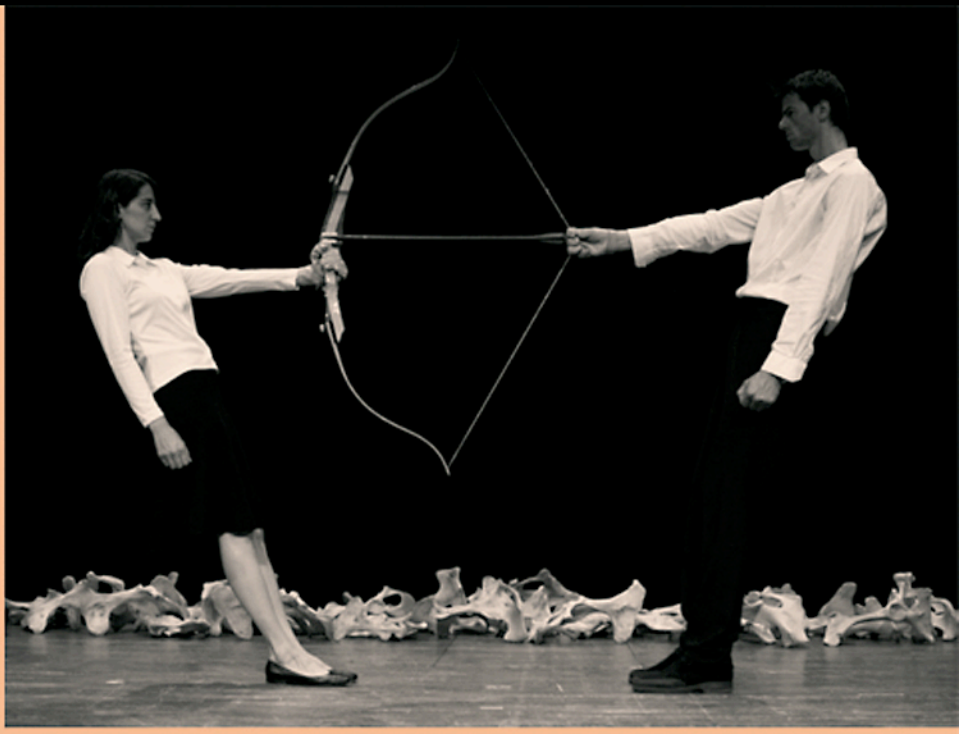

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PERFORMANCE

A new aesthetics

Erika Fischer-Lichte
Translated by Saskya Iris Jain

The Transformative Power of Performance

'Wonderfully erudite, clear and concise'
Maria Shevtsova, Goldsmiths College, University of London

'A major reference work for debates on theatre theory, performance, and methodology. Written by one of the foremost representatives of the field of theatre studies'
Hans-Thies Lehmann, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt

In this book, Erika Fischer-Lichte traces the emergence of the performance as **an art event** in its own right. In setting performance art on an equal footing with the traditional art object, she heralds a new aesthetics.

The peculiar mode of experience that a performance provokes – blurring distinctions between artist and audience, body and mind, art and life – is here framed as the breeding ground for a new way of understanding performing arts, and through them even wider social and cultural processes.

With an introduction by Marvin Carlson, this translation of the original *Ästhetik des Performativen* addresses key issues in performance art, experimental theatre and cultural performances to lay the ground for a new appreciation of the artistic event.

Erika Fischer-Lichte is Professor of Theatre Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin and Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies on the Interweaving of Theatre Cultures. She was President of the German Association for Theatre Studies (1991–1996) and of the International Federation for Theatre Research (1995–1999). Among her numerous publications are *The Semiotics of Theatre* (1992, in German 1983), *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre* (1997), *History of European Drama and Theatre* (2002, in German 1990), *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual. Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (Routledge, 2005).

The Transformative Power of Performance

A new aesthetics

Erika Fischer-Lichte

Translated by Saskya Iris Jain

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2008
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk."

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Fischer-Lichte, Erika.
[Ästhetik des Performativen. English]
The transformative power of performance : a new aesthetics / by Erika Fischer-Lichte ; translated by Saskya Jain.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Performing arts–Philosophy. 2. Performing arts–Semiotics.
3. Experimental theater. 4. Performance art. I. Title.
PN1584.F5713 2008
791.01–dc22 2007041684

ISBN 0-203-89498-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0–415–45855–2 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0–415–45856–0 (pbk)
ISBN10: 0–203–89498–7 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978–0–415–45855–9 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–415–45856–6 (pbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–203–89498–9 (ebk)

Will transformation. Oh be inspired for the flame
in which a Thing disappears and bursts into something else;
the spirit of re-creation which masters this earthly form
loves most the pivoting point where you are no longer yourself.

What tightens into survival is already inert;
how safe is it really in its inconspicuous gray?
From far off a far greater hardness warns what is hard,
and the absent hammer is lifted high!

He who pours himself out like a stream is acknowledged at last by Knowledge;
and she leads him enchanted through the harmonious country
that finishes often with starting, and with ending begins.

Every fortunate space that the two of them pass through, astonished,
is a child or grandchild of parting. And the transfigured Daphne,
as she feels herself become laurel, wants you to change into wind.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Contents

Acknowledgments

This project was supported by numerous organizations and individuals at crucial stages of its research and writing. For many years, the German Research Council has generously funded my research on this topic and the Free University Berlin granted me a sabbatical to finish the book.

At Columbia University, my colleague Martin Puchner shared several insightful suggestions throughout the process of writing. I would like to thank Ramona Mosse, who agreed to read the manuscript in various stages and sections, for her thorough and sharp comments throughout. Joy Kristin Kalu provided useful assistance locating bibliographical data and compiling the index. During my seminars I took the opportunity to discuss the book with my students, whose interest and insight added to the text considerably. Special thanks are also due to Talia Rodgers and Minh Ha Duong at Routledge, whose helpful encouragement and constant support have been critical in the realization of this project.

I am indebted to my translator Saskya Iris Jain, not only for her meticulous and judicious translation, unflagging hard work, and dedication, but also for her critical reading of the text and for being in constant dialogue with me on the project.

I am deeply grateful for the help I received. For the remaining errors only I am to blame.

