromise, reproduces the manner in which integrating critical analyses within the performance training curriculum, specifically improvisation and status based classes, is proposed as a critical apparatus to be deployed as a distancing mechanism between the subject of study and the self that engages with exercises in dominance and subjugation.

Chabal identifies and values "the cycle of individual and communal lives from birth to death (which constitutes) a contextually drawn framework for the study of some of the most relevant questions about power" (2009: x). Chabal further suggests that "in Africa" the notion of "belonging" is invested with value .[42] He writes:

> What makes African social relations what they are is the fact that individuals conceive of themselves in terms of the multiple and multifaceted relations which link them with others within ever-expanding and overlapping concentric spheres of identity (2009:43).

As Chabal posits, concepts of personhood and group affiliation, separation, participation and aesthetic distance cannot be isolated from the cultural matrix in which they operate. For Chabal, an anthropologically based framework is valuable because it offers a filter through which to interrogate implicit assumptions regarding the value and "uses of political theory"[43] and what "agency" has come to mean in Africa with its particular tensions between so-called traditional societies and modernity. Raising concerns that are as pertinent and pivotal to the wider domain of the humanities, arts and cultural studies as they are to the social sciences, he asks:

> From the point of view of theory, the tension between the universal and the local is double. First what should the *vantage point* of analysis be? Second, what concepts should be used? (2009:74)

[41] Chabal's terms.

[42] He stresses this sense of "belonging" because it imbues systems of kinship and the network of associations with obligations that are highly valued. "Belonging" places the individual within a collective and establishes the parameters of modes of conduct which are consensually acknowledged. In performance training nurturing the ensemble sensibilities within the heterogeneous group may be a means of re-imagining a collective, and as such, a means of promoting hybrid variations on socio-cultural traditions that draw on the combined heritage of African and Western performance traditions. Stripped of political accretions, the term "collective" denotes centripetal integration and collaboration which should not be conflated with uniformity and loss of individuality.

[43] He acknowledges that "the very meaning of theory is problematic since it implies a particular way of 'explaining' that derives from a Western tradition of rationality and scientific endeavour, which originates in the Enlightenment" (Chabal 2009:3). Homi Bhabha suggests something similar when he submits that "there is a damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged. It is said that the place of the academic critic is inevitably within the Eurocentric archives of an imperialist or neo-colonialist West" (Bhabha 2004:29).

The task of identifying a conceptual framework, method and practice needs to include precisely the kinds of questions that Chabal raises, particularly since the issues of cultural position and agency are central to the ambit of my enquiry. I am informed by social perspectives that reflect the constant interface between so-called "Western" and "African" dispositions and customs, just as my epistemological perspectives (despite being lodged in the conceptual underpinnings of European theory) are subject to reformulation as a consequence of functioning, intellectually and creatively, within the context of a metropolitan hub that is defined and promoted as African. My pedagogical and creative practices negotiate an inter-cultural network of social or inter-personal encounters, and, in so far as I am able to assimilate and engage with others according to the notion of "ever-expanding and overlapping concentric spheres of identity", I define myself as "South African" acknowledging that the issue of something as simple as asserting a national identity, may be considered contentious.[44]

The body of thinking and writing about theatre, drama and performance in terms of its social and aesthetic functions that has occupied a central place in my thinking and practice for three decades originates from Europe, has been intrinsic to colonial culture and is increasingly and provocatively subject to interrogation from post-colonial experiences and theoretical perspectives. It is only the imperative of subjecting aspects of these theories to a critique from a contemporary and local perspective through *revisiting* what they invite us to re-consider that begins to legitimize the adoption of such a framework. My commitment and interest in the larger undertaking of this thesis is, I acknowledge, motivated (at least in part) by the need (and desire) to revisit and rethink this body of theory in order to extrapolate what appears to be productive within the flux of local and contemporary cultural practices. Status interactions permeate attitudes towards pedagogical roles and functions as much as they saturate questions of "authorship", be it that of the writer or director within the domain of cultural expression, and I am invested in revisiting a body of critical perspectives that resist the assumptions of embedded authority over both meaning and creative practice, but not at the expense of collapsing conceptual integrity or dexterous and informed manipulation of the medium of performance and presentation. Following Chabal one might ask what is the place, and role, of "theory" in a performance training curriculum in South Africa today? Or, more accurately, since there are multiple theoretical paradigms that have emerged from disparate (if historically inter-twined) socio-political regimes, one might ask what is the role of "theories" of aesthetics and representation; of approaches to transmission and reception; of asymmetrically based social interaction and the circulation of power? What relations can be drawn between the scholarly project, committed to a trajectory of developing theoretical positions grounded in logical persuasion and argument, and the (perhaps more intuitively informed) notion of communicating through creative practice and symbolic forms? My response to these questions outlines a trajectory that acknowledges the complex legacy of Aristotle within western-based *dramatic* idiom and tries to move *beyond* this framework in order to dislodge perceptions that this European theory comprises a monolithic conception of performance and theatre practices, congruent with the understanding that aesthetic formulations are as contextually contingent as knowledge economies and representational repertoires.

[44] The complexity of self-definition in terms of "national identity" is the subject of Ivor Chipkin's study *Do South Africans Exist?*

Returning to Aristotle as a pivotal theorist of Western classical aesthetics may allow me to enquire into a dramaturgical form that parallels the primary structuring principle of African performance, the call and response motif and how it operates as a mechanism of inclusion and connection, and do so from *within* the paradigm of a western understanding of relations between the individual and the collective through the analysis of a modernist reconfiguration of the chorus. While the strategy of returning to Aristotle's formulations invites the possible (ideologically founded) critique of neglecting an Africanist position, and consequently of questionable integrity because of my position "outside" of African culture and scholarship, it leaves me vulnerable to the accusation of perpetuating (or even trying to advance) Western assumptions. Similarly, recourse to conceptions of modernity (as diverse as those of Artaud and Brecht) opens up ways of approaching aesthetic dimensions of a dystopic experience of metropolitan living and "alienation" (on the one hand) and the overt politically committed instrumentality of the performance medium (on the other), again from within the cultural tradition to which I ostensibly "belong". This approach on my part is not intended to exclude or devalue African perspectives of isolation and marginalization as an intensely real and ever present phenomenon as a consequence of colonial dispossession, but rather acknowledges that my capacity to engage critically with the issues central to my project within this domain is circumscribed. The aesthetic dimensions of the Brechtian model, avowedly antithetical to that of Aristotle, provides me with a template that has some congruency with ways in which "art and life" are integrated within traditional African cultural expressions and the merits of an object or performance (of a ritual or custom) is assessed according to the extent that it is deemed useful or productive within the course of everyday life. This aspect of social engagement is one that I can most profitably take up via a close reading of a Brechtian text (specifically with regards to questions of power and pedagogy) rather than through an anthropological account of traditional cultural performances or, indeed, an analysis of Brecht's text *in performance*, equally an ethnographic undertaking to which my status, as either outsider or insider, is considerably less clear. Gene Blocker, in his essay "On the distinction between Modern and traditional African Aesthetics", concludes as follows:

> One must be careful not to exaggerate the differences between traditional Africa and modern European aesthetic attitudes, as if they marked mutually exclusive domains.[45] It is frequently claimed, for example, that Western aesthetics is a cerebrally detached concern with art for art's sake, whereas African aesthetics involves total participation and immersion. Both sides of the comparison are mistaken: the differences [...] are not categorical but a matter of degree. It would be a serious mistake to ignore the element of aesthetic distance present in African traditional aesthetics as it would be to ignore the existence of audience participation in modern European aesthetics (1998:425).

Perpetuating any specific model of performance (derived from a specific cultural repertoire) is, of itself, a complex value laden and ideologically aligned exercise. I am more interested, ultimately, in *the space between these;* in a hybridized approach, and how this can best be instigated. Bhabha defines the "hybrid" in relation to the process of "transformation": "the transformational value of

[45] As Bhabha claims, "the work of hegemony is itself the process of iteration and differentiation. It depends on the production of alternative or antagonistic images that are always produced side by side and in competition with each other" (2004:42).

change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One nor the Other but something else besides, which contests the territories of both" (2004:41).[46]

Because of the extent to which the heritage of Aristotelian views on aesthetics, structure, and the affective agency of *mimesis* permeates contemporary dramatic idiom, his views cannot be dismissed. Re-visiting Aristotle's writing via the nuances advanced by Stephen Halliwell allows for addressing considerations that are central to the performance project, specifically the notion of embodying (or playing) a persona in contrast with collapsing the distance between self and character and conflating the self with that which is represented. Halliwell's reading also allows for detaching *mimesis* from verisimilitude, opening up potential for *the mimetic theory of art* to encompass more stylistic variants than naturalism. The value of Aristotelian thinking extends beyond its embeddedness in contemporary practice: his writing is a considered defence of the artistic idiom in response to Plato's critique of products of the imagination. Aristotle reinstates the value of products of the artistic imagination as an alternative means of 'knowing the world' through its narrative representations and artefacts. This premise is central to the undertakings of this thesis and validates performative representations more than orthodox readings of Aristotle might allow.

The quintessentially bourgeois model of 19th century domestic naturalism and realism, with expressionist and symbolist variants on the one hand, and farce, melodrama and light entertainment on the other, along with their housing in the ubiquitous proscenium arch structure have inculcated a limited appreciation of what "transformations" have been effected in the Western conceptions of theatre in directions as diverse as those proposed by Brecht, Artaud and Grotowski. The reductive tendency to equate theatre with the proscenium model,[47] designed to house the illusionist box set, and an acting technique to match, has asserted a cultural hegemony, congruent with 'importing the classics' – Sophocles, Shakespeare and even Sheridan – at the expense of iconoclastic challenges to mainstream theatre. The Modernist and avant-garde interrogations of Aristotle's tradition of *mimesis* have been largely marginalized in common-sense expectations of conventional theatre practice. The modernist critique of conventions regarding the boundedness of the text, aesthetic distance and the scope for agency of the spectator, although manifest diversely and provocatively as a challenge to mimesis, remained marginal to establishing a Western model of theatre in South Africa until the 1980's.

Since no unified and monolithic concept of Western theatre can be articulated, the contradictory tensions in notions of *theatres* need to be foregrounded in contemporary practice. Key figures in Modernist European theatre – Piscator, Brecht, Artaud, and Grotowski – have launched various

[46] Bhabha refers to the particular case of Beatrix Campbell, one of the women who had been involved in the Miner's strike of 1984/5 for whom life thereafter could not return to "the good old days". He concludes that "it would be simplistic to suggest either that this considerable social change was a spin off from the class struggle or that it was a repudiation of the politics of class from a socialist-feminist perspective. There is no simple political or social truth to be learned, for there is no unitary representation of a political agency, no fixed hierarchy of political values and effects" (2004:41).

[47] Peter Brook begins his landmark text, *The Empty Space,* as follows: "I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. Yet when we talk about theatre this is not quite what we mean. Red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness, these are all confusedly superimposed in a messy image covered by one all-purpose word" (1977:11).

ideologically founded challenges to the Aristotelian model, and much of their work is approached *in relation to* his concepts. The body of work produced in Europe by these theatre directors and theorists (along with the writers whose texts have been staged by them) may reasonably be described as operating within *and beyond* "Aristotle's web". Bhabha's insight is useful here:

> It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity (2004:55).

The theories underpinning Modernist initiatives have considerable purchase in theatre making today since their strategic solutions to *theatre-making* are so readily adopted and recited. Epic, montage, multi-media, simultaneous staging, valorization of mise-en-scène, the emphasis on structuring modes of reception all originate in works diversely attributed to European modernists. The extent to which the vitality of Modernist art and theatre making, ranging from Picasso's painting to Artaud's vision of theatre, is indebted to both Oriental and African forms is striking and thoroughly documented. The body of writing about modernist practice comprises a distinct strand of theory with a focus on the medium of theatre and performance, and the structured context in which it is produced that shapes its transmission, reception and value. This framework augments any analysis of the dramatic text as a particular form of literature crafted for public presentation. Artaud stresses mise-en-scène over dialogic utterance and his more extreme proposal aims at collapsing the physical distance between performers and spectator in the effort to reinstate ritual in which both parties are participants in a single cultural phenomenon. The value of returning to his propositions lies in his foregrounding the material languages of theatre: his work stresses both the spatial setting and the physical capacities of the performer whose corporeal presence is "read" as a unit within a spatial configuration. Re-visiting Artaud's ideas concentrates the reader on how the materials of theatre-making (actors with their bodies and voices, the audience, all configured within a spatio-temporal field) construct and define role players to establish an aesthetic. As Brechtian principles so systematically advance, the mode of presentation determines a receptive frame. The Brechtian emphasis on socially founded analysis rather than emotional expressivity and identification on the part of the performer, or empathetic engagement on the part of a spectator offers a cogent means of conceptualizing performance training committed to political engagement.

Improvisation training, liberated to some degree from the acquisition of the kinds of technical competencies required in interpreting and delivering a text-based performance, is a means of facilitating skills development in crafting an evolving narrative through the medium of the mise-en-scène. The role of collaborative improvisation and devised work as a means of challenging the hegemony of the scripted text is no longer a nascent phenomenon, but different approaches to defining a goal and methodology within this field of spontaneously authored work urge scrutiny in terms of their goals, outcomes and instrumentality. Establishing a framework for improvisation technique that emphasizes social interaction between participants along with sustaining the awareness of crafting a presentation to, and for, an audience, thus constitutes another aspect of the theoretical component of this study and leads me towards assessing the merits of inter-disciplinary approaches to representational practices and social theory.

In so far as improvisation has a long established place within the Western tradition, it disrupts an approach to drama as a form of literature produced by an author whose text is the *raison d' etre* of the performance. This view of theatre in which "the play" is valorized beyond the encounter itself (and regarded as a vehicle communicating authorial insights and perspectives) construes performance as little more than a means to an end and is contested by all that improvisation proposes. The *act-gratuit* depends on the presence of witness-participants in a historically conditioned moment. The expression of self and free will is circumscribed by discursive limits produced through languages, thought, desires and experience; all of which are inseparable from the self who participates in an improvisation. Improvisation thus becomes a fulcrum in which the tensions between determination and freedom are tested: the self of self-presence cannot be separated from socio-cultural experience. But the extent to which improvisation is equally compelled to address the demands of craft and aesthetics, and what pedagogy supports this endeavour, is what this thesis addresses. Focusing on the aesthetics of performance entails identifying the constitutive elements of the theatrical encounter along with the discourse in which meanings and subjectivities are produced and circulate.

Problematizing a conceptual framework for performance studies, in either the representational or presentational style, cannot reasonably be extricated from a considered response to the over-arching questions posed by Chabal, nor is it exempt from the assertions made by Bhabha. Moreover, in its ephemerality, as Brook declares, the practice of theatre-making ultimately frustrates and defies archival endeavours. The scholarly obligation persists in probing conventions of presentation, transmission, reception and value of a project that inherently refutes fixity. Within the teaching and learning project attached to theatre and performance, questions regarding a "vantage point", or conceptual filter, compounds relations between theory and practice. This dimension points to ways in which "ways of seeing and being" are embedded in the symbolic orders and in language. "Theater and *theory,*" writes Samuel Weber, "share a common etymology and [...] a vexed history. At issue is the interpretation of *thea*, of looking, of its site, *theatron,* of the onlooker or spectator, *thoros,* and finally of the spectacle itself" (2004:200). These kinds of insights make the case for aligning performance studies with theories of aesthetics and cultural production.

**Advancing an inter-disciplinary pedagogical practice.**

This thesis draws broadly on inter-disciplinary perspectives and the case for doing so merits substantiation as an alternative to learning within discrete disciplinary domains. The impulse towards specialization and the demarcation of disciplinary boundaries was, as the historian Theodore Zeldin explains, a reaction to an earlier epistemological position. He writes: "Around the beginning of the eighteenth century [...] the ideal of encyclopedic knowledge was replaced by specialization. Withdrawal into a fortress of limited knowledge meant one could defend oneself on one's home ground; it gave one self-confidence of a limited kind; but it left one helpless in vast areas of one's life, particularly the emotional part" (1996:197). Citing Kuhn's contention that "most scientists work to reinforce the systems of thought which dominate their epoch [making] new facts fit into these systems, or 'paradigms'" (1996:198), he critiques the tendency to separatism and isolation of disciplines. The perpetuation of separating and segregating, in the South African context, in the fields of acquiring knowledge and in social interaction, has connotations that may be associated with the Apartheid practices. Not only does the performance laboratory, with inter-

action, crafting expressive and communication skills, require the most permeable and porous of boundaries in order to sustain its own identity as a fulcrum for engaging with what is most curious and interesting in human behaviour and sociability, it also serves as a site in which the legacy of segregation can be challenged, specifically through efforts at linking, or instilling the practice of making connections, between bodies of critical thinking or disciplinary domains.

Zeldin proposes that curiosity is both "the key to freedom" and "the most successful remedy for fear".[48] He is unequivocal in identifying what it is that inhibits curiosity – nothing less than "being obstructed by preconceived ideas". He develops an evocative metaphor for knowledge systems and their operation, suggesting ways in which they serve to delimit domains, and are constructed to sustain, support and perpetuate ways of being. His trope of the spider's web elucidates his idea quite clearly: the tensile web, despite its apparent fragility, functions as a trap. Zeldin explains:

> Humans [...] have usually been obstinately attached to their old ideas, not just from the fear of the unfamiliar, but because an old idea is part of a system of thought, which is like a cobweb: every part sustains every other, and once you are in you cannot escape (1996:181-194).

His explanation accounts in some measure for tendencies to re-produce what is familiar, rather than advance new paradigms. Zeldin does however, echo Arthur Koestler's definition of "the act of creation' (whether scientific invention or creative practice as commonly understood) as a "bisociative act" when he suggests: "All invention and progress come from finding a link between two ideas that have never met, bringing foreign bodies together"(1994:93).[49] Zeldin values a personal conceptual underpinning that may be tenuous and tentative precisely because it retains a certain elasticity and mobility. In his view this "fragility" is more desirable than the false security or assumed respectability of perpetuating received ideas:

> People who try to think for themselves know that the cobwebs they spin are fragile and incomplete; but those who are content to be disciples, and become entangled in the cobwebs of others, forget the fragility and imagine that they have landed on firm, stable ground. Borrowed ideas, which were originally indeed to be only gossamer, thus harden and fossilize; ideologies become dogmas, and curiosity, which should blow freely like the wind, suddenly becomes motionless (1996:195).

The real gain of embracing inter-disciplinarity within academia today seems to be that it invites a more critical evaluation of the values and limitations of the specialist domain. Zeldin makes the case for the inter-disciplinary method and what it might achieve through citing the case of Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1895):

> Unlike Einstein […] and unlike Hawking [...]– neither of whom have in any way changed the purposes or attitudes of ordinary people – Humboldt tried to extract a new way of life from his researches, abstract though some of them might seem. This is rare because it conflicts with

[48] Zeldin proposes that the unrestrained spirit of curiosity is personified in Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1895) a "pioneer in global thinking" with a frame of reference "unparalleled in range" (1996:198). He lists "physiology, zoology, botany, anthropology, archaeology, meteorology and geography" as the multiple fields of von Humboldt's expertise.

[49] Koestler proposes that scientific "discovery", humour and creativity are generated by the unexpected collision of two propositions that are customarily contained within two separate matrices. He cites numerous examples that demonstrate ways of understanding this proposition. Bert O. States deploys this term to explain the comic effect invariably produced by Launce's dog, Crab, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: "We have an intersection of two independent and self-contained phenomenal chains – natural animal behaviour and culturally programmed human behaviour" (1987:33).

> the rules of specialization, which require one to keep one's mouth shut on subjects on which one is not a trained expert (1996:198).

In his 1908 essay, "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality", Simmel explains a similar notion, proposing that "individuality in being and action generally increases to the degree that the social circle encompassing the individual expands" (1971:252). A narrower social circle imposes constraints and encourages homogeneity as a means of ensuring group cohesion and the continued specific identity of this smaller domain. The expansion of this circle facilitates increased diversification, individualization and differentiation. While the widening circle establishes ties across greater distances, beyond the confines of the original domain, this takes place at the risk of maintaining observable unique individuality and affiliation to the smaller community. What is at stake emerges quite clearly in applying this proposition to the sphere of academic and intellectual activity.

The field of scholarship loosely termed dramatic arts comprises disparate strands of scholarship and is not entirely homogenous nor uncontested but nonetheless sustains a disciplinary identity through demarcating its terrain in ways not unlike the narrower circle in Simmel's proposition. Expanding the frame of reference to the broader epistemological network of cultural studies and inter-disciplinarity entails both gains and losses. Simmel suggests that the impulse towards differentiation generates the reward of being distinctive, in contrast to the fellow members of one's group, while the greater degree of individuation correspondingly entails some loss in an entirely different dimension: increased individualization occurs at the expense of the pleasures and satisfaction that can only be derived from "oneness" (1971:259) with one's peers and colleagues. The individuality and freedom attained by the associations in the wider field are, however, productive even though these might unsettle an allegiance and position within the worlds of drama and theatre training as a primary discipline. Anxieties about the potential extinction of the specialist discipline are groundless: inter-disciplinary practice by definition presupposes continuity of the specialist domain, and may advance its clarity: without disciplinary coherence, cohesion and clarity, there is little scope for hybridity.

**Aristotle revisited: "performance as a medium", "character", "mimesis" and "action".**

Prior to any sustained consideration of improvised performance as a mode of artistic expression, and how status-play operates to structure the spontaneous encounter, it is necessary to establish the relation of performance to drama through examining some of the formal concepts inhering within the dramatic tradition with its emphasis on the literary and aesthetic composition. The seminal text in Western performance aesthetic, Aristotle's *Poetics*, appears founded on the antithesis of Chabal's approach: the treatise argues in the abstract mode and cites texts that best exemplify propositions pertaining to subjects and principles of dramaturgy, notably Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* the epitome of the tragic genre. Ultimately, for Aristotle, as Weber claims:

> …everything relating to theater as medium, to the scene [...] exists, insofar as Aristotle is concerned, only to serve the *synopsis.* The machinery of representation is thus useful only to the extent that it is able to efface itself, to become transparent, revealing a more direct view of the thing itself – which is to say, of the unity of an action and a life(2004:103).

Aristotle's text and its interpretation continue to provoke debates and insights in terms of contemporary enquiries and practice. Samuel Weber introduces his anthology of essays,

*Theatricality as Medium,* via a study of the Platonic position as a necessary precursor to Aristotle's views, which counter the scenario and argument articulated in the Cave (2004:99).[50] But *Poetics* not only represents a dialogic response to a previous argument. Rather than standing alone as a singular authoritative treatise, it serves as a verification of the medium of representation and its efficacy as a means of enabling learning through some means other than direct personal experience.

The appeal of the Aristotelian model, grounded in the theory of mimesis, is partly due to its ostensible accessibility and superficial correspondence to common-sense predilections regarding "life as it is lived and experienced". The interpretation of Aristotle today arguably depends on a contextualized reading in addition to highlighting problems encountered in the act of translation, an exercise on which its interpretation depends. In other words, his formulations provide points of departure for assimilating and then challenging aspects that are central to drama and performance, specifically the medium of presentation, character and action, all contained within the overarching concept of mimesis.

Samuel Weber proposes a deconstructive reading of *Poetics* and similarly, *Oedipus Tyrannos*, which effectively "dismantles" (2004:103) a number of crucial claims made by Aristotle regarding corporeal presence and the medium of theatre.[51] For Aristotle, the performance, the material means of transmission of the tragedy,[52] is a *means to a (dramatic) end*. As Weber argues, this proposition not only effaces the textuality of performative expression, but neglects the core challenge posed by Oedipus who is de-centred, constructed in discourse, the quintessentially "split" subject at the apex of the House of Labdacus, and whose embodied presence *in a particular place and scene* is pivotal to the myth itself as much as to its reworking by Sophocles in dramatic idiom. Weber's theoretical critique of Aristotle's position regarding the medium of performance is advanced through textual close-reading and methodology supplementing the multiple modernist initiatives valorizing the live encounter through stressing the materiality of the medium and its expressive and affective capacity.

Aristotle explicitly deems "character" subordinate to "action" and "plot". Valorizing "character" over aspects of action and plot is a development that owes much to Renaissance Humanist discourse

[50] Dorsch, in the preface to his Penguin translation, suggests that it is more than merely an "answer to Plato's views" (1965:17) and that Aristotle is as intent on putting forward views of his own.

[51] His essay "Scene and Screen: Electronic Media and Theatricality" counters the kind of interpretation advanced via the model of classic literary criticism exemplified by Gilbert Murray. Weber writes: "Far from confirming the totalizing and unifying conception of theater advanced in the *Poetics*, Sophocles' play may be read as its theatrical dismantling. This opens up a different understanding or approach to theater, in which the scenic medium is no longer a means to an end, but rather, is the spatio-temporal condition of what Benjamin writing almost three millennia later was to call 'the exposing of the present'[...] Oedipus can be read as a problematization of theatrical space qua medium"(2004:103). Again: "The very notion of what it means to see, and hence to see in a theater, to see and hear a play, for instance is also implicitly called into question by Tiresias and by the play" (2004:105).

[52] Shepherd and Wallis insist on the significance that Aristotle was writing nearly a century after the "Golden Age" of Sophoclean tragedy: "Aristotle attempted descriptions and categorizations of many of the phenomena he saw around him, including the weather. When he turned his attention to 'poetics' he thought it necessary to try to account for an artform that had held a significant place in the culture of Athens nearly a century earlier, drama. Although he had not seen this drama for himself, Aristotle tried to describe how it worked" (2004:57). Whereas in many of his philosophical disputations Aristotle addresses subjects pertaining to his direct experience, in respect of "drama" and "epic" he is forced into the position of a historian interpreting an archive. Shepherd and Wallis propose that this may explain why Aristotle relegates "spectacle" to a subsidiary status: "When Aristotle treats spectacle as the least important element of tragedy, we understand that he never saw the plays enacted" (2004:169).

with its emphasis on the agency of the individual, as exemplified in *Hamlet*.[53] The dramatic interest remains lodged in the process of deliberation and choice, along with tensions ensuing from the consequences of those choices and actions, but these are now defined in terms of the scope for individual autonomy. "To be, or not to be?" remains the definitive question that poises Hamlet, as fictional character, as much as the entire play, centre stage in deliberating the metaphysics of identity and performing one's being. This highly self-reflexive text constantly engages with dualities. As a philosophical argument, Hamlet's propositions suggest that the sincerest form of being oneself is to acknowledge that the self is constituted by a series of roles played out in various situations and relationships. As a psychological study, it would be misleading to interpret the Danish Prince as anything beyond what is inscribed in the text: there is no subtext beyond what surfaces in the soliloquies. The convention of conceptualizing character in terms of a "life" beyond the synecdochal action, gestures and spoken utterances of the play, is the achievement of 19th century dramaturgy, against which Artaud so vehemently rebels.[54]

In contemporary use the term "character" is readily associated with what is singular, individual and psychological. The genealogy of the term reveals, however, that its earliest use denoted a "recognizable social *type*" (Shepherd and Wallis 2004:179), aligned more with "stereotype" than contemporary use allows. The 18th century transition towards designating 'salient attributes' persists in the colloquial notion of a character reference– the conventionalized statement testifying to personal integrity and achievement. Scripts that announce the *dramatis personae* along with the title of the play invoke the archaic, or perhaps residual, designation of fictional identities to be embodied by an actor. The Latin form, *persona,* invokes all that the 'masked' front represents both literally and symbolically. Peter Arnott in *Public and Performance in Greek Theatre* (1991) argues that conventions of theatrical presentation inform and shape dramatic writing and Aristotle attests to two, three, and later four actors playing all the roles required of any text. The transformation by any one actor from one role to another is facilitated by a change of designated character mask, each with its immobile expression. This convention is entirely at odds with the contemporary orthodoxy of assigning a single actor to each role.[55] The inherent theatricality of a single actor taking up a series of roles within a single dramatic presentation defines Western classical theatre at its inception and depends on the assumption of a variety of disguises and distances from the role, rather than conflation of the performer with the part being played. If "meaning is not separable from the way in which it is staged [...but] inhere[s] in the staging of a certain type of performance" (Weber 2004:26), then the distribution of the roles between the three performers, for whom Sophocles

[53] "Our interest in Orestes, the hero of Aeschylus' play *Libation Bearers*, derives from our sense that Orestes is identical with the ethical position or power he represents. What engages us with Hamlet, by contrast, is his conflict not with an opposing spiritual power, but with circumstances and, still more with difficulties in his own nature. The person of modern – that is, Shakespearean – tragedy is conceived by Bradley as complex, as internally divided and shaped by 'circumstances'. An intellectual culture formed by the theories of Karl Marx and then Sigmund Freud might recognize this account of the modern person" (Shepherd and Wallis. 2004:26).

[54] In his essay "No More Masterpieces", Artaud writes: "Psychology persists in bringing the unknown down to a level with the known, that is to say with the everyday and pedestrian. And psychology has caused this abasement and fearful loss of energy which appears to me to have really reached its limit. And it seems both theatre and ourselves want nothing more to do with psychology" (1989:58).

[55] The emphasis on action being relayed by an unfolding mise-en-scène, in which actors and roles may well be inter-changeable, has some correspondence with "Bentley's (suggestion) that dramatic character is less a fixed entity than a relationship, a force-field even, between play and audience [...] both a restatement of the Aristotelian idea that character is a function of action, and in a world that has digested its psychoanalysis, a reformulation of character as that which is unfixed" (Shepherd and Wallis 2004:183).

writes, requires that at least two of the actors consistently change role, mask and function *in relation to* Oedipus, and these permutations are intrinsic to the presentation, affect and interpretation of the drama.

"The word 'drama' means literally 'a thing done', and is derived from the verb [...] *drān, '*to do'*"* (1986:34) writes Dorsch, in support of his translation of a line in Part 3 of *Poetics:* "And this, some say, is why their works are called dramas, from their representing men doing things."(1986:34) Aristotle's essay isolates "The Manner of Poetic Imitation", as separable from both "the media" and the "objects of poetic imitation". The treatise, in translation, begins:

> Some artists, whether by theoretical knowledge or by long practice, can represent things by imitating their shapes and colours, and others do so by the use of the voice… (1986:32).

Representation and imitation are clearly two related, but not inter-changeable, terms. The much quoted and debated definition of tragedy (introducing chapter six) is:

> Tragedy, then, is a *representation of an action* that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to several parts of the play; *presented in the form of action*, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions (1986:39, my emphases).

This statement, a compound and complex sentence, heralds much of the restless frustrations of the history of Western drama. The repetition of "action" is an indication of its significance. Action is manifest in the arc of the agonistic encounter but pertains equally to the choric debates (strophe and antistrophe) that probe the likely consequences and values of the protagonist's choices. Action may be interpreted as referring to the overall arc of the play but may also be lodged in the minutiae of dialogic exchange, or, in apparent stasis (as Chekhov suggests) of unfulfilled longings to get to Moscow.

The value of returning to Aristotelian theory lies in what it contributes to discourses of representation and the desire to perform beyond the limits of signifying practices: the concept of mimesis is central to these concerns. Stephen Halliwell's careful reassessment of the Aristotelian formulation of the concept establishes a nuanced perspective that merits adoption.

> Mimesis is a Greek word. Its persistence as such within English-speaking cultures is significant. For it has no fixed, reliable or agreed English equivalent. You can find it associated with the following English words: imitation, representation, copy, similarity, fake. The attempt to translate it immediately becomes an act of interpretation, and hence of debate (Shepherd and Wallis 2004:212).

The referential status of a drama, or a production style (and the pejorative judgements this evokes) is inflected by the connotations of "imitation, copy and fake", implications that perhaps owe more to Plato's use of the term than to the nuances introduced by Aristotle and productively pursued by Halliwell.[56] Dorsch, as translator, provides a useful point of entry to any consideration of mimesis: "in Book III Plato uses it in a rather specialized sense, perhaps best translated as *'impersonation'*: that is, what the poet does when he is not speaking in his own person, as he does in lyric but by the

[56] Halliwell argues that mimesis "receives fluctuating and constantly revised treatment from Plato" and "was not always an explicit part of Plato's thinking about poetry". He explains that in addition to poetry "being 'twice-removed' from the truth" his skepticism derives from "poets creat(ing) their poems not from wisdom or knowledge but by inspiration" (2002:38).

use of direct speech in drama or in parts of epic, represents or impersonates another person" (1986:11, my emphasis). The idea of "impersonation" implicates the performer in an act that sets out to copy, willfully inserting the actor in relations between the "ideal" and the "real", in the sense problematized in Book X and the Theory of Ideas,[57] in which mimesis signifies the construction and perpetuation of a problematic illusion. For Plato, that impersonation suggests a developed facility for feigning through manipulation of appearance and manner, gesture and vocal delivery, a mastery of constructing "exterior signs"[58] of an identity other than the self. Such a masquerade invites philosophical and political critique.

"In *The Republic,* where (Plato's) so called attack is most fully developed, his main preoccupations are political, not artistic," writes Dorsch (1986:10).[59] The political "preoccupations" guide us to a different set of issues, less to do with aesthetics than the purpose, instrumentality and the affective agency of mimesis. Plato is deeply ambivalent towards the impact of representation on the grounds of what Halliwell calls "the so-called affective fallacy" (2002:16).[60] Halliwell's view is that this is the issue on which Aristotle most clearly challenges Plato: contrary to the proposition that mimesis induces a passive, unquestioning assimilation, it promotes a mode of reception grounded in "both the artifactuality and the representational content" (2002:28). Aristotle's defence of "representation" entails recognition of framing devices, negotiating conventions and the preservation of fictive distinctions through active interpretation.[61] Having argued that classical theory of mimesis accommodates a view that the artwork is an artistic "heterocosm", self-contained and autonomous while being simultaneously a "world-reflecting" model, Halliwell interprets Aristotle as suggesting that it is through "discernment of likeness [...] an active and interpretive process of cognition [that we can make] a perspicacious discovery of significance in the world" (Shepherd and Wallis. 2004:213). He counters the reading that emphasizes superficial iconicity as a crucial marker of Aristotle's definition of mimesis:

> Mimetic mirroring dissatisfied Aristotle, and this fits with his general avoidance of a conception of mimesis as a counterfeiting of the real […Mimesis] involves combined and balanced consideration of the media as well as the 'objects' of mimesis […advancing] its status as created artifact, as the product of an artistic shaping of artistic materials, as well as its capacity to signify and 'enact' the patterns of supposed realities (2002:172).[62]

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[57] Dorsch writes: "According to this theory everything that exists, or happens, in this world is an imperfect copy of an ideal object or action or state that has an ideal existence beyond this world. The productions of the poets [and artists] are therefore imitations of imperfect copies of an ideal life; they are third-hand and unreal, and can teach us nothing about value in life" (1986:12).

[58] Denis Diderot (1713 –1784) cited in Shepherd and Wallis.

[59] Halliwell posits that for Plato "[t]ragedy [...] exhibits the power of mimetic art on two connected levels: it shows itself to be a potent communicative agent, the medium of a picture of reality that in some sense is a cultural rival to (Platonic) philosophy and it correspondingly demonstrates how the status of mimetic artworks is bound up inseparably with their psychological impact on their audiences" (2002:27). Elsewhere Halliwell puts it more expressly: "Plato perceives poetry as a potent cultural rival, an opponent to rational discourse in what Socrates famously calls the 'ancient quarrel'" (2002:56). He emphasizes Plato's "repeated acknowledgements [...] of the alluring pleasures of poetry and other art" (2002:74) and suggests that Plato might be a "romantic puritan" (2002:54).

[60] Halliwell sums this up as: "Two main lines of approach run through (Plato's) dialogues' handling of mimetic art: one fixes on the complex relationship of 'likeness' between mimetic images and the features of the world they (purport to) represent, the other on the psychological implications and consequences of mimesis for its audiences" (2002:25).

[61] Halliwell bases this on his reading of Chapter 4: "The Origins and Development of Poetry" in which Aristotle addresses "the instinct" and "pleasures" of imitation.

[62] Correspondingly "aesthetic pleasure both embraces and qualifies an understanding of possible responses, including emotional responses, to equivalent realities outside the work of art so that the common Platonic premise of uniform correlation between responses to life and responses to art is modified yet not simply discarded by Aristotle [...] the *Poetics*

This view foregrounds the reception and interpretation prompted by what Halliwell calls "the mind's capacity to explore the possibility of *difference* in its own life" (2002:54). In his view it is on these grounds that Plato and Aristotle conspicuously diverge.

Shepherd and Wallis track the impact of embracing "activity" rather than "action", suggesting that it is a move synchronous with the rise of performance art and performance studies in the 1960's. Citing Timothy Wiles (1980), they observe that:

> In the new practices of drama, and specifically 'performance', the category of action has evaporated: 'Rejecting the formal and aesthetically completable (sic) concept of dramatic *action*, recent theoreticians have called for the centrality of *activity;* not as Aristotle had it, 'what might happen,' a probable and universally applicable action, but 'what happens,' the fragmentary, contingent, time-bound, and unrepeatable activities which have the advantage of being real, not ideal (2004:170).

The appeal of the discontinuous, the chance intervention, the provisional and the transient would seem to underlie the objectives of this intervention and change of emphasis, and the pleasures of improvised performance depend on exactly these qualities. The "certainties" attached to promoting "activities" in terms of a more pronounced measure of "authenticity" transcending the domain of symbolic forms are not entirely persuasive on two counts. Firstly, these brief encounters, purporting to constitute the elusive "real" remain encoded texts and may profit from being more directly acknowledged as such, and secondly, no matter how brief or discontinuous, an "activity" invested with transitions in status, is inevitably dramatic in form. The inscription of status shifts within an interaction, even if this is imposed from the external position of the spectator, "transforms" activity into action. The dramatic moment can only be fleeting and ephemeral, "the glitter of sun on the surface of the water" (D.H.Lawrence: "Kangaroo*"* cited in Dollimore 1998:272). Perhaps a more productive approach to "activity", and the tendency towards self-contained expressive utterance, can be developed from approaching performance training through the imperatives of the medium of theatre that it seeks to repress, by emphasizing "reciprocal inter-action". In his analysis of a scene in *Autumn River*, in the repertoire of the Peking Opera, Samuel Weber suggests that it is "an allegory of theatricality as a medium – not as a medium of representation, but as a medium that redefines activity as reactivity" (2004:29). His analysis emphasizes the "interplay of different rhythms [...] and the separate movements that constitute (a) common rhythm – and situation" emphasizing that the two performers are "*in their separation linked* through the reciprocity of their movements" (2004:29). Action prompts response and develops through differing levels of agency accorded to that response.

Revisiting Aristotle's *Poetics* and contemporary texts that probe specific aspects of that text, alerts us to the key questions outlined above: the productivity of interrogating a classic from a fresh perspective can be briefly summarized in so far as improvisation and status-play are concerned. Privileging action over character, or vice versa, may be foregrounded as a formal choice. Aristotle's theory of *mimesis* requires analysis of the action in terms of a dual focus on the "drama" or what Bert O. States (1987) calls "enact*ed*" events and its relation to the medium of theatre or the "act*ing*" event. Aristotle's notion of aesthetic distance and the quality of engagement called for (on the part of both performer and spectator) merits consideration, regardless of whether the representation is

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constructs a dual perspective on poetic artworks by figuring them both as material constructions and as representations of imagined human actions" (Halliwell 2002:173).

conventional and overtly stylized or performed in a manner that aims for verisimilitude: performing and interpreting indices of status interaction operate as cogently in either mode.

**Improvisation and Playing Status Games: the inter-personal and outwardly focused Johnstonian model.**

The work of Keith Johnstone is ostensibly the antithesis of the Aristotelian poetics.[63] Firstly, improvisation challenges the view that drama is necessarily literary and unified, and secondly, it hones in on precisely that aspect of dramatic presentation that Aristotle regards as little more than a medium. Moreover, attributing value to improvised performance entails endorsing that which is ephemeral and oral, frequently partial or fragmented in form, without regard for sequential linearity and crafted in the mise-en-scène. Johnstone's propositions merit explication in relation to their foundations in the pedagogical arena and for his seminal explication of status dynamics in inter-personal exchanges.

Johnstone's core proposition is that formal education (primary and secondary schooling in mid to late twentieth century Britain) inhibited creativity through inculcating an insidious form of self-censorship in the individual which is manifest in a variety of ways. In his view, the tendency towards self-constraint is underpinned by one central feature, namely the desire for acceptance, affirmation and recognition which serve as compulsions towards conformity. He regards the desire "to excel" as equally problematic in inhibiting creativity. The focus on the goal of recognition, rather than pleasure, in the creative process may result in a curiously un-productive self-consciousness. He argues that the capacity for spontaneity, creativity and play is eroded and atrophied through the institutional mechanisms intended to facilitate development because of the goal orientated drive towards excellence. In his view, compliance becomes a strategy by which students succeed through diligent application and absorption. Following Johnstone, the challenge in confronting these outcomes is twofold: firstly, it consists of disrupting the comfortable notions of an established pattern of learning and achievement in order (subsequently) to be able to realize the primary objective of liberating individual creative capacities. This means contesting thoroughly assimilated and often highly prized dispositions and reinstating the capacity for aleatory play. This paradigm shift might be summed up as privileging play over work, or indeed pleasure over conspicuous effort.

Departing from formal text analysis and training in vocal delivery, Johnstone's method hones in on the interactive encounter as a framework for understanding how performances are constructed through relationships between performers, rather than privileging individual actor-character dynamics. This creates a web of interactions, doubly embodied – actors respond to each other as

[63] Johnstone was a significant contributor to George Devine's project at the Royal Court in multiple capacities: workshop facilitator, playwright, reader and director. He was appointed to develop skills through the activities of the Writer's Group. This constituted a forum for implementing performance workshops and classes, extending writing skills through understanding the relations between dramaturgy and performance. Improvisation and play studies thus served the dream of a 'renaissance' in dramatic writing. In recounting the achievements of the project, Johnstone writes: "We learned that things invented on the spur of the moment could be as good or better than the texts we laboured over. We developed very practical attitudes to the theatre. As Edward Bond acknowledged: 'The writers' group taught me that drama was about relationships, not about characters'" (Johnstone.1997:26).

actors as much as the characters that they are playing inter-act with other characters.[64] The presence of the performer as a player is foregrounded rather than allowing for the 'disappearance of the player'.[65] In this mode of improvisation, as in play, the performer takes on a role and is engaged beyond a pure presentation, or expression, of self. Johnstone writes:

> We have this idea that art is self-expression – which is historically *weird*. An artist used to be seen as a medium through which something else operated. He was the servant of the God. Maybe a mask-maker would have fasted and prayed for a week before he had a vision of the mask he had to carve, because no one wanted to see *his* Mask, they wanted to see the God's (1997:79).[66]

He observes that "Once we believe that art is self-expression, then the individual can be criticized not only for his skill or lack of skill, but simply for being what he is" (1997:79). Correspondingly Fischer writes:

> It is necessary to seize, hold and transform experience into memory, memory into expression, material into form. Emotion for an artist is not everything: he must also know his trade and enjoy it, understand all the rules, skills, forms and conventions, whereby nature – the shrew – can be tamed and subjected to the contract of art (2010:17).

Improvisation does lends itself readily to an equation with the freedom to express the self, but models that advocate this application may privilege "character" over "action", valorizing the psychological subject and the singular experience over what may be held in common, and, perhaps (most problematically) promote content with little regard for form and structure, by which I mean the performance as a work for presentation to and reception by a public. In contrast to the quasi-confessional, therapeutic, potentially solipsistic interpretation of improvisation as a method, the Johnstonian model readily incorporates theories of play and structured relations. Within this system, status transactions are a central component around which action can be structured and rhythms developed, and the play ethos operates as a governing principle of inter-active encounters.

A considerable portion of Johnstone's chapter, "Status", records and explains issues emerging from empirical observations in teaching status in the studio class. He writes most explicitly of hierarchies and the pecking order. "I've known about this ever since I was given a book about social dominance in kittiwake colonies, yet I hadn't immediately thought of applying this information to actor training" (1997:41). His statement inadvertently, perhaps, reveals something of the ways in which creative pedagogical approaches draw profitably on intuitive and inter-disciplinary impulses rather than on strict adherence to received traditions. Continually challenging the repressive effects of socialization and education,[67] together with boundaries of what is deemed normative or verging on

[64] Marvin Carlson credits ethnologist Richard Bauman with clarifying the "essentially contested concept of performance" and cites him as saying: "all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action" (1996:5).

[65] Henricks writes: "Simmel's great contribution is his insistence that play is, first of all, a recognition of and entry into 'form' [...] to play fully and well, one must accept a framework of understanding about the play sphere [...] play is an acquaintance with symbolic order. At every moment we learn what it means to take on a specialized identity, to see objects in new ways, to understand success and failure in an altered context" (2006:129).

[66] This view parallels that of Ernst Fischer in *The Necessity of Art*: "The magic role of art has progressively given way to the role of illuminating social relationships, of enlightening men in societies becoming opaque, of helping men to recognize and change social reality" (2010:22).

[67] Lorna Marshall (2001) similarly identifies "freeing the body" from embedded idiosyncratic patterns as a primary pedagogical concern. This is predicated on tracking ways in which the body is socialized, rather than 'imprinted'. The adult customizes and economizes the use of the body, delimiting its expressive range and selecting preferred idiosyncratic vocabularies. She recognizes the actor's need to be liberated from this limiting repertoire.

the insane, he contrasts the "uncanny perception" of schizophrenics with ways in which "normal people repress the capacity to decode action, sounds, movements – selectively ignor[ing] purposive expression" (1997:41).

Johnstone stresses the connection between interpretation and embodiment as indices of status through two propositions: "the things *said* are not as important as the status *played*" (1997:49); and, within the improvisation context "the insults must remain an ornamentation to the scene, they mustn't become the scene itself [...] there must be some purpose they're trying to achieve as well as 'being insulted'" (1997:54). The first proposition is readily demonstrated in an interaction in which the verbal exchange is ostensibly neutral and denies overt expression of status positions.

A: Hallo.
B: Hallo.
A: Been waiting long?
B: Ages (1997:49).

This seven word 'play' is clearly ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. The relations between A and B depend entirely on physical and vocal delivery for the status relations to be inscribed in the action. The "fragment" accommodates diverse renditions and status shifts, serving as an introduction to status games and prompts caution against asserting a categorical or definitive reading of any "script". Participants have to engage with the core principle that acting is constructed through inter-personal engagement, in which meaning is inseparable from the here and now of each other's bodies and the space between them, in a reciprocally focused encounter. Assumptions regarding the explicit intention and the authority of the written utterance can be de-stabilized.

Johnstone's core proposition is that "every inflection and every movement implies a status, and [...] no *action* is due to chance, or really 'motiveless'" (1997:33 my emphasis). The focus here is quite clear: what potentially arouses interest and sustains tension for the audience is the status-play between participants, or a single actor in an empty space, playing status transactions in relation to objects or even the empty space itself. This proposition returns us to the Aristotelian notion of advancing the importance of action over character. The injunction disabuses us of the notion that psychological categories per se are of "ethical interest" or, in and of themselves, constitute a compelling presentation for an objective witness. Moreover, in expanding on how playing status relations sharpens the focus on relations between persons and persons, or persons and things, strategic modes of power play and provisionally held positions surface without indulged introspection. Johnstone further posits that status is established not only in response to others, but in relation to objects, to spaces and to events.

An embodied mastery of the medium of performance is the objective of actors in training and entails identifying both the language and the craft of presentation and a vocabulary to articulate the complexities with which they are working. Since that medium may be broadly defined as "human action", it may be useful to be more precise in outlining what this means. Bert States insists that action is manipulated and presented in spatial and temporal terms:

> The stage space and the stage event are one and the same thing: they are reciprocal entities, impossible to keep separate for very long, even for discussion purposes. There is

> even a level on which actors cannot be distinguished from furniture since both are aspects of a composition in time and space (1987:50).

Since space and time are the matrix for human interaction it follows that developing awareness of how these may be manipulated is central to performance training. Johnstone's emphasis on embodying status physically underpins games such as "insults", "space" and "master servant" roles.[68] Practical games and exercises provide a departure point for more considered enquiry into how these may be linked with an approach to discourse at the level of the inter-active encounter. Manipulation of territorial advantage, along with understanding spatial configurations, is crucial to skills development in constructing an unfolding mise-en-scène.

Johnstone suggests that preferred status tactics become established through customary or habitual use. This, he suggests, is so to the extent that it is possible to distinguish between individuals with a marked "status preference" compared with those who are "status experts", moving fluently across varied relations with ease. Drawing on the mannerisms of two different teachers, he introduces the distinction between the low status player, lacking assertiveness and the capacity to assume control, and the high status player who forcefully projects authority, forfeiting trust and affinity. The status expert is unafraid to adjust positions and initiates status shifts rather than responding to circumstance, and in so doing generates co-operative interaction. Explaining what is at stake here is the desire to dominate or the need to be submissive, Johnstone acknowledges that the introduction of these terms may trigger resistance and inhibitions, an understandable pre-emptive caution on the part of participants. The pejorative connotations attached to positions of agency or, conversely, powerlessness, and anxieties regarding "moral" judgments and socio-political correctness, makes for reluctance in performing extreme positions of either dominance or subjugation "authentically".[69] For Johnstone, status games and exercises are the starting point. He follows this with exercises in spontaneity. Within the South African context and its heritage of inequities, there are grounds for inverting this sequence and beginning with developing skills in spontaneity, emphasizing the continuities between improvisation, classic play theory and games. There are two reasons for changing the sequence: a socio-political response to the demographics of student groups where diversities and imbalances are compounded by the aftermath of apartheid social engineering, which threatens to introduce the reductive conflation of status with either class or race bound indices; and, secondly, developing the facility of spontaneous play is a framing device that fosters and establishes the terms of engagement between participants. It seems critical at the outset to acknowledge that linguistic facility and confidence distorts status relations. This entails identifying a mechanism for negating the inherent advantage of English speakers while promoting the confidence of second language English speakers as a crucial premise of potential equitability.

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[68] He identifies a series of physical "tricks" through which dominance or submission is made manifest, suggesting that involuntary patterns persist to reveal personal status preferences even in the attempt to project an unaccustomed status position. The "bag of tricks" introduces status relations through manipulation of eye contact (sustaining the stare, or breaking eye contact), stillness (particularly the head, and its association with command) and balance (weight evenly distributed on the feet to provide a firm support). The value of his observations hold only in so far as culturally specific conventions of eye contact, attitudes to listening and proxemic relations are congruent with the context in which his model is being applied.

[69] Johnstone cites the example of a student from a working class background who resolutely resisted playing an assertive or dominant identity due to conflating status with class: "not realizing that you can play high or low in any situation." The student was guided towards avoiding unnecessary movements or deferential gestures and concentrate on sustaining an assertive attitude (1997:56).

Although the field of improvisation seems to be the site most directly opposed to that which is studied, prepared and rehearsed,[70] sustained and committed engagement in improvisation classes dismantles that assumption. Repetition is the basis of establishing routines that enable an ensemble to improvise from a sound basis in group consensus. Developing rhythms is intrinsic to patterning and shaping the process of improvisations, in the warm up and short scenarios. Johnstone advocates understanding routines with their value in focusing participants and engendering interest on the part of the audience or spectators. The tension and expectations produced through the routines, or through repetition and variation as a motif, becomes a compositional strategy central to collaborative engagement. Routines are also fundamental to developing a scene to the point where the need for rupture becomes necessary. The fundamentals of improvised dramatic narrative structure are consistently re-played in the Improvisation studio and establish a territory that is polyphonic and heteroglossic as indices of socio-cultural referents are introduced, circulated and explored. The structure of repeated exercises (geared to exploring a particular objective) along with the content (the inevitable incorporation of miscellaneous cultural material that surfaces through these improvised scenarios) correspond with Weber's probing of the relations between repetition, citation and theatre. Spontaneous participation in routines and games may be predicated on familiarity with a repetitive structure and at this level improvisation and theatre may both be founded on a common principle.

> Brecht emphasizes that it is 'the manner in which the actress plays the scene' that 'makes the occasion seem so memorable'. Elsewhere he discusses how Chinese theater operates with a defined repertoire of gestures and situations, which are presented in infinitely varied and singular ways. What therefore 'happens' on the stage is not the communication of something new, in the sense of content, but the variation of something familiar through its repetition. Repetition thus emerges as a visible, audible and constitutive element of the theatrical medium (2004:24).

The acknowledgement of the mutually shared social domain as a point of departure establishes a relationship between spontaneous performance and citation.

> Citation reveals its potentiality to be re-cited, its citability. Cited as citable, gesture is never simply present, but split between past and future, invoking the past to portend an unpredictable future. A form of repetition, citation reveals that it is not necessarily a return of the same. Or, rather, that the return of the same is itself not necessarily identical or unchanging – as with repetitive, ritualized habits that have become so automatic as to escape conscious control (Weber 2004:47).

Training in spontaneity through a range of exercises is ultimately, and perversely perhaps, a means to achieve an experiential understanding of citation and the ways in which it diverges from reproducing automatic, well-drilled or rehearsed gestures.

> Theater involves neither the constitution of order out of chaos nor the solving of problems. It does not communicate contents or produce positive knowledge. Nor is it 'performative' in the sense usually understood, which is to say, that of accomplishing an intention through

[70] The pressure of the imperatives to be deemed "original" is militated against by acknowledging a play ethos, its appropriation of citable gestures. Frequently, in Johnstone's view, it is the unpretentious and "ordinary" impulse, the predictable, and the "least original" opening gambit that constitutes the most generative springboard for developing a scene and prompts greatest pleasure in the audience.

> an act. Rather, by isolating acts and gestures of reference from their intentional content, it points to established frames of reference and also to the conditions and contexts that those intentions suppose – but only in order to *dislocate* them (Weber 2004:305).

Weber might well be writing of play and its autotelic gratification or the improvisation studio as a forum for a particular type of pedagogical practice His insistence on "dislocation" as a key principle also applies to the shaping and crafting of dramatic structures and the effect of fragmentation or montage as a compositional principle. Like Johnstone, whose continual emphasis is on the underlying geometry of relations in an encounter as the necessary mechanism for generating a scene, Weber devotes considerable energies to formative principles. He tracks various alternatives to the linear trajectory advocated by Aristotle, along with the nomenclature for this: an "interruption" (Walter Benjamin), a "caesura" (Hölderlin), a gap, gash or cut. "The cut", he writes "does not simply destroy; in segmenting it becomes a formative factor" (2004:120). A compositional strategy similar to montage or juxtaposition, it has the effect of 'suspending us in time' or 'dis-locating us in space'. The example that he cites is "when de Gaulle's motorcade passes by in Goddard's *Breathless*. First there is the motorcycle escort in front of the limousine, then the cut, and finally the motorcycle bringing up the rear" (2004:157). Status shifts produced through action and response become markers of transformation and may prove to function as a compositional, rather than thematic, device in generating a narrative structure in precisely the manner that Weber attributes to the "cut". Ultimately, according to Johnstone's propositions, a shared awareness of status relations and shifts constitutes a technical language and a compositional strategy for collective collaboration in developing impromptu scenes.

**Sociological approaches to the play paradigm.**

Dario Fo links unstructured play with agency and infinite variety; and the lack of self-consciousness associated with this with imaginative capacity and originality, releasing fluent incandescent performances, unrestrained by convention. In his view, the innate expressive integrity of play does not survive adult intervention, which replaces creative capacity with banal gestures and quotations. He asserts:

> All games invented by children breathe the air of total liberty. They have a feeling for the grotesque, for subtlety, for joy, but the moment an adult says: 'Anyone like to act?' that sense of liberty is choked off and everything takes on a forced air. Nothing remains except that weary movement redolent of senseless and arbitrary rules which makes theatre nothing other than a poor copy of the downright obvious, a stereotype bright and shining liked a plaster cast and as full of the sparkle of imagination as a lump of smoked Mozarella cheese vacuum packed for export (1992:53).

Fo pits artless self-realization against self-conscious contrivance. This seems to encapsulate the challenges inherent in training in the performing arts, with the underlying tensions between pleasure and freedom, agency and conformity, and ultimately individual identity and the sensibility of the ensemble.

Umberto Eco begins "Interpreting Drama" by reciting two episodes from Jorge Luis Borges' short story "Averroes's Search"; the first of these connects children's play, status aspirations and Aristotelian theory. Averroes (circa 11$^{th}$ or 12$^{th}$ century) is preoccupied with trying to make sense of

Aristotle's terms *comedy* and *tragedy,* the meaning of which eludes him owing to cultural taboos prohibiting dramatic performance within the Arab world at the time. Borges writes:

> He looked through the lattice-work balcony; below, in the narrow earthen patio, some half-naked children were playing. One, standing on another's shoulders, was obviously playing the part of the muezzin […] The one who held him motionlessly played the part of the minaret; another, abject in the dust, and on his knees, the part of the faithful worshippers. The game did not last long; all wanted to be the muezzin, none the congregation or the tower (1972:181).

Averroes dismisses the scene and returns to his philosophical pursuits. Eco submits that he "touches" on "the experience of theater, skimming over it without understanding it. Too bad, since he had a good theoretical framework ready to define it.[71] Western civilization, on the contrary, during the Middle Ages, had the real experience of theatrical performance but had not a working theoretical net to throw over it" (1994:102). Eco's observation serves to reinforce issues regarding relationships between the common-sense understanding and a theoretical perspective, while Borges' brief description provides some insight into dramatic representation being embedded in the spontaneous and uncontrived scenario which Averroes does not recognize as an instance of *mimesis,* because he lacks the capacity to recognize the comedy being played out in the street below him.

It is useful to acknowledge relations between play and the pleasures of mimesis advanced by Aristotle, and gratification afforded through gaining insight through mimesis. Sociological studies and theories of play function to stimulate ways of addressing this phenomenon and also expand an approach to performance that synthesizes relations between the individual and the ensemble with aesthetic form. Scholarship linking dramatic and theatrical models with social discourse is well established, notably in Kenneth Burke's *Grammar of Motives* and Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, although in both these instances the vocabulary of the dramatic project provides a vocabulary for the sociologist. Play theory, inherently interdisciplinary,[72] is in the view of Thomas Henricks a topical and pertinent project instigated by the work of the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and his *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1955).

Henricks articulates the "conflicted" position at the heart of Huizinga's extensive writings on the subject. In the first instance Play is understood as a *"*special *form* of activity*"* which is not quite the same thing as "a well-defined *quality* of action*"* (2006:184). Fo, in comparing the child's game with an enacted performance, mobilizes the former in his notion of play as a particular *form* of behaviour. His playful tone performs a different understanding of play, the "*quality"* of playfulness. An emphasis on quality, rather than form, proposes that play "is a 'cognitive style,' a commitment to transpose circumstances of any sort into opportunities for play" (Henricks 2006:184).

Henricks approaches play in relation to three other modes of social behaviour and interaction, namely work, ritual and "communitas". These provide extremely useful categories to interrogate play as both a "mode of *expressive behaviour*" (acknowledging a dispositional and psychological

[71] At the outset, Eco states that "Averroes was a specialist on Aristotle, mainly on the *Poetics.* […] Western civilization had lost this book and had rediscovered it only through the mediation of Arab philosophers. Averroes did not know about theatre. Because of the Muslim taboo on representation, he had never seen a theatrical performance" (1994:101).

[72] The social and behavioural sciences of education, psychology, folklore, animal behaviour studies and anthropology all define play as a legitimate area of enquiry. Henricks bemoans the fact that "no discipline has moved this topic to the center of its theoretical or research tradition" (2006:3).

bias) and as a "mode of *human interaction*" (inclining to a sociological emphasis on encounters and their formats). Drawing on Huizinga's seminal propositions regarding the ludic capacity as a particular activity and disposition, Henricks asks: "Does play – as a pattern of interaction – have a logic or geometry that differentiates it from other forms of interconnection?" He then proceeds to chart play in terms of similarities to, and differences from, work, ritual and communitas, constructing a grid of co-ordinates positioning these four distinct modes of social interaction. Ritual and play diverge in respect of predictability and the degrees to which they are contestive or integrative patterns; they also diverge in relation to rationale. Ritual is instrumental, and play deemed consummatory: the former emphasizes compliance whereas play is transformative and allows for assertive expression. Henricks maps fundamental distinctions across "dimensions" of expressive behaviour which define differences in the "stance or orientation" of individuals according to whether the activities transform the conditions of their existence or not. Simultaneously he maps the four key activities in relation to their instrumentality as opposed to their consummatory capacity. Play has a consummatory capacity in common with the urge towards communitas (the carnival, the street fair), but (like work) can be deemed transformative in its operation. Play is associated with the space for anarchic and random individual expression defying societal norms. In this sense Henricks suggests that play, unlike communitas and ritual, is not conformative. The opposition between assimilation and self-assertive expression seems to underpin the alignments Henricks makes. The challenge, at least in terms of training an ensemble in improvisation technique, is to align play with communitas. Henricks is intriguing in his alignment of play with work in its capacity to take on "the world", to engage with, to shape and order experience. The distinction between play and work lies in the rationale underpinning the activities. Play is accorded the status of being consummatory, its value located within the activity for its own sake, while labour "alienates" the individual from these pleasures. But this does not preclude play from being powerfully instrumental when learning outcomes are embedded in games: understanding is arrived at through discovery and pleasure.

In a second mapping Henricks looks to "patterns of engagement" in terms of whether they are agonistic or non-contestatory and integrative. This variable is offset by what he terms "the directionality of the engagement" in which routine and repetition diverge from what is entirely unpredictable. Through this he establishes a second mapping of "modes of human interaction". Play, again, is aligned with "work" and "communitas", albeit according to different criteria. But it is here that performer training and the development of the ensemble has the potential to break with the neat geometry of the sociologist and his study of cultural formations and activities, in the sense that developing a shared language regarding spontaneity becomes the very premise of positioning the individual within the collective, and is transformed into an integrative, rather than contestive, strategy.

The "*working consensus*"[73] of the group is a pivotal underpinning for co-operative and collaborative play. Establishing the play frame with a group of students suggests that the activity might more appropriately be termed "work". But, the whole point of multiple games is to arrive at the moment of recognition when behaviour can be articulated, discussed and critiqued in terms of effecting a separation between the individual disposition and performance choices. Two players need to be

[73] Erving Goffman's concept.

able to operate entirely co-operatively as "themselves" while the element of contest is played out in terms of the persona within the action. In this sense play is both predictable (premised on a working consensus) and unpredictable, requiring constant spontaneous adjustment in response to stimuli evolving in a partnership. Improvisations take on the uncanny appearance of a superbly rehearsed performance; timing is natural and uncontrived. This is only a consequence of both players adhering to, and delighting in, a shared encounter, consistently accepting each other's position along with the "rules of the game".

Henricks' survey of seminal play theorists, specifically his assertion that Georg Simmel (1858 – 1918) is Goffman's intellectual predecessor, prompted more extended reading and assimilation of this seminal social philosopher. Simmel's writing reflects not only his over-arching concern with the fledgling discipline of sociology but also his fascination with relationships between individuals in a specific situation and moment: a focus clearly congruent with interrogating status play and performance. His formulations offer a vocabulary apposite to the rhetoric of performance,[74] effectively providing a social theory that augments and underpins Johnstone's improvisation method.

The rationale for my anchoring not only the structure, but the conceptual underpinnings of a Simmelian approach in this thesis may be critiqued on the grounds that he represents all that is remote and antithetical to the politics of culture and pedagogy in contemporary South Africa; that the corpus of his analysis emerges from a quintessentially emerging modernist ethos and European context; and that his perspective is ostensibly inseparable from his bourgeois identity and affluent lifestyle. Freudian perspectives, and the subsequent corpus of works developed as an extension of the psycho-analytic project and subject, may well be subject to the same critique. This counter-analogy cannot begin to validate a decision to anchor a study in performance-related issues in Simmel's writing. The analogy is made, rather, to indicate something of Simmel's stature which is similarly verified in the following statement: "Simmel", writes Everett Cherrington Hughes in the introduction to *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations,* "is the Freud of the study of society. Instead of seeing change as disturbance of a naturally stable thing called society, he sees stability itself as some temporary balance among forces in interaction; and forces are by definition capable of being described only in terms of change" (1964:9). Not unlike Ovid, Simmel is fascinated by tensions between flux and fixity.

Simmel interprets culture, social life and individual personality as "forms of expression" (1971:113) and as a "condition of modernity" (1971:114). For Simmel, social life can be understood as patterns expressing the interests and appetites of actors; and his focus is on models of associative *encounter* and *exchange.* This brings his sociology into close alignment with the interactive process central to understanding Johnstone's approach to Improvised performance. Both stress inter-personal relations and interaction, both disengage from interiority and psychological approaches to identity. Simmelian concepts thus constitute appropriate tools for addressing questions inherent in inter-subject relationships as productive and constitutive of experience: he identifies (and analyzes) individual social roles reiterated as tropes of being and behaving as patterns of encounter inscribed in situational contexts.

[74] Henricks asserts that "some critics have concluded that Simmel's payoff is aesthetic rather than sociological" (2006:128).

**Simmel's social philosophy and cultural theory: outlining the conceptual core of his thought.**

Simmel is particularly interesting for the evident correspondence of his thinking with pertinent post-modern themes; as Henricks puts it, his "emphasis (is) on the ways in which our involvement with others – and with culture – is always incomplete" (2006:116). He is, perhaps, one of the first theorists of subjectivity, positing that which is fragmented, separated, and tangential as ways of knowing the self, the world and inter-personal relationships. Donald Levine attributes to Simmel the articulation of concepts central to the contemporary sociological project a full century later. The legacy of his independent and concerted efforts to define and shape the field of sociology includes setting out concepts of "social distance, marginality, urbanism as a way of life, role playing, social behaviour as exchange, conflict as an integrating process, dyadic encounter,[75] circular interaction, reference groups as perspectives, and sociological ambivalence" (1971:ix). Thomas Henricks writes: "Among the early sociologists, Simmel had perhaps the deepest understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of social life [...] the ways in which cultural forms articulate and preserve social distinction"(2006:24).[76] Expanding on this claim, Henricks suggests:

> Simmel was fascinated by the relationship between socio-cultural reality – as a kind of magnificent abstraction – and the inspired commitments of individuals in the moments of their lives. What he understood profoundly was that this tension-filled relationship between the abstract and concrete, timeless and momentary, impersonal and personal, is fundamental to the experience of being human. *Probably better than any sociologist before or since, Simmel realized that humans encounter the world fundamentally through the construction and employment of symbolic forms.* His ability to describe in striking ways the degree to which people create, inhabit and oppose form, makes him, arguably, the greatest of the sociological theorists of play (2006:110, my emphasis).

Simmel pursuit of themes of discontinuity, fragmentation and incompleteness, and the self-conscious disposition towards playful adoption of roles suggests the appeal of his thinking today.[77]

Donald Levine, in his introduction to *On Individuality and Social Forms* observes that "four basic presuppositions underlie all of Simmel's analyses of culture, society and personality. These may be identified as the principles of form, reciprocity, distance and dualism" (1971: xxxii). These key tools of the Simmelian paradigm provide ways to shift notions of status relations, and more importantly shifts in status positions so central to interactive encounters, to questions of their formal or aesthetic articulation. In terms that might equally be applied to Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Levine observes: "(Simmel's) method is to select some bounded, finite phenomenon from the world of flux; to examine the multiplicity of elements which compose it; and to ascertain the cause of their coherence by disclosing its form" (1971:xxi). The concepts of form, reciprocity, distance and

[75] "[T]wo units treated as one". This formulation is a useful encapsulation of the idea that dramatic performances and improvisations cannot be autonomously and independently crafted, but depend on reciprocity between players.
[76] Henricks suggests that Thorsten Veblen and Pierre Bordieu continue this tradition, but identifies Erving Goffman as "the principal inheritor of Simmel's subtlety and flair" (2006:24). In evaluating Simmel's contribution to the discipline, Henricks writes: "[His] great contribution was to think through the logical implications of different types of social, cultural and personal patterns" (2006:129).
[77] "In our purportedly post-industrial age, play (and the broader matter of human enjoyment) has become a public preoccupation" (Henricks 2006:79).

dualism merit expansion because of how they may be deployed in the analysis of status interactions.[78]

"Form" denotes "determinate structure and meaning" (1971: xxvii), constructed by articulating specific, and potentially repeatable, experiences. For Simmel, form explicitly refers to phenomena such as "superiority, subordination, competition, division of labour, formation of parties, representation, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness towards the outside" (1971:26). This readily accommodates positions of dominance and submission, authority and subjugation as spatially arranged co-ordinates, [79] emblematic of capital. Inter-active participation as an active mode of operation has evident affinity with the notion of reciprocity.[80] Simmel continually stresses intrinsically dialectical relations and emphasizes the centrality of exchange. He claims that reciprocal exchange is "the purest and most concentrated form of all human interactions in which serious interests are at stake" (1971:43). As Levine puts it, for Simmel no "thing or event has a fixed, intrinsic meaning; its meaning only emerges through interaction with other things or events" (1971: xxxiii). This is fundamental to the ways in which status positions are constructed and occupied, in relation to another person, an object, or a territory. Status is relationally and reciprocally defined. Levine submits that Simmel sustains a sociological and inter-personal focus anchored in a fundamental proposition that "[t]he place where all societal events occur is within the minds of individuals" (1971: xxxiii).

The notion of dualism, defined by Levine as "conflicts and contrasts between opposed categories" (1971: xxxv), suggests the Aristotelian formulation of dramatic conflict, but is also instrumental in defining relations between disparate cultural practices and attitudes towards received tradition and present needs. Levine catalogues ways in which dualism is central to Simmel's enquiry as including "subject/object relations [which] are supplemented in the Simmelian analysis by the oppositions inherent in the public/private distinction; the tensions between conformity and individuation; antagonism and solidarity, compliance and rebelliousness, freedom and constraint" (1971: xxxvi). Simmel's concept of distance, invoking spatial dimensions, configurations and symbolism, seems intrinsically valuable to the theatrical project and as central to the aesthetic enquiry as they are to interrogating status. He introduces ways of extending the factor of distance beyond the sense of territorial dominance because his application of spatial relationships and boundaries is both literal and symbolic. His analysis of how we orientate ourselves cognitively as subjects within a spatial and social world is particularly useful in connecting action with a tendency towards achievement or failure and the kinds of value judgements and assessments through which these outcomes are regarded. He asserts:

> Man's position in the world is defined by the fact that in every dimension of his being and his behaviour he stands at every moment between two boundaries. This condition constitutes the formal structure of our existence, manifesting itself in countless ways in the diverse

[78] Writing of "The Relativity of Value", Simmel, fuses notions of form, distance, dualism and reciprocity in proposing that "a line possesses this length only at the moment of being compared with another line. A line is not long of and by itself. It cannot determine its length by itself, but only through another line by which it is measured, and which it measures as well…" (1971:50).

[79] Simmel's terms "superordinate" and "subordinate" are less pejoratively loaded, but like "coordinates", his term for persons of more or less equitable status, these have little contemporary currency.

[80] The concept of reciprocity is not confined to equitable relations. Hegel's master-slave dialectic proposes antithetical (yet mutually constructed and sustained) roles that polarize difference in terms of agency and are inter-dependent.

> provinces, activities, and destinies of human life. We feel the content and value of each hour stand between a higher and a lower; every thought between a wiser and a more foolish [...] We are constantly orientating ourselves, even when we do not employ abstract concepts, to an 'over us' and an 'under us', to a right and a left, to a more or less, a tighter or looser, a better or worse. The boundary, above and below, is our means for finding direction in the infinite space of our worlds (1971:35).

In "The Stranger", Simmel posits that "spatial relations not only are the determining conditions of relationships among men, but are also symbolic of those relationships" (1971:143). He develops this argument in his seminal essay on marginality in which the Stranger is at once "close "and "remote", "outside of" and "within" a community. Simmel recognizes and analyzes identities and patterns of interaction inscribed in situational contexts and reiterated as motifs or tropes of being and behaving. His method is to separate out, for the purpose of analysis, what he terms contents from form.[81] His interest lies in emphasizing the purposive forms of interaction, rather than specific content.

Henricks suggests that an abiding metaphor for society, with which Simmel would have been familiar, is that of a house with many rooms, each governed by specific codes and conventions. His interest lay in the types of engagement that take place within this structure along with the roles and identities of participants. He hones in on the details of specific social encounters and begins to define the particularities of the sociological enterprise. For Simmel, the core problem for sociology is quite clear: it lies in identifying forms of social interaction and individuality and probing the relations between these. Returning to the architectural metaphor, Henricks suggests that his interest is less in the architecture of the house and its continual renovations than in "the comings and goings of people – the whispered conversation in the hall, the knowing glance, the love affair, the rivalry, the secret, the adventure. While other scientists focused on the structures of work and power that direct people along socially approved pathways, Simmel was more interested in the 'social' in its purest forms" (Henricks 2006:109). His interest intertwines the field of social psychology with the study of behaviour and interaction.

Simmel's singular achievement lies in figuring what is ostensibly amorphous– defining sociology as the pursuit of the abstract geometry of social relations and individual experiences, as distinct from cultural forms. He makes a pivotal, if slippery, distinction between the cultural and the social which is complicated by his accompanying insistence on the separation of form and content. In so far as Simmel seems to adopt a generalist, ahistorical, and structuralist approach to social interaction, it is necessary to stress that this abstraction constantly interfaces with cultural and anthropological concerns. He continually distinguishes between cultural and social orders in order to be able to examine relationships between phenomena, as in "Subjective Culture" (1908) which explicitly probes the relations between the individual and "objective cultural forms."[82]

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[81] In this respect, his thinking corresponds with Johnstone's insistence that participants in improvisations should focus on the structure of a routine (the underpinning dynamics of the exchange and relations between players) rather than be self-consciously absorbed in generating dialogue.

[82] Subjective culture is the "extent to which individuals assimilate and make use of the complex of ideal and actualized products for their personal growth" (1971: xix). The essay concludes: "Thus far at least, historical development has moved steadily toward an increasing separation between objective cultural production and the cultural level of the individual. The dissonance of modern life – in particular that manifested in the improvement of technique in every area and the simultaneous dissatisfaction with technical progress – is caused in large part by the fact that things are becoming more and

Levine suggests that Simmel's focus can be organized around distinct areas of enquiry: an investigation into a range of cultural forms – cognitive, aesthetic and evaluative (music, art, theoretical knowledge and values, religion) and their origins; an enquiry into elementary units of sociality (different forms of social interaction) and an examination of "the metaphysics of individuality" (subjective culture, social types). Simmel's study of culture and sociality proposes four sequential (and subsequently co-existing) forms, the most elementary of which is designated "protoculture" which is "bound by the pragmatic interests and adaptive exigencies of the immediate situation" (1971: xvi). The corresponding social dimension to the nascent protoculture is the inter-personal encounter and other "elementary forms of social behaviour" (1971: xxv) or relatively un-codified behaviour that typifies elementary exchanges. Simmel's fascination with inter-personal exchanges begins with what transpires at this most rudimentary level, suggesting the appeal of Simmel's writing for the student of human behaviour or theatre maker since he hones in on spatio-temporal settings and encounters that take place between subjects:

> People look at one another and are jealous of one another; […] they exchange letters and have dinner together; […] apart from all the tangible interests they strike one another as pleasant or unpleasant; […] At each moment threads are spun, dropped, taken up again, [...] They explain all the toughness and elasticity, all the colourfulness and consistency of social life, which is so striking and yet so mysterious (Levin 1971: xxv).

In the next level, protoforms of both culture and sociality are consolidated and take on an "existence of their own [and] become objectified" (1971: xvi). What is suggested by this proposition is that cultural forms "can be liberated from their connection with practical purposes and become objects of cultivation in their own right" (1971: xvi). It is this level of cultural forms with their "autonomous" generative capacity (always in excess of the contribution of the individual subject) that fascinates Simmel. He is particularly attuned to the proliferation of cultural forms as a consequence of the expansion of modern urban living and the consolidation of the mechanisms of the capitalist economy. The ceaseless production of diverse cultural products and practices makes it increasingly impossible for any single individual to experience, assimilate and synthesize the objective symbolic and institutional networks which constitute culture. Correspondingly, within social life, elementary forms "become combined and hypostatized into larger institutionalized structures. These more visible, solid social structures – states, labour unions, priesthoods, family structures, military organizations, communities – represent an objectification of social forms" (1971: xxvi). Group dynamics, hierarchical orders with patterns of dominance and submission, antagonistic and integrative strategies and mechanisms of interfacing on a collective scale, expand the more rudimentary exchanges identified in social behaviour.

The third level of social interaction is distinguished by the emergence of what Simmel designates "autonomous 'play' forms" (1971: xxvii). These social "worlds" and their corresponding 'fields of cultural engagement' seem to have some correspondence with Foucault's discursive regimes as "each world exists as a sovereign form, urging those who are at all responsive to its claims to translate more and more of the contents of the cosmos into its domain" (1971: xvii). Simmel's

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more cultivated, while men are less able to gain from the perfection of objects a perfection of the subjective life" (1971:234).

"sociability"[83] is located at this level and focuses on how individuals engage in, and enjoy, social encounters "for the sake of the forms themselves" (1971: xxvi). Sociability implies the performance of "roles", self-consciously and ironically signalled, lauded and appreciated, establishing and sustaining a playful distance from serious purposeful activity. It is in this domain, along with that of the arts, that Simmel's writing most thoroughly problematizes play.[84]

The fourth and final components in this framework are the "generic forms" (1971: xxvii) of culture and society, a macroscopic view of social and cultural history which, for Simmel, tends towards greater proliferation and diversity. According to this view, cultural pluralism rather than unity is the consequence of modernity. Herein lies the value of his thinking and its application within a heterogeneous society, specifically since his layered conceptual framework allows for both a diachronic and synchronic view of social histories and cultural production.

In the social domain, Simmel posits, "there is no such thing as interaction 'as such' – there are only *specific kinds* of interaction" (1971:26). Accordingly, "his method is to select some bounded, finite phenomenon from the world of flux; to examine the multiplicity of elements which compose it; and to ascertain the causes of the coherence by disclosing its form" (1971: xxxi). Simmel is explicit in demarcating the distinction between form, as a synthesizing principle, and "contents":

> I designate as the content – the materials, so to speak – of sociation everything that is present in individuals (the immediate concrete loci of all historical reality) – drive, interest, purpose, inclination, psychic state, movement – everything that is present in them in such a way as to engender or mediate effects upon others or to receive such effects. In themselves, these materials which fill life, these motivations which propel it, are not social [...] Sociation is the form (realized in innumerably different ways) in which individuals grow together into a unity and within which their interests are realized (1971:24).

Thus we are led towards his view that "abstractions alone produce science out of the complexity or the unity of reality" (1971:25). Simmel cuts across different categories of experience, identifying likenesses irrespective of content. Importantly, he argues that forms have the property of emerging and disappearing, and are neither fixed nor immutable.

In as much as Simmel advocates the scientific terrain of a sociological enquiry, he is clearly cognizant of the affiliation between history and sociology. While he contrives a "radical separation of history from sociology" (1971: xxiii) the historical imperatives remain anchored in his propositions regarding individual expression and experience: "Practical life depends...on the selective reconstruction of past events in relation to their implications for present circumstances" (1971: xxiii). Negotiating temporal transitions and positioning the self in relation to time is the means through which Simmel offers a series of extraordinarily valuable insights. His suggestion is that the "understanding" or perception of the value, usefulness and efficacy of past events, whether located in personal experience or vicariously assimilated, constitutes the basis for appropriate action in the present, and that this is constantly judged in relation to the future. Henricks, extrapolating from this, writes:

[83] The distinction between sociality and sociability in Simmel's nomenclature is important: it is only "sociability" which denotes a disposition of "play" as it is characterized by citing forms of social relations through ironic detachment.
[84] Huizinga proposes that what defines humanity as a species is the ludic element and Hendricks submits that "humans have especially developed capacities to play, that is, to hold the world lightly and creatively. Our species, it seems, can step back from the grim necessities of life" (Henricks 2006:11).

> Because of the human capacity for memory and reflection, the past can be brought forward into the present as a set of problems or lessons. Furthermore, although humans are driven by physical needs or drives, they are able to become aware of these and act upon them with that knowledge. Simmel's general point is that human beings understand time – and indeed create it. Our adventures in the present are doubly informed, by our memories of past experiences and by our images of future possibilities. In that sense*, the present does not lie at the front edge of experience but in its middle (*2006:117*,* my emphasis).