Introduction

Perspectives on performance: Germany and America

Marvin Carlson

The modern field of performance studies was largely developed within the United States, but performance has proved so useful and stimulating a concept that today scholars around the world are exploring its possibilities for a better understanding of social and cultural processes. The present book by Erika Fischer-Lichte makes an important and welcome contribution to this growing body of discourse. Fischer-Lichte is one of the leading contemporary figures internationally in the area of theatre and performance research, and director of one of Europe's leading programs in theatre studies, the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft at the Free University of Berlin. She brings a fresh, continental perspective to a field which up until now has been dominated by Anglo-Saxon scholarship.

As Shannon Jackson has convincingly demonstrated in her study, *Professing Performance*,[1] just how this complex and contested concept is understood and utilized is, like any such theoretical abstraction, profoundly influenced by the genealogy of its development and application. Although the modern field of performance studies draws upon the insights and theories of many figures in a wide spectrum of fields across the humanities and the social sciences, the field was crystallized in the United States at two major universities during the 1970s and 1980s, at New York University and Northwestern University. Jon McKenzie, in his *Perform – or Else*, the most extensive study yet to appear of the concept of performance in modern culture, calls the approaches to the field represented by these two schools the "Eastern" and "Midwestern" variations of performance studies.[2]

At New York University, the program of Performance Studies grew out of a theatre program at the Tisch School of the Arts and its interest in developing an interdisciplinary faculty composed not only of theatre scholars, headed by Richard Schechner, but also of dance theorists, musicologists, folklorists, and anthropologists, most notably Victor Turner. The background of performance studies at Northwestern was quite different. Although there also performance studies might be said to have arisen from a convergence of the interests of social scientists (especially the anthropologist Dwight Conquergood) and theatre scholars, the academic position of theatre itself within the institution was very different.

To understand this difference, one must step back to the early twentieth-century and the beginnings of theatre studies in the United States. From early in that century there existed a version of something similar to what McKenzie

later designated as the "Eastern" and "Midwestern" variations of this academic field. What developed into the "Midwestern" version appeared first, and in fact was created at a number of Eastern colleges and universities, at Carnegie, Yale, Harvard, and Radcliffe. These schools, soon joined by many others across the country, inaugurated the field by offering non-academic study in such subjects as playwriting, acting, elocution, and oral interpretation. As time passed, this approach, strongly influenced by the popular educational theories of John Dewey, who stressed the importance of practical experience in learning, became particularly associated with the large state universities of the American Midwest. There, this emphasis upon performance and practice led to theatre becoming closely associated with and frequently merged into programs of oral interpretation and communication. This is the tradition at Northwestern, where a School of Speech provided an academic umbrella for departments of oral interpretation, communication studies, radio, television, film, and theatre. Thus performance studies arose at Northwestern not as an outgrowth of and to some extent developed in opposition to a pre-existing program in theatre (as at New York University), but rather as a further development of a long-standing interest in the study of oral culture.

Again on the East Coast, an alternative to this speech, communication, and oral interpretation-oriented approach to theatre studies began to develop in the 1940s. This new approach was heavily influenced by recent work in theatre studies being developed in Germany by Max Herrmann, a figure of critical importance in Fischer-Lichte's own approach. The central figure in America to champion this approach was Alois Nagler, an Austrian scholar who began lecturing at Yale in the 1930s and who joined the faculty there in 1942. For the next several decades he was America's leading theatre historian and the model for a more academic, European-oriented approach to theatre than the more performance-oriented work of the previous generation, now very well established in the major state universities of the United States, especially in the middle of the country. Traces of the rivalry between these early "Eastern" and "Midwestern" approaches to theatre studies may still be seen in the alternative professional journals and organizations which today still serve theatre scholars in the United States.

The American Educational Theatre Association, founded in 1949 with its first executive offices at the University of Michigan, created that same year a quarterly publication, the *Educational Theatre Journal*. The direct lineal descendents of this organization and this journal are today's American Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) and *Theatre Journal*. Nagler and other *Theaterwissenschaft*-influenced scholars, mostly in the East, found the production-oriented emphasis of both this organization and journal largely irrelevant to their own concerns, and so undertook the establishment of alternatives. The founding in 1955 of the International Federation for Theatre Research in Europe, of which Nagler was one of the eight founding members, inspired Nagler to call for an American organization more in line with the IFTR interest in academic research in theatre, an interest he felt inadequately represented in the American Educational Theatre Association or

its journal. The result was the foundation of the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) in 1956, with its own journal of this organization, *Theatre Survey*, first appearing in 1960. Despite a significant converging in interests between these organizations today, and even more between these journals, to which a common interest in performance has significantly contributed, their division still stands as a memorial to the early "Eastern" and "Midwestern" division of this field.

Despite their difference in orientation, the development of "Eastern" theatre studies as an independent field at Yale and elsewhere and of "Midwestern" theatre studies under the umbrella of speech and communication at many large state universities created in early twentieth century America something akin to the "performative turn" that Fischer-Lichte argues that the work of Max Herrmann achieved at roughly the same period in Germany. In both countries the study of theatre, which had previously drawn its authority and its critical grounding from its close relationship to literature, now sought to shift its attention from the dramatic text to the realization on stage. Despite this similar shift in focus, neither branch of the American "performative turn" quite resembled Herrmann's approach, even if the Yale version was to a significant measure inspired by his insights.

For Herrmann the process of embodiment, not text, was central to the theatrical experience and this embodiment moreover had to be experienced and empathized with by other bodies, those of the audience, in each unique manifestation of the art. The American Yale school embraced Herrmann's view of theatre as based not upon a dramatic text but on a physical event, but Nagler and his students did not consider embodiment a central concern. They tended to be more interested in the material conditions of performance – the physical stage, the scenery, the costumes – with the body of the actor only one such element and often not even the most interesting one. The alternative, "Midwestern" school, on the other hand, while it shared Herrmann's focus on embodiment, tended to privilege the voice, reflecting its grounding in oral interpretation and public speaking. Moreover, its strong debt to the pragmatic educational doctrines of John Dewey encouraged a view of theatre as experiential training for the individual performer, with distinctly less interest in the theatre event as a whole than was to be found in either Herrmann or Nagler.

A closely related important distinction between modern performance studies in Germany and in the United States, particularly in the formative years of the field, was that this new field had a troubled and somewhat contradictory relationship with the already established field of theatre studies. At New York University, theatre tended at best to be regarded as a minor, rather specialized area of work within the far broader field represented by performance studies, characterized by Richard Schechner as "a very small slice of the performance pie."[3] At worst, performance studies defined itself in direct opposition to theatre studies. At Northwestern, performance studies and theatre were considered as two separate fields, within the same family of studies, but distinctly different in concerns and goals. In Germany, however, no such division or distancing from theatre studies resulted from the evolution of the academic disciplines. The field

of *Theaterwissenschaft* (the study of theatre), established in the early 1920s by Max Herrmann, defined itself, like the parallel early theatre programs in the United States, in opposition to traditional study of the literary text (*Literaturwissenschaft*), but since Herrmann based this opposition on the study of theatre as a social event and a process of embodied action rather than the communication of a literary text, his version of theatre studies was far more compatible with the concerns later developed by modern performance studies. Thus German programs in *Theaterwissenschaft*, like that headed by Fischer-Lichte, never suffered from the tensions and divisions between theatre and performance that were frequently felt in the United States.

Beginning around 1980, American theatrical theory was profoundly influenced by the importation of semiotic theory from Europe, but that theory was at its foundations concerned with textual study – the dramatic text, what was called the performance text, and the relationship between the two. An alternative approach, for a time much less visible but ultimately equally significant, called for the analysis of theatre not with the tools of such arts as literature, but with a recognition of the importance of performance as experience. Gerald Hinkle's short 1979 book, *Art as Event*, marks this shift, even in its title. Hinkle argued that the performance aspect of arts like theatre relates them more directly to our perception of life as an "event-full" process, such as that described by the philosopher Whitehead, than to the working of non-performance arts like literature or painting.[4] While this provided a striking new alternative approach for theatre and performance scholars in the United States, it was already well established in German *Theaterwissenschaft*. As Fischer-Lichte herself observes in the present study, "At the heart of Herrmann's notion of performance lies the shift from theatre as a work of art to theatre as an event."

As the head of Germany's leading program in *Theaterwissenschaft* at the Free University of Berlin, where Max Herrmann established this discipline early in the last century, Fischer-Lichte is thus working in a tradition in which the development of modern performance studies comes as a natural extension of an already well established field, not as the "new paradigm" that Schechner and others in America have considered it. This may help explain to American readers why Fischer-Lichte, although concerned with a key question in performance studies, that of what performance actually accomplishes for its participants, actors and audience alike, draws her examples almost exclusively from what might be called the artistic tradition of theatre and performance art, instead of ranging broadly through other examples of social and cultural performance as an American theorist might do. The live theatre still remains the grounding of her work as it was for Herrmann, her illustrious predecessor.

There is yet another reason why Fischer-Lichte finds examples from theatre particularly useful and accessible for her arguments, which also separates her approach, at least in some measure, from recent American theorists in this field. The theatrical culture in Germany is very different from that in the United States. While the record of innovation and achievement of the American experimental

theatre, especially in the later part of the twentieth century, compares favorably with that of almost any other major theatre culture, the theatre in general in America holds a very different position in the cultural imagination than it does in Germany. In general, theatre is regarded in America as a form of entertainment, more elitist perhaps than films, but still lacking the cultural respectability of orchestral music, painting, or even such closely related forms as opera or dance. In Germany, on the other hand, theatre is a major cultural form, knowledge of theatre is considered an important part of any cultured person's experience, and the stage is regarded as a significant contributor to the public discussion of social and cultural concerns. For an American theatre-goer (much rarer proportionally than among the German population), the central and most visible example of the art will be a Broadway "show," while in Germany it is much more likely to be a controversial politically, socially, and artistically challenging production by an innovative director in one of the major theatres in Berlin, Munich, or Hamburg.

In addition to her situation within an academic institution where modern performance theory has found theatre a comfortable companion, Fischer-Lichte lives in a general theatrical culture where the directors and dramaturgs at leading theatres, unlike those in America, regularly mount productions that are highly informed by current theory and offer readily accessible examples for the sort of analytic study Fischer-Lichte is pursuing.

This of course presents a potential problem for American readers of her work, who are very likely unfamiliar even with such major figures in the recent German theatre as Castorf and Schlingensief, whose work will be well-known to any German reader of this book. Happily, however, this does not present a problem, for two reasons. The first, and more important, is that the argument that Fischer-Lichte is developing is grounded not in German performance or German aesthetics, but in contemporary performance theory as it is being built up largely within the United States. She therefore draws upon John Cage's event theory, Austin's establishment of the concept of the performative in linguistic theory, Judith Butler's work on performative acts and gender, the contributions of the Cambridge anthropologists to ritual study, Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander's discussions of presence, all quite familiar references to anyone working in this field of study.

Second, when Fischer-Lichte utilizes specific examples from modern theatre and performance art, these draw equally upon German and non-German examples. In support of her discussion of theatre's performative use of space, for example, she draws upon examples from the contemporary German directors Claus Peymann, Einar Schleef, and Klaus Michael Grüber but also from American work by Richard Schechner and the Los Angeles Cornerstone Theatre, from international performance artists Joseph Beuys, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and Coco Fusco, as well as from Max Reinhardt, Nikolai Evreinov, and Jerzy Grotowski, familiar figures from the history of the modern European theatre. An American reader will thus be able easily to situate the work of less familiar continental figures by the way in which their work is related to that of more familiar artists. Even when an argument is based on the specific performance practice of, for example,

Castorf or Schleef, Fischer-Lichte's description of the relevant features of the work in question is always sufficiently precise and detailed to provide an adequate understanding of it and of its significance to the ongoing argument.

Let us now turn to that argument, and again consider it both within its German context and in relationship to recent and current work in performance studies in America. Fischer-Lichte praises Herrmann for making the "performative turn" which turned from regarding the theatre as a static work of art to considering it as a spatial, embodied event, thus opening the way to developing an aesthetics of the performative. She argues, however, that he did not go on himself to consider the features of such an aesthetics, or of the function or meaning of performance. These considerations became much more central and pressing with the subsequent performative turn of the 1960s and after, when a new aesthetics of performance began to be developed alongside a new consciousness of and appreciation of this activity. The aim of her book, then, is to lay out the foundations of this aesthetics, based, following the example of Herrmann, on the practice and operations of the theatre.