This insight seems a particularly useful way of apprehending that which is spontaneous or an outcome of current preoccupations as capable only of operating in a dynamic interregnum. Further, Simmel claims that "man, as something known is made by nature and history; but man, as knower, makes nature and history" (1971:4).

Henricks claims that "Simmel produced no extensive theory of personality of consciousness nor did he document at length the relationship of the individual to social and cultural forms. Rather, in keeping with his pluralistic spirit, he tended to focus on distinctive social 'types' (2006:116). In "The Problem of Sociology", he explicitly brackets off "drive, interest, purpose, inclination, psychic state" (1971:24) in order to suggest that the study of social forms of interaction is independent of a consideration of psychological factors that motivate expressive or purposive interaction. "The givens of sociology are psychological processes whose immediate reality presents itself first of all under psychological categories. But these psychological categories, although indispensable for the description of the facts, remain outside the purpose of sociological investigation" (1971:35). Despite bracketing off the psychological enquiry, Simmel retains a systematic emphasis on individual consciousness that underpin penetrating observations regarding ways in which the individual is positioned in relation to society. "In the Kantian view (which we follow here),[85] the unity of nature emerges in the observing subject exclusively; it is produced exclusively by him" (1971:7).

Seeking to identify and account for the ways in which connections between individuals and groups are made or broken, Simmel draws attention to processes of perception and cognition in response to "natural" and "cultural" phenomena. His objective is to demonstrate that the concept of unity in society differs from the ways in which the associative impulse operates in the natural world because the synthesizing consciousness is effectively positioned within, rather than detached from, social relations. Society, unlike nature, is "directly realized by its own elements because these elements are themselves conscious and synthesizing units" (1971:7). Social relations and interactions become the site of expression, assertion and definition – and are grounded in reciprocity and the dialectical tensions that constitute interactive encounters. It is through this framework of ideas that Simmel formulates the view of "human experience as endlessly creative, multiply fragmented, inexorably conflictual, and most meaningful when in the service of individuality" (1971: xxxvii).

"To be sure," Simmel submits, "consciousness of the abstract principle that he is forming society is not present in the individual. Nevertheless, every individual knows that the other is tied to him" (1971:8). He insists that "we consist of interactions with others". Interaction persists even in the instance of what he terms dissasociative or "negative" modes of interaction. Oscillating between

[85] Simmel draws on Kant's propositions of the 'knowing subject' whose mind "assembles, orders, and shapes sense perceptions." In Simmel's view it is this "knowing subject" who combines and synthesizes given materials "into objects and series of objects, into substances and attributes, and into causal connections" (1971:6).

centripetal and centrifugal forces, "the individual is contained in sociation and, at the same time, finds himself confronted by it. He is both a link in the organism of sociation and an autonomous organic whole; he exists both for society and for himself" (1971:17). He suggests that the impression of another that any individual may form is "based on certain distortions" (1971:9). Simmel's account of these "distortions" addresses what is at stake in the tendency towards two different types of generalizations and stereotyping, both practices that demand ethical consideration in crafting and representing identities. The first of these is that "we see the other person generalized in some measure. This is so, perhaps, because we cannot fully represent to ourselves an individuality which deviates from our own. Any re-creation of a person is determined by one's similarity to him" (1971:9). The impossibility of fully knowing the subjectivity of another is an index of "incompleteness" in interaction which is compounded and magnified by a second evaluative generalization: the tendency towards encountering the individual in terms of an abstract type.

Simmel argues that this tendency negates the "pure individuality" (1971:10) of the other and persists "even when the transformation from the singular to the typical is so imperceptible that we cannot recognize it immediately...we privately persist in labeling a man according to an unverbalized type, a type which does not coincide with his pure individual being" (1971:10). The impulse towards categorization is fraught with inevitable mismatching: the individual will be both greater and less than the assigned typification which both detracts from and supplements the apprehension of the other. Consequently, despite "the utter uniqueness of any given personality [...] we form a picture which is not identical with its reality but which at the same time does not coincide with the general type" (1971:10). Simmel immediately inserts the reciprocal effect integral to all social encounters and asserts that:

> All of us are fragments, not only of the general man, but also of ourselves. We are outlines not only of the types 'man', 'good', 'bad' and the like but also of the individuality and uniqueness of ourselves. Although this individuality cannot, on principle, be identified by any name, it surrounds our perceptible reality as if traced in ideal lines. It is supplemented by the other's view of us, which results in something that we never are purely and wholly. It is impossible for this view to see anything but juxtaposed fragments, which nevertheless are all that really exist. However, just as we compensate for a blind spot in our field of vision so that we are no longer aware of it, so a fragmentary structure is transformed by another's view into the completeness of individuality (1971:11).

Simmel thus arrives at an understanding of the de-centred and dispersed subject through interrogating the dynamics of the individual in the course of social interaction. He supplements this by interrogating phenomena integral to an individual's affiliation with others in particular groups based on professional association, or other allegiances. He suggests that within the group "people look at one another as if through a veil. The veil does not simply hide the peculiarity of the person; it gives it a new form" (1971:11). The implications here are rather different: subjectivity is now subsumed through affiliation – "we see the other not simply as an individual but as a colleague or comrade or fellow party member – in short as a cohabitant of the same specific world" (1971:11). Simmel concludes that these permutations "are, actually, the conditions which make possible the sort of relations that we call social. The phenomenon recalls Kant's conception of the categories:

they form immediate data into new objects, but they alone make the given world a knowable world" (1971:12).

The value of engaging with Simmel's thought is precisely because it is so wide-ranging in the sustained focus not only on individual and group but also on what links that which is social to cultural expression and forms. His meticulous and detailed analysis of his chosen subjects establishes guidelines to a way of reading and interpreting social behaviour as indices of cultural dynamics. Levine's analysis of the core tools of Simmelian analysis isolates the tools of "distance, reciprocity, dynamism, and dualism" which undergird his prolific output and link his short essays, which will be interwoven through the close-readings that follow. The potential instrumentality of Simmelian tools to extend the "vocabulary" of practical improvisation sessions is appealing, as is the extent to which these same concepts promote the analysis of status rhetoric in a critical close-reading of a text.

Simmel's formulations of amorphous and multiple social "realities" in order to reveal abstract structures and patterns suggests the efficacy of adopting a similar approach to interrogating status rhetoric. Like Simmel, I elect not to record and analyse empirical data but propose to base my study in interpretive strategies in order to reveal the patterns of inscribing discrepant levels of agency in social encounters and their representation. In the subsequent chapters I will draw on specific essays to frame aspects of status analysis foregrounded in the close reading of the texts selected to facilitate that enquiry: "The Adventurer" and "Domination" inform my analyses of contestive encounters, "The Web of Group Affiliations" provides a theoretical departure point for deliberations on the collective and the chorus. "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in conjunction with "The Stranger" advances my analysis of representations of isolation and alienation, and finally, "Exchange" and "Sociability" provide a theoretical framework for an appreciation of the ways in which encomiastic discourse operates as an affirmation of value.

Since a key premise within this study is that the transmission of values and power is inscribed in the texts circulating within cultural and social formations, key "creative" texts themselves are central to promoting knowledge and ideas, as advanced by Cassirer. Accordingly, I draw on a text that underpins and sums up the conceptual framework of this project, namely *The Life of Galileo* in conjunction with Jameson's work, *Brecht and Method*. The latter probes the integration of pedagogy, dramaturgy and philosophy, and all three of these as a mode of praxis, on the grounds that Brecht's doctrine "raises the possibility of a philosophical dramaturgy, or even of philosophy as dramaturgy, after which the question of dramaturgy as philosophy will itself already seem less paradoxical" (1999:46). Brecht's text tackles the question of transformation of ideas and social relations at both the macro-level of institutional authority and in terms of the inter-personal encounter, encapsulating the focus of this thesis.

**Transformation, play and pedagogy in Brecht's play *The Life of Galileo.***

Brecht's play synthesizes the moral and ethical considerations bound up in research practices and knowledge production, ideals and methods at a critical juncture of historical transition. His play clearly fuses morality and ethics with issues of political choice, thus advancing the understanding of praxis. Through dramatic enactment, Brecht relies on demonstration rather than argument, setting

up an implied dialogue or dialectical relationship with the spectator of the play or the reader of his text in which the notion of "ethical knowledge" is scrutinized. Avowedly antithetical to Aristotle in terms of aesthetics (just as Galileo disputed Aristotelian logic regarding the properties of bodies able to float in water and set out to challenge the prevailing view through practical experiment and demonstration) it would nonetheless seem that Brecht validates the Aristotelian concept of phronesis.[86] Brecht's play deals with relations between knowledge systems and power at a pivotal historical juncture, when the boundaries of known systems are being challenged. As Jameson puts it:

> In Brecht, what is taught, what is shown, is ultimately always the New itself [...] Learning thus displays the breaking in of the *Novum* upon the self: a dawning both of a new world and of new human relations (1999:117).

In terms of action, theme, and the roles inscribed in the identities of key characters, the play serves as an allegory for the focus of this thesis and allows for enquiring into the purchase, value and ethical aspects of "status-based pedagogy" to be addressed.

Brecht's text *shows* how knowledge is proposed, reasoned and advanced: the figure of Galileo represents, even symbolizes, a particular form of capacity and capital. Defined by the relationships in which we see him, he is mentor and father-figure as much as a ground-breaking scientific genius. He stands for a particular method of scholarship, a method that is founded on the powers of empirical observation and demonstration rather than on abstract reasoning. The play is also a demonstration of potential conflicts between elite powers and authorities. The action is structured around tensions between competing knowledge economies and conflicts in resisting shifts in epistemology and attempts to sustain the hegemony of doctrinaire beliefs.[87] Moreover, *The Life of Galileo* incorporates, as structural features, relations between teacher and pupils, the efficacy of games and public performances as modes of communication, and tensions between literacy and orality. It epitomizes two key aspects of Brecht's dramaturgy: the preoccupation with social transformation and the "celebration of change" (Jameson 1999:23)[88] which is fused with "cases calling for judgements" and "images of judgement" (1999:149).[89]

The play spans some 32 years from 1609 to 1637 and ends with *The Discorsi* being smuggled out of Italy by Andrea Sarti, the first of Galileo's pupils. The transmission of ideas between mentor and mentee *in conjunction with play* becomes a key framing device as the final scene at a small frontier town again presents us with a parallel to the situation of the opening scene. In the final scene, Sarti

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[86] Sobel writes: "'To be ignorant of motion, is to be ignorant of Nature,' Aristotle had said, and Galileo sought to end the general ignorance of Nature's laws of motion" (2000:32). Brecht dramatizes Galileo's method of practical reasoning and the tool that enables this: the telescope. As Sobel recounts, this insistence on practical method became essential to the "corroborat[ion] of Galileo's observations. Bound as these Jesuits [of the Collegio Romano] were to an Aristotelian belief in an unchanging cosmos, they did not deny the evidence of their senses" (2000:42).

[87] Brecht's historicism additionally provides a template for understanding how innovation may be appropriated and deployed by institutional interests.

[88] Dialectics and historical momentum underpin Brecht's poem:

> [he taught] that over time the movement of the yielding water
> Will overcome the strongest stone.
> What's hard – can you understand? – must always give way" (Poems 315) (Jameson 1999:23).

[89] Jameson writes: "The great final plays all offer images of judgment: the Church's judgment on Galileo is redoubled by what we have seen to be complex and ambiguous appeals to the public to pass a different kind of judgment on this seemingly broken figure [...] the playhouse has much in common with the courtroom, and acts and acting seem to call out for that response which we call judging and judgment" (1999:149).

disabuses three young boys of their superstitions regarding a local woman believed to be possessed by supernatural forces:

> One cannot fly through the air on a broomstick. It must at least have a machine on it. And as yet there is no such machine. Perhaps there never will be, for man is too heavy. But of course, one cannot tell. We don't know nearly enough, Giuseppe.[90] We are really only at the beginning (Brecht 1965:122).

The action is thus firmly located in a depiction of the relationship that symbolizes the 'transfer' of ideas, or more accurately, the shared pleasures of expanding epistemological boundaries.

Through the course of the play we hear of a number of inventions, all of which attest to man's capacity for imagining and then making the objects that help to shape and control his environment: these include Galileo's "proportional compasses" (1965:30), " his star charts" (1965:102) and "his new water-pumps"(1965:78). These objects serve to concretize and represent the processes through which knowledge produces transformations in life styles. The book and the telescope are, however, crucial to the action and symbolize complex sets of ideas around what they represent in terms of knowledge/power relations. Entire scenes are structured and woven through the action around both of these objects. The importance of Galileo's writing and the freedom to commit his ideas to paper for their broader dissemination makes 'the book' as an object, as important as the ideas contained within it. Benedict Anderson's key insight regarding the role of print media in shaping "fundamental change [...] in modes of apprehending the world" (2006:22) and consequently a prerequisite for a developing "imagined community," surfaces in the play in two forms: the book and the pamphlet. We see the impact of confining the circulation of new knowledge to its publication in Latin,[91] and the shift produced when print is extended to incorporate vernacular languages rather than being confined to the official language of the church and privileged elite.[92]

A great April Fool's Day 'spectacle' is lodged at the heart of the play. It is the only scene set in the thoroughly open public location of the market place. The carnival scene opens up a space for interrogating relations between spectacle, popular entertainment and common sense perception and understanding. The role of the telescope as a valuable tool,[93] designed to extend optical capacity and the ability to understand the cosmos, has been clearly set out from its introduction, exchange, rapid adoption and multiple applications. As much as the object symbolizes man's ability to expand his understanding and control of the environment, it also stands for the relations between visibility and knowledge, asserting a theme expressly linking power and strategic control of resources: the tool's 'usefulness' to a mercantile and military fleet has been made apparent. The telescope's instrumentality in diminishing distance is quite literally demonstrated: it is a tool that

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[90] The pattern of questions and answers echoes the opening scene in which the roles are reversed as the young Sarti subjects Galileo to a series of questions before exchanging roles with his mentor who subjects him to a series of leading questions.

[91] In the 'disputation' with the Philosopher, the Mathematician and the Theologian, the first of these gentlemen proceeds to discuss the Aristotelian system in Latin, Galileo interjects on the grounds that Feredonzi, the lens-grinder will be barred from participation. The Philosopher's response is that "the argument will lose in elegance" (1965:51).

[92] Galileo makes the decision to publish his findings in the vernacular: "I could write for the many in the language of the people, instead of in Latin for the few" (1965:90). Much earlier he has realized that the constituency who will recognize the 'usefulness' of his science and what it can produce include "the old woman, who on the eve of a journey, gives her mule an extra bundle of hay with her horny hand…" (1965:42).

[93] It is described variously as "a highly saleable cylinder", a" profitable toy" and "an instrument" (1965:33) but, as Galileo himself announces, "it's far more" (1965:33).

enables an enquiry into what was previously private and invisible in the social world. It is a commodity as much as it is a tool to enable analysis, an instrument of research and discovery. The telescope, and by association, optics and ways of seeing, has the capacity to inaugurate profound social change. In the carnival scene, Galileo is fittingly magnified and transformed into a giant puppet at the centre of one of the few scenes in which he himself is not present. It is his ideas and, more importantly, their impact on the community, that are at the core of the scene. The carnival is a celebration of what the invention of the telescope has made possible: core biblical truths (and the entire social order that they sustains) are debunked, subverted as 'the people' take up the new ideas. Received wisdom, perceived authority and past practices are challenged in a single pronouncement at the end of the scene and Galileo is declared "the Bible buster!" (1965:95) The carnival of pamphleteers,[94] ballad-singers, and the procession of players is a celebration of what Galileo represents in terms of an imagined new age: a vivid demonstration of the empowerment of 'the people'. Pamphleteers and ballad-singers take up the new ideas, subverting and parodying the social norms of entrenched epistemology and hierarchy. Thus the play pries open tensions between visibility and what is hidden, between presence and absence, relations between seeing and knowing: it is in these ways that Brecht's dramaturgy and philosophy can be understood.

Brecht juxtaposes the actions and choices of individuals who function in the world on the basis of faith and continued adherence to principles which they do not interrogate, and individuals who are persuaded by the evidence of objective enquiry, hypothesis and rational argument grounded in thoroughly documented experiment.[95] The dialectical thrust, or contrapuntal tension, of the play with its crucial play on contra-dictions is generated by Galileo's recantation of his findings. In direct counter-point to the carnival scene, Galileo is again distinguished by his absence. He has been absent for 23 days, and it is through the speculations of his adherents and then (after the tolling of the bell to signal his recantation followed by the invisible voice of the town crier formally declaring the terms of the heresy and its recantation) their reactions that we, the audience, learn not only of Galileo's choice, but what it signifies. As Jameson observes, the consequences of this denouncement are varied:

> [T]he scholars' disperse, betrayed by the one man, poised on the threshold of introducing a new system of knowledge who yields to the Authority of the Church and the Cardinal Inquisitor. The particular historical episode raises questions about the scientists and their responsibilities.[96] If we go back to Galileo himself, then, it is because of Oppenheimer and

[94] Both pamphleteers and ballad-singers circulate and celebrate Galileo's ideas and their radical implications. The recourse to oral circulation and "symbolic form" as a means of valorizing ideas and argument explodes onto the stage, disrupting the conventions established by the action of the play thus far.

[95] During the course of the action we witness Galileo surrounded by a small and distinctly heterogeneous group of adherents. His pupils are Andrea Sarti (the son of his housekeeper, his first pupil, and the most scrupulous and dedicated advocate of his 'master's method and findings'), Federonzi, (the lens-grinder unable to read printed texts because they are printed in Latin) and the "little monk". This small group of individuals has been persuaded of the veracity of Galileo's claims regarding the properties of motion and his determination to prove Copernicus' hypothesis.

[96] In the final meeting with the man who has been his first real pupil and his fiercest advocate, Sarti, Galileo says:

> During my free hours I have gone over my case and considered how the world of science, in which I no longer count myself, will judge it [...] the pursuit of science seems to me to require particular courage. *It is concerned with knowledge, achieved through doubt*. Making knowledge about everything available for everybody, science strives to make skeptics of them all. [...] The movements of the stars have become clearer; but to the mass of the people the movements of their master are still incalculable. The fight over the measurability of the heavens has been won through doubt; but the fight of the Roman housewife for milk is ever and again lost through faith (1965:117, my emphasis).

> the atomic bomb; and the play thereby insensibly becomes an allegory of the anti-nuclear movement as that was refracted through the various disarmament and anti-NATO campaigns in East and West alike (1999:154).

Subject and theme, narrative and its treatment within the play thus open up questions concerning moral and ethical choices harnessed to how the work of representation in its complex senses functions aesthetically and politically.

Jameson addresses the "usefulness" of Brecht's ideas today, suggesting that within the context in which they are developed "activity" and "praxis" had compelling socio-political force.[97] Jameson claims that Brecht's position as a catalyst in Western theatre rests on three points that make the case for his continuing "usefulness" today. Briefly, these are his capacity for "innovation in a period particularly avid for such new theories and modes of staging" (1999:24), his crafting of a mode of public expression that synthesizes political conviction with art in "a new kind of agitprop and political literature" (1999:24) and, finally, the "possibilities to be explored by decolonized peoples trying out new voices, for whom the exile and wanderer Brecht was himself non-Eurocentric to the degree which he treated his own country like a Third World one" (1999:24). Unsurprisingly, Jameson stresses Brecht's "pragmatism" (1999:31) and in explaining what this entails, proffers what might be even more persuasive and cogent grounds for implementing a Brechtian understanding of a "methodology" in arts practice and training today: adopting classic Marxist logic, Brecht turns a problem into a solution. Jameson explains this kind of strategic approach to contradictions in broad terms and then in relation to acting. As he puts it, "the dilemma in question is turned inside out, and an unexpected, unforeseeable line of attack opens up that leads neither into the dead end of the unresolvable nor into the banality of stereotypical doxa or logical non-contradiction"(1999:33). There seems to be much merit in adopting this approach to differences in pedagogical agendas and their underpinnings. In relation to the question of a performance style and a heritage of pejoratives accrued to methods of imitation and artifice, Brecht advocates, in Jameson's words, that

> Instead of concealing the act of acting (and the profession that results from it), the spectacle as a whole should try to demonstrate to the audience that we are all actors, and that acting is an inescapable dimension of social and everyday life (1999:32).

Brecht's model of dialectics and the constant demonstration of contradictions mobilizes an inherent dynamism central to the ways in which status is constantly being produced and resists the fixity implied in stereotyping. Galileo is neither a (classical) hero nor (modernist) anti-hero, but embodies the contradictions that typify multiple aspects of Brecht's dramaturgy: he is a figure who, like Hegel's Master, desires honour and recognition, the "bonus of power and material privilege" (Jameson 1999:155), along with the gratification of his personal tastes and desires. His life story with its extraordinary achievements is presented to us in conjunction with a profound betrayal of the very ideas that he has initiated and all the promise that they hold in inaugurating a new social dispensation. The emancipatory narrative is set in counterpoint to entirely self-centred subjectively defined concerns. His recantation is an act of submission that Jameson calls a "fundamental abnegation – [a] sin against the New itself" (1999:156). The recantation of his own theoretical propositions is presented to us in a manner that avoids all sensation: we do not witness the

[97] Jameson's view is that praxis is "now urgent and topical precisely because […] so many people seem immobilized in the institutions and the professionalization which seem to admit of no revolutionary change, not even of the evolutionary or reform-orientated kind" (1999:5).

application of the instruments of torture by the Grand Inquisitor or his functionaries. The play seems to go to considerable lengths to establish Galileo's 'lack of courage' and the application of these very instruments of persuasion is never required. The inquisitor has said at the end of Scene 12 that it will be enough to show, to reveal, the instruments of torture to Galileo; they will not need to be put to use on the grounds that "he is an expert on machines" (1965:103) and will readily appreciate what pains can be inflicted. In the penultimate scene, Galileo confirms that he was not subject to torture and that he erroneously judged the "machines" about to be put to use and so elected to recant.

Jameson isolates and emphasizes the building blocks of Brecht's method, identifying the specific concepts that have as much to do with pedagogy as dramaturgy and the reception of the performance text. Amongst these are autonomization, gestus and autoreferentiality, all of which have some bearing on pedagogy in terms of a hybridized approach to storytelling and training in status dynamics. In Brecht's play, the device for isolating moments in the flow of action is the interpolation of scene headings, or titles, that the audience reads as part of the presentation. The constant emphasis on the relation of part to part and part to whole is a crucial foundation for inculcating critical awareness. As a coherent planning method it also anchors a scaffolding process in a steady appreciation of principles of construction and composition: it provides a pattern for structuring ensemble improvisation. Jameson explains that Brechtian epic involves "something as humdrum and everyday as narrative" or 'storytelling' in which the narrative as a whole can be fragmented and each of the smaller segments "takes on an independence and an autonomy of their own" (1999:55). The *autonomization* can be further extended to "smallest units of the narrative" (1999:56). These two claims emphasize the merits of honing in on the smallest unit of status-based exchanges between players, and also have implications for the ways in which texts are authored.

Scene titles announce and encapsulate the action of the scene, thereby focusing attention on the manner in which that action develops. The paradoxical effect of the use of titles is that while they acknowledge that the action is pre-determined and the outcomes known, as the basis in historical incident might in any event presume, they allow for a shift in attention (on the part of performer and spectator) to the tone, structure, rhythm and texture of the scene itself. Since 'we' already know what will happen, 'we' concentrate on *how* that action unfolds. This 'forces' the performer to concentrate on the formal artistry of presenting the action, in other words it sharpens the need for the mastery of the medium of theatrical expression. The "estrangement" of social inter-action and its underlying political dimension serves to activate analysis on the observer's part. The motif of status dynamics can be named and identified consistently through improvising a series of status exercises just as in Brecht's dramaturgy the action is named, conceptualized and contextualized – all of which works against the naturalization or unity of action, and consistently pronounces the status of the performance as a text, re-citing "pre-existing *social* raw material" (Jameson 1999:64, my emphasis).[98]

[98] Jameson notes that Barthes elaborates on Brecht's dramaturgy by drawing on the Greek "prohairesis – [meaning] choice or decision" in identifying 'the proairetic moment […] in which an already existing, stereotypically pre-formed event may or may not take place" (1999:64).

Gestic action is a means of 'estrangement' or an 'alienating device'. Brecht defines and explains what he means by gest in ways that link his term and the concept it introduces most explicitly with evaluative stances, status markers and ideological position. Gest means more than gesture:

> (It is) not supposed to mean gesticulation; it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movements [of] the hands, but of overall attitudes. A language is gestic when it is grounded in a gest and conveys particular attitudes adopted by the speaker towards other men (1987:104).

Jameson explains the same concept in more extended terms:

> *Gestus* clearly involves a whole process, in which a specific act – indeed, a particular event, situated in time and space, and affiliated with specific concrete individuals – is then somehow identified and renamed, associated with a larger and more abstract *type* of action in general, and transformed into something *exemplary* even if archetypal is no longer the word we want to use about it (1999:129).

The very notion of gestus seems to correspond to the "estrangement" produced by playing status games which artificially emphasizes the positions between participants along with the complex and contradictory indices through which these positions are posited, the pattern and trajectory of the action and response that occurs in the exchange. Simultaneously, the grammar of the trajectories being "played" is inhabited and observed. Status based transactions are concretized by the contents of the encounter and all the while trajectories that pattern that very interaction are the core objectives of the participant. The performer is simultaneously within the action and detached from that action, simultaneously conscious of the self that is subject and player as much as caught up in the role that is being played. The "double-consciousness" of the actor, the performer and the player is held in an artificial tension that constitutes the technique, the craft, and the artistry of the medium.

Jameson discusses the motif of self-reflexivity in Brecht's method through connecting it most explicitly with 'pedagogy' and cites what he calls "the great opening lesson" (1999:114)[99] of *Galileo* as perhaps the most explicit case of what this entails. In describing what the scene achieves he posits that it is

> Less a mimesis of scientific knowledge – its models and complexities, its value as a unique solution to peculiarly knotty problems – than it is a representation of how you go about transmitting and conveying such knowledge: 'the stool is the earth'. Teaching is thus showing, [...] the dramatic representation of teaching is the showing of showing, the showing of how you show and demonstrate (1999:115).

The patterns of reciprocal engagement and the sense of a joint adventure into an unbounded territory (about which only provisional hypotheses and models exist) is the first point to make regarding what it is that can be learnt about a shared commitment to engaging in a particular project or enquiry. The acquisition of the language of that discipline is pronounced within the first two exchanges: a circle is "described" while the shortest line between two points, the straight line is embedded in the world of everyday experience: it is not an abstract mathematical proposition. The

[99] "The great opening lesson is more or less just that: the audience does not need to learn about the solar system, nor is it really necessary to characterize Galileo as a teacher – the drama turns on his science and his experimentation, his relationship to his new truths and discoveries. From the standpoint of any traditional dramaturgy, this great opening scene is utterly gratuitous (save, perhaps, as a way of introducing a character – Andreas – who will have a more important part to play at the end)" (Jameson 1999:114).

straight line is the route that the bailiff will take and is posed as a riddle. The entire scene can be interpreted as a demonstration of "learning about the process of learning itself".

Verbal games and a lightness of touch in making connections between the abstract or theoretical proposition and its commonsensical apprehension provide a foundation for the first demonstration of the Ptolemaic system according to its model which we recognize as a representation of that system. This segment of the scene parallels the mode of breaking up knowledge into sections that can be assimilated and confirmed – with the young Andrea demonstrating that he has grasped what is offered to him according to these premises. All this serves to set up a "contradiction" or dialectical transition, and fittingly motion is at the heart of the shift in register: "now make the sun move" (1965:20). The response to this ("we're so shut in") launches Galileo's monologue of motion and transformation, and the articulation of doubt, the freedom to question received wisdoms and models from the past: "where belief has prevailed for a thousand years, doubt now prevails"(1965:21). An eclectic range of social interactions and observations has "taught" Galileo to question social structure and organization, the relation of knowledge and power, and to challenge the "static model" of the universe.

To the models of demonstration and observation as a method, Galileo adds conjecture and hypothesis.[100] The marvellous substitution of the iron wash basin for the sun and a chair for the earth's revolution around the sun begins, with Andrea sitting on the chair. The model of embodied participatory learning is advanced playfully through the improvised use of the splinter and the apple, which allow for an explanation of rotation and answer the question how it is that the body does not experience the earth turning. The game of learning, showing and sharing has just begun. Inter-active participation and learning are part of the same process, or as Jameson writes: "Science, along with learning as such, is assimilated to play and sheer pleasure, to the fun and manipulation and experiment, to the delight not only in change but in the very ability to provoke changes and make new things happen" (1965:157). Other instances of the exhilaration experienced in the learning process are played out: Galileo's insistence will always be on the right to challenge orthodoxies and the quest for empirical proof rather than abstract speculation and unquestioning reiteration of authorized texts.

The play also demonstrates the ways in which knowledge is produced and circulates through translation, recitation and transposition to a different medium. These three aspects of communication as a form of exchange are integral to the training process of improvisation, and specifically the development of a structured narrative sensitive to status dynamics. The authority of Latin (in print and oral form) consistently surfaces in the scenes in which Federonzi participates in experiments. Galileo recognizes the need for inclusion as a core principle and insists that among a group uniformly committed to the same ideals the condition governing equitable participation in the experiment is an equitable command of the language through which ideas can be probed. Thus Brecht performs the idea that the strategic use of language as a medium is linked to knowledge/power relations within the cultural and social domain.

[100] Andrea asks for a definition of a hypothesis before the scene is concluded and receives the following reply: "when one accepts something as probable, but has no facts" (1965:31).

Galileo's hypothesis is stated in a single line: "there is no fixity in the universe" (1965:40). It will be translated and reiterated in different registers and media. The proposition gains currency through repetition, recitation and ultimately proliferates transposed to the medium of a jingle hummed by Andrea who concludes with the line "And yet it moves" (1965:87). The transposition prefigures the series of transformations celebrated in the scene that follows. It is a scene which is entirely dominated by presenting the substance of Galileo's project in ballad form and, as if a parody of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* enumerates the multiple proliferations of change that flow from a single pronouncement. Science has given artists the material to shape into playful expression, into a polyphonic multi-vocal performance of that first single idea. The carnival is an improvised public theatre predicated on the lively participation in which separation between performer and audience is "smudged". The distinctions between the subject of and within the spectacle, the boundary between the visible and abstract, the observed and the observer, are dismantled.

The close-reading of the play, rather than one of Brecht's theoretical texts, allows for extrapolating key questions pertaining to pedagogical and creative practice and advances a central proposition of this thesis, namely that the close reading of texts allows for developing a set of theoretical propositions. Brecht's model for inculcating an active and critical reception of political processes serves as a prototype for introducing empowerment through engaged critical participation in terms of making work and responding to performances. The application of Brechtian strategies, in rehearsal or improvisation studio, foregrounds the importance of collaboration and exchange, and the role of both in social processes committed to broad initiatives of transformation. The mode of inter-textual and inter-disciplinary critical practice, deployed as a framing device, 'performs' the mode of performance pedagogy being advanced through this study.

Chapter 3: **Contests and Confrontations: competitive encounters with material and symbolic status outcomes.**

"Icarus was, even before his birth, and remains after his death, the image of human restlessness, of questing for knowledge, of the soaring poetry which during his short life he incarnates. He has played his role, as he had to; but he does not end with himself. This is what happens with heroes. Their gestures endure and, taken up by poetry and the arts, become a continuing symbol."

Andre Gide: *Theseus*[101] (2002:29).

" Sarti: Unhappy the land that has no heroes.
Galileo: No. Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes. "

Bertolt Brecht: *The Life of Galileo* (1965:107).

[101] Gide's Theseus is an old man who reflects on past adventures and multiple encounters that he had before founding Athens, and subsequently. Andrew Brown, in the preface to his translation, writes: "In Gide's story, Theseus comes to stand for *this* world, for the splendour of the visible and tangible, for immanence, for the secular, for the way experience is grounded in its own authority, for the need to 'move on', for the avoidance of ties, for the autonomy of the self and the legitimacy of the modern" (2002: xii).

In this chapter the central theme of vying for dominance and resisting subjugation will be addressed via three examples in order to examine status interactions driven by the desire for self-promotion and mobilized through contest. The *Metamorphoses*, with its kaleidoscopic canvas of transformation is a master narrative in which each episode can be isolated and analysed as a fragment while it remains part of larger whole.[102] The tension between visibility and invisibility, self-display and concealment will emerge as an adjunct to asserting different modes of dominance and subjugation. Different forms of leadership, authority and the status of the hero are central to the issues being considered. Simmel's essays, "The Adventurer" and "Domination", provide a coherent quasi-autonomous framework for expanding on the implications of status dynamics embedded in agonistic encounters.

The adventure, Simmel suggests, is typified by being bounded in a temporal sense through its demarcated beginning and end but remains simultaneously part of a continuum. He declares: "What we call an adventure stands in contrast to that interlocking of life-links, to that feeling that those countercurrents, turnings and knots, still after all, spin(s) forth a continuous thread" (1971:188).[103] Simmel's essay, together with (firstly) an analysis of the weaving contest between Arachne and Minerva in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* introduces the display of prowess, the desire to win and the expenditure of energy that typify the contest as a form of interaction. Status relations and shifts are overtly and visibly played out in the public domain as a means of asserting symbolic capital. A brief analysis of *Coriolanus* provides a means of furthering the understanding of status play between the individual and the collective, and allows for expanding on the notion of singularity integral to the notion of the hero. Individual accomplishments being pitted against those of another as a means of enhancing a reputation can be contrasted with trials of endurance and capacity which are constructed around the lone individual setting out on a conquest to achieve what no-one has previously mastered. Like Icarus or Ovid's Phaeton, the accounts of Charles Lindberg's 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic provide a final study of defying established limits. The singularity of achievement that pronounces the identity of heroes and superheroes at one end of a spectrum invites consideration of the antithesis, the loser or the victim.

**Simmel: "The Adventurer"**

From a contemporary perspective, Simmel's subject evokes iconic representations and embodiments of an archetype who subjects himself to trials of strength and tests the limits of perspicacity in unchartered terrain: Harrison Ford, Crocodile Dundee and the machismo model of the Camel cigarette advert. Victorian prototypes Henry Morton Stanley[104] and Robert Scott,[105] of

[102] In addressing the structure of the a text within the repertoire of Peking Opera, Samuel Weber proposes the analogy of a string of pearls: " the 'thread' refers to the narrative whole, while the 'pearls' are the specific scenes in the play which can be separated from each other and the whole and function autonomously in terms of generating meaning" (2004:25).

[103] Ovid's opening mobilizes the motif of spinning as a means of synthesizing 'history' and the art of poetry.

[104] Tim Jeal's 2007 biography *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer*, quotes Stanley (who was born in poverty and raised in a Welsh workhouse) in an opening citation: "away from people who had already made up their minds about me, I could be different. I could introduce myself as [...] a boy of dignity and consequence, and without any reason to doubt me people would believe I was that boy. I recognized no obstacle to miraculous change but the incredulity of others" (2007).

[105] Scott's second voyage to Antarctica on the *Terra Nova* began in 1910 and his last diary entry is dated 29th March 1912. The Norwegian team captained by Amundsen had 'beaten' the British team in the efforts to be the first to 'conquer' the Pole. The inscription on the cross on an Arctic peak that memorializes Scott's last voyage is taken from Tennyson: "To Strive, to Seek, to Find, and not to Yield".

the 'race to Antarctica,' hark back to figures of fable and myth: Marco Polo and Ulysses.[106] But Simmel anchors his abstract propositions in a single named example, one that has little correspondence with the feats of these action heroes: he cites Casanova, whose multiple *amours* make him the prime example of the adventurer. Simmel makes no attempt at meticulous socio-historical documentation, nor does he deploy a psycho-analytic framework as an explanation of personality: he focuses only on the pattern of multiple intimacies and encounters. His key proposition is that "the adventure, in its specific nature and charm, is a *form* of *experiencing* and the *content* of the experience does not make the adventure" (1971:97, my emphases). Simmel, typically, brackets off "contents" from "form" in order to formulate a pattern of experiencing time, space and consciousness. This allows for his radical reconfiguration of the adventure and the observations that he makes *à propos* the adventure have some equivalence with some of the challenges of improvised performance.[107] His proposition, which emphasizes the disposition of the subject, defines the adventure as something in excess of the experiential encounter in and of itself.

Simmel introduces his way of understanding the adventure through a consideration of the syntagmatic relationship of a part to a whole, demonstrating that each segment can be valued as a self-contained episode in addition to being assimilated into a continuum. As a formal enterprise, the adventure is typified through its resistance to integration within continuities of experience: meaning is invested in temporal fragmentation and dispersal, heightening the perceived intensity and value of the episode in and of itself. Simmel maintains that "[the adventure's] deeper meaning, [is] that it occurs outside the usual continuity of this life." He adds that the pattern of the adventure has equivalence with the qualities of the dream: "What we designate as 'dreamlike' is nothing but a memory which is bound to the unified consistent life-process by fewer threads than are ordinary experiences" (1971:188). Having established the temporally bounded form of the adventure through the theme of fragmentation, Simmel then introduces an additional dimension to the adventure, the element of the extra-ordinary:

> We speak of adventure precisely when continuity with life is thus disregarded on principle – or rather when there is not even any need to disregard it, because we know from the beginning that we have to do with something alien, untouchable, out of the ordinary (1971:189).

The dynamics of the adventure are grounded in its 'inner-sense' and it is on these grounds that Simmel discerns an affinity between artist and adventurer:

> The essence of a work of art is after all, that it cuts out a piece of the endlessly continuous sequences of perceived experiences, detaching it from all connections with one side or the other, giving it a self-sufficient form, as though defined and held together by an inner-core (1971:189).

The transition from the everyday to the world of play and adventure is one way of understanding an improvisation class in which Simmel's minutely determined distinctions between fragmentation and continuities, integration and separation are continuously operative. Jeffrey Masson's use of the

[106] "Gide's Theseus, like Odysseus, is epic rather than tragic, someone who lives life to the full rather than crashing into its limits and constraints. […] He inhabits a world where gods, men, women, animals and plants all mingle promiscuously [...] in a world full of gods, and where nothing is sacred because everything is."(Brown 2002:viii) Brown, like Hughes-Hallett, identifies a particular type of heroic identity: that of the wanderer and strategist who surmounts multiple challenges in the course of a journey or quest. The 'wily survivor' is the antithesis of the heroic paradigm of Achilles.

[107] Simmel suggests that artists, philosophers, gamblers and lovers are all potential adventurers.

term *Funktionlust* which "helps to account for taking pleasure taken in what one can do best – the pleasure a cat takes in climbing trees, or monkeys take in swinging from branch to branch. This pleasure, this happiness, may increase an animal's tendency to do these things" (1996:13). The ability to inhabit, even exult in, "being" in the present moment, in precisely the terms Simmel advances, provides a means of explaining why improvised performance appeals to some performers, but not to others.[108] Keith Johnstone writes: "There are people who prefer to say 'Yes', and there are people who prefer to say 'No'. Those who say 'Yes' are rewarded by the adventures they have, and those who say 'No' are rewarded by the safety they attain. There are far more 'No' sayers around than 'Yes' sayers, but you can train one type to behave like the other" (1997:92). He expands on his proposition in a lengthy footnote, quoting from a paper by Couch and Kenison in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 160, No 2.1960,* which is revealing as it begins to account for impressions of consensus and co-operation, as opposed to resistance:

> The yeasayer's general attitude is one of *stimulus acceptance*, by which we mean a pervasive readiness to respond affirmatively or yield willingly to both outer and inner forces demanding expression. The 'disagreeing' naysayers have the opposite orientation. For them impulses are seen as forces requiring control and perhaps in some sense as threats to general personal stability. The naysayer wants to maintain inner equilibrium [...] Thus, as opposed to the yeasayers, the naysayers' general attitude is one of *stimulus rejection* (1997:107).

This approach to performance training establishes an identity of the performer as 'player' closely affiliated to the adventurer. Simmel stresses the interface of chance and predictability, and predilections for preferred positions in the continuum between agency and passivity. It is in relation to both of these that Simmel makes the (audacious) move of placing the gambler amongst the adventurers that he identifies. "The gambler," Simmel writes, "clearly, has abandoned himself to the meaninglessness of chance. […] chance for him has become part of a context of meaning" (1971:191).[109] The connection with improvisation is reinforced when considered in this light: unforeseen and unpredicted possibilities of encounters are the hallmarks of extemporized play and require the penchant for risk taking. The inclination to enjoy the uncertainty of outcomes, including potential conflict and failure, depends on recognizing that pleasures can be located in the chance encounter which heightens the intensity of the transient moment. Like the adventure, improvisation games provide the opportunity for total absorption in the moment, producing what Goffman calls a "key change" which corresponds with Csikszentmihalyi's notion of "flow." Henricks identifies this as a feature of the play mode: "A person in flow is entranced by the necessities of the moment. Indeed, one's concentration can be so deep that the interaction seems to defy conscious control" (2006:153).

Simmel recognizes an inherent dualism in gaming: "There is in us an eternal process playing back and forth between chance and necessity, between fragmentary materials given us from the outside and

[108] Simmel's explanation of Casanova's capacity to inhabit time, rather than relationships: "His perspective on the future was wholly obliterated in the rapture of the moment" (1971:190) provides another way of understanding the gratification of being immersed in improvised play: the source of pleasure is located less in affirming social cohesion but lies in an intensified appreciation of what it means to "inhabit time".

[109] Simmel engages thoroughly with the discourse of a capitalist economy that defines social interaction through "exchange" and "value". The single example of an adventurer that refers to the financial "world" may represent a marginal position because he defies norms through relying on income independent of the wage-earning work ethic.

the consistent meaning of the life developed from within" (1971:191). Dualism underpins his analysis from the outset: in tensions between part and whole, segment and continuity. The desire for integrating a trajectory of differentiated experiences is opposed to a proliferation of discrete encounters. The appetite for risk or, conversely, security becomes a determining factor guiding a course of action. Simmel suggests that the enterprise entails assessing "the alternative between the highest gain and destruction." He proposes that "the great forms in which we shape the substance of life are the syntheses, antagonisms, or compromises between chance and necessity. Adventure is such a form" (1971:191). The processes of integration, fragmentation or compromise have very different implications and his abstract discourse does not aid in clarifying ways in which these may co-exist within a single phenomenon. His point emerges more clearly in his assertion that the adventure is ultimately not consistent with "the sheer abrupt event whose meaning – a mere given – simply remains outside us", nor with a series of fragmented encounters, which in supplementing each other tend towards an integrated meaning, "but rather that incomparable experience which can be interpreted only as a particular encompassing of the accidentally external by the internally necessary" (1971:191-192).

For Simmel, a profound and internalized individual consciousness is the site of construction of value which becomes the primary mechanism of synthesis or resolution within its trajectory. As he puts it, "another such synthesis (that the adventure) achieves is between the categories of activity and passivity, between what we conquer and what is given to us" (1971:192). The inherent dualities of assertive and passive impulses at play within association are introduced in this formulation. For Simmel, the adventure carves out the space for affirming agency. In as much as it displays the confidence of "the gesture of the conqueror, the quick seizure of opportunity", it also conversely acknowledges that the gesture entails relinquishing securities and being left "with fewer defences and reserves than in any other relation" (1971:192). If activity and passivity are effectively unified in the adventure, antagonisms persist in the tensions between the "incalculable" and the "calculable" (1971:194), or what could be understood as levels of predictability founded on the challenge of what cannot be foreseen, so crucial to the formulation of the adventure. Oppositions between certainties and uncertainties contend with one another and must be embraced. Just as the philosopher, operating within these dimensions, is Simmel's "adventurer of the spirit" (1971:194), the aspirant improviser is an adventurer in the domain of social encounters.

Compromise, the spirit of concession, is distinguished from both synthesis and antagonism and depends on mutual concession or partial waiving of principles in order to settle differences. The spirit of compromise is attached to maturity, or so Simmel seems to imply, as he concludes with the proposition that adventure is "alien to old age [...] only youth knows this predominance of life over its substance" (1971:198).[110] For Simmel, ultimately, the adventure is defined in the consciousness of the individual rather than being located specifically in any particular activity. It happens:

> By virtue of a certain experiential tension whereby (its) substance is realized. Only when a stream flowing between the minutest externalities of life and the central source of strength

[110] Gide has Theseus conclude: "If I compare my own destiny with that of Oedipus, I am content: I have fulfilled it. Behind me I leave the city of Athens. I have cherished it even more than I cherished my wife and my son. I have built my city. After me it will be, immortally, a dwelling for my thought. It is with acquiescence that I approach death alone. I have tasted of the good things of earth. It is sweet for me to think that after me, because of me, men will see themselves as happier, better, freer. For the good of future humanity, I have completed my work. I have lived" (2002:51).

> drags them into itself; when the peculiar colour, ardour, and rhythm of the life-process become decisive and, as it were*, transform its substance* – only then does an event change from mere experience to adventure (1971:198).

**Multiple encounters in epic narrative: Ovid's weaving contest and the tales of two tapestries.**

Simmel repeatedly uses motifs associated with spinning and weaving in identifying the formal properties of the adventure. The reiteration of a resonant symbol is indicative of his method of cutting across conventional categories in order to identify the geometry of forms within the continuous flux of social interaction and experience. Much like the skein presented in myth to Theseus as a means of negotiating the labyrinth, the thread is central to the weaving contest of Book VI of the *Metamorphoses* in which the transformation of substance through artistry defines the action. Simmel's search for forms and Ovid's vast narrative both chart fluctuations and flow. Life and Being in Classical cosmology are articulated through the metaphor of the "thread of life", the manufacture and manipulation of which lies in the hands of the Fates.[111] The image of life (as a process of spinning, weaving and cutting) effects a primary fusion of a domestic art with fecundity and control over birth and death. This theme is the subject of Velasquez's *Las Hilandras (The Spinners)* an analysis of which would parallel Foucault's analysis of a carefully selected painting to launch his propositions regarding the "subject in and of representation". A.S. Byatt,[112] in an interpretation of *Las Hilandras*[113] suggests that Velasquez' painting "is about vision and skill [...] the Fable of Arachne, and the Rape of Europa, [...] light at its work, the eye discerning forms of light, the skill of the human artist who with a fine brush and an exquisite touch makes maps and delineates the *visible and invisible*[114] world at the point where they touch" (Terry et al. 2001:146).

In the contest between Minerva and Arachne, the loom and the spindle (along with the "craftswomen" and the works that they produce) take centre stage as Ovid recites the story of a challenge and outcome of a contest. The Ovidian episode affords the opportunity to introduce relations between the visible and invisible, epic and dramatic form, dramatic encounter and theatrical spectacle in relation to the agonistic encounter. The performance of position and status fluctuations are inscribed within a "maximum status gap" between goddess and mortal and within

[111] "Clotho, (the youngest) prepares the thread of life, which Lachesis spins, and Atropos cuts off" (Stevens 1998:4). Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* makes this observation in a footnote (2008:140).

[112] Byatt's short story, in the anthology *Ovid Metamorphosed,* "is a mixed genre narrative, weaving together elements of autobiography, essay, art history and sheer storytelling, (making) its own tapestry of tales. These include the story of Velasquez' painting and of Ovid's Arachne, and other tales involving spiders (both real and literary), forming a kaleidoscopic narrative that is improvisatory and densely patterned, meticulous and de-centred..." (Terry et al. 2001:3). Comprising, as it does, multiple quotations from Ovid's fable among other texts, it is structured around the theme of weaving and fuses form with content.

[113] The ways in which "light" is at play consistently across the canvas is the locus of her analysis: "It can be seen to be a painting about light, about the rendering of light as it catches and makes visible threads so fine that they are made of pure light, shimmering silk tissues with the light running in bright darts and shoots on the gloss. The spinning wheel is a whirr of moving radii; the thread held in her ball and skein by a pretty worker is quite different in quality from the translucent veiling around the head of the spinning women, and different from the gauzy draperies over the fashionable ladies' satins. Light catches strands of hair differently again, and the soft thick pelt of the solid cat" (Terry 2001:145).

[114] Tensions between visibility and invisibility underpin Simmel's tracings of underlying patterns of interaction. Ovid's epic focuses on ways in which power and desire are made visible – the Gods assume a range of forms, embodying physical identities in order to interact with mortals. Ovid insistently introduces the "dematerialization" of identity in the fable of Echo and Narcissus who both literally "waste away". Echo, incapable of independent utterance or response, is reduced to reiterating the phrases of others as a consequence of her excessive chatter.

an unfolding scenic medium. Moreover, the unusual contest between two representatives of the female gender concludes with a juxtaposition of two images: two tapestries woven through Ovid's words and metre. The narrative of the relations between the two weavers, along with the two images of social structures and the operation of power within them, both urge analysis in terms of status dynamics. The weaving contest is particularly available for analysis in dramatic and theatrical terms: the personae are cast antagonistically from the outset and the tale includes entranced spectators for whom the performative process of producing the tapestries is as engaging as the tapestries at which they marvel. Arachne, a young Lydian girl, is pitted against Minerva in a challenge with a predictable outcome: the punishment of mortal presumption. The contest, however, proves surprisingly evenly matched as Arachne produces a tapestry that "Not Pallas, not even the goddess of Envy could criticize" (2004: 6:128). The encounter demonstrates much of the spirit of the Simmelian adventure in its energy, while the imagery of the two tapestries that the contest produces may be read as a "contrapuntal" juxtaposition of relations between mortals and super-ordinate powers.[115]

Ovid's narrative voice, status and repute are explicitly invoked throughout his poem,[116] but despite this feature a succession of personae are intermittently accorded the role of story tellers, allowing for shifts in register, tone and points of view, pluralities and ambiguities. The narrator remains readily distinguished as a dominant single authority but the paradigm of the poet as storyteller accommodates a subversion of the Classical model at the level of formal treatment as much as in subject matter and theme. Feeney's introduction to Raeburn's 2004 translation urges the reader to recognize "the kaleidoscopic variety [...], its baffling shifts in register and mood, its manifold layers of irony and self-consciousness, its capacity to move readers deeply despite appearing to be all surface, its intensely intelligent and teasingly elusive wit" (2004:xx). The narrative is organized around two forms of visual displays. The performance as social encounter in the presence of witnesses and two images or cultural artefacts, and status dynamics inhere in the construction of both. The exchange between Minerva and Arachne animates the primary level of the contest, while the tapestries, in iconography and composition, constitute a second layer to the contest as a form of exchange. What can be gleaned about the status dynamics, their underpinnings and trajectory from this "maximum status gap" contest between a mortal and a goddess? Minerva provides the first clue to what it means to be defined socially. In initiating the very idea of a competition she is motivated by the desire for praise and the need to diminish any individual who claims parity with her status. Self-gratification in reasserting her undisputed prominence as champion, as much as punishment directed at overreaching *hubris*, lies at the core of the contest. Minerva fuses both imperatives: "Is praising enough? I also/ need to be praised in my turn.[117] No mortal shall scoff at my power/

[115] Edward Said's term, coined to articulate the concept of a colonial subject and perspective of "speaking back to imperial authority". I am proposing that the episode and its rendering are more subversive than it superficially appears to be.

[116] "Changes of shape, new forms, are the theme which my spirit impels me now to recite. Inspire me, O gods (it is you who have even transformed my art), and spin me a thread from the world's beginning down to my own lifetime, in one continuous poem." (2004:5) Raeburn, the translator, explains what is accomplished in this invocation: "Ovid's poetry has itself undergone a metamorphosis, which he attributes to the Gods" (2004:634). The Epic closes with: "My name shall never be forgotten/ Wherever the might of Rome extends in the lands she has conquered, /The people shall read and recite my words. Throughout all ages, / If poets have vision to prophesy truth, I shall live in my fame" (2004:63).

[117] Huizinga writes: "In praising another each praises himself. We want to be honoured for our virtues. We want the satisfaction of having done something well. Doing something well means doing it better than others. In order to excel one must prove one's excellence; in order to merit recognition, merit must be made manifest. Competition serves to give proof of superiority. This is particularly true of archaic society" (1955:63).

unpunished" (2004: 6:3-5). Arachne, however, considers herself equal to – not better than – Minerva, and the artworks produced through the contest does much to sustain Arachne's claim.

The format of the contest as a means to settle a dispute replicates the immediately preceding narrative.[118] The earlier episode is one in which Minerva has herself been an *auditor* to the tale related by the Muses.[119] "Memory's daughters", (5:267) the nine muses are supremely gifted and "govern the arts" (5:254) but defer to Minerva's superior accomplishments. Prompted by the events, Minerva relinquishes the role of auditor and becomes an active participant in a contest in which her own reputation is at stake. The skills contest is literally recast with the formidable goddess in the role of competitor. The transition also accomplishes a shift from reportage to enactment, from narrative to the performative mode and Ovid expressly frames the unfolding of the fable in public and theatrical terms: "The nymphs used often to leave their haunts [...] equally eager to watch her handwork in progress/ [her skill was so graceful] as much as to look at the finished article" (6:14-17).

Ovid counterpoints the protagonist's position with that of the challenger. A comparatively detailed portrait of the young girl offsets Minerva's motives for instigating a confrontation and establishes our sympathies with the aspiring artist. We are told "Arachne's distinction lay not in her birth/ or the place that she hailed from but solely her art" (6:6). Affinities between the two contenders are hinted at: father figures feature predominantly in the lives of both, just as both are fiercely independent and pride themselves in their much admired artistry. A.S.Byatt observes that "Ovid emphasizes [Arachne's] ordinariness [...her] commonness" adding that she is "motherless and low-born". Byatt further suggests that this is a crucial accentuation of what distinguishes the nymph: "her skill is hers, grown in her, her own" (2001:132-133). Arachne's uniqueness lies in her talent and she makes no concession to an external mentor. Furthermore, she is willing to risk all on the basis of this skill: without it she lacks a sense of self definition. Arachne is both gambler and artist, prepared to venture all in a single trial of artistic expression. Stressing the equivalence of the two opponents in terms of a match in passion, determination and independence has the effect of neutralizing the maximum status gap and heightens the tension of the contest itself.

The initial meeting between Minerva and Arachne suggests that an outright competition between the two women could have been avoided and serves to reinforce the intensity of the rival claims to excellence. Minerva appears in the guise of an old crone.[120] Her subterfuge in constructing a persona that invokes wisdom and expertise grounds the clash between the antagonists in the distinction between age and youth. She launches an appeal for respect: " 'Not all old age's effects', / she said, 'are to be despised; experience comes with years" (2004: 6:28-29). On this basis she offers guidance: "'you should aim to be known/ as the best among humankind in the arts of working with wool; but yield the palm to Minerva'" (6:29-30). Sagacious advice is met with recalcitrance,

[118] The contest is central to Huizinga's thesis that "play" is pivotal in developing cultural systems and values. He systematically examines ways in which categories of public life are organized through contests, demonstrating how institutional structures and collective ritual expressions are developed from and permeated by the "play form" of the contest in law, war, knowledge systems, poetic expression, philosophy and art.

[119] Minerva has had relayed to her the events, and contents, of a singing contest between the Muses and the daughters of Píerus. In this competition the daughters of Mnemósyne, were victoriously represented by Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, and the losers transformed to a chorus of twittering magpies.

[120] This masquerade in human form introduces the theme and variations that Arachne will weave into her tapestry.

youthful impatience and dismissive arrogance.[121] Arachne's spontaneous reaction is rash but consistent with her fierce independence: "Leave me alone, you stupid old woman! The trouble with you / is you've lived too long. You can give your advice to what daughters you have/ or the wives of your sons. I'm clever enough to advise myself" (6:37-39). The outburst culminates in an audacious insinuation: that Minerva lacks the courage to confront her rival. This challenge goads the goddess into revealing her true identity in the first of many transformations. The nymphs and Lydian women in attendance are quick to respond to the 'revelation' and pay Minerva "suitable homage" (6:45) acknowledging an extreme shift in status relations. Their collective response counterpoints that of Arachne and further emphasizes her isolation. The sequence of events is rapid but at this critical juncture the tempo changes and it is Arachne's response that halts the momentum: her blush is a visceral, uncontrollable reaction which seems to reverberate in silence and magnitude. "Only Arachne remained unafraid,/ but she did turn red and her cheeks were suffused with a sudden, involuntary/ blush which soon disappeared, as the sky glows crimson at early/ dawn and rapidly whitens again in the rays of the sunrise" (6:45-48).

This is a subtle transformation by comparison with those of Minerva that have preceded it. The lyrical rendering nonetheless magnifies the humiliation and shores up our affinities with Arachne rather than her rival. The allusion to the sky prefigures a particularly evocative passage in which the interweaving colours of the tapestry become a thing to marvel at. Phillip Terry observes: "Ovid is a supremely visual writer, both in his detailed description of setting and in his treatment of the pleasures of looking – whether voyeuristic [Acteon] or narcissistic [Narcissus]" (2001:2). The vivid evocation of mise-en-scène and performance (during which the two tapestries are woven) attests to his assertion. The activities of the weavers and the wonders of their artistry are a source of gratification. "The two contestants made haste; with robes hitched up to the girdle, / they moved their experienced arms, the labour lightened by pleasure" (2004: 6:58-59). Perceptions are confounded by expertise and speed, physicality and skill, which are as significant as the tapestries produced. Absorption in creative passion replaces mundane practicalities and neutralizes antagonism and competition.

Another level of transformation is established as the two artworks materialize. A paean to the visual medium follows – colour and thread are worked through *sfumato* – and parallels the transcendence ascribed to the creative process. During the creative process, both women are absorbed, rapt in the flow of artistic endeavour, and we discern the affinity between them. Distinctions resurface as the tapestries are completed and the image and narrative of each 'product' emerges clearly. Ovid clearly takes for granted the view that culturally based interpretations will guide the interpretation of the contents of both tapestries and presumes an understanding of the iconography of each. The tapestries, in terms of both content and composition, articulate the dispositions of the artists towards the classical episteme: images of power are narrated in coloured skeins. The resultant images represent two disparate ways of seeing the world. "Minerva depicted [...] the ancient dispute concerning the name of the land" (6:69-71) [122] and, as Byatt suggests, this is

[121] Arachne's petulance is conveyed in words and phrases: "sullenly", "almost hit her" and "with anger written all over her face". These contrast with her reaction to the subsequent assault by Minerva.

[122] This refers to "the contest between Minerva/Athena and Neptune/Poseidon, as to which of the two gods should own the land and determine its name" (Byatt 2004:648). "The rock of Mars refers to the Aeropagus to the west of the Acropolis at Athens" (2004:648).

an allegory of "power and judgement" (2001:140) in which she herself is visible in the canvas at the moment in which "victory crowned her endeavour" (2004: 6:82). It is an image of "civic and divine order" (Terry et al. 2001:139), formally organized in a display of authority and dignity: it comprises all twelve Olympian deities, each an icon of potency. Jove, Neptune and Minerva command particular attention: Jove as the Supreme Ruler, and Neptune and Minerva as combatants invested in claiming the city of Athens. The template of the contest recurs, directly harnessed to presenting gifts to the citizen spectators: Neptune is depicted "striking/the rugged crag with his long trident, while sea water gushed forth/ out of the cleft of the rock" (2004: 6: 74-76). Similarly, Athena strikes the earth with a spear and produces her gift – the olive tree. The value of her gift lies in more than its "berries and grey-green foliage" (6:81); it is the "symbol of peace" (6:102) and reiterating its importance to the city of Athens, olive branches are woven into the border of the tapestry. The image and the gift restate the goddess's power.[123] Surrounding the central figure is a quartet of images: "four contests were added, one in each of the web's four corners" (6:84). Each of these motifs depicts an incident in which an individual is transformed as punishment for their defiance of the gods.

There is no such impeccable ordering of space and social relations in Arachne's tapestry, which, unlike Minerva's work, takes as its subject the abuse of power.[124] The proliferation of disparate narrative images in which erotic desire and asymmetrical power relations is played out in (what is described by Byatt as) "a rush of beings, a rush of animal, vegetable and mineral constantly coming into shape and constantly undone and re-forming" (2001:141). Transformative capacity is seen to be the prerogative of the gods: Jove, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus and Saturn are depicted as committing twenty one "misdemeanours" between them. The canvas is charged with images of shape shifting, seduction and deception. Jove, the majestic figure of Minerva's stable resolution of warp and weft, is depicted in the guise of a bull seducing Europa, as an eagle with Astérië, a swan with Leda, a satyr with Antíope, her husband with Alcména, a shower of gold with Dánaë, fire with Aegína, a shepherd with Mnemósyne and finally a speckled serpent with Prosérpina. Neptune and the other three gods add to this breathless 'rush' of disparate images, which finds a brief caesura in departing from listing contents to address the manner of representation: "All of these scenes were given authentic settings, the persons their natural likeness"(2004: 6:122). Spatial coherence collapses: it is difficult to imagine a compositional strategy within the plane of warp and weft that can accommodate this tumultuous agglomeration of dreamlike encounters, each depicting inequitable positions. Judgment is immediately passed on the quality and impact of Arachne's art: "Not Pallas, not even the goddess of Envy could criticize weaving/ like that" (6:128).

There is no formally appointed body of judges like the nymphs who appraised the performances of Calliope and the nine Píerus sisters, who might now pronounce a victory. In this weaving contest the sole judges are the participants themselves. This absence of appointed judges suggests that what is at stake lies only in the evaluation of the two competitors themselves. Minerva's tacit acknowledgement of the excellence of Arachne's canvas is immediate: she rips apart Arachne's work and physically assaults her challenger. Arachne's representation of "the god's misdemeanours"

[123] The narrative emphasis is on Minerva/Athena's triumph, stability and public gravitas, and the landscape is "transformed" in the interests of civic well-being.

[124] To use Simmel's terminology, these myths are cultural forms (visual representations) which become social contents through dissemination and sedimentation.

(6:131) flouts norms and conventions, and in theme and subject, as much as in its artistry and excellence, disputes the Olympian order. There can be no outright declaration of a winner; both goddess and girl are poised for yet another confrontation. But, Arachne does not retaliate. The contrast between the earlier radiant creative activity and silence is profound. In a remarkable gesture she prepares a noose with which to hang herself.[125] Little insight is provided, or required, regarding her motivations; the single line, "The wretched girl was too proud to endure it" (6:133), is all that Ovid offers. The trauma of physical assault, and the destruction of her art and reputation, hints at the complex problems confronting the individual who opposes objective cultural forms,[126] which Minerva represents with great authority. Ovid's voice tells us that "She was hanging in air when the goddess took pity" (6:135). The likeness suggests an enlargement of the spider hanging at the end of a single thread – prompting a final metamorphosis in which Arachne is denuded of discernable human features, shrivels, hardens and diminishes within seconds.

Minerva's tapestry is an ode to Aristotelian concepts of tragic form and method. Arachne's extraordinary achievement, on the other hand, is a panegyric in celebration of Ovid's own narrative idiom with its multiple juxtapositions. The dialectical tension between thesis and antithesis remains in a necessary suspension: for Ovid to favour one or the other would be to commit to a fixed position. As Byatt suggests, Arachne's tapestry is given the vital "lively images" (2001:143) – it is her tapestry that seduces and overwhelms. Citing Italo Calvino, Byatt explains that the formal treatment establishes a particular response: the "poetic rendering favours the guilty victim" (2001:143). Minerva, the relentless figure of authority, reveals, at the last, a capacity for compassion: the transformation of Arachne into the first spider is a compromise which tempers the desire for her rival's destruction. Unlike the subjects of Minerva's tapestry who are transformed to inert matter, or the nine daughters of Píerus defeated by Calliope and transformed into birds which then persist in quarrelsome disputes and clattering noises, Arachne the spider "continues to spin/ her thread and practice her former art" (2004:6:144-145). The multifaceted physical recasting that Ovid brings to the fore is continuously grounded in displays of self-promotion and the metamorphoses form a trajectory demonstrating the outcome of contested positions. Response and reaction are as crucial as initiative. Minerva and her tapestry assert agency and stability but also express the desire for status positions to be consolidated and fixed. In her person and her tapestry, she creates illusions of transformations. The volatility of status interactions is unambiguously the subject of Arachne's being and expression. Simmel's concepts of sociality and interactive encounter are helpful in understanding the contest, but these, as the contents and organization of the tapestries have revealed, cannot be negotiated without reference to the lexicon of cultural values in which they occur.

As the analysis of Ovid's treatment of one particular contest has demonstrated,[127] competitive drives embedded within the event make it a site of invested, latently hostile, confrontation,

[125] The impulse towards self–destruction is a sacrificial gesture and the only one that she can make that confirms the value that she invests in her destroyed tapestry and her artistic status.

[126] "The forms of social and cultural life for Simmel are not merely objects of admiration or vehicles to help us think and feel; they may also oppose and frustrate our experience of the world" (Henricks 2006:111).

[127] *The Judgement of Arms* (Book 13) focuses on a different type of contest: "a formal debate between the heroes Ajax and Ulysses, each of whom is claiming the divinely-made arms of the dead Achilles. The two speakers – the brave but stolid-minded warrior Ajax, and the wily tactician, Ulysses – are skillfully characterized and contrasted. [...] Ajax unwisely

especially when the challenge is based on activities from which both parties derive intense, even transcendental, pleasure. Competition, as a public and social mechanism, generates tension, and this tension is heightened by the participants being relatively evenly matched in terms of levels of ability, despite a wide range of other criteria that might make for otherwise distinctly asymmetrical relations. The tension generated within the encounter lies in the intersection of chance and predictability, and both tension and aesthetic pleasure are integral to the contest which itself constitutes a form of theatre presuming the presence of spectators or representatives of a broader community whether they are acknowledged or not. These spectators, far from being extraneous to the event itself, are integral to the rationale of the contest since it is these witnesses and observers who will corroborate the outcome and the distinction achieved by the winner. Ovid's contest is not only a site in which "symbolic and status orientated outcomes" (Henricks 2006:18) can be pursued as Johan Huizinga claims, but is also an encounter which includes unanticipated risks. These attributes of the contest also apply to the improvisation training studio, the small circle, in which individual assertions and desires are played out and levels of technical mastery are made visible. The studio, as delimited and bounded as it may be, is situated within a broader context and what takes place within it cannot be entirely separated from prevailing discursive domains or the individual subjectivities and reputations of participants.

**Reflecting on status differences as an underpinning for contests: dominance and submission.**

Jeffrey Masson relays an amusing anecdote of a scimitar horned oryx, an alpha male, in a reserve in the Negev Desert. The account depends, partially, on his being named Napoleon which indicates the extent to which human characteristics are imputed or ascribed to animals. The allegory establishes links between atavistic desires for dominance with territorial possession. Napoleon

> …had grown old and short of breath and had lost status. Rather than leave the herd, he continued to challenge other males and pursue females. His challenges were ignored, but when he pursued females the other males attacked, goring him with their yard-long horns. The preserve managers put Napoleon in protective custody – a five acre paddock. He escaped the next day, and was injured by another oryx. He was recaptured and treated – and escaped again. After his eighth escape from the paddock, now festooned with bolts and latches, the managers changed their approach. Since Napoleon could not be forcibly contained, they decided to give him what he wanted in the paddock. They decided that he wanted not to attack males, not to be with females, but to be dominant. So every morning the director would enter the paddock with a bamboo pole. In ritual battle, he clattered the pole on Napoleon's horns and Napoleon threatened and charged until the director allowed the victorious oryx to drive him out. Napoleon stopped escaping and lived in the paddock until he died of old age, the top of his oryx enclosure, and apparently content (1996:140).

This story encapsulates the desire to persist in asserting a customary and preferred status position. Territorial control and the need for dominance, in the most literal sense possible, motivate the protagonist, eclipsing the instinct to survive. The behavior modification tactics adopted are measures designed to affirm the selfhood of the alpha male. This sense of position and command or self-realization is, it seems, dependent on (and effected through) interaction, regardless of the levels of duplicity involved on the part of the subordinate. The anecdote ably illustrates the

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addresses himself to the crowd of onlookers, while Ulysses argues his case directly to the chieftains who have been asked to decide the issue" (2004:495).

significance of inter-active or relational determinants of identity over efforts at self-promotion, which are considerably less effective in securing the necessary affirmation or sense of value. Similarly, a group of performance students has partly established preconceptions regarding each other which creep into the ostensibly neutral terrain of the studio and construct positions within which an individual is granted space to operate. Frequently the prominence of pre-determined leaders or champions has to be actively disavowed, while individuals who customarily reserve the right to remain submissive require prising from the safeguard that this role seems to provide. Introducing overt status-based encounters too early in a training programme is possibly counter-productive: an ethos of reciprocal respect, trust and the willingness to gamble on risks in playing status-based encounters is a pre-requisite for eliminating the consequences of competitive encounters that may well be played in earnest.

Simmel consistently inscribes social relations in spatial terms, articulating the geometry of relative positions.[128] In "The Stranger," (1908) he writes: "Spatial relations not only are determining conditions of relationships among men, but are also symbolic of those relationships" (1971:143). Establishing and interpreting tableaux, static configurations of bodies in space, along with pathways through space are the primary means of introducing status play to performance students. This has an ontological basis. The centrality of "body action metaphors" begins to account for how the sense of selfhood is anchored to what is exterior to it. Zarilli et al write: "The 'source-path-goal' concept, learned in infancy by crawling towards an object [is] goal directed movement from one place, the source, across a path, to an end location." In the fusion of agency and self- hood, spatial orientation and negotiation becomes a key determinant of status relations, at least in the views of some cognitive psychologists: "Categories in the mind/brain relating to spatiality include inside/outside, part/whole, center/periphery, balance, up/down, near/far [...] these orientations to space shape human behaviour in all cultures" (Zarilli et al 2006:90).[129]

Concepts of spatial direction and configuration raise two sets of issues: firstly, they are implicated in the impulse towards affirming affinity and likeness as much as asserting distinctions and difference, and, secondly, they imply inherent dynamism within these relations. The performer's body is registered as an element within a tableau, or mise-en-scène, and as such functions as a component of a visual narrative, constructing implied power relations from the perspective of the spectator. Experiments in status play operating within spatial dimensions explicitly invites fusing physical expression with its reception and the critical interrogation of theatrical presentations and their reception. The interpretation of the tableaux provides opportunity to identify different cultural codes attached to distances, levels, posture and attitudes congruent with the affinities of the participants.

The distinction between forcible and voluntary shifting of boundaries, the impetus and mode undergirding such shifts, clearly relates to the freedom and agency of the individual as opposed to

[128] The notion of 'marginality' is a clear instance of precisely this – fittingly exemplifying one of Simmel's central themes and his own position within German scholarship of his time.

[129] In "The Transcendent Character of Life" (1918) Simmel writes: "We are constantly orienting ourselves, even when we do not employ abstract concepts, to an 'over us' and an 'under us' to a right and a left, to a more or less, a tighter or looser, a better or worse. The boundary, above and below, is our means of finding direction in the infinite space of our worlds" (1971:353).

being confined within patterns of domination and subjugation. The imperatives of dominance play out across a wide spectrum. For example, the landscape of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, unstable in terms of any reasonably coherent experiences of space, time, or political correctness, nonetheless relies on an intensified sense of social hierarchies and usefully serves as a "script" for initial experiments. Demonstrating how narrative can be structured around transitions in status positions, its premise is a world of rigid hierarchies which relies on a highly pertinent mnemonic for this form of social organization – the pack of cards.[130] This world, like the one on the other side of the Looking Glass, is one in which customary social relations and privileges cannot, however, be taken for granted – they are reversed, subverted and a general sense of anarchy and misrule prevail, challenging the remarkably stoic and pragmatic Alice in a series of increasingly anarchic encounters, culminating in the confrontation with the Red Queen. So even here, or rather especially here, in Wonderland, identity and role are predicated on a clear sense of hierarchical order – as the over-riding presence, if persistently irrational authority, of the Queen of Hearts suggests. Playing status challenges can be issued with the gusto afforded by comic absurdity and cultural distance. Carroll's text also allows invites making distinctions between a designated position within a social hierarchy and a more nuanced appreciation of status.

The playing-card gardeners, dressed in regulation pack uniform, are open to interpretation as emblematic of the 19th Century Imperialist world view and the class system. In Carroll's allegory, social position – designated by numerical nomination – is determined by birth. Even if Alice's narrative carves out the scope for autonomy and self-realization, it does so as a privilege of a specific class and according to certain "rites of passage". The horticulturalists tending to their cultivars in a sublimely absurd fashion – incongruously occupied in the task of painting white roses red – are supremely conscious of the ranking that orders their own small world. Their labour dramatizes the lack of coherent agency that the outrageous social hierarchy enforces. These gardeners are Alice's introduction to court routine:

> TWO: Look out now Five, Don't go splashing paint over me like that!
> FIVE: I couldn't help it. Seven jogged my elbow. [Raises himself.]
> SEVEN: That's right Five! Always lay the blame on others! [Lowers Five.]
> FIVE: You'd better not talk! I heard the Queen say only yesterday you deserved to be beheaded. [Raises himself and simultaneously attempts to lower Seven]
> TWO: What for? [Attempts to raise himself.]
> SEVEN: That's none of your business. [Thoroughly lowers Two.]
> FIVE: Yes it is his business! And I'll tell him – it was for bringing the cook tulip-roots instead of onions." [Raises Two, Lowers Seven – and wins!] (Carroll 1984: 74).[131]

In this exchange the key concepts outlined by Keith Johnstone in respect of playing status line by line emerges very clearly: status is relational or relative, dynamic and transactional, constantly shifting through strategies of self-promotion or elevation up the scale *or* by demoting someone else downwards. In Wonderland, with its Victorian hierarchy, status shifts for all except Alice are minimal and momentary. Alice, the pawn, is set on a quest for self-realization and transformation:

[130] The ladder as metaphor of upward social mobility expresses social relations in spatial terms.
[131] Five, literally the middleman, is adept at asserting his superiority over Two and seeks to undermine or diminish Seven. Two, deferential and uninformed, is ruthlessly demolished by Seven when he ventures a timid query. The proximity of Five to Seven makes playing the distinctions between them an example of the subtleties required in playing a minimum status gap, if this is to be conveyed through interpretation and delivery rather than signalled by sumptuary codes.

the 'dream' narrative is an allegory of the acquisition of agency, assimilating symbolic forms and values of a particular social context from riddles to duels, mores, etiquette and manners.

"Play," writes Huizinga, "only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of mind breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos" (1955:3). The statement suggests that the power of the imagination conjoined with the force of will is potent in its affective potential. Moreover, unlocking the capacity to draw proactively on personal resources and ability comprises the tool that may make transformation possible. Huizinga approaches the motif of the contest through the framework of play, which he defines as bracketed off from considerations of material consequences. For him too, ritual contests or competitions do not generate outcomes of instrumental substance, although he stresses the symbolic rewards intrinsic to their rationale. The limitations of his manoeuvre is that it has the effect of divorcing contests, competition, and even war, from the circulation of power and authority within social structures and institutions.[132] His focus is on play forms and ritual expressions of the contest motif and ways in which specific cultural values are implemented, inculcated and displayed. Henricks acknowledges Huizinga's thesis as incorporating ways in which "play events also commonly functioned as repositories of public memory". For Huizinga, "although play may be a departure from ordinary life, this does not mean that it is preoccupied with trivial matters" (Henricks. 2006:18). His view is that

> Contests [...] have been crucial in all types of societies for many centuries. Perhaps most crucial is Huizinga's emphasis that play is not confined to contests of physical strength and skill. [...] *Homo Ludens* is a book about riddling games, potlatch festivals, trials by ordeal, philosophical dialectics, competitions in courtly manners, huffing barristers, competitive artisanship, and so forth (2006:18).

Huizinga's conclusion focuses on "play elements in contemporary civilization" and suggests that its impetus as an instrumental factor in socio-cultural development has been considerably eroded during, and since, the 19th century.

On the grounds that its "expression in language" may provide some clue to the phenomenon itself, Huizinga probes the etymology of "play" in order to define the concept. He reveals an interesting set of relations between play and *plegan* (Old Saxon), the German *pflegan* and Old Dutch *plegan,* meaning "to vouch or stand guarantee for, to take a risk, to expose oneself to danger for someone or something"(1992:39). This aspect of the meaning of the word suggests something very different from the notion of mimicry, illusion and artifice: play has affinities with the adventure, risk, and stakes and is intrinsically social. He examines the origins of "prize", and the related terms price and praise, which all have some purchase in relation to the contest:

> All derive more or less directly from the Latin *pretium* but develop in different directions [...] *price* remains bound to the sphere of economics, *prize* moves into that of play and competition and *praise* acquires the exclusive signification of the Latin *laus* (1992:51).

The archaic meaning with its connotations continues to echo in the notion of value,[133] honour and distinction.

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[132] His seminal study remains invaluable to play studies but needs to be tempered by acknowledging his position and criticisms leveled at this ideas: despite writing at the time of Nazi ascendancy in Western Europe he does not interrogate hierarchical orders and his 'idealism' suggests a nostalgia for a lost past.

[133] The spheres of exchange and valuation are distinctly Simmelian territories of enquiry and will be more thoroughly interrogated in Chapter 6.

The contestive encounter exercises and stretches the individual potential beyond innate ability in so far as unique capacities need to be nurtured, developed and honed in anticipation of rigorous testing. Athletic prowess displayed in classical games resurfaces in medieval tournaments and jousting contests, and the early form of "ball games […] require the existence of permanent teams, and herein lies the starting – point of modern sport. The process arises quite spontaneously in the meeting of village against village, school against school [...] the structure of English social life had much to do with it. Local self-government encouraged the spirit of association and solidarity. The absence of military training favoured the occasion for, and the need of physical exercise." (Huizinga 1992:197) Huizinga observes that team sports have become increasingly commodified, or "systematized and regimented" (1992:197). His interrogation of board games and games of chance (on which *Alice in Wonderland* is so overtly modelled) is brief compared with the significance granted to the motif of the riddle: a contest of mental acumen and insight. The riddling contest is directly associated with the opportunity for displaying intellectual and verbal virtuosity. Huizinga recognizes that "the answer to an enigmatic question is not found by rational or logical reasoning. It comes quite literally as a sudden solution – a loosening of the tie by which the questioner holds you bound. The corollary of this is that by giving him the answer you strike him powerless" (Huizinga 1992:110). The riddle motif, along with its centrality in determining a communally feted victor can be identified in the narrative of Oedipus who liberates Thebes from the terror of the Sphinx by solving her riddle, the answer to which, "man", resonates in symbolizing autonomy and transformation.[134]

Huizinga's approach to the duel as a conventional means for avenging a slur provides valuable insight into ways in which the contest is a mechanism devoted to restoring personal prestige. He writes:

> The private duel avenges outraged honour.[135] Both ideas – honour that can be outraged and the need to avenge it – belong to the archaic sphere, notwithstanding their undiminished psychological and social significance in modern society. A person's honourable qualities must be manifest to all, and if their recognition is endangered, must be asserted and vindicated by agonistic action in public [...] The duel also reveals its deep seated identity with the judicial decision in the fact that like the judicial duel itself, it hands no blood feud on to those who lose a kinsman by it (1992:94).

The duel is thus intrinsically theatrical and performative. Henricks summarizes Huizinga's views on competitive encounters, which "tend to be for something[136] […] in something[137] […] and with

[134] Turandot and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* are both won by trials in which the deserving suitor's merits will be announced through their ability to solve a riddle. Alice is challenged by the Mad Hatter with a riddle: "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" (1984:66); to which, in defiance of the rules of the contest, there is no answer. She objects to the White Queen's muddled "riddle" in *Through the Looking Glass*, "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday – but never jam *to-day"* (1984:171).

[135] His interest lies in demonstrating the constraints and conventions according to which the private duel is defined and records "that fighting should not aim at killing, but stop at the shedding of blood, when honour is satisfied" (1992: 95).

[136] "What is 'winning', and what is 'won'? Winning means showing oneself superior in the outcome of a game. Nevertheless the evidence of this superiority tends to confer upon the winner a semblance of superiority in general. In this respect he wins something more than the game as such. He has won esteem, obtained honour; and this honour and esteem at once accrue to the benefit of the group to which the victor belongs" (Huizinga 1992: 50).