Once again the difference in orientation between the development in performance studies within the tradition of *Theaterwissenschaft* in Germany and its rather different genealogy in the United States opens questions of both function and aesthetics in quite different directions, although, as I ultimately hope to argue, to some significant convergences, especially in more recent writings in this field. In very general and obviously oversimplified terms Fischer-Lichte's approach, based as it is on what might be called the aesthetic side of theatre and performance, seeks the "meaning" or "purpose" of performance in what she calls its "specific aestheticity," a concern one would be most unlikely to encounter in an American performance theorist. American performance theory, with its close historical ties to the social sciences, to Deweyesque pragmatism, and to the tradition of rhetoric and communication, has in general looked for the utility of performance in its ability to alter or at least alter the spectator's thinking about general and specific social situations. Phillip Zarrilli, for example, speaking of performance as "a mode of cultural action," describes it as "not a simple reflection of some essentialized, fixed attributes of a static, monolithic culture but an arena for the constant process of negotiating experiences and meanings that constitute culture."[5]

While doubtless Fischer-Lichte would agree with this emphasis on the dynamic and fluid quality of performance, Zarrilli's emphasis upon "negotiating" marks a distinctly different orientation. Fischer-Lichte's concept of performance as involved with the "enchantment" of the world may possibly be read as having some specific social or cultural implications, but it is not really concerned with cultural "negotiation," which suggests the sort of directly pragmatic interests found in much American performance theory. It looks rather to a deeper experience of being in the world and of becoming newly conscious of that being that is much closer to traditional aesthetic theory. Her basic concept of "enchantment," for example, has much in common with the well-known concept of "defamiliarization," so important to the Russian formalists and most clearly

articulated by Victor Shklovsky. His often-quoted definition of art is much closer to the approach of Fischer-Lichte than almost any theoretical formulation of the function of performance by an American theorist:

> Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.*[6]

Clearly when Fischer-Lichte speaks of performance as a process wherein "the commonplace appears transfigured and becomes conspicuous," she is dealing with a phenomenon very similar to what interests Shklovsky. And yet, although a common aesthetic orientation connects their work, it would be a serious misrepresentation to see Fischer-Lichte's approach as simply a contemporary reworking of this aspect of formalism.

The key difference, once again, is the shift from art object to event. In this regard Shklovsky remains firmly in the European aesthetic tradition, from which the "performative turn" departed. His concern is clearly with "the object" or "the thing" and the manner in which this object is observed and understood. It is obviously a fundamentally different matter when we shift from the artistic experience in the course of which we are led to look at an object with fresh eyes, exposing its "artfulness" or one might say, its more sensual relationship with the world, to a situation in which we have an experience which causes us to gain a new, refreshed comprehension of our own situation of being in the world. The former, despite the potential operations of empathy, remains a rather abstract and intellectual process. The latter engages the full activity of the human being as an embodied mind, a point frequently emphasized by Fischer-Lichte.

The special critical terms that Fischer-Lichte employs all point in this direction. The most central of these is autopoiesis, a term that to the best of my knowledge has so far been employed rarely if at all in American performance theory, despite its widespread use in such diverse fields as sociology, psychotherapy, management, anthropology, and organizational culture. The term was first utilized by the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela to point to the unique self-producing operations of living systems. While all other kinds of machine produce something different from themselves, autopoietic systems are simultaneously producers and products, circular systems that survive by self-generation. Recently autopoiesis has entered American literary theory through the work of such critics as Joseph Tabbi[7] and Ira Livingston,[8] but, as Fischer-Lichte argues, the continually operating feedback loop provided in any performance event by the ongoing interactions of performers and audiences provides an even more fundamental example of this dynamic that can be provided by literature. It

ties the living process of the theatrical event back to the fundamental processes of life itself, and as the creation of embodied minds on both sides of the loop (actors on the one side, spectators on the other) demonstrates not only how performance operates within human society, but why it is important, indeed essential. As a self-organizing system, as opposed to an autonomously created work of art, it continually receives and integrates into that system newly emerging, unplanned, and unpredictable elements from both sides of the loop.

As embodied minds, we are involved in autopoieses continually in our being in the world, but what theatre and performance art offer are occasions for heightening our awareness of and sensitivity to this process. The dynamic has some resemblance to formalist aesthetics, as I have noted. Both might be said to be centrally concerned with what Fischer-Lichte calls the perceptual transformation of "what has been ordinary into components of aesthetic experience." For formalists like Shklovsky, however, the ordinary was found in the materiality of the world, while for Fischer-Lichte it is the experience of the ever-evolving dynamic of being in that world.

Essential to this project, and to the shift from art object to art event, is the collapsing of binaries, headed by that of subject and object, or in the case of performance, spectator and actor. Here Fischer-Lichte is on ground much more familiar to American performance theorists, for whom liminality, dissolving of boundaries, continually shifting perspectives, and the privileging of dynamic process over the stable work have long been central to their concerns. Fischer-Lichte's term "perceptual multistability" may be unfamiliar, but the process that it characterizes, the "oscillating focus between the actor's specific corporeality and the character portrayed," between "presence" and "representation," will surely strike a familiar and sympathetic chord in American readers.

The concept of performance as transformation itself is also not unfamiliar to American performance theory, although generally speaking it has been employed with rather different implications than those in Fischer-Lichte's book. A recent anthology, *Teaching Performance Studies*, contains essays by many of the leading American scholars in this field, including Richard Schechner, Joseph Roach, William O. Beeman, Phillip B. Zarrilli, John Emigh, Bruce McConachie and Michael and Ruth Bowman,[9] and thus provides a useful survey of current work. The introductory essay, by the two editors, bears the title "The Power of Transformation in Performance Studies Pedagogy." In fact, although this essay has much to say about embodiment and pedagogy, it mentions transformation only once, and that is in quoting a later essay in the collection, Beeman's "Performance Theory in an Anthropology Program."

Somewhat surprisingly, despite the title of the introductory essay, Beeman's is the only essay in this collection to address the matter of transformation, and it is surely not coincidental that this essay is oriented not toward aesthetics, but toward social science, and anthropology in particular: "Performance theory in an Anthropology Program." Beeman, who teaches at Brown University, is clearly in the tradition of the "Eastern" school of American performance, his academic

appointment being in anthropology as well as in theatre, speech, and dance. Echoes of the Richard Schechner (from theatre) and Victor Turner (from anthropology) alliance that shaped this field at New York University are found throughout his article, which in fact begins with a quotation from Turner's *The Anthropology of Performance.*

Both Turner and Beeman stress the utility of performance, although their emphases are slightly different. Turner, at least in the passage cited by Beeman, sees the primary function of performance as revelatory: "man is a self-performing animal – his performances are, in a way, reflexive, in performing he reveals himself to himself."[10] In his own discussion of the transformative potential of performance, Beeman stresses not a developing self-knowledge, but the achievement of specific pragmatic goals. Citing Austin's concept of the performative speech act, he equates "transformational" with "effective." Performance is "intentional." If successful "it does cultural work in the world. It strives to affect human affairs."[11] Later he notes "As a transformational force, performance behavior has the power to restructure social order through the persuasive power of rhetoric and through the power of redefinition of both audience and context."[12]

The difference between this very American concept of the transformational potential of performance and that of Fischer-Lichte is, I hope, quite clear. Beeman's focus is upon the pragmatic, the utilitarian, and the model (derived from Austin) is that of a performer seeking to achieve a certain effect (note Beeman's telling use of the term rhetoric) on an audience. There is almost nothing here of Fischer-Lichte's dynamic of performer and audience mutually involved in an ongoing dynamic of the fulfillment of the process of life and consciousness, not under the control of either. The Turner formulation cited by Beeman, stressing self-knowledge rather than rhetorical effictiveness, is somewhat closer, but still colored by Deweyesque pragmatism and still focused on the performer as initiating the performance in order to affect his or her audience.

I would suggest that the American performance theorist who has so far come closest to the orientation suggested by Fischer-Lichte's study is Jill Dolan in her recent book *Utopia in Performance.*[13] Although like Beeman (and for that matter like Fischer-Lichte) Dolan refers back to J.L. Austin, and to his concept of the performative as something that in its enunciation *acts*, this "doing" is seen by Dolan and by Fischer-Lichte as much more general than the specific goal-directed behavior described by Beeman. What Dolan describes as the "utopian performative" is clearly something very closely akin to Fischer-Lichte's tracing of autopoieses in performance. Utopian performatives is the term Dolan applies to those "small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense."[14] These "small but profound moments" are clearly the moments that Fischer-Lichte would call moments of enchantment, resulting in a sudden deeper insight into the shared process of being in the world. Dolan's stress on the

"aesthetics" and "intersubjectivity" of this experience provide further evidence of her similarity to Fischer-Lichte on the analysis of this experience.

Given the pragmatic orientation of much American theory, one might be tempted to read Dolan's use of the phrase utopian performance to indicate a sort of teleological performance directed toward achieving some utopia, but this is an interpretation that Dolan specifically and clearly rejects. Her investigation into this subject, she insists, "resists the effort to find representations of a better world." Recalling that the word *utopia* literally means "no place," she refuses pinning this experience "down to prescription." "Any fixed, static image or structure would be much too finite and exclusionary for the soaring sense of hope, possibility, and desire that imbues utopian performatives," she argues.[15]

Also like Fischer-Lichte, Dolan stresses the importance of the co-creating of this performative by the embodied minds of actors and spectators. In the "present, live moment" of performance, she argues, "the synergy of the actor's embodiment and the spectator's willing imagination creates possibility, the potential for new understanding and insight charged by the necessity of intersubjectivity."[16] Finally, Dolan also speaks of the "transformative powers" of performance, "the new worlds it creates with each shoring, the potential … of feeling myself part of a public newly constituted, held together in the moment of performance by a filament of faith."[17]

The striking convergence between the enchanted performances of Fischer-Lichte and the utopian performances of Dolan offers the potential of developing a new dimension in the ongoing discourse of modern American performance theory. That discourse has on the whole so far been oriented distinctly, and it must be admitted, very productively toward pragmatic concerns and the use of performance to achieve certain specific social, cultural, personal, and rhetorical goals. In the formation of modern American performance theory, aesthetics in general and theatre in particular have often been sidelined or outright rejected as areas of particular interest. In the present book, even more specifically and extensively than Dolan, Fischer-Lichte restores these areas of interest to the center of performance studies. Perhaps this book will be seen as marking an "aesthetic turn" in such studies, which would be a development with important and far-reaching consequences. In any case, however, it clearly marks and establishes an important alternative approach to this popular field of study.

Chapter 1

The transformative power of performance

On October 24, 1975, a curious and memorable event took place at the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck. The Yugoslavian artist Marina Abramović presented her performance *Lips of Thomas*. The artist began her performance by shedding all her clothes. She then went to the back wall of the gallery, pinned up a photograph of a man with long hair who resembled the artist, and framed it by drawing a five-pointed star around it. She turned to a table with a white table-cloth close to the wall, on which there was a bottle of red wine, a jar containing two pounds of honey, a crystal glass, a silver spoon, and a whip. She settled into the chair and reached for the jar of honey and the silver spoon. Slowly, she ate the honey until she had emptied the jar. She poured red wine into the crystal glass and drank it in long draughts. She continued until bottle and glass were empty. Then she broke the glass with her right hand, which began to bleed. Abramović got up and walked over to the wall where the photograph was fastened. Standing at the wall and facing the audience, she cut a five-pointed star into the skin of her abdomen with a razor blade. Blood welled out of the cuts. Then she took the whip, kneeled down beneath the photograph with her back to the audience, and began to flagellate her back severely, raising bloody welts. Afterwards, she lay down on a cross made of blocks of ice, her arms spread out to her sides. An electric radiator hung from the ceiling, facing her stomach. Its heat triggered further bleeding from the star-shaped cuts. Abramović lay motionless on the ice – she obviously intended to endure her self-torture until the radiator had melted all the ice. After she had held out for 30 minutes without any sign of abandoning the torture, some members of the audience could no longer bear her ordeal. They hastened to the blocks of ice, took hold of the artist, and covered her with coats. Then they removed her from the cross and carried her away. Thus, they put an end to the performance.

The performance had taken two hours. In the course of these two hours, the artist and the spectators created an event that was neither envisioned nor legitimized by the traditions and standards of the visual or performing arts. The artist was not producing an artifact through her actions; she was not creating a fixed and transferable work of art that could exist independently of her. Yet her actions were also not representational. She was not performing as an actress, playing the part of a dramatic character that eats too much honey, drinks wine excessively, and inflicts a variety of injuries on her own body. Rather, Abramović was actually harming

herself, abusing her body with a determined disregard for its limits. She fed it substances which, though certainly nutritious in small doses, would doubtlessly cause nausea and discomfort in such excess. Moreover, the audience had to infer a strong physical pain from the heavy external injuries that she inflicted on herself. Yet, the artist betrayed no sign of distress – she did not moan, scream, or grimace. She generally avoided any physical sign that would express discomfort or pain. The artist restricted herself to performing actions that changed her body perceptibly – feeding it honey and wine and inflicting visible damage on it – without producing external signs for the inner states induced by these actions.