[137] "Competition is not only 'for' something but also 'in' and 'with' something. People compete to be first 'in' strength or dexterity, in knowledge or riches, in splendour, liberality, noble descent, or in the number of their progeny. They compete 'with' bodily strength or force of arms, with their reason or their fists, contending against one another with extravagant displays, big words, boasting vituperation, and finally with cunning and deceit." (Huizinga 1992:51)

something (such as the use of bodily strength or mental strategy)" (2006:18). The duel is grounded in a display of physical skills as much as the symbolic meanings of the confrontation, whether this is with swords (Hamlet and Laertes, Mercutio and Tybalt) or pistols (Onegin and Lensky in *Eugene Onegin)* or refined, sparkling verbal sparring in either comic idiom (Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing)* or manipulated with the searing intensity of contemporary idiom (George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?).*

**Simmel on two forms of dominance: authority and prestige.**

Simmel's focus in "Domination" (1908) lies in patterns of association set within a "threefold scheme" (1971:100). The matrix comprises superordination "exerted by an individual,[138] by a group, or by an objective force – social or ideal" (1971:101).[139] He identifies limits within which the reciprocal positions of domination and subjugation may be construed as social interaction and includes "domination", but specifically excludes the "*societas leonina*"[140] which nullifies the very notion of society by negating the assumption of any form of reciprocal affect. As he puts it: " the significance of one party falls so low that its effect no longer enters the relationship with the other, there is little ground for speaking of sociation"(1971: 97). Asymmetrical relations, Simmel suggests, are those in which interaction persists in so far as a superordinate wants his/her influence to act back on him as a demonstration of the efficacy of his will or as a means of confirming value and status. He excludes "*extreme* case[s] of egoistic inconsiderateness […in which] the desire for domination is designed to break the *internal* resistance of the subjugated" (1971:96). The distinction made here accommodates a mode of being that adopts an outward display of subordinate behaviour but retains an inherent resistance to domination rather than a psychic assimilation of being subjugated. Simmel thus allows that "subordinates" retain a capacity for personal choice:

> Even in the most oppressive and cruel cases of subordination, there is still a considerable measure of personal freedom. We merely do not become aware of it, because its manifestation would entail sacrifices which we usually never think of taking upon ourselves. […] More precise analysis shows that the super-subordinate relationship destroys the subordinate's freedom only in the case of direct physical violation. In every other case, this relationship demands a price for the realization of freedom – a price, to be sure, which we are not willing to pay. (1971:97)

Exercising the right to autonomous personal choice is however not always consistent with a gratification of desires, as Ovid's tale has shown. Simmel's view is that the prerogative of choice

[138] Simmel argues that obedience and opposition in cases of subordination under an individual are dual features of a single human attitude, namely the desire for leadership. He suggests that harmonious relations as a result of group unification under a single leader are 'energy saving' but discordant relations in which the group deems itself in opposition to the leader ruptures this equilibrium and the leader's position will only be sustained through rallying jointly against a common enemy. In his view there is what he calls a "threshold phenomenon" (1971: 105) in which pressures exerted from an external source may result in unity being restored. This principle is dramatized in *Coriolanus* as the civic unrest within Rome is temporarily defused by uniting against the Volscians.

[139] In the case of subordination to a principle, Simmel suggest that "real interaction [...] is precluded" (1971: 113). Nonetheless the individual feels himself to be determined by a set of "un-influenceable powers" which establish the tension between spontaneity and compliance. Similarly individuals may be suborned to objects and to conscience. Moral imperatives are, for Simmel, a "psychological crystallization" of an actual social power. They epitomize the internalization of impersonal abstractions.

[140] A definition derived from the "later Roman jurists" (1971:97), literally translated as "sociation with a lion, that is a partnership in which all the advantage is on one side," explains the translator (1971:97).

persists even in instances of extreme subjugation, or defeat, but that acting on that awareness is invariably foreclosed upon because the course of action implied lies beyond immediate apprehension, as Arachne's silent preparation of a noose has demonstrated.

Interrogating variable means through which a position of leadership is achieved enables Simmel to construct a perspective regarding the difference between "authority" and "prestige". In distinguishing between modes of leadership or positions acknowledged as influential, Simmel advances a crucial distinction. For him, "what is called 'authority' presupposes, in a much higher degree than is usually recognized, a freedom on the part of the person subjected to authority". In as much as authority presumes a level of power, it is arrived at in two different ways, although both imbue the figure of authority with "a character of objectivity" (1971:98).[141] One mode of gaining authority is when the individual through his being, actions and beliefs, in either the "immediate or remote milieu", is spontaneously acknowledged for being exceptional. The recognition of distinctive qualities confers a particular mode of superiority, with relations being "transformed into a new quality... of objectivity" (1971:98 -99). Innate authoritative capacity is not the same as a second form of leadership acquired by conferral from an exterior source, in which a "super-individual power",[142] or institution, confers authority on the individual who would otherwise not ordinarily acquire such capacity. In this instance, as he puts it: "authority descends upon a person from above, as it were". (1971:99) The latter mode of leadership is typified by a "higher, cooler, and normative character [...] more apt to leave room for criticism [...] on the part of its followers" compared with prestige which, prompted by the acknowledgement of singularity, depends more strikingly on a greater degree of "voluntary homage to the superior person" (1971:100). The charismatic appeal and glamour of inspired leadership elicits a response in which those who are led elect the position that they adopt. The distinction between the degrees of freedom on the part of the subjugated fascinates Simmel, who puts it in these terms:

> In the face of authority, we are often defenceless, whereas the *élan* with which we follow a given prestige always contains a consciousness of spontaneity. Here, precisely because devotion is only to the wholly personal, this devotion seems to flow only from the ground of personality with its inalienable freedom (1971:100).

An analysis of texts that elaborate on these two forms of dominance, within contestive or confrontational formats, comprises the remainder of this chapter. Coriolanus and Charles Lindberg are individuals who stand apart from the respective social groups and acquire distinction. The treatments of their life stories construct narratives mapping status shifts congruent with the process of emerging as a prominent figure in the public domain.

### *Coriolanus:* a display of status interactions within patterns imposed by kinship and citizenship.

*Coriolanus* is compacted with tributes and valedictories which raise the status of the person thus affirmed, along with insults and pejoratives which contest the status being asserted. These are either directed at the dominant figure of Coriolanus, or are judgments made by him regarding the

[141] Simmel expands on this: "(The figure of authority) thus enjoys a prerogative and an axiomatic trustworthiness in his decisions which excel, at least by a fraction, the value of mere subjective personality, which is always variable, relative, and subject to criticism"(1971:98).
[142] Simmel names, as examples, the "state, church, school, family or military organization" (1971:99).

Roman citizens he considers inferior to him. Class distinctions abound: the divided body politic is the locus of the action and the bid for power from either side is driven by maximum status gaps between the patricians and plebeians. Jan Kott proposes that the play has two protagonists by making the case for the plebeian collective, the anonymous citizens of Rome, being granted the status of protagonist alongside the patrician hero. Shakespeare's play fascinated Bertolt Brecht who made the claims and rights of the plebeians his primary focus. Kott suggests a more complex structural contradiction in positing the simultaneity of opposing viewpoints.[143] This structural feature is one way in which the play may be regarded as modern, as though this was an early cubist text which tackles the issue of status in conjunction with political agency. Its plurality of perspectives pertains to a world view which is relativist, secular and modern:

> The history that breaks Coriolanus is not royal history any more. It is the history of a city divided into plebeians and patricians. It is the history of class struggle. History in the royal chronicles and *Macbeth*, was a Grand Mechanism which had something demonic in it. History in *Coriolanus* has ceased to be demonic. It is only ironic and tragic (Kott 1983:147).

The binary opposites of singularity/multiplicity and acclamation/anonymity are brought into play in the tensions between the hero and ordinary "unsung" citizens. This feature is clearly established in Kott's analysis:

> The tragedy has two protagonists, although one of them has many heads and many names. […] Coriolanus is never alone, at least, in the physical and dramatic sense. In twenty-five scenes of the play, out of twenty-nine, crowds are present. Twelve scenes take place in the streets of Rome, in the Forum, and on the Capitol; two scenes at Corioli; ten – on fields of battle and in military camps. The crowd is nameless, rather than having many names (1983:142).

The political implications of the maximum status gap between patricians and plebeians is expressed with concentrated intensity in Coriolanus' consistent re-stating of the difference between these two classes.[144] In contrast, minimal status gaps are played out in the exchanges between anonymous underlings: the First and Second Citizen, the First, Second and Third Servant.

Cultural commemoration, whether in narrative idiom or public monument, in order that the life of particular individual should not be forgotten, is a key theme of the play and reveals something of how the motif of prominence functions. Lucy Hughes-Hallett puts it like this: "A hero might sacrifice himself so that others might live, or so that he himself may live forever in others' memories. But even when his exploits are undertaken for purely selfish and temporal motives of ambition or greed, the very fact of his enduring fame is a token of immortality" (2004:13). Expanding on the way in which heroes serve as a tool through which mortality can, at least notionally, be contested or challenged, she writes: "To be forgotten is to die utterly" (2004:34). There is a poignant demonstration of being rendered nameless, unmemorable and vanquished in the play. Plutarch

[143] Hibbard, the editor of the 1967 New Penguin Shakespeare republished in 1995, follows orthodox critical practice but acknowledges the prominence granted to the citizens. He writes: "One of the most marked features of *Coriolanus* is the number of choric scenes in it. Time after time, two people, or two groups of people, come together to discuss Coriolanus's behaviour and character, and on each occasion the pattern of the discussion is the same. Two antithetical views of him are put forward and left unreconciled. Even when this choric function is transferred to a single person, Aufidius in IV.vii, no final conclusion is arrived at. In the last analysis there is something mysterious about him; judgement is baffled. Men are either for him or against him, they cannot regard him with detachment or indifference" (1995:22).

[144] His speech is rich in pejoratives and he refers to the plebeians as: "scabs"," curs", " hares", "geese", "rabble", "shreds", "fragments "and "rats" within a single scene (1995:I.i.).

records: "I (Coriolanus) have only one special grace to beg, and this I hope you will not deny me. There was a certain hospitable friend of mine among the Volscians, a man of probity and virtue, who is become a prisoner, and from my former wealth and freedom is now reduced to servitude" (Plutarch1932: 269). He provides no further details of the unfortunate Volscian host. Shakespeare's Coriolanus, having been granted his request for clemency to be shown to this man, cannot recall the name of the person he would have pardoned. The impulse toward honouring a fellow human being, now at the mercy of the Roman army, cannot be fulfilled and the anonymous Volscian presumably both dies and is forgotten. This could never be the case for the hero himself. The narrative and the image of the hero "outlives and outlasts" the span of a single lifetime in defiance of the void that death or permanent absence represents. Hughes-Hallett anchors this phenomenon in Homer's epic in which "Achilles in his tent sang of the exploits of heroes dead and gone, tales that shaped the concept of himself and his role just as his story was to condition posterity's idea of what a hero might be" (2004:7).[145]

Multiple interpretations and subsequent representations of the hero proliferate. Lucy Hughes-Hallett observes: "Once dead a hero becomes an infinitely malleable symbol. [...] Every retelling of a heroic story is coloured by the politics and predilections of the teller, whether that teller's intentions are deliberately propagandist or ostensibly innocent. Looking at heroes, we find what we seek" (2004:12). Hughes-Hallett identifies Achilles, Alcibiades, el Cid and Sir Walter Raleigh as figures particularly susceptible to subsequent narrative formations. She posits: "Hero-worship is the cult of the individual, and the hero is always imagined standing alone." Significantly, in her view, "virtue is not a necessary qualification for heroic status: a hero is not a role model. On the contrary, it is of the essence of a hero to be unique, and therefore inimitable" (2004:2). For her, the hero is frequently cast in the role as a rebellious insubordinate who, nonetheless, retains an aura of glamour. She proposes Achilles, whose actions launch Homer's *Illiad,* as the "paradigmatic hero", as she explains:

> This argument is far more than a squabble over possession of a slave. It is a dispute over the nature of superiority. Agamemnon tells Achilles he will take his girl 'so you can learn just how much greater I am than you'. But is a man's worth dependent on his rank, or on his talent? Is it a function of his social and political relationships, or can an individual possess a value independent of place in the community? (2004:20).

These questions begin to reproduce the Simmelian distinctions made earlier between authority and prestige. Caius Martius Coriolanus presumes the right to consulship on the grounds of his own brand of "unsurpassed brilliance" which is not dissimilar to that of Achilles.[146] The anti-egalitarian point of view verges on being solipsistic and entirely undemocratic. Hughes-Hallett probes the basis of Agamemnon's contesting claim:

> Only Agamemnon disputes Achilles' right to the title (best of the Achaeans), and he does so on political grounds. He doesn't claim to be a greater individual than Achilles. He bases his challenge on the assumption that no individual can count for as much as a community, and

[145] There is a suggestion of introspection, creative contemplation and the luxury of time required to carve out a memorial process, much like Hamlet in his prevarication and aversion to immediate action. The accelerated pace of the action in *Coriolanus* allows for nothing like this. There is little indication that Coriolanus, the man of action, would engage in such self-scrutiny. His narrative is accorded a place in public memory precisely because the consequences of his actions have such a far reaching impact on the body politic.

[146] "Achilles is an exceptional being [...] His beauty, his size, and his speed are all prodigious. He is a divinely created aristocrat, a living demonstration that men are not born equal" (Hughes-Halett 2004:20).

> that therefore the ruler of that community is, by definition and regardless of his or anybody's else's personal qualities, the greatest person in it (2004:21).

The rival claims to superiority in *The Illiad* establish the paradigm in which the winner is he who can invoke the vocal support of the collective as an endorsement of his claim. But, as Hughes-Hallett points out, the archetypal hero may well be positioned as an outcast from his own community:

> Like so many subsequent heroes, Achilles becomes a voluntary outcast from a society he despises. Self-exiled, he is isolated [....] He respects no human jurisdiction. He defers to no-one; he fears no one. In Homer's telling of his story he is the champion of individualism against the compromising demands of the community, the defender of the loner's purity against the complex imperfections of the group (Hughes-Hallett 2004:23).

Coriolanus, like Homer's Achilles, venerates his mother and ultimately defers to her injunctions:[147] the Roman matriarch is the one figure who can humble her son and bend him to her will.

Jonathan Miller invests the notion of the "afterlife" of a play with considerable purchase. His premise is that "the performance is, necessarily, a limitation [...] the destiny of a great play is to undergo a series of performances each of which is incomplete, and in some cases may prove misleading and perverse" (1986:23). He interrogates the kinds of transformations artworks that survive the context of their commissioning and initial reception are subjected to.[148] *Coriolanus,* having generated a series of "revisions", is a text that illustrates this proposition particularly clearly. The distinctly Roman biography as recorded by both Livy and Plutarch, is, in Jan Kott's view, re-contextualized within Elizabethan and Jacobean London by Shakespeare.[149] In turn, Shakespeare's dramatic treatment of the fable is subsequently "re-functioned" by Bertolt Brecht, who worked on his version of *Coriolanus* between 1952 and his death in 1955. Brecht's process of rehearsing *Coriolanus* becomes the subject of Gunter Grass' play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* (1966). In Grass' play, Coriolanus is transformed, re-figured as Marxist theatre director and auteur, named Boss, and the Roman mob takes on the identity of East Berlin construction workers of Stalin Allee in

[147] Coriolanus' bond with his mother is pivotal to Plutarch's narrative, and established at the outset: "Being left an orphan, and brought up under the widowhood of his mother, has shown us, by experience, that, although the early loss of a father may be attended with other disadvantages, yet it can hinder none from being either virtuous or eminent in the world, and that it is no obstacle to true goodness and excellence" (Plutarch 1932: 263).

[148] He makes the proposition that "if they are discovered after a long period of being lost or neglected, it is as if they are perceived and valued for reasons so different from those originally held that they virtually change their character and identity" (1986:28). Miller catalogues a range of formal or intrinsically material transformations of an artwork. These include: "physical deterioration" and "mutilation", and conversely, restorative projects that 'impose' later aesthetic assumptions on forms derived from an earlier epoch; re-contextualization, display, juxtaposition and framing, all of which are varying manifestations of "social re-allocation" impacting on the identity and reception of an artwork. To this he adds the impact of reproduction, duplication and proliferation of copies of the original on the reception and value of an image, object or manuscript. His examples are predominantly objects with material substance. His objective is to establish how much more labile and susceptible to a transformation in an "afterlife" the dramatic text, with no clear "original" may be.

[149] The threat posed by the Spanish Armada of 1588 is not dissimilar to the national crisis posed by the Volscian threat to the Romans; the Revolt of the "Diggers" (Hibbard 1995:12), as it was called, refers to the violent protests against action regarding the Public Enclosures in Warwickshire. This has congruency with the premise of the first scene of the play – the corn riots. Hibbard claims that "Coriolanus is quite as much a Jacobean noble as he is a patrician of antique Rome" (1995:10). Edward Bond's play *Bingo* is a dramatic exploration of relations between Shakespeare, the writer, and the issue of the enclosures. Based on what he calls "material historical facts" (1979: vii), Bond exposes Shakespeare as complicit in the Enclosures, as he explains: "Shakespeare's plays show (a) need for sanity and its political expression, justice. But how did he live? His behaviour as a property -owner made him closer to Goneril than Lear. He supported and benefited from the Goneril-society – with its prisons, workhouses, whipping, starvation, mutilation, pulpit-hysteria and all the rest of it. An example of this is his role in the Welcombe enclosure. A large part of his income came from rents (or tithes) paid on common fields at Welcombe near Stratford. […] He sided with the landowners" (1979: ix).

the Uprising of 16th and 17th June 1953 (1972:33). Shakespeare's "unpopular" play is structured around a complex network of status positions, exchanges and trajectories open to a range of interpretations informed by diverging ideological objectives.[150] Class conflict as a key determinant of status and political agency within agonistic situations is a central dramatic feature while the play itself may be read as a meditation on political leadership.

Hibbard in his introduction to a 1967 edition confronts the susceptibility of the play to what he calls "doctrinaire manipulation" and writes: "Shakespeare's presentation of the class struggle is so judicious, and therefore so ambiguous, that it has given the play a peculiar contemporary relevance. During this century Fascists and Communists alike have seized on the *Coriolanus* for their own purposes" (1995:22). The play, according to Jan Kott, is "one of the least frequently performed" (1983:141), and has "few enthusiasts and admirers, although among their number were Coleridge, Swinburne, Brecht and Leon Schiller". T.S.Eliot announces that "*Coriolanus* might not be as 'interesting' as *Hamlet*, but it is, with *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's most assured artistic success" (1972:144). Kott provides an uncompromising account of the play and its reception:

> The play had not been a success in Shakespeare's lifetime and in the three centuries that followed; nor is it in our times. It has been called a bleak tragedy, or a monodrama. In *Coriolanus* […] there is only historical chronicle, dry as a bone, though violently dramatized. There is also a monumental hero, who can rouse all sorts of emotions, but never sympathy (1983:141).

Shakespeare's play begins with a scene of agitation and rebellion amongst the citizens. Meninius' parable of the "the Belly" is a masterpiece of sophistry defending Patrician entitlement and establishing the modes of political rhetoric through which governance is implemented.[151] Caius Martius enters and it is clear that he comes directly from a confrontation with a different protesting body in another part of the city. His terse statement – "They are dissolved. Hang 'em" (1995: I.i) – hints at his assuming an unquestioned right to employ physical force as a measure of civic control. Privilege, achievement and entitlement define this Roman. From the start it is clear that the play is a study of the individual in relation to the collective and indices of class are central to defining positions and perceptions. The hero acquires added distinction, unequivocally and rousingly pronounced by Cominius: "From this time, For what he did before Corioles, call him/ With all th'applause and clamour of the host, Caius Martius Coriolanus" (I.ix.61-64). The reward for distinctive valour raises his stature by the end of the first act. In contrast, the citizens, lacking individual names, wretched and starving to the point of instigating a full scale rebellion, are subject to his barrage of pejoratives. But they too are promoted in political agency within the same act: they gain representation in the figures of the two tribunes.

At the outset Coriolanus is declared "chief enemy to the people" (1995:I.i.8). This is rapidly followed, some twenty lines later, with the assertion that "he pays himself with being proud"

[150] Kott writes: "Coriolanus could not please either classicist or romanticists. To the first it seemed incoherent, vulgar and brutal; to the latter it was too bitter, flat and dry" (1983:142).

[151] Gunther Grass suggests that Sir Walter Raleigh is a plausible model for Coriolanus: "Raleigh controlled the wine monopoly; Coriolanus controlled all the grain ships coming from Sicily. While in Rome the enemy of the people prevented captured grain stores from being distributed amongst the indignant, in London the naval hero bitterly opposed a bill before Parliament which provided for the sale of cheap wine. Both heroes forfeited the favour of the people when […they] tried, the one in the grain the other in the wine market, to fix prices, that is to keep them high" (1966:11).

(1995:I.i.31). Brecht's study interrogates the extent to which the play may be considered "the tragedy of pride," and seeks out opposing impulses: "as there's so much question of his pride, let's try to find out where he displays modesty" (Willet 1993:264).[152] He, like Kott, consistently emphasizes the "contradictions" around which the play is structured: "great and small conflicts all thrown on the scene at once: the unrest of the starving plebeians plus the war against their neighbours the Volscians; the plebeian's hatred for Marcius, the people's enemy – plus his patriotism; the creation of the post of People's Tribune – plus Marcius' appointment to leading role in the wars" (1993:255).[153] Of Coriolanus himself, Brecht states: "His switch from being the most Roman of Romans to becoming their deadliest enemy is due precisely to the fact that he stays the same" (1993:264).

Coriolanus consistently invokes constancy as an ideal.[154] Despite being called upon to acquit himself in diverse public roles, he resists the need to adapt according to socially defined expectations. Constancy is his code of honour and a mechanism of survival within a spatio-temporal world.[155] Hibbard identifies this as consistent with the timbre of the verse:

> The verse matches the action. Austere, rugged and often harsh, it is a perfect vehicle for the tirades, the exhortations, the eulogies and the accusations with which the play is filled. Almost devoid of lyricism, the poetry of *Coriolanus* has a hard, stony or metallic timbre that is peculiarly its own, as T.S. Eliot recognized when he began his poem 'Coriolan" with the words:
>
> "*Stone,bronze, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels*
> *Over the paving" (*1995:7).

This is the dominant chord of the tone-poem establishing the "world" of the play. This ruthlessly secular and material world is nonetheless a world through which butterflies flit. Their fragility and delicacy makes them sport for willful young boys, as in Valeria's account of her young son at play .[156] Young Martius' presence dramatizes the process of nurture and acculturation as powerful determinants of identity. Volumnia, far from admonishing the aggressive destructive impulses of her young grandson, endorses his action. As Kott puts it, "Cruelty is part of the leader's schooling. Coriolanus' son is the grandson of a Spartan mother" (1983:158). Cominius invokes the same boy's game in describing the confident Volscian army, led by Coriolanus

> They follow him
> Against us brats with no less confidence
> Than boys pursuing summer butterflies (IV. vi. 93 – 95).

The butterfly is the hapless target and victim of a superior strength against which it can only flutter and flail before being destroyed. The fragility of the butterfly is intertwined with potent symbolism

[152] He continues: "following Stanislavsky's example, who asked the man playing the miser to show him the point at which he was generous" (Willett 1993:264).
[153] I note that the spelling of the name is rendered as "Marcius" not "Martius" as per the New Penguin Shakespeare edition.
[154] He is like Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: "I am constant as the northern star" (III.i.60).
[155] Huizinga contrasts Roman culture with the Hellenic world. "Roman society seems, at first sight, to have far fewer play-characteristics than the Greek. The essence of Latin antiquity can be summed up by qualities like sobriety, probity, austerity, practical thinking of an economic and juristic order, feeble imagination and tasteless superstition. [...] Rome grew to a World Empire and a World Emporium. [...] Its culture was fed on the overflow of a dozen other cultures" (1955:174).
[156] "I saw him run after a gilded butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again, and after it again, and over and over he comes and up again, catched it again; or whether his fall enraged him or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it" (III. Vi. 1–6).

of transformation: Menenius defines the butterfly in terms of its life cycle: "There is a difference between a grub and a butterfly, yet your butterfly was a grub" (V. iv. 11). The motif encapsulates the core tensions in the play: metamorphosis is integral to identity formation and development, as opposed to the dedication to constancy that Coriolanus himself upholds so vehemently. Critical commentary hones in on Coriolanus' pride, his sense of honour, entitlement and self-sufficiency, to which might be added, his repeated pronouncements of fixity, "constancy" and resistance to transformation.

Another keyword for Coriolanus is his isolation: the word "alone"[157] resonates throughout the play – he enters the gates of Corioles alone, he is alone in exile in Antium – and at the moments of greatest poetic intensity, again the word "alone" recurs. Other Shakespearean protagonists are represented through close relationships with a confidant – Hamlet/Horatio, Macbeth/ Banquo, Lear/Kent, Othello/Iago, Anthony/Enobarbus, Romeo/Mercutio – but Coriolanus is a notable exception. Family ties and associations with his much older mentors, Meninius and Cominius, are all that we witness. Coriolanus is, for the most part, consistently and dramatically alone, serving to sharpen the contrast between him as 'one' and the citizens as 'many'.

Hughes-Hallett writes: "The Spaniards called Drake 'El Draque', the dragon, a simple pun that vividly conveys the role he came to play in their collective imagination." (2004:247) The symbolism of the dragon – a hybrid creature of myth and history – is the antithesis to the butterfly. Meninius "mixes metaphors" and invokes a monstrous creature: "This Martius is grown from man to dragon. He has wings, he's more than a creeping thing" (V. iv. 12). The dragon has already been introduced much earlier in the play, by Coriolanus himself in taking leave of his mother and wife: " though I go alone/ Like to a lonely dragon that his fen/Makes feared and talked of more than seen" (IV.i.35 37). In Hibbard's view this is "an image that condenses pride and self-sufficiency, on the one hand, and a devastating sense of isolation and desolation on the other" (1995:42). Analysing the analogy through the referential terms of Shakespeare's world is rewarding. Hughes-Hallett writes:

> A dragon is a *solitary predator*, the enemy of all settlements and civil communities. To Drake's contemporaries dragons were or had quite recently been real. One was sighted in Suffolk in 1405, 'vast in body with a crested beak, teeth like a saw and tail extending to an enormous length'. It slunk back off into the marshes from which it had come after devouring 'very many sheep'. Dragons represented the wild: they emerged from horrid mires or sinister caves or dark mysterious forests. They were the embodiments of *disorder and bestial*, untamed energy (2004: 247, my emphases).

The dragon references suggest firstly that Drake – the Elizabethan "hero" and rebel – haunts the play.[158] Secondly, the real tension at the heart of the play lies in the inter-actions between the lone individual and the collective. The play may be interpreted as a means of teasing out the Aristotelian

[157] Hibbard links this to Coriolanus' discomfort with words: "Coriolanus' vulnerability to words is connected with his failure as a human being. He cannot converse with other men, for conversation implies reciprocity, and there can be no reciprocity for one who refuses to admit his relationship with others" (1995: 33).

[158] This is all the more plausible if one allows for the probability that Shakespeare, the man of theatre, wrote in response to what was topical or might excite the audience of his time. Hughes-Halett records that Lope de Vega's epic poem *La Dragontea* was published in 1598, some ten years after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in which Drake had acquired the reputation for being the primary danger to Spain, and some ten years before Coriolanus was first performed (1608). "In it Drake is a damned monster as magnificent as he is wicked. He is great-hearted and all but invincible and the poem climaxes with a coruscatingly brilliant picture of him in his dragonish form; black and green and glittering, his eyes shining like the dawn [...] In Hispanic legend Drake was to remain for centuries the marauding dragon" (2004 : 318).

principle:[159] "He that is incapable of living in society is a god or a beast" (*Politics I.*2 as cited in Hibbard 1995:32). The dragon metaphor invokes bestiality or an extreme inhumanity that effectively "ex-communicates" Coriolanus.

But on more than one occasion he is also accorded the status of something like a god. The tumultuous reception honouring his triumphant entry to Rome in which "All tongues speak of him..." (II.i.197) is an example. The consul, Brutus, openly hostile to Coriolanus, speaks of the effects of visible heroic presence on the populace and concludes by nonetheless acknowledging the unassailable superman who, it seems, is more than mortal: "As if whatsoever god who leads him/ were slily crept into his human powers" (II.i.211 – 212). It is Brutus who challenges Coriolanus:

> You speak o'th'people
> As if you were a god to punish, not
> A man of their infirmity (III.i.80-82).

Cominius, the Roman General, under whom Coriolanus has served, in his report of Coriolanus' standing amongst the Volscians speaks in unreserved terms:

> He is their god. He leads them like a thing
> Made by some other deity than Nature,
> That shapes men better... (IV.vi.91-93).

This tribute to a man who is effectively a traitor is nothing short of astonishing. Coriolanus' position within the Antiate and Volscian circles seems charmed: the servants of Aufidius' household (in a scene as important as I.i.) have recognized that "He is simply the rarest man i' th' world" (IV.v.165). The long scene between nameless retainers reasserts Coriolanus' stature as singularly charismatic.

The presentation of self through interaction and encounter in the public domain as a means of establishing and confirming identity is central to the play. The action is structured around Coriolanus acquitting himself in a number of different roles and explores the tension generated by his varying ability to conform to the social requirements that these prescribe. Crudely put, the roles are successively "vanquishing warrior", "statesman elect" and "traitor/military hero". Coriolanus goes into battle under the command of Cominius, effectively second-in-command, and shows no sign of resisting or resenting this position. In the course of the two battles, however, he emerges as the supreme soldier, earning Cominius' tribute "Flower of warriors" (I.vi. 32) He not only storms and captures the city of Corioli single-handedly but, commissioned by his General, he leads the charge against Aufidius in the field, reversing Cominius' earlier judiciously ordered 'retirement'. This act of apparent insubordination is uncensored. The arc of this first movement establishes, beyond doubt, the degree to which Coriolanus exceeds all others as a warrior. Despite this, the act ends with distinct undertones of disquiet: the hero is unable to accept praise and honours graciously. His immediate response to his new title is a blunt announcement: "I will go wash: And when my face is fair you shall perceive/ Whether I blush or no" (I. ix. 67-69). The bluntness is barely excused by adherence to notions of modesty and Roman *virtus* and the obligation towards military excellence as a routine civic responsibility. Hibbard suggests that "the price of military efficiency [...] is a certain loss of humanity" (1995: 31). Coriolanus' stiff response to Cominius' eulogy, his inability for reciprocal expression endorsing the value of the honours he has just been granted is a foundation

[159] "'The man who is incapable of working in common, or who in his self-sufficiency has no need of others, is no part of the community', wrote Aristotle. Such a man is 'like an animal or a god' " (Hughes-Halett 2004:24).

for the resolute lack of concession to social expectation that he displays in the second movement of the play.

The national threat having been resolved, the action returns to the centre of unrest within Rome itself. Brecht draws on the writing of Mao Tse-Tung, in an essay "On Contradiction" (Willett 1987:261), to observe that "the contradiction between the plebeians and the patricians, the class struggle, has been put into cold storage by the emergence of the new contradiction, the national war against the Volscians. It hasn't disappeared though" (1987:262). The class struggle emerges once again as the "main contradiction" of the action. Hibbard describes it as follows:

> The second movement, extending from II.1 to IV.2, is the great central section of the play, the most searching piece of political drama that Shakespeare ever wrote. It takes place entirely in Rome, opening with Coriolanus' return to his native city in triumph and ending with his banishment from it with the hoots of the populace sounding in his ears... The two Tribunes, whose weapons are words and chicanery, turn out to be more formidable opponents than the Volsces were (1995:17).

Coriolanus' patriotism is tested in a different arena and according to different terms.[160] He now resists custom and the formal process that requires him to lower his status in symbolic ritual.[161] The process of election to public office entails having to don the "cloak of humility" in an open display in order to "beg" the votes of the citizens and is intrinsically theatrical. Coriolanus himself explicitly introduces the motif of 'playing a part' alien to his 'true self' with candid directness. In his view, having to appear in "this guise" is inconsistent with his customary disposition and he will not acquit himself honourably:

> It is a part
> That I shall blush in acting, and might well
> Be taken from the people (II. ii.142-144).

Mistrust of theatrical presentation and display gains momentum, as Hibbard observes:

> His way out of his dilemma is something of a subterfuge. He decides to save his honour by turning the election into a palpable farce. There will be no false pretences. He will ask the citizens for their votes in a manner that will make it abundantly clear that he despises them, and that he regards their 'voices' as so much 'stinking breath' (1995:35).

Coriolanus succeeds in securing the citizens' votes, but then the Tribunes intervene replaying and interrogating the interaction between the candidate and the people in order to expose his insults to the body public. The action erupts into the first direct confrontation between Coriolanus and the Tribunes and rapidly escalates to accusations of treason and the call for his arrest. Civic disorder and lack of unity, cohesion and consensus prevail. Coriolanus is persuaded by his mother to make amends, but (again) is politically out-manoeuvred by the Tribunes. In brokering some form of reconciliation Coriolanus is required to play a political game rather than conduct himself with unimpeachable integrity. He insists that he would do better to "play the man I am." (III .ii.15) but

[160] Plutarch clarifies the custom: "It was usual for those who stood for offices among them to solicit and address themselves personally to the citizens, presenting themselves in the forum with the toga on alone, and no tunic under it; either to promote their supplications by the humility of their dress, or that such as had received wounds might more readily display those marks of their fortitude. Certainly it was not out of suspicion of bribery and corruption that they required all such petitioners for their favour to appear ungirt and open, without any close garment; as it was much later, and many ages after this, that buying and selling crept in at their elections, and money became an ingredient in the public suffrages" (Plutarch 1932:271).

[161] I do beseech you/Let me o'erleap that custom, for I cannot/ Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them/ For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage. Please you/ That I may pass this doing" (II.ii.134–137).

filial duty makes him vulnerable to Volumnia's appeal to "perform a part" (III. ii.107). It is quite clear that he considers this a form of self-betrayal, a breach of his own ethical codes.[162] Cominius reminds him to temper his tone to "mildness" (III. ii.139-145) but the strategic minds of Brutus and Sicinius are pitted against any possibility of Coriolanus sustaining this resolution. The reprise accusation of treason is ironic: he is a traitor only because he has betrayed his personal ideals; the betrayal of his country and countrymen will follow.

His appearance in the fourth act is a dramatic and theatrical coup: we see him exiled, anonymous, in disguise and void of national allegiance, as the bleak exchange with the Third Serving man establishes:

> Third Servingman: Where dwell'st thou?
> Coriolanus: Under the canopy
> Third Servingman: Under the canopy?
> Coriolanus: Ay
> Third Serving man: Where's that?
> Coriolanus: I'th'city of kites and crows (IV. ii.39-43).

Physical displacement and dislocation is a profound metaphoric articulation of a psychic state. Unlike Lear abandoned to the elements on the heath, he seeks shelter at the hearth of his acknowledged enemy, and does so with strategic intent. The terse exchange verges on being a monosyllabic condensation of Lear's ramblings and is all the more striking in its brevity. Lear contemplates "unaccommodated man" rather than man as a national subject: Coriolanus' responses are those of an individual deprived of a sense of nationality, citizenship and kinship.

Kott divides the play into two sweeping movements which sharpens the dialectical tensions of the action and explicitly promotes a politicized interpretation. Summarizing the action of the first three acts Kott regards this as encapsulating the perspective of the body politic. He describes the opening arc as concerned with what he calls:

> …the first chapter of the Roman legend of Coriolanus. In it there is a Republican moral. A leader who despises the people, betrays the country and goes over to the enemy. An ambitious general aiming at dictatorial power is extremely dangerous for the republic. The people have been right to exile Coriolanus (1983:144).

As a leader, Coriolanus is held in high regard and feared by Volscians and Romans alike. He seems invincible. In the second part of the play we witness how Coriolanus re-establishes himself as a leader within a community to which he is not only a stranger but an enemy and Aufidius' mounting personal jealousy and hostility towards his new ally further underscores how potent a threat Coriolanus may be to Rome. For Kott, "The city that exiles its leader becomes defenceless. The people can only hate and bite, but are unable to defend their city" (1983:145). Power and authority remain invested within the single invincible figure of Coriolanus. Rome is weak and vulnerable to the threat that he now constitutes. The tension between the power of the collective and the individual is now concentrated on what the marginal outsider represents as a force against the collective. The political implications of these two disparate dimensions to the play circulate in the rhetoric of power and position, relations between individuals and groups. As Kott puts it:

[162] "Must I/ With my base tongue give to my noble heart/A lie that it must bear?" (III. ii.99–101).

> Eagles do not lower themselves to the levels of rats and crows. Coriolanus wants the world to recognize his greatness. But the world is divided into patricians and plebeians, Coriolanus' hierarchy of nature does not agree with the real world. Rats have no wish to consider themselves worse than eagles (1983:158).[163]

Playing the status conflicts of Shakespeare's text entails (as in *Julius Caesar)* tackling relations between status, class and politics. The prejudices underpinning the provocative and uncompromising insults and slurs in the dialogue are in sharp contrast to contemporary politically correct sensibilities. The play introduces asymmetrical relations and probes dominance (in the forms of both authority and prestige), prejudice and subjugation. This requires an appreciation of the reciprocal construction of status indices, as distinct from categories of class, as an indispensible tool in crafting performances or in interpretive analysis.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett's study, with its antecedent in Plutarch's lives, is premised on the view that patterns of prestige and social valorization are continually reproduced in historical and representational terms.[164] Visibility and physical presence are a means of ensuring and sustaining the status of dominance, a singularity of being endorsed by a collective, and is central to Hughes-Hallett's thesis regarding the hero.[165] This restates issues associated with "theatricality" in slightly different terms, namely "one man showing himself superior to an entire community" (2004:55).

**The soloist as 'hero' and antithesis to the 'victim': Charles Lindbergh and Njinsky's dancer.**

P. David Marshall, in his introduction to *The Celebrity Culture* Reader, puts the need to valorize individual achievements in these terms: "Our own selective tradition of personalities, our perpetual elevation of some individuals to be visually identified and hailed above others, has ensured some individuals a celebrated past and present" (2009: 8). Individuals are cultivated and celebrated in the popular press, advancing a particular kind of prominence or what Leo Braudy calls the "exaltation of the single man" (2009:35) in the public imagination. These manifestations are particularly clear early in the 20th century in European culture as modernism reproduced the principle of celebrating individuality in direct response to radically altered living conditions and in counterpoint to increasingly solipsistic and relativistic models and views of experience and identity. Hughes-Hallett attributes the emergence of popular celebrity culture to an ethos of relative prosperity:

> At the time of writing it is fashionable to lament the littleness of those accorded celebrity within our culture – so many footballers and rock stars and models, so few great spirits – but

[163] He concludes "The image of the world is flawed and lacks cohesion. Contradictions have not been resolved, and there is no common system of values for the *polis* and for the individual [...] in a nutshell the bitter drama of renaissance humanism; of any humanism, in fact" (Kott 1983:167).

[164] She writes: "There is an odd kind of perverted vanity that persuades people to imagine that some of our collective follies are brand new, peculiar to the age of mass media. Wrong. As the stories I have told here demonstrate, there is nothing new about the cult of personality, about the calculated manipulation of news for political ends, about the ways in which celebrity and sexual charisma can be translated into power, about the suggestibility of a populace who, in a time of fear or over-excited enthusiasm, can be tempted to hand over their political rights to a glorious Superman" (2004:14).

[165] She submits that "the belief that some people are innately different from and better than others pervades all pagan mythology and classical legend and surfaces as well in folk tales and fairy stories. The foundling whose white skin proclaims her noble birth, the favoured younger son who survives his ordeals assisted by birds and beasts who recognize his privileged status, the emperor-to-be whose birth is attended by tremendous omens – all spring, as Plato's men of gold do, from a profoundly anti-egalitarian collective belief in, and yearning for, the existence of a naturally occurring elite – exceptional beings capable of leading their subordinates to victory, averting evil and playing saviour, or simply providing by their prodigious feats a spectacle capable of exhilarating and inspiring the humdrum multitude" (2004:44).

> such collective frivolity should be cherished as one of the privileges of peace. It is desperation that prompts people to crave a champion, a protector, or a redeemer and, having identified one, to offer him their worship (2004:2).

Her study hones in on the extent to which corporeal presence in the form of a continuous demonstration of singularity and superiority is crucial to sustaining the momentum of celebrity or charismatic status. She invokes the vacillating career of Alcibiades (one of the two "most sought-after young men" in 5 BCE Athens) as an instance of sustained prestige.[166] Periods of exile, or invisibility, seem to have enhanced all that he represented:

> In a society whose watchword was 'Moderation in all things' (Alcibiades) was a fascinatingly transgressive figure, an embodiment of riskiness, of exuberance, of latent power. 'The fact was', writes Plutarch, 'that his voluntary donations, the public shows he supported, his unrivalled munificence to the state, the fame of his ancestry, the power of his oratory and his physical strength and beauty, together with his experience and prowess in wars, all combined to make the Athenians forgive him everything else (2004:53).

The multiple ways in which Alcibiades 'displayed' his value to the community are a consistent demonstration of singularity. An even more astonishing account of the interplay between visible presence and absence from public life is relayed in the revisions of the life and death of 11th century war lord, el Cid (Roderigo Díaz).[167] Hughes-Hallett cites the 1961 Anthony Mann film as a representation of what has been recorded:

> The Cid is killed fighting but his grieving wife and followers, knowing that without the inspiration his presence provides their armies will never succeed in beating off the hordes of the enemy, keep his death secret. His corpse is dressed and armed and strapped upright in the saddle of his great white charger. The trusty horse gallops out at the head of the Cid's army. Believing that their great leader is still with them, his men win a marvellous victory before the horse, with its lifeless but still invincible burden, disappears over the horizon (2004:11).[168]

The modernist anti-hero, the quintessential modern subject, is the antithesis of the publically prominent hero, and may be defined as the invisible (and perhaps unsung) individual whose single action challenges the prevalence of alienation and anonymity. In *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age,* the cultural and military historian Modris Eksteins records the adulatory reception of the aviator Charles Lindbergh in Paris, Brussels and London as a living instance of mass desire for a hero as a corrective to the prevailing nihilism in the aftermath of World

[166] Plutarch, in his comparative analysis in his *Lives*, juxtaposes Alcibiades with Coriolanus. Like Alcibiades, Coriolanus' career can be mapped in terms of his presence in Rome and his exile from this community.

[167] "A hero's appearance is sometimes all that is required of him....Indeed it isn't necessary that he actually be present: it is enough that he should be so apparently. Achilles sent Patroclus out to fight disguised in his armour, knowing that the mere simulacrum of himself would be terrifying enough to send the Trojans hurtling back towards their walls" (Hughes-Halett 2004:11).

[168] "The story is made up on purpose for the film," she adds. "There is no medieval legend, let alone chronicle, in which it appears in that form, but the thinking behind it is sound" (2004:11). She substantiates this view: "Roderigo's body was taken back to Castille and buried at the monastery of Cardeña. There it spawned stories...pious legends...embalmed *pre mortem,* he died. Following his directions, Jimena and his lieutenants kept his death secret [...] They strapped the Cid's embalmed body, dressed as though for battle in full armour, helmet and boots, upright in the saddle of his marvelous horse Babieca. His eyes were open, as though in life Escorted by Jimena and a troop of a hundred knights, the dead Cid made his last ride back to Castile, the country from which he was three times exiled but which claimed him, once he was no longer alive to assert his independence, as its national hero" (2004:220).

War I. For Eksteins the task of the analyst is not simply to study the event, or the text, but to assess its impact and value through its public reception. He argues:

> Cultural history must at least try to capture the spirit of an age. That spirit is to be located in a society's sense of priorities. Ballet, film, and literature, cars and crosses, can provide important evidence of these priorities, but the latter will be found most amply in the social response to these symbols. In modern society, as this book will argue, the audience for the arts, as for hobbits and heroes, is for the historian an even more important source of evidence for cultural identity than the literary documents, artistic artefacts, or heroes themselves. The history of modern culture ought then to be as much of a history of response as of challenge (1990:17).

Accordingly his focus is not so much on a formalist and aesthetic analysis of *Rites of Spring* (Stravinsky/Njinsky) as on the phenomenon of the opening performance in Paris on 29 May 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées with its conflicting reports; on diarized accounts and letters describing surreal experiences in the trenches rather than formal records of troop movements;[169] on the sales and response to Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (January 1929) rather than on a detailed analysis of its content;[170] and, startlingly, and at some length, on the repercussions of Lindbergh's safe landing at Le Bourget at 10.20pm Saturday, 21 May 1927 (1990:327).

Conveying the mounting excitement and anticipation of Lindbergh's triumphant end to his trans-Atlantic flight, Eksteins' writing traverses a wealth of disparate perspectives to contextualize the delirious response to Lindbergh in order to account for what it may have represented, and why. Lindberg was an "overnight sensation" who was "fêted like no one else in history, not kings or queens, statesmen or churchmen. Overnight he became the most famous man ever" (1990:329).[171] The tumultuous reaction to Lindbergh's achievements was manifested in a variety of phenomena:

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[169] Eksteins records: "Between 1920 and 1923 British shipments of headstones to France reached four thousand a week. On November 1920, the Unknown Soldier was borne from France and buried at Westminster Abbey, and within two days 100,000 wreaths had been laid on the Cenotaph at Whitehall. [...] This disequilibrium between the experience of the war and the subsequent response to it meant that the war, in its most important sense, as a social, political, and, foremost existential problem, was relegated to the realm of the unconscious, or more precisely, to that of the consciously repressed" (1990 : 343). The scale of losses experienced in "the war to end all wars" was amplified by the erosion of heroic ideals and a mode of warfare by attrition. The staggering loss of life on the Western Front is a salutary indication of the extent to which the value of an individual was reduced to meaninglessness. The atrocity of trench warfare is most expressly articulated in the lyrics of the song on which Joan Littlewood's *Oh What a Lovely War!* which stoically concludes:

> And when they ask us, how dangerous it was,
> Oh, we'll never tell them, no we'll never tell them:
> We spent our pay in some café
> And fought wild women night and day,
> 'Twas the cushiest job we ever had.
>
> And when they ask us, and they're certainly going to ask us,
> The reason why we didn't win the Croix de Guerre,
> Oh, we'll never tell them, oh, we'll never tell them
> There was a front, but damned if we knew where (First performed 1963) (1992:107).

[170] "Within three weeks 200,000 copies were sold. [...] By early May 640,000 copies had been sold in Germany. English and French translations were hastily prepared [...] By the end of the year sales neared a million in Germany, and another million in Britain, France, and the United States, together" (1990:369).

[171] He was probably the first celebrity icon of the 20th century. "He was literally worshipped and adored. People sought relics from his person and his plane as if he were some new god. He was revered more openly in 1927 than were the American astronauts who walked on the moon in 1969. His sudden and fabulous fame, overnight, has not been matched" (1990:333).

the size of the crowds that caused Parisian traffic to come to a complete standstill at multiple junctures; the pandemonium and mob frenzy that resulted in at least ten persons hospitalized in Paris and again in Croyden. The public 'participation' in Lindbergh's achievements corresponded to the hyperbolic statements made by representatives of officialdom and the media.[172] Lindbergh was the first American to be awarded the Légion d'honneur (1990:330). Formal acknowledgements corresponded to eloquent gestures in the popular domain – "they named drinks after him" – all of which suggest a staggering response somewhat in excess of the stimulus.[173] As Eksteins makes clear, this was not the first trans-Atlantic flight and the 25 year old pilot from Little Falls, Minnesota boasted no greater credentials than being an "airmail pilot and reserve captain in the American air force."[174] Crucially, the charisma and glamour attached so readily to this "youthful adventurer" was, he asserts, not a creation of the press. Although this may well have been construed as the "biggest news story since the war", Eksteins demonstrates that the "press followed the excitement rather than created it" (1990:129-336),suggesting that Lindbergh might serve as an example of a figure who elicits voluntary respect rather than being the kind of figure whose stature is institutionally or objectively bestowed.

In response to the unanticipated acclaim and rhetoric the air ace remained entirely modest and diplomatically circumspect throughout a series of formal receptions.[175] Lindbergh did not court adulation and this is apparent from the outset: at Le Bourget, shortly after landing, Lindbergh was disguised in uniform and decoys were substituted to distract the crowd from his person. But what had been conceived of as a personal quest became a fully public, bureaucratically controlled enterprise, as the statement from *L'Humanité* suggests: "LINDBERGH, VICTIM OF OFFICIALS, THE EAGLE DEVOURED BY DWARFS...." (1990:353).[176]

In his analysis of the phenomenon of the Lindbergh flight, the cultural historian probes ways of accounting for what appears to be a re-appearance of a "Homeric individual" (1990:339) – the classic hero. The facts of Lindbergh's flight are saliently summarized. The mission was accomplished:

> Despite all odds. Alone. Completely alone. From the New World to the Old. From Roosevelt Field in New York to Le Bourget in Paris. He had left behind even the grey kitten, Patsy, which some reports claimed he was taking with him [....] He had no special instruments on the plane, not even a radio, only a magnetic compass (1990:328).

In so far as Eksteins' overarching project is to articulate the *Zeitgeist* and turbulent aesthetic impulses of the modern age, he consistently juxtaposes reactionary, Establishment impulses and values with those that boldly embrace change, the future and the machine. With regard to the morale of troopers in the trenches, he suggests a polarization of positions with the German

[172] These include proclamations exalting Lindberg as "the greatest individual achievement in the history of the world"– Mackenzie King, Canadian Prime Minister (1990:352); "the most audacious act ever seen in all the centuries" – General Girod, French Chamber of Deputies (1990:353).

[173] "Two Parisian restaurants offered to feed him and a tailor proposed to dress him gratis for the rest of his life" (1990:330).

[174] "His feat of course cannot be denied. Others had flown the Atlantic before him several times since John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown first made the northern crossing from Newfoundland to Ireland in June 1919. But no-one had ever tried to make the crossing alone, and without a radio" (1990:333).

[175] "Lindbergh rejected all the monetary and material rewards and temptations that were dangled before him: not only clothes, meals, but houses and enormous sums of money offered for appearances in film, on stage, on radio, or in advertisements....The conservative world adored him for his restraint" (1990:337).

[176] The rhetorical devices manipulated here play across several matrices, conflating the individual at the mercy of officialdom with its obverse, the freedom of the lone "champion of the skies."

disposition tending towards embracing all that modernity represented,[177] while the Allied position, and particularly the British sensibility, tended towards nostalgia for the past and traditional values. Lindbergh, in himself and through his actions, could appeal to both constituencies – he could "satisfy two worlds, one in the throes of decline and the other in the process of emergence" (1990:336). His actions restored and affirmed a sense of the value and glory of personal feats, continuous with past ideals irrefutably brought into question by the carnage of the battlefields.[178] Simultaneously, his flight epitomized the capacity of the future:

> Man and machine had become one in an act of daring. The purpose was immaterial. The act was everything. It almost captured Gide's prewar vision of an *acte gratuit,* a perfectly free act, devoid of meaning other than its own inherent energy and accomplishment... He flew for no-one, not even for mankind. He flew for himself. That was the greatest audacity....He was not the creation of an old world; he was a harbinger of a new dawn (1990:338).

Indeed, Eksteins posits that the twenties was a decade in which "the meaning lay in life itself, in the act of living, in the vitality of the moment" (1990:344). The symbolism of Lindbergh's flight is readily understandable.

> The key to Lindbergh was that his goal was 'in himself'. Paris lay in his own mind, the mind of a happy youngster... The theme in all this commentary and reaction is that of a revival of the imagination ...in the midst of a ruined civilization, of a revival of individual will and spirit. That alone would lift Europe out of its pessimism and doldrums [...] Yet the tone throughout is one of regret rather than hope. Individualism has lost its social dimension; truth is not to be found in social reality but in the individual imagination, in Dionysian energy and will (1990:358).

Eksteins' explanation for the ways in which Lindbergh's action impacted on the public does not rest on this observation: he systematically contextualizes and examines the data he has collated. The curious silence surrounding the unprecedented slaughter of the battlefields established the context that imbued meaning to Lindbergh's action. This leads Eksteins to speculate that "Although he had not participated in it, the war gave Lindbergh's accomplishment its extraordinary dimensions" (1990:352).[179] Lindbergh's itinerary invites such analysis. In Paris, Brussels and London the spontaneously generated ritual of a ceremonial tribute to the millions of war victims was symbolically enacted in a wreath laying commemoration – visiting the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, at the Arc de Triomphe, in Paris, in the Belgian capital and again at Westminster Abbey. "At the Arc de Triomphe [...] Lindbergh got out and placed flowers at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Thus his first official act in Paris, at one o'clock in the morning was to pay homage to the dead of the war"

[177] America symbolized all that was new at the end of the War and through the decade to follow. "The Lindbergh episode revealed that the pre-war form of modernism, with its positive urge, had shifted to America," writes Eksteins, by way of a preamble to a richly suggestive account of "America's unrestrained energy. That energy – so obvious in the cultural artifacts, forms and personalities that America exported, whether they were Hollywood's epics or slapstick comedies; ragtime, jazz, or the Charleston; bobbed, cigarette-smoking, gin-swilling flappers, exotic sensualists like Josephine Baker; or hard-living expatriates like Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald – that unrelenting and unrepentant energy was unavoidable" (1990:359).

[178] Eksteins explains his appeal to "the old world" "of decorum, of positive accomplishment, of grace. It was a world that had room and ready recognition for individual achievement based on effort, preparation, courage, staying power. It was a world in which man used the machine and technology to conquer nature, in which means were subordinate to ends" (1990:336).

[179] "Millions of war dead surrounded Lindbergh during his visit to Europe, contemporary death, especially the high fatality rate among flyers, also surrounded him" (Eksteins 1990:353).

(1990:351). The juxtaposition of "hero" and "victim", the former a vivid epitome of living singularity, the other an anonymous, silent representative of a multitude, is powerfully invoked.

The symbolism attached to the dimensions and domain of Lindbergh's flight does not escape the analyst's scrutiny: individual achievement is conceptually and rhetorically tied to positions of privilege articulated in terms of freedom and autonomy.

> The air ace was the object of limitless envy among infantry, mired in mud and seeming helplessness. Soldiers looked up from their trenches and saw in the air a purity of combat that the ground war had lost. The 'knights of the sky' were engaged in a conflict in which individual effort still counted, romantic notions of honor, glory, heroes, and chivalry were still intact. In the air war still had meaning. Flyers were the 'aristocracy of war' – the 'resurrection of our personality,[180] as one writer put it (1990:355).

Self-realisation in individual and social terms is inscribed in terms of a 'position above' with all its associations of freedom and supposed autonomy, both literal and imagined.

The discourse of a lost generation is structured around tropes of anonymity and invisibility: the figure of the victim haunts Eksteins' account of Lindbergh's experience as thoroughly as it is inscribed in the accounts of the Western Front in fiction and in autobiographical analysis.[181] Sceptical responses to Remarque's book hone in on the veracity and credibility of his testimony to trench experiences.[182] Paul Bäumer and his peers "are ripped apart at the front, not only by enemy fire but also by a growing sense of futility. The war is transformed from a cause into an inexorable insatiable Moloch. The soldiers have no escape from the routinized slaughter: they are condemned men. They die screaming but unheard, they die resigned but in vain. The world beyond the guns does not know them; it cannot know them" (1990:376). In *Testament of Youth* (1933), Vera Brittain, on duty as a nurse at the front, adopts all that is implied in "victim identity":

> Another badly wounded boy – a Prussian lieutenant who was being transferred to England – held out an emaciated hand to me as he lay on the stretcher waiting to go, and murmured: 'I tank (sic) you, Sister.' After barely a second's hesitation I took the pale fingers in mine, thinking how ridiculous it was that I should be holding this man's hand in friendship when perhaps, only a week or two earlier, Edward up at Ypres had been doing his best to kill him. The world was mad and we were all victims; that was the only way to look at it. These shattered, dying boys and I were paying alike (1993:376).

According to Chambers, a victim is: "*a living being offered as a sacrifice*; one subjected to death, suffering or ill-treatment: a prey: a sufferer." (Chambers English Dictionary, my emphasis) It suggests, in the strongest way possible, a sentient body, subjected to both physical violation and

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[180] This is linked with the tensions between the reactionary and futuristic dualities straining contemporary sensibilities: "The most significant technological achievement of the modern world was thus also seen as a means of affirming traditional values" (1990:355).

[181] Eksteins posits: "Historians have failed to find explanations to the war that correspond to the horrendous realities, to the actual experiences of the war...Imaginative, not historical, literature it was that sparked the intense reconsideration of the meaning of the war" (1990:388). Of *All Quiet on the Western Front* he writes: "The simplicity and power of the theme – war as a demeaning and wholly destructive, indeed nihilistic, force – are made starkly effective by a style that is basic, even brutal. Brief scenes and short crisp sentences, in the first person and in the present tense, create an inescapable and gripping immediacy. There is no delicacy. The language is frequently rough, the images often gruesome" (1990:376).

[182] Eksteins interprets the text as "a comment on the postwar mind, on the postwar view of the war, (rather) than an attempt to reconstruct the reality of the trench experience" (1990:377). Remarque writes: "This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure. […] It will try simply to tell of a generation of men, who even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war" (1990:375).

suffering at the level of consciousness as a direct consequence of a particular identity and position within a collective.

The status of sacrificial "object" locates the role and identity of a "victim" as an antithesis of the hero. Stravinsky's original title for *Le Sacre du Printemps* was, as Eksteins records, *The Victim.* He cites the composer's notes: "I had dreamed a scene of pure pagan ritual in which a chosen sacrificial virgin dances herself to death" (1990:70). For Eksteins, it is this motif of death that is symbolic of the century to follow in conjunction with the view that the "century is one in which life and art have blended, in which existence has become aestheticized" (1990:19).[183] His survey of the relations between Modernism and World War I is introduced through the analysis of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and its reception, which he regards as central to its meaning. In his view, the premiere of the work with its core theme of "deliverance and regeneration" (1990:58) serves as the "landmark of the century". He observes that commentaries and writing about *Le Sacre* converge on "the event rather than the art" because "the response of the audience was and is as important to the meaning of this art as the intentions of those who introduced it" (1990:39). This corresponds with what Robert Hughes claims for Picasso's painting of six years earlier, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) which "turns (the) viewer into voyeur" by "putting the viewer in the client's sofa (1991:24).[184] The impact of *Le Sacre* lies in its potential affective capacity. Conflicting accounts regarding details of the performance and the mayhem in the auditorium are lodged in press reports and memoirs (1990:38) including the writing of Carl Van Vechten[185] who describes "(the chosen maiden) executing her strange dance of religious hysteria on a stage dimmed by the blazing light in the auditorium seemingly to the accompaniment of the disjointed ravings of a mob of angry men and women" (1990:36). The focal point – the moment of sacrifice – is partially diminished by strategic use of lighting which accentuates the auditorium and the collective presence of the recipients of the work. Conventionally 'non-participatory', this body acquires prominence through responses to the presentation and as the site of making meaning.

Eksteins identifies ways in which Stravinsky/Diaghilev/Njinsky/Roerich (the designer) collaborated in creating a text that might be deemed truly representative of the "modernist revolt" in its underpinnings, style and motifs (1990: 86).[186] These he defines as an "overt hostility to inherited form; the fascination with primitivism and indeed with anything that contradict the notion of civilization; the emphasis on vitalism as opposed to rationalism; the perception of existence as continuous flux and a series of relations, not as constants and absolutes; the psychological

[183] He continues: "History, as one theme of this study will try to show, has surrendered much of its former authority to fiction. In our post-modernist age a compromise may, however, be possible and necessary" (1990:19).

[184] "With its hacked contours, staring interrogatory eyes, and general feeling of instability, *Les Demoiselles* is still a disturbing painting after three quarters of a century, a refutation of the idea that the surprise of art, like the surprise of fashion must necessarily wear off. No painting ever looked more convulsive. None signaled a faster change in the history of art. Yet it was anchored in tradition, and its attack on the eye would never have been so startling if its format had not been that of the classical nude...whatever else these five women may be," writes Robert Hughes, "they are not victims or clowns" (Hughes 1991:21). The subjects are prostitutes displaying themselves for the client's selection. "Picasso did not name the painting himself, and he never liked its final title. He wanted to call it *The Avignon Brothel*" (Hughes 1991:24).

[185] Eksteins suggests that Van Vechten's testimony is of questionable integrity as it explicitly conflicts with other eye-witness accounts. The conflicting testimonies of the performance prohibit any stable account of what occurred.

[186] Eksteins cites "Jaques Rivière, the most astute of contemporary commentators" as interpreting the performance from an unfamiliar perspective, that of "spring seen from the inside, with its violence, its spasms, and its fissions. We seem to be watching a drama through a microscope" (1990:86). The ballet, musically and choreographically, consistently confounds expectations of the gentle lyrical promise of renewal, with the resurgence of growth.

introspection accompanying the rebellion against social convention"(1990: 86). Valorizing subjective experience and its expression is the dominant manifestation of the Janus-faced trajectories of Modernism in the West.[187] It is one in which an "anarchistic and libertarian impulse, which is eminently political, is central to the modern revolt" (1990: 75). Citing D.H.Lawrence's "Kangaroo", suggesting that this is "openly political if "we see politics as more than the formal structures of social discourse and regard it as a mediation on relations between individual and group interests" " (1990: 75), Eksteins foregrounds the vital roles of witnesses who observe and audit this experience:

> Freedom had meaning only in relation to the audience. Anna's dance could have no meaning without her husband. And so, paradoxically, the negated audience was central to the art. The *act-gratuit* became a will-o'-the-wisp, and the individualistic moment became also a supremely social and hence political moment (1990:75).

This chapter has focused on the individual, as subject and as performer, along with the position from which the contestive actions are witnessed and audited in the interests of demonstrating diverse matrices and modes of agonistic encounters. The impulse to dominate over another or others as a guarantor of being exceptional or unique sharpens asymmetries between individuals which, even as it defines the territory for accruing symbolic capital, does so at the expense of generating collaboration or goodwill between participants as the narratives of Arachne and Coriolanus in very different ways both demonstrate. In both cases, the presence of spectators and a collective who may not be directly implicated within the contest itself is central to shaping and articulating the status of both individuals. These bystanders take on an even more crucial role in promoting the status of an individual whose achievements are ostensibly independent of any direct inter-play against a recognizable antagonist, as in the instance of Lindbergh. In all three cases transformation is predicated on being prepared to risk multiple challenges in the interests of enhanced reputation and status markers are seen to be provisional and fluctuating through the course of the narrative. It is these fluctuations that construct the tension and compel the interest of the reader or viewer. As disturbing or even distasteful as the display of overt dominance may be, as in the case of Coriolanus' highly provocative insults, these provide a potent point of confrontation which launches dramatic action, compels disputation and generates the capacity to affect an audience.[188]

[187] "Diaghilev was of course merely a part, though an immensely significant one, of a much broader cultural and intellectual trend, a revolt against rationalism and a corresponding affirmation of life and experience that gained strength from the 1980's on. The romantic rebellion, which with its distrust of mechanistic systems, extended back over a century, coincided at the *fin de siècle* Henri Bergson developed his idea of 'creative evolution', which rejected the notion of objective knowledge: the only reality is the *élan vital*, the life force" (Eksteins 1990:60).

[188] The contemporary phenomenon of a 'celebrity culture' is predicated on generating a similarly receptive public, as Marshall suggests: "As celebrities perform individuality in their various guises, they are expressions of hyper-versions of possible transformations that anyone in consumer culture could achieve" (Marshall 2009:13).

Chapter 4: **Status dynamics within the collective: the crowd and the chorus.**

"Man is a species-being [Gattungswesen] not only in that he practically and theoretically makes his own species as well as that of other things his object, but also – and this is only another expression for the same thing – in that as present and living species he considers himself to be a universal and consequently free being....
Productive life [...] is species-life. It is life begetting life. In the mode of life activity lies the entire character of a species, its species-character; and free conscious activity is the species-character of man."

Karl Marx: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* [1844] (1997:293)

"...the self in postcolonialism is both multiply connected and multiply alienated.[...] Perhaps one way of understanding the relationship between the individual and society in African postcolonialism is to turn to music, jazz in particular. In jazz, the individual is both within and apart from the group simultaneously; the individual relies upon the group for the ensemble, the group relies on the individual for innovation. In this way improvisation and identity cannot be separated from group dynamics."

Gerald Gaylard: *After Colonialism* (2005:54)

Any study of group dynamics takes on a dual focus, directed towards equitable relations on the one hand, and on the other, issues regarding the ways power distinguishes and separates individuals from one another. Improvisation training is anchored in these same challenges and engages with the dualities inherent in advancing potentially equitable relations between participants through building consensus and co-operation and, at the same time, serving the needs and desires of the individual. Fostering an ensemble-based approach to performance is at odds, perhaps, with serving assertive drives and the determination to secure prominence within a group. According to Chambers, the term *ensemble* denotes "all parts of a thing taken together; the union of performers in a concerted number". This suggests something in excess of teamwork, more like a coalition. The more complex aspect of the definition of ensemble lies in the implication that the component parts are synthesized into a whole, and that this whole is "greater than the sum of its parts". This process *seems* to require that individuality may effectively disappear within the ensemble. The extent to which this is possible, and even desirable, along with identifying some strategies that facilitate the process of forging an ensemble constitutes the focus of this chapter. An eclectic range of observations, arguments and analyses will, through their juxtaposition, strive to parallel the pedagogical project of ensemble training through improvisation. I propose a definition of an ensemble, as an egalitarian and democratic collective, is a performing unit typified by equitable status relations voluntarily engendered between members of a group. The capacity to minimize status differences will be seen to serve as a cohesive mechanism in which reciprocal respect, trust and goodwill constitute the bedrock of co-operation and collaborative creative interplay.

Improvisation classes quickly reveal the preferred tendencies of individual students who divide into roughly two groups: those who actively seek opportunities to initiate action, caught in the compulsion to lead,[189] associating this with agency and dominance, and those who avoid making offers, their preferred mode of interaction being response to the initiatives of others. Crudely interpreted, this signals disparate dispositions towards prominence within the ensemble and relinquishing a measure of active participation. These inter-personal undercurrents require careful negotiation. Confident performers, assured of their personal value and technical competencies, willingly embrace a supporting role, and are undaunted by playing low status in recognition that this is a demonstration of capacity rather than the lack thereof. Less assured improvisers and those less sensitive to group dynamics persist in attaching notions of technical competency to the role of the leader and individual prominence. The compulsion to remain assertive is difficult to dismantle even when games playing low status encounters are introduced. The capacity for play on the part of a thoroughly encultured adult cannot, however, simply be taken for granted, as Henricks cautions: "To play with others is to enter a realm of interconnection that is much more complicated than the play of individuals with the material world" (2006:9).

[189] Lecoq's account of two potential chorus leaders emerging in an improvisation reveals how the exercise integrates the imperatives of the balanced playing space and the gradual accrual of persons occupying the space to form a group of eight – the chorus of seven and the hero. Clearly the challenge pertains to the spontaneous, consensual election, or recognition of the leader, in the existing configuration of bodies: "When he decides, the hero will fall to the ground, and this will be the signal for the chorus to break up. Six actors withdraw from the space, leaving one, motionless, facing the hero; this is the chorus leader, who has been placed there by the chorus and who will have the right to speak in the name of them all. I insist on the chorus leader being chosen by the others as they withdraw: it is not he who decides to take on the function by stepping forward. This precise moment of the exercise is particularly difficult and requires from all the actors a great sensitivity to one another. We often see two would-be chorus leaders left facing the hero: two is one too many" (2009:144). The presumed high status attached to the role of chorus leader, and the desire for individual prominence undoubtedly explains such instances.

The paradigm of a "dominance hierarchy" infiltrates social relations and cannot be divorced from specific socio-ideological implications. For Johnstone, status games and exercises are the starting point of his teaching, followed by exercises in spontaneity. This sequence may not be appropriate in a very different socio-political environment where the demographics of student groups are defined by diversities and imbalances resulting from apartheid social engineering. In South Africa, the legacy of Apartheid ideology stresses differences and constantly threatens the reductive conflation of status with either class or race. It seems advisable rather to develop the facility of spontaneous play as a framing device that fosters and establishes the terms of equitable engagement between participants. Once the crucial sense of potential equitability is established it is possible to embark on playing status games because the risk of real consequences to the confrontation and contest in status based encounters has been reduced. As a mode and form of interaction between individuals and groups, play creates a temporarily bounded terrain in which patterns of dominance and subordination, of equitability and affinity can be more readily approached. To some extent, at least, establishing a play ethic provides a 'safe domain' in which to confirm individuation and extend performance skills. As importantly, it may facilitate an assimilation of the complexities of collective or group interaction. The pleasures of teamwork become a means to develop a collaborative and consensual approach to performance rather than perpetuating an ethos of competition. Participants can be introduced to a new set of allegiances that have their premise in obligations towards each other and the collective project, effectively becoming members of a newly formed group.

The pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq, premised on accommodating differences in languages and cultural identities, will be drawn on to launch considerations of likeness and differences as a preliminary means of exploring status play within collective identities and set out ways in which the crowd and the chorus differ formally but retain similar properties. Studies of 'social' or group behaviour and status hierarchies within the wolf pack open up two areas of consideration: firstly, the extent to which patterns of dominance are species-specific along with how adopting a low status position is a well-established means of ensuring survival; and secondly, how the routine exchanges between pack animals, the manifestation of group cohesion and equitability is premised on a "pecking order" which is produced through interaction and subject to constant re-formulation. Simmel's essay regarding group formation (as distinct from group affiliation) will transfer the focus onto individual and social identities founded on the modes of symbolic exchange that distinguish man as a socio-cultural being. Simmel's emphasis on affiliation indicates the provisional basis on which connections are forged between members of a group while sustaining divergences. The need to establish reasonably equitable relations as a binding mechanism for a group in which exchanges are non-competitive in both informal and more conventionally structured social encounters, underpins the selection of material addressed in this chapter. The analyses of these examples will expand on ideas concerning sameness and singularity and their outward display to those who are not members of this group.

In *Impro for Storytellers: Theatresports*[190] *and the Art of Making Things Happen,*[191] Keith Johnstone writes: "People are hardly ever of equal status, except when they're forced into uniform and made

[190] Johnstone acknowledges that his highly popular improvised model of *Theatresports* was inspired by pro-wrestling which he describes as a "family entertainment". For him "wrestling as public performance" was valuable as "the only form of working-class theatre that [he] had seen" and for the excitement and "exaltation" it generated within its audience

to perform identical and restricted movements (chorus lines, troops being drilled, etc.) but trying to make the status gap as small as possible is an excellent training" (1999:227). In the case of the chorus line and the army, uniformity in appearance and manner is imposed from an external source by an authority empowered with the right to compel individual conformity. Uniform identity appears to strip participants of individuation and difference. But a chorus line and a dramatic chorus are not quite the same thing and reveal scope for individuation that derives from the origin of these forms in the less formally constituted collective formation of the crowd. Structured according to different principles and serving different objectives, the chorus and the chorus line diverge in terms of the relations that they establish with an audience. As the analyses of *A Chorus Line* and *Sarafina!* aim to demonstrate, the individual may nevertheless come sharply into focus through being dressed identically to performers adjacent to him or her and executing the same choreographed routine. "Small status gaps" or minimal assertions of dominance or submission between members of the chorus have an effect not dissimilar to uniformity in dress: the focus is directed more explicitly towards individual faces, voices and the body, together with the expressive capacities of each, as the site of displaying and transmitting personal identity.

**Jacques Lecoq's training and its emphasis on the ensemble: the crowd and the chorus.**

"The shape of the territory of tragedy," writes Lecoq, "is marked by two main features: the chorus and the hero" (2009:135).[192] He proposes that the reciprocal dynamics in encounters between an individual and the group is a central concern of performance training. This governing principle provides the rationale for his emphasis on spatial configurations and how they are received.
In order to overcome the "archaic" relations of the hero and the chorus, Lecoq introduces exercises between the contemporary orator and the crowd as a precursor to tackling the demands of interpreting and performing choral extracts.[193] He claims that "the chorus is one of the most important components of my teaching method and, for those who have taken part in one, it is the most beautiful and the most moving dramatic experience" (2009:139). Lecoq is not being wilfully mystical. On the contrary, his claim announces just how central collaborative participation and collective expression is to his training programme and he offers guidelines to training in which developing an ensemble is an objective. Lecoq's statement acknowledges the rewards of forging a unified body in which multiple subjectivities are grafted into a single unit. He implies that aesthetic gratification is dependent on the sense of accomplishment ensuing from developing formal skills and

(1999:1). He established "Theatre-Machine" (UK) and "Loose Moose" (Calgary, Canada) to develop the model which has subsequently been taken up globally, with multiple variants.

[191] Published in 1994 as *Don't Be Prepared – Theatresports for Teachers,* the later writing develops and expands his seminal text. The model of "theatresports" (in which 'teams' of improvisers present sketches to an audience) may be regarded as geared towards establishing an ethos of competition between participants, playful as it may be. The tendency towards facilitating contestive inter-action rather than promoting ensemble based collaboration seems a latent tendency inherent in the model of theatre-sports.

[192] "The territory of tragedy raises the profoundest questions concerning our relationship to the gods, to destiny and to the transcendental. It has nothing to do with sects or religions. Nowadays scientists are closest to these questions when they find themselves awed by the wonders of the cosmos. Scientific research engages with a territory which goes beyond the merely human and this is also true of tragedy..." (2009:135).

[193] The porous relations between the world and the performance laboratory emerge in this. He writes: "Tragedies cannot be improvised, they require authors. For our work on orators we therefore abandon improvisation and turn to the real texts from public life: the speeches of Angela Davis, André Malraux's oration for the transfer of Jean Moulin's ashes to the Panthéon [...] all the great speeches that have had the power to enthuse mass audiences" (2009:138). The purpose of this is to enable "the students to test out the emotional level which can unite a crowd, an orator and a text" (2009:138). One might add Lincoln's Gettysburg address and Mandela's Rivonia Trial speech.

artistry. Indeed, his phrasing suggests that for the participants themselves, there is an added dimension of pleasure located in, and derived from, the consciousness of being assimilated within a collective, in other words, being at one with others in a larger organic unit.

He posits that "the orator is the forerunner of the hero and the crowd suggests the humanity of the chorus. The transition from crowd to chorus involves raising the level of acting in the same way as the transition between psychological and masked performance. The tragic chorus is the crowd raised to the level of the mask" (2009:138). The formal properties of the chorus distinguish it from a loosely associated group, like the lively, if fractious, body of citizens in *Coriolanus*. Just as the dramatic value of the crowd and the chorus differ, so too the experience of playing within a crowd, as a group of differentiated individuals in which subtle distinctions are foregrounded, and as a member of the chorus, introduces student performers to the structure, dynamics and technical requirements of an ensemble. Lecoq construes the chorus in terms that stress its formal unity:

> A chorus is not geometric but organic. In just the same way as a collective body, it has its centre of gravity, its extensions, its respiration. It is a kind of living cell, capable of taking different forms according to the situation in which it finds itself. It may exhibit contradictions, its members may sometimes oppose one another in subgroups, or alternatively unite to address the public with one voice" (2009:139).

To the extent that "working consensus" or co-operation are crucial to developing collaborative work, Lecoq's method is valuable in its emphasis on the importance of forging connections rather than perpetuating solitary and even agonistic relationships between players. The emphasis on engendering a centripetal focus is central to Lecoq's pedagogy. He writes:

> For the students, the major discovery when they work on tragedy is how to make connecting links. They discover what it really means to be connected, both with the ensemble and with a space. To speak through another's mouth, in a common choral voice, is to be, at one and the same time, grounded in the truth of a living character, and in touch with a dimension which transcends human reality (2009:135).

For Lecoq, choral training becomes not only a rigorous exercise in stripping away tendencies to construct the performance on the basis of personal psychology and impulse, but a series of insights into the importance of configurations and interaction *between* bodies and gestures in a single space.

He suggests that the discipline and focus required for integration within a chorus can be addressed by understanding relations between figures, or figures and space – and that what the audience reads is the significance of these relationships. The tableau is the basic building block of staging: a production is a series of tableaux in which the composition is a vital component of the medium of presentation. His exercise of "balancing the stage" in which the triad of space, the actor's presence and the spectator's point of view are set in constant interplay fosters skills development by requiring continually adjusting configurations on stage (2009:141). The reciprocal and proxemic implications of all choices made by the moving actors are continually brought to the fore. The exercise demands "high levels of concentration" (2009:144) and serves as a building block for subsequent improvisations.[194]

[194] "Another type of exercise is when a chorus moves without anyone knowing who is the leader. The internal rule, which spectators are unaware of, but the students discover, is that the leader is the one who is visible to all the others. Or again,

Lecoq's calculation of the optimal number of choral participants accords closely with my experience of an ideal size of a group for optimal training in improvisation technique,[195] although the rationale underlying the calculations diverges slightly.

> The chorus is made up of a group of either seven or fifteen people. These figures are precise, for each number has its own specific dynamic. One person is solitude. Two is one and his double. Three make a unity, four a static block. A group of five begins to move, but each member retains a personality. Six is not worth considering, for it divides in half to make two threes. Seven is an interesting number: a chorus leader may emerge flanked by two half-choruses of three each. Eight is a double block. At nine a crowd begins: a group of nine goes off in all directions. Ten and eleven are nearly a dozen! At thirteen a chorus starts to emerge. Fourteen is unworkable – there's always someone missing. Fifteen, as in rugby is the ideal number: a chorus leader, two half-choruses of seven each of which has a sub-leader, and all kinds of marvellous movements become possible (2009:140).

Lecoq distinguishes between the crowd and a potential chorus with its formal symmetries and bi-furcation. He also dismisses the smaller groups as not having the required mass to extinguish residual traces of strong assertions of individuality. Simmel theorizes the propensities of the smaller group in these terms:

> The smaller the circle which forms our environment and the more limited the relationships which have the possibility of transcending the boundaries, the more anxiously the narrow community watches over the deeds, the conduct of life and the attitudes of the individual and the more will a quantitative and qualitative individuality tend to pass beyond the boundaries of such a community (1971:333).

This not only substantiates the kinds of individual differences that Lecoq regards as problematic in the smaller circle, but also invites a consideration of mechanisms of internal monitoring, along the lines of Foucault's panopticon and Johnstone's observations regarding self-censorship.

Lecoq's chorus work synthesizes gesture and spoken text. This entails being able to perform the chorus in silence without losing its communicative force: "The objective is not to discover some choreographic solution for the movements of the chorus, but rather to attain the point where the actor remains still, having experienced in his body the dynamics of the emotion and of the whole dramatic development" (2009:149). His pedagogy aims to produce what he calls a "genuine body voice" (2009:150). His training model aims to collapse the distance between the script and the performer rather than promoting a cerebral analysis and delivery of the script as spoken utterance which contrives a Cartesian separation of the voice from the body. Retaining a "trace of this physical relationship with the text" (2009:150) is achieved, partly, through shared vocal expression which operates as a means of generating collaboration:

> The tragic chorus speaks with a single voice and the group of actors *has to be able* to achieve this collective dimension. For ensemble speaking, different techniques are used: one student recites a text that all have learned, another tries to speak the same text through the mouth of the first; gradually others join in until they achieve a common group voice, each

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we make the chorus 'breathe' by maximizing the distance between its members. Beyond a certain distance, the chorus no longer exists, it breaks up. Here we find the threshold of stress, known to architects" (2009:140).

[195] Setting this at 14 or 16 allows for each person to have a partner in warm up sessions.

> member of the group having the impression that he is spoken by the others (2009:150, my emphasis).

Attentive listening and an outwardly directed focus enable the collective to speak in dynamic unison, and may be introduced through generating a shared pulse or breathing pattern. The concentration required to develop and sustain an organic breathing tempo among performers creates the basis for collective consensually based action. The embodied approach to linguistic expression, discovered through ensemble improvisation, is a tool that depends on heterogeneity, rather than formal orchestration led by a designated individual.

Unlike a choir, which as a unit is conventionally fixed to a relatively static defined space, the stage chorus is unconfined spatially and the freedom of movement united with vocal delivery must liberate the voices that accompany this fairly unbounded movement. Lecoq makes a significant point pertaining to the cultural pluralism of trainees at his school: "The International dimension of the school brings foreign actors into contact with French texts. It is interesting to observe how an attention to careful articulation brings out the force of the writing. The pains these students must take to rediscover the value of words reaps rich rewards" (2009:150). The inference is clear: far from being disadvantaged, a second language performer, challenged by texts in a medium other than a mother tongue, may engage more rigorously with the texture, shape and meanings embedded in the text and consequently stimulate new approaches to that same script on the part of first language speakers. The text is fragmented and de-familiarized as performers accustom themselves to its demands.

The role of the chorus, by established convention, is on the margins of the action, debating, warning, advising, sympathizing, but in terms of the classical model always physically distanced and separated from the action spatially. The classical chorus, as Peter Arnott argues, constituted a living bridge between the audience and the performers and the configuration of the theatre itself promoted this relationship: the *orchestra* was reserved for exclusive use by the chorus, while the actors performed on the *stage* area behind the orchestra and directly in front of the *skene* building. Just as the proxemic relations establish a close link between chorus and audience, the choral interludes frame responses to the scenes between characters.

Not unlike Johnstone's emphasis on response mechanisms, Lecoq's maxim is: "the great rule governing the tragic chorus is never to be active, always reactive" (2009:140). Accordingly, he advocates a mode of improvisation and physicality lodged in situations and re-action to stimuli outside of the self. He says:

> In my method of teaching I have always given priority to the external world over inner experience. In our work the search for self-enlightenment and for spiritual bliss has little attraction. The ego is superfluous. It is more important to observe how human beings and objects move, and how they find reflection in us. [...] I do not search for deep sources of creativity in psychological memories whose cry of life mingles with the cry of illusion. I prefer to see more distance between the actor's own ego and the character performed (2009:17).

Probing tensions between individuation and commonality is central to Lecoq's philosophy and method of performer training. He emphasizes the need to probe levels of similarity and difference

and, writing of the necessity to ground actor training in the use of the neutral mask, insists that "the idea that everyone is alike is both true and totally false. Universality is not the same as uniformity" (2009:40). This crucial distinction is congruent with using the neutral mask as a mechanism to introduce an understanding of characters as identities which are constructed and pronounced through a specific history of interactions,[196] in contrast with a psychological approach to performing. For Lecoq, "the underlying dynamics of the situation" (2009:41) construct dramatic interest and shape its performance aesthetics. "You take on the neutral mask," he writes," as you might take on a character, with the difference that here there is no character, only a *neutral generic being*. A character experiences conflict, has a history, a past, a context, passions" (2009:38, my emphasis). The emphasis on neutrality necessitates a focus on both the text and the spontaneous encounter generated between players. Lecoq invites his students to recognize the expressive force of the neutral mask predicated on the understanding that the mask functions optimally when it focuses outwards, toward the world being inhabited. He observes that students being introduced to this type of mask work struggle with what he identifies as quasi-representational tendencies. They persist in privileging a preoccupation with "discover[ing] their own bodies," and consequently misdirect their focus, "while all along an extraordinary dimension is being offered to them: space [...] the world is there to discover" (2009: 40). Improvisations demonstrating a logocentric dependence on an individual utterance rather than interactive dialogue are similarly "unproductive."[197] This corresponds with Johnstone's propositions regarding privileging an outward interactive focus through emphasis on gestures away from the self into the spaces between individuals. The spatial and physical dynamics of the encounter are what need to be crafted and communicated for the spectator.

Lecoq's use of multiple neutral masks, all equally expressionless, asserts the principle of similarity and likeness amongst players. "Players" is a key term in this context: as he suggests, the fit of the mask serves to facilitate the capacity for play,[198] rather than mechanical and referential reduplication of the patterned clichés of behaviour. Using the neutral mask as a means of establishing a visible and embodied sense of shared attributes is a corollary to developing skills in collective vocal expression. A chorus of neutral masks has little in common with the robot, or the android of science fiction, because the mask heightens the expressive quality of the actor's body. Lecoq claims that "[t]he neutral mask puts one in touch with what belongs to everyone, and [...] nuances appear all the more forcefully. These are not nuances of character [...] but all the little differences which separate one performer from another. All bodies are different but they resemble one another through what unites them" (2009:41). Performers are united in participating in joint

[196] Johnstone writes: "When I was one of a group of young playwrights we could never agree on what was meant by 'dramatic action', but I would define it now as the product of 'interaction', and I'd define 'interaction' as 'a shift in the balance between two people' [...] One way to understand 'action' is to attend performances that are in a language that you can't understand. Some will be baffling, but if the characters are altered by what was said, you'll remember them. [...] Good theatre is like tennis in that the spectators look to see how a statement is received, whereas in bad theatre it won't be received" (1999:77).

[197] "[Performers] remain staring at one another but neither can *respond* to the other. In fact a neutral mask is never able to communicate face to face with another mask. What could a neutral mask say to another mask? Nothing. All they can do is find themselves together, facing an outside event which interests both of them" (2009:40).

[198] He writes: "Like every other mask, a neutral mask should not adhere closely to the face. A certain distance should be preserved between the face and the mask, for it is precisely this distance which makes it possible for the actor to play" (2009:38).

action. In this respect "playing" the neutral mask suggests rediscovering the subtle interstices in which the expressive range of individual bodies lingers.

**Patterns of submission and self-preservation within "pack formations".**

Patterns of dominance and subjugation, competitive aggression and its resolution within multiple species, have prompted scientific studies which probe intra-species interaction and chart reciprocal responses which defuse or exacerbate potential confrontation. Jeffrey Masson explains that competition "uses a lot of energy and many species seem to minimize such strife. In many animals there are postures of surrender that inhibit the attacker of the same species" (1995:137). He suggest that submissive behaviour is particularly effective in limiting aggression over access to resources,[199] but concedes that scape-goating, or deliberate targeting of an individual animal, sub-ordinating them, or ousting them from the pack "has been observed in some animals" (1995:149) although this is largely the result of being kept in captivity.[200] Simmel claims that

> Sceptical moralists speak of the natural enmity between men. For them *homo homini lupus* (man is wolf to man).[201] Empirically, rationally, man is pure egoist, and any deflection of this natural fact can occur in us, not through nature, but only through the *deus ex machina* of a metaphysical being. Hence natural hostility as a form or basis of human relationships appears at least side by side with their other basis, sympathy (1955:28).

Johnstone makes it clear that the veracity of the Latin maxim is based on an unstable claim[202] and a complete misconception of the "sociable" strategies through which wolves interact: "Non-defence is exploited by the wolf who exposes his neck and underbelly to a dominant wolf as a way of ending a losing battle. The top wolf wants to bite but can't" (1997:52).[203] It is clearly not only "top dogs" that have the capacity to determine the outcome of a hostile encounter. Masson draws on de Waal's studies of aggression and non-aggression amongst apes and concludes: "De Waal's argument is not that primates are unaggressive, but that the ways they handle and dispel aggression are as important as the antagonism and deserve equal attention. A full understanding of reconciliation awaits evidence [...] we will not understand aggression, cruelty or dominance and its attraction for animals and for humans until we understand their emotional aspects" (1995: 153). Johnstone

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[199] Masson records: "Wolf howls […] have been investigated in some depth, and we continue to learn about their complexity. The wolf's howl advertises and maintains its territorial boundaries and even acts as a spacing mechanism to keep wolf-packs from intruding on each other. Wolves need a lot of space to survive" (1998:143).

[200] "In the wild, a pariah could leave, either to be solitary or to seek another group" (1995:149).

[201] Jeffrey Masson gives the lie to this: "In many ways wolves and humans are alike. We are social animals, even pack animals; we reflexively seek out hierarchical order [but] wolves have no natural enemies other than man. […] similarities should not be exaggerated, however, because in truth we still know very little about the behaviour of wild wolves. [...] Just to see a wolf in the wild is a rare event. As a result it is not exactly clear how a wolf pack is formed in the wild; usually it consists of litter mates, but sometimes a stranger is accepted, and to date nobody knows the basis for such acceptance into the pack" (1997:141). He writes: "Wolves form a hierarchy that governs a great deal of their everyday behaviour. The alpha wolf, head of the pack, displays physiological characteristics that separate him from lower-ranking wolves. For instance, he has a higher heart rate, presumably because of the responsibility which accompanies his role as leader and the concomitant stress" (1997:139).

[202] Masson cites Peter Steinhart's conclusion to *In the Company of Wolves*: "The wolf was once widely seen as a symbol of the depravity of wildness; it is now to many a symbol of the nobility of nature. Largely by the use of symbols, we nearly eradicated the wolf. Largely by manipulating symbols, we may yet save it" (1998:146).

[203] He continues: "Some Congolese soldiers dragged two white journalists out of a jeep, shot one and were about to shoot the other when he burst into tears. They laughed and kicked him back to the jeep and let him drive away, while they waved and cheered. It was more satisfying to see the white man cry than to shoot him" (1997:52).

explains the basic physiological reflexes that man as a species shares with the wolf in terms of a survival instinct, even if these are manifest differently due to a different physiognomy and attributable to more complex ways in which the human species operates through the symbolic codes of language.

> We have a 'fear-crouch' position in which the shoulders lift to protect the jugular and the body curls forward to protect the underbelly [...] The opposite to this fear crouch is the 'cherub posture', which opens all the planes of the body: the head turns and tilts to offer the neck, the shoulders turn the other way to expose the chest, the spine arches slightly backwards and twists so that the pelvis is in opposition to the underbelly [...] a sign of vulnerability and tenderness […] High status people often adopt versions of the cherub posture. If they feel under attack they'll abandon it and straighten, but they won't adopt the fear crouch. Challenge a lose-status player and he'll show some tendencies to slide into postures related to the fear-crouch (1997:59).

Concepts of a hierarchical caste or class system have purchase for the social scientist and political theorist but colloquialisms serve as adequately. Terms like "pecking order" and "pack status" within fields of interaction and group organization reflect the persistence of an assumed hierarchical order and its ascription to animal behaviour. Jeffrey Masson provides a useful and unexpectedly literal explanation of the notion of the "pecking order" which operates allegorically in colloquial discourse:

> Ever since it was announced in the 1920's that chicken have 'pecking orders', ethologists have been seeking and finding pecking orders – now called dominance hierarchies – everywhere. In a pecking order a chicken is dominant to some other chickens, and can peck them and push them away from food – unless it is the lowest-ranking chicken of all. And, unless it is the top bird, other chickens will in turn be dominant to it, and the chicken will allow these birds to peck it and oust it from food (1996:138).

Masson suggests, however, that "cherished theories (pertaining to the pecking order) must be re-examined" (1996:139). He stresses that current studies ask "if such hierarchies are real or a product of human expectation" (1996:138) and maintains that studies have refined theories of dominance hierarchies to a point where relational dominance is acknowledged, but "dominance ranks assigned to individuals are not" (1996:138).

**Simmel: *The Web of Group Affiliations.***

Reinhard Bendix, the translator, explains that Simmel's focus is not only on groups and individual attachment to these groups, but on a sociological definition of subjectivity in which the metaphor of the circle operates to conceptualize space and distances between individuals in addition to configuring relations between them, thus: "[...]each individual is unique in the sense that his pattern of group-affiliations is never exactly the same as that of any other individual [204] [...] because the same individual belongs to many groups, Simmel refers to him as standing at the intersection of social circles" (1964:125). Simmel introduces "group-formation" through an analogy with perception, distinguishing between "advanced" cognitive processes and more rudimentary

[204] Reinhard Bendix writes: "In using the word 'circle' as a synonym for 'group', Simmel often plays with geometric analogies; it has seemed advisable to me to minimize this play with words in so far as this seemed compatible with an accurate rendering of Simmel's thought. I have used the term 'group-formation' when Simmel refers to the origin of a 'social circle' and 'group-affiliation' when he has in mind that an individual 'belongs to a social circle'" (1964:125).

capacities in which constituent parts are not readily distinguishable as components of the whole. Advanced cognitive processes enable the recognition and identification of parts in a range of contexts and in alternative permutations. This "disentangling from various accidental and irrelevant connections" (1964: 127) promotes an exponential increase in independent and objective conceptualization. In terms of the "relationships of individuals to each other" (1964:127), he posits that "the individual sees himself in an environment which is relatively indifferent for his individuality, but which has implicated him in a web of circumstance. These circumstances impose on him a close co-existence with those whom the accident of birth has placed next to him." The primary group-affiliation is thus, to some degree, rooted in biological or natural connections. The process of development and socialization establishes contact with similarly disposed or positioned individuals on the basis of "talents, inclinations, activities, and so on", (1964:128) resulting quite literally in one individual being a constituent member of a diverse range of groups,[205] on the grounds of what he calls "objective criteria".

Group-formation and group-affiliation are separate but related areas of enquiry. The distinction proves useful in probing subjectivity and group dynamics. Simmel distinguishes between group-formation and group-affiliation (with the former serving, in his view as the basis for the latter) by ranging across a broadly historical panorama with a view to establishing how the modern conception of group association develops and differs from earlier paradigms. Consistent with his overarching commitment to identifying spheres of maximum individual autonomy, he begins by making the case that "propinquity and interest" (1964:128) may conflict, but that "cohesion based on purpose" will transcend affiliations based on common origins and location. He argues that an affiliation that is "freely chosen" on the basis of "beliefs and desires" provides the individual with an "enlarge (d) sphere of freedom" (1964:129).[206]

Organic and rational (or objective) criteria impact diversely on group formation .[207] The family in its extended sense of clan and kin (augmented by immediate neighbours and community) serves as a prototype for cohesion anchored in organic associations. But Simmel's interest lies in group membership entrenched through what he calls "objective criteria". Confining his observation largely to the Classical world, he argues that military interests were best served by acknowledging that a clan or local district constituted a military unit, while a singular exception was made in the case of Sparta. In the case of Sparta, 'best practice' entailed acknowledging local custom and a curious instance of choice or "free association" prevailed, one that endorsed the value of the individual exercising an elective option. "Among the Syssitians of Sparta," he records, "fifteen[208] men sat at one table according to free choice. *One* vote was sufficient to bar a man from joining the table. This 'company of the table' [Tischgenossenschaft] was then made the basic unit of the army. Here the actual tendencies and sympathies of individuals intermingled with the ties of

[205] Simmel draws the two strands of his analogy together. "Just as a higher concept binds together the elements which a great number of very different perceptual complexes have in common, so do practical considerations bind together like individuals, who are otherwise affiliated with quite alien and unrelated groups" (1964:128).
[206] An historian of the trade unions has expressed this change by saying that *trade* had become the governing principle of the worker's organizations in place of the *city.* There is an element of freedom operating here: for however much confinement there may be in the position of the worker, membership of a trade union implies more freedom of choice than belonging to the citizenry of a town.
[207] "Group-affiliations which are formed according to objective criteria constitute a superstructure which develops over and above those group-affiliations which are formed according to natural, immediately given criteria" (1964:135).
[208] This figure corresponds with Lecoq's ideal size for a chorus.

neighbourhood and of kinship as the basis for the formation of a primary communal group" (1964:130). Unity of purpose is stronger, he argues, than a fixed rule privileging organic group formation over other forms of allegiance. In the context of military operations in Sparta in which "free association" was adopted as an (objective) operative principle, "the qualities of individual personality became the determinants of group-solidarity" (1964:131). In the pedagogical context, this notion of "free association" seems to hold considerable promise for negotiating diversity and establishing bonds predicated on a common purpose.

Any consideration of group membership necessitates acknowledging the potential for participation in multiple groups at any given moment. Simmel considers the phenomenon significant: "The number of different social groups in which the individual participates, is one of the earmarks of culture" (1964:138).[209] Group affiliation does however entail understanding that "patterns [of group affiliation] had the peculiarity of treating the individual as *a member of a group* rather than as an individual" (1964:139, my emphasis). Shifting his attention to the consequences of being associated with multiple groups and its impact on individual personality", he suggests that increasing "individuation" results from participating in multiple groups:

> The groups with which the individual is affiliated constitute a system of coordinates, as it were, such that each new group with which he becomes affiliated circumscribes him more exactly and more unambiguously. To belong to any one of these groups leaves the individual considerable leeway. But the larger the number of groups to which an individual belongs, the more improbable it is that other persons will exhibit the same combination of group-affiliations, that these particular groups will 'intersect' once again (1964:140).

The mathematical insight guiding this proposition supposes a diagram of circles, with an ever diminishing point of intersection as group membership becomes increasingly exclusive to a singular individual. The increase in the number of circles results in the multiple circumferences converging on a single point, the geometrical equivalent of the individual. Alignment with multiple groups is thus not a negation of singularity, but rather a constitutive element of subjectivity. This proposition maps the ways in which metropolitan life, with its capacity for diversified social connections, promotes individuation rather than negating self-hood.

Simmel does not end his enquiry there. He focuses on this point of singularity and offers what might reasonably be understood as a definition of subjectivity, articulated from a sociological perspective:

> As individuals we form the personality out of particular elements of life, each of which has arisen from, or is interwoven with, society. This personality is subjectivity par excellence in the sense that it combines the elements of culture in an individual manner. There is a reciprocal relation between the subjective and the objective. As the person becomes affiliated with a social group he surrenders himself to it. A synthesis of such subjective affiliations creates a group in an objective sense. But the person also regains his individuality, because his pattern of participation is unique; hence the fact of multiple group-participation creates in turn a new subjective element (1964:141).

[209] "The medieval group in the strict sense was one which did not permit the individual to become a member of other groups, a rule which the old guilds and the early medieval corporations probably illustrate most clearly. The modern type of group-formation makes it possible for the isolated individual to become a member in whatever number of groups he chooses" (1964:140).

His emphasis on the uniqueness of a "pattern of participation" is complex because of inherent dualisms embedded in the process of forging connections through selection. Selection is a process that acknowledges not only what is assimilated but also what is consciously or unconsciously 'discarded' or 'rejected'[210] in encounters with "objective culture" (artefacts, representations, beliefs and values) along with other individuals and what they represent. Reciprocity and dynamism remain core analytical tools for the analysis of individuality: "as the individual becomes affiliated with social groups in accordance with the diversity of his drives and interests, he thereby expresses and returns what he has 'received'" (1964:141).

His study seems to focus on the individual rather than the collective and he accounts for the "crisis of the modern subject" from this abstract theoretical perspective. He identifies an increasing degree of uncertainty attendant on participation in multiple groups; the individual is subject to both "conflicting and integrating" pressures asserted by the groups to which he belongs. In his words: "As the individual leaves his established position within *one* primary group, he comes to stand at a point at which many groups intersect [...] the security and lack of ambiguity in his former position gives way to *uncertainty* in the conditions of his life" (1964:141). The individual exposed to choices and the consequences of selection from those choices is subject to resulting internal tensions produced by the competing "need[s] to reconcile within himself a diversity of group-interests"(1964:142).

His theoretical framework also provides a departure point for analyzing particular communities, codes of honour and sanctions, patterns of freedom and obligation within groups themselves. He interrogates two models in which different circles (each representing group-membership) are established in relation to each other. In his view, the medieval mapping is a concentric model and "affiliation with a group absorbed the whole man" (1964:149). In contrast, "the modern pattern differs sharply from the concentric pattern of group-affiliations" (1964:150). It is a configuration in which groups, or circles, are juxtaposed and only intersect in respect of the individual on the basis of choices made by that individual, and less organically compelled. This is a consequence of the proliferation of groups formed according to objective criteria. The quality of the groups themselves, at the most abstract level, has also been subject to a transformation. Groups have, of necessity "had to be oriented towards the individual. In the earlier situation the individual was wholly absorbed by, and remained oriented toward, the group" (1964:151).

The consequences of "multiple group-affiliations" produce complex status dynamics: the bond of membership of a common group renders inoperative status differences that might otherwise differentiate individuals. "New differences between high and low (status)" (1964:153) arise according to the criteria germane to the new grouping. Position and agency are articulated in a different register: an individual can occupy a "central position in one group [...] while his position (is) peripheral in another" (1964:152). For Simmel, position is not necessarily fixed in terms of an absolute sense of authority and agency, rather "one and the same person may occupy positions of different rank in different groups" (1964:154). Routine adjustments in status relations, according to situation and grouping, subsequently inform the understanding of interactive encounters. Integrative tendencies and rewards are continually poised against contestive and competitive drives:

[210] The diagrammatic representation would mean a palimpsest overlaid onto, or beneath, the diagram of multiple circles just described. Another set of intersecting circles, just out of alignment with the first set, such that they do not intersect at the central converging point but just miss the required mark, would represent alternatives not acted upon.

"the instinctive needs of man prompt him to act in these mutually conflicting ways: he feels and acts *with* others but also *against* others" (1964:155). Relations between individuals in either mode may be represented in sociological, political, moral and ethical terms, as the earlier analysis of *Coriolanus* showed. Coriolanus' mistrust of interaction is a crucial factor in his isolation, as Hibbard claims: "Coriolanus' vulnerability to words is connected with his failure as a human being. He cannot converse with other men, for conversation implies reciprocity, and there can be no reciprocity for one who refuses to admit his relationship with others" (1995:33). The domain of personal expression – the articulation of the self through speech – requires some consideration regarding the identity and agency of the speaking subject, the context and mode in which this subject speaks, along with the shaping of receptive formats in which the utterance is transmitted.

The analyses that follow expand on ways in which the group identity is constructed, in terms of cultural context, criteria of group formation and affiliation, the patterning of collective expression and in response to a key individual towards whom the chorus orientates its actions and efforts. Lecoq's "chorus and the hero" will be seen to persist, albeit in a variety of ways. The tension between the scope for individuation within the chorus, perhaps the most extreme form of an ensemble, will be interrogated through assessing the performance challenges presented by three examples.

**The collective voice of the first person plural: the choruses in *Murder in the Cathedral, A Chorus Line* and in *Sarafina!***

*Murder in the Cathedral* is a Modernist take on a decidedly pre-modernist historical incident.[211] Eliot experiments with models that challenge the prevailing naturalist theatre of his day. He trawls through a cultural heritage, retrieving ostensibly archaic forms, but the action of the play reflects contemporary concerns, and consequently the play's impact extends beyond retrieving historical subjects as narrative content. His model of basing innovation on informed scholarship is one that contemporary South African theatre makers and dramatists might do well to emulate: archaeological excavation of past expressive forms may prove a productive project in post-colonial drama and theatre writing. Eliot's bold experimentation with dramatic idiom, rather than the substance, or content of his work, is not without attendant risks of failure,[212] as critical reception to his plays demonstrates. The tension between tradition and innovation is what Simmel probes in his posthumously published essay, "Freedom and the Individual", in which he yokes subjective and cultural dynamics to seismic transitions and transformations in Western history and social formations:

> The general European consensus is that the era of the Italian Renaissance created what we call individuality. By this is meant the state of inner and external liberation of the individual from the communal forms of the Middle Ages, forms which had constricted the pattern of his life, his activities, and his fundamental impulses through homogenizing groups. These

[211] Eliot bases the action on events that pre-date the life of Chaucer. "Beckett's martyrdom created an emotional content which for centuries remained of immense significance in English life and helped to form the enduring values of England. The Canterbury martyr created *The Canterbury Tales* and all the generations of pilgrims riding or tramping through the Kentish countryside 'the holy blissful martyr for to seek'" (Bryant 1965:39).

[212] Barney Simon was emphatic that the Market Theatre was to be a forum in which experimental work should find a public platform. The corollary to this objective was that it was equally important that new works should have the right to fail. This profoundly visionary and generous point of view appears to have given way to the pressures of commercial viability.

> had, as it were, allowed the boundaries of the individual to become blurred, suppressing the development of personal freedom, of intrinsic uniqueness, and of the sense of responsibility for one's self (1971:217).

*Murder in the Cathedral* probes tensions between rural communities and the nexus of power as represented by Church and Court and the individuals who dominate these institutions and through doing so, it offers a way of understanding the identity and role of the chorus as a potent vehicle in its expression of the core theme of the play: the transcendence of fear. Raymond Williams makes a highly persuasive case in suggesting that the "pattern" of the action is that the women of Canterbury move "from passivity to involvement to participation" (1976:200). He asserts that the action increasingly implicates the chorus in events concerning their prelate. They move from a "maximum status gap" in relation to the prelate, in Johnstonian terms, to one which is effectively obliterated, at least on the terms proposed by the play – the spiritual level. This overarching trajectory frames an analysis of the internal dynamics of the choral voice and the subtle heterogeneity it encompasses. The attempt to analyse the dynamics of the choral voice via this text, rather than a Greek tragedy, is premised on the notion that the collective presence of a choral body is largely archaic. As Andrew Kennedy acknowledges, "the frequent 'awfulness' [experienced in listening to recordings of the play] does make one realize the extreme difficulty modern actors experience in speaking the lines of a chorus" (1975:106).[213] Eliot's play, however, is both Modernist and curiously conservative in its adherence to High Anglican orthodoxies,[214] and is one of the few revivalist experiments in deploying the formal properties of the chorus. Extrapolating from Simmel, the play moves between 'what separates' to what is held in common, as is demonstrated through the relations between Becket and the women and within the final chorus itself.

Simmel, in "The Metropolis and Mental Life", regards the community life of the small town as the obverse of the modern urban environment. He analyses both in terms of the scope they afford for autonomy and individuation. Conformity and homogeneity are strategies through which a small or emergent community sustains its identity at the expense of accommodating or tolerating extreme differentiation. In his view "the self-preservation of very young associations requires a rigorous setting of boundaries and a centripetal unity and for that reason it cannot give room to freedom and the peculiarities of inner and external development of the individual" (1971:332). This explanation goes some way towards accounting for the formal structure of groups and expressive unities in the passages ascribed to the three priests, the four tempters and their counterparts, the four knights, and the larger, if imprecisely calculated chorus.

The separation between these groups is clearly signalled and the disparate vocal registers and rhythms of each are crucial to the orchestration of the ensemble chorus at the conclusion of Part I. The crescendo of voices in the final chorus of Part I has the Tempters and Priests join the chorus proper in intensifying momentum and emotion. The ensemble sets up Thomas' solo voice and his announcement, a decision, with which this movement ends. Beginning with the women's heightened sense of foreboding; the 'concerto' is broken by the interjection of the Tempters,

[213] He subsequently refers to the "success" of Eliot's project as being defined "within the limits of resuscitating an archaic mode of speech" (Kennedy 1976:106).
[214] Eliot was received into the Church of England in 1927, eight years before the first performance of the play in 1935, at the Canterbury Festival.

speaking for the first time in choral unity. Their doggerel and their views proclaim a different panorama of experience and value, one aligned with modernist sentiments and experiences:

> Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment;
> All things are unreal,
> Unreal or disappointing:
> The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,
> The prize awarded for the English Essay,
> The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration (1972:44).

In response to the massed antiphonic voices of these disparate factions, Becket can announce his resolution with emphatic certainty: "Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain." The triumphant simplicity of his assertion is largely dependent on the density of disparate and discordant vocal appeals and pressures that precedes it.

Simmel distinguishes between "two specific meanings" attached to the concept of individuality in his 1908 essay "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality"*:*

> Individuality in the sense of freedom and responsibility for oneself that comes from a broad and fluid social environment, whereas the smaller group is 'narrower' in a dual sense: not only with regard to its extent, but also with regard to the restraints it imposes upon the individual, the control it exercises over him, the trifling radius of prospects and the kind of impetus it allows him. The other meaning of individuality[215] is qualitative: it means that the single human being distinguishes himself from all others; that his being and conduct – in form, content, or both – suit him alone; and that being different has a positive meaning and value for his life (1971:271).

These two notions of individualism constitute a foundation for analyzing the position of the individual within the chorus and the extraordinary figure of Beckett. Not only does the play depend on the relations between an individual and the collective, but also on relations between different groups and their agency. Its central theme of individual and collective transcendence expands on intensely subjective aspirations towards immortality and the ethical pursuit of a means of achieving this goal.[216] Eliot seems to dramatize Simmel's proposition that:

> The soul that faces its God with reliance only upon itself in its metaphysical individuality, the only absolute value of all being, is identical to all others in what ultimately matters. For in the eternal and absolute, there are no distinctions; man's empirical differences, confronting the eternal and transcendental, are of no consequence (1971:287).

Focusing on the role of the chorus, the play can be interpreted as a poetic rendering of a collective response to radical disruption, from its foundations in restless anxiety to full scale trauma. In Raymond Williams' view, the play is:

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[215] Later in the same essay he writes: "The later meaning of individualism – according to which the factual reality of human nature is comprised of the uniqueness of individual's qualities and values, a uniqueness whose development and intensification are moral imperatives – this meaning of individualism is the denial of every kind of equality" (1971:286). Simmel argues that the divergence in the two meanings of individuality correspond to the eighteenth century and Enlightenment ideals and the consequences of 19th century industrial development and Romanticism.

[216] Williams asserts that Eliot "is not writing a history of Becket, but is dramatizing a contemporary consciousness of separation and martyrdom [...] the substantial design is the need for sacrificial blood, for the renewal of common life" (1976:203).

> …based on yet another rhythm: not so much of martyrdom as of sacrifice. The dominant imagery is of the land and the seasons: of the relation between the lives of men and the lives of beasts; of what can be seen as redemption but also as increased fertility through the spilling of blood. Redemption is an awareness that the natural and human order, without this kind of sacrifice, is merely bestial. It is the act of blood, and the receiving of blood, which creates consciousness and separates man from the beasts. [...] The power of *Murder in the Cathedral* is that it succeeds in communicating a personal structure of feeling as if it were traditional and even conventional. The strangeness of Eliot's vision – the rejection of ordinary life, the insistence on separation and sacrifice – is made to seem familiar and acceptable (1976:203).

Ritual sacrifice draws a community together in a single pivotal gesture underpinned by a rhythm that affects all participants: tension rises to a point of climax and then is released. Johnstone observes: "Tragedy is obviously related to sacrifice. Two things strike me about sacrifice: one is that the crowd get more and more tense, and then are relaxed and happy at the moment of death; the other is that the victim is *raised* in status before being sacrificed. The best goat is chosen, and it's groomed, and magnificently decorated. […] A sacrifice has to be endowed with high status or the magic doesn't work" (1997:41).

The play opens with the women drawn to the auspices of the cathedral seeking shelter, security and reassurance. In part an expository device, the opening chorus (with its rhetoric rooted in seasonal cycles) firmly establishes a collective anchored in passivity and subjugation. Routinely enduring the passage of time, waiting for events to unfold, community life finds comfort in familiar routines and resists disruption. The parochial limit of their world makes secure and orders the rhythm of their lives which lack prominence and visibility.[217] The sense of communal identity, shared values and beliefs is relayed through what they represent as a marginalized socio-political unit: their gender, class and allegiance to the Church rather than the State, suggests that they have few resources on which to draw, beyond those intrinsic to surviving the routine hardships of their lives.

Despite the strong sense of collective, even uniform identity, the verse depends on a polyphonic delivery in which the interplay of contrasting individual voices gives dynamic expression to the disparate distinctive views articulated within the whole. The texture of the poetry depends on playing the minimal degrees of differentiation between members of this community. In this respect Eliot's chorus may well differ from the demands made of the unison voice of the Aeschylean chorus and its derivatives. This is not to say that Eliot's chorus is not structured in such a manner that the voices are intermittently conjoined in collective expression. Rather, the interplay of solo voices

[217] "Seven years and the summer is over
Seven years since the Archbishop left us,
He who was always kind to his people.
But it would not be well if he should return.
Kings rule or barons rule;
We have suffered various oppression,
But mostly we are left alone to our own devices,
And we are content if we are left alone.
We try to keep our households in order;
The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to compile a little fortune,
And the labourer bends to is piece of earth, earth-colour, his own colour,
Preferring to pass unobserved" (1972:12).

(anxiety oscillating between clinging to symbols of past continuities and a dread of what the future portends) within the chorus punctuate and fracture the unison movements, and makes the performance of the work a challenging act of interpretation. Joan Little's allocation of individual voices to lines and phrases within the opening stanza of the first chorus provides a clear indication of what is possible:[218]

> Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait. / *[voice 1 – chorus leader]*
> Are we drawn by danger? *[voice 2]* / Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws our feet
> Towards the cathedral? *[Voice 3]* / What danger can be
> For us, the poor, the poor women of Canterbury? *[voice 1]* / What tribulation
> With which we are not already familiar? *[voice 2]* / There is no danger
> For us, / *[voice 1]* and there is no safety in the cathedral. *[voice 2]* Some presage of an act
> Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
> Towards the cathedral. *[voice 4]* / We are forced to bear witness *[unison]* (11).

Different positions are isolated by fragmenting the delivery according to the register, resonance and timbre of different voices of performers within the chorus. The vocal texture of this chorus requires yet another new voice to launch the shift into the following stanza:

> Since golden October declined into sombre November
> And the apples were gathered and stored, / *[*voice 5*]* and the land became brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud *[*voice 6*]*
> The New Year waits / *[*voice 5*]* breathes, waits, whispers in darkness. *[unison]*
> While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot and stretches his hand to the fire,
> The New Year waits,/ *[voice 7]* destiny waits for the coming. *[unison]*.
> Who has stretched out his hand to the fire ad remembered the Saints at All Hallows,
> Remembered the saints and martyrs who wait? *[voice 1]* and who shall
> Stretch out his hand to the fire and deny his master? *[voice 2]* who shall be warm
> By the fire and deny his master? *[voice 5]*

All the voices speak from a shared perspective and experience of subjugation, but within this nuances of difference emerge in the counterpoint of concerns. The formal shape of the verse with its metrical pulse controls and binds the expressions of individuality, delimiting the gradations in tone. Yoked to the symbolic significance of the individual voice is the question of identity. As Raymond Williams suggests:

> Language reasserts control in performance. The problem of performance is the application of these rhythms within which all the visual elements of performance are contained and prescribed. This is perhaps Eliot's most important general achievement. There is the same control over character. The persons are individualized so far as it is necessary, but they are contained by the total pattern (1976:202).

Positions within the chorus trace minute gradations in status: differentiation and separation persist within the tightly ordered community.[219] Thus, cohesion and isolation are set in continuous

[218] 1974 production: University of Natal, Durban.

[219] Stephen Spender gives a compelling description of the ways in which this portrait of the community takes on a particular identity and role: "Eliot can see them as rooted in rituals of toil – rituals of the seasons – as sharing the dignity of their domestic and agricultural labour, as having their place within a hierarchy whose temporal head is the king, and whose spiritual head is the Archbishop, representative of the pope in Rome. Eliot's picture of the people of Canterbury may not be historically exact but it is imaginatively moving. He is able to visualize their lives within the context of values and conflicts which the play is about. They go to Church. They work. They are afraid of the barons. They are therefore

interplay. But this is only one level of the dualities comprising a text that explores allegiance and submission to the will of another, or God, as a core obligation.

Raymond Williams argues that the use of liturgical form is not only congruent with the subject matter of the play but central to how it worked on the audience for which it was written. He claims that the play is:

> Eliot's most assured dramatic success. It has a completeness of form which springs from the perfect matching of material and form; and a certainty of communication which depends on the use of a living convention of action and speech (1976:199).

This "living convention", or deployment of the Christian ritual with its continued currency, Williams suggests, is one that may "easily be overlooked". He identifies how the convention operates, positing that:

> …the best dramatic conventions are usually those which the audience do not recognize as conventions: which we accept and assume so completely that our participation is immediate. The chorus, for example, is one of the most difficult conventions to establish in modern drama. Where it is based simply on a lost tradition it has to fight against its own unfamiliarity [… but this chorus] is merged in a larger method in which *a tradition is still available.*[220] The chorus becomes a link between ritual and believers; chorus is choir, the articulate voice of a body of worshippers (1976:199, my emphasis).

The pattern of the liturgy is a methodical interplay between priest and congregation, the ordained individual voice and the collective response: it is a structure that depends on intermittent unison declarations, the incantations of faithful accord.

Opinions diverge regarding the achievements of the play. Ezra Pound, Eliot's earlier collaborator and editor is intolerantly dismissive,[221] while Spender lauds the choral poetics as one of the great achievements of Eliot's mature writing. Spender suggests that "*Murder in the Cathedral* [...] deals with people who attain the kind of consciousness which consists of seeing themselves as they are, and doing this by living through extreme situations for which the only language is poetry"(1975:212). The recourse to expression through heightened language, as he points out, aligns with a proposal made by Eliot in "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry"*:* "The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse" (1972:46). In so far as the verse with its pulse and rhythms constitutes a formal means of binding individual voices in the collective utterance, the poetic form of the text demands attention.

Kennedy poses a pressing question in *Six Dramatists in Search of a Language*, when he asks: "can the organic growth of language be 'mimed' without too great a loss in spontaneity?"(1975:91). Kennedy's study is predominantly concerned with dramatic language, and begins with

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capable of commenting on the action which they first obscurely and later luminously understand. They are in a relation to Thomas which is that of both chorus and of a generalized protagonist capable of entering into dialogue with him" (1975:195).

[220] "The dramatic realization is in terms of the Christian ritual: the accepted, familiar relationships of priests, choir, and congregation. Thus a convention of choral speech, which is of great dramatic value, so far from being an unfamiliar barrier is the actual convention of participation" (Williams 1976:200).

[221] Andrew Kennedy records at least two highly critical views: "Ezra Pound turned off his radio set in Rapallo when listening to the play, with a despairing 'Oh them cawkney voices'; and Hugh Kenner, who repeats the story, caps this action-judgement with his impatience; 'The language of the Chorus: their ululating logorrhea, doubling and tripling the image' " (1975:106).

acknowledging the "very radical position" that Eliot adopts in contesting the representational and naturalistic idiom. He scrutinizes "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" (1920) in which Eliot writes: "A mute theatre is a possibility [...] The essential is not, of course, that drama should be written in verse [...] The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world – a world which the author's mind has subjected to a complete process of simplification" (1975:87). Astonishing as it may seem, Eliot seems to imagine in "a mute theatre" the very possibilities of Robert Wilson and the Theatre of Images much later in the twentieth century. His own dramatic works, Kennedy insists, place "dramatic form and language at the centre" of his poetic experiments, suggesting that Eliot is pitting the "value of 'rhetorical' as against 'conversational' speech, defending the rhetoric of self-dramatization" (1976:88).

Kennedy develops this theme to the position where he acknowledges that "Eliot is the first dramatist to write from within a *muse imaginaire* of speech with full consciousness" (1975:90). Despite this, Kennedy claims : "In theory, such a conception of language offers a dramatist the bold innovatory potentialities of modern, or Modernist, art; he should be able to use language as he uses myth, 'manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity'"(1975:91). Kennedy's scholarly analysis of Eliot's verse focuses on crucial critical considerations but does not address ways in which this pertains to the performing the text which, in its affective appeal, introduces an entirely different way of appreciating formally controlled language and what it offers to an ensemble. Kennedy seems intent on confirming Eliot's reactionary status as an artist:[222] "What does stand out is Eliot's constant backward look when struggling to create new possibilities of expression in drama" (1975:90). Eliot's extensive deliberations on culture – the relentless weight of tradition, of the inheritance of "exhausted" linguistic and dramatic models – underpin his experimentation with the theatrical viability of poetic expression in his own time. Kennedy calls this "Eliot's predilection for […] borrowing, quotation, allusion and pastiche" (1976:92). He cites Eliot's essay "Phillip Massinger" in which he declares: "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take [...] The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that which it was torn" (1976:92). Some seventy years later this might well transpose to become an injunction to the performer today, raising (as it does) questions of authorship and appropriation in relation to the degree that the actor serves the play, and the playwright. Declamatory incantations of verse as verse result in the recitation that Pound rightly deplores. The injunction, rather, to play the group dynamics through an ensemble sensitive to the pulse and tensions inscribed within the work, that equally "tears the verse from the page" and into the space of theatrical presentation, seems appropriate.

Locating the grammatical structure and formalities of "Numb the hand and dry the eyelid" in the "liturgical and incantatory patterns"(1976:94) of the Dies Irae, Kennedy is sensitive to the shifts and transitions in the dynamics of the poetry and its trajectory: "gradual intensification, an orchestral crescendo from the half-rationalised forebodings (most of Part I) to the near-hysteria of the two choruses before and after the murder of Becket (the 'death bringers, and "Clean the air") (1976:105). But what Kennedy does not address (as beyond the ambit of his enquiry) is the dynamics of the subject identities and the register of their expression. He claims:

[222] Kennedy's study encompasses the dramaturgy of Shaw, Eliot, Beckett, Pinter, Osborne and Arden. In this company, Eliot emerges as conservative on political grounds and in his declared views on tradition, culture and religion.

> Eliot's boldest innovation in drama: a chorus that gives voice to two kinds of experience 'normally' unspoken or inexpressible: the stages of dumb mass suffering, and the inward agony of the chief 'agonist' placed deliberately beyond communication. The chorus starts by representing the passive consciousness yet ends as the chief agent of participation – drawing the audience into the action with its own reluctant passion; it speaks 'out of' the inarticulate with formalized articulateness, attempting to move from the almost subhuman towards the superhuman (1976:104).

Later he returns to the enigma of Eliot's oeuvre, the "recurrent fear of, or withdrawal from, human speech and the attempt to create conditions for the 'unspoken word'" (1976:123).

The disruption of custom and the pathology of fear palpably structure the play, [223] and through this register status transitions are most dramatically negotiated. Whereas Prufrock, the relatively urbane, eponymous "anti-hero" can contextualize fear in social terms, effectively encapsulating this in "In short I was afraid," *Murder in the Cathedral* articulates anxiety and fear in metaphysical and primal terms. The Women of Canterbury have none of Prufrock's strategic means of containment and experience fear at the extremities of their sense of collective being.[224] The accelerating pulse and restless rhythms of agitation capture the psycho-physical shifts of the body in response to extreme threat, in which short shallow clavicular breathing[225] allows rapid oxygen intake bracing the individual for appropriate response. This compulsive listing of hyper-vigilant senses is an unnerving invocation of the pathology of fear.[226] Atavistically launched in the alarm of the opening phrase, the rhythm depends on the subsequent apprehension and confusion of all five senses, attuned to signals that confound any semblance of normality lurking in the enjambed lines. The run on line suspends and stretches nervous apprehension to its limits. Tempo and pulse respond to the trigger of the stimulus, and approximate the panting intake of shallow respiration synonymous with response to a perceived threat.

Eliot's anatomization of fear offers a way of engaging with the innate insecurities attached to performance and especially improvisation, whether these anxieties are acknowledged or not. The

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[223] I have smelt them, the death bringers, sense are quickened
By subtile forebodings; I have heard
Fluting in the night-time, fluting and owls, have seen at noon
Scaly wings slanting over huge and ridiculous. I have tasted
The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt
The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd. I have heard
Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises;
Jackal, jackass, jackdaw; the scurrying noise of mouse
And jerboa; the laugh of the loon, the lunatic bird. I have seen
Grey necks twisting, rat tails twining, in the thick light of dawn. I have eaten
Smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of
living things under sea; I have tasted
The living lobster, the crab the oyster, he whelk and the
Prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my
Bowels dissolve in the light of dawn. I have smelt
Death in the rose,….Second Chorus: Part II. 1972:72).

[224] Lecoq suggests that there is value in the gendered chorus: "The finest choruses are often those made up of women, for they possess a deep sense of cohesion and solidarity. They stand guard over essential values" (2009:140).

[225] This contrasts with "normal" relaxed deep breathing activating the diaphragm and intercostal muscles.

[226] "This is to make the whole animal world and all its processes destructive, whether they go on outside us or within our bodies, in the elements or in the intestines, a vast psalm of life metabolically changing into death, surrounding human beings and happening inside them" (Spender 1986:197).

paralyzing mechanism of prohibition and self-censorship induced by self-awareness and self-consciousness operate as attenuations of hyper-vigilance. Self-revelation may be frightening within a forum of peers. Just as the ramifications of unwilling participation, reluctance and deep agitation are central to the shape and content of the women's' choruses, so too disruptions within the continuum of a class may be rooted in tension resisting the challenges presented by participation within a group. *Àpropos* Becket's "tormenting doubt as to his motives," Spender writes: "drama concretizes abstractions as living situations" (1986:191).[227] This has considerable purchase in conjunction with the lot of the women who articulate their own sense of being in terms of the marginal position of "waiting" and "witnessing".

> For us, the poor, there is no action,
> But only to wait and to witness (First Chorus: Part I 1972:13).

Their initial intimation of fear is articulated in terms of what is known and familiar, the routine of life punctured by intermittent mishaps.[228] The liturgical rhythm underscoring routine daily life invokes aid from an exterior source at all times, particularly in the closing lines in which they serve as devices through which the collective "confess" in an appeal to a greater power. Kennedy writes of their lack of agency in these terms:

> The stage of passivity growing into anxious comprehension. The language changes correspondingly: from the monotonous three beat lines of the 'living and partly living' sequence which precedes it, to an at once irregular and emphatic rhythm; from lulling abstractions of the human condition ('We have seen births, deaths, and marriages') to the immediate threat to mind and body; the image-clusters or parallelisms (our hearts/our brains/ours selves) are like the obsessive repetitions of an anxiety state, not a mere litany. The violent image ('your brains unskinned like the layers of an onion') is universal: it expresses a personal *and* communal fear (1976:105).

The chorus immediately preceding the murder, underscored by the *Dies Irae* sung by a choir in the distance, is in an entirely different key from the saturated sensation of "the death bringers". In tone and imagery, bleak acquiescence to violation synthesizes form and content. The antipathy to sacrilege governs the expression at this juncture, and is conveyed in rhythmic crafting which needs to control the delivery of this chorus as it approximates a pitch of "hysteria". The first word is a

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[227] The four tempters are announced by Becket in these terms:

> "meanwhile the substance of our first act
> Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows" (1972:23). They represent aspects of Beckett's past as the fun-loving hedonistic man of the world: the Chancellorship in alignment with the King's interests; worldly power sanctioned by regal authority; the potential allegiance with baronial interests in opposition to the king; the lure of spiritual authority through martyrdom.

[228] "We have had various scandals,
> We have been afflicted with taxes
> We have had laughter and gossip,
> Several girls have disappeared
> Unaccountably, and some not able to.
> We have all had our private terrors,
> Our particular shadows, our secret fears.
> But now a great fear is upon us, a fear not of one but of many,
> A fear like birth and death, when we see birth and death alone
> In a void apart. We
> Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot face, which none understands,
> And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost
> In a final fear which none understands" (Second chorus: Part I 1972:20).

potent clue to the vocal colouring required. This "flatness" is endorsed by the matchless monosyllabic image of death: sensation and feeling are temporarily held at bay, fear is a metaphysical dimension that dispenses with physical sensation.[229] Stephen Spender describes Eliot's representation of trauma invoking a spatial metaphor: "(he) touches the utmost depths of horror that he knows" (1975:196).[230] This chorus clearly cannot be performed effectively on psychologically based emotional identification. A vocally dexterous delivery grounded in formal analysis of rhythm and metre, although technically competent is equally unlikely to sustain the range and intensity these passages demand.[231] Training in group dynamics and status inflections may prove enabling and equip an ensemble with a range of skills appropriate to the poetics of this chorus work. An ensemble, versed in playing status shifts, could conceivably fragment the text, accentuating the call and response motif, identify affiliations between women, and generate a spontaneous delivery of the whole in which theme and variation add colour and timbre to the words. Interaction-based delivery which emphasizes playing contrasts and contradictions, reiterative emphases and repetition, could provide an edge to a performance that sharpens its poetic form.

The play depends on delineating collective identities – the priests, tempters, knights in addition to the chorus – as counterpoint to the solitary figure of Becket who returns from exile to a visible presence within his community. The figure of royal authority, Becket's antagonist, remains invisible and remote. Historian Arthur Bryant sketches ways in which Henry II and Thomas Becket are rivals for leadership, secular and spiritual, and dominance:

> The two men – one with the strongest throne in Europe, the other representing the international Church – seemed well matched. They had been the complement of one another and now became the antithesis. Each had the same imperious, overbearing will,

[229] The reiteration of the amorphous physical fears articulated in "woven like a pattern of living worms/In the guts of the women of Canterbury" (1972:73) is obvious.

[230] Spender writes: "No one knows better than Eliot the horror of waking in the uncertain hour between darkness and the first dawn of an icy gritty day in Paris or London; of unswept corners of attics; of funguses that grow behind the dark wainscoating; of a cat in an alley gutter licking the inside of a sardine tin; of the war between clawed enemies that takes place under rocks fathoms down on the sea floor. There is a remarkable list of the infinitesimal glimpsed terrors that surround us throughout our lives and which indeed burrow through our flesh in these choruses" (1976:196).

[231] "Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,
Still the horror, but more horror
Than when tearing in the belly.

Still the horror, but more horror
Than when twisting in the fingers
Than when splitting in the skull

More than footfall in the passage,
More than shadow in the doorway,
More than fury in the hall.

The agents of hell disappear, the human, they shrink and dissolve
Into dust on the wind, forgotten, unmemorable; only is here
The white flat face of Death, God's silent servant,
And behind the face of Death the Judgement

And behind the Judgement the Void, more horrid than the active shapes of hell;
Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
The horror of the effortless journey, to the empty land
Which is no land, only emptiness absence, the Void...." (Chorus Three: Part II. 1972: 76).

> each was thorough, persistent, and electric with restless energy, each had behind him a career of unbroken triumph. And each knew, or thought he knew, his opponent (1965:22).

The contest between two powerful individuals is patently not of dramatic interest to Eliot despite the possibilities afforded by the conflicts between these flamboyant and evenly matched men. The Plantagenet king gains stature through his invisible control of others: his distance and absence is the signifier of his majesty. The Archbishop, in contrast, corporeally present after seven years in exile, through the violation to his physical person, becomes the embodiment of a spiritual ideal. As Churchill observes:

> This tragedy was fatal to the King. The murder of one of the foremost of God's servants like the breaking of a feudal oath stuck at the heart of the age. All England was filled with terror. They acclaimed the dead Archbishop as a martyr; and immediately it appeared that his relics healed incurable diseases, and robes that he had worn by their mere touch relieved minor ailments. Here indeed was a crime, vast and inexpiable (1956:167).

The series of conflicts between Becket and the King[232] prior to the action of the play[233] lend themselves to dramatic representation in the classic idiom of tragic confrontation of opposing positions. Bryant suggests something of the dramatic and theatrical efficacy of rendering Becket as a figure isolated from overt interaction with his antagonist.

> Yet for the lonely, spectacular role he now chose Becket was superbly equipped. His towering height, his pale sensitive face, the aquiline nose and restless penetrating eyes, the white feminine hands and quick eager movements made him look what he aspired to be, a saint and martyr. And the very theatricality and emotionalism that so annoyed high-born men of the world appealed to the hearts of the common folk who only saw him from afar and knew nothing of his weaknesses.[234] Here was a man who even in that age of pageantry and outward symbols made his meaning ten times clearer than anyone else, speaking to them across the immense barriers of rank and wealth (1965:29).

In line with Eliot's view, corporeal presence and material power is transient and superficial, but the value of adopting the self-consciously dramatic role in an interaction with others is intrinsically

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[232] Churchill, in *A History of the English Speaking Peoples (Vol.1)* describes Henry Plantagenet, "a Frenchman, with foreign speech and foreign modes" as being the instrumental force shaping the foundations and organization of contemporary English society. In Churchill's analysis he was a "nation builder"; "re-established the system of royal government" but most importantly "relaid the foundations of a central power, based on the Exchequer and the judiciary" (1956:157-158).

[233] The play intensifies the action through Eliot's concentration on Beckett's return from exile to the moment of his death. Bryant makes the real time frame of the action clear: "Then on December 1st 1170, having shown that he was prepared to abate not one title of the Church's authority, and avoiding the royal officials who, infuriated by his latest act of war, were waiting at Dover to seize him, he landed at his own cathedral's port of Sandwich" (Bryant 1965:33). On December 29th the four knights, with a rabble of de Broc's followers, arrived at Canterbury where the archbishop was sitting after dinner in his chamber (1965:34). Eliot's play incorporates past events but dramatizes the interval that elapses between Beckett's Christmas sermon and his death. The ritual chorus of the priests, and its musical underscoring solemnly announces the passage of three days: "Since Christmas a day: and the day of St Stephen, First martyr [...] Since St Stephen a day: and the day of St John the Apostle [...] Since St John the Apostle a day: and the day of the Holy Innocents [..] Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from Christmas" (1972: 58 – 59). The formal patterning is a prelude to what is inevitable, and the neutrality of the fourth day subtly suggests that day too will acquire ceremonial significance. The fourth day, it soon emerges, is "half gone" and night and the arrival of the Knights is imminent.

[234] Bryant compares Becket and the King in what is tantamount to a status based analysis: "Beckett lacked the virtues in which Henry, the Achilles-heel of his temper apart, was so strong. He had none of his capacity for statesmanship and *finesse* in handling political opinion. He was a perfectionist rather than a man of the world [...] while he appealed to the multitude by his dramatic genius and emotional power, his equals could not depend on him. He was far too much of an egotist to be a good colleague. He lacked constancy and stability. He seemed capable of every attitude except moderation [...] The king who had been so well served and delighted by his chancellor's genius, understood his weaknesses perfectly" (1965:22).

theatrical: "(t) he really fine rhetoric of Shakespeare occurs in situations where a character in the play *sees himself* in a dramatic light" (Eliot 1972:144). It is no co-incidence that Becket, so supremely qualified in terms of projecting these attributes, should appeal to Eliot, and that Eliot should have him dismiss the Third Tempter in a citation that seems to paraphrase Coriolanus:

> Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves
> Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves? (1972:36).

The most striking feature of Eliot's dramatic monologues and choral interludes is the heteroglossic quality of language. Spender acknowledges "the second and third voices" of Eliot's verse, but the citations record a far broader constituency. The women's' choruses are structure through punctuating apparent consensus with dissent. The agitation and restlessness, the movement of anxiety is constructed through this device. The encounters between characters are consistently inflected by inferences toward dignity and value, or the lack thereof, emphasizing the significance of status relations. It is this kind of complex layering that is currently under explored in contemporary South African dramatic writing.

The performance project, at least in terms of South African theatre today most derived form a Western paradigm but also including its hybrid derivatives, is saturated by a preoccupation with the individual subject at the expense of the collective. The dramatic tradition with its emphasis on action is structured around the individual subject as locus of agency, and the introduction of "performance studies" and the related project of "performance art" have not significantly challenged this preoccupation. If anything "performance studies" seems to advance and extend the scope for introspection, advancing personal narratives and subjective expression through the insistence on "devised projects" which may or may not depend on collaborative work. The trajectory of dramatic and theatrical innovation, with few exceptions, devolves from and depends on the agency and effort of the individual, even in instances where the text and ensemble are explicitly directed at communal and social themes. While British theatre companies like Joint Stock and Shared Experience, as their names suggest, commit to socialist ideals and strict observance of egalitarian principles, it seems difficult to identify a sustained tradition that positively endorses individual self-effacement. And few texts celebrate group identity as equals to the individual. The value of ensemble based processes in generating and performing a text is most potently demonstrated through two different examples of musical, rather than dramatic, theatre: *A Chorus Line* and *Sarafina!*

The documentary film *Every Little Step*[235] provides fascinating insights into the making of *A Chorus Line* – which in its title proclaims a departure from the Broadway paradigm in affirming the collective. Ostensibly, at least, *A Chorus Line* is not about the individual "star" performer who receives "above the line" billing as an acknowledgement that their presence markets the production to an audience. As the title suggests, its dramatic interest lies in the identically costumed singer-dancers who comprise the chorus and whose presence foregrounds the unique attributes of the leading characters and name parts. *A Chorus Line* strips the stage of its illusory magic, opposing the

[235] The film's subject is the audition for the Broadway revival of *A Chorus Line*, but this is inter-cut with archival footage of the making of the 1975 production supplemented by additional interviews and anecdotes. Produced by Joseph Papp, *A Chorus Line* opened off-Broadway at The Public Theatre on May 21, 1975.

glamour and safety of a well-rehearsed presentation with the stark brutalities of behind-the-scene action, specifically the technicalities and tensions of the audition process.[236]
Locating the action and lyrics in what is customarily excluded from view has considerable shock value and demystifies the effortlessness and confidence that is assumed integral to the professional trade. Simultaneously the anonymous taken-for-granted bodies acquire individual subjectivities and status shifts abound as each performer appears before the invisible figure of the director/choreographer out in the auditorium. The self-referential drama concentrates on the personal histories and aspirations of each individual for whom, ironically, success means disappearance within the uniform line, which the audience gets to see in the theatrical equivalent of a jump cut in the kick line of the "Production" finale.[237] The album cover depicts the vivid transformation from individual street clothes expressing individuality to the uniformity of a kick line in which the impeccable reproduction of a routine is a conventional expectation. The finale works on two levels: it returns the audience to the familiar expectations of the "glitz and glamour" of the Broadway spectacular (complete with sequins and top hats) and simultaneously, it is a resolution and vindication of the audition process as the chosen individuals demonstrate their consolidated identity in a tightly rehearsed and triumphant display of the skills that earned them their place in this group.

*A Chorus Line* won the 1976 Pullitzer Prize for Drama,[238] a critical endorsement of its achievements. Although the work is a collaborative and collective project, its instigation and drive depended on the daring and vision of Michael Bennett, the choreographer and director. The documentary relates how, in 1974, he sat down to a 12 hour session (beginning at midnight) with a group of Broadway performers, to listen to and record their individual stories. The transcribed tapes provided material for character identities and lyric lines. The documentary investigates the instigation of the project, its value for participants and how the initial reception of the production led to further refinements. Marvin Hamlisch, the composer, tells of how the audience response, or rather lack thereof, led to radical changes in the contents during the early weeks of its first season. He relates, for example, how the reception of the production compelled reconsidering the text, resulting in a significant alteration to the outcome of the audition. He credits Marsha Norman with the insight that audience expectations 'required' that one of the auditionees, Cassie, should make the final cut. This development in the plot had earlier been rejected because Cassie is defined in terms of her status as a potential star with no place in the chorus.[239] Thus the disruptive force of singularity threatened to

[236] *A Chorus Line* revels in "no stars, no set and almost no plot." Its premise is "Final auditions for dancers in a never-named Broadway show: 24 hopefuls will be cut down to 8" (Bennett et al, 1975: Compact Disc insert: 6 -7).
[237] The reprise of "One" is ironic. The lyrics sung by the ensemble celebrate the individual male and female stars rather than themselves:

> One singular sensation, every little step he takes,
> One – thrilling combination, every little move that he makes,
> One step – and suddenly nobody else will do,
> You know you'll never be lonely with you know who
> One – moment in his presence, and you can forget the rest.
> For the guy is second-best to none.....

[238] "The original season of 6,137 performances garnered in addition, the New York Drama Critics Award, and nine [Tony Awards], including Best Musical, two for Bennett (choreography and direction), score, book and cast members Donna McKechnie, Sammy Williams and Carole Kelly. For once the nobodies – the people in the back, behind the star – triumphed" (1975:5-7).
[239] This has some correspondence with Lucy Hughes-Hallett's account: "'The Argonauts left Heracles behind', noted Aristotle, for the same reason that the Athenians took to ostracizing and sending into exile outstanding citizens, 'so the

destabilize an otherwise equitable company. This change to the outcome of the audition demonstrates that the display of skill is a form of contest for which the reward is opportunity, and accordingly requires, at the level of popular consumption, gratification of the heroine's desires. South African drama of the 1970's and 1980's was distinctive for its commitment to honouring the ensemble performance as a political principle, as much as an explosive physical energy, in articulated presentation. The protest genre comprises *Woza Albert, Bopha*, *Asinamali, You Strike the Woman? You Strike the Rock!, Born in the RSA,* and *Score Me the Ages,* amongst others. These distinctive texts are similar in that all roles are of comparable weight, and the voice of each individual performer is accorded an equitable portion of the audience attention. Like *A Chorus Line,* they emerged from the workshop tradition and were developed in collaboration with a theatre maker/director rather than having been scripted prior to the start of rehearsal. The economic imperatives of a strategic use of resources as much as the political statement being made account for this: each participant is equally committed and accorded a share in the process of developing and performing the text. This model of maximum utilization of resources of time and labour through equitable distribution within the performance appears to have been forsaken. The ensemble collaborative no longer dominates South African stages in quite the same way, rather authored scripts tending to privilege particular characters have displaced an emergent tradition. The need to endorse personal narratives[240] as integral to transformation and redress has informed contemporary approaches which seem committed to valorizing the individual rather than the collective.

Perhaps more than any other South African playwright, composer and director, Mbongeni Ngema has made the ensemble the focal element and defining feature of his various works. The continuity between the drama, *Asinamali!* (1985),[241] and the musical, *Sarafina!* (1987) lies in the centrality of the ensemble to the structure, texture and narrative. The play is a hybrid of narrative, song and dance that anticipates the idiom and style which Ngema was to expand in *Sarafina!*[242] which more expressly celebrates *mbaqanga* – the driving dance music of the townships – and resistance politics. At the level of content, the musical fuses cultural form with the call to collective action and political agency. The action is developed around the defiant and indomitable spirit of township schoolchildren living under Apartheid rule and subject to the curbs and constraints of State of Emergency regulations. A fictional class at Morris Isaacson High School is constructed around the figure of Sarafina who, herself, represents the spirit of resistance leadership. The character is a synthesis of the idealization, glamour and romance attached to the role of leadership within the "Struggle" with the more egalitarian capacity for self-effacement. The work explicitly pays tribute to Tsietsi Mashinini in lyrical and dialogic references. He organized and led the Soweto uprisings of

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Argos would not have on board one so vastly bigger than the rest of the crew'"(2004:2). The "myth" is eloquent and persuasive.

[240] The significance of personal narrative is integral to the discourse of the Transformation and Reconciliation Commission, its implementation and modality.

[241] In *Asinamali!,* Solomzi Bishilo, Thami Cele, Bongani Hlope, Bheki Mqadi and Bhoyi Ngema give their names to the persona or roles that they play. Set in Leeuwkop Prison the five men relate the stories of their lives and the events that have resulted in their imprisonment. The play takes its title from the rallying cry initiated by Msizi Dube who led the residents of Lamontville in protests against proposed rent increases. Dube, as Duma Ndlovu recounts, "was later gunned down by government forces, a martyr to his cause" (1986:179).

[242] The musical was developed in collaboration with Hugh Masekela, in exile at the time, who had met with Ngema in New York in 1987, during the run of *Asinamali!* As early as 1984, while Ngema was in New York with *Woza Albert,* the two had discussed the possibility of collaborating on the project of an *mbaqanga* musical. The title song is composed and written by Masekela, as is "Sechaba" which was incorporated into the production in New York and not part of the original season at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

1976 and *Sarafina!* not only refigures what he represents through transposing the role in terms of gender, but also transforms his narrative through the process of (fictional) representation and commemoration.

It is however, Victoria Mxenge, the activist lawyer who was shot and hacked to death in 1985 who is the iconic symbol of resistance and role model adopted by the adolescent schoolgirl, Sarafina. Mxenge's role in the Struggle and her violent death is the subject of Sarafina's first act monologue.[243] This monologue is underscored by the entire company in "Wawungalelani" which leads into the lament "Mama*".* The intertwining of Victoria Mxenge's story with the emotive *response* to that narrative on the part of the ensemble is an important formal feature of the drama and culminates in the sequence of events comprising the first act finale. The sequence begins with the classroom routine being disrupted by the arrival of a Security policeman who challenges the teacher's lesson on "the oil producing countries" prompting immediate resistance and retaliation on the part of the students,[244] and ends with the funeral of those who 'die' in this confrontation.[245] The Mxenge monologue draws on the *ntsomi* tradition and the recitation of events that occur within the life of a specific community, and is a concrete instance of what Berger and Calvino claim for the role of oral history and the story-telling tradition. The oral testimony, crafted into a form intended for dissemination to an audience acknowledges the responses of that audience as integral to its shape. The narrative functions as a node around which notions of identity, affiliation, values and ideals can be consolidated. In contrast, "unauthorized" texts and the means of their dissemination is a motif that recurs throughout the text: earlier in Act 1 the routine of the school day begins with a musical rendition of the Lord's Prayer, followed by a recitation of "On Westminster Bridge*".* The appropriateness of the latter to the curriculum is challenged by Sarafina: "why do we have to learn about beautiful cities in England which have nothing to do with us?" She is also quick to recognize that "Mistress" teaches them "the history that is not in books", about *Umzabalazi* – the wars of resistance – and the Defiance campaign, in which the role of the collective figures so prominently.

The role of the collective in recycling unwritten or repressed narratives in order to perpetuate their circulation within a community resonates strongly throughout *Sarafina!* and is also central to the mode of production which characterizes Ngema's subsequent musicals. In a complete break with conventional norms and theatre protocols *Sarafina!* was rehearsed and performed without the script being recorded in written form.[246] The explanation for this phenomenon lies as much in the

[243] The substance of this narration is largely an historical account of Mxenge's victory in the court case involving the rape of a black woman by a white man, followed by the grueling details of her murder.

[244] The presentation of violence and confrontation is highly stylized and symbolically represented through relatively simple theatrical devices: the pupils mime throwing stones, gun shots and tear gas are signified through the use of staccato drum and percussion instrumentation and smoke machine effects. The panic stricken pupils run in ever decreasing circles to their "death" in a sequence that is concluded by a trumpet solo. The requiem is a solemn expression of what this type of violation and loss means to a community.

[245] The priests' eulogy and the accompanying dirge "Give us power*"* solemnly acknowledge "coffins" being lowered into the grave. The action breaks into a *toyi-toyi* accompanying the protest chant "Afuna Amaphoyisa Soweto" before the segue into "Nkosi Sikeleli' Afrika" and the declaration of the dream of liberation. "Freedom is coming Tomorrow" closes the first half on a note of defiance, conviction and hope.

[246] The entire opening season at the Market Theatre was stage managed without recourse to a script. Lighting cues and additional calls were made from a cue sheet rather than an entire prompt book. It was only on arrival at the Lincoln Centre, New York that the absence of such a document was queried, contested and "remedied" with an individual appointed to generate a written document as a matter of urgency so that the technical stage management team had an orthodox means of interfacing with the production. The printed script seems thin and may be regarded as slight in terms

identity of the ensemble as the so called workshop mode and writing dialogue directly into space and time through the voice and body of the rehearsing performer. The cast lived and rehearsed for eight months in the Committed Artists premises – a building on the outskirts of Newtown. The process of developing the production included vocal and physical training in order to reach the levels of fitness that Ngema requires of his performers. The constant repetition of developing sequences meant that the retentive abilities of the entire company could be called on, obviating the necessity of writing down lines as they were resolved.[247] In addition to effecting a natural synthesis between "dialogue" and physical action from the start,[248] the evolution of the playing script through interaction (with the entire company as witnesses and auditors) also meant that any member of the ensemble was effortlessly capable of stepping into any role as an understudy, and was equally capable of delivering the entire text more or less single handedly.[249] More crucially, the focus of every performer was directed not only on their particular role and part within a specific scene, but as intensely engaged with the unfolding narrative as a whole, imbuing the production with an uncommon level of theatrical intensity.

Ngema cast an ensemble of twenty four performers, seven of whom were to play the named characters: Colgate, Crocodile, Silence, Teaspoon, Stimela, Sarafina, and the teacher Mistress It's-a-Pity.[250] All of these named roles are part of the "class room" ensemble and are distinguished by brief instances in which the pertinence of the nickname calls for a fleeting solo line that reveals their abilities as actors[251]. Solo vocalists and dance leaders emerge from within the group without any particular significance (or status) being attached to their role or identity, just as the named characters effortlessly "disappear" within that same collective. And what appears to be a homogenous group is consistently revealed as heterogeneous. The khaki shorts and shirts worn by the five male prisoners in *Asinamali!,* like the monochromatic black, white and grey school uniforms worn by the Morris Isaacson pupils of *Sarafina!*, operate in direct antithesis to the neutral masks of Lecoq's chorus. The uniformly dressed bodies have the effect of drawing attention to the distinctive individual features and expressive range of each individual as a potent intervention regarding both the construction and reception of stereotypes. Meticulously drilled choreographic sequences are accompanied by constant disruptions of the façade of uniformity and precision. Idiomatic individuation is introduced on two levels: firstly, within the choreographed routines performers' faces become the site of animated individuation, and secondly the dance sequences are structured around disrupting the chorus line with breaks in which individual bodies are granted scope to

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of literary and political merit. It conveys little of the theatrical density of the production and its use of mise-en-scène, or its dependence on rich musical expression.

[247] Similarly the musical orchestration is not rendered in the form of a score and the musicians do not require sheet music as a reference point – rather their focus and performance is, from the start, integrated and reliant on the relationship between their music and the performers.

[248] The rendition of "Ode on Westminster Bridge" is a remarkable demonstration of how integrating physical action and gesture supports the retention of a text which is remote and unfamiliar. The unison recitation is accompanied by a continuous series of choreographed movements which link and "illustrate" the meaning of each "foreign" phrase.

[249] I first saw *Sarafina!* in 1987 in the Newtown premises described, about two months before its season premiered at The Market. The work continues to be presented and a considerable number of the original performers still play their original roles. The most recent "revival" of the work was in 2010, and the work continues to be rehearsed and developed without reference to a script or score.

[250] Over 700 aspirant performers had auditioned.

[251] Colgate (so called because of his dazzling toothy smile) is ostensibly the narrator and introduces us to these characters: Teaspoon, the class gossip, Crocodile, the fighter, Stimela, the "express train to Soweto", and the teacher who uses her favourite expression at random and on all occasions. Sarafina is admired and loved for her personal attributes and beyond this for her 'Struggle credentials'.

improvise at random and according to personal style and preference, before being integrated once more within the formally constructed and rehearsed sequences.



Ngema's signature, as it appears in the performance of his early and seminal works,[252] appears to be a celebration of the creative scope and political imperatives of unity and conformity in group action which can be achieved without losing the respect for, and value of, the individual in the process or its presentation. The boundaries between individual and collective are constantly being tested in terms of their elasticity and capacity for constraint. The message of *Asinamali!* and *Sarafina!* seems to be that unity, or rather a united vision, accommodates, and is even strengthened by diversity and pluralities and that working consensus does not entirely depend on the negation of different positions and views. The presentation of these ideas on stage depends on crafting relations between individuals, as performers and as personae, within the actual and symbolic collectives represented.

[252] The scale of his later individual projects is ambitious. Economic and logistical constraints do perhaps preclude the opportunity and scope for emergent theatre makers to experiment in the same vein, but as *Asinamali!* demonstrates, ensemble performance and equitable roles within the process comprise a vital moment in the evolving hybrid forms of South African theatre and its dramatic tradition.

Chapter 5: **The voice of the first person singular in the dramatic monologue: playing status transactions with space, objects and an implied audience.**

"Knowledge and language are rigorously interwoven. They share, in representation, the same origin and the same functional principle; they support one another, complement one another and criticize one another incessantly. [...] But language is knowledge only in unreflecting form; it imposes itself on individuals from the outside, guiding them, willy nilly towards notions that may be concrete or abstract, exact or with little foundation. Knowledge on the other hand, is like a language whose every word has been examined and every relation verified. To know is to speak correctly, and as the steady progress of the mind dictates; to speak is to know as far as one is able, and in accordance with the model imposed by those whose birth one shares."

Michel Foucault (1992:86).

An understanding of the spatial matrices of the modern city and its capacity to engender particular ways of belonging or of alienation underpins the analyses in this chapter, which focuses on status issues pertaining to the individual in relation to settings and situations, objects and an audience, rather than on relations between subjects, fictional or otherwise. The medium of the mise-en-scène thus constitutes a framework through which status transformations of a solitary individual will be addressed.[253] Additionally, this chapter probes performative considerations of the mise-en-scène in order to show that this may expand orthodox literary analysis by including a close reading of a lyric poem. What binds the texts selected for analysis (a theatrical encounter, a lyric poem and a dramatic text) is the common subject of an alienated and disaffected individual, lacking agency and isolated from a group or society. This allows for addressing status positions and dynamics as an analytical tool in relation to individuals positioned on the margins and the periphery of a collective, and whose interactive encounters are either introspective or confined to relations between them and a material world or spatial domain.

As unlikely as it may seem, if regarded in the Simmelian sense of comparing forms regardless of their specific content, the refined world of Prufrock's salon and the robust world of the stage appear to share the propensity for bringing people together, albeit only transiently.[254] Both provide a site for engaging with affinities and differences within the communities and the domestic reception room and public platform are thus instrumental in setting up mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion. What is significant is that the voices of all present at these gatherings are provided with an opportunity to be heard, individually or chorally expressing dissenting or collectively held views spontaneously or through the reiteration of familiar lyrics. In Simmelian terms, both situations are spatially configured in ways that collapse distances between individuals and foreground reciprocity or connection. Additionally both are structured as conventionally negotiated spaces dedicated to sociability as much as constituting, in themselves, forms of objective culture. Clearly performance considerations and aspects of theatricality pertain to both fields of interaction,[255] and the dynamism

[253] Artaud writes: "The Balinese produce the idea of pure theatre with the greatest exactness, where everything in concept and production is valued and only exists through the degree of its objectification *on stage*. They triumphantly demonstrate the absolute superiority of the producer whose creative ability *does away with words*." (1989:36) Ronald Hayman claims that after the collapse of the surrealist project Théâtre Alfred Jarry in 1929*,"*the next important event in Artaud's life occurred in July 1931, when he got the central idea for his 'Theatre of Cruelty' from seeing a troupe of Balinese actors at the Colonial Exhibition in the Bois de Vincennes" (1977:76). Hayman also observes that "Artaud's influence can[not] be isolated from that of other designers Appia and Craig or the directors Meyerhold, Reinhardt, and Piscator, who in their different ways were all challenging what Artaud called the dictatorship of the word" (1977:85).

[254] In their introduction to *Simmel on Culture,* Frisby and Featherstone write: "Simmel's exploration of space goes beyond Kant's notion of space as the abstract possibility of being together (Beisamkeit) in the direction of human interactions as modes of filling space. Sociation fills space. But as Lechner (1991) has pointed out, Simmel's views concerning the 'spatial embeddeness of social configurations should not be confused with the actual causes of social processes. And yet while he shows how space is in some ways socially formed, he does not treat space simply as a social construct. It retains a reality of its own. Simmel's overall position, then, lies somewhere between spatial determinism and social constructionism'" (2006:11).

[255] Artaud's vision of theatre and its unique language is central to this chapter. Martin Esslin writes: "If Artaud is among the modern masters, it is by no means easy to say into which of the recognized categories of achievement his contribution falls. He is not a *thinker* who could be regarded as having produced a coherent body of new knowledge or to have opened up new field of enquiry; nor was he a *doer*, a man of action, a hero who has shaped events, influenced the course of history; and while, undoubtedly, he was a *poet* of great power, it is not his poetry that accounts for his influence. His writings about *theatre* have had considerable influence, but his actual work in that sphere is acknowledged to have been a failure, so that he must be regarded as an inspiration for others rather than a great director in his own right. In this he resembles those powerful figures who, while not producing anything like a tangible, verifiable system of thought, act as catalysts and stimulators for others by opening up new areas of speculation and directing the attention towards new modes of seeing"(1976:10).

of the occasion is lodged in tensions between speaking and listening, being acknowledged, affirmed, or disavowed. Participation oscillates between fostering cohesion and effecting dismissal through either the valorization or rejection of what an individual offers to the group in intrinsically dramatic encounters.

**Simmel: "The Metropolis and Mental Life"[256] and "The Stranger."**

Simmel's essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life",[257] investigates ways of understanding communities and how they differ qualitatively. His hypothesis is that "the metropolis [...] creates in the sensory foundations of mental life, and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organization as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence" (1971:325). He proposes that individual and communal identities are constructed through location and life style which may be summed up as a response mechanism or "adaptations made by the personality in its adjustment to the forces that lie outside of it." The relationship between a "social structure [and what it] promotes between the individual aspects of life and those which transcend the existence of individuals" is central to Simmel's preoccupations since his core concern is to assess "the resistance of the individual to being leveled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism" (1971:324).

Simmel acknowledges the projects of the Enlightenment and 19th century Europe as being the increased emphasis on promoting emancipation and individuality. He proposes that this development has had the effect of making the individual more, rather than less, reliant on interactive relations and writes: "his individuality (which is connected with the division of labour) and his achievements which make him unique and indispensable […] at the same time make him so much more dependent on the complementary activity of others" (1971:324). The life styles of rural habitats provides an initial point for comparative analysis with the urban world which is typified by "swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli [such that the] mind is stimulated by difference between present impressions and those which have preceded" (1971:325). Small town life is typified by continuity and conserving traditions, as he puts it, "the steady equilibrium of unbroken customs," whereas the urban world is one of "rapid telescoping of changing images" (1971:325). These contrasting conditions require different psychic and mental responses and types of energy. Herein lies Simmel's hypothesis regarding the "essentially intellectualistic character of the mental life of the metropolis" (1971:325). He suggests that this quality is individually developed as a response to external conditions in contrast to the more emotionally and relationally derived dispositions of the small town inhabitant. The pluralities that characterize city life are amplified by the consequences of the metropolis being the hub or "concentration of commercial activity" (1971:326).

[256] The essay is cited as being "one of Simmel's most famous essays, described by Louis Wirth in 1925 as 'the most important single article on the city form the sociological standpoint'"(Frisby and Featherstone 2006:12).
[257] For Simmel, "the metropolis is the site of the domination of objective culture and indeed of 'the culture of all things'" (2006:13).

Economic metaphors infiltrate diverse forms of interaction by becoming the standard through which social interaction is understood.

> Money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e., with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level. All emotional relationships between persons rest on their individuality, whereas intellectual relationships deal with persons as with numbers, that is, as with elements which, in themselves, are indifferent, but which are of interest only insofar as they offer something objectively perceivable (1971:326).[258]

For Simmel, this has far reaching consequences: relationships tend to become redefined in terms of professional role, or "obligatory associations" (1971:327), impersonally distanced and largely anonymous.[259] Economic discourse is manifested in a tendency towards "calculation" in spheres of life that seem far removed from being assessed in terms of value and cost-efficiency .[260]

He suggests that distance and an element of reticence is a response to the ceaseless routine encounters of high density urban living and closely agglomerated proximity to others, claiming that "the mental attitude of the people of the metropolis to one another may be designated as one of reserve" (1971:331).The blasé attitude, Simmel suggests, is a psychic phenomenon produced by metropolitan life as a response to the incessant and rapid change of stimuli. He defines, and to some extent accounts for, the defensive strategy of indifference by calling it "an incapacity to react to new situations with the required amount of energy" (1971:329). As he puts it:

> The essence of the blasé attitude[261]is an indifference toward the distinctions between things […] the meaning and the value of the distinctions between things, and therewith of things themselves, are experienced as meaningless [...] To the extent that money, with its colourlessness and its indifferent quality can become the common denominator of all values, it becomes a frightful leveller – it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair. They all float with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money (1971:329).

In Simmel's view the impulse towards self-preservation and sustained coherence of "subjective life" fosters a "negative type of social conduct" which fractures the cohesion of the social body into a

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[258] Arjun Appadurai indicates the centrality of Simmel's writing to recent and contemporary anthropological and sociological theory in his introduction to *The Social Life of Things (1986)* when he writes: "As to what we mean by economic value, the most useful (though not quite standard) guide is Georg Simmel" (2009:3). He proceeds to draw extensively on Simmel's concept of how value is produced through the dynamics of exchange, rather than being inherent in an object itself.

[259] It is beyond my present scope to discuss the impact of the formation of the modern city as a consequence of industrialism, commerce and capitalist foundations manifest in Simmel's thinking about social organization, and address ways in which technology, virtual reality and mass communication via the internet, facebook, twitter and mobile phones have intensified the tensions that Simmel scrutinizes. Face to face encounters and social inter-action have been supplemented by mediated encounters in which the screen is crucial to the transmission and reception of messages, introducing new and rapidly shifting nuances in conventions of communication and interaction.

[260] He writes: "The modern mind has become more and more a calculating one. The calculating exactness of practical life which has resulted from a money economy corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula. It has been the money economy which has thus filled the daily life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms" (1971:327). In his view concerns with precision and punctuality are further manifestations of loading time with issues of value –a notion that is memorably articulated in *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock*: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons."

[261] The "blasé attitude" reaches an apotheosis in the snippets of conversation overheard by Prufrock.

diversity of plural affiliations.[262] Moreover, he posits "that the self-reservation of certain types of personalities is obtained at the cost of devaluing the entire objective world, ending inevitably in dragging the personality downward into a feeling of its own valuelessness" (1971:330).[263] The sense of value, or conversely, valuelessness, clearly implies a position and points towards status dynamics articulated in terms of a vertical dimension.