This put the audience in a deeply disturbing and agonizing position that invalidated both the established conventions of theatrical performance and generally of human responsiveness to a given situation. Traditionally, the role of a gallery visitor or theatregoer is defined as that of either an observer or spectator. Gallery visitors observe the exhibited works from varying distances without usually touching them. Theatregoers watch the plot unfold on stage, possibly with strong feelings of empathy, but refrain from interfering. Even if a character on stage (e.g. Othello) sets out to kill another (in this case, Desdemona), the audience knows full well that the murder is but a pretense and that the actress playing Desdemona will join the Othello actor for the final curtain call. In contrast, the rules of everyday life call for immediate intervention if someone threatens to hurt themselves or another person – unless, perhaps, this means risking one's own life. Which rule should the audience apply in Abramović's performance? She very obviously inflicted real injuries on herself and was determined to continue her self-torture. Had she done this in any other public place, the spectators would probably not have hesitated long before intervening. What about this case? A variety of considerations come into play. Abramović's artistic intent demanded a certain respect, ensuring that she could complete her performance. One risked destroying her "work of art." Then again, calmly watching her inflict injuries on herself seemed incompatible with the laws of human sympathy. It is also possible that Abramović wanted to force the spectators to take on the role of voyeurs[1] or test how far she could go before someone would put an end to her ordeal. What rules should apply here?

Throughout her performance, Abramović created a situation wherein the audience was suspended between the norms and rules of art and everyday life, between aesthetic and ethical imperatives. She plunged the audience into a crisis that could not be overcome by referring to conventional behavior patterns. Initially, the audience responded with the very physical signs that the performer refused to show: signs from which inner states could be deduced, such as incredulous amazement at her eating and drinking or horror at her breaking the crystal glass with her hand. When the artist began to cut into her flesh with the razor blade, one could hear the spectators drawing their breath in shock. Whatever the transformations the spectators underwent in those two hours – transformations that, to some extent, were manifest in perceptible physical expressions – they flowed into and prompted concrete reactions. Moreover, these transformations

had clear consequences: the spectators put an end to the artist's ordeal and thus concluded the performance itself. The performance transformed the involved spectators into actors.

In the past, when one spoke of art's potential to transform – referring both to the artist and the recipient – one generally evoked an image of the artist seized by inspiration or the beholder of art roused by an inner experience, calling out like Rilke's Apollo: "You must change your life." Nonetheless, there have always been artists that treated their bodies abominably. Legendary accounts and autobiographies of individual artists consistently tell of sleep deprivation, drug consumption, excessive use of alcohol and other substances, as well as self-inflicted injuries. Still, the violent treatment that these artists inflicted upon their bodies was neither hailed as art by them nor considered art by others.[2] Relevant sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveal that such practices were tolerated at best. They were accepted as a possible source of inspiration for artistic endeavor, sanctioned as the price for the work of art that they induced – but never credited as art itself.

Nevertheless, there existed – and continue to exist – cultural domains that consider practices in which people injure themselves or expose their bodies to serious harm not only "normal" but even laudable and exemplary. This applies particularly to the domain of religious rituals. Many religions bestow a special saintliness on ascetics, hermits, fakirs, or yogis, not only because they suffer unimaginable privations and put their own bodies at great risk but also because they injure their bodies in the most tremendous ways. It is all the more astounding that even mass movements occasionally adopt these practices, as is the case with flagellation. Part of individual and collective practice for nuns and monks from the eleventh century onwards, self-flagellation was taken up in various forms: in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, processions of flagellants moved through Europe and conducted their ritual publicly in front of large crowds; orders of penitence, prevalent particularly in Latin countries, had their members flagellate themselves collectively on various occasions. Voluntary self-flagellation has sustained itself as a living practice up to the present in Good Friday processions in Spain and in certain places in southern Italy, as well as in Corpus Christi processions, and in the liturgy of *Semana Santa*.

The descriptions of the everyday lives of the Dominican nuns at the cloister Unterlinden near Colmar, composed by Katharina von Gebersweiler at the beginning of the fourteenth century, reveal that voluntary self-flagellation constituted a fundamental part, if not the culmination, of the liturgy:

> At the end of the morning and evening prayers, the sisters remained standing in the choir and prayed until they were given a sign to begin with their devotional worship. Some tortured themselves with knee bends while praising the rule of God. Others, consumed by the fire of divine love, were unable to contain their tears, which they accompanied with devotional wailing. They did not move until they were suffused anew by grace and found 'thou whom

> my soul loveth' (Song of Solomon 1:7). Others finally tormented their flesh by severely maltreating it on a daily basis – some with birch rods, others with whips, containing three or four knotted straps, a third group with iron chains, a fourth one with flagella furnished with thorns. During Advent and the entire fasting period, the sisters went into the chapter house and other appropriate places after the morning prayers, where they mauled their bodies severely with the most diverse instruments of flagellation until blood flowed, so that the lashings of the whip sounded through the whole cloister and, sweeter than any other melody, ascended to the Lord's ears.[3]
>
> (Ancelet-Hustache 1930 cited in Largier 2001: 29)

The ritual of self-flagellation lifted the nuns above their monastic routine and offered the promise of transformation. The violence inflicted on their bodies together with the physical transformation evident after the torture brought about a process of spiritual transformation: "Those who approached God in these diverse ways were granted enlightenment of the heart, their thoughts were purified, their passion ignited, their conscience became clear, and their spirits ascended towards God" (Ancelet-Hustache 1930 cited in Largier 2001: 30). Voluntary self-flagellation – physical abuse that aims at spiritual transformation – is recognized by the Catholic Church as a penance practice even today.[4]

A second cultural domain that allows for bodily injury or risk thereof can be found in fairground spectacles. On the one hand, tricks that would "normally" lead to serious injuries miraculously seem not to harm the artists themselves, such as fire eating, sword swallowing, or piercing the tongue with a needle, to name only a few. On the other hand, the artists perform extremely hazardous actions, exposing themselves to real dangers. The mastery of the performers lies precisely in their ability to defy this danger. The performer's concentration need but slacken for a fraction of a second for the ever-lurking danger to erupt that is posed by a tightrope act without a net or by the taming of predatory animals and snakes: the tightrope dancer falls, the tamer is attacked by the tiger, and the snake-charmer is bitten by the snake. This is the moment the audience fears most and which it yet feverishly awaits. Its deepest fears, fascination, and sensationalist curiosity are unleashed in this moment. These spectacles are not so much about the transformation of the actors or, even less so, the spectators. They rather seek to demonstrate the unusual physical and mental powers of the performers, and are intended to elicit awe and wonder from the audience. We are talking here about precisely the emotions that also took hold of Abramović's audience.