Simmel's brief essay "The Stranger" mobilizes the criteria of objectivity and organic bases pivotal to his ideas of group formation and group affiliation (addressed in the previous chapter) and provides another example of how he uses dualism as a tool to probe what it is that typifies the phenomenon that he is analyzing. His study introduces a paradigm shift in conceptualizing status relations: this pertains to conceptualizing status in terms of the individual in relation to the group and also to a consideration of relations between groups. In terms of both individual and groups, Simmel identifies insider/outsider relations, marginality/centrality, and forces of inclusion/exclusion that implies a different geometry and sense of space. The horizontal plane is inferred as the dominant plane within fields of interaction: the individual "stranger" travels across distances between communities; and, collective territorial expansion or group migration are the corollary to the re-location of the single individual.

The stranger synthesizes the polarities of wandering and settlement, detachment and attachment. Simmel's definition of the stranger is predicated on spatially defined determinants although he draws on temporal factors to distinguish between the nomadic "wanderer", who resists settlement, and the stranger who "comes today and stays tomorrow" (1971:143). For him the stranger, unlike the nomad, is one who "is fixed within a spatial circle – or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries – but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it" (1971:143). Particular forms of interactive encounters are consequently produced between the individual and the collective through the very fact that the stranger is a person whose "membership of a group involves both being outside it and confronting it" (1971:144).[264] His concern with proximities and positions, what it means to embody a contradiction within antithetical (and even paradoxical) concepts of inter-personal relations, has implications for the inter-active encounter, philosophies of aesthetics and reception, and socio-political relations. As he puts it, "the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but this strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near" (1971:143). "Remoteness" is asserted on the grounds that the outsider is "not bound up organically, through established ties of kinship, locality or occupation" which endows him, or her, a characteristic of "mobility" (1971:145).

Simmel's archetype of the stranger in occupational terms is drawn from the economic sphere. "The trader" is his prototype and occupies a position that he defines as being that of a "supernumerary" (1971:144).[265] On historical grounds, he cites the "European Jew" as an example before going on to

[262] He avoids Marx's stronger term "alienation" and proposes the less value laden term "dissociation". He writes: "dissociation is in reality only one of the elementary forms of socialization" (1971:332).
[263] Prufrock, as shall be demonstrated, takes refuge in isolation amidst classical allusions in an affirmation of his own sense of being and value.
[264] His propositions offer a means of analyzing xenophobic confrontations and the emergence of a xenophobic discourse. The prototype of Simmel's "stranger" in the 20th and 21st centuries is recast as the migrant labourer, the refugee and exile.
[265] "Trade can always absorb more men than can primary production" (1971:144).

identify particular features that accrue to the position of the stranger. The "stranger" has a measure of autonomy which Simmel maps in terms of material considerations and more general and abstract social dynamics. He claims that "the stranger is by his very nature no owner of land – land not only in the physical sense, but also metaphorically as a vital substance which is fixed, if not in space, then at least in an ideal position within the social environment" (1971:144). Then, on the basis of what is associated with the characteristic of "mobility", Simmel suggests that the stranger is endowed with a certain "objectivity" that typifies his form of group affiliation and cites the historical example of the appointment of certain Italian judges on the grounds of impartiality. In respect of this he suggests that:

> … objectivity is by no means nonparticipation [...] It is rather a positive and definite kind of participation [...] the full activity of the mind working according to its own laws, under conditions that exclude accidental distortions and emphases whose individual and subjective differences would produce quite different pictures of the same object (1971: 145).

In other words, the stranger is "not bound by ties which could prejudice his perception" (1971:146). This detachment, according to Simmel, while it confers a level of "freedom" on the Stranger, also contains "many dangerous possibilities" (1971:146).[266]

Simmel's scrutiny of the links that bind the individual to a collective expands on the more general typology of organic and objective mechanisms that are set out in his overarching enquiry into group affinity and allegiance.[267] He probes the significance between what might be termed 'specific and local' distinctions between individuals as opposed to 'broader and more general' factors that underpin group formation and affiliation. The variables clearly establish degrees of tenacity and intensity regarding the kinds of connections that are made and how sustainable these may prove to be:

> With the stranger one has only certain *more general* qualities in common,[268] whereas the relation with organically connected persons is based on similarity of just those specific traits which differentiate them from the merely universal (1971:147).

His conclusion addresses the negative implications of the definition "stranger" in which "the relations are a non-relation" (1971:148).[269] Claiming that "the relation of the Greeks to the

[266] He expands: "From earliest times, in uprisings of all sorts the attacked party has claimed that there has been incitement from the outside, by foreign emissaries and agitators" (1971:146) The trope of the alien and hostile invader is taken up by Susan Sontag as a theoretical explanation for the rhetoric surrounding the AIDS pandemic in *Aids and its Metaphors*. She proposes that: "in premodern medicine, illness is described as it is experienced intuitively, as a relation of the outside and inside" (2002:120). Her account of ways in which "plague" discourse has developed (in relation to the Bubonic plague, cholera, smallpox and AIDS) demonstrates "one feature of the usual script for plague: the disease invariably comes from somewhere else" (2002:133). She restates the same idea later: "Illness is a species of invasion" (2002: 134). In her view, the" connection of exotic origin with dreaded disease" (2002:136) is tenacious in its hold on the imagination, disseminated and perpetuated through discursive rhetoric.

[267] Goethe's "novella", *Elective Affinities* (1809), is prompted by his work in physics and seeks to account for relationships between people on the basis of "chemical attraction." In an early conversation with Charlotte and the Captain, Eduard explains: "If you think of water, or oil, or quicksilver, you will find a unity and coherence of their parts. They will not relinquish this unified state except through the force of some other agent. If this is removed, they immediately come together again" (1971:51).

[268] "The stranger is close to us insofar as we feel between him and ourselves similarities of nationality or social position, of occupation or of general human nature. He is far from us insofar as these similarities extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people" (1971:147).

barbarians is a typical example", he observes that "so are all cases in which the general characteristics one takes as peculiarly and merely human are disallowed to the other" (1971:148). This establishes a premise on which theories of stereotyping differences may be developed:

> The consciousness of having only the general in common has exactly the effect of putting a special *emphasis on that which is not common*. For a stranger to a country, the city, the race, and so on, what is stressed is again nothing individual, but alien origin, a quality which he has, or could have, in common with many other strangers. For this reason strangers are not really perceived as individuals. (1971:148, my emphasis).

Simmel's model thus accounts for discrimination and prejudice of one group against another.[270] His abstract and theoretical enquiry into collective intolerance and bigotry signals the ways in which social cohesion is subject to fracturing from pressures grounded in the perception of differences which are privileged over what is held in common. And, although he does not address the implications of asymmetrical access to resources within fields of interaction, a contemporary reading of his analysis cannot separate these concerns from the relations that he examines.

Whereas in *The Web of Group Affiliations,* Simmel seems to advocate a pluralistic and egalitarian definition of the subject who operates with some autonomy in developing an identity predicated on connections and affiliations that are 'free' choices, in "The Stranger" the outcome of the self-spun web of associations and encounters suggests less autonomy than his more generalized suppositions propose. Just as Foucault's subject is caught in a web of discourse and the power relations which govern social connections, so too Simmel's inter-subjective model implies that subjectivity cannot be accounted for only in terms of a psychological model as our sense of being depends on the sense of location, status and relations between self and others and is accordingly always relational and dynamic. To the extent that subjectivity is produced through affiliation with particular groups, and an ever increasing and diversified engagement in multiple groups produces individuation, Simmel's view of the subject has some correspondence with Foucault's notion of the subject as produced through discourse rather than inherently autonomous, as proposed by classical Humanism. As "The Stranger" proposes, this may well be produced through the emphasis of differences which curtails and delimits the scope for social cohesion.

The implication of Simmel's ideas for the micro-groups within improvisation training and indeed more broadly in South Africa today are complex and far reaching.[271] His ideas imply a pedagogy that 'defies' the psychological model of individual expression through nurturing an ensemble based model emphasizing a response-based (rather than autonomous) approach to performance. His analysis and explanation of the interactive dynamics that produce the 'stranger', or 'other', underpins, and subtly augments more recent studies of the stereotype and its representation. Simmel's concepts of "disassociation within the metropolis" and the status of "the stranger" occupying marginalized positions establishes continuities between the analyses that follow, all of

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[269] He qualifies this by asserting that his primary concern has focused elsewhere – "he is not what we have been discussing here: the stranger as a member of the group itself" (1971:148) and later: "Despite his being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is still an organic member of the group" (1971:149).

[270] The peculiar tension in his writing is perhaps a reflection of his own position, as a Jewish scholar within the German Academy. Despite his evident integration in social and intellectual spheres, he, like the stranger, remains an outsider, both near and far, the subject of his own hypothesis. His "objective" enquiry scrupulously avoids any personal indications of this possibility.

[271] Simmel incorporates in his essay the "stranger" in "even the most intimate relationships" (1971:147). Sexual and erotic encounters are also probed in terms of generalization and specificity, familiarity and estrangement.

which articulate the position of an isolated individual. Defined through their spatial distance from a collective, these individuals provide the opportunity for an enquiry into alienation or disaffection which is consequently articulated in terms of encounters or relationships with their surroundings, with objects, recollections and consciousness.

**Artaud and mise-en-scène: his last public appearance, *Lot and his Daughters* and *The Conquest of Mexico.***

Alone on a public stage a single individual, pages of writing in hand to anchor his speech and presentation, addressed an audience for nearly three hours.

> It had been advertised as a 'Tête-á-tête with Antonin Artaud' and the overflow audience packed into the small Paris theater on January 24, 1947, gaped in wonder. On stage was one of the most storied figures of the pre-war Parisian avant-garde. A decade before, the actor and artist had announced his plans to create a new kind of drama, a new type of theatrical performance – a display of delirium designed to 'stir up shadows' and to spark, as if by contagion, 'a spasm in which life is continually lacerated,' convulsing the spectator 'with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior'(Miller 1994:94).[272]

The address consisted of nonsense syllables interspersed with silences and snatches of French. The performance of provocative poetic incantations – "o dedi/o dada orzoura/o dou zoura/a dada skizi" (Miller 1994:95) – concluded in a challenging assertion articulated in a single key question. This question, and the circumstances in which it is uttered, raises the issue of presence and the impossibility of communication without recourse to the use of symbolic codes.

The attempt to probe and explain his last stage performance inter-textually, through reference to Artaud's own writing anterior to the encounter itself in order to understand what this encounter might signify, is curiously antithetical to Artaud's declared objectives. Nonetheless, the analytical exercise brings into play the contradictions and complexities inherent in the theatrical presentation of self. Artaud, in a direct appeal to his audience, harnessed identity and subjectivity to "theatricality" by way of concluding his interaction with a public audience. He inserted a simple cogent question that invoked the full reflexive deliberations that problematized identity and truth, representation and reality. "I put myself in your place, and I can see that what I tell you isn't at all interesting. *It's still theater.* What can one do to be truly sincere?" (Miller 1994:95, my emphasis). Gide,[273] according to Miller, "concluded that this was Artaud's finest hour; 'Never before had he seemed so admirable to me'" (1994:96). Foucault's response was not dissimilar, and Miller uses the account to launch his chapter on Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*:

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[272] Hyman records the same event: "If the declamation of a Nerval poem could constitute an example of [the idea of the Theatre of Cruelty], so could a reading by Artaud of his own work, and the conviction grew in him that he ought himself to give a performance in public, so it was arranged that he should appear at the Vieux-Colombier on 13 January 1947 [....] 'Tête-á-tête par Antonin Artaud, avec 3 poèms déclamés par l'auteur.'[...] there were about 700 people in the theatre, a hundred of them standing at the back" (1977:134).

[273] "We are not free and the sky can still fall on our heads," he writes, "And, above all else, theatre is made to teach us this" (1989:60).
"As André Gide later recalled, the audience leaving the theater that night: 'remained silent. What could they say? They had just seen an unhappy man, fearfully shaken by a god" (Miller 1994:96).

> Improvising a unified performance that breached the boundaries between acting and being, artifice and uncontrollable impulse, Artaud had put his mind to the test, unforgettably evoking for his audience, as Foucault later put it, 'that space of physical suffering and terror which surrounds or rather coincides with the void' (1994:96).

Miller draws on Ruby Cohn's "account" in *From 'Desire' to 'Godot': Pocket Theater of Postwar Paris,* and comments on the significance of the event via his reading of Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double*. The *tête-á-tête* as a theatrical encounter is preserved only through description, raising questions of the filtering processes attendant on reception and interpretation central to Artaud's own project. Artaud challenged the reliability and efficacy of language as much as the aesthetics and ethics of representation, and has been taken up by Derrida.[274] And, as if in direct contradiction to the claim that the transient encounter "leaves no trace no object to carry off", the sedimented layers of the account of his own final appearance on stage continue to circulate and may be analysed inter-textually through reference to his writing and manifestoes.

Artaud's text, *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), announced his ambition to forge a new form of theatre that celebrated transience and presentational density along with decimating the conventional divide between the space assigned to players and audience, life and art. Not unlike Eliot in his search for a new form of expression, his avant-garde experiment challenged the representational idiom and psychological enquiries[275] of the dominant mode of realism.[276] He eschewed the contemporary subject in favour of "themes from the past [with a view to] transform[ing] them completely (Styan 1994: 107) but he differed sharply from Eliot in rejecting the logocentric bias of the dramatic text[277] and redefined theatre in terms of the potency of mise-en-scène and sensory affect.[278] Artaud emphatically disputed the controlling authority of the word and a performance tradition that revered both script and playwright, as announced in the opening

[274] Derrida states: "Artaud knew that the theater of cruelty neither begins nor is completed within the purity of simple presence, but rather is already within representation, in the 'second time of Creation,' in the conflict of forces which could not be that of a simple origin. [...] Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated. Affirmation itself must be penetrated in repeating itself" (1993:249).

[275] Artaud writes: "Psychology persists in bringing the unknown down to a level with the known, that is to say with the everyday and pedestrian. And psychology has caused this abasement and fearful loss of energy which appears to me to have really reached its limit. And it seems both theatre and ourselves want nothing more to do with psychology" (1989:58). Samuel Weber explains that certain misinterpretations of this statement are a possible consequence of a "very misleading render(ing) in the published English version" (2004:282). Weber makes the case that the translation "resists a critique of psychology directed not just against a form of individualism but against humanism more generally." In his view "Artaud criticizes 'psychology,' not for its individualism, but for its humanism, (which) extrapolates from individuals to a general idea of 'man' which it places at the centre of the universe" (2004:282). The project of humanism and theatrical movements within its discourse is to represent man as the "governing principle of life and death, being and non-being" (2004:283), the central controlling authority of his ordered and stable universe.

[276] In "No More Masterpieces", he begins: "One of the reasons for the stifling atmosphere we live in without any possible escape or remedy, which is shared by even the most revolutionary among us – is our respect for what has been written, expressed or painted, for whatever has taken shape as if all expression were not finally exhausted, has not arrived at the point where things must break up to begin again, to make a fresh start" (1989:55). "Once spoken, all speech is dead and is only active as it is spoken. Once a form is used it has no more use, bidding man to find another form, and theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, is never repeated in the same way" (1989:56).

[277] "Let us do away with this foolish adherence to texts, to *written* poetry. Written poetry is valid once and then ought to be torn up" (1989:59).

[278] "I maintain the stage is a tangible, physical space that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak in its own concrete language. I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical, tangible language I am referring to is really only theatrical in as far as the thoughts it expresses escape spoken language." (Artaud "Production and Metaphysics" 1989:27).

paragraphs of the First Manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty: "We must first break theatre's subjugation to the text and rediscover the idea of a kind of language somewhere between gesture and thought" (1989:68). His rationale for resisting the authority of the dramatic text and the 'tyranny' of an invisible author is closely bound up with the efficacy of language and representation. He launches this position in "No More Masterpieces", in which he writes:

> Any true feeling cannot in reality be expressed. To do so is to betray it. To express it, however, is to *conceal* it. True expression conceals what it exhibits. It pits the mind against nature's real vacuum, by creating in reaction a kind of fullness of thought. Or rather it creates a vacuum in thought, in relation to the manifest illusion of nature. Any strong feeling produces an idea of emptiness within us, and lucid language which prevents […] poetry appearing in thought. For this reason an image, an allegory, a form disguising what it means to reveal, has more meaning to the mind than the enlightenment brought about by words or their analysis (1989:53).

This does not translate, however, to dispensing entirely with any form of spoken idiom, as he makes quite clear a few paragraphs later:

> There is no question of abolishing speech in theatre but of changing its intended purpose, especially to lessen its status, to view it as something other than a way of guiding human nature to external ends, since our theatre is solely concerned with the way emotions and feelings conflict with one another or the way man is set against man in life (1989:53).

The range and intensity of responses to this public encounter bears out Artaud's own theatrical vision that the "unrepeatability" of the theatrical gesture[279] is accompanied by its having a potent *affectivity.* As Weber puts it: "The spectator of the theater of cruelty envisaged [...] by Artaud is one 'whose blood will have been traversed by violent scenes.' Such a spectator will have been transformed by what he has witnessed" (2004:279). Weber argues that Artaud's challenges to Aristotelian concepts of drama specifically concern the medium of presentation[280] which in its textual materiality cannot be separated from its meaning. Weber connects this modernist position with a fundamental interrogation of the premise of unity upon which Aristotle's argument rests. He writes:

> It may help to recall once again Aristotle's insistence that a tragic plot should be capable of being 'taken in at a single view'. The unity of such a 'view' presupposes a stable and detachable *point* of view, a fixed position from which the plot can be taken in as a unified whole. This in turn presupposes a certain arrangement of space: a clear cut separation for instance, between stage and audience, actors and spectators. Artaud challenges this stable partitioning of space and the kind of localization that makes it possible (2004:283).

[279] Weber writes: "Properly performed, namely *theatrically,* the violent gesture remains *singular*. 'Once accomplished,' Artaud insists, it can never be identically repeated, above all, not in the world 'outside'" (2004:278).

[280] Weber discerns clear continuities between the philosophies of Aristotle and Artaud regarding drama and performance. He queries whether or not the "Theater of Cruelty [is] in some sense haunted by the ghost of Aristotle – the very tradition against which Artaud rebels" (2004:279) and makes the point that "Artaud – unlike Brecht for instance – never considered himself primarily 'anti- Aristotelian'. Rather, the tradition from which he sought to distance himself was the modern theatrical tradition that had developed in the West since the Renaissance" (2004:279). Weber identifies three points on which Aristotle and Artaud converge. They share the insistence on the affective capacity of theatre and its mode of impacting on its audience through *catharsis* (Aristotle) and "transformation through witnessing" (Artaud); secondly, both make "action' rather than 'character' the objective of representation and, finally, both acknowledge the "pedagogical function" (2004:279) of theatre. As Weber puts it: "What Artaud condemns [...] is, not narrative as such, but the kind of narrative that Aristotle himself rejects; one that subordinates *action* to *character"* (2004:281, my emphasis).

Weber argues that "unity [...] is what Artaud's Theater of Cruelty calls into question: unity of meaning, of action, of the subject, and, above all of time, space and *place*" (2004:284). The conventional structuring, allocation and use of space, specifically its boundaries, divisions and capacity for assigning particular roles and levels of agency is what was violated in the interaction between Artaud and one particular member of the audience: André Gide. The distance between 'performer' and 'spectator' collapsed as the actions of the latter dissolved what conventionally separates the 'spectacle' from its reception.

The sole subject of the stage 'spectacle' at the centre of Miller's account is Artaud himself: "old, gaunt, possessed" (Miller 1994:95). His floundering gestures and actions are likened to those of a "drowning man" (1994:410). He is the subject of his own representation: "The man on stage would not let his audience ignore his pain, his suffering, his nine years of psychiatric confinement, the more than sixty convulsive shock treatments he had been forced to undergo" (1994:95).[281] Miller identifies, in endnotes to his text, the spectator who describes the figure in terms of "drowning" as none other than André Gide (1994:410). Roger Blin later described the response of the erudite cognoscenti of which he was a member: "We were all in extreme anguish. He told us afterward that the void in the room made him afraid" (1994:95). Acute existential anxiety and personal crisis is attested to by both Artaud and his audience. Sixty years later we are reliant on the printed word for interpreting and evaluating the significance of this encounter: lacking the performative signals of inflection, intonation and tempo of delivery, or any verifiable image of embodied presence, there is absolutely no means of asserting a reliable understanding of Artaud's presentation. There are only the descriptions of the encounter and its conclusion:[282]

> Repeatedly he fell silent. He seemed lost. Repeatedly, he started over.
>
> And so it went for almost three hours, hands flying, words tumbling, silent pauses creating a mounting sense of apprehension.
>
> Then an accident: in a sweeping gesture, Artaud knocked over the papers he was reading. Stopping, he bent down to retrieve the manuscript. His glasses fell off. He dropped to his knees. Groping blindly, he searched for his poetry [.....]
>
> Sitting in the front row was André Gide, at seventy-eight the dean of French letters. From his seat he tried to show Artaud where his manuscript had fallen. It was no use. Slowly, unsteadily, the actor, as if suddenly a broken man, lifted himself up and sank back into his seat. "I put myself in your place," he said, "and I can see that what I tell you isn't at all interesting. *It's still theater.* What can one do to be truly sincere?"
>
> The show was over. With the help of a neighbour, Gide rose to his feet, walked on stage, embraced Artaud, and guided him to the wings. It was Artaud's last public appearance; fourteen months later, he was dead (Miller 1994:95).

Gide's spontaneous (presumably silent) gesture seems to require no interpretation – its meaning and value lies beyond words, or as Artaud himself might have understood it, it forges a new

[281] Derrida posits: "There is no theatre in the world today which fulfils Artaud's desire. And there would be no exception to be made for the attempts made by Artaud himself. He knew this better than any other: the 'grammar' of the theater of cruelty, of which he said it is 'to be found', will always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a re-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent." (1993:248)

[282] The complexities attendant on attempting to analyze Artaud's "Tête-à-tête" demand the acknowledgement that any attempt to extend and interrogate a text is positional, and partial, contextually constrained and constructed.

language "where the usual limits of feelings and words are transcended" (Artaud 1989:30). Ronald Hayman records that:

> Ten days later Artaud wrote in a letter [...] 'As for the improvised words, what I had to say was in my silences, not in my words. If I did not say what I had come to say, it was because, having arrived at the actual point, I *renounced* it, and because, after the poems, it appeared to me that what I had to say could no longer be said with words' (1977:135).

It is however, misleading to interpret this as a rejection of speech in theatre, as Weber observes:

> Despite his attack on verbal discourse, Artaud never dreams of excluding language as such form the theatre, but rather of restoring its capacity to signify in short, its *virtuality.* To do this, the tyranny of *meaning* must be supplanted by a language of *signification:* a language, above all of gesture, intonation, attitude, and movement, but without a recognizable or identifiable 'goal.' The absence of such a goal would allow the movement of language, its signifying force, to come into its own without being subordinated to a purpose. The incidence of such a language of signification would be inseparable from its location in time and space (2004:286).

Artaud's writing is opaque and frequently mystical as is demonstrated in *"*Production and Metaphysics.*"* The essay is not frequently referred to by scholars or theatre makers, but is nonetheless noteworthy on two accounts. The introduction, with its careful analysis of a painting, is a compelling demonstration of Artaud's intensely visual orientation, while the title of the essay itself signals the crucial import, to him, of how the theatrical encounter is constructed, defined and crafted. He begins the essay with the same critical move later made by Foucault in the opening of *The Order of Things*, although the painting to which Artaud devotes his attention is considerably more obscure than that of Diego Velasquez.[283]

> There is a work by a Primitive painter in the Louvre, whether known or unknown I cannot say, who will never represent a major school in art history. The artist name is Lucas van Leyden and to my mind he invalidates the four or five hundred years of painting coming after him, rendering them useless. The painting in question is entitled *Lot and his Daughters,* a biblical subject in the style of the period (1989:23).

Artaud writes as compellingly of the composition and formal attributes of the painting as of its contents and affective capacity. He begins: "Even before we have made out the subject, we get the feeling something important is happening and it seems the ear is as affected by it as the eye. A tremendously important mental drama appears accumulated there..." (1989:23). He later reiterates the extent to which the value of the painting lies in its compelling impact: "It would be untrue to claim that the thoughts emerging from this painting are totally clear. At all events they are of a grandeur to which we have become totally unaccustomed during the last few centuries by painting that was merely painting" (1989: 25).

The tableau of figures is situated within an apocalyptic landscape to which Artaud devotes as much attention as he gives to the declared subjects of the painting, the patriarch and his daughters. His

[283] There may be some significance in the lack of recognition and critical attention granted to the painting. Van Leyden's image and its impact on the viewer clearly held a potent place in Artaud's thought. Hayman records Artaud's dissatisfaction with post-Renaissance painting which had concentrated superficial appearances: "'Painting has fallen under the anecdotal domination of nature and psychology. Instead of being a means of revelation, it has become an art of simple descriptive representation'" (1977:106).

description of the voyeuristic Lot and the 'objects' of his gaze, his many daughters, introduces a theme of bodies held up for display. Both sets of bodies are conscious of the power of appealing to the eye of the beholder, stimulating desire that is potently transgressive in defiance of any taboo laid down by cultural or supernatural authority.

> A tent is pitched on the shore, in front of which Lot is seated, wearing a breastplate and sporting a fine red beard, watching his daughters parade before him as if he were a guest at a prostitute banquet.
>
> And in fact they strut about, some mothers, others Amazons combing their hair or fencing, as if they never had any other object than to please their father, to serve as his creatures or playthings. Here we see the deeply incestuous nature of this old subject which the artist has developed in sexual imagery, a proof that he has fully understood all its deep sexuality in a modern way, that is to say as we would understand it ourselves (1989: 24).

Beyond a fleeting reference later in the essay,[284] this is the sum of the attention that Artaud grants to the figures after whom the image takes its title. His attention is directed almost entirely to other elements within the composition in what seems to be a demonstration of his insistence that the mise-en-scène in its entirety is what stimulates the viewer and rouses response. Indeed, it is in direct relation to "the fire in the sky" which signals that "this drama originated in the heavens, took place in the heavens" resulting in "the strange colouring and jumble of forms" (1989:23), that Artaud draws on 'life' experiences that have some equivalent in order to convey the disturbing effects that the image produces. He refers to the experience of watching firework explosions which fuse sound and light, describing "the nocturnal gunfire of shooting stars, sky rockets and Roman candles" to demonstrate how these have the effect of stripping natural forms of their customary appeal to the eye in terms of "colour and appearance, forever remaining associated in our minds with a notion of ear splitting noise" (1989:24).

The field of interaction, a conflict between opposing forces of power and authority, is articulated on more than one level within the painting, or so Artaud seems to suggest. The "full destructive power" being unleashed by a "higher authority" animates the artwork. The impact of this plays out in two directions. Primary consideration is given to the impact on the viewer of the painting, and Artaud's response gives some indication of its affectivity: "...there is something horribly forceful and disturbing about the way the painter depicts this fire, like active changing features in a set expression. It makes little difference how this effect is achieved, it is real. One has only to see the painting to be convinced of it" (1989:25). Secondly, the consequences of the cosmic explosion are integrated within the image itself:

> … this spit of land, however near it may appear to the shore where Lot's tent is pitched, still leaves room for a vast gulf where an unprecedented marine disaster seems to have taken place. Ships broken in two but not yet sunk are propped up on the sea as if on crutches, while the water around them is full of their uprooted masts and broken spars.
>
> It is hard to say why such an impression of absolute disaster emanates from the sight of one or two shipwrecked vessels (1989:25).

Clearly, the magnitude of the divine wrath at the disruption of an inscribed order, ethics and moral code, is simultaneously both naturalized and manifested in the eruption of chaos.

[284] "In addition, Lot and his daughters suggest an idea of sexuality and reproduction and Lot seems placed there like a drone, to take improper advantage of his daughters. This is almost the only social idea in the picture" (1989:25).

Artaud acknowledges that the formal competencies of the artist enable him to manipulate conventions and the material elements of the painting with its "formal, external symmetry" (1989:26). His discussion of the ideas that the painting generates in response includes identifying the "metaphysical dimension" suggesting that change,[285] fate, chaos, the marvellous, the balance of forces and the futility of words are all represented visually. As much as the landscape is transfigured by the dissonance and discolouration emanating from the fiery web, the viewer too may be viscerally 'transformed' through the encounter with the image. The "fire in the sky" seems to exemplify the force aspired to and the insouciance of Lot and his Daughters, in contrast to the destructive force unleashed about them, is an allegory of status relations within the spatio-temporal domain.

In an ostensible change in direction, Artaud then advances a series of questions regarding the multiply coded medium of theatre. He announces this shift in focus with a directness that belies allegations of obscurity levelled at him:

> And I ask this question.
> How can it be that in the theatre, at least such as we know it in Europe, or rather in the West, everything specifically theatrical, that is to say everything which cannot be expressed in words or if you prefer, everything that is not contained in dialogue...has been left in the background? [286] (1989:26).

In advocating a "solid material language by which theatre can be distinguished from words" (1989:27), Artaud proposes that "it is composed of everything filling the stage, everything that can be shown and materially expressed on stage, intended first of all to appeal to the senses, instead of being addressed primarily to the mind, like spoken language" (1989:27). Re-configuring the space along metaphysical and material terms is pivotal to Artaud's conceptualization and demonstrates the extent to which the spatio-temporal factors are intrinsic to the theatre. His goal of collapsing the conventional distance between the bounded text, the performance and its reception, stresses the role of spatial organization in theatre.

> We intend to do away with stage and auditorium, replacing them by a kind of single undivided locale without any partitions of any kind and this will become the scene of the action. [...] Direct communication will be re-established between the audience and the show, between actor and audience from the very fact that the audience is seated at the centre of the action, is encircled and furrowed by it. This encirclement comes from the shape of the house itself. Abandoning the architecture of present day theatres, we will rent some kind of barn or hanger rebuilt along the lines culminating in the architecture of some churches, holy places, or certain Tibetan temples (1989:74).

[285] "There is an idea of change in the different landscape details and the way they are painted, […that] lead us into the mind […] the same way as in music" (1989:26). The transformations within the landscape correspond with the idea that the stage spectacle should be one that constantly changes but is neither literal nor illustrative. Artaud's views return us to the key principles of *The Scenic System à l'Italienne (*after Sabbattini) which, as Richard Southern stresses, was predicated on the scene operating according to three primary requirements: that the scene image should intermittently be changed, secondly that these changes should themselves be fully visible to the audience, rather than concealed, and finally that the changes should contrive to happen as if by magic with no apparent human effort.

[286] He returns to this aspect of production later in the same essay: "All these elements when they exist outside the script, are generally considered the lowest part of theatre, are usually called 'craft' and are associated with what is known as staging or 'production'. We are lucky when the word staging is not just tagged on to the idea of external artistic lavishness solely connected with costume, lighting and décor" (1989:29).

Hayman suggests that "the most influential passage of all in Artaud's manifesto deals with theatre architecture and the relationship of the acting area to the auditorium" (1977:86).[287] His writing otherwise, however, continued to depend on conventional concepts, even if these are designated differently. The scene, "actors" and "staging", continue to surface with the roles of "author and producer" conflated "in a kind of single Creator" (the "director") whose guiding hand is responsible for "producing the play and the action" (1989:72). Moreover, the echo of Aristotelian principles may be traced in the opening paragraph describing *The Conquest of Mexico*, in which Artaud outlines his intentions for the first declared project of the Theatre of Cruelty. He begins:

> We will stage events rather than men.[288] Men will appear in their proper place with their emotions and psychology interpreted as the emergence of certain powers in the light of the events and historical destiny in which they played their role (1989:85).

Far from challenging the Aristotelian paradigm, this revives the emphasis on action although the scope for autonomy and agency on the part of the individual is less than that granted by a classical humanist philosophy. The actor has responsibilities to his fellow players and is a constitutive element of the mise-en-scène. Esslin further substantiates the significance of this conceptualization of a performance dynamic and ethics by citing an extract from a letter to Gaston Gallimard in which Artaud addresses the role of the actor. "What one calls the personality of the actor must disappear completely. There can no longer be an actor who imposes his rhythm on the ensemble and to whose personality everything must be subordinated" (1976:85).

Having announced his approach, Artaud then explains his choice of subject:

> From a historical point of view, *The Conquest of Mexico* raises the question of colonization. It revives Europe's deep-rooted self-conceit in a burning, inexorably bloody manner, allowing us to debunk its supremacy. It contrasts Christianity with far older religions. [...] By raising the dreadfully contemporary problem of colonization, that is the right that one continent considers it has to enslave another, it questions the real supremacy some races may have over others. [...] it sheds light on the organic hierarchy of the Aztec monarchy established on indisputably spiritual principles.[...] we intend to highlight the *spectacular* [289] merits of the conflicts it will stage (1989:85).

This passage signals a departure from the Aristotelian ideals and reinstates the value of the medium of presentation, privileging theatre over drama. While Artaud aims to effect a split between the sign and its referent, or even between the signifier and signified, the referential aspect to his project nonetheless remains explicitly laid out. His vision of the language of theatre augments the physical capacity of the expressive body with "puppets, huge masks, objects of strange proportions (which will) appear by the same right as verbal imagery, stressing the physical aspect of all imagery and expression – with the corollary that all objects requiring stereotyped physical representation will be

[287] Hayman cites a range of theatre directors and designers who challenged the conventions established by the proscenium arch theatre and its use of scenery, some of whom were working independently of Artaud in Europe at the same time, such as Brecht and the designers Appia and Craig. He identifies Artaud's influence as seminal to a wide range of architectural transformations of extant structures into theatre spaces, and to the advent of "environmental staging" and site specific work, both of which attempt to develop new relationships and modes of reception.

[288] Hayman writes: "Artaud's quarrel with the existing drama centred on his conviction that it was wrong for drama to be concerned with the definition of individual character, the delineation of personal thoughts, the elucidation of emotional states, the discussion of psychological and social issues" (1977:79).

[289] He lists the following elements: "images, moves, dances, rituals, melodies cut short, and sudden turns of dialogue...non-speaking parts of the show" (1989:86).

discarded or disguised" (1989:75). The key challenge of his envisaged theatrical project is articulated as:

> The mentality of the masses, the spirit of events, will travel over the show in material waves, determining certain lines of force, and the diminished, rebelled or despairing consciousness of individuals will be carried along like straws.
> Theatrically, the problem is to determine and harmonise these lines of force, to focus them and to obtain suggestive melodies from them (1989:86).

What is significant about Artaud's final public performance, his response to *Lot and his Daughters* and his proposals regarding *The Conquest of Mexico,* is the way in which his writing defines a particular attitude to performance that accentuates the relationship between figures *and* the world they inhabit as the core of theatrical art. Thus he defines a field in which status interaction may be contextualized and expanded to incorporate the audience. Bert O. States in *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* writes:

> I want to deal with stage space, the little room [...] because it seems natural to deal with space before dealing with what happens in it. Even this is a rather misleading justification since stage space and stage event are one and the same thing; they are reciprocal entities, impossible to keep separate for very long, even for discussion purposes. There is even a level on which actors cannot be distinguished from furniture, since both are elements of a composition in time and space (1987:50).

He cites Arnheim's distinction between the pictorial and literary image as an entry point to defining how theatrical images function: a pictorial image presents itself whole, in simultaneity. "A successful literary image grows through what one might call accretion by amendment. Each word, each statement, is amended by the next into something closer to the intended total meaning" (States 1987:53). The medium of theatre combines ever changing visual and aural images – the constant interplay of visible action and spoken utterance, operating in conjunction or antithetically, is what we need to assimilate as we respond to the contents of the scene and indulge, speculatively, in opening up what 'games' are being played, and with what effect.

Theatre as a medium requires that we are equally as attentive to what is invisible rather than seen, along with the silences between words or in the refusal to respond. These, as Artaud insists, are highly productive, even volatile, sites of negotiation and are intensely theatrical, foregrounding what is visible and invisible in the same instant. As potently, silence through speech is an equivalent articulation of theatricality, a force loaded with the potential to disrupt and challenge figures of authority and power. The improvisation studio as a teaching and learning space could be conceptualized as a form of theatre along the lines envisaged by Artaud: the performance area is not formally articulated and remains fluid, as do the relations and roles assigned to participants, who at any given point may be either performers or observers. The focus on para-linguistic elements of communication produces a heightened awareness of encounters between bodies in even the most rudimentary tableaux exercises. Improvisation skills with an outwardly directed focus sharpen the specificity of gesture, innovative experiment in spatial relations, the rhythm and pitch of sounds being generated as a soundscape along with developing the confidence in the use of these tools of the medium. The consciousness of being constantly observed and interpreted in the use of gesture, space and sound, of manipulating the multiple codes of theatre in the interests of their reception and interpretation, is foregrounded as a central component of inhabited relations

between the performer and the spectator. Solo improvisations, by definition, run the risk of introspection and self-indulgence, but Johnstone's exercises, along with a continued emphasis on an outwardly directed focus emphasizing the encounter with objects and a sense of place or space is a means of nurturing a status based approach to generating a performance. The analysis of two texts for a solo voice will demonstrate how this may operate as both avail themselves to applying concepts central to improvisation technique.

***The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock*: the voice of the first person singular.**

A montage of ubiquitous images of the city and snippets of conversation make a spatio-temporal world, just as the salon itself anchors the social encounter of one of the quintessential monologues of the modern metropolis: "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock". Its core action is constituted by attempts at sociality, conversational interaction and engagement with the culture of the cosmopolitan world.[290] According to fellow poet Stephen Spender, Eliot was lured to Paris in 1910 because he was intrigued by the formal poetic devices and experiments of Jules Laforgue and the poem may be read as a tribute to the French poet. "Laforgue wrote dramatic monologues in which the narrator, through speaking in the first person, was viewed objectively and ironically as though by an outsider" (1986:27). Laforgue's own appearance and manner seems to provide a way of understanding the identity of Prufrock as a dramatic character, the eponymous subject of the "lovesong".[291]

The critical challenge presented by 'the contents' of Eliot's poetry is compounded by the poet's position regarding form and subject matter.[292] His preoccupation with relations between form and content corresponds to Simmel's absorption with the modern urban subject.[293] Like Ovid's epic, Eliot's poetry is constructed through performance and the multiple codes of theatrical encounter: the speaking subject is, however, no longer exterior to the text itself. The dramatic subject of the early poems is the isolated individual consciousness. Eliot's lyric provides a means to address the expressive properties and status positions of the first person singular to complement the analysis of the polyphonic voice of the first person plural in the previous chapter. Positions of agency and affect are relationally constructed and contingent on specific social circumstance. Status dynamics are articulated in relation to territory, objects and constructed through interpersonal relations rather than being intrinsically psychological. Eliot's poems are a study in relations between a figure and the territory that he occupies. Such territories, inhabited by the poetic subjects, are crucial in defining the "idiom of the speaking voice" (Williams 1976:193).

[290] The fact that these attempts fail does not negate, but rather confirms Simmel's hypothesis regarding the modern urban crisis being grounded in the encounter of the subject with objective culture.

[291] "In his actual life Laforgue played a muted and subdued role, and was dressed for such a part. There was no meretriciousness. He simply acted not being a poet, and did so while retaining an air of ironic detachment from himself. He wore a dark suit, carried an umbrella and conversed in tones of inflexible politeness" (Spender 1986:28).

[292] Spender claims that "in his later poetry the subject matter becomes increasingly important. However, he never lost the sense that whatever the poem 'said', it was the being poetry and not the saying that mattered. The conflict between the meaning of the poem, as belief, philosophy, report on emotion experienced, and the poem as being nothing but itself – the poetry – was one which preoccupied him all his life" (1986:16).

[293] Simmel's essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" of 1903, begins with the assertion that : "The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. This antagonism represents the most modern form of conflict which primitive man must carry on with nature for his own bodily existence" (1971:324).

The title of the poem is curiously enigmatic: tokens of modernity appear in the prosaic and distinctly un-heroic[294] pronouncement of identity in conjunction with the wistful longings for past expressive forms suggested by the formal properties of a ballad or epic. The poem is a highly condensed exploration of social relations between the individual and a social gathering; status positions and fluctuations shape its contours. Eliot is essentially "a poet of fragments" [295] (Spender 1986:106) in precisely the sense proposed by Simmel vis-à-vis the subject in relation to objective culture.[296] Negotiating sites of sociality and culture, Prufrock's mental processes spiral inwards with cumulative intensity which culminate in introspective imaginings in which transcendental desires surface through allusions to past cultural forms.[297] In his analysis of Prufrock, Spender proposes that the poetic arc is formally articulated in terms of a quest, a search for a grail (1986:39).[298] Perhaps the full resonance of the '"lovesong" motif is not clear until the closing lines although its cadences and yearnings delineate its course. The lyric, as Cassirer observes, is a form that most clearly advances the expressive rather than communicative functions of art; this poem arguably synthesizes both imperatives. The poem is an expression of transcendental longings which are relayed in terms of what Simmel, less poetically, identifies as the outcome of the subjective encounter with objective culture. Simmel's terminology and conceptualization of "subjective culture" and its relations to the objective world is echoed in Spender's articulation of the pressing thematic concerns of his fellow poet: "the relationship of the subjective consciousness with the objective world. The idea that the human mind was the only centre of awareness in the universe filled him with terror" (1986:31). The expressions of desire and affiliation, the astute acknowledgement of social dynamics, make this poem a concentrated articulation of status permutations, charting positions and the trajectories between them. The multiple economies through which value systems are established refract the competing tendencies and demands of modernity.

The poem opens with the line, "Let us go then you and I" plunging us directly into a dialogic, if tenuous, association with the speaker. This active voice implies the presence of a particular persona[299] and also a second presence: the recipient of the utterance. The reiteration of the established relationship is excused by poetic imperatives.[300] The striking immediacy of this provisional, doubly articulated, bond dissipates within the very first step of a shared journey towards an unspecified destination, as the focus shifts to the spatial and temporal context of the encounter.

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[294] Prufrock's name seems a commentary on the specifically American practice of supplementing calling names with initials. This underscores Spender's observation that this early poem was written, at least in part, during Eliot's Harvard years: 1906 – 1914 (1986:26).

[295] Spender develops this theme in relation to "The Waste Land", and later poems, but adopting the Simmelian understanding of the necessarily partial and fragmented nature of relations suggests that this is equally applicable to the early poems.

[296] The individual capacity to engage with another and with culture in incomplete or fragmentary ways is integral to Simmel's thought.

[297] Spender suggests that Eliot's poetry is located in the tensions between "the spiritually negative character of the contemporary world and the spiritually positive character of the past tradition" (1986:9).

[298] "Prufrock is a searcher, and his quest, like that of other individuals in Eliot's poems, is for a grail. The grail, however is a fantasy, artifact, to the real supernatural. The mermaids are related to the grail of *Parsifal* or to Siegfried conversing with the Rhine Maidens" (Spender 1986:39).

[299] Spender suggests that this is not necessarily an autobiographical statement: "Ezra Pound considered that Prufrock was *partly* a self-portrait of the author, just as Hugh Selwyn Mauberley was partly his own self portrait, though neither character was identical with Pound or Eliot" (1986:41, my emphasis).

[300] The 'us' is immediately extended and clarified through specifying that the social relations are between 'you and I': the subject-object relations clearly poise Prufrock as the subject, although his identity, as Spender suggests, is not immediately apparent.

Social connections are severed and displaced in the face of a joint urban expedition which is at once cosmic and intimate, "where evening is spread out against the sky, like a patient etherized upon a table."[301] The unbounded expanse of the sky at dusk locates us in a moment in time understood in spatial terms, and on the threshold between being and death, consciousness and oblivion.

Erving Goffman writes:

> Soliloquies and audible internal dialogues are characterized by the individual's knowing that the person he is talking to is either himself or is not there in real conversation with him. Reveries have the same character: the individual knows he really is not in the world he is allowing himself to drift into, or at least he can be easily reminded of the fact. However, there is a kind of awayness where the individual gives others the impression, whether warranted or not, that he is not aware that he is 'away' (1963:75).

The subject, having invited our involvement,[302] seems to desert interactive "encounter" in favour of precisely this kind of "awayness" in a synthesis of Romantic sublimation and clinical detachment, momentarily fusing individual consciousness with an expansive urban landscape. As Spender so astutely observes, the opening lines of the poem are "a sequence of thoughts which have not yet crystallized into the identity of Prufrock, who is thinking them" (1986:37). Withdrawal into soliloquizing ironically affirms that status can be *played* in response to a range of inanimate external stimuli. Johnstone contends that "status is played to anything, objects as well as people. If you enter an empty waiting-room you can play high or low status to the furniture. A king may play low status to a subject, but not to his palace" (1997:50). Status dynamics may serve as an analytical tool for analyzing the poem in terms of its quintessentially urban modern protagonist.

From a position of relative anonymity 'he' gradually acquires an identity. He is a figure who is increasingly identified as a "man of uncertain age who speaks out of a life whose centre is a society drawing-room approached through streets the description of which provides metaphors for the squalor (and also the mystery and beauty) of a city, unnamed, which nevertheless seems representative of other great cities [...] the universal temporal city of modern western civilization" (Spender 1986:36). Spender identifies the task of mapping the opening movement to "Dante's journey under the guidance of Virgil [...] a conducted tour through various human exhibits illustrating degrees of damnation, purgatory or beatitude" (1986:37). The referential field is compellingly visualized in the secular world of the city. The journey through the streets, curiously "half-deserted" and reverberating with "muttering[s]", is layered with memories for "Prufrock", who seems able to navigate these with confidence born of familiarity and slight discomfort. It is the sure sense of a destination that differs qualitatively from the pathway that sustains and urges the

[301] Spender's analysis of this is masterful: "This simile [or perhaps metaphor] is not capable of being visualized, unless as burning aura of smog, above a city [it might have been drawn by Klee]. I call it 'symptomatic' because the 'patient' is the 'soul' of the city The simile or metaphor hangs on the word 'etherized' which is ambiguous, suggesting of course, the 'ether' [which was used for anaesthetics] but also having many connotations in Romantic poetry – for instance 'ethereal'. The combination of the clinical and the romantic connotations suggest the state of suspended consciousness of the 'patient' and the head of the dreamer full of the night sky and stars. One has only to substitute the word 'anaesthetized' for 'etherized' to see how 'anaesthetized' would make the image rigid, anchored, grotesque. 'Etherized' untethers it – makes it float, witty, dreaming. But this is to describe the effect, not to explain away how it so miraculously 'works'" (Spender 1986:42).

[302] Goffman proposes the term in relation to which he identifies as issues that impact on this type of "unfocused interaction." In contrast, "focused interaction" describes face to face engagements in which "co-presence" is the typifying feature (1963:37).

expedition onwards.[303] The cityscape is alien, veiled in "yellow fog", "yellow smoke", imbued with an animation of its own, which silently, wraithlike, prowls and arches through its domain with all the superiority of an alley cat in well marked territory. The feline allusion affords a seamless transposition to the anxieties attendant on Prufrock's central obsession with grooming:

> There will be time, there will be time
> To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet…

The poem contrasts natural phenomena, the fog/smoke and the cat, with the speaker's concern for cultivating fronts appropriate to social encounters: the ease of the former is juxtaposed with the diffidence of a consciously sub-ordinate speaker far from at ease with his own appearance and obsessed with grooming rituals. Spender maps this movement: "In the next stanza, or section, the themes of outside and inside, spectator and inmates of the drawing-room, are brought together" (1986:37). Further, he suggests that "the theme of time [...] recurs throughout the poem like the reiteration of a note in a Beethoven sonata" (1986:37). Consciousness of time (and how it is 'spent') is as germane to the poem as its spatial dimensions. Patterns of behaviour and aspirations constitute the rhythm of Prufrock's days in which elaborate preparations are finally resolved in bathos: the banal routine of "taking of a toast and tea". Prufrock endlessly 'revises' portentous projects and ambitions which are rehearsed as imagined projections and assertions of the self. Rather than materializing, these fantasies culminate in unremarkable and meagre suppers: grand self-conscious dramatic gestures are erased in favour of repetitions of convention. In the world of the imagination, the "status see-saw" is in constant motion.

Veblen, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* writes: "In order to gain and to hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence." Prufrock's salon is a world dedicated to "conspicuous leisure" (Lerner 1976:83) in which "abstention from labour is not only a honorific or meritorious act, but it presently comes to be a requisite of decency" (1976:88).[304] Veblen draws connections between the lifestyle of the leisure class and a particular temporal disposition: "the term 'leisure', as here used, does not connote indolence or quiescence. What it connotes is non-productive consumption of time. Time is used non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness" (1976:90). The use and the value of time becomes a marker of social status.[305] The inconsequential idle

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[303] We are given a taste of what awaits with the aside:

"In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michaelangelo." [13 -14] The Renaissance master is invoked in contrast to the mediocrity of the landscape being traversed. These lines hint at the "grail" anticipated at the destination. It is as Spender points out a "false grail" (1986:36). Spender suggests that a cinematic point of view is skillfully manipulated here: "The inhabitants of the room which is the object of the visit are also seen from the outside" (1986:37). This Prufrock is quite literally marginalized and epitomizes Simmel's conception of both the adventurer and the stranger.

[304] As the encounter progresses Prufrock deliberates offending the tacit protocols by relating his contrasting experience and drawing on his appearance from a working class world. He refrains from doing so, knowing that it would be an unpardonable solecism.

[305] Simmel suggests that "Because of the character of calculability which money has there has come into the relationships of the elements of life a precision and a degree of certainty in the definition of the equalities and inequalities and an unambiguousness in agreements and arrangements, just as externally this precision has been brought about through the general diffusion of pocket watches" (1971:328). Precision and punctuality are conceptually related; both reflect a "firmly fixed framework of time" in which waiting and wasting time can be 'ill-afforded.' The imperatives of calculation invade the discourse of time. Zeldin also examines ways in which controlling and organizing time has constrained lifestyles and identities. He writes: "The Lilliputians observed two centuries ago that Gulliver's God was his watch and that 'he seldom

conversation[306] and absorption in subtly coded matters of "manners and breeding, polite usage, decorum, and formal and ceremonial observances" (1976:92) provide an initial definition of the collective.

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michaelangelo.

The exact repetition of this fleeting description of the fixed and imperturbable activities in the salon consolidates the sense of a social gathering contained by routine "arts of conversation". The privileged caste of this assembly is clearly signaled: the interior world is a milieu dominated by a *fin de siècle* elegance and "refined taste" (Lerner 1976:85). Due observance of appropriate social protocols and etiquette appears to govern Prufrock's sensibility: his anxieties to present himself in accordance with expectations suggest social distance and doubts as to his reception and ratification by the company he seeks to join. The next stanza opens with the refrain of uncertainties:

> And indeed there will be time
> To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, "Do I dare?'
> Time to turn back and descend the stair,…

Self-doubt dominates the moment of crossing the boundary between exterior and interior. Prufrock seems continually poised on the threshold of the encounter,[307] all too aware of his personal inadequacies, most poignantly "a bald spot in the middle of my hair". Spender proposes that "the 'I' character who has been, as it were, in abeyance since the opening lines of the poem acquires the attributes and stage properties of Prufrock. Instead of being the satiric observer, he is the observed [...] transferring the contempt with which he believes the women in the room regard him, on himself in the form of self-irony" (1986:38). Spender's reading is plausible. An alternative interpretation is that the moment on the threshold is a no more than a speculative projection into the future whilst Prufrock is still in the process of journeying towards the destination. The repeated articulation of the encounter in terms of a future tense seems to support this reading.[308] The imaginative projection is based on memories of previous encounters, as the repeated motif of the opening lines of the next three stanzas attests. Such is the density and the momentum of the poem that the

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did anything without consulting it..." (Zeldin 1996:349). Prior to the invention of the clock continuities between the past and present were more readily sustained. Exact calculations of age had no material significance and a linear, compartmentalized understanding of temporal dimensions of existence had no consequence. He suggests that "the modern idea of time is peculiar because it includes a new sense that once something has happened, it is gone for ever, that time means change, and so insecurity" (1996:350).

[306] "But leisure in the narrower sense, as distinct from exploit and from any ostensible productive employment of effort on objects which are of no intrinsic use, does not commonly leave a material product. The criteria of past performance of leisure therefore commonly take the form of 'immaterial goods'. Such material evidences of past leisure are quasi-scholarly or quasi-artistic accomplishments and a knowledge of processes and incidents which do not conduce directly to the furtherance of human life" (Lerner 1976:91).

[307] In *Heroes: Saviours, Traitors and Supermen*, Hughes-Halett says of Giorgio di Chirico's painting "The Return of Ulysses": "In his end is his beginning [...] it seems that, for all the hero's adventures, his protracted wanderings, he has never really left his own front room" (2004:483). Unlike di Chirico's painting and its evocation of the materiality of the point of departure in the private sphere, the home, the poem permits the view that the journey is continuous and the salon, a public domain, is arrived at only in Prufrock's imagination.

[308] "They will say" is repeated and the enormity of the possibility of electing and committing to a course of action remains suspended: "Do I dare/ Disturb the universe? / In a minute there is time/ For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." The luxury of temporal indulgence recited earlier has been replaced by the heightened sense of anxiety that the amount of time available for rescinding actions has been reduced. There is no distinct announcement of direct face to face encounter. The entire poem journeys towards the final stanzas, which might be the alternative point at which Prufrock encounters the siren ladies of the salon.

action seems already to have progressed beyond the journey to the moment of social encounter,[309] regardless of whether it is real or a projection of fantasy still to transpire: the careful enumeration of Prufrock's meticulously prepared personal appearance and attire dominates the prospect of arrival at the destination:

> My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin –
> My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –
> (They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')

Impeccable compliance with sumptuary protocols is an assumed pre-requisite for admission to the gathering.[310] Prufrock is at once familiar and strange, near and far in the terms by which Simmel defines the 'Stranger.' He remains, or will remain, the outsider to the coterie of the salon, or in Goffman's terms a "bystander" rather than an active participant (1963:156).[311] Goffman asserts:

> … while all participants share equally in the rights and obligations described [in focused interaction], there are some rights that may be differentially distributed within an encounter. Thus, in spoken encounters, the right to listen is shared by all, but the right to be a speaker may be narrowly restricted, as for example in stage performances and large public meetings (1963:100).

This sheds some light on the tacit roles inscribed in the informal social encounter. Goffman notes that differential rights persist and are underpinned by "ratified mutual participation".[312] It is incumbent on bystanders, he indicates, to demonstrate appropriate forms of "civil inattention" (1963:156), the pretence of not overhearing what is not explicitly directed towards them; they are also obliged to "desist in some way from exploiting their communication opportunities [...] it will fall upon the participants to limit their actions and words" (1963:159).

Bystanders are required to exercise "tact" through being particularly sensitive to proxemic relations or, in Goffman's more abstract formulation, "spacing" (1963:161). Investment in levels of impression and information management, compliance with relevant dress codes and somatic controls constitute the primary level of interaction. It is on this level that Prufrock's impression management skills are visibly at stake on his real or imagined arrival. He feels that his presence is

[309] This proposition is informed by Simmel's view of time: "Insofar as the future, like the past, is localized at some point, however indefinite, and the progress of life is disrupted and crystallized into the terms of logical differentiation among three grammatically separate tenses, the immediate continuous stretching of itself into the future, which every living present signifies, gets concealed. The future does not lie ahead of us like some unexplored land, separated from the present by a sharp boundary line, but rather we live in a border region which belongs as much to the future as to the present" (1971:361).

[310] Goffman, writing in general terms about group dynamics, claims: "All persons in the gathering at large will be immersed in a common pool of unfocused interaction, each person, by his mere presence, manner, and appearance, transmitting some information about himself to everyone in the situation, and each person present receiving like information from all the others present at least in so far as he is willing to make use of his receiving opportunities" (1963:154). Goffman distinguishes between unfocused action and face to face encounters which can take place within this broader sphere. Moreover, Goffman identifies different levels of participation: "The persons present in the gathering at large can then be divided up into participants and bystanders, depending on whether or not they are official members of the engagement in question; and the issues to be considered can be divided up into obligations owed the encounter and obligations owed the gathering at large (and behind the gathering, the social occasion of which it is an expression)" (1963:155).

[311] "Bystanders are obliged to refrain from exploiting the communication position in which they find themselves," proposes Goffman (1963:156). This proposition establishes a particular role which delimits Prufrock's participation in the conversations of the salon – and one that he imagines transgressing.

[312] Goffman distinguishes between engagements between acquaintances and the unacquainted. In the case of the latter, "an important basis of mutual accessibility resides in the element of informality and solidarity that seems to obtain between individuals who can recognize each other as being of the same special group" (1963:131).

immediately subject to critical scrutiny and commentary. As Spender puts it, "Prufrock's recital defines his characteristics, but as narration is negative. He sees himself as existing passively in the minds of those whose society he frequents [...] His negative inhibition is that he dare not transgress the boundary of opinion which they have drawn around him"(1986:38). The elegance of Spender's phrase "boundary of opinion" does much to establish the ways in which the status of the individual in a social encounter with a collective is invariably placed in jeopardy,[313] dependent on the consensus generated within a group and its agency in expressing this directly or indirectly. Prufrock acknowledges his own socially perceived inadequacies – not of a paranoid neurotic, but rather as the inevitable bystander, alienated by complex status differences from those whose company he has actively sought out.

The line, "For I have known them all already, known them all," [314] announces a movement which brings the past to bear on the present in three haunting stanzas which circulate the motif of memories retained from previous encounters. The first stanza plays across the accumulation of disparate routines, all similar, amounting to little more than an on-going series of excursions and visits. The expanse of years of "evenings, mornings, afternoons" is compacted in the memorable phrase "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons". The metaphor synthesizes pedantic obsession with evaluation and the banalities of social procedure, heralding the question towards which it builds: "So how should I presume?"[315] Experience, with its contained disappointments, circumscribes expectation and anticipation.

The single word "presume" is weighted by allusions to liturgical and metaphysical realms and invokes discrepant positions between suppliant and benefactor. Presumption is central to the injunction by St Augustine that so charmed Samuel Beckett, as Andrew Kennedy explains.[316] He cites "Beckett's often-quoted remark declaring interest in the shape of ideas, in the shape of a sentence. Thus Beckett praises the beauty of St Augustine's statement on the two thieves [...] 'Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned', and adds: 'That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters" (1976:134). St Augustine's proposition balances expectation and uncertainty, opposing profound despair with optimistic anticipation of surviving the moment of judgment. The possibility of salvation haunts the issues to which Prufrock repeatedly returns but connotations of unworthiness are attached to the single word "presume" as the supplication of the Anglican Communion liturgy ritually acknowledges.[317]

[313] Johnstone's exercise in "demoting" the status of an individual relies on the response to an entrance in the "Wrong room" game. The doorway as a threshold of admittance to an assembled gathering becomes a mechanism through which to introduce and develop the performer's understanding of the interactive dynamics between the individual and the group.
[314] This is reiterated with small variations in the pattern: "And I have known the eyes already, known them all" - and "And I have known the arms already, known them all - ."
[315] The symmetry of repeated opening lines is echoed and reinforced through the insistence of this question at the close of each stanza.
[316] Kennedy emphasizes Beckett's preoccupation with the form of an utterance. His praise for Proust is based on recognizing that he is "less interested in what is said than in the way in which it is said" (1976:133).
[317] Presumption resonates with connotations derived from the Communion service: "We do not *presume* to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, Trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table" (The Book of Common Prayer: 306).

The next three stanzas begin with a variation on the same line in which the mounting force of being the object of study is clearly signalled.

> And I have known the eyes already, known them all-
> The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
> And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
> When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
> Then how should I begin
> To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

The question intensifies the theme of being critically scrutinized and transformed, demoted from subject to object, suffering the indignity of close clinical examination.[318] The efficacy of the social gaze paralyzes. Goffman and Johnstone, for different reasons, emphasize the significance of eye contact in status relations. The sociologist suggests:

> Eye to eye looks[319] [...] play a special role in the communication life of the community, ritually establishing an avowed openness to verbal statements and a rightfully heightened mutual relevance of acts....Of the sense organs, the eye has a uniquely sociological function. The union and interaction of individuals is based upon mutual glances. This is perhaps the most direct and purest reciprocity which exists anywhere. This highest psychic reaction, however, in which the glances of eye to eye unite men, crystallizes into no objective structure [...] No objective trace of this relationship is left behind (Goffman 1963:93).

The potency of the glance and the sustained stare derives from its socio-psychic impact and its ethereality. The performance expert, Keith Johnstone suggests that sustained eye contact is one of the strategies through which to establish dominance: authority is asserted through manipulating eye contact.[320] Again it is not simply the initial impulse that establishes dominance unequivocally – the response, the reaction is instrumental in confirming the impulse: "Status is established not through staring, but by the reaction to staring" (1997:42), addressed earlier as a crucial physical index of interactive dynamics. The transience of status positions in the encounter is as ephemeral as eye contact patterns which leave only their trace in the mind of the individual.

Prufrock clearly submits – albeit with an ineffectual protest – to perceived and acknowledged super-ordinates.[321] This is reinforced by the suggestion of a confession, hinting towards admitting his own distinctly less accomplished achievements and habits. The secularized "confessional" culminates at the point in which he admits to being the seeing male subject, all too readily absorbed and fascinated by the aesthetic and sensual appeal of female limbs on subtle display. His intense focus is momentarily diverted in a response to an olfactory stimulus.[322] Overwhelmed, Prufrock barely controls and sustains the coherence of his own thoughts.

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[318] Following Spender, it would seem that 'formulated' fuses formaldehyde and mathematical calculation; dissection and calculation paralyze the human subject.

[319] Goffman analyses the significance and effect of a sustained stare, noting ways in which it is both a tactic of invasion and control. He cites White, Wright and Dembo: "The act of staring is a thing which one does not ordinarily do to another human being; it seems to put the object stared at in a class apart. One does not talk to a monkey in a zoo, or to a freak in a sideshow – one only stares" (1963:86).

[320] He also demonstrates that it is not necessarily the first to break eye contact who is the sub-ordinate low status player.

[321] This is Simmel's term for individuals in a position of superiority, command or agency. I adopt the term here as it seems relatively neutral, untainted by pejoratives of overt domination and control.

[322] "Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?"

The lyrical mood sustaining the mask of self-conscious irony is disrupted as a brief spirited protest surfaces in which Prufrock speculates about the prospects of "situational self-sabotage" (Goffman 1963: 225).[323] Defying "situational proprieties" (1963:216), Prufrock flirts briefly with a declaration of his experiences beyond the world of the salon. His impulse dissipates into silence. Silences are, as Jacques Lecoq teaches, "the roots from which [the] spoken word grows" (2009:29).[324] Prufrock's silence erupts as a coda allowing for a shift in which the ironically adopted social mask is dropped

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

This shapes an entirely new existential sense of self. The Ovidian trace of species transformation is less explicit than in Eliot's 'companion monologue,' "Portrait of a Lady*",* which is similarly structured around the social encounter between a young man and a much older woman:[325]

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.[326]

Spender suggests that "Prufrock is like an eel at the bottom of a tank. He knows the depths and the darkness which the deceived creatures who swim around in their artificial light do not know. This self-knowledge becomes realization of what he psychically is" (1986:39).

The next movement of the poem anticipates a similar coda expressing a clear sense of knowing the self through social relations, rank and agency.

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous –
Almost, at times, the Fool.

The dramatic and theatrical references explicitly locate identities, roles and positions within action and are congruent with Eliot's appreciation of the theatrical or doubly coded elements of life itself.

[323] Goffman does not pass judgment on this kind of defiant action, suggesting rather, that in certain contexts situational self-sabotage is entirely explicable and can be condoned for example in the case of the patient who "demonstrates, at least to himself, that his true self is not to be judged by its current setting [as he] has not been subjugated or contaminated by it" (1963:225). In the poem, Prufrock increasingly asserts his own merits that distinguish him as aloof from the gathering.
[324] "In any human relationship two major zones of silence emerge: before and after speech. Before, when no words have been spoken, one is in a state of modesty which allows words to be born out of silence; in this state strength comes from avoiding explanatory discourse [...] The other kind of silence comes afterwards: when there is nothing more to be said" (Lecoq 2009:29).
[325] This poem is more bounded: it comprises a face to face encounter, and the poem "diarizes" in the moment of enactment, on three different occasions, in three different seasons: December, April and October. The "Boston hostess" is "exotic, absurd, self-dramatizing in her stage setting", notes Spender: "Hostessing being an artificial situation, the fact that she is constantly trying to step out of her social role and reveal her real self, a spiritual and emotional sensitive whose values are friendship and art, forces the visitor back on his own role of malicious, ironic, though also insidiously sympathetic, observer. He has a sensibility deeper than his social self – acting the role of visitor..." (1986:43).
[326] The simile allows a compound identification in which some sense of distance is maintained, whereas in Prufrock the imagined "alternative self" is conflated with fictional personae.

He articulates this view in his critical writing: "The really fine rhetoric of Shakespeare occurs in situations where a character in the play *sees himself* in a dramatic light"[327] (Eliot 1972:39). He cites, amongst other examples, Coriolanus:

> If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there
> That like an eagle in a dovecote, I
> Fluttered your Volscians in Corioli.
> Alone I did it (Coriolanus V: vi.115 – 118).

The idiom of inter-textual reference at this juncture of "The Lovesong..." is a theatrical sense of performing within a specific situation. Parts and roles are allocated or distributed strictly according to status positions, and Prufrock's affinity with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, if not Polonius, is unmistakably clear. This contrasts markedly with the existential dignity accorded to the "heroic" Prince. The extraordinary condensation of "nor was meant to be" encapsulates and contains Hamlet's memorable deliberations and is simultaneously independent of the famous soliloquy.[328] The stanza juxtaposes the high status position of the Prince with that of its extreme antithesis, the Fool, who conventionally functions with particular liberties as a licensed critic of the established order although confined to its margins.[329] Identities, the poem insists, are relational, crafted and situationally derived, character cannot be isolated from the world, the theatrical matrix in which it is constructed – figure and setting are reciprocally intertwined.[330]

Spender suggests that Prufrock "by negation […acquires] a certain grandeur" through acknowledging his inferiority to "the inhabitants of his world" (1986:39).[331] The expenditure of effort on his part remains unacknowledged or is overtly dismissed. His attempts to bridge differences traverse patterns of speculation, through the stanzas beginning with "And would it have been worth it, after all". The implication is that conjecture on his part will be met with constant evaluation. These two stanzas launch a movement of interactive initiatives, in the imagination at least, by Prufrock. These are defined through suggested physical proximities and attitudes as much as attempts at conversation. His offers trigger conjectural responses insinuating rejection or polite verbal dismissal. His desire to assume the distinction of Lazarus, "come from the dead",[332] aspires to

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[327] Later in the same essay he writes: "This dramatic sense on the part of the characters themselves is rare in modern drama [....] In plays of realism we often find parts which are never allowed to be consciously dramatic for fear, perhaps, of their appearing less real. But in actual life, in many of those situations which we enjoy consciously and keenly we are at times aware of ourselves in this way, and these moments are of very great usefulness to dramatic verse" (Eliot 1972:41).

[328] "To be, or not to be – that is the question" Hamlet makes no attempt to resolve the uncertainties posed. Prufrock acknowledges only the negative field suggested. The anti-hero as the subject of Modernism has no alternative.
The frame of reference is clearly Shakespearean, and it is pertinent to acknowledge the different types of Fool within the plays – the Will Kemp prototype of Dogberry the comic buffoon contrasts with the wit and perceptive wisdom of the identities that appear to have been crafted for Roberts Armin: Feste, Touchstone, and Lear's Fool. Viola says of Feste:

> This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
> And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons and the time,
> And, like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. [*Twelfth Night III; 1*].

[330] In his essay on Ben Johnson, Eliot writes: "Volpone's life is bounded by the scene in which it is played; in fact, the life is the life of the scene […] the life of the character is inseparable from the life of the drama" (1972:153).

[331] "Prufrock is superior to the inhabitants of his world because he is conscious of being inferior" (Spender 1986:39).

[332] As Williams observes: "The surrogate characters, from Prufrock to Gerontion, are ways of distancing, often grotesquely, an intense private feeling; or a scene is played, as with three voices [...] Here an intensely private, even an isolate, feeling –

puncturing the ennui of his auditors and is recognized as a solecism. Transgressing the protocol of decorum would disrupt the "situational tonus" [333] of the salon. He remains inadequate to the task of diverting attention from conventional conversation towards himself, despite ranging through a series of alternative gambits. Continually reduced to pondering fresh approaches, Prufrock fails in all his imagined conversational ambitions and remains entrenched in the role of outsider, an anathema to the group. But the assembly itself is increasingly defined as preoccupied with superficialities that he himself dismisses in favour of more profound values. His failure to relate on the terms tacitly stipulated articulates the multiple economies and standards in operation and his separation from these.

The desire to initiate interaction becomes a haunting motif of alienation and increasing isolation. All possible efforts prompt the anticipation of a similar response, delicately underlining the impossibility of assimilation. The concluding lines of each stanza firmly reiterate rejection:

> If one, settling a pillow by her head,
> Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all.
> That is not it at all.'

The languid action, suggestive of the blasé outlook that Simmel addresses, counterpoints the emphatic negation of Prufrock's presence. The theatricality of the constant physical adjustments discretely signals a dismissal. Johnstone maintains that "we are all giving status signals, and exchanging subliminal status challenges all the time" (1997:61) and **"**high status players will allow their space to flow *into* other people. Low status players will avoid letting their space flow into other people. Kneeling, bowing and prostrating oneself are all ritualized low status ways of shutting off your space. If we wish to humiliate and degrade a low status person we attack him while refusing to let him switch his space off" (1997:59). The "expressions given off" by the woman Prufrock imagines himself addressing are strategies of claiming territorial possession expressed through the direction of limbs,[334] an index of openness to or rejection of another's physical presence.

If Prufrock's position is affirmed as that of perpetual functionary, or nonentity, a shift in register follows: the process of aging is exquisitely imagined, the desire to maintain appearances and decorum which will continue to tinge as uncomplicated a process as eating a peach. This passage, with its projections into a future extending way beyond the present, is a prelude to a vision of mortality. The closing lines of the lyric seem to detach Prufrock from the salon in a profound articulation of a singularly heroic death in which the desire to be remembered is anticipated. Jonathan Dollimore in *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* provides valuable insights to ways in which death is conceptualized in Greek culture, specifically through being "feminized."[335] The basis of this proposition is his analysis of narrative and metaphor in "The Song of the Sirens" in Book XII of Homer's *Odyssey.* This allusion in the closing lines of Prufrock's Lovesong provides a way of understanding the title of the poem. The Sirens, like the mermaids of Prufrock's imagination, like

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as if a voice from that dead – is communicating by distancing it, in an ironic commentary, and by juxtaposing it with a bored, indifferent consciousness" (1976:194).

[333] Goffman's term.

[334] Johnstone examines ways that posture and the splay of limbs either invites another into one's personal space or precludes an approach. This operates in conjunction with physical positions in space; status positions are directly related to territorial possession.

[335] He builds on the ideas of Jean Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (1991*)* cited throughout.

the Sirens, and as Dollimore explains, they "charm and seduce men irresistibly. All who succumb never return home but die right there" (1998:18).

The encounter between Odysseus and the sirens is framed, like that of Minerva and Arachne, by prior incidents and portents. "Even before Odysseus actually encounters the Sirens, a connection is made between sexual desire and death" (1998:18). Circe warns that it is not only Odysseus who is vulnerable, but all the men of his party who must "stop their ears with wax": the only way for Odysseus to fulfil his longings to hear the siren song and remain unmoved by their enticements is to be bound and immobilized. Prufrock, his modernist counterpart, is mobile, an outsider or stranger, psychically protected by his "alienation". He is deluded by his conviction that "they will not sing to [him]", because like Ulysses, Prufrock's vulnerability lies in his dream of immortality through remembrance. Dollimore explains the magical potency of the Siren's song:

> They implore Odysseus to come to them; they treat him as a hero and promise him that they will send him on his way the possessor of divine knowledge [...] As Vernant points out, the Sirens 'celebrate in his presence that very Odysseus whom the song of the *Iliad* immortalizes: the virile male warrior'; in their song Odysseus sees himself not as he is, 'struggling precariously amid the dangers of the world, unsure of the future, but as already immortalized in legend'.[336] That is a crucial aspect of what is so seductive about the encounter (1998:19).

Prufrocks' grail – the encounter in the salon - is by definition a social, even intimate, one. It promises the sublime moment of fulfilment and gratification of the need for affirmation. The question must be asked: is Prufrock, the anti-hero of modernity, so patently the obverse of the wily hero of classical legend? I think perhaps not. Despite the restless movement of the poem, he has heard "the mermaids singing," not unlike the ladies of the salon, "each to each", which makes it more than likely that they sing of him. Unlike Odysseus, he is not "immobilized" by restraining bonds: he can range free and reckless in body and imagination, trusting uncertain immunities. Sight and sound quickly catch him up in the endless and relentless movement of the waves,[337] so that he, like Odysseus is trapped and will succumb to space and time.

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us and we drown.

*Àpropos The Odyssey,* Dollimore proposes: "This episode challenges interpretation even as it demands it" (1998:19). The same is true of Elliot's poem, particularly if the final movement is interpreted in the light of Ulysses epic journey and the note on which the poem ends is construed as

[336] Hughes-Halett likewise pursues this theme: "To the Homeric warriors it seemed that fearless confrontation of violence with more violence might be a way to transform themselves from destructible things into indestructible memories. [...] To be forgotten is to die utterly" (2004:34). Her interpretation of the Siren's song introduces a fresh dimension to the relation between the heroic desires and routine: "It is hard for Homer's warriors to return to civilian life. The song of the sirens is about 'the pains that Achaeans and Trojans once endured/On the spreading plains of Troy'. The temptation they offer is that of evading the hard work of becoming once more a member of civilian society and dwelling forever among the grand simplicities of warfare. It is almost irresistible. Few Homeric heroes make it home [...] the moment of re-entry to civilian life is as perilous and traumatic as anything faced in battle" (2004:562).

[337] It is hard to ignore the surge of implied movement in the lines that follow:

> " I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
> Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
> When the wind blows the water white and black".

a citation of the Siren's song. If so, then "what is being seduced is mortal, sexual desire for beauty, strangeness and otherness, and the mortal (sexual?) desire for legendary immortality" (1998:19). The lyrical images conjured in Prufrock's imagination are imbued with this same strange erotic intensity – the means to defeat loneliness, old age, the un-heroic. But as Dollimore so carefully points out, the seduction of Odysseus is accompanied by a warning at the site of the encounter itself: "The Sirens are surrounded by the corpses of [...] men" (1998:18) who have been unable to resist their lure. For Odysseus there is no way to escape or refute the evidence of his senses: the visceral description of the corpses, "high banks of mouldering skeletons which flutter with the rags of skin rotting upon the bones" (1998:18) are reminders of past encounters as integral to the moment as the sirens themselves. Italo Calvino confirms this interpretation. For him, the song of the Sirens is the Odyssey itself, "perhaps the same one we are reading, perhaps a very different one" (1986:136). In another essay he writes that "their song is nothing more or less than the *Odyssey.* The tendency of the poem to incorporate itself, to reflect itself as in a mirror, appears a number of times [...] who better than the Sirens could endow their own song with this function of a magic looking glass?" (1986:119).

The theatricality of previous encounters, and the 'spectacle of death' is self-evident, but the density and symbolism of the image demands contextualization. Dollimore's response to the Siren's victims is a means of doing this.

> Those mouldering remains tell us that this overwhelming desire leads not to an exalted, immortalizing death, perhaps not even to an ecstatic one, but precisely to a death of the kind which the Greeks most feared: without funeral, without tomb, and rotting anonymously on the shore, undistinguishable from other corpses in the pile. The lure of death – to be free of finitude, contingency, danger; to be immortalized in legend – is confounded by the anonymity of actual death (1998:19).

This understanding suggests that the meaning of the encounter is constructed through mise-en-scène rather than purely through interaction between participants. The moment is not construed entirely in terms of desire: rather desire is circumscribed by what is visible and exterior to it. Transposing and extending the significance of context accounts for the cumulative impact of the action and multiple locations of the poem. In place of corporeal remains, Prufrock's sirens are surrounded by the fragments of culture, the detritus of European civilization.[338] While the ghosts of others like Prufrock are alluded to in the inter-textual hints at what it is that surrounds the Sirens, the landscape is curiously disembodied. Prufrock's sirens inhabit an urban island of objective culture, circumscribing the individual crisis in terms closely aligned with Simmel's views as articulated in "Subjective Culture."[339]

***Krapp's Last Tape:* status relations between man and machine in a Manichean "den".**

Eliot's lyric maps a journey through metropolitan terrain, communicating a sense of spatial fluidity along with transformations in the participant-observer who traverses the route. A different

[338] The talk of Michelangelo, the strains of music from another room gives texture to the interior setting, creating a sound-scape that corresponds to the 'sculpture' of physical remains surrounding the sirens.

[339] Simmel concludes: "The dissonance of modern life – in particular that manifested in the improvement of technique in every area and the simultaneous deep dissatisfaction with technical progress – is caused in large part by the fact that things are becoming more and more cultivated, while men are less able to gain from the perfection of objects a perfection of the subject life" (1971:234).

approach to space, territory and image is articulated in the later plays of Samuel Beckett, particularly *Krapp's Last Tape.*[340] Addressing aspects of the play seems a necessary corollary to the analysis of Eliot's imagined setting in a spatio-temporal world.[341] The analysis of Beckett's play also serves as a study of status based interaction between performer and props, or material objects. In the play, the ledger, dictionary, tape-recorder[342] and tapes – all objects that directly pertain to the interrogation of language, consciousness and memory – are offset by a range of objects that introduce a different set of associations and connotations: the banana, and the overhead light. Together this sparse range of things constitutes Krapp's world and establishes the momentum of routine activities and the interruption of these routines.

The play might well be regarded as a continual exercise in status relations as the objects variously expose Krapp's mastery or shortcomings. Despite the fact that the actor is alone on stage, a performance may be generated through seeking out the relationships and interactive encounters between performer and these few 'things' that comprise his world.[343] Additionally, light and darkness take on a material and thematic significance within the action as they constitute the medium through which the setting is constructed. Simmel's notion of ways in which darkness delimits space, defining relationships between what is near or far, extends ways in which the mise-en-scène and aspects of the text can be interpreted.[344]

Beckett's dramatic world is constructed via his explicit control of the mise-en-scène which is such that the stage directions cannot be regarded as marginal notes occupying an interstitial space on the

[340] James Knowlson and John Pilling in *Frescoes of the Skull* conclude their analysis of Beckett's play in these terms: "Of all Samuel Beckett's plays, *Krapp's Last Tape* seems to fuse most successfully a moving human situation with philosophical issues that lead one directly into judgements on the nature of existence. And the fact that the images are carefully chosen and patterned to suggest a dualistic view of the world does not here inhibit the apparent spontaneity of the verbal flow. It is important to stress that dualism is not a skeleton to which flesh has been added. It is itself that flesh. What is experienced is then, a form of poignant theatre poetry, not a mere representation of philosophical ideas. For, even more perhaps than *Waiting for Godot* or *Happy Days, Krapp's Last Tape* provides a central dramatic confrontation that is simple and moving"(1980:92).

[341] The temporal dimension of both texts merits noting: both are evening meditations, but whereas Prufrocks' journey suggests the colouring and palette of the transition between day and night, Krapp is confined to an interior in which the radical contrast between areas of darkness and brightly lit areas constructs an interior in which contrasts are more extreme. Despite the allusions to the evening in the play, the multiple references to black and white, light and dark override the sense of the transitional space between these zones.

[342] A "form of mechanized memory bank", the tape recorder fuses language and memory with modernity. It is an evocative metaphor of the disjunction between past and present: "Krapp brings to the contemplation of his own past a characteristic blend of longing and loathing. [...] and Krapp's recourse to a form of mechanized memory-bank serves to underline the unbridgeable gulf which exists between the essentially ephemeral, unreal quality of his daily life – which, on another level, is, of course, only too monotonously, depressingly real – and the dream of absolute being which constantly haunts Beckettian man: 'Be again, be again", repeats Krapp" (Knowlson and Pilling 1980:85).

[343] Bruce Chatwyn, exploring the philosophical and psychological implications of possession and ownership in *The Morality of Things* writes: "Things have a way of insinuating themselves into all human lives. Some people attract more things than others, but no people, however mobile, is *thingless*. A chimpanzee uses sticks and stones as tools, but he does not keep possessions. Man does. And the things to which he becomes most attached do not serve any useful function. Instead they are symbols or emotional anchors" (1997:171).

[344] For example, Simmel writes: "The spatial tension capacity of any association is dependent upon the amount of capacity for abstraction that is available […] in the complexity and confusion of the external image of city life, one grows accustomed to continual abstractions, to indifference towards that which is spatially closest and to an intimate relationship to that which is spatially very far removed" (2006:152). At the core of this set of propositions lies a way of explaining the 69 year old Krapp's sense of his younger selves now reduced to a disembodied voice on a spool of tape that is somewhat impersonally and reductively chronicled in his register. The same capacity for "abstraction" would seem inherent to the fantastic relations with Effie and Fanny, the former romantically idealized and distant, the latter verging on ruthlessly banal and stripped of any allusions beyond a perfunctory and barely satisfactory sexual encounter.

printed page. Rather his vision of the staging is central to the very construction of the text: stage image and spoken utterance are inter-twined and reciprocal. As Andrew Kennedy claims, however, "we need to understand, first of all, the extent of Beckett's dependence on words as a primary element in drama, despite his undisputed mastery of gesture, movement and setting – the art of visual counterpoint" (1976:133). Beckett's late theatre works refine and compact the tensions between stark visual presentations and pared down vocal utterance, testing the limits of speech, silence and their reception. Both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Not I* effect a separation between the source of an utterance and auditor: the speaker is not wholly present in an embodied sense or even as a coherent subject consistent with the present. Rather the stage image comprises, in the first instance, boxes of tape recordings, a favoured "spool" dependent on mechanical transmission,[345] and in *Not I* a disembodied and disconnected speech producing organ, a mouth.[346] Both fracture the relation between speaking and knowing subject as the source of personal narrative and the flow of words is affective and meaningful in so far as the carefully crafted image sets up both the context and the aesthetic of the soliloquy.

The visual landscape is intrinsic to shaping the flow of words regarding which Kennedy proposes:

> Beckett starts from an acceptance of [the] solipsistic condition. For him language is irredeemably private: words germinate in the skull of the speaker, at an inestimable distance from things and other persons, motive and argument, local time and place. […] From the start Beckett accepts the paradox of dramatic *stasis;* movement in his plays is nearly always a succession of still points or a cyclic recurrence of verbal occasions. His dialogue – as will be seen – is a quasi-dialogue composed of counterpointed or subtly coded doubled monologues (1976:131).

The juxtaposition of the soliloquies written by Eliot and Beckett takes on added cogency when the similarities and differences between the two are taken into account. Both monologues trace the trajectory of self-conscious confrontations with mortality and explore the desires and symbolic means of resisting this notion. Both narratives oscillate between encounters with intellectual projects, cultural aspirations, and inter-personal exchanges with 'significant' women. In both instances the unfolding personal monologue is developed as a direct response to the utterances of 'others',[347] and comprises partial citations or reminiscences of these exchanges. Both are underpinned by an implicit sense of theatricality and depend on self-reflexivity, observing the real and the imagined self in a current situation and projected into alternative moments in time and space. Finally, both characters consistently evaluate and judge their own performance, consciously effect a series of status shifts in addition to embodying these same status transformations. As Knowlson and Pilling put it:

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[345] Words are on occasion reduced to incoherence through pressing the fast forward button or through rewinding.

[346] "In a letter postmarked 30th April 1974, Beckett wrote 'Image of *Not I* in part suggested by Caravaggio's *Decollation of St John* in Valetta Cathedral'. But this must be set alongside the image of the djelleba-clad 'intense listener' seen supposedly in Tunis" (Knowlson and Pilling 1980:196).

[347] Krapp is his own interlocutor: he is distanced and alienated from his "former selves" by the consequences of changes in his own views on life and its meaning and the value of his achievements. This applies to the fragmented insights into the most intimate relations dominating his life, and is very clear in the contrast between his aspirations to being an artist/writer on the brink of producing his "opus magnum" (1979:12) and its reception: "seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas" (1979 :18) His own judgement on himself is clearly stated at the outset of his final recording: "Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that" (1979:17).

> …the device of the tape-recorder allows Krapp to bring to the judgement of his former selves a lucidity and contempt which goes some way towards forestalling the sentimentality that might seem, almost inevitably, to lie at the heart of so dramatic and potentially moving a confrontation. The pithy, sometimes macabre humour with which Krapp describes his present plight also serves as a counter-balance to sentimentality […] Krapp brings to the contemplation of his own past a characteristic blend of longing and loathing (1980:84).

The oscillation between different status positions patterns and structures the play.
Within the spectrum of similarities, the differences between Prufrock and Krapp emerge. Krapp's project, as he embarks on his annual self-designated "PM" (1979:13) is a retrospective of his own life.[348] Prufrock's imaginings project forwards as he imagines both his immediate and long term future old age. Prufrock responds to the imagined voices of the ladies of the salon and the mermaid/sirens while Krapp – hard of hearing, hand cupped over his ear – listens intently to the recordings of his younger self. He is doubly estranged from the mechanical reproduction of his own voice and the sentiments recorded on his 39th birthday which additionally refers to an even earlier recording made on his 29th birthday: he cannot recognize himself in the voice, attitudes and values pronounced in the recording. The structure of the play is such that Krapp spends more time listening to the voice from the past than speaking in the present.

Prufrock, the aesthete, although not unconscious of the sensuality of the anonymous women of the salon, is ultimately seduced by the fantasies of his own romantic notions of creatures of fable and myth. And to some extent, despite the prevalent world weariness and cynicism, a similar strain haunts Krapp's remembrances. The remarkable and remembered women in Krapp's life include his mother, Bianca, the anonymous girl in the "shabby green coat", the nurse in her crisp white uniform and Fanny, "the bony old ghost of a whore" (1979:18). He returns – literally rewinding and replaying – to the lyrical moment shared with the girl in the punt and a joint decision to end that relationship and renounce all that this type of intimacy represents. This moment, and the figure of the girl who has scratched her legs picking gooseberries, takes on the status of high Romantic fiction, equivalent to Theodore Fontane's classic *Effie Briest*. Krapp himself makes the connection in musing as to whether or not he perhaps "could have been happy with her" (1979:18). Life and art, 'fiction' and 'reality' interpenetrate each other in the quest for meaning and fulfilment. The landscape inhabited by Effie, "the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes" (1979:18), is a distinctly Northern landscape compared with Prufrock's Mediterranean shoreline and the Siren's island. Despite the difference in tone and texture of the landscape, what remains foregrounded is an entire mise-en-scène: the day on the punt is remembered in relation to an entire setting and locale rather than an exclusive focus on the female body which epitomizes sensual desires and romantic yearning, their potential gratification and simultaneously denied fulfilment. The vignette, replayed three times within the course of the play, reiterates the sense of desire and struggle, loss and regret.

The differences between the two texts extends, as Kennedy observes, to the role of language and mise-en-scène as the choice of medium itself implies. Beckett's play constructs the material world of Krapp's 'den' as a crucial dimension of the action: the medium of theatre, as in the Artaudian

[348] The play's title, along with several references, specifically singing "Now the day is over, Night is drawing nigh" (1979:13) within the text, alludes to the probability that this is his final tape. Krapp, in this final recording, has "Nothing to say, not a squeak. What's a year now? The sour cud and the iron stool" (1979:18).

model, is integral to the meaning generated by the text, and yet the work resists being 'reduced to the sum of its ideas' – the poetics of the prose and the affective appeal of the mise-en-scène retain a mysterious density. Kennedy writes:

> The whole texture of Beckett's language is created out of his ever-renewed sense of the failure of language. Going beyond Eliot's 'intolerable wrestle with words' and his relatively non-central notion that a language can be exhausted, for Beckett the creation of words *against* the wreck of words becomes the central act (1976:136).

Commenting on Beckett's use of language and the medium of theatre with regard to *Play*, Kennedy writes: "This is not *about* a psychic limbo. The language is made to sound *as if* it came from a limbo – at least it creates the verbal equivalent of a 'final desolation of solitude' somewhere beyond the tangible world" (1976:132). Beckett's theatrical project tests the visual limits of this "tangible world".

The status dynamics of the two texts depend on yet another dimension which is central to the identity of the sole protagonists of each: Prufrock is inseparable from the motif of the journey through space while Krapp's entire being depends on being contained within the fulcrum of his "den" with its epicentre in the table underneath the overhead light.[349] The atavistic quality of his retreat is perhaps less significant than the quality of habituated spatial settlement that it announces – his den, and table with overhead light, is a point of constancy, a fixed point at the centre of continuous change. The contrasts between a fixed domain and a spatial world that is continually transforming, or rather the social relations and subjectivities that sedentary lives promote in contrast to a more mobile lifestyle is explained by Simmel's views on spatial configurations which, he proposes, can be analysed in terms of five fundamental qualities. These are: the exclusivity or distinctiveness of all spaces; the delimiting capacity of particular boundaries or further division of that space into bounded units that may be associated with any given space; the qualities of fixity and flexibility that that space accommodates; spatial distances and proximities along with their implications; and, finally, the degree of liveliness or quality of interaction promoted within its ambit. These constitute indices towards social interaction, or as he puts it, they are "the clearest documentation of the real forces" (2006:138) which enable an analysis of the more abstract phenomena of social encounters and forms associated with those spaces. These considerations pertain most explicitly to the social scientist but also need to be appreciated by visual artists, theatre directors, designers and performers in so far as their project interfaces with any particular cultural context and their specific spatial forms. In so far as spatial relations are a constituent element of an artwork or performance, the composition or organisation of figures within the material dimensions of a spatial field takes on added significance. The aspects of space identified by Simmel, along with their implications and uses, are highly productive, particularly in relation to establishing and playing status positions and exchanges.

Along with the fundamental qualities of spatial forms Simmel designates distinctions between largeness or smallness of areas subject to territorial ownership and authority, the "concentration or dispersal" (2006:137) amongst inhabitants of a population along with mobility and stability as crucial markers of the social relations between members of the groups within that space. The imperatives of social cohesion or its antithesis, fragmentation and rupture, are reiterated in the dualities

[349] We hear that this "new light above [the] table is a great improvement" (1979:12) – but that statement was made thirty years previous to the present, and there is little to indicate that it has changed.

expressed by the structural motifs of the bridge and the door – both mechanisms which mark and negotiate boundaries – which he analyses in terms of their functions in signifying and forging connections and separation. Accounting for patterns in sociation or isolation from a unified group is his overarching concern and accordingly tensions between fixity and mobility constitute a key area of enquiry. He posits that nomadism, and migration, has the effect of 'making life in general something so unstable and rootless" (2006:160). Further, "wandering individualizes and isolates in its own right, because it makes people rely on themselves" (2006: 162). The nomadic lifestyle, in his view, is characterized by the transience of connections or "momentary impressions and encounters held in common, and the consciousness of an imminent and definitive separation" (2006:162). It seems however, that what most fascinates Simmel is the impact of being separated from "one's accustomed milieu" (2006:162). He expands on this theme in ways that are useful to this analysis:

> Few people know purely from within and through secure instincts where the immovable boundary of their psychological private property is actually located, and what reserves their individual existence demands in order that it remains unscathed. Only through impulses and rejections, disappointments and adaptations, do we tend to learn what we can betray of ourselves to others without risking embarrassing situations, feelings of indiscretion or actual damage (2006:163).

The elasticity and relativity of personal boundaries are subject to continual exposure and unfamiliar challenges which "[test] our powers and emotional reactions" (2006:163). Simmel records various measures through which a sedentary or fixed group "strives to overcome its spatial dispersion" and the persistence of mobility or a mobile element within the group "amplifies […] an already existing, latent or open hostility" (2006:168). This set of relations is personified in:

> …the vagabond and the adventurer, whose perpetual roving projects the unrest and the *rubato* character of their inner rhythm of life into space. In themselves, the differences between those who are by nature sedentary and those whose inclination is towards mobility provide infinite possibilities for variation in the structure and development of society (2006:168).

Urban expansion and development advances the model of settlement with its advantages, as Simmel posits:

> The fundamentally settled person can be anywhere at any time, so that alongside his sedentariness, he increasingly comes to enjoy all the advantages of mobility, whereas the restless fundamentally mobile person does not gain the advantages of sedentariness to the same extent (2006:170).

Beckett's striking stage images – mounds of sand, dustbins, a disembodied mouth – are a theatrical exploration of physical fixity and psychic distance which effect a blurring of subject-object relations with animate beings rendered as static or incapacitated. Status dynamics are produced through the encounters with space and things, evident in the juxtapositions and contrasts that they evoke. The "limits of localization" that defines Krapp could well be defined by the terms proposed by Simmel; "position is fixed as if by a system of countless co-ordinates" (2006:150). Beckett's sense of co-ordinates draws economically on the quintessential components of the medium of theatre: encounters and relations between bodies in time and space. The sonic record of the past is a set of

co-ordinates that parallels the shuffling footsteps and pacing within the confines of an intensely private domain.

Krapp is at a point of "advancing physical and intellectual decline" (Knowlson and Pilling 1980: 83). The deterioration of physical capacity is announced in his appearance and manner, his deficiencies in seeing and hearing, his shuffling gait and the reports made of his bowel movements and dietary restrictions. The deterioration of intellectual capacity that accompanies advancing age surfaces in the lapses in memory and grasp of language previously used with arrogant aplomb: keywords no longer prompt recognition as we realize when he reads of the "memorable equinox" (1979:11) from the ledger which summarizes the contents of each recording. He needs to refer to a dictionary to make sense of his own earlier linguistic facility. Krapp, having silently mouthed the syllables of the word "viduity" which he has just heard, reads from an "enormous dictionary":

> State – or condition – of being – or remaining – a widow – or widower. (*Looks up. Puzzled.)* Being – or remaining?...(*Pause. He peers again at the dictionary. Reading.)* 'Deep weeds of viduity.' …Also of an animal, especially a bird… the vidua or weaver-bird…Black plumage of male*…(He looks up. With relish)* The vidua bird! (1979:14).

The recitation from the dictionary is saturated in its resonance. Coherence becomes fragmented. The denotative properties of a particular word along with its conceptual underpinnings take on dense problematic qualities. The incoherence and futility of language has earlier been announced and repeated with considerable "relish" (1979:11) in elongating a diphthong to produce a sound that has little to do with familiar pronounciation: "Spoooool!" (1979:10). The older Krapp delights in the pleasures of the signifier, split from its signified, or the sign separated from its referent. The collection of tapes, each numbered and boxed, fragments and separates each year of his life,[350] while the accompanying ledger reduces the narrative voice to a cryptic puzzle through the references to which the précis alludes. Knowlson and Pilling suggest that "in watching *Krapp's Last Tape* we come to experience not only the particular sadness of an individual lifetime of faded aspirations and frustrated ideals but the unreality of all past human experience that can necessarily only exist in the memory" (1980: 85).[351]

The play was entitled *Magee Monologue* in its earliest draft, suggesting its origins lie in a response to the particular vocal qualities of the actor Patrick Magee. The emphasis on the oral and acoustic dimensions of language – tempo, timbre and tone, the texture of a particular voice – is inseparable from the semantic value of the words. Along with that which is said is the silence that expresses what remains unspoken. Beckett is "seeking an art that gets beyond words to the silences between them" (Knowlson and Pilling 1980:247) and much of the interest for the spectator lies in watching an actor on whom the primary demands are articulated less in terms of speaking the text in the present, than in listening and responding to pre-recorded speech. This becomes the mechanism through which Beckett provides a "direct theatrical experience of regret, loneliness, and

[350] The parallel with Prufrock measuring out his life in coffee spoons is striking – both serve as metaphors of quantifying and storing the personal experience of time and memory in terms of the motif of separation and calculation.
[351] "Three later plays can be seen as ruthlessly exhibiting specimens of a 'dead language', and yet, as the words are replayed by the tape recorder or the compulsive voices of memory, they come to life within each play" (Kennedy 1976:147).

disappointment at life…" (1980:84). The description of Krapp,[352] a figure of high modernist theatre, aligns readily with the pioneers of silent film, the comedians Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, masters of the slap-stick routine. And the routine of peeling the banana and repeatedly slipping,[353] or not, on the peel discarded on the floor reinforces the significance of silent action in which dignity and comic incongruity are relayed through the interface of the old man and the few physical objects comprising his world.

Beckett sets the play in "*A late evening in the future. Krapp's den"* (1979:9). Besides the atavistic connotations implied in the texture of the world that Krapp inhabits, the stage directions resist reference to a sense of place anchored in the present, and are moreover explicitly theatrical, as suggested by both the placing of the furniture and the use of extreme contrasts between areas which are either brightly or dimly lit. The stage direction "*Front centre a small table, the two drawers of which open towards the audience"* (1979:9) immediately establishes the implied presence of an acknowledged, rather than invisible, audience reinforced by the later injunction: *"Table and immediately adjacent area in strong white light. Rest of stage in darkness"* (1979:9). Knowlson and Pilling interpret the significance of this theatrical and Manichean metaphor:

> What is most important about the light and dark emblems in the play is that Krapp is unable to see them in terms other than those of opposition. He can choose only between absolutes of black or white. And his choice results in total self-isolation. He is a prisoner of his own dreams and fantasies, in a world that might just as well have been 'uninhabited' (1980:91).[354]

Knowlson and Pilling further observe that "Krapp's den is an artificially created setting and the point about God's world outside this refuge is that there is not such clear division between the light and the darkness" (1980:87).

Propositions made by Simmel in "The Sociology of Space" add nuance to an understanding of Beckett's delimitations and boundaries: the tapes recorded on each birthday demarcate transformations of the self across a temporal dimension while the intensified contrasts between

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[352] *"Rusty black narrow trousers too short for him. Rusty black sleeveless waistcoat, four capacious pockets. Heavy silver watch and chain. Grimy white shirt open at neck, no collar. Surprising pair of dingy white boots, size ten at least, very narrow and pointed"* (1979 :9).

[353] *"…He treads on the skin, slips, nearly falls, recovers himself, stoops and peers at the skin and finally pushes it, still stooping, with his foot over the edge of the stage into pit. […] takes out a second banana […] advances to edge of the stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, tosses skin into pit, puts end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him*"(1979:10). The ways in which the first and second banana produce minutely graded status responses is a feature for actor and director to engage with: in both cases the banana is produced from the locked drawer of the desk with some prior fumbling with keys, and the sense of prohibition and dependency/addiction is suggested but whereas the careless tossing of the first banana peel literally sets up the potential for slipping and losing balance, Krapp masters and controls the peeling and disposal of the second skin. The comparison allows for an expression of status relations between actor and inanimate object at the outset of the play.

[354] They expand on this: "The black and white imagery that runs through the entire play suggests Krapp's inability, even his unwillingness, to find happiness with a woman arises out of a fundamental attitude to life as a whole that affects most aspects of his daily living. Krapp is only too ready to associate woman with the darker side of existence and he clearly sees her as appealing to the darker, sensual side of man's nature, distracting him from the cultivation of the understanding of the spirit. Krapp's recorded renunciation of love is then no mere casual end of an affair" (1980:86). The black and white imagery referred to is identified: "Bianca is white by name, but they live together in Kedar (or, in Hebrew, Black) Street. Conversely the nurse whom he admires at a distance is a dark young beauty with an incomparable bosom, who pushes a black pram [...] but she wears a uniform that is 'all white and starch.' And although Krapp's fantasy woman is placed in the Northern light-filled setting of Fontane's novel, her name 'Effie' links her with that of Fanny, the whore, with whom she is ostensibly contrasted, by announcing her physical function, recalling as it does also Beckett's remark that one should 'eff the ineffable'" (1980:87).

areas that are brightly lit and the darkness that surrounds it establish an equally complex boundary in the flux of spatial forms and encounters. Simmel proposes that "[t]he concept of a boundary is extremely important in all relationships of human beings to one another, even though its significance is not always a sociological one. For it often only indicates that the sphere of a personality has found a limit according to power or intelligence, or the ability of endurance or enjoyment" (2006:142). More significantly, he probes the "interactions that result between the inside and the outside of the boundary", asserting that "the essential thing here is the breadth or narrowness of the boundary" (2006:144) which itself produces distinctive tensions. Darkness, as a medium of demarcating and establishing the limits of a "spatial frame" (2006:145) is in his view:

> … a quite special frame,[355] which brings the significance of the narrow and the broad into a peculiar unity. By being able to survey only the most immediate environment with an impenetrable black wall rearing up behind it, the individual feels closely pressed together with the most immediate surroundings; the delimitation against space outside the visible surroundings has reached its limiting case: this space seems simply to have disappeared. On the other hand, this very fact also causes the actually existing boundaries to disappear; fantasy expands the darkness into exaggerated possibilities; one feels surrounded by a fantastically indefinite and unlimited space (2006:145).

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate ways in which identifying and playing status dynamics is a tool for approaching aspects of the European modernist innovations in theatre and drama, in addition to its more overt function in shaping traditional or classic conflicts and contests. In describing Beckett's oeuvre Andrew Kennedy concludes that "by or after 1963 the aesthetic extremism of his dramatic language had tended to inhibit creativity: 'No more stories, no more words'" (1976:137).[356] In deliberating the consequences of what he calls Beckett's "unique achievement" in renewing dramatic language Kennedy identifies two concerns: firstly, the "arrest of growth towards convergence or wholeness" and, perhaps more challengingly the probability that:

> Beckett's own intense consciousness of 'the burden of the past' – the museum of styles as a mausoleum – will intensify the stylistic self-consciousness of other dramatists in search of new ways of expression. The burden of Beckett is that in a little more than a decade he has pre-empted so many modes of expression in drama – including the art about to be examined, the re-creation of language through seeming decomposition, and the creation of dialogue through monologue. For Beckett has all but exhausted what he has perfected. […]
>
> Estragon: All the dead voices.
>
> Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.
>
> Estragon: They have to talk about it (1976:138).

What is striking about Eliot and Beckett is the extent to which their texts are deeply inhabited by a sense of both a personal and literary past. The attitude to these pasts ranges from distinctly nostalgic notes to accents of derision both of which perpetuate the persistence of the past and memory as fragmented or incoherent as it may be. The idiom produces a particular affect, one that

[355] The contrast between spaces that are brightly lit and those that are darkened takes on added significance in relation to conventions established and entrenched within different models of theatre particularly in respect of the status and agency of the audience/spectator in direct relation to the degree to which they are granted visibility, and by implication, affirmed in their presence, or not.

[356] Kennedy's footnote acknowledges this as a line given to The Voice in *Cascando* (1976:137).

curiously affirms the predicament of the present as being unable to break entirely with received traditions and codes. Neither writer simply grafts contemporary sensibilities onto past tropes of subjectivity or its representation. Rather, and this seems to be the value of scrutinizing their texts, at the level of formal experimentation and crafting as much as at the level of content and theme, past conventions and motifs provide points of departure for contemporary innovation. References to a personal past (entirely fictional or semi-autobiographical) are located within a sense of cultural tradition rather than claiming autonomy and consequently seeming naively solipsistic. The accrued cultural capital that surfaces within the monologues provides a form of anchorage for profound and complex explorations of ideas and style develops a distinctive resonance and density in their texts. Stripped of this saturation of the present by residual and even archaic motifs of the past these texts might lose the aura and affective impact with which they are imbued. Received and remembered notions of values, and among these are status distinctions, are seen to be intertwined with positions adopted and asserted in the present. Past models and traditions act as a kind of prism which refracts the continuous stream of present experience, splintering it into its disparate elements. This prism, operating very differently from the mirror which reflects only the surface properties of any given phenomenon, becomes the appropriate metaphor for the Modernist texts of Eliot and Beckett in probing subjectivity.

Chapter 6: **Status play and encomiastic discourse: gestures of affirmation and homage in Praise Poems and Tributes.**

"Like the generations of leaves, the lives of mortal men', so a Trojan warrior tells a Greek, as they prepare to fight to the death. The Greek has asked to know his antagonist's identity. The Trojan's point is that the question is otiose. If each individual is as expendable and replaceable as this year's leaves, it scarcely matters who anyone might be."

Lucy Hughes-Hallett (2004:19).

"The hailing of the subject in praise poetry […] carries with it a significance beyond obvious social recognition. The subject of the poem is defined, identified, recognized, named adjectivally for living auditors and for the ancestors. The subject is situated in an almost unpunctured stream of time, from the past of the ancestors to the future generations who may invoke the subject through performance of the praises. The whole subject – physical, psychological and spiritual is hailed. A person is not construed in terms of the Western technologies for mind and body and soul."

Judith Lűtge Coullie (1999:76).

"I divide people into pairs and call them A and B. A gives a present to B who receives it. B then gives a present back, and so on. At first each person thinks of giving an interesting present, but then I stop them and suggest that they can just hold their hands out, and see what the other person chooses to take. If you hold out both hands about three feet apart, then obviously it will be a larger present, but you don't have to determine what your gift is. The trick is to make everything you are *given* as interesting as possible. You want to 'overaccept' the offer. Everything you are given delights you. [...] An important change of thinking is involved here. When the actor concentrates on making the thing he *gives* interesting, each actor seems in competition, and feels it. When they concentrate on making the gift they *receive* interesting, then they generate a warmth between them."[357]

Keith Johnstone (1997:100).

[357] Johnstone describes this game as "rather childish" but nonetheless a viable means of inculcating an ethos of collaboration and an outward interactive focus among improvisers. It has the added value of generating spontaneous integration of physical and spatial performances, particularly when speech is prohibited or confined to playing in gibberish.

**"Tournaments of value".**

This chapter examines modes of interaction and performance, oral and literary, in which affirming and elevating the status of another may be achieved. Johnstone's inter-active encounter and response-based technique provides a departure point for encouraging and developing ways of promoting collaboration and reciprocal goodwill rather than providing scope for indulging self-promotional or contestive strategies which encomiastic discourse expressly negate. Whereas Johnstone's *Insults game* asserts dominance and self-promotion and needs to be implemented with the framing device of consensual goodwill and the spirit of play in order to minimize antagonism and aggression, the *Presents game* (described above) is the obverse and patently elevates the other.[358] The crucial importance of the *Presents* game is that it inculcates reciprocity. Formally structured around the mechanism of exchange, both as a structural patterning in terms of alternating roles and through the subtle underscoring of repeated appreciation and emphasis of the responses to the "gift", the game serves as a means of inculcating inclusivity. In "overaccepting" the proffered gift,[359] the recipient endorses its value, and acknowledges both the act of homage that it signifies along with the opportunity to respond to the token received.

The dynamics of this inter-active impulse profits from a thorough inter-textual reading of two of Simmel's key essays in order to extend the understanding of what is meant by "value formation" and "association", their relations to each other, to play and to aesthetic form. The issues at stake will be introduced through the mechanism of the "praise poem", a cultural form central to Southern African performance practices and subsequently addressed through contrasting instances in which affirming and elevating the status of the other is a key objective.

Improvisation classes in which multiple rounds of the *Presents game* generate permutations in gifting and praising between participants function not unlike contests which profit from the presence of witnesses. The motif of the contest (regarded as seminal to a classical analysis of both "drama" and "play") takes on nuance when considered in the light of the *tournament.* The denotative properties of this type of cultural event are encapsulated by the *Chambers English Dictionary* which defines a tournament as "a military sport of the Middle Ages in which combatants engaged in single combat or in troops, mainly on horseback, with spear and sword; a military and athletic display; a series of games to determine winner or winning team by elimination." The tournament implies witnesses and spectators whose presence is not an auxiliary to the contest, but central to the rationale of the *display* of skills and prowess. The structure of the tournament, dependent as it is on a series of elimination rounds as a means of generating and sustaining the interest and tension for the observers, provides for the observers' needs to familiarize themselves with the expertise on display and align themselves with specific participants. The participants themselves are (ideally) closely matched in an equitable contest from which heightened pleasure may be derived due to the ever diminishing differences in levels of capacity. The model serves to accommodate more than sporting events. The pattern of alternating opportunities to offer and

[358] As indicated at the outset, the ambiguity of the gift itself, its non-material obscure identity makes room for the recipient to "discover" and articulate its identity. The assured element of the exchange is the rule that it must delight through offering pleasure and agency to the recipient who is instrumental in determining what it is and how it operates.
[359] "Over-accepting" is a term introduced by Johnstone which implies a heightened level of response, an enthusiasm in excess of the stimulus, and introduces and emphasizes response-based performances generated between players.

receive gifts, in the spirit of playful encounter, profits from being anchored in a theoretical understanding of how this mechanism serves to bind individuals or communities.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on commodities (and, more importantly, the means by which they are exchanged and produce value) in *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai introduces the term "tournaments of value". The concept resonates with the value of collective participation as an act of affirmation of social and collective identity which serves to generate social cohesion. He develops the term in relation to the *kula*, "the best-documented example of non-Western, preindustrial, nonmonetized, translocal exchange system,"(2009:18)[360] which he regards as the most appropriate paradigm for the concept of *tournaments of value.* He defines *"*tournaments of value" as:

> Complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally defined way from the routines of economic life. Participation in them is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests between them. The currency of such tournaments is also likely to be set apart through well understood cultural diacritics. Finally what is at issue is not just status, rank, fame, or reputation of actors, but the disposition *of central tokens of value* in the society in question (2009:21, my emphasis).

In his words, "commodities and things in general, are of independent interest to several kinds of anthropology […] they are the stuff of material culture" (2009:5)[361] in which "value is embodied" (2009:3) as the cultural specificity of value is affirmed. He draws on the Simmelian definition of exchange, advancing Simmel's proposition that value is not an inherent property of things but rather is *produced through exchange*[362] in order to explain the means by which objects, as commodities, acquire such a significant role in social life.[363]

Appadurai , whose study acknowledges the *kitoum* or the "mingling or exchange between men and things" (2009:20) in respect of "more intimate, regular […] intra-island exchanges" (2009:20), observes that Western common sense "has a strong tendency to oppose "words" and "things" (2009:4) although he concedes that Mauss' study *The Gift* maps exceptions to this. The distinction between words and things, particularly when words are crafted into conventional forms that "govern" social interaction, will be challenged through the demonstration that encomiastic discourse is an enunciation of values in either the public or private sphere. The scope for "tournaments of

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[360] "The *kula* is an extremely complex regional system for the circulation of particular kinds of valuables, usually between men of substance, in the Massim group of islands off the eastern tip of New Guinea. The main objects exchanged for one another are of two types: decorated necklaces (which circulate in one direction) and armshells (which circulate in the other). These valuables acquire very specific biographies as they move from place to place and hand to hand, just as the men who exchange them gain and lose reputation as they acquire, hold and part with these valuables" (2009:18). The pathways taken by these objects, the routes of their trade is instrumental in "the making of memories and reputations" (2009:18) and the objective of the exchange of commodities is "increment being sought [in terms of] reputation, name, or fame" (2009:19).

[361] These are defined as "objects of economic value" (2009:3) available for exchange through various forms of transaction: bartering, gifting and commercial exchange.

[362] The "comprehension of value" (2009:3) depends on understanding that "subjectivity is only provisional and actually not very essential" and "we call those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them". The association between value, desirability and distance is key to Simmel's formulation: "one's desire for an object is fulfilled by the sacrifice of some other object, which is the focus of desire of another. Such exchange of sacrifices is what economic life is all about and the economy as a particular social form 'consists not only in exchanging *values* but in the *exchange* of values." (2009 :4)

[363] As he puts it: "Economic exchange creates value. Value is embedded in commodities that are exchanged. Focusing on things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is *politics*, construed broadly"(2009:3).

value" to extend beyond commodity exchange and apply to collective celebrations and dramatic texts merits investigation. Transposed to forms of verbal interaction which consistently pronounce value, or the "gain of reputation", as in the case of the praise poem and the public tribute generated and circulated in the public domain, the distance between words and things diminishes. The powerfully expressive cultural form of the praise poem (and its variants) introduce and foreground the performance elements of presentation and reception as cultural forms that foster inclusivity, connection and cohesion in much the same way as the exchange of "things" .

Brown explains *izibongo* as the Zulu and Xhosa word for "praise poems" for which the Sotho equivalent is *"lithoko"* (1999:3). The "praise poem" is a residual cultural form that has proven its capacity for persistent adapted use in varying social and political circumstances. Public celebrations, such as the inauguration of President Mandela or the opening of the 2010 Soccer World Cup, inscribe tradition and custom within public performances while endorsing iconic leaders. But the *izibongo* serves equally to acknowledge "ordinary" members of a community or clan and may even be an expression of admiration for livestock. The analysis of fragments of a particular *izibongo* requires thorough contextualization in its specific historical and political dispensation in order for its impact to be fully appreciated and its efficacy for a community to be grasped. The introduction to Albert Luthuli's *Let My People Go* (2006) provides a fairly comprehensive account of two separate, but clearly related (if spatially distanced) events which might be regarded as simultaneous variations of Appadurai's *tournaments of value:* one in Oslo[364], the other in Stanger which provided a platform for several speakers to celebrate Luthuli's significance.

Three separate instances of paying homage to Luthuli are juxtaposed. Kader Asmal gives an account of what occurred in Stanger:

> Although the government was prepared to let him go to Norway, it would not grant permission for him to attend the celebrations that were held in nearby Stanger. Buses were prevented from transporting people to the event. Nevertheless, a celebration was held. Fatima Meer spoke. Alan Paton read out his ' Praise Song for Luthuli' […] The praise singer, Percy Yengwa received the biggest response from the gathering for his poetry celebrating the great bull that our enemies had tried to enclose in a kraal, the great bull who had broken the strong fence to wander far – as far as Oslo! Yengwa concluded by praising Albert Luthuli as 'Nkosi yase Groutville! Nkosi yase Afrika! Nkosi yase world! (Chief of Groutville, Chief of Africa, Chief of the world!) (2006: xvii).

The multiple pronouncements provide different individual voices representing different constituencies to harmonize rather than compete with each other: the variations and distinctions are valued as markers of unity across multiple ethnic identities. This is not a competition in which a winner is the speaker who generates the most appreciative response. Asmal records nothing of Meer's register or theme or indeed the response generated. He explicitly acknowledges Yengwa as

[364] Albert Luthuli was nominated in February 1961 by the Social Democrats of the Swedish parliament for the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize. At the time he was still entangled in the five-year Treason Trial, which finally resulted in his acquittal on 29 March 1961. Under renewed banning orders that restricted his freedom of speech and movement, limiting him to the lower Tugela magisterial area, Luthuli was confined to his house in Groutville when he learned on 12 October 1961 that he was being awarded the Peace Prize. In a public statement, he thanked the Nobel Committee, but suggested that the award was being given, not only to himself, 'but also to my country and its people – especially those who have fought and suffered in the struggle to achieve emancipation of all South Africans from the bonds of fear and injustice (2006:xvii).

generating the most appreciative response which may well be attributed to a range of factors: a cultural familiarity with the form, language and register, as much as the conventions of participation with which the majority of those present would be familiar. Although Paton's poem occupies more page space and is granted distinction through the comprehensive citation, again what the poem elicits by way of response is seemingly disregarded.

The prestigious reception in Oslo and Luthuli's acceptance speech have both been formally recorded in the print medium , although like Artaud's last public appearance, both are essentially public performance encounters. The Norwegian newspaper report on which the account draws acknowledges the profound dislocation between freedom of speech and the restrictions imposed on the circulation of Luthuli's words within his own community. The paradox of presence/absence, speech/silence and (above all) freedom/constraint are pithily announced in the press statement: "Although his words and voice could be heard in Norway, they still could not legally be heard in South Africa. 'Albert Luthuli must now return to his people in chains, to his guards in exile […but] 'We have never seen a freer man!'" (2006: xix). But it is the local celebrations, in terms of the identity of participants and their mode of performing and articulating three forms of tributes that most expressly launch the ideas of this chapter. It is in these three addresses to the assembled gathering that the aesthetics, instrumentality and value of a public address, the poetic tribute[365] and the *izibongo* most clearly emerge. Paton, the author, read 'his' poem dedicated to Luthuli and composed in his honour. Literary craftsmanship is implicitly evoked in what he terms a "Praise song" and formally contrasted with the poetics of the *izibongo,* its collaborative authorship, performance and reception.

Liz Gunner acknowledges the "credibility" (1999:50) and cultural premium conferred on literacy and cites Finnegan's notion of "the Great Divide" between literacy and orality. She acknowledges the critical tendency "to separate literacy from orality" (1999:50). The tension between printed and spoken word is one that that performance studies consistently negotiates.[366] Her essay focuses on the relations between poetry and remembrance and honouring figures of the past:

> The ability of praise poetry to exploit the symbolic capital of a particular culture (which) had long been recognized, but its ability to collapse the heroic past into an heroic present, and in

[365] Paton's poem refers to the same set of ideas as the *izibongo* but despite the similarity in references the rhythmic impact and economic density of the Zulu used in the *izibongo* is apparent.

> You there, Luthuli, they thought your world was small
> They thought you lived in Groutville
> Now they discover
> It is the world you live in.
>
> You there Luthuli, they thought your name was small
> Luthuli of Groutville
> Now they discover
> Your name is everywhere.
> You there, Luthuli, they thought you were chained
> Like a backyard dog
> Now they discover
> They are in prison, but you are free. (2006:xviii)

[366] Brown makes the point that "orality studies leads us towards a reconceptualization of written language" (1999:11) and challenges what he terms the "artificial separation of oral and literate forms (and the binarised thinking which the separation implies)" and urges the recognition of "the complex intersections of performed and printed forms" of speech (1999:1).

> this way make memory work for it, had been underestimated. During his political career and at his funeral in 1967, the African National Congress leader, Chief Albert Luthuli, had been the subject of praise poems which harnessed the aura of great figures of the past, such as the early nineteenth-century ruler Shaka, and resituated them around the modern leader (1999:52).

Luthuli, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, is recast as warrior aligned with a predecessor. At the time of the award being made, the referential idiom in which these praises were communally celebrated and cited, were anchored in twin emblems of Zulu life and culture: the kraal and the bull.[367] These references resonate strongly and merit further deliberation particularly in relation to what Duncan Brown suggests is a "crucial question for criticism" (1999:7). For him, the core question is quite simply "what does the text seek to accomplish in the spheres of social and political action, and how does it accomplish this (by what rhetorical features / formal strategies)?" (1999:7).

Coullie asserts that "traditionally *izibongo* are not merely statements but are usually both socio-political and spiritual acts. As Opland (1893:132) remarks, *izibongo* always *do* things, regardless of what they say; they are performative utterances, illocutionary acts" (1997:77).[368] The *imbongi* (praise poet) speaks from a particular designated position, in his own right as poet/performer and custodian of past *izibongo* and as the designated spokesperson of the collective in the present. Coullie makes several points regarding this position and its obligations, chiefly (citing Ricard 1997:193), that "'the performance of the poem is the poem'" (1999:68). She explains the two levels on which this fusion occurs. The collaborative rapport between performer and audience operates in terms of articulating form and content: "In addition to the crucial role of audience participation, affecting not only the delivery but also content (performers may repeat, omit particular lines or even add appropriate material), the *rapprochement* which is achieved on such occasions is fundamental" (1999:68). Expanding on what Gunner and others have charted,[369] Coullie identifies the generative process as an amalgam of subject authored material, the citation of phrases used by others and the "adoption" of phrases about third parties. This heteroglossic quality, or in her evocative phrase, "smudged authorship", is in itself significant, introducing a "lack of distinction between self-composed praises and those composed by others" (1999:68).

Citation and improvisation are conventionally fused in an acknowledgement of the function of the *izibongo* as a symbolic form. Coullie reproduces the crucial point advanced by Gunner and Gwala who challenge "the commonly held view 'that because an oral form uses shared expression it tends to say the same things.' The use of a common pool of praise names, linking devices and so on, does not lead to a general anonymity or sameness. Instead it creates a shared background which serves to highlight the singularity of the individual *izibongo*" (1999:68). Reiteration, recitation and repetition are key principles within the oral performance mode and allow for spontaneous

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[367] Gunner, in deliberating "Pre-election Praise Poetry" records: "at Mandela's first Natal rally after his release, which was held in Durban in February 1990, Ntanzi praised Mandela as:

> The bull that roared at Robben Island
> Its roaring shook Robben Island. (Kromberg 1993:199)" (1999:57).

[368] Illocutionary acts, as defined by Austin's theory of Speech Acts may be defined as "a verbal utterance which constitutes an action […] illocutionary acts include making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, referring and predicting. All are rule-governed: a request involves a future act, the ability to perform it and the belief on the part of the speaker that it will be done. It is also an attempt to make the listener do something. An order has the additional preparatory rule that the speaker must be in a position of authority over the listener" (Macey 2001:361).

[369] Brown describes the form of the *izibongo* as "multivocal" (1999:2).

permutation congruent with the immediate context. The kind of interplay accommodates continuity and innovation.[370]

Regardless of whether the *izibongo* is dedicated to praising a chief or a person who is of substance in the esteem of an entire community, or is addressed to a more ordinary individual, it functions to "name, identify and give significance and substance to the named person or object" (1999:61) and thus serves as an act of affirmation of the subject. Moreover, since the *izibongo* are performed[371] as "communal activities" (1999:66), they serve to strengthen affiliations and ties between members of a collective, or in Coullie's words "cement social bonds" and do so in a register of heightened emotional intensity.[372] The sense of "belonging" so central to unifying a community is intertwined with the working of the izibongo: continuities and connections are forged between present and past, between those corporeally present and those who are physically absent from the gathering. The act of naming performs a cultural function of spiritual and socio-political importance: it serves not as a simple reference to the absentee, [373] but rather invokes the person being referred to as a living being in the midst of a community, "conjuring" (1999:75) the person into the presence of those assembled. As an example of the affective capacity of the *izibongo,* Gunner relates how Nelson Mandela records his response to hearing the Xhosa praise poet S. E. K. Mqhayi. Mandela attributes Mqhayi with the "ability to comment on international events, namely the Second World War, and then tie those events into a sense of belonging that is far more local than national even though it gestures towards a larger African identity through its sense of incorporation" (1999:55). Mandela describes his response to Mqhayi's performance as an affirmation of his identity as a Xhosa.[374] As an act of affirmation, the veracity of the claims of the *izibongo* is thus lodged in the responses that it elicits, or as Coullie puts it: "the praise poem will be a truthful account of an individual, but its truthfulness is secured by the community, not by the subject" (1999:70). The collaborative and shared responsibility in generating values and endorsing what an individual stands for is publically declared and celebrated.

In addressing the formal attributes and rhetorical strategies of the *izibongo* beyond questions of authorship and performance, Coullie cites Gunner and Gwala: "Praise poetry is usually allusive, metaphorical, compressed, 'cryptic and aphoristic', with single lines often recalling the balanced structure and the gnomic brevity of proverbs. It is characteristically richly symbolic" (1999:73).

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[370] This is consistent with some of the features identified as central to the performance of *Sarafina!* It is likewise a structural feature of technical training in Improvisation technique.

[371] Coullie draws on Cope's description of the kind of performance criteria that arrest and hold the attention of an audience: "The praiser recites the praises at the top of his voice and as fast as possible. These conventions of the praise-poem recitation, which is high in pitch, loud in volume, fast in speed, create an emotional excitement in the audience as well as in the praiser himself […] Movement, both visible and audible, is the essence of praise poem recitation" (1999:67).

[372] Historian Ian Knight provides a record of the integration of praise singing with daily routine and on formal occasions which occurred at the 'colonial coronation' of Cetshwayo: "A small incident, inconsequential in itself, took place which perfectly parodied the hollow posturing that lay beneath the encounter. Shepstone, in accordance with his sense of public dignity when attending public events, maintained on his staff his own praise-singer. One morning the royal homestead woke to the sound of a noisy altercation; it was the custom, when the king was in residence, for the royal praise-singer to announce the new day by reciting his praises, and on this occasion Shepstone's man had felt obliged to challenge the right. Within a few minutes, '…each [was] yelling out the string of praises of their respective chiefs…and trying to outdo each other. At last they got so excited, being urged on by the crowd of whites and blacks who had formed a ring around them, that they were very nearly coming to blows'" (2010:95).

[373] "Names are not merely labels which refer to someone, for many Africans they are their referent" (1999:75).

[374] "I did not want ever to stop applauding. I felt such intense pride at that point, not as an African, but as a Xhosa; I felt like one of the chosen people" (1999:55).

These qualities are readily discernible in two *izibongo*, the first of which operates almost like a riddle by withholding the explicit identity of the subject of praise until the final word. The ambiguity of the gendered pronoun allows for the poem to pay tribute to both man and cattle who share a common point of origin:

> He came from Him-who-owns-the-stars, Father-of-beauty;
> He was born with the star of the morning;
> When the red light of dawn appeared,
> He stretched himself to his full height, this wonderful bovine (Poland et al 2008:10).

The praise poem does not distinguish between bull and ox, referring rather to an entire species and may be contrasted with an *izibongo* that is explicitly singular in its reference to a particular bull, observing his qualities and memorializing these in terms of a "laudatory phrase borrowed from the *izibongo* tradition of the great chiefs" (Poland et al 2008:89).

> He who bathes among crocodiles,
> The crocodiles will not attack him,
> They care for his bubbles (Poland et al 2008: 89).

Both examples draw (and depend) on well-established rhetorical and iconographic traditions and cosmology in terms of metaphor and analogy. But the form allows for incorporating contemporary references as a contemporary example demonstrates. The imbongi/span-owner/driver, having addressed four of the span directly by name transfers his focus to a final subject and concludes:

> Where are you going, Nqulusomjendevu,
> Jeep with super wheels! (2008:87).

Poland claims that "[t]he written record can only give a meagre representation of one aspect of the aesthetic of praising. It is only in performance, accompanied as it is by gesture, posture, dance, reverence or laughter – and the total involvement of subject and audience – that its aesthetic impact can be apprehended fully. Committed to cold text – essential though it is for preserving past tradition – the lively excitement and spontaneity of context is inevitably lost, and much of the fuller artistic appeal sacrificed" (2008:85). In *The Abundant Herds*, Poland and Hammond-Tooke claim that "an analysis of (cattle) names, including a full description of terms, their provenance and their context, has not been fully attempted before. The role of cattle in the oral tradition, both as a subject and in terms of the imagery employed in the different forms, has also largely been overlooked" (2008:11). Their study of "the long and intimate association between the Zulu people and their herds" comprises a clear mapping of the connection between cattle colouring and patterning derived from perceiving likenesses with birds or natural phenomenon after which it is named. The centrality of cattle to the Zulu pastoral tradition is manifest in the spatial organization of the *umuzi* (homestead) which itself was the focal point of social life. The cattle byre, *isibaya* (2008:14) "was in the centre of the family settlement, surrounded by a circle of its dwellings. The cattle were always *there*, in the midst, not in some far-off cattle-post. Interaction between man and beast was close – and closeness bred both pride of possession and love" (2008:14). Ian Knight provides an example which indicates the extent to which cattle permeate every aspect of Zulu expressions regarding the organization of space and time when, in describing early dawn, he writes:

"…that time, called in isiZulu 'the horns of the morning' – when the cocks crow and the horns of the cattle can first be seen against the greying horizon" (2010:7).[375]

Luthuli's izibongo fuses kraal and bull, both powerful emblems of custom, continuity and community and the link being made merits expansion and explanation. Poland et al repeatedly refer to the symbiotic relationship between man, cattle and the environment and the role of cattle in shaping central customs and enforcing particular taboos substantiates this claim. Milk, taken as *amasi,* is central to "the most rigid rule in Zulu society", namely that sour milk could "only be shared with kinsmen […] To drink sour milk with a woman was to acknowledge her as a relative, and, as such, ruled out as a possible sexual partner" (Poland et al 2008:19). The strict incest taboo is accompanied by a series of observances and customs which devolve from the presence of, and dependence on, cattle in a life-style. Customary roles and obligations[376] and received wisdoms are patterned on observing the behaviour and relations of these much prized beasts. This is reflected in a range of proverbs or aphorisms,[377] and beyond this a perhaps more profound resonance pertaining to the "spiritual and aesthetic significance of the cattle" (2008:10).[378] The cattle analogy extends to naming battle manoeuvres, the structure of the family, and the structure of the homestead, all of which take, as a reference point, the anatomy of the body of a cow, ox or bull.[379] The cattle herd is a key trope through which to articulate the role and identity of the patriarchal leader, head of household and in particular, a chief whose authority binds clans and homesteads together. "The metaphorical association between a Zulu homestead head and his herd is thus complex. In terms of sexuality and authority (a man) is likened to a bull; in terms of social responsibility and value to the community he is like an ox" (2008:25). The izibongo of Dingane, Cetshwayo, Dingiswayo, Dinizulu all incorporate the trope of the calf, the angry beast, and the bull – and in 1961 Luthuli's place amongst such figures becomes a rallying point of resistance to domination. This begins to explain the response to the *izibongo* within the sequence of tributes offered to Luthuli. The praise poem as a valued cultural form elicits recognition and identification in excess of that which the other two addressees are able to trigger precisely because of it referential idiom. The emblems of the bull and the kraal bind the addressees through associative ties.

Formal verbal acknowledgements as in a valedictory address, the toast, and the eulogy correspond to some degree with *izibongo*, although they perhaps lack the heightened intensity of verse and may

[375] Knight attributes the aphorism "two bulls cannot live in the same kraal" to Mpande in response to the factions developing around his rival sons, the princes Cetshwayo and Mbyazi, both of whom anticipated succeeding him as ruler (2010:68).
[376] "Johnny Clegg has recorded that the family head takes great care to rise and pass water each morning before his bull does. If he does not, it is believed that his authority over both human group and herd will be undermined" (2008:23).
[377] An example pertaining to leadership and authority is pithy: "You can't have two bulls in one kraal".
[378] The cosmological connection between man and beast is acknowledged in poetic idiom by H.I.E. Dhlomo: "The cow is…our great means of support. It is our traditional server out of food, *which we brought with us from the place whence we came as people.* The creation by God is a great miracle here on earth. It is said that 'one hand washes the other', so it is with the cow and man" (2008:10, my emphasis).
[379] The distinction between the bull and ox extends metaphorically in terms of social relations amongst clan members. "The bulls are necessary to fertilise the cows, but they are essentially anti-social and difficult to control. Intractable, and often dangerous, they are left to graze with the other cattle and are corralled in the byre at night – but are treated with circumspection […] A bull's aggressive masculinity exudes sexuality and potential violence, yet there is an obvious associative linkage of bull with homestead head" (2008:23). Young bull calves are castrated "to maintain the authority of the bull" and oxen are described as frequently more prized than a favoured bull on the grounds that "oxen are reliable, tractable, responsible. Within their limits, they act like reasonable people – and the reasonable person is one who can be depended on to act in a socially responsible manner" (2008:23).

be of questionable reliability given their subjective individual bias and authorship. As Dr. F.V.Engelenburg writes:

> Funeral orations, apart from artistic merit, usually have small value as historical material. What Smuts said at [Louis] Botha's grave may be counted an exception: 'He had no equal as a friend. We have worked together intimately for twenty-one years without intermission. We came together with a closeness seldom vouchsafed to friends. This entitles me to call him the greatest, cleanest, sweetest soul of all the land – of all my days. To his friend is left the bitter task of burying him, and to defend his works, which were almost too heavy for him to perform' (1929:336).

As Smuts' simple prose acknowledges, the relationship of the speaker to the subject is pivotal to the gravitas and veracity of the tribute being made. The credibility of the speaker within the community, or the role played by a designated individual whose address is directed towards, and on behalf of a collective, is equally important in 'authenticating' and endorsing the tribute being advanced.

The concept of affirmation may be theorized in terms of how values are produced and the mechanisms of their formation are thoroughly deliberated by Simmel in "Exchange", the analysis of which now follows. To the extent that values are culturally situated and circulate within and between members of collectives, it is crucial to engage with the principle of association in addition to scrutinizing relations between art, play and the play form of social inter-action, which (superficially at least) would appear to have little relation to the issue of value and exchange. Simmel's propositions do, however, invite the synthesis of these concepts and accordingly an analysis of relations between exchange, value, desire and association will be developed as a precursor to an analysis of a play in which the less formal, less conventionalized form of the *izibongo* will demonstrate aspects of gifting and tributes in a different key.

**Simmel: "Exchange" and the significance of sacrifice in value formation.**

Simmel begins with the hypothesis that "(e)xchange is the purest and most concentrated form of all human interactions in which serious interests are at stake" (197:43). The statement heralds two related areas of enquiry that he subsequently addresses: exchange as a specific form of interaction, and secondly, an interrogation of value, meaning and significance together with the ways in which this is integral to the process of exchange. His central proviso, stated at the outset, is that exchange (as in Johnstone's *Presents game)* is based on reciprocal action. He establishes this phenomenon through challenging the possible interpretation of a series of encounters which may, superficially at least, appear to be a "unilateral process" (1971:43). Using the examples of the public speaker, the teacher, the journalist and, intriguingly, the hypnotist, he asserts that none of these ostensibly asymmetrical relations is one in which the polarities of influence and total passivity are set up as opposing positions of engagement.

Simmel then develops a distinction between interaction and exchange. Interaction is the more expansive term and activity, or in his words "the broader concept" (1971:44) within which exchange is a particular sub-category, the identification of which forms the substance of his essay. Exchange is associated with the notion of gains and losses, although not, at the outset, explicitly linked to economic value. As meticulous as the careful choice of words or phrasing may be, the comparison

being advanced depends, to an uncharacteristic degree, on relatively amorphous and ambiguous phenomena. He writes:

> What one expends in interaction can only be one's own energy, the transmission of one's own substance. Conversely, exchange takes place not for the sake of an object previously possessed by another person, but rather for the sake of one's own feelings about an object, a feeling which the other previously did not possess. The meaning of exchange, moreover, is that the sum of values is greater afterwards than it was before, and this implies that each party gives the other more than he had himself possessed (1971:44).

He initiates a particularly subtle view of relations between subjects and the status of the object. Firstly, the *value* of the object itself, and indeed the desire for the object and the willingness to make an exchange, depends on the attitude of both subjects towards the object; secondly (and this qualification seems to be a key insight), it is only the desire of the potential recipient for the object that prompts and instigates the previously unacknowledged recognition of its value because of its potential for transfer; and finally, in the subsequent aftermath the worth of the "words or things" that have been exchanged has effectively been enhanced. In his view it is thus that exchange itself results in a continuous process of evaluation and re-evaluation *between parties* or, as he puts it: "[t]he ordinary vicissitudes of daily life produce a continuous alteration of profit and loss, and ebbing and flowing of the contents of life. Exchange has the effect of rationalizing these vicissitudes, through the conscious act of setting the one *for* the other" (1971:44). It is reasonably clear that Simmel is not excluding material goods or commodities from his consideration: what needs to be stressed is how he incorporates additional abstract social qualities within the mechanisms of exchange. The subjective feelings on the part of the one who desires what may be exchanged acquire a measure of objectivity through the mutual endorsement of the properties of what is to be exchanged. Establishing 'a view held in common' is thus the tacit premise of the exchange.

The core principles underpinning his propositions of how value is negotiated and produced have obvious parallels and implications within improvisation pedagogy. In relation to positions occupied by two parties in respect of an exchange, some correlation with "offering and accepting" or "giving and receiving" so central to Johnstone's vocabulary and improvisation technique is made and neither action is totally influential or passive. Johnstone explicitly directs that the giver should not dominate the scene being generated. Miming the gift being offered self-evidently requires the agency of the receiver, whose pleasure in the object is communicated to the giver, who can only then recognize the "value" of what has been exchanged. Further, since material objects are not part of the game being played, the willingness to engage or participate in the *Presents game*, as with other improvisations, is predicated on the full acknowledgement that 'one's own substance' is a crucial resource on which to draw.[380] Finally, the rhythm of alternating the roles sets up a reciprocal dynamic as a structuring principle for participation in a jointly developed sequence of actions as the identity and potential of the object received and given is discovered by both parties.

[380] In the South African context the multiple cultural value systems, customs and discursive domains cannot be excluded from the kind of subjectivity implied here.

Turning his attention more explicitly to the "nature of economic exchange",[381] Simmel introduces the issue of sacrifice with the proposition that "[o]f all kinds of exchange, the exchange of economic values is the least free of some tinge of sacrifice" (1971:44). Despite the section heading, he does not immediately engage with economic or mercantile values of the object, but consistent with the terms he has advanced thus far, he proceeds towards calculating value *ex negativo*, by asking what it will cost the subject who desires "the thing" and what course of action is open to him or her. It is through this logic that the sacrifice is introduced and accounted for as instrumental to constructing value.[382] To begin with, Simmel compares economic exchange with related forms of exchange in which "no real utility" (1971:44) is expended and the "calculation of profit and loss" (1971:45) is dispensed with. Inter-personal encounters independent of economic factors, such as "exchanging love" or an intellectual conversation, are those in which, he submits, "our possession of ourselves is in no way diminished" (1971:45). The outcome of these transactions is rather that "we perceive the response of the other, despite our own offering, as an unearned gift" (1971:45). In fusing the properties inherent to labour with those of gifting, Simmel hints at the complex gratification and affirmation of gifting, which begins to lay the basis for a preferred discourse within the improvisation studio, an emphasis on play rather than an overt expenditure of effort (or work), on gifting rather than calculated profit and loss.[383] He arrives at a broad definition of exchange, as a pattern of "sacrifice and gain", or "sacrifice and attainment" in which:

> Exchange is nothing more than the causally connected repetition of the fact that an actor now has something which he previously did not have, and for that he has lost something which he previously did have (1971:46).[384]

A corollary to this point is the claim that "exchange is a creative process" which may be regarded as "just as productive, as creative of values, as is so-called production" (1971:47).[385] This constructionist claim relies on the premise that:

> The end result yields a surplus of satisfactions over what obtained before the action. We can create neither matter nor energy anew, but only so attack the given that as many quanta as possible ascend from the realm of reality to the realm of value as well. This

[381] The material and economic aspects of his argument are of lesser significance to this study, but do nonetheless include principles on which one can draw most productively.

[382] The motif of sacrifice is taken up by Appadurai and is embedded in his concept of *regimes of value*. Appadurai draws strongly on the centrality of sacrifice for Simmel's model of exchange, summarizing its relation to desirability (defined in a subjective sense) and objectivity (the previously unrecognized endorsement of the desirability of the object by the second party) although his rendering of Simmel's use of subjective and objective frameworks is slightly ambiguous. Appadurai usefully sums up Simmel's complex and lengthier propositions: "economic objects […] exist in the space between pure desire and immediate enjoyment, which is a distance between them and the person who desires them, which is a distance that can be overcome. This distance is overcome in and through economic exchange in which the value of objects is determined reciprocally" (2009:3). Appadurai advances the notion of *"regimes of value"* in order to accommodate "inter- and intra-cultural" situations in which a set of shared standards cannot be presumed. He proffers the term as one which acknowledges that not every "commodity exchange presupposes a complete cultural sharing of assumptions, but rather that the degree of value coherence may be highly variable from situation to situation, and form commodity to commodity. A regime of value is […] consistent with both very high and very low sharing of standards by the parties to a particular commodity exchange ..." (2009:15). The nuances introduced here will be more fully developed in relation to the overtly differing value systems of Egypt and Rome in Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

[383] Simmel allows for alternative forms of exchange of commodities, such as bartering and gifting, and for the patterns of exchange, such as a kiss, in which the property of what is exchanged, has no material properties or utilities.

[384] He writes: "the give-and-take between sacrifice and attainment within the individual is the fundamental presupposition and, as it were, the essence of every two-sided exchange" (1971:46). This has considerable purchase as a key concept for working partnerships in improvisation: it models a mode of equitable participation that begins to redress the inherent asymmetries in status preferences of participants and accommodates questions of cultural difference.

[385] And consequently "value and exchange constitute the foundation of our practical life" (1971:47).

> formal displacement of given materials is effected by exchange between men just as by the exchange with nature which we name production (1971:47).

Simmel thus advances a model which consists of a series of associated transformatory principles whereby firstly raw materials are converted to commodities (which Appadurai might variously term "products", "objects", "goods" or "artefacts" (2009:6)) and then imbued with value. In so doing, he acknowledges, even equates, the role of instilling value in such commodities with a discursive function, at least in so far as the evaluative mechanisms (discrimination and valorization) at work are instrumental in constructing ways of thinking about these objects and locating them within a framework of a social structure and its customs. The founding principle on which this process rests is that "value must always be offered up in order to obtain a value" (1971:47) and it is precisely this "offering up" that constitutes a "sacrifice".

Simmel addresses the significance of sacrifice in ways that augment a conventional dramaturgical approach to the collective ritual offering up of an item of value as the "victim" or "object" of the collective action. He makes important observations as to what sacrifice entails. Firstly, he addresses the common-sense position that "we strive to minimize sacrifice and perceive it as painful" (1971:48) and that a life that circumvents the need for sacrifice would be more rewarding. Simmel regards this as a misconception: in his view sacrifice is "by no means always an external barrier to our goals. It is rather the *inner* condition of the goal and the way to it" (1971:48). His argument depends on observing that a goal depends on a sense of attainment and is necessarily distanced from us by some form of obstacle without the interposition of which it would not exist as a goal. Thus, he proposes that "sacrifice is the condition of all value" (1971:49). He makes the case that labour, for example, is a form of sacrifice in that the value of its outcomes is preferred to any other alternative expenditure of time and energy.[386] In his words "for every expenditure of energy in question, one or more possible and desirable alternative uses of it must be sacrificed" (197:49).

The dualities on which his system is founded, as much as the careful structure of his mode of argument develops to a consideration of the "relativity of value" so central to the "formation" or foundational processes through which an economic system develops. The principle of comparison as an essential mechanism for establishing merit introduces both a measure of objectivity and judgment, along with anchoring the process of identifying value beyond what is singular and individual. Simmel's point is that things are perceived relationally, readily available for (and appreciated through) comparison on which discerning judgments produce formulations of value.[387] The centrality of proximity and distance, likeness or difference in attributing value to an object, or one might add, an action and even a statement, is crucial. Continuing to probe the ways in which value is produced rather than inherent or given, Simmel transfers his focus to the issue of the "source of value", beyond what is entailed in the necessary sacrificial element of the exchange. He insists that the source of value is provisionally anchored in what he terms "particular circumstances" and is therefore always contextually and situationally contingent.[388] The qualification advanced by

[386] Alternatives identified include "the desire for leisure, for the mere self-satisfying play of skills, or for the avoidance of strenuous exertion" (1971:49). The last alternative is a delicate non-pejorative euphemism for inertia.

[387] He writes: "Relativity among things has a peculiar property: it involves reaching out beyond the individual, it subsists only within a plurality, and yet it does not constitute a mere conceptual generalization and abstraction (1971:69).

[388] He makes this point following the citation of a hypothetical incident in which "someone at the point of death from hunger gives away a jewel for a piece of bread…because the latter is worth more to him under the circumstances than the former" (1971:52). This interpolation merits acknowledgement as a demonstration that Simmel, like Appadurai, is

this formulation is that value systems are essentially dynamic and resist fixity; they are lodged "in a whole complex system of our feelings which are in constant flux, adaptation and reconstruction" (1971:52). Simmel's formulation of value accommodates both transformation and hybridity, since values and exchange are inter-twined and located at the cusp of encounters between individuals on the micro-level, and communities or cultures at a macro-level. It seems clear that Simmel's model of the inter-dependence of exchange and value extends to knowledge systems and power relations, mores, ideals and beliefs as much as to commodities and things. The stature of both Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela as political leaders and as subjects of the *izibongo* referred to earlier, is predicated on the considerable moral force and integrity of the ideals they elected to uphold and have come to represent and symbolize. Both were equally prepared to make extreme sacrifices in order to achieve their goals,[389] and both become living instances of Simmel's premise:

> If we observe which human achievements attain to the highest honours and evaluations, we find them always to be those which manifest, or at least appear to manifest, the most depth, the most exertion, the most persistent concentration of the whole being – which is to say the most self-denial, sacrifice of all that is subsidiary, and devotion of the subjective to the objective ideal (1971:53).[390]

Insisting on the importance of "analogies and relations to norms" (1971:60) which make comparisons possible, Simmel suggests that standards and averages serve a crucial function in that they allow us to perceive what he calls "the relativity of value": we cannot calculate merit in complete isolation, divorced from context and comparative reference points. The norm establishes the co-ordinates through which what is exceptional can be perceived and apprehended and its value asserted. He writes:

> Between the norm itself and the cases which it defines as either exceptional or standard there is no difference of kind: there is, so to speak only a quantitative difference. This is somewhat like when we say of an extraordinarily elevated or degraded individual, 'He is really no longer a man.' The fact is that this idea of a man is only an average. It would lose its normative character at the moment a majority of men ascended or descended to that level of character, which would then pass for the generically 'human' (1971:60).

In his view "traditions of society" establish sets of norms, grounded in, and developed from "the majority of experiences" (1971:60) which may or may not be congruent with "individual constellations, (the) demands of the moment, and the constraints of a capricious environment" (1971:60). The dimensions of the interface between "collectively held norms" and subjective positions are consistently adjusted and modified by socio-historical and cultural circumstances. Thus

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cognisant of asymmetries in terms of value systems and standards that may emerge from inter- or intra-cultural exchanges.

[389] Mandela's closing words at the Rivonia Trial are a resounding declaration. He describes the final moments of his defence in *A Long Walk to Freedom: "*I had been reading my speech, and at this point I placed my papers on the defence table, and turned to face the judge. The courtroom became extremely quiet. I did not take my eyes off Justice de Wet as I spoke from memory the final words: 'During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die' " (1995:438).

[390] Correspondingly, he posits: "We perceive the specific value of something obtained without difficulty as a gift of fortune only on the grounds of the significance which things have for us that are hard to come by and measured by sacrifice" (1971:54).

his conceptualization of standards and norms is articulated as synthesizing distinctions between subjective and objective worlds, dismantling perceived oppositions in a constant state of dynamism. It is ultimately this "cultural foundation of exchange" (1971:65) which constitutes an inter-subjective network that takes on the appearance of objectivity, shored up by social institutions and structures. It establishes a (relatively) stable framework which facilitates and delimits inter-individual encounters and exchanges. The cultural framework is crucial enabling "social interaction, expansion, and normative order" (1971:66) and shores up the dignity, rights and assumptions of the individual. The subjective and objective worlds, comprising individual interests, impulses, appetites and desires on the one hand, and the associatively formed and collectively held position on the other, are held in a constant tension and comprise the desire and context for exchange and value construction. They are, in addition, instrumental in forging the potential for encounter and transfer and inseparable from the exchange itself.

Donald Levine, in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, groups Simmel's essays under section headings. "Exchange" (pertaining to "forms of social interaction") is the first essay catalogued in a section which concludes with "Sociability."[391] The latter complements the core principles of exchange, value and sacrifice with a set of separate but connected issues, specifically his ideas regarding art and play, and interrogates relations between what he defines as *play forms of social interaction*, the pleasures of the associative impulse and the drive towards aesthetic form, all of which pertain to ways in which the tribute confirms allegiances, circulates and is crafted.

**Simmel: "Sociability" and the significance of the "play form" of association.**

For Simmel, sociability means forms and types of "associations [that are] accompanied by a feeling for, by a satisfaction in the very fact that one is associated with others and that the solitariness of the individual is dissolved into togetherness, a union with others" (1971:128). His premise is that, like exchange, *sociability* as a particular form of interaction is distinguished and typified by particular features. These features are of both cultural and social significance and generate a distinctive set of gratifications. *Sociability,* for Simmel, is the "play form of association" (1971:130) enabling the adoption of roles and facilitating inter-active encounters for the sake of social interaction in and of itself. He links "sociability" with "art and play which draw their form from [the reality of life] but nevertheless leave their reality behind them" (1971:128). The proposition suggests that "sociable encounters" are those that are bracketed off and set apart from material consequences and outcomes. To the extent that it is a play form, it is a constant citation of roles and modes of engagement, in which we are simultaneously both participant and observer, subjectively involved and aware of an element of distance from our own performance which enables the appreciation of its formal articulation.

Thomas Henricks, in his analysis of Simmel's essay stresses what this proposition means in terms of play and, in his paraphrasing, sociability comprises "activities in which people gather together to celebrate their common connections" (2006:125). Just as play has serious underlying impulses, so too sociability affirms the "meaning of community" (2006:125) and is founded on the "impulses and interests which man experiences in himself and which push him out toward other men" (1971:127).

[391] The other three essays are: "Conflict", "Domination" and "Prostitution."

The aim of sociability is "nothing but the success of the sociable moment, and at most a memory of it" (Henricks 2006:125) and it depends on the "goodwill of those involved" (2006:125). Moreover, as with art, sociability is predicated on the need to observe tacitly defined qualities, essentially the aesthetic properties that guide and shape its course. Sociability, as Simmel conceptualizes it, thus becomes a mechanism for acknowledging tensions in the interface between subjective "impulses and interests" (1971:127) and the broader objective or overarching phenomenon of society.[392] To the extent that sociability is "symbolically playing the fullness of life," (1971:129) Simmel identifies the "self-regulatory mechanisms" (1971:130) that require observance. The ostensible freedom implicit in the sociable encounter is held in a productive tension with a set of tacitly understood constraints that enable the realization of the objectives of shared participation and pleasures that may be produced. Simmel is unequivocal in asserting that "[t]he pleasure of the individual is always contingent upon the joy of others; here, by definition, no one can have his satisfaction at the cost of the contrary experience of others" (1971:132).[393]

The articulation of the constraints comprises the core focus of the essay and provides a means of theorizing the tensions between the individual and the ensemble in improvisation training. Henricks redefines Simmel's two key guiding principles as "sociability thresholds" and explains what he means in more obscure terms: "To embrace too much 'objectivity' or too much 'subjectivity' is to move outside the doorways of the experience"(1971:126). Despite Simmel's formulation of the regulatory mechanisms which establishes and sustains the delicate balance between the polarities identified in the distinctly 19th century circumstances, context and conventions of bourgeois life and custom, these guiding principles can be extrapolated and understood in contemporary terms. Simmel launches his discussion of the psychological components and behavioural traits and qualities that sustain sociability by asserting the need for "tact". This can be understood as a restraint delineating the boundaries of the interface between individual and collective in a situation where no extraneous imperatives are at stake other than the mutual pleasures in the encounter. In his view, *tact* "guides the self-regulation of the individual in his personal relations to others where no outer or directly egoistic interests provide regulation" (1971:130). He makes the case for developing a refined astuteness and sensitivity to the shared and mutual interests of the group as a mechanism to focus and guide participants toward synthesis and cohesion.[394] Henricks expands on this:

> To describe the ideal relationship between attendees, Simmel emphasizes the 'democratic nature' of sociability. Again following Kant, he formulates a 'principle of sociability' in which 'each individual should offer the maximum of sociable values (of joy, relief, liveliness, etc.)

[392] Simmel begins the essay with a complex definition of the "nature of society" (1971:127). He acknowledges that there are two diametrically opposed views on the nature of society: one that "mystically exaggerates its significance, contending that only through society is human life endowed with reality. The other regards it as a mere abstract concept by means of which the observer draws realities, which are individual human beings, into a whole" (1971:127).

[393] He continues, observing that "in other forms of association such lack of reciprocity is excluded by the ethical imperative which govern them but not by *their own immanent nature*" (1971:132, my emphasis). Simmel suggests that the appreciation of reciprocal and equal pleasures is an intrinsic property of the (ideal) sociable encounter. The force of this subtle observation establishes a connection with the goals articulated in *Exchange*, and accordingly some sacrifice may be required to attain this goal. The application of this to the collective project of an improvisation class makes it reasonably clear that the goal is not always readily attainable as the competing interests and capacities of participants cannot be assumed equitable, with the predictable corollary that the pleasures in the outcome of the session are likely to be diverse and varied.

[394] Henricks describes this as "the quality of judgement that keeps people focused on the proper purposes of the event" (2006:124).

> that is compatible with the maximum of values he himself receives.[395] When the participants in sociable occasions are too different or unequal this quality of reciprocal exchange is made difficult. However, even when the participants are in reality quite similar in background, the sense of equality is *only a fiction*[396] that is developed and sustained (2006: 126, my emphasis).

The implications of these ideas for distinctly heterogeneous groups (in which asymmetries are founded and compounded across multiple variables) is self-evident since even where relations are most homogenous, equitability can at best be inscribed as an ideal, *a "fiction"* that requires accommodation by all.

Insofar as sociability can forge inter-subjective connections, or "themes of joining and co-operation" (Henricks 2006:127), Simmel introduces its dependence on the quality of distance that prohibits unrestrained expression of a forceful personality as a crucial component of establishing a collective ethos.[397] As Henricks puts it:

> Simmel makes the striking assertion that sociability must always be somewhat impersonal. Although the liveliness of such occasions depends on the proper mix of backgrounds, interests, and preoccupations of those attending, such matters must also be kept in check. In particular, differences in wealth, erudition, fame and social position must be downplayed to support the sense of unanimity. Even more surprisingly 'the purely and deeply personal traits of one's life, character, mood and fate must likewise be eliminated.' Thus one can be a bore by allowing one's personal preoccupations or interests to overwhelm others (2006:125).

These ideas begin to account for the impact of stressing the formal, even aesthetic, properties of the sociable encounter as compared with those that are more overtly instrumental or purposive. Relations between form and content and how these underpin the definition of the mode of interaction that Simmel is accounting for, presumes a Western sensibility of aesthetics and its complex relation to distance and proximity.

Simmel is writing about behaviour in everyday life, but his views are congruent with propositions regarding play and art within a Western paradigm. Probing the relations between form and content via his model of sociability, specifically regarding structure and aesthetics, informs attitudes to drama, performance and theatre as either primarily content based or formally preoccupied, or a synthesis of both. He proposes that an element of impersonal distance is intrinsic to play forms:

> The most purely and deeply personal qualities must be excluded from sociability. The most personal things – character, mood, and fate – have thus no place in it. It is tactless to bring in personal humour, good or ill, excitement and depression, the light and shadow of one's inner life. Where a connection, begun on the sociable level[…]finally comes to center about personal values, it loses the essential quality of sociability and becomes an *association*

[395] Simmel writes: "the pleasure of the individual is always contingent upon the joy of others; here by definition, no one can have his satisfaction at the cost of contrary experience on the part of others" (1971:132).

[396] Henricks expands on this point: "In sociability, one does as if all were equal. This deception is not a 'lie' in Simmel's view, but rather a commonly understood pretence" (2006:126).

[397] Simmel's view is that "precisely because all is oriented about them, [that] the personalities must not emphasize themselves too individually. Where real interests, co-operative or clashing, determine the social form, they provide of themselves that the individual shall not present his peculiarities and individuality with too much abandon and aggressiveness." (1971:130)

> *determined by a content* – not unlike a business or a religious relation, for which contact, exchange and speech are but instruments for ulterior ends (1971:131, my emphasis).

The inter-active encounter based model of improvisation tends towards foregrounding structure, rhythm, dynamics and formal components of inter-subjective behaviour and is largely congruent with Simmel's propositions. Johnstone stresses the need to focus on the structure of the encounter rather than feeling pressured to generate content spontaneously. The scope for individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to arrive at a provisional *working consensus* via a shared appreciation of structure – inherently more objective as a paradigm – seems viable as an alternative to the project of forging affinities on the basis of exchanging content-based experiences and personal narratives especially when these are so varied and underpinned by divergent value systems and cosmologies. The principle of "distance" from the contents of a direct experience serves as an enabling mechanism in that aesthetic forms lend themselves readily to being critiqued from a multiplicity of viewpoints. Moreover, lodging the appreciation of structure and form as generative mechanisms for ensemble work is a means to identify shifts in perceptions of aesthetics and form and bridge distances between differences. The collaborative principle, structure and ethos arguably foster the emergence of a hybrid aesthetic. The distance established in Simmel's model of sociability with its adherence to avoiding *association determined by content* seems to me (if this logic holds) a viable approach to generating work in South Africa today, as an alternative to a content based focus.

Simmel's concept of *sociability* has considerable implications for improvisation (and its pedagogy) because of its correspondence with the underlying demands and gratifications of practical and discursive sessions in which participants experiment in forms of human behaviour and social interaction in order to understand the underlying dynamics.[398] While exchange is expressly bound up in the project of value formation that is founded on reciprocal participation, sociability (an entirely different form of interaction) depends on *associative* imperatives. Sociability operates as an integrating mechanism in which affinity with others is actively sought and celebrated. Cohesion depends on acknowledging similarities and affinities to establish a degree of equitability rather than asserting distinctions between individuals as fraught by pejorative aspects of difference. The founding of a sense of "communitas" is implicit in Henricks' notion of the "powerful feelings of shared circumstance and commitment" (2006:124). "Sociability" is separated from its original impulses (which it cites) *through* play. Simmel makes a crucial proviso: "If sociability cuts off completely the threads which bind it to real life and out of which it spins its admittedly stylized web, it turns from play to empty farce, to a lifeless schematization proud of its woodenness" (1971:139). The concept of sociability begins to articulate ways in which the process of developing an ensemble becomes, in and of itself, a source of gratification in which the aleatory pleasures operate in a different dimension from the 'serious' mechanisms of exchange and value formation.
While the essay relies on abstraction, Simmel illustrates his claims with two striking examples that further demonstrate what he means by "the play form of association" and its imperatives. His

[398] As Henricks puts it: "[in] the play-forms of interaction […] social form itself becomes the 'content' or focus of the interaction" (2006:124).

reference to the coquette and flirtation[399] enables him to draw a final analogy: "As sociability plays at the forms of society, so coquetry plays out the forms of eroticism" (1971:135). He deliberates what he calls "that most extensive instrument of all human common life, *conversation"* (1971:136).[400] For him, in functioning as a sociable form, conversation must "retain its self-sufficiency at the level of pure form, the content must receive no weight on its own account; as soon as the discussion gets business-like, it is no longer sociable; it turns its compass point around as soon as the verification of a truth becomes its purpose"(1971:136). Simmel values repartee precisely because "its object matter can change lightly and quickly […] it has an entirely interchangeable and accidental character which inheres in means as against fixed purposes" (1971:137). Conversation, in the form of repartee, has equivalence in fleeting expressions committed to paper, or the medium of screen to screen communication, in which the guiding principle is affirming connections and affiliations. A more extended analysis of the forms and rhetoric of gifting and legacies enables the pattern of affirming value to be scrutinized in terms of inter-personal relations, relations *between* parties and as a means of inculcating shared cultural perspectives.

**Pages from an autograph album: gifts and legacies.**

The three objects in the photographs below are ostensibly unconnected in themselves: an old autograph album, a "multi-vocal", domestic equivalent of the *izibongo*[401]*,* inscribed "To Dear




Natalie, from Phyllis" in lyrical cursive script, its pages as much as the date of the earliest entry in 1914 testifying to its age; a fifty rand note in circulation in 2010, with little to indicate whose hands it has passed through; and a birth certificate registering a date and heritage singular to one individual. Their association depends on a particular common mark: all three are verified by a signature which becomes a symbol of singularity and authority both literally and figuratively. Anthropologically,

[399] He locates the pleasures of flirtation in " free moving play, in which something definitively erotic lurks only as a remote symbol […] Coquetry […] has left behind it the reality of erotic desire, of consent or denial, and becomes a play of shadow pictures of these serious matters" (1971:135).
[400] In terms of more sustained narrative Simmel posits that "the mutual understanding, the common consciousness of the group" constitutes a goal which, when "it [is] given as gift of the individual to the whole, behind which the giver can remain invisible…the narrator allows his own person to remain completely in the background" (1971:137).
[401] An inscribed page in an autograph album may be regarded as a graphic equivalent of the individual voice.

these objects are tokens of a specific culture and context. The birth certificate additionally attests to a particular moment in the history of a nation: its provenance is defined in terms of the Union of South Africa 1955 where it was issued at the cost of 2/60. The autograph album allows glimpses into the mores and small wisdoms of girlhood in Durban in the early years of the 20th century and the R50.00 note will circulate for as long as it is deemed legal tender.