The second distinctive feature of Abramović's performance is the transformation of the spectators into actors, for which there also exist examples from different cultural domains. Of particular interest for our context are the penal rituals of the early modern period. As Richard van Duelmen has shown, spectators would crowd around the corpse after an execution in order to touch the deceased's body, blood, limbs, or even the lethal cord. They hoped that this physical contact would cure them of illness and generally provide a guarantee for their own bodily

well-being and integrity (1988: 161). The transformation of spectators into actors occurred in the hope of achieving a lasting alteration of their own bodies. As such, this transformation had a completely different thrust from that experienced by the audience in Abramović's performance. Her spectators were not concerned with their own physical well-being so much as that of the artist. The actions that transformed the spectators into actors, i.e. the physical contact with the artist, were aimed at protecting her bodily integrity. They were the result of an ethical decision directed at another, the artist.

In this respect, the audience's actions also fundamentally differed from those of the Futurist *serate*, Dada-soirées, and Surrealist "guided tours" at the beginning of the twentieth century, in which spectators turned into actors. In this case, the spectators were provoked into action by deliberate shocks. The transformation of spectator into actor happened almost automatically as specified by the *mise en scène*; it was hardly the result of a conscious decision on the part of the concerned spectator. Accounts of such events as well as manifestos of the artists speak to these conditions. In his manifesto entitled *The Variety Theatre* (1913), for instance, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti makes the following suggestions for provoking the audience:

> Introduce surprise and the need to move among the spectators of the orchestra, boxes, and balcony. Some random suggestions: spread a powerful glue on some of the seats, so that the male or female spectator will stay glued down and make everyone laugh … – Sell the same ticket to ten people: traffic jam, bickering, and wrangling. – Offer free tickets to gentlemen or ladies who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric and likely to provoke uproars with obscene gestures, pinching women, or other freakishness. Sprinkle the seats with dust to make people itch and sneeze, etc.
>
> (1973: 130)

In this artistic spectacle, members of the audience became actors merely through the impact of shock and the power of provocation. Throughout, they were watched with anger, excitement, amusement, or malice by the other spectators and organizers. In Abramović's performance, too, the transformation of some spectators into actors would have aroused contradictory emotions in the remaining spectators: shame for having lacked the courage to interfere oneself; outrage or even anger due to the premature conclusion of the performance, preventing one from seeing how far the performer would have still been willing to go in her self-torture; or relief and contentment about someone finally deciding to end the ordeal of the performer and most probably also that of the audience.[5]

Whatever the final assessment of the similarities and differences, Abramović's performance notably exhibited elements of ritual as well as spectacle, that is to say, it hinted both at a religious and a fairground context. In fact, it constantly oscillated between the two. It was ritualistic[6] by virtue of engendering a transformation of the performer and certain spectators but lacked the publicly recognized change in status or identity, as is often the case with rituals. It resembled a spectacle by virtue

of eliciting awe and horror from the spectators, shocking and seducing them into becoming voyeurs.

Such a performance eludes the scope of traditional aesthetic theories. It vehemently resists the demands of hermeneutic aesthetics, which aims at understanding the work of art. In this case, understanding the artist's actions was less important than the experiences that she had while carrying them out and that were generated in the audience. In short, the transformation of the performance's participants was pivotal.

This is not to say that there was nothing for the audience to interpret; the objects used and the actions carried out on and with them could indeed be construed as signs. The five-pointed star, for example, would have given rise to the most diverse mythical, religious, cultural, and political associations – not least as the established symbol for socialist Yugoslavia. When the artist framed the photograph with a five-pointed star and then cut a corresponding star into her abdomen, the audience might have interpreted these actions as a symbol for the ubiquity of the state. This ubiquity manifests itself to the individual through its laws, provisions, and injustices; the audience might have read Abramović's actions as a symbol of the violence that the individual suffers at the hands of the state and that inscribes itself onto the body. When the performer used a silver spoon and a crystal glass at a table set with a white tablecloth, the audience might have been reminded of daily activities in a middle-class setting, while the excessive consumption of honey and wine may also have implied criticism of consumerist, capitalist society. Alternatively, the audience might have read these actions as a reference to the Last Supper. In this context they would have then interpreted the flagellation – which in another context might have alluded to sadomasochistic sex practices – as a reference to the flagellation of Christ and his followers. When the artist lay down on the cross of ice with her arms spread out, the audience would probably have made a connection to the crucifixion of Christ. They might even have read their own act of removing her from the cross as the prevention of a historical reenactment of the self-sacrifice or as a repetition of the removal from the cross. Overall, the audience could have interpreted the performance as an exploration of violence that ranged from self-harm to the sort of violence that individuals encounter at the hands and in the name of the state or religious communities. The audience could have seen it as a criticism of social conditions, which allow the individual to be sacrificed by the state and which require such self-sacrifice.

However plausible such interpretations might seem in retrospect, they remain incommensurable with the event of the performance. The audience would have attempted such interpretations only to a limited degree during the performance itself. The actions that the artist carried out did not simply mean "drinking and eating excessively," "cutting a five-pointed star into the abdomen," or "flagellating oneself;" instead, they accomplished precisely what they signified. They constituted a new, singular reality for the artist and the audience, that is to say, for all participants of the performance. This reality was not merely interpreted

by the audience but first and foremost experienced. It provoked a wide array of sensations in the spectators, ranging from awe, shock, horror, disgust, nausea, or vertigo, to fascination, curiosity, sympathy, or agony, which stirred them to actions that equally constituted reality. It can be assumed that the affects that were triggered – obviously strong enough to move individual spectators to intervention – by far transcended the possibility and the effort to reflect, to constitute meaning, and to interpret the events. The central concern of the performance was not to understand but to experience it and to cope with these experiences, which could not be supplanted there and then by reflection.

In this way, the performance redefined two relationships of fundamental importance to hermeneutic as well as semiotic aesthetics: first, the relationship between subject and object, observer and observed, spectator and actor; second, the relationship between the *materiality* and the *semioticity* of the performance's elements, between signifier and signified.

For hermeneutic and for semiotic aesthetics, a clear distinction between subject and object is fundamental. The artist, subject 1, creates a distinct, fixed, and transferable artifact that exists independently of its creator. This condition allows the beholder, subject 2, to make it the object of their perception and interpretation. The fixed and transferable artifact, i.e. the nature of the work of art as an object, ensures that the beholder can examine it repeatedly, continuously discover new structural elements, and attribute different meanings to it.