The autograph book is a compendium of scraps. A product of "multiple authorship", it is a testimony to the polyphonic voices of friendship which invites eclectic expression. It contains a range of visual images: finely drawn sketches in black ink, water-colour paintings and cartoons ranging in subject matter from a bemused "Rain-Drenched Seaman" contemplating a sign announcing "Beware of the Wet Tar" [Fred 28/7/17], to Kaiser Wilhelm running at speed with a caption "The 'Berlin" sprint" [Mackenzie 29/7/17]. The drawings and paintings are complemented by adages and aphorisms that provide further indications of the Victorian heritage, values and ideals of group membership.[402] A "mixed media" declaration of personal commitment is playfully announced by a postage stamp affixed to a blank page with its caption "By gum, I'm stuck".[403] Undated, but signed by Ivan, it




stands in counter-point to the wry observation made by E.R.P. at Klipfontein in 1916: "I am very much in love with Nan/ But she is not in love with me/ As she flirts with another young man/ So I have little hope as far as I can see." The texture of relationships, life style and memories announce the social and cultural forms of a specific community and their values.

The unit of currency is an index of a system of exchange, more specifically the financial economy of capitalist society; the birth certificate – curiously alienating through the very fact of its "object-hood" – attests to the existence of a subject although its purposive categorization may well be construed as a symbol of bureaucratic ordering of a larger socio-political complex. The autograph book literally

[402] "The Best Medicines, Joy and Temperance and Repose, Slam the door on the doctors nose" [undated, initialed only] and "Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever/Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long/And so make life, death and that vast forever/ One grand, sweet song [July 4, 1914]".

[403] The marriage between Ivan Acutt and Natalie Wild took place on 19th September, 1925 and is recorded in *Acutts in Africa* by Yvonne Miller (1979). In this same genealogy of a single family I note that the conventions of marking identity according to position within a family tree relies on a curiously mathematical formula, more impersonal than a birth certificate. According to this genealogical system my identity number is 1.4.1.4.1.1 – effectively categorizing me as the oldest child of the eldest child of the fourth child. The system is an equivalent of nominative determinism designating offspring according to an ordered birth sequence.

binds together the evidence of close personal associations. The metonymic traces of friendship and personalities are articulated in the modality and style of each different entry, as much as the content of each inscription. A closer scrutiny pronounces the association of these three seemingly unrelated objects: in each a common graphic mark acts as a marker of authority and invests each 'statement' with a particular value. The mark of a designated individual confirms the status of the object and what it represents. The signature of Tito Mboweni is reproduced above a horizontal line beneath which his status as Governor of the Reserve Bank is confirmed in daily commercial exchanges regardless of whether the bearer consciously acknowledges this. Mboweni's signature will in due course be replaced and a different signature will verify the status of currency in circulation. The birth certificate, according to the convention of legal documents, bears the signature of an otherwise anonymous local registrar whose position in a departmental hierarchy is clearly signalled. This certificate, like all legal documents, depends for its verification on the autographic trace of the representative of officialdom at the bottom right hand corner of the page. The relationship of the signatory to the subject of the document remains strictly impersonal.

The multiple signatures between the covers of the autograph book construct its compound identity,[404] each separately, in Simmel's words, "maintaining a wisp of the personality of the giver" (1971:121).[405] Individually each separate entry in the autograph book is a signature that confirms associations and is proffered as a form of "gift". In as much as the autograph album is a "scripted" and fixed series of testimonials affirming a subject within a collective, each entry proclaiming an exchange of declarations within a narrow circle, so too the legacy of an individual constitutes a particular form of gifting that affirms the individual intellectual project. Proposing that his unorthodox thinking is diversely expressed, that the investment in the expression of individuality is consciously adopted and sustained as a "philosophical conviction"(1971:xiii), Levine identifies two biographical details which offer an additionally intriguing introduction to understanding the man and his ideas and which account for the preoccupation with the symbolic mark of the signature. He writes: "Simmel was disposed towards academic non-conformity[406] from an early age. The evidence includes a graphological analysis of samples of Simmel's handwriting, which reports that 'already at 22 years, Simmel's writing shows an unusually personalized character....He begins his own way at this time This appears especially clearly in the fact that *he employs two different kinds of script; an academically correct one, and one that is significantly individualized*" (1971: xi, my emphasis). This transgression is consistent with extended manifestations of resolute "devotion to the principle of individuality" and a refusal to comply with conventional expectations within the academic community. Seemingly fully aware of the "price to be paid", or in his lexicon, "the sacrifice to be made" for adopting this position, a "famous" late diary entry echoes a simile to his theoretical propositions: "I know that I shall die without intellectual heirs, and that is as it should be. My legacy

[404] In the age of electronic media and digital communication the autograph book is perpetuated by *Facebook,* a virtual equivalent which asserts the network of allegiances and "friends."

[405] In "Prostitution" (1907), Simmel asserts that "Only transactions for money have that character of a purely monetary relationship which leaves no traces, as is the case with prostitution. With the giving of money, one completely withdraws from the relationship; one has settled matters more completely than by giving an object, which by its contents, its selection, and its use maintains a wisp of the personality of the giver" (1971:121).

[406] The imperative of conforming to a distinct style of writing is symptomatic of ways in which educational practices meticulously govern self-expression at every level. Keith Johnstone unequivocally condemns art classes where crudely imitative styles are valued above abstraction and pleasure in the expressive potential of the medium. Far more insidious is the ruling that the "form" of the writing must conform in order for the "content" to be deemed scholarly.

will be like cash, distributed to many heirs, each transforming his part to use according to his nature – a use which will no longer reveal its indebtedness to this heritage" (1971:xiii).

The privacy of the blank page of the diary is suggested in the pronominal declaration – a feature noticeably expunged from writings authored for publication – and indicates that this may well have been written in the "significantly individualized" hand. The statement makes tacit allowance for publication through the dissemination of ideas expressed through the directives customarily employed in the disposition of an estate. This invites us to interpret his "bequest" in terms of how he has theorized value, gifting and economic exchange, so central to his thinking. Simmel persists in affirming individual autonomy and demonstrates a deeply internalized command of the sociable relations he has so thoroughly scrutinized. Arguably undeterred, even perhaps liberated, by the lack of having founded a particular school of thought in his own life time, he confidently inscribes worth into the corpus of his intellectual project disseminated in the public domain. Moreover, he detaches or absolves his intellectual successors from obligation through invoking the analogy with "cash," the commodity which he himself has distanced from a gift. As a commodity it "lends itself to any use" and "excludes any attachment" (1971:122). The intellectual generosity underpinning his gesture, his 'gift' is declared in terms of his own arguments.

***Anthony and Cleopatra:* the tribute as a structuring device and theme.**

The *Chambers English Dictionary* defines *tribute* as: "payment in acknowledgment of subjection; an act, gift, words or other expression of approbation – a testimony". [407] The definition indicates the multiple formats in which tributes are made along with the implicit hierarchical status relations produced through the action of paying homage. The purchase of the tribute as a structuring device that elevates the subject will be analysed by drawing on different levels in which valorization functions within *Anthony and Cleopatra.* Both Antony and Cleopatra, in the course of this play, are subject to the process of being constructed in the imagination but through different media and making different appeals to the sensory capacity and imaginative facility of those to whom the display is presented or the narrative is relayed. In respect of Antony, a series of verbal tributes displaces Cleopatra's imagined display and the range of 'moral judgments'[408] constitutes a scope of opinions about the man that we are invited to negotiate and synthesize.

Three qualitatively different verbal forms of tributes may be identified as working in overlapping and complementary ways. These forms are the *eulogy* in its formal conventionalized mode and its more intimate subjective memorialization, the 'objective' *personal testimonial* expressed in indirect form of narrative description, and affirmation through *salutation* (implicit in the recourse to either titles or the preference for using calling names). In conjunction with establishing a register and rhetoric, together these reveal a (perhaps) surprising pattern that exists in counterpoint to the 'grand scale'

[407] The tribute need not necessarily be addressed to the subject but disseminated to and through the community, as in the funeral oration or obituary. Plutarch writes: "Plato admits four sorts of flattery, but [Cleopatra] had a thousand. He proceeds to provide examples, the most notable being the angling expedition which ends with Cleopatra exhorting Antony to leave his rod to "the poor sovereigns of Pharos and Canopus; your game is cities, provinces and kingdoms" (1932:1121). In a single sentence his magisterial command is expanded in territorial terms in a manner not dissimilar to the concluding lines of Luthuli's Nobel Prize *izibongo.*

[408] Moral judgments, as Hamlet reminds us, are entirely derived from ideological positions: "Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (*Hamlet* II. ii 251-252).

of public ceremony and occasion. The pattern that emerges is one that underscores and reinstates shared positions and 'commonality' despite the obvious insistence on what is singular and remarkable about the protagonists of the play. The repetition and variation of the motif of tribute (and the embedded value systems that it promotes through its articulation and deployment as an instrument of exchange) will be further identified as a structuring device that operates variously to shape different kinds of encounters between characters. Shakespeare's play abounds in tributes, public and personal, addressed and referring to both "emperor" (Antony) and "monarch" (Cleopatra), twin archetypal symbols of leadership. Who speaks, from what position, and to what effect, is indicative of how ultimately both figures are constructed as prototypes in the imagination of the communities that they represent and over which they preside.

Lewis Mumford, in *The City in History* reveals something of the role and value of a leader to a community in his interrogation of what it means to be at the apex of a social hierarchy as its "symbolic representative".[409] He traces the transition from community stronghold to village and ultimately the formation of the modern city. In relation to this transformation of collective life styles, he suggests that the prototype of the political chieftain is the hunter. This claim is made on the grounds that "villages protected by the hunter flourished better than those whose crops might be trampled by wild herds, or whose children might be mangled and devoured by marauding beasts" (1991:33). The archetypal "war lord" has his counterpart in the shepherd, arguably "the spiritual brother of the hunter, his better self, stressing the protective rather than the predatory function" (1991:34). Mumford expands on this fusing of the functions of power with protection:

> Both vocations call forth leadership and responsibility above, and demand docile compliance below. But that of the hunter elevated the will-to-power and eventually transferred his skill in slaughtering game to the more highly organized vocation of regimenting or slaughtering other men; while that of the shepherd moved towards the curbing of force and violence and the institution of some measure of justice, through which even the weakest member of the flock might be protected and nurtured [...] *When kingship*[410] *appeared, the war lord and the law lord became land lord too*(1991:34, my emphasis).

The prototypes of the Monarch and the Emperor have their antecedents in these distinctly communal roles and responsibilities and are intrinsically caught up with the continued survival of the community to which their presence is so fundamental.

The analysis will focus on Enobarbus' speech which will be juxtaposed with Cleopatra's memorialization of Anthony in which he appears to transcend conventional notions of leadership and assumes the status of a colossus. Through using the apparatus of status dynamics, I aim to establish an analytical framework through which to engage with the text and its themes aligned with, but independent of, contemporary post-colonial terms. At the level of action and thematic concerns, the play constantly probes motifs of power and position in respect of the individual as much as the political community. It is perhaps the one play within the Shakespearean canon that

[409] Leo Braudy in "The Longing of Alexander" introduces his study with a similar observation: "In civilizations with a god-king especially those that used a written language primarily for religious, astronomical, and mercantile computation, rulers often took the same name as their predecessor because the role of the leader was more important than the individual who occupied it" (2009:34).

[410] Archetypal symbols of leadership open up some interesting links between signifier, signified and referent: "The Chinese ideogram denoting 'king' comprises three parallel strokes, for Heaven, Mankind and Earth, linked centrally by a vertical stroke" (Chevalier et al 1996:566).

most explicitly engages with the prototype of Imperial relations which is established as the context and determinant of personal narratives. In the sense articulated by Edward Said, "imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (1994:8). The action moves relentlessly between Egypt and Rome itself: although Rome might be construed as the Imperial centre in political and military terms, the 'heart' of the play is anchored in the Egyptian court, the sense of which provides a point of entry to the action and continues to dominate throughout. This sense of spatial relations invokes both the notion of a centre and margins with the concomitant insider/outsider status identities, as much as positions within a vertical hierarchy.

Whether sincere and merited, or patently flimsy and sycophantic, compliments and flattery effect the promotion of an individual through accrediting the superordinate with a specific value. The utterance positions speaker, addressees and the subject of valorization in relation to a particular set of socially sustained and culturally defined indices of worth. As the praise poem has demonstrated, public celebration of a leader is an instrument of memorialization and as such serves as a highly efficient political tool. The Roman world view (that of the archetypal Empire)[411] is pitted against that of Egypt throughout the play, and much of the fascination and tension within the play is generated through the ways in which Anthony moves constantly between these two worlds and cultures, serving as a living 'bridge' between them.[412] Camille Paglia stresses that "the action takes place at a great transition in history, when empire replaces republic" (1992:214). Plutarch explains Antony's life story in terms of the Imperial ambitions of Julius Caesar.[413] Caesar figures largely in the lives and literature pertaining to both protagonists of this play, although his heir (Octavius) now assumes the role of antagonist. Octavius epitomizes all that is rigidly and austerely Roman – the antithesis of Antony. In addition to the sharp contrast drawn between these two powerful individuals, the systemic opposition between the power and cultural values of Rome and Egypt is initiated and sustained through multiple metaphors – chief among these an East/West distinction.

Octavius Caesar's pronouncement in response to the news of Antony's death serves as a departure point for probing the different registers through which figures are acknowledged and affirmed within the play. It establishes the conventional extreme at one end of a scale of utterances which all conform more or less to the same purpose, but are expressed from different subject positions in terms of distance and association and accordingly differ in emotional intensity and tone. A public and formal declaration, the eulogy is succinct, even terse, but nonetheless as significant in its register as it is in terms of the point within the play at which it occurs. The speech not only 'reclaims' Antony as a Roman citizen but also asserts a shift in the balance of conflicting powers as Octavius assumes an increasingly powerful role as sole Imperial leader. The formal acknowledgement of the stature of Antony as former triumvir and military leader, if personal rival, is

[411] Edward Said reveals how "imperialism [is not] a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. [It is] supported [...] by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories an people *require* and *beseech* domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination" (1994:8).
[412] Simmel's proposition is that the bridge confirms separated territories while simultaneously serving as a link between them. The bridge confirms boundaries and becomes a means of traversing these limits.
[413] He describes Caesar's ambitions in the following terms: "the true motive that led him was the same that formerly led Alexander and Cyrus against all mankind, the unquenchable thirst of empire, and the distracted ambition of being the greatest man in the world" (1932:1108).

articulated in terms of consequences for the greater collective and political power, in a striking affirmation of the Roman imperatives towards territorial authority and control:

> The breaking of so great a thing should make
> A greater crack. The round world
> Should have shook lions into civil streets,
> And citizens to their dens. The death of Anthony
> Is not a single doom, in the name lay
> A moiety of the world (V.i.14-19).[414]

The tension produced in the potential clash between the opposing worlds of Rome and Egypt, to which Octavius "eulogy" quite explicitly does not refer, just as it scrupulously avoids any personal or emotive connection with its subject, propels the action from the outset. In the very first line, Philo's orthodox Roman point of view provides a core vocabulary of values to be interrogated and inverted in the action that follows. His unequivocal censure of Anthony introduces the themes of excess and transgressing boundaries in terms that suggest the fecundity of the Nile itself. He launches the play by refuting an opinion that appears to have been put to him, effectively mid-way in a dispute of views, with the words: "Nay, but this dotage of our General's/O'erflows the measure" (I.i.1-2). We are introduced immediately to the view that reason and military responsibility should curtail and delimit desire. Rational judgment and precision are core guiding principles congruent with military command and appear to have been forsaken in favour of indulging sensual abundance. The extent of Antony's degradation to the Roman eye is summarized in Philo's "you shall see in him/ The triple pillar[415] of the world transformed into a strumpet's fool" (I.i.11-13). The terms "General" and "strumpet's fool", positioned at the outset and conclusion of the short opening speech, chart the trajectory of Anthony's ostensible fall from grace. The criteria invoked fuse neglect of military leadership with the betrayal of the Imperial allegiance and power. Philo seems to echo Plutarch's judgment[416] and immediately establishes the core of the Roman point of view. For Camille Paglia, this Roman world is one in which "(the) abstract and public take precedence over the concrete, emotional and sensuous" (1992:214). The origins of these primary Roman values are expounded in Plutarch: prior to the birth of Romulus, a prophecy forecast the rise of a man who would embody "valour, good fortune and strength of body" (1932: 25). Citizenship and personal identity are organically fused and defined in the foundation myth of the city of Rome itself. The infants Romulus and Remus, exposed at birth, were, as legend has it, succoured by the woodpecker and the wolf – "creatures esteemed holy to the God Mars." The gestation and survival of the twin infants depends

[414] There is a compelling congruency with the spirit of Cleopatra's extended memorialization of Antony which will be addressed more thoroughly later in this chapter, although the emotional tone and cultural positions from which Octavius and Cleopatra speak differ considerably.

[415] The abstract notion of the vertical axis materializes in the ladder, the "pre-eminent symbol of ascension and realization of potential." Bachelard observes the way in which elevation is mapped as a "realization of potential" in which "verticality is the line which describes the quality and height of that elevation, horizontality its quantity and extent" (Chevalier et al. 1996:580). It is a trope for spiritual, even mystical, ascension in a number of world religions and belief systems. The ladder is a vertical bridge facilitating the meeting of "Heaven and Earth" (1996:582) and the question of measuring or judging achievement and failure is readily apprehended. Natural variants of the ladder are trees, mountains, sets of steps and even the rainbow, and its earliest architectural trope is "the pillar" – so frequently invoked in *Antony and Cleopatra.* While natural forms manifest structural features morphologically related to the rungs between the extremes which are markers of stages of the journey, the pillar separates the base and capitol with its long shaft, suggesting something of the gap between top and bottom strata. The ladder with its vertex directly above the base most closely resembles the pillar in establishing a continuum between the extreme points, and both ascent and descent are implied by its structure.

[416] Plutarch's dictum is articulated in irrefutable terms: "a ruler's first aim is to maintain his office, which is done no less by avoiding what is unfit than by observing what is suitable" (1932:46).

on fostering that equates military fortune with survival. Speaking of his General, Philo invokes the attributes of this God of War,[417] in direct comparison with his General's conduct in a critique that implies a betrayal of the value system so integral to maintaining the power and authority of the Imperial centre.

The direct introduction to the title figures of the play follows almost immediately in a swift exchange. The refusal to acknowledge boundaries is reiterated in a register that harnesses depth of feeling with its metaphor of spatio-temporal limits to the calculation of value.

Cleopatra: If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
Antony: There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.
Cleopatra: I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved
Antony: Then must thou needs find out a new heaven, new earth (I.i.14 -17).

The lines positively exult in a refusal to acknowledge limitations, boundaries and a judicious calculation of value. Antony patently glories in excess and his words invite us to re-consider Philo's judgment of moments earlier. The pattern of the play itself is, typically, articulated in this first scene in the juxtaposition of contesting positions. The Egyptian world is one that accommodates and celebrates infinite fecundity and variety and has its most passionate advocate in Antony himself.[418] The Roman triumvir articulates his values as entirely different from the orthodox Roman way of life. His words attest to his embrace of all that Egypt represents. Intimating something of the pattern of "gains and losses" inscribed in Simmel's notion of exchange, Antony declares himself in words that irrevocably defy Imperial power and authority, redefining "nobility" and what exceeds norms and standards in the process:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall. Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike
Feeds beasts as man. The nobleness of life
Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't -
We stand up peerless (I.i.33-39).

There are two important features to foreground in examining the context and effect of the ways in which tributes consistently function within the play. The first is the importance of witnesses, or representatives of a community – even a single auditor serves – suggesting a conscious theatricality, in the sense of "performing for an audience"[419] This is doubly articulated in that two sets of audiences are invariably present – one comprising the patrons outside the frame of theatrical action, while the characters, Eros, Dolabella and Charmian play important roles as witnesses and respondents within the action. The second remarkable phenomenon relates to the terms and values that are ultimately established through the arc, or scale in which the tributes are patterned. While Cleopatra recasts Antony as a Cosmic Emperor in her extraordinary invocation to Dollabella, her final tribute is far more personal: offering her life as a gift to Antony, she says: "Husband, I

[417] Antony's "protector" Hercules, the warrior icon, deserts him in Act IV just before the final battle. Plutarch also provides some record of this.
[418] Further evidence of this emerges when, on return to Rome, Enobarbus reports his experiences to Agrippa and Maecenas: "we did sleep the day out of countenance and made the night light with drinking"(II.ii.177) before confirming the rumour of "Eight wild boars roasted whole at breakfast and but twelve persons there" (II.ii.180 – 183).
[419] Marvin Carlson (1996) is unequivocal in declaring that performance is dependent on this consciousness although he concedes that an audience of one may be the same self that is the performer.

come" (V.ii.286). The magnificent Plutarchian accolades accorded to the gruff Enobarbus in detailing the splendour of her glorious first meeting with Antony has to be set against Charmian's final tribute that Cleopatra is a "lass unparalleled."[420] This suggests that the play is intensely concerned with setting values according to a scale or register – and what defines both Cleopatra and Antony is ultimately neither their power nor position. Attributes of social significance are constantly set in antithesis to a scale of intimate personal value. We, the audience, like the characters within the world of the play, are called on to grapple with the simplicity and ordinariness of powerful and influential figures.

Shakespeare is extraordinarily diverse in playing with the motif of the tribute, which is deployed at the level of a single line, across a single speech, as a motif that sustains the rhythm and structure of an entire scene –and ultimately as the overriding arc of the play as a whole. The tribute effected in the single line or phrase is deeply affective as Charmian's reaction to Cleopatra's death suggests.[421] She says:

> Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
> *A lass unparalleled* (V.ii. 314-315).

The poignant directness and simplicity of the words accompanies a note of finality and exhaustion in an intimate eulogy. The line yokes together a set of complex contradictions which at first glance may be missed. The contest between death and life is implied. Death wins and, in a trope directly derived from *The Illiad*, is entitled to claim Cleopatra as concubine, part of the spoils of war. Charmian's words accommodate the dualities of her position: Cleopatra's worth is defined, not in just in terms of her status as queen and greatest prize in the "spoils of war", but as a woman and equal of her handmaid. The real force of the line is reserved for, and contained in, the final four syllables. The word "unparalleled" is almost impossible to say at high speed. The tempo of vocal delivery is thus structured into the writing itself, controlling the momentum as if in a bid to defy mortality through elongating and sustaining the value of Cleopatra's life through language and sound. One of John Barton's injunctions to actors in *Playing Shakespeare* (1990) is to identify and play the contrasts and contradictions of the text as these contribute significantly to the texture and affective properties of Shakespeare's use of language, whether poetry or prose. The example cited here is a supreme instance of how the meaning of a word opposes and contests what comes before or after. "Unparalleled" contains all possible excess, and admits no rival, and qualifies the monosyllabic simplicity of the preceding noun. Cleopatra is at once a "lass", and a great deal more. As Johnstone points out, the fortunes of the "hangers on", like Charmian, rise and fall with those of the individual magnetic force that holds them in their orbit. This motif is one that Shakespeare

[420] Another cultural custom recorded by Plutarch: Caesar, as Imperial authority has the final words, and accordingly pays tribute constrained by formal and political obligation.

[421] These are not Charmian's final words – she provides another tribute in response to the Roman Guards arriving at the scene: "It is well done, and fitting for a princess
Descended of so many royal kings" (V.ii. 321-322). This epitaph has distinct congruity with Plutarch's records: "And when one came in said angrily, 'was this well done of your lady, Charmion?' "Extremely well,' she answered, 'and as became the descendant of so many kings" (1932: 1152). Plutarch emphasizes the reasonable doubts surrounding the precise manner of Cleopatra's death*:* "what really took place is known to no one." He details the evidence, or rather the lack thereof, that surrounds the mystique of the asp: "there was not so much as a spot found, or any symptom of poison upon her body, not was the asp seen within the monument; only something like the trail of it was said to have been noticed on the sand by the sea...Some relate that two faint puncture-marks were found on Cleopatra's arm, and to this account Caesar seems to have given credit; *for in his triumph there was carried a figure of Cleopatra, with an asp clinging to her"* (1932:1152, my emphasis). The ways in which perceptions and identities are constructed are signaled in Plutarch, and subsequent representations become potent vehicles for establishing a core image or narrative.

dramatizes quite explicitly through the deaths of Eros, Iras and Charmian. Cleopatra herself is brutally cognizant of the principle by which her attendants are likely to share her fortunes in the event of their capture by Caesar, as is made clear in a speech that not only engages with the status of being held captive, but more crucially imagines the continued circulation and depiction of these consequences:

> Now Iras, what thinkst thou?
> Thou, an Egyptian puppet shall be shown
> In Rome, as well as I. Mechanic slaves
> With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers shall
> Uplift us to the view....
> Saucy lectors
> Will catch at us like strumpets, and scald rhymers
> Ballad us out o'tune. The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us, and present
> Our Alexandrian revels. Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th'posture of a whore (V.ii. 205-220).[422]

The triumph of Caesar over Cleopatra requires the ritual display of the victor over the vanquished. The theatrical spectacle is invoked as proof of power and position, as proof of authority and depends on, and is constructed through, public presentation and the assertion of difference. Caesar's "triumph" and Cleopatra's subjugation depend on her being 'taken alive' and her presentation as evidence of conquest. The speech quite clearly articulates two ways in which she and her retinue will be humiliated – they themselves will be paraded in the streets in grand public spectacle and will further be the subject of parody. The greater antipathy is to the subsequent representations that she imagines being forced to witness. In these she vividly conjures all that is abhorrent in unsympathetic performances that appropriates the identity of the "other" and represents this as a stereotype without respect or concern for individual subjectivity and dignity. The obligation of the performer to entertain and gratify an audience implicitly fixes and seals the identities of those being parodied in the public domain.

The speech articulates the multiple problems associated with "spectacle" and ways in which the self that is being presented is doubly articulated, serving as an allegory of theatre and its vexing issues of presentation and reception. The theatrical spectacle is invoked as proof of power and position, of authority – and depends on its dissemination within a community. This problematizes theatre, its association with commodification and asymmetrical power relations which converge in a public and potentially volatile forum. Theatre is conjoined with display, show, and spectacle or in professional parlance, "production value". Bodies and all that they stand for are conjoined in signification and display in order to produce knowledge and power relations. This entails the optimal manipulation of its resources, deploying multiple and synchronous codes, in a tacit affirmation of strategies of fabrication and artifice. The instrumentality of theatre, with its capacity to engage and influence

[422] The dramatic irony of cross gendered representation is lodged in the performance conventions of Elizabethan theatre: these lines were written for a young apprentice boy actor to deliver and the noun acquires considerable force when used, as in this utterance, as a verb. The harsh antagonism of the line may owe its force to the reverse in which the noun becomes the verb. Transfer and displacement within language are a strategy for constructing pejoratives.

popular audiences, is further bound up with questions of impersonation and transformation, together with layers of reception and interpretation that comprise discursive regimes.

The values invoked by Charmian, on Cleopatra's death, are a repetition and variation of the very terms used earlier by Cleopatra herself in her immediate response to the news of Anthony's death[423]. Juxtaposing these two scenes reveals the taut control of metaphor and theme. The single dense utterance "The crown o'th'earth doth melt" is potent in its evocation and initiates *leitmotifs* that will echo in the later scene. Cleopatra's profound sense of loss is articulated as an audit of what remains:

> Young boys and girls
> Are level now with men. The odds is gone
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the waning moon (IV. xv. 65-68).

In an instant, bereft of the singular and exceptional, all things and all people are equal. This theme is underscored by the insistence with which both Iras and Charmian steadily try to reinstate notions of the singular. In their attempts to nudge Cleopatra towards some sense of the potential of her own life, the vocal duet quite literally reminds her of her station, escalating from "lady" to *"madam"* to "Royal Egypt, Empress!" (IV.xv.68 -73). Hailed as both monarch and Empress, Cleopatra's response instantly topples notions of stature and position:

> No more but e'en a woman, and commanded
> *By such poor passion as the maid that milks*
> And does the meanest chores (IV.xv.73 -75).

The emotional scope and range of her response to her lover's death comprises near hysterical snatches and allusions, but returns to the simple observation: "Look, our lamp is spent, it's out" (IV.xv.84 – 85). The analogy equates Antony with light, and seems to underpin the moment of resolution to follow:

> We'll bury him, and then, what's brave, what's noble,
> Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
> And make Death proud to take us (IV.xv. 86 -88).

It is not quite what she commits to doing. Rather, she appears to engage in a strategic assessment of the opportunities for dignified survival in a world without Antony. These are explored in quick succession in her encounters with Proculeius, Dolabella, and ultimately Caesar himself. But Charmian's tribute to her dead mistress binds Death to boasting and pride and consequently has the curious effect of reinstating Cleopatra's initial intentions through echoing these very expressions and terms.

Camille Paglia explicates the ways in which the iconography of astrology establishes what she calls an important "image pattern" (1992:222) in the play. She suggests that "astrological metaphors are crucial to its psychological design" and probes the astrological meanings of the elements: "Fire is will, originality, boldness, the amoral life force. Air is language, wit, balance, humane perspective. Water is intuition, sympathy, deep feeling, mystical oneness and prophecy. Earth is order, method, precision, realism, materialism" (1992:223). Drawing on this, she suggests that Shakespeare casts a

[423] It is Anthony's death scene, but the locus of dramatic interest is in Cleopatra – she dominates in terms of the number of lines given to her. The position of Anthony's death at the end of act IV emphasizes the way in which Cleopatra becomes the driving force of the two scenes of the final act. She "outlives" Anthony by close on 500 lines.

horoscope for Cleopatra that is "lacking the element of earth" (1992:223). She demonstrates the ways in which this position opens up a reading of Enobarbus' famously poetic speech that is particularly insightful, and also enriches an understanding of the Battle of Actium and what it represents.

> Cleopatra is the fire and air of the imagination[424] afloat upon the sea of perpetual transformations. Fire is her fierce or fiery character of aggression and violence. Air is her verbal energy and poetic power of image making. Water is her uncontainable surges of emotion and her mercurial shifts of mood […] earth is not present to stabilize or set a single persona (1992:225).

While Antony's death induces Cleopatra to pronounce her 'resolution' and determine her fate, there is a crucial sequence of transformations and roles she will yet adopt. This is all too evident in Plutarch's narrative and becomes the basis of moral evaluations of her character in classical criticism. The brief meeting with Philostrate hones in on formal and public roles and is tightly structured around positions of power and their extreme opposite. Cleopatra is both strategic and diplomatic, and is accorded a linguistic dexterity and rhetorical skill that accords with Plutarch's account of her linguistic commands:

> If your master
> Would have a queen his beggar, you must tell him,
> That majesty, to keep decorum, must
> No less beg than a kingdom (V. ii. 15-18).

The imperatives of decorum and individual dignity adopts the articulation of rank and its display in order to assert the socio-political dimensions of status between victor and vanquished.

Cleopatra's invocation of Anthony's greatness in the exchange with Dolabella is an extended instance of the way the tribute underpins and sustains an entire monologue. It also demonstrates the monumental achievements and strategic resourcefulness of Cleopatra after Antony's death. Again, her speech is a reincorporation of what has been intimated much earlier in the play. Previously Cleopatra has called Anthony the "demi-Atlas of this earth" (I.v.19-34). These lines are a meditative response to his temporary absence – he has returned to Rome - and prefigure how she will respond to his death.[425]

Cleopatra's eulogy to Antony is one of the key speeches of the play and a single auditor, Caesar's emissary, suffices for Cleopatra's project. Transcendence and transformation constitute the governing principle and the speech is an extended variation of her earlier phrase "the crown o'the earth doth melt" in the immediate aftermath of Antony's death. Transfiguration can only be effected because of Antony's absence which guarantees that no figure can enter to undercut or contradict the demi-god status she contrives for him. He can now be re-instated as the colossus of

[424] Paglia suggests that this changes in the moment of death: "Her ceaseless transformations end in the immobility of death – she has finally mastered her too-combustible fire and air and achieved a spiritual integration of all four elements. With the addition of 'marble constant earth', the coldness of death, Cleopatra is now the complete Mercurius, enshrined upon her altar-like bier" (1992:226).

[425] Despite the play being entitled *Antony and Cleopatra,* we as the audience, see relatively little of the two lovers together after the magnificent opening scenes of Act I. They are reported reunited at the opening of III. iv., but we do not actually see them together until well into III. vii, so separation from each other, rather than enjoyment of each other's presence dominates the action.

Cleopatra's imagination: his value is incontestably promoted. The reference points are intensely, specifically human yet cosmic in range. It seems possible to read this speech as Shakespeare's reply to Plutarch and his assertion that "Antony was so great as to be thought by others worthy of higher things than his own desires" (1932:1153). The "boundless" magnificence of the person described to Dolabella, and to us, by extension, in the form of an extended praise poem, celebrates the capacity for desire and largesse and is quite uncompromisingly proclaimed as amongst his greatest attributes.[426]

I dreamt there was an Emperor Anthony
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man.
His face was as the heav'ns, and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O o'the earth.
His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm
Crested the world. His voice was propertied
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas,
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above
The element they lived in. In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets. Realms and islands were
As plates dropped from his pocket.....
Think you there was, or might be, such a man
As this I dreamt of?

Dolabella's careful, and perhaps reluctant, negative triggers the important coda to her invocation.

..if there be, or ever were one such,
It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t'imagine
An Anthony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite (V.ii.76-100).

It is possible to expand at length on the significance of this speech from a number of positions but it is perhaps most satisfactorily interpreted as functioning in the same ways as a "praise poem". Unlike Proculeius,[427] Cleopatra might have no particular reason to trust the man who Plutarch describes as "not without a certain tenderness for Cleopatra" (1932:1151). Shakespeare's use of

[426] Shakespeare, through Cleopatra seems to challenge Plutarch's censure. Plutarch provides a substantial claim for Anthony's leadership amongst his soldiers –"What might seem to some very insupportable, his vaunting, his raillery, his drinking in public, sitting down by the men as they were taking their food, and eating as he stood, of the common soldier's tables, made him the delight and pleasure of the army." He is equally careful in recording Anthony's magnanimity and humanity to conquered opponents, his respect for dignity and protocols beyond his own: "when Ptolemy, after he had entered Pelusium, in his rage and spite against the Egyptians, designed to put them to the sword Anthony withstood him, and hindered the execution...Not was his humanity towards the deceased Archelaus less taken notice of .[…Anthony] sought out the body and buried it with royal honours. The consequence was that he left behind him a great name among the Alexandrians, and all who were serving in the Roman army looked on him as a most gallant soldier" (1932:1107).

[427] Cleopatra informs him, and us, that Antony has told her that she can trust Proculeius (V.ii.13). The advice is misguided: Proculeius is more Caesar's man than Dolabella will prove to be.

this recorded fragment is to make him the recipient of a magnificent 'praise poem' whose sympathies are engaged by the speaker and profoundly affected by her magnification of her lover's attributes. The speech also elevates Antony beyond recognizable human proportions as a necessary precursor to Cleopatra's own 'self-sacrifice.'

The monologue is structured around a pattern of interjections from Dolabella which reverse the pattern used by Iras and Charmian discussed earlier. Dolabella greets the queen of Egypt with the appellation "Most noble Empress", and a few seconds later, "Most sovereign creature", but seems to capture her attention, and arrest the flow of ideas by using her name: "Cleopatra". He has effectively moved from high formal acknowledgement of her status to personal address. This detail is deeply affective, foregrounding subjectivity through the act of naming, rather than continuing to observe objective social status. This complements and underscores all that Cleopatra herself is doing as a means of engaging empathy. The structure of the speech itself is as significant as its content, with the opening and closing lines firmly locating what is imagined as a "dream". The 'real' and the 'imagined' are to be positioned side by side, and the very attributes that Plutarch deliberates form a firm core for Cleopatra's representation of Antony. She conceives of Antony in cosmic proportions in terms of his appearance and manner, not unlike the figure at the centre of Vive's fable.[428] The values placed on physical valour, and oratory, are recast in metaphysical terms before her focus moves to the subject of his legendary generosity and his taste for pleasures. Her central conceit sets the 'natural' against imposed order – and Anthony's predilection for the Bacchanalian is positively eulogized! Abundance and profound enjoyment inevitably take precedence over glorying in power and authority. Nonetheless the vision ends with an invocation of omnipotence as a global leader. So the shift in register, when she challenges Dolabella to confirm the veracity of her vision, the plausibility of the demi-god she has just invoked, is as startling as it is triumphant. Antony's worth and identity is ultimately to be judged as a *man*.

The coda, in which Cleopatra annihilates Dolabella's skepticism, further complicates the relations between the real and the imagined: the thing of nature and the creature of her dreams. We know, because we have been reminded by the framing device at the outset of the speech, that this transformed being is a product of her imagination, her 'dreams' – but, in a formidable conclusion, she has trumped any possibility of sustaining this view, as Dolabella's response confirms:

> Your loss is as yourself, great, and you bear it
> As answering to the weight (V.ii.100-101).

The Arden edition footnote makes the meaning of Cleopatra's paradoxical formulation of Antony quite clear: the "unsubstantial creations" of the imagination, or of representation,[429] is "discredited" by the "masterpiece of conception" (1987:202). The natural world produced Antony: he is not a figure of her fertile imagination: she has succeeded in convincing Caesar's emissary of her view and in doing so has gained an ally sympathetic to her cause. The speech has the effect of inducing Dolabella to reveal his Emperor's intentions regarding the captive Queen, although this is done under pressure as Caesar's arrival is announced. The meeting of Caesar and Cleopatra is a masterful manipulation of 'misrecognition' and, following hard on the extraordinary way in which Antony now

[428] Vives' fable is used by Cascardi to launch his study of Calderón. So too, Shakespeare's recourse to the paradigm of *theatrum mundi* along with Cleopatra's pleasure in theatrical display in addition to her accolades to Antony , all suggest some links between this play and Vives' fable of man and humanism.
[429] The Platonic invocation is implicit in the word "shadows".

so thoroughly dominates theatrical attention through his absence, heightens the incongruity that neither recognizes the other. Caesar asks: "Which is the queen of Egypt?" while Cleopatra has to be informed of the Caesar's identity: "It is the Emperor madam"(V.ii.112-113). The palpable tension is crafted in terms of symmetry and its reference points pertain to the obligations of decorum that accompany positions of extreme high rank. Queen and Emperor meet at last, and lack a shared sign system to apprehend this very fact.

The mechanism of the tribute dominating an entire scene is most clearly demonstrated early in the play when Enobarbus, back in Rome, informs fellow Romans, Agrippa and Maecenas, of the fabled meeting between Cleopatra and Antony:

> The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
> Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
> It beggar'd all description; she did lie
> In her pavilion – cloth of gold, of tissue –
> O'er picturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature….
> The city cast
> Her people out upon her; and Antony
> Enthron'd i'the market place, did sit alone,
> Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
> Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
> And made a gap in nature (II.ii.190-240).[430]

Camille Paglia describes this famous excerpt as "a gorgeous dreamlike memory" while R.H.Case suggests that the speech is "most incongruously put into the mouth of the prosaically common-sensical Enobarbus" and consequently "not in character" (1987: xlviii).[431] The authority of eye witness testimony is pitted against the temptation of a spectacularly theatrical dramatization of the events. It seems that the ultimate interpretive error would be to succumb, like Cecil B de Mille, to the temptation of enacting, depicting or showing the sumptuous extravagance of Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony. This would be a case of "semiotic literalness" (Elam 1991:23) and entirely negate what Shakespeare so dazzlingly achieves. Keir Elam invokes Honzl's useful concept of "acoustic scenery" as a core convention of Elizabethan staging. Known in classical rhetoric as

[430] The contents corresponds so closely to Plutarch that one might imagine all that Shakespeare has done is to heighten the tone, crafting one of the most intensely poetic speeches of the entire play.

[431] Reading Case's scholarly and thorough introduction written in 1906 but nonetheless still the introduction to the 1987 Arden edition is a sharp reminder of how the critical apparatus largely determines the range of interpretive moves; to transpose Patrick Chabal: "the questions being asked *do* determine the answers". The moral stature of the protagonists, the obsession with possible inconsistencies in the time line of the action, and the compulsion to evaluate the play in terms of its merit, in order to pinpoint its position in the canon are central to his writing. Where his insights continue to inform in their keen perception is with regard to the "poetics" of the play. He argues that the most deeply affecting lines, and there are many instances of these, are entirely contingent for their effect on the dramatic context – the poetry is inseparable from the dramatic intensity which it develops.

"topographia" (Elam 1991:25) this strategy refers to the ways in which spoken language assumes the role of invoking the location of the action, rather than any reliance on the visual codes of the production. But Enobarbus' speech achieves far more than this – precisely because he draws on the power of narration. His description of the spectacle will always exceed what is materially or physically possible in the theatre, just as Cleopatra's invocation of Antony after his death defies physical embodiment. Events (and the individual) are invested with a significance that draws on the unrestricted capacity of the imagination to respond to what is being described. But, and far more importantly, it simultaneously locates the impact and meaning of the events on the viewer as imbued with greater significance than the actions themselves: the recording and retelling becomes the locus of the action. The speech is delivered relatively early in the play and is a clue to the way in which tributes serve the project of memorialization, the very motif central to Cleopatra's core objectives after Antony's death.

But the speech has another function. The levels of hyperbole establish what appears to be the tribute to Cleopatra's mastery of stagecraft and spectacle, the visible demonstration of her power and mystique. These predictably provoke responses of awe from Agrippa, the man who has been mandated, only minutes previously, to speak on behalf of Caesar in proposing the marriage of Octavia and Antony. Enobarbus' ultimate tribute to Cleopatra is held in reserve and follows after his praise poem. The trappings of state and public magnificence fade in comparison with the memory of inadvertently witnessing a private and personal moment – Cleopatra at her most vivacious, most vital and most memorable without recourse to contrivance or public display:

> I saw her once
> Hop forty paces through the public street
> And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
> That she did make defect perfection,
> And breathless, power breathe forth...
> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety; other women cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,
> Where most she satisfies. For vilest things
> Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
> Bless her, when she is riggish (II.ii.228-240).

Enobarbus' tributes to Egypt's queen are doubly articulated: as an observer he moves from witnessing a crafted performance in the public domain to a status closer to that of the voyeur intruding in a most private and intensely personal moment, less majestic in terms of social power, but infinitely greater in terms of personal magnetism. Paradoxically, Cleopatra is both Queen and whore. In both roles she overwhelms reason, and Enobarbus, the character invented by Shakespeare, is instrumental in establishing this sense of her and guiding our perceptions towards this realization.

The brief and poignant scene in which Enobarbus commits suicide is thematically associated with the interrogation of the tribute and the gifting mechanisms within the play. Enobarbus' defection from Antony's camp is the substance of the relatively short scene (IV.v.) and we are introduced to it via

Antony's reaction which is entirely non-censorious and reasonable.[432] Two very brief scenes track the subsequent fortunes of Enobarbus (who has left all his personal and material belongings behind in Antony's camp): the first is that in which Enobarbus learns of Antony's response to his 'betrayal'[433] followed by the scene in which alone he faces the consequences of his actions and affirms all that Antony stands for as Roman military commander and as individual whose judgement he no longer respects or trusts. Enobarbus is, in terms of the world within the play, entirely alone, disassociated from any particular party as a consequence of his own choices and actions. He is the recipient of Antony's generosity and tributes – all his own belongings, and more from Antony's treasure chest, plus Antony's good wishes have been sent after him - and his final lines[434] resonate with the full realization of what it means to be respected and honoured, although in his own estimation he is undeserving. The prosaically commonsensical Roman remains ruthlessly logical and disciplined. He is capable of collected judgment and comparison, but ultimately all that his General stands for in the subjective and emotional sense surfaces in the final lines, rendering him virtually speechless and reliant on repetition: "O Antony!"

The mechanism of exchange and the dynamics of perceived gains and losses, sacrifice and value embedded in the praise poem and in very simple forms of gifting have been central to the analyses in this chapter. The arc and pattern traced throughout the case studies surveyed is itself not without significance: just as Appadurai tracks relations between the "tournament" of the *kula* to the less formal exchange mechanism of the *kitoum,* this analysis has tracked the conventionalized form of the praise poem in oral culture (an acknowledged formal mode of public declaration) to the example of simple personal declarations within a narrow circle. This parallels the rhetorical interplay which patterns the ascending and descending scales of value in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The consistent shift in register from the high grandiloquent gesture to more modest and simple assertions is a valorization of what is commonplace and ordinary.

Keith Johnstone, writing about spontaneity, stresses the stultifying effect of striving towards being original, of aspiring to being deemed imaginative and creative, or, quite simply, the desire to be regarded as exceptional. He urges the need to recognize that without expending any particular

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[432] His response to the news of his first lieutenant's desertion is an unconditional acceptance of Enobarbus' right to exercise his own judgement. Antony appears to assume responsibility for the lapse in loyalty and in addition to insisting that Enobarbus' own possessions are sent after him, commands that written assurances accompany the gesture:

> … write to him
> I will subscribe gentle adieus and greetings
> Say that I wish he never find more cause
> To change a master. My fortunes have corrupted honest men (IV.v.13-17).

[433] O Antony, Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
> My better service, when my turpitude
> Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart:
> If swift thought break it not, …
> I will go seek
> Some ditch, wherein to die: the foul'st best fits
> My latter part of life (IV. vi.31-39).

[434] O Antony,Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
> Forgive me in thine own particular,
> But let the world rank me in register
> A master leaver and a fugitive:
> O Antony! O Antony! (IV. ix. 18-23).

efforts in this direction every participant in an improvisation class needs to recognize that they are unique, in and of themselves. In substantiation of this view, he cites Mozart:

> Why my productions take from my hand that particular form and style that makes them *Mozartish*, and different from the works of any other composers, is probably owing to the same cause which renders my nose so large or so aquiline, or in short, makes it Mozart's, and different from those of other people. For I really do not study or aim at any originality (1997:88).

Mozart, despite epitomizing a prodigious mastery of form and style, of technical craftsmanship and understanding of his medium, disavows striving towards adopting an ideal in crafting his own particular style in order to stand apart from other composers. He demystifies and undercuts pretensions towards "singularity" through a playful and robust insistence that these may be taken for granted. Daniel Boorstin arrives at a more sober conclusion in "From Hero to Celebrity":

> In this life of illusion and quasi-illusion, the person with solid virtues who can be admired for something more substantial than his well-knownness often proves to be the unsung hero: the teacher, the nurse, the mother, the honest cop, the hard worker at lonely under-paid, unglamorous, unpublicized jobs. Topsily-turvily, these can remain heroes precisely because they remain unsung. *Their* virtues are not the product of our efforts to fill our void. Their very anonymity protects them from the flashy ephemeral celebrity life. They alone have the mysterious power to deny our mania for more greatness than there is in the world (2009:90).

Chapter 7: **"To move, to teach, to delight": a consideration of some implications of status dynamics in pedagogical encounters and creative practice.**

"...much of modern (or post-Kantian) philosophy has struggled in one way or another to de-epistemologize the concept of science-knowledge, to undermine it as a static representation and to set it in motion or to translate it back into the practice it came from.
Brecht offers us a world in which that practice is entertaining, and includes its own pedagogy as a member of the class it subsumes – the teaching of practice also being a practice in its own right, and thereby 'participating' in the very satisfaction it holds out to its student practitioners. Under these circumstances, at least two terms of Cicero's famous triad (to move, to teach, to delight) slowly fold back into one another: 'to teach' again recovers its kinship with the injunction 'to delight', and the didactic again slowly reconquers the social respectability long since accorded that (only secondarily and marginally) approved social function for art as the embellishment of life."

Frederick Jameson (1999:5).

"With works of art even more than with philosophical systems it is impossible to find out how they are made. Those who make them work hard to give the impression that everything just happens, as it were of its own accord, as though an image were forming in a plain inert mirror. Of course this is a swindle, and apparently the idea is that if it comes off it will increase the spectator's pleasure. In fact it does not. What the spectator, anyway the experienced spectator, enjoys about art is the making of art, the active creative element."

Bertolt Brecht cited in Willet (1987:164).

**The rhetoric of status re-considered.**

The anthropological philosopher Ernst Cassirer cites *and challenges* views that have considerable purchase regarding both creative "expression" and spontaneity:

> "What the artist is trying to do," says R.G.Collingwood, "is to express a given emotion. To express it and to express it well, are the same thing …Every utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art." But here again the whole constructive process which is a prerequisite both of the production and of the contemplation of the work of art is entirely overlooked. Every gesture is no more a work of art than every interjection is an act of speech. Both the gesture and the interjection are deficient in one essential and indispensible feature. They are involuntary and instinctive reactions; they possess no real spontaneity. The moment of purposiveness is necessary for linguistic and artistic expression. In every act of speech and in every artistic creation we find a definite teleological structure. An actor in a drama really "acts" his part. Each individual utterance is part of a coherent structural whole. The accent and rhythm of his words, the modulation of his voice, the expressions of his face, and the postures of his body all tend towards the same end – to the embodiment of human character. All this is not simply "expression"; it is also representation and interpretation. Not even a lyric poem is wholly devoid of this general tendency in art. The lyric poet is not just a man who indulges in displays of feeling. To be swayed by emotion alone is sentimentality, not art. (1992:142)

In remarkably similar terms, Jacques Lecoq insists that:

> [I]mprovisation is at the heart of the educational process and is sometimes confused with expression. Yet a person expressing himself is not necessarily being creative. The ideal, of course, would be for creation and expression to go hand in hand, in perfect harmony. Unfortunately many people enjoy expressing themselves, "letting it all hang out", and forgetting that they must not be the only ones to get pleasure from it: spectators must receive pleasure, too. There are many teachers who confuse these two points of view (2009:16).

His pragmatic advocacy of a mode of pedagogy in which innovation, creativity and pleasure are inter-twined with issues of how presentations are received and elicit responses and interpretation stresses the acquisition of formal artistry and critical thinking.

The juxtaposition of these views suggests the merits of arts and specifically performance pedagogy which fosters the scope for pleasure through developing formal languages but which stresses the need to integrate perspectives of how meanings are generated, transmitted and circulate. The fields of pedagogy committed to emancipation and empowerment and artistic production are obliged to confront tensions between autonomy and obligation, freedom and the constraints imposed by political and ethical dimensions of practice. And as the strands of this enquiry are drawn together in conclusion, the moral and ethical dimensions and implications of the project become more visible.

In formulating an overview of the issues and ideas embedded in promoting rigorous and engaged critical thinking about creative practices, I draw on ideas advanced by two notable South African intellectuals and activists in an attempt to forge connections between epistemological positions and ideological perspectives originating from the tradition of Western culture and viewpoints that are

acknowledged as profoundly committed to liberation ideals in both political and cultural domains. Both improvisation and inculcating critical thinking about creative practice must be viewed as inseparable from the greater project of promoting cultures "founded on the deep connectedness of human beings"(Ramphele 2012:62). In other words, arts pedagogy needs to be re-considered and assessed in terms of its potential to go beyond the superficial objectives of "skills training" in favour of inculcating deeper notions of informed accountability and instilling a sense of social engagement and collective obligation as a fundamental underpinning of what it means to be a citizen within a democracy.[435] As Ramphele puts it:

> The opportunity now is […] to recapture the values embedded in our collective cultural heritage of the inextricable connectedness of people as a defining element of being human (2012:64).

The larger project of advocating a pedagogy that draws on social theory and philosophy (in order to advance performance training as more than a set of expressive tools) circumscribes the narrower questions pertaining to status rhetoric with its role in performance pedagogy. Accordingly, re-assessing this over-arching proposition is a priority. In the light of the foregoing analyses, some conclusions must be advanced regarding the efficacy of drawing on analytical frameworks that are not expressly central to performance practice or philosophical observations of that practice. The inter-textual close readings have aimed to re-inscribe a mode of critical thinking and analysis as central to critically informed theatre-making that moves beyond being introspection and self-expression. In a context in which subjectivities and the taste for rapid, superficial consumption predominate, the expectation of, and desire for, instant gratification, assimilation and mastery profits from disrupting the momentum of proliferating "expression". The impact of slowing down (or even halting) performance in favour of analysis allows for necessary reflection. The intervention in the model of continuous transmission explicitly foregrounds different types and qualities of receptive agency. I draw on the views of Njabulo S. Ndebele to outline the necessity for instilling an appreciation of analytically informed theoretical approaches to a subject as axiomatic to advancement.

In his 1984 address at the University of Bophuthatswana[436] on the occasion of the Sol Plaatje Memorial Lecture, Ndebele stresses the need for critically informed analysis to be harnessed to both political action and creative practice. Subsequently published under the title "Actors and Interpreters", the speech defines the former as agents of material social change, be they mass actors or individual leaders, while intellectuals and artists are imbued with the task of responding to socio-political circumstances as "interpreters" whose work is of value only insofar as it is founded on two

[435] These imperatives seem all the more crucial in the face of aspects of contemporary life which steadily undermine the goals of transformation: multiple instances of self-serving opportunistic exploitation of the scope for rapid material advancement on the part of some has resulted in what Ramphele calls "the neglect of social pain" (2012:168) of the majority resulting in "the continuing inequalities of opportunity in our public and private lives despite the precepts of a human rights based constitution" (2012:173). The rapid advances in information technology and communication systems provide a new generation with fresh resources for extended net-working and enable connections to be forged, as Ramphele readily affirms. But the negative impact of a greater dependency on technological modes of interfacing may impair skills in face to face encounters and the capacity to interpret the cues of interactive behaviour.

[436] Bophuthatswana was then designated a Bantustan homeland under the Group Areas Act so central to the implementation of Apartheid policies. Ndebele's first sentence acknowledges the implications of appearing to endorse Separate Development simply through agreeing to be present at this institution for the occasion: "I agonized over the political ethics of coming here…" (2006:73)

ostensibly irreconcilable principles, namely work that is organically rooted in a socio-political sense in addition to being theoretically and analytically informed. His example of the writer who best exemplifies the ways in which rigorous and astutely observed publications are crucial to changes in social formation is Plaatje himself. Ndebele devotes a considerable portion of his address to two responses to Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa:* he cites views culled from an "editorial of the Pretoria News of September 1910" (2006:74) before proceeding to juxtapose these views (which co-opt and contain Plaatje's style and views as being "moderate") with his own analysis asserting Plaatje's position as being "firmly placed in the genuine history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. His role in that struggle has been that of methodical observer and interpreter" (2006:82). Ndebele launches the next part of his address with two questions:

> While Sol Plaatje largely focused his critical questions on the oppressor, I would like us to attempt the opposite: to focus our attention on the oppressed themselves. I assume that the work of looking at the oppressor, of unmasking his claims, will continue to be done. […] The evidence of oppression, after all, is all around us to see. What is not so easy to understand is how that oppression *actually* affects the oppressed. How well do the oppressed really understand themselves in relation to the oppressor? How much do the oppressed understand themselves in relation to one another? (2006:82).

The thrust of Ndebele's argument is directed towards advocating the integration of socio-political activism and advancement through education. The repeated invocation of the need to "understand" signals Ndebele's insistence on the merits of theoretical enquiry and analysis in addition to embracing formal developments and transformations in cultural expressions and forms. He argues that the strengths of both *mbaqanga* music and Gibson Kente's township drama may be attributed to the innovations in the medium (at the level of form) as much as the ways in which at, the level of content, both address specifically local themes and subjects. He further suggests that transformation of traditional forms is a consequence of transition to a modern urban lifestyle which impacts on both the "form and content" of performance traditions as much as their reception:

> It seems clear then, that the success of drama and music is connected with the relationship between popular culture[437] and progressive experimentation with that culture at the level of form and content. (2006:89)

His address ends with the injunction to his audience to "look at the structure of authority" (2006:99) as much as the curriculum and teaching methods. In his foreword to the anthology of Ndebele's writing, Michael Chapman stresses the "contemporary relevance" and cogency of Ndebele's arguments.[438] Ndebele's own stance is clear, to cite Chapman: "imaginative and ethical responsibilities are inseparable; the writer [of fiction] is simultaneously an artist and an educator." (2006: viii). Ndebele's insistence on the need for analysis and objectivity, on recognizing the interpretive role of the artist, is an injunction that offsets current tendencies towards unconstrained expressivity and a disavowal of both the political dimensions and formal mastery of crafting artworks.

[437] Ndebele draws on David Coplan's definition of popular culture as being that which is organically connected to and developed from within a particular community in which "public participation" in the evolution of a form is a key component of its development.

[438] The essays were first published in 1991, a period that Chapman describes as one of "trauma, defiance and change" (2006: vii).

Ernst Fischer makes the following proposition:

> Unless we apply sociology to the arts – unless we examine the social causes for its changing subjects, forms and content – we are bound to end up in a cloud-cuckoo-land of abstract speculation and aestheticism, miles from reality. An analysis of style, however intelligent it may be and however brilliant its insights into specific problems and details, is bound to fail unless it recognizes that content – that is to say, in the last instance, the social element – is the decisive style-forming factor in art (2010:171).

Fischer's proposition compellingly synthesizes the aesthetic dimensions of art with social engagement. What is so appealing about the prospect of performances predicated on the socio-political scope of an arts practice that depends on its public reception for its continued existence is that recognizing the dual obligations of pedagogical and creative practices is central to defining those practices. Fischer's submission that treatment and content are inextricably interwoven underpins his insistence on the need for informed critical analysis of the socio-political context as integral to the substance, meaning and value of art as an expressive and communicative language. The purpose and function of artistic presentation in the public domain within a society committed to transformation cannot but be informed by such considerations.

The value of a critical apparatus of sociological formulations pertains to ways in which the language of behaviour and interaction advances the development of a shared conceptual map for the representation of these phenomena, thus expanding the idiom of both critical analyses and performance languages. The usefulness of extending the scope for describing and analyzing aspects of self-presentation and interaction would appear self-evident. The analytical purchase of discourses of social philosophy and analysis lies in the manner in which they disaggregate questions of agency or vulnerability from specific circumstances or contents. By this assertion, I mean that analysis allows for a mode of abstraction that serves as a mechanism to counter the inevitable conflation of self and fictional persona on a psychological level. Performance is inevitably bound up with the imperatives of embodying and personalizing agents of narrative and specific circumstance in presenting the body in action to an audience. As in Brecht's dramaturgical method, recourse to a vocabulary that specifically analyses behaviour challenges naive notions of empathy or fixity associated with individual subjectivities and opens up the space for critical appreciation and formal manipulation of the material that is presented and performed as a text.

At the level of expanding the shared language of generating performances, Simmel's writing demystifies the spatial dimensions of mise-en-scène: concepts of distance, spatio-temporal configuration and dynamism become stringent and supple means of addressing issues bound up in crafting an aesthetically informed and socially meaningful presentation. His deliberations on interaction and exchange are central to the premise of reciprocally founded engagement, while the propositions embedded in understanding dualities encourages resistance to reproducing superficial stereotypes or the recycling of banal routines. The notion of dynamism and flux seems particularly valuable in enabling young performers to dissect critical points within the action of a scene or in sharpening the socio-political implications of an improvised scenario. In relation to playing status encounters specifically, the discourse of social analysis urges us to address the discomforts lurking in profoundly asymmetrical relations rather than perpetuating the seemingly neutral markers of "high and low" status, and expressly invites recognition of ways in which agency is masked. The more explicit terminology of dominance and subservience, empowerment and subjugation is an

appropriate and frank articulation of the underlying political forces determining life as it is experienced in South African society.

Focusing on the sociological aspects of a status discourse also opens up a rigorously ethical approach to the subject being defined at the heart of the interaction. Therapeutic discourse has, demonstrably, gained increased prominence and veracity as a means of addressing the consequences of systemic and inter-personal abuse. The repercussions of this discourse in the dimension of art-production need to be assessed. Sociologist Frank Furedi, in his study of the phenomenon, posits that the "cultural turn" towards a therapy discourse is predicated on the emergence of a culture that not only valorizes emotional expression but tends to recast formulations of identity (or personhood) through that register of therapeutic discourse. He writes:

> The tendency to reinterpret not just troublesome but also normal experiences through the medium of an emotional script can be seen through the phenomenal expansion of psychological labels and therapeutic terms (2004:2).

A discourse that promotes the "emotional script" impacts on pedagogical and creative practice and ways in which performance is conceptualized. Firstly, critical analysis is undercut through the mechanism of valorizing the emotional register that confers legitimacy on individual experience and feeling, and reduces obligations towards a considered crafting of the expression of feeling in its aesthetic dimensions in favour of content. Secondly, subjectivity is articulated through what he calls the "script" of self-esteem, privileging "emotional intelligence and well-being" as a means of constructing, or coping with everyday realities. This prioritization of emotion and feeling tends to obscure ethical and moral considerations of social processes. Furedi argues that "conventional moral meanings attached to such concepts as guilt and responsibility lose their salience in circumstances where the therapeutic ethos gains influence" (2004:12). Further, he posits that therapeutic culture insidiously encourages the view that "people cannot emotionally cope with a growing range of encounters, experiences and relationships"(2004:5) without recourse to professionals versed in the art of "healing" which, as he proceeds to show, may exacerbate and intensify notions of victimization and helplessness rather than promote agency and resilience. He states his hypothesis in unequivocal terms:

> One of the central arguments of this book is that what has changed is the cultural imagination of trauma. Today we fear that individuals lack the resilience to deal with feelings of isolation, disappointments and failure" (2004:6).

There is clearly a correlation between the valorization of "feelings" registered through the "emotional script" and the concept of status, so strongly predicated on social determinants and interaction. What seems to be at stake is the extent to which ethical and moral concerns (along with notions of autonomy, agency and accountability in the socio-political sense) are either diminished or advanced. Occupying a spatial territory that has been marked off as "a stage" needs to be recognized as being caught up in the politics of representation which, as such, is inseparable from questions of reception, interpretation and socio-political consequence. With its capacity to engage with the ways in which people behave and how conflicts in social intercourse produce identities and relationships, meanings and values, improvisation is uniquely equipped to probe asymmetries that produce fear, avoidance and antagonism; just as it seems an appropriate means of developing, and refining, collaborative performances predicated on (and compelled by) a sense of equitability, communitas and connectivity.

Theoretically informed perspectives drawn from the literature of social theory and philosophy additionally open up the scope for reframing modes of education and performance through the integration of play with pedagogical and aesthetic projects. Clearly, play offers a way of understanding how the antimonies of an organizing structure are set in productive relationship to the autonomy granted to the participant and the need to respond on an improvised basis to spontaneous and random ways in which action unfolds. The capacity and readiness to play presumes both willingness and goodwill as primary initiatives on the part of the participant, who voluntarily enters into a contract of participation and affirms the terms of the encounter. The usefulness of a play paradigm (discarding the accrued association of play with triviality) is its detachment from the ethos of labour which is bound up with the expectation of discernible outcome as the 'reward' for invested effort. The play modality destabilizes expectations precisely because of its orientation towards being "disinterested" in the sense that there is no immediate or discernible material outcome to an activity other than the intrinsic satisfaction and pleasures of participation. Harnessing a play modality to performance training seems a particularly productive means of contesting tensions and constraints borne of individualistic desires and vulnerabilities. Moreover, the appreciation of play as a mode of interaction, theoretically articulated and assimilated, helps inculcate an ethos of collaboration and sense of communitas. This quality is congruent with notions of communal form of social organization in which the African values of *Ubuntu* predominates. This proposition does not inherently depend on or advocate promoting the philosophy of *Ubuntu,* rather, all that is implied in the phenomenon of reciprocal respect (as a defining cultural proposition) is recast in an idiom that does not explicitly invoke either African values and associated restorative practices or a Western sensibility.

Terry Eagleton records an anecdote about George Best whose reputation is that of being "perhaps the finest footballer in history until alcoholism brought him low"(2003:113). It is a 'joke' that Best, is said to have repeated 'against himself' frequently. Because this playful anecdote draws together key aspects of status, its operation and rhetoric along with the instrumentality of the setting and context, it returns the focus to my analysis of status rhetoric.

> Best the ex-footballer was lounging in a five star hotel room surrounded by caviar and champagne, with a former Miss World lounging amorously beside him, when a member of the hotel staff entered, weighed down with yet more luxury goods. Gazing down at the supine star, he shook his head sadly and murmured: 'George, where did it all go wrong?'

The wry judgement of a glamorous life style, replete in material affluence, is an expression of regret and mild censure. The hotel worker recognizes that Best no longer represents all that he once stood; "he was not living," Eagleton continues, "if the pun may be excused, at his best"(2003:113).[439]

The first specific question regarding the articulation of status to which I return is the extent to which it is a phenomenon that is *culturally contingent and discursively constructed*. This aspect of status requires explicit foregrounding in the South African situation since status differences are bound up in differences of cultural norms and values. The primary value of Johnstone's programme of improvisation training lies in the way in which he stresses a collaborative response-based approach

[439]In Eagleton's view, the decision to forfeit iconic status on the soccer field itself, was "a courageous rejection of the success ethic. It was a recognition, however bleary eyed that life was not a matter of goals, in every sense of the word. Best was now free to enjoy himself, not live as some kind of self-entrepreneur. The frenetic high living was a shadow of exactly that. The emptiness of desire replaced the hollowness of achievement" (2003:115).

to performance training. A key aspect of this project has been to demonstrate that status determinants are negotiated and produced inter-actively and reciprocally: it is the significance of the *response* to the performative utterance or gesture that validates or negates its efficacy as an index of acceptance or rejection.[440] But crucially, the social context and value systems within which this action takes place and permits 'status markers' to be perceived, recognized and acted upon needs to be articulated more rigorously than Johnstone allows. His treatment of the social context within which exchanges and encounters take place is considerably under-developed and leaves room for intervention and adaptation. In the local context somatic indices of deference and respect differ considerably and implementing status-based routines in performance training seems to offer a rich opportunity for exchange. The understanding of culturally embedded ways of reading behaviour can be explicitly drawn out through physical expression and verbal discussion. Explicit acknowledgement of cultural differences in "ways of being, presenting and seeing" need to be incorporated and discrepancies between constituencies can be re-cast as opportunities for dynamic exchange and growth.

With regards to differences in cultural and symbolic capital related to facility in any particular language, the scope for collective interaction and engagement with the texture and expressive force of the eleven official languages seems crucial. Brecht's *Life of Galileo* dramatizes the political issues embedded in using an officially sanctioned language of an elite class over the vernacular which results in excluding Federonzi, one of the collaborators in the experimental project, from full participation in the joint undertaking. Asserting his disadvantage in terms of class and occupation he reminds his colleagues: "I grind lenses, and you look through them and observe the heavens, and what you see are not spots but 'maculis'." (1965: 83)[441] This incident invokes a range of questions regarding privileging the use of any particular language within a multi-lingual group committed to either improvisation or text analysis in which a homogenous linguistic facility and cultural dexterity cannot be presumed.

Improvisation, and the improvised presentation of texts in which translation is actively promoted, seems uniquely suited to multilingual collaboration and exchange. The strategic use of language as a medium, linked to ways in which the simple act of speaking, as "Prufrock" demonstrates, is a marker of status linked to cultural capital. Declaring opportunities for multi-lingual expression and communication to be normative practice puts into play a number of misconceptions regarding the assumed privilege of being a first language English speaker. The limitations of monolingual capacity rapidly surface and transform assumed positions of linguistic command. The strategy of turning what appears to be a problem into a productive mechanism may appear to be an expedient application of Brechtian dialectics. I prefer to acknowledge the robust instrumentality of the solution in terms of African resourcefulness, specifically evident in creative problem-solving that evolved in response to the need for developing inclusive channels of communication. The polyglot *Tsotstitaal* (the street vernacular) of Sophiatown in the 1950 was a street argot that hybridized not only idiomatic expression but vigorously incorporated and mobilized Afrikaans words, phrases and

[440] Hegel's "master-slave" propositions and the extent to which status dynamics may be defined as dialectical usefully accommodates each of the phases. In representation both components of an encounter need to be identified in order to play the integrated 'sum' (statement/gesture and response) in a manner that preserves the components or parts within the structure which may have effectively 'overcome or subsumed' these elements, stages or phases.

[441] A book has been delivered. Its title is *de Maculis in Sole* which Andrea immediately translates as "sun spots" (1965:82).

grammatical structure in a fluent and assertive command of the right to belong. *Tsotsitaal* served the expressive needs of a defiant community.

The spatial and territorial metaphors of status have, through the course of the preceding analyses, stressed ways in which the referents central to post-colonial perspectives may be foregrounded. The tropes of *"*horizontal co-ordinates*"* such as centrality and marginality, insider and outsider status invite the kind of implementation that offsets recourse to notions of "high" and "low" markers of provisional positions. The foregoing textually-based analyses have set out to demonstrate the idiom and rich referential matrix through which evaluative judgments are pronounced to recognize that the indices of lateral configured relationships serve as expressively as vertical ones to communicate affiliation or marginalization. The notion that status is relationally constructed has axiomatically enforced a focus on responses to initiatives that begin an exchange along with identifying the many ingenious ways in which a range of media are deployed in the performance of status relations. The varied relationships between individuals, like those between individuals and groups, have provided points from which readily identifiable trajectories and movement patterns originate. Ascension or demotion – the rising/falling binary – refer to vertical hierarchies that saturate both pre-modern and liberation discourse. A different order structures Modernist and post-colonial discourse in which the trope of centrality and margins is foregrounded and introduces the lexicon of inclusion and exclusion, although this too has clearly identifiable antecedents in classical discursive regimes as the analyses of *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* set out to examine. The persistence of the same status dimensions being articulated in the vertical plane across a range of epistemes suggests the extent to which these are entrenched cross-culturally, despite secularization and multiple politico- cultural revolutions dedicated to democratization and egalitarian ideals. Performance expressions of encomiastic discourse, such as the *izibongo,* are seen to operate as a mechanism of connectivity (while honouring a designated individual) through the affirmation of collectively held values.

The analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of status interaction has demonstrated that the supposedly stable category, the antithesis between valorization and stigmatization, is subject to reconfiguration in terms of spatial reference points and operates within distinctly political dimensions. These observations stress the need for a 'revisionist' assessment of Johnstone's technique, which confines 'status interplay' within improvisation training to the idiom and markers of high/ low status and transitions between these points, whether the status gap is of a minimum or maximum kind. While he develops a methodology that invigorates performance intensities in inter-subjective encounters articulated by these polarities, his work does not accommodate the status implications of positions implied in the centre-margin field with their connotations of inclusion and exclusion. The dual set of co-ordinates through which status dynamics may be mapped profits as much from theoretical interrogation as their pervasiveness may be gleaned from textually based close-readings of both improvised performances and literature. Further, in order for 'status-based' performance training games to be both pertinent and instrumental in sustaining a vigorous application it would appear crucial to locate playing status games within an understanding of discourse in which cultural factors are at play and construct a wide range of symbolic forms and encoded messages. Johnstone's recourse to the terms "high and low status", as he concedes, points to the reluctance to implement the more rigorous, and perhaps more politically necessary terms of dominance and subjugation. Such a strategy, in the local context, would avoid the political dimensions of education and creative

practice. Explicit acknowledgement of differences and discrepancies in agency may need to be factored into improvisation pedagogy. Implementing status-based approaches in a context of socio-political transformation in which volatile and fragile issues of self-hood are the substance and medium of expression cannot reasonably, or ethically, defer or neutralize issues of empowerment in playing with expressions of dominance and subjugation.

The application of Johnstone's improvisation method introduces aspects of the interplay of agency between individuals and alerts performers to the challenge of forging equitable bases for co-operation and collaboration. The outcome of this may facilitate developing a strong ensemble or group but this remains a latent property of his method rather than intrinsic to it: the extent to which his technique allows for developing centripetal ensemble work will depend on its implementation and the rationale underpinning its pedagogy.[442] What does seem productive is the ways in which theoretical interrogation and analysis intersects with practical creative teaching committed to skills development, enabling expertise and artistry. These concerns are necessary considerations within teaching and training in South Africa today as they are also central to post-colonial experience.

The individual propensity for the self-serving acquisition of strategies of empowerment may work against the interests of those of the collective. Status-based manoeuvres may be seized on as a tool for self-advancement on the part of an individual (rather than in the interests of the ensemble) and this manipulation clearly requires monitoring and constraint. Implementing status dynamics also needs to be assessed in terms of what advantages it offers performers in training and those who facilitate the learning process. The question of how it may best be implemented in order to function as something more than enabling a mechanistic implementation of a formula demands careful consideration in order to circumvent a tendency to reification. This cannot be addressed without acknowledging its limitations as a potentially reductionist strategy particularly if the programme as outlined by Johnstone, as valuable as it may be, is adopted without acknowledging that his approach is grounded in culturally formulated observations and that the specific indices of status to which he refers reflect mid-20th century Britain.

The tendency towards a reductionist and mechanistic model of "status games" requires dismantling through inculcating the understanding of how status claims depend on acknowledging ephemeral *processes* of interaction rather than status being conceived of as a material commodity. The tendency to reify 'status' within the context of performance training, as in everyday life, is an index of the extent to which the desire to shape and map relations is an organizing principle of social inter-action. Frederic Jameson observes:

> [R]eification – in [the] specifically Weberian and Bergsonian sense of the divisibility of a process which has been made over into a thing-like entity – is a tendency not at all limited to science and technology on the one hand, and the labour processes on the other: rather, it is

[442] This provision does not preclude acknowledging the value of basing a training model on Johnstone's approach to improvisation in order to serve alternative purposes: the objectives of the outwardly directed focus facilitates the development of the model of inter-personal exchange and anchors students in the rigours of observation and attentive listening; Johnstone's model readily accommodates a synthesis with the generative capacity of play and so becomes a productive strategy for generating ensemble collaboration and consensual co-operation. There are no guarantees to this, as he himself cautions. Resistance persists amongst individuals for whom forfeiting the scope for control of a scene is quite simply too onerous.

> a tendential social law which has ultimate effects on and implications for aesthetics and art (1999:59).

Jameson's explanation provides some way of understanding the tendency towards reification, at least as far as 'status' is concerned. Firstly, the very process of separation and division, categorization and classification,"produces" the transformation from a state of flux to "a thing-like entity", and at its most extreme, an object; secondly, if the tendency is to operate according to a "tendential social law" – and this view is entirely consistent with Johnstone's claims – then any study or exercise in interaction within any social group will reveal that status dynamics are a "universal" feature,[443] common to all groups, collectives and societies although operating according to different reference points in its rhetoric.

**"To move…": returning to Ovid and the theme and processes of "transformation".**

Ovid's text embraces adaptation and multiformity along with what this means in collective and individual terms. Moreover, the poem asserts its position as a cultural form in which values and political judgements are expressed and disseminated. As the analysis of the weaving contest has shown, the silent witnessing of events is as crucial to what that event represents as the enraptured and purposeful activity of the two protagonists, Minerva and Arachne. Aesthetic excellence on the part of both produces works that the spectators marvel at in silence. Their response, relayed to us by Ovid, is as crucial an index of the affective capacity of their efforts as is the pleasure they derive from creative expression. The re-telling of the encounter is self-referential and allows for further conclusions to be drawn regarding the role and relationship of the "artist/performer" and the community.

In accounting for the story-teller's mandate and performance, Berger stresses the receptive agency as a mode of sanctioning what it is that the story-teller does. The presentation of a story functions primarily to trigger multiply founded responses:

> … story invites comment. Indeed creates it, for even total silence is taken as comment. [...] Each story allows everyone to define himself. The function of these stories, which are in fact, close, oral, daily history, is to allow the village to define itself. The life of a village, [...] is the sum of all the social and personal relationships existing within it, plus social and economic relations – usually oppressive – which link the village to the rest of the world (1985:16).

The "social and personal relationships" point to the importance of collective contribution to storytelling as much as to participatory obligations and rights within the teaching and learning endeavour. Ovid's juxtapositions and inter-weaving narratives provide a template for structuring

[443] Marx's *Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts* (1844) is useful for a consideration of relations between labour/alienation and process/product, and how this may extend thinking about status in terms of its reification. It also establishes the foundations for a shift towards a conclusion that focuses explicitly on teaching as a mode of praxis. Marx's extended reflections on the alienating impact of labour expose notions of obligation and subservience to another. He makes two propositions at the outset: firstly, labour produces commodities and objects, thereby transforming the 'natural' world and simultaneously "objectifying" (or 'producing' the worker as a product or object). The "worker" is effectively diminished in his status in relation to his 'fellow man', to the 'natural' world, and to the object of his labours or the 'cultural/constructed world', alienated from the very product of his labour. Secondly, Marx proposes that this alienation must be viewed from the "worker's" point of view in regard not only to the objects produced (the product) but also to the *process* of production, which he deems an activity of "externalization" (1997:289) alienated from (and operating in) a different dimension from the experience of interfacing with the sensuous external world.

collective experiences and multiple perspectives, just as the collaboratively sanctioned material utilized by a village story-teller corresponds to the multiple narratives derived from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which, albeit individually, have inspired recent theatrical projects. It may be that Ovid's radical countering of the narrative form advocated by Aristotle's *Poetics* suggests an aesthetic congruent with the multiplicities and diversities of the South African experience in a manner that re-instates the dignity of the venerable tradition of story-telling in rural cultures. The Ovidian strategy and form is a means of refuting the Aristotelian model with its emphasis on unity of form and linear action.

Performance practices may commit equally to the projects of retrieval and restoration on the one hand, and on the other reworking and circulating the traditional forms. Alternatively, socially engaged work in South Africa may elect to refute the impact of isolation and engage in a productive dialogic exchange with "imported" artefacts and performance cultures. The expression of collectively shared concerns that integrate and bind observers to the expressive force of the work would counter the practice of valorizing the individual subject testimony at the expense of ensemble based work or multiple narratives. While economic circumstance may confine dramatic innovation to small scale projects, within the academic domain no such considerations dictate which texts are too ambitious to tackle on the grounds of numbers required. The tendency to avoid any kind of major collective work suggests a fear of individual erasure within a collective and needs to be strenuously contested.

Fischer accounts for how and why narratives promoting the individual at the expense of the collective emerged: [444]

> The invasion of money and trade into the conservative feudal world had the effect of dehumanizing relationships between people and loosening the structure of society still further. The self-reliant and self-dependent 'I' came to occupy the foreground of life. [...] It was trade that brought subjectivism into literature. The individual experience became so important that it could hold its own by the side of the tribal chronicle, the heroic epic, the sacred chant, and the war song (2010:55).

The extent to which adopting the autonomous 'I' is indicative of the singularity of experience and its expression at the risk of excluding the collective focus is a question that must be raised. To the extent that the model of the individual as a locus of performance and aesthetic contemplation continues as a paradigm for creative practice in today, it is necessary to ask what this model reflects in terms of terms of social and cultural values. The model of the ensemble reinstating genuinely collective and collaborative authorship of a presentation seems to be more radically innovative and in line with broader goals of political transformation.[445] Ovid's treatment of form and flux, of assertions of individual will and power along with grand historical shifts, chart the multiple ways in which transformations are manifested - as a sign of value or punishment for transgression as much

[444] "The individualization of human beings was bound in the end to spread to the arts. This happened when a new social class, that of seafaring traders, came into being – the class that had so much to do with evolving human personality. The aristocratic landed gentry, those gravediggers of the old tribal collective, had also thrown up a few personalities, but their natural element was war, adventure, heroism. An Achilles or an Odysseus could only be conceived of away from their native soil: at home they were not individual heroes but merely representatives of their noble families [...] The seafaring trader was something very different; a reckless self-made man used to staking his life again and again, [...] Everything depended on individual skill, determination, mobility, cleverness – and luck" (2010:54).

[445] This does not axiomatically make the case for reinstating 'the tribal chronicle, the heroic war chant, etc.' which may have served as symbolic forms congruent with a particular historical moment.

as territorial appropriation and conquest. This is, ultimately, a metaphor of the ways in which neither social structures nor cultures are static or monolithic but devolve through hybrid grafting and the assimilation of that process.

Ovid's theme is broadly congruent with George Simmel's conceptualization of form and life, which also scrutinizes the interplay of competing cultural forces. I reiterate Simmel's observation regarding the "unreconcilable opposition between life and form, or in other words, between continuity and individuality […] nevertheless individuality is everywhere something alive, and life is everywhere individual" (1971:367) since this pronouncement captures the tensions inherent to creative "expression". Simmel's theoretical propositions articulate similar insights to those of Ovid regarding tensions between flux and energy on the one hand, and differentiation and form on the other. Whereas Simmel's propositions are produced through systematic reasoning and analysis consistent with the objectives of scholarly enquiry, Ovid's perspectives adopt, as their departure point, the "logic of the imagination" as a legitimate means of contributing to a culture of ideas. He announces that his "art" has the capacity to endure although the capacity to do so is pronounced as provisional in two respects: firstly, his writing is declared culturally contingent and its value dependent on 'continuities' associated with the expansion and consolidation of that culture; and, secondly, within these parameters the recitation of his narrative will depend on the integrity of the generations of poets that will succeed him. The process of historical transformation has been his overarching theme and it comes into sharp focus in the final book, Book 15, in which socio-political transition and succession in leadership is a key theme.

The allegorical implication of the final metamorphosis in Ovid's narrative lies in his introduction of the motif of reconciliation which is harnessed to the project of transformation.[446] The comparatively brief account is unrelated to the interplay between individuals, but describes the transformation of Aesculapius into the snake (intertwined with a rod in his emblematic staff) animating all that the 'healer' represents, prompted by civic need to look beyond the extant skills and competencies within the community in order to tackle the 'plague'. This 'selfless' transformation serves the interests of an entire community as the 'healer God' prepares to relocate from his home in Epidaurus to Rome. This tale serves as a mechanism through which Ovid transfers the focus of his narrative to recent historical events,[447] thus connecting the fabled past with the present. Aesculapius' transformation and relocation also marks a far greater shift, the transition from the Hellenic world to the Roman one, from one dispensation to another. I invoke this as a metaphor of South Africa's negotiation of past and present founded in a compound of cultural pluralities which animate the hybrid processes and syncretism that characterize the languages, knowledge systems and art of the present. In a show of what Feeney calls "religious solidarity displayed by the Senate and the People of the Republic" (2004: xviii) who "import" the God, collective and "anti-individualistic" (2004: xviii) action is subtly juxtaposed and unity is shown to be a constructive strategy that firmly challenges the project of individualistic empire-building on which the celebrated Augustus embarks.

[446] The pertinence of harnessing transformation to reconciliation embedded in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission project and subsequent policies of transformation in post-1994 South Africa is self-evident.
[447] The reference appears to be to the plague of 293 BCE. As Raeburn records: "Aesculapius' cult was introduced to Rome in the following year" (Raeburn 2004:669).

The sea-voyage, a passage in space in and time, is a metaphor of transition that separates and links two 'worlds' and Ovid's succinct narration establishes the spatio-temporal distance between the point of departure and the destination. As Ndebele (in "Actors and Interpreters")[448] writes:

> In the fields of history, political science, art and general culture, the responsibilities of formal interpreters of human society become even greater. The discovery of consistent patterns, of real trends in social behaviour is a process that may require many years of study, before certitude can be reached. That is why an era cannot evaluate itself accurately. It is too involved to be objective (2006:84).

The tensions of grappling with the interregnum of an unfolding present, is equally fraught by the dualistic processes of processes of separation and connection. Simmel expands on the metaphor of the bridge, so central to TRC discourse, and compares this connecting mechanism with the door. The door acknowledges the boundaries that enforce separation, but nonetheless also provides a threshold for moving beyond divisions that categorize and isolate:

> (T)he human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating […] And the human being is likewise the bordering creature who has no border. The enclosure of his or her domestic being by the door means, to be sure, that they have separated out a piece from the uninterrupted unity of natural being. But just as the formless limitation takes on a shape, its limitedness finds its significance and dignity only in that which the mobility of the door illustrates: in the possibility at any moment of stepping out of this limitation into freedom (1971:174).

In assessing the accomplishments and implications of this study, I restrict myself to observations of its usefulness within the academy, rather than any foreseeable impact in the public domain of creative theatre practice. In modest terms, the propositions (developed through this analysis) provide a departure point for curriculum development and planning in terms of content and methodology. The template for integrated teaching in which improvisation is not segregated from "text-based" critical practice and "text-based" learning could provide a means of transforming education appropriate to a constituency of diverse linguistic facilities. The more radical dimensions of this study speculatively offer a means of challenging "Western" notions of the centrality of an authorial or directorial figure as a necessary presence in shaping a text for presentation. A corollary to this is to consider "scripts", marked as integral to a specific cultural legacy and integral to the idiom of either Imperialism or colonialism, as sites of departure which accommodate radical structural intervention and reconfiguration.[449]

**"To teach"…the ethical obligations of a social contract.**

The issue of asymmetries inscribed within the teaching and learning context through designated roles, rights and responsibilities must be briefly considered since interactions within the teaching and learning encounter is far from immune to notions of authority and agency. Roland Barthes'

[448] Ndebele defines actors as those who make things happen. Correspondingly, performers in this formulation are witnesses, observers and commentators, among the interpreters rather than actors.

[449] As an indication of how this proposition might be implemented and contribute to the project of transformation through affirming the richness of cultural exchange, I append documentations of *The Julius Caesar Project (2013).* While the "production" serves as a form of creative practice and central tenets of this thesis, it is not integral to the argument being formulated.

essay "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers" links issues pertaining to status dynamics and roles within the public domain and the power of speech and addresses the power dynamics at play within the academy. He acknowledges that "there is a fundamental tie between teaching and speech" (Sontag 1989:378), with its origins in the oral medium of Rhetoric rather than writing. Barthes asserts that "language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power; in the realm of speech there is no innocence, no safety" (1989:381). He declares the first property of speech to be its "irreversibility", while the second is a consequence of the speaker, necessarily present in a context, inevitably "serv[ing] the Law" (1989:379). Both of these claims merit expansion.

Barthes claims:

> [In speech] a word cannot be retracted, except by precisely saying that one retracts it. To cross out here is to add; if I want to erase what I have just said, I cannot do it without showing the eraser itself [...] paradoxically it is ephemeral speech which is indelible, not monumental writing (1989:379).

The authority and indelibility of the oral utterance pose challenges to modes of reception and interpretation as new technologies and modes of transmission of ideas gain credibility and are increasingly integrated within the teaching and learning format. Barthes' second proposition is that "the teacher escapes neither the theater of speech nor the Law played out on its stage: the Law appears not in what is said but in the very act of speech" (1989:380). In bracketing off content from form, he adopts a distinctively Simmelian mode of analysis in order to examine the roles and asymmetries set up between participants. These propositions underpin Barthes' "circuit of exchange" (1989:391), a pedagogical model of inter-action that operates in the same way as the definition of social and theatrical encounters proposed at the outset of this entire project.

Barthes reconfigures the simple transmitter-receiver model of communication with its unidirectional flow of information predicated on polarized points of stimulus and response, replacing this with a reverse flow and agency. The supposition that the so-called position of authority is more vulnerable than it appears to be is congruent with Simmel's notion of asymmetrical relations being less one-sided in terms of agency than is assumed. Barthes analyses the linguistically defined positions of speaking and listening in order to identify how these very roles, with the conventional expectations attached to them, constructs positions of empowerment and dis-empowerment.

> Imagine that I am a teacher: I speak, endlessly, in front of and for someone who remains silent. I am the person who says *I* **[**the detours of *one, we*, or impersonal sentence make no difference.] I am the person who under of *setting out* a body of knowledge, *puts out* a discourse, *never knowing how that discourse is being received* and thus forever forbidden the reassurance of a definitive image – even if offensive – which would *constitute me***.** In the *expose,* more aptly named than we tend to think, it is not knowledge which is exposed, it is the subject [who exposes himself to all sorts of painful adventures] (1989:382).

Barthes turns the customary cliché of the transmission model of the teaching and learning situation upside down: the teacher is no longer axiomatically a figure of authority but is rather rendered vulnerable by the very fact of delivering a discourse in public. And the body of individuals being addressed, far from constituting a silent/passive/disempowered audience are correspondingly granted considerable agency through their acknowledging the potency of their responses to what is being transmitted. The student remains "the exemplary [unspeaking] Other" (1989:384), ever

present, "puncturing his discourse" (1989:383). Barthes then cites Brecht[450] on the importance of contractual relations:

> Most of the time, the relations between humans suffer, often to the point of destruction, from the fact that the contract established in those relations is not respected. As soon as two human beings enter into a reciprocal relationship, their contract, generally tacit, comes into force, regulating the form of their relations (1989:384).

The distinction between tacit and explicit contractual obligations and expectations is circumstantially contingent. Barthes, like Brecht, adopts the notion of "imaginary" contracts between parties, along with the potential for the inadvertent transgression of the terms reasonably assumed in the light of the polymorphous and unstable subjectivities of all participants. The contract nonetheless becomes the mechanism by which both parties acknowledge and agree to "defer" the implications of privileging the designated speaker and insert the agency of receiving (watching and listening) and most importantly the need for these roles to alternate.[451]

The contemporary currency of the term "best practice" in teaching and cultural production is a superficial abbreviation of the need to adhere to rigorous protocols and ethical obligations integral to the ideals and implementation of socio-political transformation in post-1994 South Africa. The imperative of re-thinking and re-shaping ideas, their expression and dissemination underpins developments in both knowledge economies (with their continual expansion) and the sphere of cultural production. In both domains, deliverables cannot be measured purely on a quantitative level. The qualitative aspects of what is produced requires equally attentive scrutiny if redress and reparation are to serve the foundation of a truly sustainable egalitarian society. It has been a fortuitous coincidence that as this enquiry was drawn to a conclusion, the issues raised by it started resonating in the public sphere in addresses and the recent publication of intellectual and activist Mamphela Ramphele. While the scope of this thesis is restricted to a narrow field and affects a small constituency, the issues raised correspond to the core concepts, strategies and the thrust of her argument which contextualizes the study in specific terms. The dangers of "promoting a culture of mediocrity", as Ramphele puts it, is that it invites settling into a complacent acceptance that hinders rather than supports broader upliftment ideals. The openness and inclusivity that characterize a constitutional democracy, far from negating the space for critical interrogation and intervention, compel modes of enquiry that are stringent and rigorous. It remains the obligation of an academic curriculum to challenge boundaries and advance excellence along with inculcating an understanding of what it means to be ethically engaged and morally accountable citizens who contribute constructively to the ethos of social inclusivity. As Ramphele (invoking precisely the kind of rhetoric that has been the subject of this study) charges:

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[450] Jameson stresses the crucial role of Brechtian theory and method in Barthes' thinking. He writes: "*Mythologies* paved the way for the triumphant entry of the estrangement-effect into French theory" (1999: 49). Jameson points out that the "concepts of distanciation and the split subject in Brecht's theatrical practice" find "philosophical significance and influence [or even] ideological crystallization [...] in structuralism and poststructuralism" (1999:218). He writes: "It is surely in Barthes' *Mythologies* that the most usable form of the Brechtian method was developed, and the most influential in the areas of cultural and ideological analysis: Barthes's was a textbook 'application' of the method to a range of social and cultural phenomena, along with a theoreticization of the objects of estrangements in protolinguistic terms.[...] Brecht's was a method, not a philosophical system (hence the appropriateness of extrapolating its consequences out into linguistics, as Barthes did, rather than into this or that reifiable and ontological kind of social theory)" (1999:219).

[451] This is as true of the theatrical situation as it is of the encounter in the classroom unless the agency of response is acknowledged as a core principle through which status relations, as much as meaning and knowledge, are constructed.

> We settle for less because we are nervous about setting high expectations for ourselves lest we fail and prove our detractors right. The unspoken fear of failure which would confirm the worst racial stereotypes about black inferiority and white superiority has held us captive to a downward tolerance for mediocrity. We refuse to challenge one another to perform at the highest levels because we do not want to expose ourselves to scrutiny by those who might judge us negatively (2012:39)

It is not only practitioners working in community theatre, "Theatre for Development" or "Theatre for Healing" but also intellectually committed creative artists who may make active contributions to the social and cultural fabric of a nation that grapples with the divisive legacy of Apartheid by using tools that facilitate social cohesion at multiple points of cultural encounters. Inter-subjective encounters in which inter-dependency and community orientation is asserted may prove instrumental in instilling notions of participation and sharing, of the active connection with others, as both a social and cultural imperative.

What is at stake in a status-related enquiry is closely bound up in issues of subjectivity and how it is conceptualized, constructed and valued. This dimension can be addressed from two crucial angles: the political aspects of subject/citizen distinctions and the dimension of "authorship" in the domain of cultural production. Activating the socio-political dimensions of subject identity and connectivity in improvisation opens up the crucial political distinction between subject-status and citizenship linking the latter to agency and accountability, as proposed by Ramphele. She writes:

> The myth that South Africans were passive recipients of freedom from a liberation movement has disempowered many into believing that they owe their freedom and future prosperity to the ANC as a liberation party[452] […] The citizenship rights and responsibilities are undermined by this myth which perpetuates the subject status of citizens which is the antithesis of freedom (2012:159).

The ensemble-based collaborative mode of theatre-making that was so central to the extant body of South African theatre of the 1970's – 1994 tended to stress reciprocally constructed and collectively framed subject identities. This tradition, informed by the ethos of the liberation struggle and its unifying impulses, appears to have faltered or been abandoned in favour of opportunities to realize personal ambitions and individual goals at the expense of social or community orientation. The value of acknowledging a personal position within a wider network is entrenched in idiomatic expression as Ramphele's explanation of Zulu greeting affirms. She writes:

> Dialogues start with acknowledgment of the presence of others. The isiZulu greeting captures it best; '*Sawubona*', literally, 'we are seeing you'.[453] Being seen and acknowledged is an affirmation of being connected with those around one … (2012:183).

The collaborative mode of authorship requires urgent reassessment in terms of its merits in enabling and reinforcing collective interests. It offers a rich alternative to individual authorship and control of the means of generating a text.

[452] Ramphele defines freedom as entailing "the right and the ability to make choices in life…" (2012:67).

[453] The collective subject identity affirms the speaker as part of a community as much as the person being greeted. The dual affirmation embedded in this greeting makes the use of the first person plural very different from the British royal prerogative and acts as a crucial marker of the need for teaching practices to recognize idiomatic and culturally specific understanding of language constructing subject positions. The declension and verbal form is also indicative of a strong sense of continuous shared present-ness.

The challenge of generating a participatory learner-centred ethos which integrates activity with the pleasures of self-realization requires a consideration of complex contextual and cultural variables. Improvisation ostensibly implies liberation from a range of constraints and affords scope for spontaneity which the *Chambers Dictionary* defines as "of one's free will, acting by its own impulse or natural law; produced of itself; impulsive, unpremeditated." The definition holds out the promise of autonomy and agency. But social and educational institutions are characterized by diverse constraints and obligations in which socio-cultural heterogeneity figures prominently. Pleasurable play as a form of sociable exercise, in and of itself, does not constitute a dynamic method for generating the text, its objectives or aesthetics in terms of a developing production, regardless of how gratifying and empowering the process may be. To the extent that embodied spontaneous expression is what training in improvisation technique aims towards, the objectives and values of applying the skills acquired through these means must be clarified unless improvisation is to be regarded as an end in itself. The kinds of competencies being developed are productive as a means towards an end: the development of a collaborative ensemble dynamic. Improvisation techniques in general can be applied to either collaborative action in group authorship of a text for presentation to an audience, or as a rehearsal technique for an extant text.[454] Ramphele draws on the writing of Theodore Sturgeon in order to make observations about "how we understand issues of ethics and morality and how they are reflected in our decision-making framework and the workings of society" (2012:68). Ethical considerations are her primary concern;[455] she advocates the need to restore social cohesion through re-instating collectively-shared values in these terms:

> Engaged citizens need to remind themselves that while all transitions are painful, the rewards of successful transformations make the journey worthwhile. […] We cannot avoid the responsibility of exercising our rights to make choices as free citizens. There is no excuse for failure to apply one's mind to making those difficult choices. This is the responsibility of being human (2012:79).

It is this kind of thinking that most needs to contextualize and frame the ways in which improvisation training (in general) and status interaction (in particular) can prove productive.

Dialogic exchange, as a model for the teaching and learning encounter, seems to be far more appropriate than attempts to resist status inflected positions of authority through trying to adopt a so-called neutral, or intermediate, status position. Contriving to disavow either dominance or submission, Johnstone observes:

> You can see people trying to be neutral in group photographs. They pose with arms folded or close to their sides as if to say 'Look! I'm not claiming any more space than I'm entitled to', and they hold themselves very straight as it saying 'But I'm not submissive either!' If someone points a camera at you you're in danger of having your status exposed […] In formal group photographs it's normal to see people guarding their status. You get quite different effects when people don't know they're being photographed (1997:37).

The need to "guard" status and subject identity seems to be attached to projecting and maintaining a particular front in a formal situation. This kind of self-conscious behaviour is less evident when

[454] Johnstone's own model of *Theatre Sports* testifies eloquently to how team skills and roles can be advanced and presented as a hybrid of competitive sports and cultural expression.

[455] "The respect for human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms" (2012:64) is the primary virtue which encompasses the intolerance for any form of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, religious belief or preferred life style.

the need to "fix" a status position is dispensed with through being immersed in situations in which reciprocal pleasures in interactive engagement predominate and absorb participants. Johnstone's model for this type of situation is friendship which assumes affinity, respect and reciprocal trust.[456] The same qualities might be claimed for an ensemble with a healthy sense of inter-personal dynamics. Johnstone offers ways to resolve some of the "status problems" in the given asymmetries of the teaching and learning context, specifically when it comes to the joint venture in experimenting with behaviour and its representations. An important shift in thinking on the part of 'students' and 'facilitator' depends on the capacity to transform what is already experientially 'known' through formulating and testing its language, extending its analysis and building towards a conceptually founded understanding.

**"To delight" … the pleasures and rewards of interactive dynamics.**

Cicero's triad "to move,[457] to teach, to delight" encapsulates the ideals of best practice in terms of pedagogy, the theatre project and the concept of praxis.[458] Transformation and dynamism are implicit in the first of these active propositions, which indicates the extension of capacities beyond a given starting point by deploying the verb which signifies action rather than simply referring to the capacity "to arouse emotion, apply, express, inflict or purge strong feelings" (Jameson 1999:5). What is so striking about this triad is the interconnectedness of each injunction, explained so aptly by Jameson: "[they] slowly fold back into one another: 'to teach' again recovers its kinship with the injunction 'to delight'. What seems so appropriate in Cicero's triad is that it articulates all its propositions in entirely positive terms that may well prove enabling for all parties engaged in the teaching and learning project. [459]

Johnstone, at the outset of *Improvisation for Storytellers,* cites two very different cases which testify to the generative integration of the spirit of playful adventure and quests into the learning process. The examples he cites span two very different fields of intellectual activity:

> Benjamin Constant was aged four when his tutor suggested that they invent a language. They went around the estate, naming everything, and working out a grammar, and they even invented special signs to describe the sounds. Ben was aged six before he discovered that he'd learned Greek.

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[456] Johnstone suggests that customarily we readily 'play' status games with close friends: we tease each other with comments or gestures that exaggerate status and what it signifies without running the risk of offending or taking offence because the codes that limit the interpretation and responses are shared and boundaries mutually understood.

> If status can't be got rid of, then what happens between friends? […] My answer is that acquaintances become friends when they *agree* to play status games together. [...] Once students realize that they already play status games with their friends, then they realize that they already know most of the status games I'm trying to teach them (1997:37).

[457] Cassirer writes: "Art must always give us motion rather than mere emotion" (1972:149).

[458] Praxis, for Marx, and subsequent theorists, is distinguishable from other forms of purposeful activity and labour. A specifically human activity, it extends beyond an instinctive modification of the natural environment and links what can be imagined with practical action. Praxis is a "free, conscious, creative and essentially human activity, alone capable of generating knowledge and a new and better social order" (Mautner 2005:486). "Marxist and Neo-Marxist theorists argued against abstract philosophizing on the ground that understanding arose only when linked to attempts to change the world through active engagement in social and political movements" (Hawthorn 2004:275).

[459] It could be accorded the same qualities that Marx applies to Feuerbach's critical reading of Hegel which he values for its "unpretentious simplicity" (1997:316) and more specifically acknowledges for its opposition to "the negation of negation, which claims to be the absolute positive, the self-subsistent positive positively grounded on itself" (1997:317).

> We were warned that Algebra was going to be really difficult, whereas Einstein was told that it was a hunt for a creature known as "x" and that when you caught it, it had to tell you its name (1999:ix).

These two anecdotes affirm not only the effortlessness and pleasures of "learning", expanding expertise and mastery of ways of knowing the world. Significantly, both accounts depend on instilling enthusiasm and "adventure" as a means for stimulating the appetite for developing facility and expertise.

Providing the scope for genuine pleasure in mastering new domains (sets of ideas as much as cultural capital) may well be inextricably associated with emancipatory initiatives. The task within the academy today (and specifically within arts pedagogy) may be to advocate and nurture the "delights", rather than duties, of an array of critical and creative challenges and the initiatives and agency embedded in the rights and scope to respond productively to these stimuli. Recasting personal achievement in terms of non-material gratification and rewards is a bold advocacy of advancing critical capacity and achievement as an end in itself rather than an obligatory procedure through which self-advancement may be assured.

Cassirer, in his brief conclusion to *An Essay On Man,* advances the view that "sociability as such is not an exclusive characteristic of man, nor is it the privilege of man alone" (1992:223). Acknowledging the complex social organization among different species of animal and insect life, he proceeds to delineate ways in which man as a species is distinguished from other forms of life, namely, the capacity for symbolic forms or cultural practices and socio-political structures which are inseparable from social consciousness and transformations to that social consciousness. He observes that:

> Language, myth, art, religion, science are the elements and the constitutive conditions of this higher form of society. They are the means by which forms of social life that we find in organic nature develop into a new state, that of social consciousness. Man's social consciousness depends on a double act of identification and discrimination. Man cannot find himself, he cannot become aware of his individuality, save through the medium of social life. But to him this medium signifies more than an external determining force. Man, like the animals, submits to the rules of society, but, in addition, he has an active share in bringing about, and an active power to change, the forms of social life (1992:223).

Not unlike Simmel, adopting a provisional separation between the social and the cultural, Cassirer's final observations return to the inter-locking ways in which cultural forms operate to advance both individual and collective development:

> Human culture taken as a whole may be described as the process of man's progressive self-liberation. Language, art, religion, science are various phases in this process. In all of them man discovers and proves a new power – the power to build up a world of his own, an 'ideal' world (1992:228).

Significantly, Cassirer's epistemological analysis, while celebrating the generative force of "the logic of the imagination", equally stresses the role and value of "historical consciousness" and the theoretical and "constructive" work of the scientific method. He submits that the project of anthropological philosophy is to engage with what he identifies as "tensions and frictions, the strong contrasts and deep conflicts" between epistemological approaches which "tend in different directions and obey different principles" (1992:228) with the understanding that these multiplicities

are generative rather than discordant. His observations offer a productive departure point for pedagogy and arts practice within the local context.

The need to adopt a critical apparatus that enables the development of contemporary South African dramaturgy and theatre might well draw on a strategy similar to Brecht's meticulous synthesis of theoretical enquiry and practical application harnessed to the socio-political project, his praxis. Njabulo S. Ndebele, in *The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa* assesses the emergent tradition in black South African literature and submits that what is lacking is any "attempt to delve into intricacies of motive or social process" (2006:33) resulting in forms that he ultimately condemns:

> We can now summarize the characteristics of the spectacular in this context. The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details;[460] it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought;[461] it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness (2006:41).

Ndebele draws on Barthes' analysis to account for what he describes as a "triteness and barrenness of thought" symptomatic of the "spectacle of social absurdity" that characterizes the "problematic relationship between art and objective reality" in South Africa in the mid-eighties. The theoretical basis of his enquiry into heightened expression enables him to denounce the practice of "the emptying out of interiority to the benefit of exterior signs, 'the exhaustion of the content by the form'. The overwhelming form is the method of displaying the culture of oppression to the utmost in bewilderment" (2006:33). It is this legacy of "superficial" recitation and the perpetuation of residual forms and tropes *without critical interrogation* that requires redress and transformation. In *The Life of Galileo,* Brecht's political and aesthetic achievement is to fuse the dawning of a new era with doubt, rather than conviction. The first scene of the play announces Galileo's determination to prove the new Copernican system. The great sweeping changes are founded on a particular process, not one that affirms and insists on the rightness of its findings, but rather celebrates its method and its foundation in scepticism: "where belief has prevailed for a thousand years *doubt now prevails* All the world says: yes, that's written in books but now let us see for ourselves. The most solemn truths are being tapped on the shoulder; what was never doubted is now in doubt" (1965:21 my emphasis).

Any critical intervention into the corpus of emergent South African dramatic writing and theatre practice confronts a legacy of sensitive issues that require theoretically informed analysis from the socio-political and aesthetic perspectives, as well as the understanding that critical analysis *per se* is not an indictment, nor does it signal a lack of commitment to the project of "nation building and

[460] "The pervasive images of wealth and poverty, of power and powerlessness, of knowledge and ignorance, of form and formlessness, may easily lead to the simplification and trivialisation of moral perception" (2006:59).
[461] "Uncritical rhetoric of protest can easily impair the capacity of the oppressed to think strategically" (2006:60).

transformation", but rather may be the means towards achieving that goal. Ndebele proposes ''the rediscovery of the ordinary" as a means to counter the hyperbole of melodrama:[462]

> By rediscovering the ordinary, the stories remind us necessarily, that the problems of the South African social formation are complex and all embracing; that they cannot be reduced to a single, simple formulation (2006:51).

A more thorough and sustained interrogation of ways in which hyperbole and excess function, both culturally and aesthetically, may need to be "re-constituted" and declared as properties of performance, dependent on an assured sense of the medium and context in which the work is being developed. Critical faculty, artistry and technique are necessary tools operating in conjunction with each other, rather than simple recourse to skills development in the most rudimentary sense. As Ndebele, in "Redefining Relevance", puts it:

> There must be an accompanying change of discourse from the rhetoric of oppression to that of process and exploration. This would imply an open-endedness in the use of language, a search for originality of expression and sensitivity to dialogue. The complexity of the daily problems of living in fact coincides with the demands of the creative act (2006:71).

It may be that a more thorough approach to status dynamics and its usefulness in structuring and texturing narratives could enliven theatre-making and performance today, returning it to an equivalent place in the public domain and in social consciousness that it occupied during the volatile 1980's. This does not imply re-producing the texts that evolved then, but rather seeking to engage as thoroughly with current concerns, mindful of Cassirer's claim:

> In art we are not content with the repetition or reproduction of traditional forms. We sense a new obligation; we introduce new critical standards (1992:226).

The appreciation and assimilation of technique and a diversity of forms is intrinsic to the entire project of skills training but cannot subsist divorced from conceptual coherence without collapsing into naïve self-expression. In order that any performance training pedagogy grounded in status dynamics may to be genuinely productive, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, it needs to operate in conjunction with a critical framework that incorporates a sociologically based understanding of interaction and exchange, value formation and the ways in which agency is asserted or suppressed within a specific cultural context. Ethnographic and anthropologically framed perspectives further enrich and enable performance studies. The broad fields of critical theory and cultural studies together constitute necessary buttresses that enable the coding and decoding of status interactions to take place. This establishes the kind of vocabulary which allows for negotiating questions of identity, diversity and cultural idiom, without which crude signals of dominance or subjugation run the risk of producing the kinds of banalities that Ndebele deplores. The interplay of perspectives afforded by the methodologies and imperatives of critical perspectives that have traditionally been deemed beyond the boundaries of the discipline of drama and performance training are crucial catalysts to revitalize technical proficiency and extend training beyond a level of proficiency in the rudiments of a craft. A tertiary training programme has both the capacity and the obligation to engage theatre makers of the future in a grounding that is attuned to contemporary socio-political debates and concerns regarding questions of power, identity and knowledge on the one hand and aesthetics and medium on the other.

[462] In "Redefining Relevance", Ndebele reiterates his quest and again expresses the need to "[s]earch for ways of thinking, ways of perception that will help to break down the closed epistemological structures of South African oppression (2006:63).

Playing status dynamics through reciprocal encounters is, on these terms, a dualistic exercise in embodying the tendencies towards separation and forging connections. This insight into social encounters and relations imbues the process of skills acquisition with far more than a repertoire of tricks, however "pleasurable" those tricks may be or the understandings of the rhetoric deployed may advance one individually. Contextualizing status play within broader discourses is a means of enlivening and enriching performance training along with demystifying the interplay of power and position in ways that may nurture the ethics of citizenship in a multicultural and heterogeneous society.

Theatre continually addresses the mutability and transformation implied in the collective and heterogeneous "here and now", along with ways in which traditions of the past disappear or re-surface and is particularly susceptible to innovation and hybridization. Theatre and performances remain transient and ephemeral, resisting the most strenuous efforts towards archival storage: performances live and transform, or die, as expressive forms in the public domain in a specific time and place. Accounting for transformations to the Peking Opera, Peter Brook posits that "theatre is always a self-destructive art, and it is always written on the wind" (1977:18). Derrida's analysis of Artaud's attempts to arrive at a theatrical idiom that collapses the distance between "art" and life", to arrive at point "beyond" representation, concludes:

> Theatrical representation is finite and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry off. It is neither a book, nor a work, but an energy, and in this sense it is the only art of life (1993:247).

This study has been mobilized by the pleasures derived in ephemeral and transient encounters in class and in rehearsal rooms, along with the desire to enhance an appreciation of the strategies on which particularly affective performances depend. The task to which I committed myself has been to expand ways of understanding the dynamics and rhetoric of inter-subjective encounters (whether in an improvisation studio or on a public stage) as a performance practice. The dimensions of 'discovery' are informed by probing the pleasures and understanding of the inter-dependency between the live encounter and the literary text. In his introduction to *The Shock of the New* (1991), Robert Hughes addresses ways in which the scope of his presentation is determined by the medium of transmission. In assessing the relative properties of television broadcast and print, he observes that television (broadly speaking a visual performance medium) "does not lend itself to abstract argument or lengthy categorization" (1991:7). So too, this extended discursive text is produced through an exercise that ostensibly 'dislocates' my study from practice and lodges my endeavour within orthodox theoretical enquiry. Hughes introduction concludes with citing Baudelaire's response to seeing *Tannhäuser* in 1860. I interpret the analogy being made as a cogent expression of the relationship between making and responding to a performance or artwork as much as a proposition that links increased pleasure to understanding that which is produced through a sustained analytical enquiry.

> '*Je resous de m'informer du porquoi. […] et de transformer ma volupté en connaissance*': 'I set out to discover the why of it, and to transform my pleasure into knowledge.' Pleasure is the root of all critical appreciation in art, and there is nothing like a long steady project to make one discover (and with luck, convey) what it was in the siren voices of our century that caught me as a boy […] and has never let me go (1991:7).

It is at the level of transforming pleasures generated by textual analysis into practical and reasonable knowledge that empowered social changes may lie. But in so far as individual autonomy may be promoted, the issue of being positioned within a socio-political structure precludes the prospect of deriving personal gratification and insight at the expense of collective advancement.

Addendum: ***Caesar* re-Configured[463]*:* a documentation of efforts towards presenting permutations in improvised ensemble performance.**

Jonathan Miller challenges the efficacy of improvisation as a method of generating performances:

> In an intelligent, well-conducted and convivial rehearsal the cast is improvising by simply acting a scene in a way that allows you to see that its outcome is not yet determined. Improvisation in itself does not benefit rehearsal. I cannot see how improvising in a vacuum can possibly increase our knowledge of the play, as we are still confronted with the problem of how to tackle and approach the script. (1986:99) [464]

The usefulness of improvised performance, aside from the model of playing endless interactive routines, remains unresolved unless the gap between improvisation strategies and their application can be bridged. Understanding the ways in which status shifts are constructed across a matrix of variables to transform and shape encounters, create rhythms and patterns of behaviour can be a productive strategy to counter the kind of accusation made by Miller. *The Julius Caesar Project* aimed to deploy an understanding of social interaction (as a set of responses generated by encounters) between individuals (and between groups) at the level of spontaneously generated 'status-saturated' encounters.

My documentation of a project grounded in collective interaction and dedicated to valuing that which is provisional may appear to contradict the rationale of the joint performance project and the process through which it was derived.[465] Having announced this caveat,[466] I nonetheless attempt a broad overview of the project of 'reconfiguring' *Julius Caesar,* its objectives, rationale, method and results. Valorizing the ensemble along with response-based interplay as a generative facility *between* performers entailed a rigorous commitment to a method of working that stressed the shared responsibility of all participants. The commitment to this style of working is ideologically, aesthetically and culturally founded and draws extensively on a body of literature interrogating the constitutive elements of the medium of theatre and the dialogic relations that it may generate. Accounting for the project requires outlining its "performance parameters".[467] I was attempting to develop a training module which incorporated (as one of its outcomes) a public performance while

[463] The title acknowledges two works that have a seminal place in my thinking and teaching: *play Reconsidered* (Thomas Henricks) and *Acting Re-considered* (Zarilli et al).

[464] His critique points to one of the key challenges of improvisation training as a self-sufficient mode of advancing skills development. It can neither be applied nor inherently productive. What is required is some means to bridge the gap between rehearsal room bonhomie and the presentation of a product, rather than a process, to an audience. The status based application of improvised interpretations of fragments of the script may well be the route to unlocking the dynamics and rhythm of the action and the relations between characters. It could integrate improvisation with rehearsal techniques, although in all probability this requires and presupposes that all members of the cast as an ensemble have established a shared technical language.

[465] Arguably a more appropriate audit of what the production achieved would incorporate all the "reflective papers" written by participants (and submitted in conjunction with the performance as a core component of participation) and reliable testimony from members of the public audience whose presence and responses to the production is the key constitutive element of theatre as a medium.

[466] The scope of an explicatory document to communicate fully the dimensions and outcomes of an informed (but nonetheless dynamic) creative process producing diverse understandings and readings can only be partial and, regrettably, aspects of the project to some extent resist qualifiable analysis and audit.

[467] The term is borrowed from Prof Alex van den Heever's address 22/5/2013 at the Helen Suzman Foundation colloquium on Accountability (Johannesburg). He uses the term as one of the cornerstones of "accountability frameworks". The term is not inappropriate as the concept of accountability encompasses all relations between two entities typified by issues of trust/obligation and the exercise of discretion. Clearly, accountability frameworks" restrict arbitrary discretion on the part of any individual, or group, and is consistent with the type and levels of trust invested in any individual.

systematically linking creative competencies with a scholarly enquiry. Two inter-twined issues become nodes around which to organize this account. The first pertains to the play as a document, a dramatic work in the form of a literary text, around which a number of key questions emerge and which served as a focal point for structuring performances. But it was the second set of ideas – enquiries into the medium of theatre and the process through which that encounter between the performers and an audience is developed – that comprised the core focus of the project. Interrogating assumptions of spectatorship, specifically challenging the notion of spectatorial passivity, was a central mechanism around which the performance parameters were constructed. Formulations of theatre serve as a precursor to contextualize a brief analysis of the play as establishing these parameters may enable a more nuanced appreciation of a rehearsal process best described as an exercise in lengthy collaborative close-reading and analysis of the text.

'Re-configurations' seems the only term appropriate to describe an approach to staging a play that itself reconfigures material from Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans,* although this line of enquiry is beyond the scope of my performance related concerns. I address, rather, how questions thrown up by the performative renderings of drama grounded in historical reference may hone in on present preoccupations rather than past perspectives. The term 're-configuration' implies re-structuring spatio-temporal and material constituents of a dramatic narrative such that the permutations themselves invoke fresh insights. In other words, the act of re-configuration extends beyond orthodox practices of interpreting and conceptualizing a dramatic text and suggests something of a revisionist interrogation. The scope for this kind of creative licence governed the project of staging Shakespeare's play in Johannesburg in 2013. The chronological narrative was dismantled into three parts, each defined by the position, perspective and agency of figures around which it was organized, effectively reconfiguring the Aristotelian notion of the action of the play. The disruption was intended not only to trigger fresh sets of responses to a (perhaps) familiar text, but was also a pragmatic response to the challenges of staging the play with a cast of ten.

The decision that the presentation should be improvised by a small ensemble with the capacity to vary role allocations each night (in addition to playing multiple roles) ensured continual reconfiguration at the level of theatrical presentation, effectively staging the understanding that no single interpretation would be privileged over another. The commitment to presenting a text characterized by spontaneous 'shape-shifting', was however a consequence of the process of rehearsal rather than a clearly defined goal at the outset and arose from a series of technical challenges to the assumptions and competencies of the participants regarding relations between text and presentation, along with developing response-based formulations of performance.
Jonathan Miller asserts that "it is precisely because subsequent performances of Shakespeare's plays are interpretations, rather than copies, that they have survived" (1988:55). Miller discounts any notion of a single authoritative rendering of a text in what he calls its "afterlife" that is unaffected by contextual changes and rightly insists that, after the period of initial presentation, all productions become interpretations on the part of director and actors. Accordingly, traditionalist approaches to presenting Shakespeare are questionable in any claims they may make towards "allowing the text to speak for itself" in the form of some kind of 'copy' of an imagined original, as if

that were, in fact, possible.[468] Rather, as Miller suggests, we need to acknowledge that an interpretive bias is central to the performance project. The drive towards "relevance" and/or "formal innovation" broadly motivates much current theatre-making and is lodged directly in understanding the extent to which theatre, as a medium, is vitally dependent on the presence of an audience. The meanings and values of any theatre presentation, do, after all, lie in its reception and the responses it generates. Perpetuating tradition arguably makes for what Peter Brook terms "the deadly theatre" precisely because it fails to consider the immediate sensibilities of today's heterogeneous audience. Brook's term for the lifelessness of a production that does little to animate a set of responses in its audience echoes the referential idiom deploringly invoked by Touchstone: "When a man's verses be not understood…it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room". "A great reckoning in a little room" is, perhaps, a provocative way of defining the theatre-making enterprise.[469]

A sustained enquiry into theatre as a site of interactive encounters on multiple levels is the core of my interest and practice. The focus of the project lay in these broader considerations rather than in a literary and scholarly approach to Shakespeare whose text effectively became a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The play served as a vehicle for identifying the scope for playing between lines and in the intervals between voices and bodies in a series of public presentations in which permutations operated as a central premise. *The Julius Caesar Project* challenged the practice of 'fixing a presentation' conventionally associated with theatre and staging strategies. We also set out to test the veracity of claims that Shakespeare's plays are archaic, emblematic of colonial oppression and irrelevant for a contemporary audience. Above all, I wished to explore the extent to which young actors can grapple with and enjoy the challenges of playing the text with integrity and dynamism, to the extent that a directorial figure may be rendered insignificant.[470] I resisted being cast as a directorial authority in favour of promoting the interpretive facility and generative capacity of performers operating autonomously and relatively independent of exterior controls or constraints. Since the accusation of being iconoclastic in the treatment of Shakespeare's play is broadly congruent with the aim of challenging orthodox assumptions of how his plays should be performed, the experiment and the risks attached seemed worthwhile.

This approach to theatre-making acknowledged the generative and hybrid potential of diverse cultural bases of the participants and capitalized on the multiplicity of experiences and insights they brought to the joint venture: working from multiple points of subjectivity was a guiding principle. This actor-centred strategy, rather than dressing characters up in an illustration of contemporaneity achieved through using street dress or transposing the setting to a specifically South African locale, seemed to be a more rigorous means of grappling with the ideas and action of the play.[471] If, indeed, the core of the theatrical encounter may be defined as the presence of actors and an

[468] Even if it were possible to "replicate" some kind of original on stage the dynamics of audience engagement and conventions of spectatorship are substantially altered. No matter how well-intentioned or sincere the effort, in terms of theatre-making, there may well be nothing more tendentious and dull than performers posturing, proclaiming and reciting "heightened text" in the mistaken belief that this mode of delivery is a sign of respect for either text or author.
[469] As the title of Bert O. States phenomenologically founded enquiry into the medium acknowledges.
[470] The director has, in some respects at least, taken on the role of the much disputed absent author and increasingly emerges as the figure of authority and arbiter of meaning masquerading as a privileged agent granted the right to interpret and present the author's text.
[471] It is my contention, as a designer, that all too often the "dressing up" of actor's bodies through drawing on specific local identities achieves little more than a superficial gesture towards a contemporary staging of a classic.

audience in space and time, then any invested interrogation of a classic must intervene primarily at the level of this set of relations rather rely on visual accretions associated with traditions of Western theatre. This proposition entails nothing less than a radical interrogation of rehearsal and presentation techniques in animating Shakespearean action. The creative impulse and process may well be summed up in Miller's assertion that "the revival of a dramatic work from the distant past is a conceptual problem and not simply a theatrical task" (1988:69). In a different key, Samuel Weber, following Brecht, advances a related proposition: theatre emphasizes the manner and modality of presentation rather than transparently transmitting content. As Weber puts it, "it is the manner in which [the] scene is played that makes the occasion seem memorable" (2004:24). Furthermore, he emphasizes the way in which repetition operates as a constituent element of theatre: speech or gestures on stage are not "something new", presumably autonomous and spontaneous, but rather draw on a vocabulary of that which is familiar and rendered compelling or absorbing because of a paradoxical synthesis between finely honed citation and the singularity of the present moment which opens up the space to apply the Artaudian notion of the "unrepeatable gesture".

Nine fourth year students signed up for the research project course "mapping relations" between theatre, drama and performance with the understanding that some form of presentation of *Julius Caesar* would be the creative fulcrum in which ideas could be applied and tested in conjunction with expanding skills in improvisation and acting techniques. There may be little that is exact in the correlation between the theoretical enquiry and its associated creative application.[472] Nonetheless, the theoretical terrain that informed our process set up a shared conceptual map from which to make a piece of theatre and requires explication. The stress on the dialogic aspects of theatre as a medium of collective interactive encounters was undergirded by issues of agency and the accountability of the subject in a broader and more abstract sense. The focus lay in exploring relations between the individual and the group, the soloist and the ensemble. Shakespeare's Roman plays, both *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus,* present opportunities to 'play' the dynamics of asymmetrical encounters at the level of embodying and presenting the action as much as at the level of subject, theme and motif.

The production was the result of establishing a number of key questions and assumptions that cluster around contemporary theatre-making along with concerns regarding the place of canonical texts within cultural production in South Africa. The issues that we probed in weekly theoretical seminars remained guiding principles articulated in the form of questions rather than setting out a consistent set of findings.[473] Our task of mapping relations between theatre, drama and performance converged on five questions and the issues they triggered:

- *What defines the relationship between the actors and the play, the actors and each other, and both of these with the audience?* Revisiting the ideas of Plato and Aristotle via Stephen Halliwell's *The Aesthetics of Mimesis – ancient texts and modern problems,*[474] along with the

[472] The scope of an explicatory document to communicate fully the dimensions and outcomes of an informed (but nonetheless dynamic) creative process producing diverse understandings and readings can only be partial and, regrettably, aspects of the project resist quantifiable analysis and audit.
[473] Three months after the performances each student presented an independently developed research paper that extended their enquiry using the common ground of the seminars and the production as a departure point.
[474] Halliwell's penetrating study of both Plato and Aristotle interrogates the related ideas conveyed in the terms "mimesis", "aesthetics and "heterocosm". He advances a dual-function definition of mimesis that extends beyond reductive and inappropriate renderings of mimesis as imitation or other pejoratively founded terms. Rather, in his view, classical

seminal modernist precepts advocated by Artaud (and Brecht), was central to establishing a theoretical framework. Since part of the project focused on the relation of the extant text (and its status as a dramatic work) with contemporary performance, a related set of questions opened up: What meaning, value and significance can be attached to classical texts in our world today? How do we set about re-examining them *through* performance? Witnessing and auditing events are central to the play's action and parallels the presentation of the whole to an audience: foregrounding reception and response comprised the central thrust of a way of working.

- *What are the points of departure and processes that generate "ensemble performances" and what merits lie in developing ensemble skills for a group characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity/difference?* [475] Keith Johnstone's model of improvisation emphasizing the outward inter-active and sociological aspects of behaviour through understanding spontaneity and status-based relations provided a reputable and systematic set of guidelines for rehearsal processes and games.
- *Is it possible to fuse improvised staging with rehearsed lines, relationships, characters and narrative structure?* If so, what processes enable and enhance the agency of the actors so that they become the creative force driving the production and can make informed interpretive choices 'in the moment', and consequently claim collective and collaborative ownership of the presentation?
- *In a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society, to what extent are we bound by all that is implied by 'preserving' the monolingual English-ness of the words on the stage?* What space is there for extemporary translation and what considerations do we have to bear in mind in making random interpolations to the text?
- *What is the result of "dismantling" the play into the perspectives of different interest groups with diverse levels of capital, agency and instrumentality? What do we gain by intervening in the linear sequence and trajectory of the original and reassembling the perspectives it offers?* Samuel Weber's analysis of *Autumn River* (Peking Opera) demonstrates the impact of segmentation – a strategy employed by Brecht to stress that *how* the action is presented, rather than *what* develops in the unfolding content of the action, is central to a presentation style. [476]

In addition to these overarching considerations, the approach to playing the text was predicated on two further sets of ideas, namely John Arden's essays, in *To Present the Pretence,* and Ashwin Desai's recent publication *Reading Revolution: Shakespeare on Robben Island* (2012), which opens up ways of valuing literature and literacy. Arden's speculation that Shakespeare's plays would have

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theories of mimesis encompass the "world reflecting" model of art along with conceptualizing art as presenting "a world-in-itself" (2002:23). Moreover, and perhaps more crucially, following Aristotle, the concept of mimesis extends well beyond attributing qualities inherent to the artistic product but engage with the principles of recognition required of the receiver. On Halliwell's reading, the cognitive processes that Aristotle ascribes to responding to an artwork are far more dynamic than standard views of passive consumption would have us believe.

[475] Fragmentary records suggest that the first performances of this play (1599) relied on about 16 actors to play the 55 or so named characters excluding citizens and servants.

[476] The company actively delighted in identifying rhetorical connections and became adept at doing so in warm ups in which they would speak the lines at random with the connections being grounded in thematic or metaphoric resonance rather than through association with character or action. This ability, predicated on everyone knowing all the words, seemed to me to be an indication of increased confidence in appreciating the text on a level other than narrative outcome and was an outcome of approaching the text in non-linear fashion.

been originally staged with little more than a few weeks of rehearsal and even then largely improvised in terms of staging, consequently depending on the actors being "word-perfect", was one departure point for the project. It would appear that professional practice within an Elizabethan context, presupposes not only that individual actors take full responsibility for the roles allocated them; it also presumes a company of individuals familiar with each other's competencies and understanding a hierarchy of relations between them that may correspond to status levels of the characters within the play and how stage space would be used without recourse to prior rehearsal. No such conditions could be assumed at the outset of this project: the diverse constituencies of the student participants and the socio-political realities of South Africa today required that we should develop a kind of company founded along egalitarian lines and predicated on equitable agency if the notion of "improvised staging" were to be attempted. Ashwin Desai's *Reading Revolution: Shakespeare on Robben Island*, as an archival document, not only affirms the value of classical literature but fuses ideas and themes extrapolated from texts like *Julius Caesar* with local political imperatives. In particular, Desai's account opens up several possibilities for staging: individuals in single cells imagining the action of an entire scene alone sets up potent ways of thinking about the role of the reader and interpreter of the text drawing on known and familiar circumstances as reference points,[477] or, at the very least, staging the play through the improvised use of crude and minimal resources.

But initial propositions, points of departure and intentions can only serve as a catalyst for a creative and pedagogical process. The need for the freedom to adjust objectives and goals in response to what developed through engaging with the text and each other as "players", the pleasure and exchange of ideas through the process of discovery, governed the outcome rather than any pre-determined directorial concept which was limited to developing the agency of the actor (as individual) and actors (as an ensemble) as interpretive and expressive social subjects. It was as an unanticipated consequence of becoming familiar with individual scenes that the cast systematically "learnt" the words for the entire play.[478] The collective commitment to improvised presentation was something that evolved organically and depended on the capacity of each member of the cast to play any role – although the roles of Brutus and Caesar, we concluded, required male performers in order to retain the integrity of the relationships with Portia and Calpurnia. The readiness to embrace the seemingly onerous task of memorizing all the words and accepting the principle of sharing 'big parts' was initiated by working on scenes between citizens and 'soloists'. It was also through working on these citizen scenes that percussive underscoring and joint participation of the entire company in improvising acoustic and vocal soundscape emerged as a unifying mechanism. It took fourteen weeks, working together five days a week for three hours per session, to develop skills in improvising meaningful tableaux (understanding positions inside and outside the presentation)[479] or spontaneously generating a mise-en-scène. In terms of vocal work, performers were also required to extend their capacity in playing heightened text by drawing on John Barton's distinctions between prose and verse rhythms in *Playing Shakespeare,* working within the rubric of

[477] *The Island* (Fugard, Kani and Ntshona) formed a template of this double layering but the immediate political imperatives underpinning the development of a staging of *Antigone (*with its polarization of the struggle between the individual and State) are less current in their resonance, whereas the kinds of questions about power, leadership and allegiance in *Julius Caesar* offers scope for staging the continual interplay between individuals and a collective.

[478] The group comprised one first language Ndau speaker and one first language isiZulu speaker, two isiXhosa speakers, two Setswana speakers and two Afrikaans speakers. Only two of the group regarded English as their primary language.

[479] The terms are taken from Halliwell's chapter on Aristotle, entitled "Inside and Outside the Work of Art"

the consistent application of the outwardly focused inter-active mode of improvisation advanced by Keith Johnstone.[480]

The adventure in ways of making theatre and enjoying the process of story-telling without the rehearsed safety-net of predictable moves and line deliveries (or uniform character interpretations), is what the company actively embraced. Accepting that theatre is an ephemeral and transient encounter, with variables produced through differences in the composition of the audience each night, and the near impossibility of reproducing and reciting studied deliveries on the part of the actors, we embraced the fundamental understanding that no two performances of the play could reasonably be identical. The cast quickly appreciated the value of diverse interpretations and role allocations with the accompanying shift in the tensions and register of how the story unfolds.[481] The interplay of ambiguities and outbursts such as dominate this particular play invited a performance method congruent with the shifts and rhythms of the action.

**Why Shakespeare and why *Julius Caesar?***

What we understand by theatre as a medium and by the "ideal" model of the actor/performer is inseparable from choosing a text that allows for applying principles of training and the acquisition of technical skills. There are two points to make with regard to this proposition. Theatre is an encounter with a public audience that relies on conventions regarding the relationship of the audience to what is being presented. The understanding that the audience is an integral component of the theatre event is embedded in Shakespeare's plays which were written for a popular audience and staged in a theatre that required the capacity to command audience attention through compelling presentation. The robustness of this way of working requires technical skill and cannot be exclusively reliant on intentional integrity or emotional affinity on the part of the actor. I am interested in the levels of artistry that this type of performance requires. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, his texts rely on the outward and inter-active focus of the actor. His plays are a crucible of ideas as much as vehicles for the actor to display a capacity to embody personality and emotional range. In this respect they offer an opportunity to develop skills in ensemble playing – and depend on playing responses rather than fostering the self-absorbed expression of any particular character. The entire company was required to be absorbed in attentive listening and reciprocal engagement with each other. The formal properties of the play with its rhythmic shifts constantly reminds the performer that he, or she, is present as the interpreting and creative artist playing a role rather than collapsing the boundaries between self and character. It is this duality of

[480] Extracts comprised part of the preliminary reading along with extracts from Antjie Krog's *There was this Goat* (opening up questions of translation, cultural and linguistic specificity and distances) and Judith Lutge Collie's essay on praise poetry. These contemporary scholarly studies all served to remind us of relations between literacy and orality, of the embeddedness of power relations in the ways in which individual narratives circulate within the public domain. The distinction between dialogic relations and the monologic address in terms of asserting value was to remain crucial to our thinking in staging the play – particularly as a "theatrical" means of intervention in the much cited oratory of Act III. Sc.I, in which our means of understanding the structure and shape of both Brutus and Antony's addresses was via the mechanism of response to that address. This foregrounded the role of the listener, the citizens, as the addressees whose reactions to what they hear drives the modulations and cadences of the actor delivering the set lines.

[481] Their pleasure in the unexpected and trust in each other extended to not knowing who would perform any role at the start of a performance for the public – the distribution of parts was tacitly determined as the action unfolded before the audience.

presence that the model of training aims to strengthen and the paradoxical interplay between degrees of embodiment and distance seemed to be a challenge worth taking on.

The evident socio-cultural distance from the subjects of Shakespeare's plays and the lives and experiences of today's emerging generation of actors heightened the challenge of avoiding false recitation and declamatory address and made moments of achieving the goal more distinctive and perhaps even remarkable. But the question of distance, forms of violence and asymmetries is one that does not necessarily require precise illustration in order to parallel the "world-reflecting" paradigm erroneously presupposed (as Halliwell argues) as the exclusive achievement of the mimesis. Reviewing the production, Megan Godsell writes:

> So often, Shakespeare performed in South Africa leans towards the hammy, the camp, the semi-drag act, with 'South Africanness' slapped on top like the afterthought of a plastic-rhino horn. This play is unquestionably South African. The imagery echoes Marikana, [482] Hillbrow 2008, Khayalitsha 2010 the winelands 2012….the lived experience [of the cast]…The Johnstone method that this piece has been built on has created an ensemble group as strong as any Benoni Breker. Everyone is engaged. Everyone is listening….this means that Cassius, Caesar Brutus are always seen in context, surrounded by ardent followers and angry mobs….this is a play for out times. I think no writer, starting now to describe Marikana, to tell the story of one man dragged behind a police van, of one mob raising up their hands to cry Liberty over dead bodies could tell a story that better captures the darkness of our nation and world we are facing now (http://fiftyfive thumbs.wordpress.com 2013/15/16 the Julius Caesar project).

Shakespeare's Roman play challenges us to define what we understand and value by theatre and associated questions of power and agency. Cassius asks: "How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over / In states unborn and accents yet unknown?" (3.1) The lines obliquely acknowledge how writers and theatre-makers presume liberties in their treatment of extant narratives. It seems reasonable to interpret Cassius' words as an acknowledgement of how public "enactment" of historical material provides a society with the opportunity to assess its own structure and core values. Tellingly, the words affirm the potency of this particular historical incident as one which will continue to invite interrogation from future perspectives and positions, regardless of the distance between the referenced material and the audience to whom it is presented. The words remind us that the opportunity to occupy any public platform is a privilege

[482] On 16 August 2012 34 miners were killed in the course of strike action and at the time of writing the death toll in continued industrial unrest now totals 44. The Commission of Enquiry into the Marikana is current. In the *Sunday Times* (28 October 2012) Prof. S. Terreblanche writes: "The Marikana massacre revealed the superficiality of the ' deals' struck during the negotiations of the 1990's to create the 'new' South Africa. What became apparent at Marikana is that the apartheid system and the migrant labour are alive and kicking – much to the embarrassment of the Zuma government, the local and global corporate sectors and the trade union movement. The Marikana massacre is comparable to the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the Soweto unrest of 1976. It is quite possible that the ramifications of Marikana could turn out to be the most radical. […] The most important consequence of Sharpeville was that it prompted the apartheid regime to turn South Africa into a much more repressive political state. The Soweto unrest of 1976 was the spark that ignited the liberation struggle that ultimately brought down the system of white political dominance. […].Marikana represents a questioning of the legitimacy of the Zuma government, of the mineral energy complex including the trade union movement, and of South Africa's status as a post-colonial satellite of neoliberal globalisation. […] Eighteen years after the transformation of 1994 South Africa has become a typical two-nation nation. The top 20% receive 75% of the total income and the poorest 50% less than 8%."

accompanied by ethical and artistic obligations. The ways in which we use this space, with what purpose and with what effect (like producing any cultural object or practice) require that questions of power and agency are addressed in both the process of preparing the work and in its presentation.

Shakespeare's play, a classical tragedy, requires an altogether different understanding of both drama and theatre from one that celebrates emotion, sensation and psychological characterization– herein lies its challenge today: it is a field of interaction in which power and accountability, action and consequences are played out and probed. Ethics and morality are lodged in a socio-political dimension: behaviour and action are conveyed with a view to considering their public, rather than exclusively personal, consequences. The stage is a public platform where opposing values are contested and does not present us with 'easy' conclusions. As Arthur Humphreys puts it, Shakespeare's Roman plays may be understood as conforming with the "Hegelian tragic category where good struggles not with evil but with incompatible good" (1998:34) The play demands that we engage with reasoned positions as much as emotively based responses to events set in motion by the personalities and choices of four influential political figures and their capacity to sway opinion. We are presented with a view of history as a sequence of events triggered by figures locked into opposing positions of power.

The play is classical, not only in its Roman subject matter but also in the treatment of that subject matter and in its structure. The subject matter allows for dramatizing and performing the relationship between public image and private conduct – a theme that (in a different register) Mamphela Ramphele addresses in her publication *Conversations.* The body politic or the community are her key focus and readily parallel Shakespeare's citizenry. The 'plebeians' of 1.i and 111.i are, potentially, a prominent constituency in Shakespeare's play and foregrounding their role in the action was an interpretive choice anchored in the recognition that they are the constituency with whom we, as makers of the production, could most readily identify. Their celebration of Caesar's leadership (and the stability it briefly affords them) sets events in motion. They are central to an invisible offstage event reported by Casca: their noisy appreciation of Caesar's refusal of the crown (thrice) offered to him. This incident seemed decisive, pivotal and influential. Importantly, they are the constituency to whom both Brutus and Antony appeal in the immediate aftermath of Caesar's assassination. But, what agency does this group effectively have? Having been prompted to mutiny within the city of Rome and implemented an instance of mob justice/revenge, they do not feature in the second half of the play with its scenes of civil war. Nonetheless, both opposing forces claim to function in the interests of "the common good". Tracking this theme enabled us to interpret the play as a fulcrum for exploring notions of active citizenship and subjugation, provisionally equating an engaged ensemble player with the active citizen that Ramphele considers crucial to a democracy.

Patriotic sensibilities are defined in terms of celebratory allegiance and dissent from the outset: the citizens celebrate a holiday in anticipation of their leader's appearance. But Caesar's triumphs and the basis of his leadership are immediately contested by two tribunes. Concerns regarding the reach of his ambition escalate rapidly – and the untouchable, indomitable ruler is warned to guard himself against coming disaster. Supernatural calamities are all signs of the established order being overturned and the clearest indication of the import of supernatural omens lies in Caesar's own

interpretation of these auguries: “these predictions *are to the world in general* as they are to Caesar.” (2.2, my emphasis) His grave assessment proves true: liberation from Caesar’s autocratic rule comes at the cost of social cohesion, stability and continuity. The conspirators’ action and Antony’s resolution (“Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war”) unleashes unanticipated chaos at the level of street justice and more formal military confrontation. We elected to emphasize how the citizens, roused to mutiny, lynch Cinna. Subsequently 100 senators, including the sagacious Cicero, are reported as having been put to death by order of the Antony/Octavius faction. Cassius and Brutus take to the battlefield with their allies, as do Antony and Octavius in the interests of retributive justice. Hastily drawn up military strategies are disputed, allegiances are threatened and the spirit of Caesar haunts all that ensues. Tackling this scale of civic disruption and violence in our own context demands that we grapple with distinctions between justice and revenge, superstitious beliefs and ethically deliberated action, between cautiously deliberated reason as a basis for action and emotionally founded impulsive loyalty to a popular and persuasive public orator or a cause. Shakespeare, as Dover Wilson (cited in Arthur Humphrey’s introduction to the Oxford Shakespeare edition) suggests, “develops the political issue in all its complexity and leaves judgement upon it to the spectator” (1998:8). Perhaps the power of theatre lies in its unique and unsettling ability to show the discrepancy between personal and public presentation of self. Staging this understanding in the present climate seemed an appropriate means of re-instigating the role of theatre in its acutely political dimension.

In the Roman world or episteme, the assumption is that influential political figures display consistency between the private and the public self whose every action affects the ‘nation’. Rather than circulating around features of psychology and temperament, the play thus requires us to deal with the social and cultural foundations of individual identity. The clear cut divisions of an overtly stratified society allow for interrogating leadership and heroism within a paradigm that demarcates relations based on dominance and subjugation. The social order is ostensibly less egalitarian and more rigid than our contemporary democratic organization. But the pervasive impact of celebrity culture in contemporary discourse, along with residual inequities that are the consequence of social engineering of Apartheid, perpetuates not only stratified groupings but also the adulation of singular individual. Today’s supermen and public figures (politicians and statesmen, public intellectuals, Olympians and artists) epitomize the collective expectations of leadership figures. It is appropriate to ask whether the adulation of “supermen” (and women) is a contemporary manifestation of the iconic presence and function of a classical hero, recast in modern idiom. And if so, to what extent does the imperative of egalitarian ideals retreat in the direction of perpetuating entrenched hierarchies of difference? Their presence perpetuates a status hierarchy and figures at the apex of that hierarchy exude a charismatic force founded not only on inherent attributes but in the highly charged public responses to their person. The ‘mythic’ enigma of Caesar proved a figure that all participants were reluctant to tackle. He is seemingly a personage beyond the imagining of a contemporary youngster, despite the reference points of Mandela, on the one hand, and David Beckham on the other. Embodying this auratic figure – projecting forcible charisma and power – initially seemed to be a task beyond the range and perhaps self-definition of the performers. Johnstone’s observations regarding reluctance on the part of any individual to play too obviously a dominant role were useful means of negotiating this inhibition. Defining Caesar less through emphasizing the way in which any particular actor took on the role and more through the responses

of others to his person became central to our enterprise, which was further supported by stressing all the ways in which public pronouncements and opinions circulate and are audited.
In *Julius Caesar*, the choices and actions of four different "heroic" figures – individual models of political leadership – are interwoven. Caesar, Cassius and Brutus all die. A future order is founded by Caesar's heir, the young Octavius. But it is not the demise of Caesar, Brutus and Cassius that makes the play a tragedy. Nor can its impact as tragic be ascribed to the gap between ideals and their outcome although we are presented with carefully considered intentions on which radical action is based and consequences mis-calculated. The outcome of that action is the loss of remarkable figures of civic leadership and political vision. Rather, following Kott, the action is tragic because it challenges us to recognize the magnitude of social disaster triggered by conflict between powerful individuals with the capacity to affect the course of history. His analysis of *Coriolanus* argues why Shakespeare's plays retain a contemporary pertinence and profundity:

> Shakespeare is fascinated not only by the transformation of a good ruler into a tyrant. He is also fascinated by history. Where and when is it decided, and who decides it? Does it have a human face, the names and passions of a prince, or is it just a sum total of chance, or a mechanism put in motion? (1983:161).

Politically, and perhaps superficially, the ideas of the play represent the antithesis between republican 'virtue' and imperial 'tyranny'. Caesar's "ambition" and demi-god status most overtly contrasts with Brutus' commitment to egalitarian ideals and the collective good of Rome. But this view oversimplifies the complex profiles of the leaders around whose actions and personalities the play is structured. Caesar, allotted some 130 lines, is all the more expressive as a dominant force precisely because of his physical 'absence'. He is an ambiguous representation of tyrannical ambition and human frailty: presented to us as an outstanding and fearless military general, a persuasive and powerful public speaker, popular and generous, and above all, *like* Brutus, capable of inspiring extraordinary levels of loyalty. The patriot Brutus, whose integrity and adherence to honour is so widely acclaimed nevertheless betrays the trust of his leader and his lack of military judgement proves disastrous to the Republican cause. Cassius' reasoning is inflected by antagonistic bias: the dedicated Republican is prejudiced against Caesar on grounds that have little to do with questions of statesmanship and, as a veteran general, he concedes to Brutus' battle plan on grounds that have little to do with strategic interest. Both 'revolutionaries' operate and reason from positions of rank and privilege within Roman social hierarchy at a considerable remove from a grass roots understanding of the collective good. Antony, introduced as verging on irresponsible and pleasure-loving, but nonetheless Caesar's prime avenger, acts in ways that can only be construed as opportunistic: he manoeuvres the course of events towards the terrain where populism and military championship favours his cause.

The play circulates continuously around motives and judgements which compel action and the consequences of that action on different individuals and factions within society. This opens up the space to show the gap between intention and its outcome. Perhaps as tellingly, the text also presents ways in which reportage and mediated views (in contrast to direct witness) become the basis for opinions on which judgments and action is based.[483] Brutus carefully considers the choices

[483] This theme is launched in the first act: the citizens are initially cast as witness-participants in the ceremonies of public presentation, then (in the scene that follows) Caesar is offered the crown. This single event occurs 'offstage', indicated by noisy shouts from the citizens. What takes place is relayed only via Casca's report in which these events (actions and

open to him and in doing so redefines political action as ethical action in which the killing of Caesar can be justified as necessary – but his resolution is not only contradicted by the savagery of the multiple 33 stab wounds inflicted on Caesar but also by the first public consequence of the liberty and freedom attained through Caesar's assassination: Cinna is killed by the citizens, purely on the grounds of nominative association with one of Brutus' faction.

Sharing respective cultural frameworks afforded a rich opportunity for the cast to engage with diverse perspectives through experiment and discussion. The dense interplay of supernatural omens and warnings – the Soothsayer' disposition, the sacrifice offered by Caesar's augurers, Calpurnia's dream and their contested interpretations – and questions of how to stage the spirit of Caesar as a corporeal presence prompted valuable exchange of a range of positions regarding these phenomena. Ethical considerations regarding cultural appropriation urged resisting the all too obvious conflation of the soothsayer with a *sangoma*, (depending on who played the servant and Caesar, the scene was rooted in degrees of traditional gestures of deference), and staging the ghost drew strongly on the Ndau sensibility that a phantom presence remains invisible but can be physically apprehended as a corporeal presence able to touch the person to whom it 'appears'. Drawing on participants' understanding of violence was an imperative that guided the staging of the battle scenes or what we called "the scene of Civil War". Despite current incidents of police brutality and civil disruption, despite Marikana, a cast member observed that these media images constituted the only personal exposure to overt conflict. Photographs of inert bodies in the aftermath of violence were the only possible reference point from which to develop truncated visual representation of the battle scenes of Acts IV and V. The choice behind the representation of the battle fragments was also consistent with foregrounding yet another dramaturgical insight drawn from Weber: what we witness as audience is a response to action that has already taken place.[484] This allowed for focusing on Brutus' response to Cassius' death, rather than attempting to en-act that suicide. So too, Brutus' suicide was not presented as a significant action. Rather Antony's eulogy, according to Barton one of the few speeches that captures the quality of heartfelt sincerity in the play, would be foregrounded.[485] The decision to play the correspondence between Shakespearean tributes and the rich culture of South African Praise poetry as equivalent modes of encomiastic discourse was an outcome of more sustained enquiry into status relations.

**"Playing" and the process of preparing to present 'the play'.**

"If an actor gets himself too emotionally involved in a passionate speech, he will actually move the audience less than if he is less carried away" (1990: 135). Barton identifies what he calls the

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response) are described twice. The account is significant: it not only reinforces Brutus' suspicion of Caesar's ambition but establishes the citizens' affirmation of Republican ideals. The offstage event acts as a catalyst and further reference to this same incident in Antony's funeral oration is a reminder of how different reports may be offered by different witnesses. Antony's account, as strategically deployed as Casca's, interprets Caesar's refusal of the ultimate token of power offered him very differently. The two sets of responses to the same public ceremony open up ways of understanding the interpretive role of the spectator/auditors in addition to demonstrating how the actions of political leaders are 'indirectly' and 'unreliably' made public and contested.

[484] Weber makes this proposition as a slightly startling opening gambit to his analysis of *Antigone:* a play all about the consequences of action that has been concluded before the play itself begins.

[485] Since this speech was a conclusion to the Brutus narrative, told from Brutus' perspective, the character of Antony seemed a subordinate to a collective celebration of what Brutus represents. The decision to disperse the speech across voices and languages is founded on extracts from *Reading Revolution* and the particular political appeal of Brutus within Struggle literature and for prisoners on Robben Island.

"naturalistic fallacy" as a way of describing a line delivery that depends on exact reproduction of the cadences of colloquial speech. He suggests rather that a clue to playing certain scenes is to identify moments when the character "stands outside" of his own actions and "sees beyond that moment". He adds that "feelings may be kept in check" and heighten the tension of the scene. As if to stress this view he reiterates: "Shakespeare very often requires an actor to show emotions and at the same time to stand outside of those emotions" (1990:137). He suggests that playing the lines requires a "mixture of feeling and experience", with the term experience summing up the "mixture of thought and emotion". He points out that Shakespeare's characters are highly articulate and that the instances where the lines are most dense (compacted with similes and metaphors) are often an indication of the character being relatively dispassionate rather than emotionally intense. This observation launches his practical analysis of four of Brutus' speeches, in which he demonstrates how tensions between these points is inscribed in the tenor and texture of the verse. Brutus' lines range from cool intellectual analysis and formal rhetoric to impassioned conviction and emotion. Barton sums up the ambiguities of the four key characters by saying that "contradictions *are* the character." Barton's injunctions to play the intention of the line rather than ascribing a particular emotional disposition to the utterance and to work heightening antitheses or contrasts were to prove technically enabling. The second set of performance principles was founded on Keith Johnstone's *Impro* which outlines methods of developing techniques in spontaneous interaction, integrating physical action with the use of space as a means of constructing relationships between players and characters. Johnstone's method enhances a "response-based" understanding of performances generated between players rather than promoting introspection or self-expressive tendencies of the individual. The integration of learning the lines through physical encounter and interaction with each other sums up our mode of working. How this seemingly unwieldy process was implemented and what it produced in the rehearsal situation now becomes the focus of the rest of this account.

Rather than committing to the customary practice of an initial reading of the whole play, we honed in on a close readings of the first scene as a starting point to allow performers to grapple with several ideas at the outset, specifically the spatial requirements of staging relationships between different constituencies and playing contemporary understandings of the situation. The inter-changeability of the role allocations was readily grasped by all participants. Most importantly individuals began to appreciate the pleasures of engaging with each other's performances along with the impact of spontaneous translation into either isiXhosa or Setswana. Having established a sense of pleasure in performance along with a lively appreciation of the fun attached to playing "insults",[486] it seemed necessary to continue developing scenes in which the citizens featured prominently. The next scene tackled was the citizen's response to the death of Caesar in which we set out to test the extent to which Brutus and Antony would be spurred by the responses of the citizens in the delivery of the famous speeches and flowed directly into the scene where the citizens mete out 'street justice' on the unfortunate Cinna. It was clear that the narrative – told from the

[486] "Insults" is an exercise introduced by Johnstone in encouraging manifestations of status as a means of forcing players to release inhibitions and reticence in generating spontaneously improvised dialogues and encounters. I have long preferred to use textual extracts in applying this game, specifically the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. I am extremely cautious of the potential ruptures of a complex web of heterogeneous relations and cultural differences that may prove too vulnerable to accommodate this application: speaking lines of allocated text distances the speaker quite literally from being a point of origin of an insult and obviates the kinds of hierarchical differences implied in playing conflicting positions.

citizen's point of view – constituted a compelling sequence which could be juxtaposed with two other narratives – those of Caesar and Brutus.[487]

The non-sequential approach to performance in rehearsal initiated the idea of further fragmenting the unified narrative. Weber's analysis of *Autumn River* stresses how scenes are strung together in a temporal sequence much like pearls on a thread which has the effect of foregrounding that which exists only in medium of performance. Western dramaturgy tends to stress, following Aristotle, the coherence of the plot and an appreciation of the 'necklace' as a whole. Occidental theatre functions differently: each scene can be viewed and appreciated as coherent and meaningful of itself; the necklace is effectively unstrung and pearls are "linked" or juxtaposed by associated themes or interests. The effect of this 'dismantling' is that the reciprocal action between players (drawing on a repertoire of highly stylized gestures) is theatrical in itself and does not depend on the unifying thread.

The fragmentation of the text and its introduction piece-meal into the rehearsal process proved to be an extraordinary mode of close reading and analysis allowing us to recognize how metaphors and motifs texture the writing throughout. The facility for cross-referencing was in part due to the fact that everyone had learnt all the lines and could share perceptions readily. Two examples of appreciating the texture of the writing could serve as demonstration. The tribunes call the citizens "blocks, stones, hard-hearted men of Rome" and (in III iii) Antony's words provide the antithesis: "you are not blocks, you are not stones, but men…" The more complex realization of how central handshakes are to the action was to prove instrumental in shaping improvised action. Modes of handshake seemed to mark the distinction in relations between Brutus and the 'conspirators' and Antony "shaking the bloody Caesar's foes". Routine gestures of everyday allegiance required discussion and appreciation of different cultural patterns associated with customary repertoires and their associations. These references were examples of what Barton suggests regarding the hidden stage directions in the speeches.

Key features of the way we set about working pertained to "learning the lines" and to physicalizing the action, separately, and integrated with each other. From the outset the task of committing the script to memory was a shared and communal process. We approached the whole on a scene by scene basis, only tackling a fresh scene when everyone was thoroughly confident with the words of the ones we had established.[488] Working with the entire group concurrently meant that lines could be discovered through the medium of the spoken rather than written utterance. To some extent this depends on the faculty of acoustically based memory rather than visual memory and individuals responded differently to the challenges inherent in hearing a line and repeating it, then gradually adding more and more of the speech to what was already familiar. The advantages of this approach are that the script is understood as embodied speech establishing relations between players from the outset, rather than studied and reproduced as a series of individual utterances. But eliminating

[487] Jerry Mntonga, a graduate who had not only trained in Improvisation for a year but also performed in the improvised staging first tested with *Much Ado About Nothing* (2006), was to join the cast as a guest of his own volition.

[488] This "segmentation" meant that the cast were all thoroughly familiar with sections and collectively ignorant of other parts of the play. The discovery of tensions, twists and speeches experienced by the cast who, lacking any overall grasp of the whole, were forced to hone in on the cadences of each section or scene seemed to generate such pleasure and appreciation of the text that presenting the equivalent opportunity for similar experiences to the audience became an objective.

the medium of print, or the text as a literary document, makes considerable demands on retentive capacity even as it liberates the individual from tendencies towards recitation.[489] Scenes developed through linking small sections of script with improvised blocking, and doing so repeatedly in order to allow for multiple permutations of players to offer interpretive vairables. This approach demanded constant focus and attention from all participants at all times. A means of reinforcing confidence with passages of newly mastered text was to use the first hour of each rehearsal as a warm up session which integrated unstructured collaborative interplay of any or all of the lines learnt the previous day. The group found increasing confidence in what I can only describe as fresh jazz variations integrating new and thoroughly familiar material in entirely unpredictable ways,[490] it was this quality that we elected to share with the audience rather than settle on predetermined role allocations.

An inevitable consequence of group learning was the choral chant that accompanies the process of rote learning which might have permeated subsequent renderings. The rhythmic unison was, however, a useful means of arriving at cohesion and communitas. Speaking heightened text became increasingly more assured and enjoyable through the collective inter-play of voices. The warm ups incorporated more and more physical 'horseplay' and an astonishing sense of inhabiting each moment of the play physically,[491] which became a means of visualizing reports of offstage or prior action (such as Cassius account of Caesar's swimming challenge on a "raw and gusty day", the strange apparitions in the street described by Casca and the images of Calpurnia's dream). These supernatural interventions were played out as the ensemble constructed the visual representation of these accounts. The fundamental requirement of improvisation training is to develop spontaneous responses to offers made by other players which required heightened capacity to observe and listen to multiple events. An indication of absorbing and visualizing the action in the course of the warm up was the spontaneous innovation of physically enacting the swimming challenge between Caesar and Cassius which the lines report. Endorsing this development led to experimenting with further embodied sequences: the physical images of the storm and of Caesar's statue "spouting blood…in which many happy smiling Romans bathed" were improvised every night in production. The physicalization appeared to be a vivid means of making sense of the verbal

[489] Preparing the final section of the work (Brutus/Portia/Cassius) took a comparatively brief two weeks. In order to introduce and accelerate the process we sat down around a table to read new sections from the page following a method introduced to me by actor/writer/director John Kani. Disregarding character indications of the script each person reads a single sentence regardless of how long or short that sentence might be. The advantages of this method are clear – all members of the company are equally involved throughout as speakers and listeners while the intention of each thought is separated out form the flow of speech. The interruption posed by the change of voice corresponds roughly to shifts in the development of ideas within the mind of a single character and foregrounds the dynamism of how it may eventually be rendered by a single individual. Repeating the process ensures that multiple interpretations are heard and provides opportunity for everyone to exercise their own range and develop vocal strength. Alternatively, in twos or threes the cast would learn new sections with only the person not speaking having a script in hand while the speaker learnt through hearing. The impromptu sign language that developed, rather like an extended variation on the game of charades, continued to connect speech with physical action and visual signs.

[490] The theatrical potential of these "warm ups" was indisputable to the extent that I deliberated the more radical proposition of presenting the work in this format to an audience. Ultimately I drew back from the proposition as being too familiar and easy a route for the players and perhaps not sufficiently focused outwards towards the unknown quantity that constitutes an audience for student Shakespeare.

[491] The race of the Champions – the 'holy chase' described by Caesar in which Antony was to touch Calpurnia as a means of "shaking off" the curse of infertility – invited staging and provided the opportunity to begin the Caesar section on an exuberant note in direct antithesis to the Soothsayer's prophesy. Moreover, drawing out and "illustrating" the ritual action of Antony touching Calpurnia's belly became a means to convey Caesar's lack of an heir and his tendency towards superstition.

account, ensuring retention on the part of the actor. It seemed reasonable to suppose that less familiar parts of the play may similarly appeal to audience.

The process of understanding descriptive reportage through embodiment extended to ways in which we considered the staging of the single event that seems to serve as a catalyst for all the subsequent action: Antony offering Caesar the crown at the feast of the Lupercal. Casca's account of action that had taken place "there and then" as opposed to "here and now" and available for the audience to witness sets up some of the questions that Weber addresses in his analysis of *Oedipus Tyrannos. H*e questions notions of place and identity so central to Western concepts of theatre. How the citizens, as audience in what might be called "the theatre of everyday life", responded to Caesar were instrumental in first visualizing, then memorizing the 'public spectacle'. The interpolation, termed the parody, was intended to counterpoint and augment Casca's eye-witness account and re-introduced the citizens both as players and as a political constituency, albeit one not particularly alarmed by the signs of Caesar's increased supremacy.

Observation and witnessing crucial political events from different perspectives and distances became a recurring motif that we elected to stage. It proved productive to pursue this treatment even in the supposedly small and private scenes in which others were introduced as silent witnesses and observers. The presence of the full company on stage together (especially during private scenes) was a quality that this ensemble had grown to depend on in order to animate inter-action. Portia, Lucius and the Soothsayer (in the brief but crucial scene at a remove from what transpired at the Capitol) were denied the privacy that is assumed consistent with a domestic interior: "spies" clustered in the background, barely disguising their interest in overhearing the brief conversation. So too, Brutus' army encamped on the eve of battle surrounded what little private space remained for Brutus to guide Cassius towards in the quarrel scene of Act IV. Flexible configurations among auditors and witnesses became a leitmotif of the production. These onstage spectators were mandated to surprise those individuals just as the interjections of the citizens served to motivate the speeches of Brutus and Antony.

The rehearsal process was an adventure with multiple discoveries in which closure and fixity was disallowed. Incorporating observers was central to the work from the outset: responses provided valuable means of gauging the impact of this style of presentation on an audience. Additionally, we presented two open rehearsals to elicit responses to inform further development. Responses circulated around the same issues: incredulity at the flexibility of the cast in disregarding the need to occupy a preferred role; disbelief that the staging was being improvised;[492] and a sense of wonderment that the cast could really enter the stage without having determined who would be playing which role and how this apparent decision was seamlessly effected.[493] Only once, during performances did a single moment attest to the demands of presenting the play in this manner. From the auditorium, I observed that with all ten bodies on stage for the "Race of Champions", no possible marginal presence hovered upstage to play the Soothsayer. Only the slightest hiatus in the rhythm was discernible as one performer recognized the situation and, without signalling that

[492] At the first of these presentations the only means of addressing these responses lay in repeating the scene with roles distributed differently in order to verify our claim and our method.

[493] This remained the principle of vitality that characterized the work and on the opening night I could honestly not say or predict who would take on which part, nor did I deem myself entitled to that privilege.

anything was untoward, quietly retreated to a position from which to cover the gap. I doubt that any member of the audience registered what took place– the company collectively understood the need to hold to themselves that instance of revealing an irregularity and through that moment palpably demonstrated the ensemble of committed and confident players they had become.[494]

[494] The consensus among participants is that extant definitions of ensemble vary and the application of the term ranges too broadly and loosely to be of any real significance. They have resisted fixing the term by defining it and have arrived at a working consensus that, like Lecoq's chorus, it is an experience best understood through a phenomenological and embodied understanding of what 'ensemble' means as a participant – an instance of linking theoretical material with an experiential application that I elect not to challenge.

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