This possibility was not offered in Abramović's performance. The artist did not produce an artifact but worked on and changed her own body before the eyes of the audience. Instead of a work of art that existed independently of her and the recipients, she created an event that involved everyone present. The spectators, too, were not presented with a distinct object to perceive and interpret; rather, they were all involved in a common situation of here and now, transforming everyone present into co-subjects. Their actions triggered physiological, affective, volitional, energetic, and motor reactions that motivated further actions. Through this process, the relationship between subject and object was established not as dichotomous but as oscillatory. The positions of subject and object could no longer be clearly defined or distinguished from one another. Did the spectators establish a relationship amongst themselves and Abramović as co-subjects by removing the artist from the cross of ice, or did this act, carried out without her requesting or explicitly approving it, turn her instead into an object? Conversely, were the spectators acting as puppets, as objects of the artist? There are no definite answers to these questions.

The transformation of the subject–object relationship is closely connected to the change in the relationship between materiality and semioticity, signifier and signified. For hermeneutic as well as semiotic aesthetics, every aspect of a work of art is seen as a sign. This does not imply that they overlook the materiality of a work of art. On the contrary, every detail of the material is given closest attention. Yet, everything perceptible about the material is defined and interpreted as a sign: the layers of paint and the specific nuance of color in a painting as much as the

tone, rhyme, and meter in a poem. Thus, every element becomes a signifier to which meanings can be attributed. All aspects of a work of art are incorporated into this signifier-signified relationship, while any number of meanings could be assigned to the same signifier.

Any spectator in Abramović's performance could have carried out the relevant processes of attaching meanings to objects and actions, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned interpretations of a fictive viewer. At the same time, the spectators' physical reactions were a direct result of their perception of Abramović's actions, but not of the possible meanings that those actions might carry. When Abramović cut the star into her skin, the spectators did not hold their breath or feel nauseous because they interpreted this as the inscription of state violence onto the body but because they saw blood flowing and imagined the pain on their own bodies. What the viewers perceived affected them in an immediate, physical way. The materiality of her actions dominated their semiotic attributes. As such, their materiality is not to be seen as a bodily excess, in the sense of an unresolved surplus that could not be worked into the meanings that were attributed to those actions. Rather, the materiality of Abramović's actions preceded all attempts to interpret them beyond their self-referentiality. It did not yield to and dissolve into a sign but evoked a particular effect on its own terms and not as the result of its semiotic status. This very effect – holding one's breath, the feeling of nausea – set the process of reflection in motion for the audience. Rather than addressing the possible meanings that Abramović's actions implied, the spectators wondered why and how they reacted. How do effect and meaning relate in this case?

For one, the shifting relationships between subject/object and materiality/semioticity generated by Abramović's *Lips of Thomas* realigns the interconnection between feeling, thinking, and acting, which will be further explored later on. In all events, the spectators here were admitted not merely as feeling and thinking but also as acting subjects – as actors.

Moreover, these shifts make the traditional distinction between the aesthetics of production, work,[7] and reception as three heuristic categories seem questionable, if not obsolete. There no longer exists a work of art, independent of its creator and recipient; instead, we are dealing with an *event* that involves everybody – albeit to different degrees and in different capacities. If "production" and "reception" occur at the same time and place, this renders the parameters developed for a distinct aesthetics of production, work, and reception ineffectual. At the very least we should reexamine their suitability.

This seems all the more pressing as *Lips of Thomas* was, of course, neither the only nor the first art event to redefine these two relationships. Overall, Western art experienced a ubiquitous performative turn[8] in the early 1960s, which not only made each art form more performative but also led to the creation of a new genre of art, so-called action and performance art. The boundaries between these diverse art forms became increasingly fluid – more and more artists tended to create events instead of works of art, and it was striking how often these were realized as performances.

Visual art took a performative approach early on with action painting and body art, later also with light sculptures, video installations, and so forth. The artists presented themselves in front of an audience through acts of painting, by displaying their decorated bodies, or enacting themselves in another way. Alternatively, the viewer was invited to move around the exhibits and interact with them while other visitors watched. Visiting an exhibition thus often meant participating in a performance. Beyond that, it also gave one the chance to experience the specific atmosphere of the various surrounding spaces.[9]

More particularly, visual artists such as Joseph Beuys, Wolf Vostell, the FLUXUS group, or the Viennese Actionists were at the forefront of this new form of action and performance art. Since the early 1960s, Hermann Nitsch's various actions that involved tearing a lamb to pieces have brought not only the actors but also the other participants into contact with objects otherwise tabooed and provided them with particularly sensual experiences. Time and again, Nitsch's audience has been physically involved in his actions, repeatedly turning the spectators into actors. They were sprayed with blood, faeces, dishwater, and other fluids and were invited to slop about in the gore, disembowel the lamb, eat meat, and drink wine.

The FLUXUS artists also began their actions in the early 1960s. Their third event, held at the Auditorium Maximum of the University of Technology, Aachen, on July 20, 1964,[10] entitled *Actions / Agit Pop / De-collage / Happening / Events / Antiart / L'autrisme / Art total / Refluxus – Festival der neuen Kunst* brought together the FLUXUS artists Eric Andersen, Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Stanley Brouwn, Henning Christiansen, Robert Filliou, Ludwig Gosewitz, Arthur Køpcke, Tomas Schmit, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, and Emmett Williams. In his action, *Kukei, akopee – Nein!, Braunkreuz, Fettecken, Modellfettecken*, Beuys caused a commotion following his majestic gesture of holding a copper staff wrapped in felt horizontally over his head, possibly by spilling hydrochloric acid (the exact circumstances are unclear according to a statement issued by the senior prosecutor in his investigation of 1964–5). The students stormed the stage in response. One of them punched Beuys in the face several times, so that blood streamed from his nose onto his white shirt. Already covered in blood and still bleeding from his nose, Beuys in turn opened a big box of chocolates and threw them into the audience. Surrounded by frenzied shouting and turmoil, Beuys compellingly lifted a crucifix with his left hand, while raising his right hand as if to stop the chaos (Schneede 1994: 42–67). Here, too, the issue lay in negotiating the relationship between the participants; once more, corporeality dominated semioticity.

In music, the performative turn had already set in by the early 1950s with John Cage's events and pieces (Fischer-Lichte 1997: 233–40).[11] Here, audio-events consisted of a variety of actions and sounds – especially those produced by the listeners themselves – while the musician, for example the pianist David Tudor in *4'33"* (1952), did not play a single note. In the 1960s, composers increasingly began to write instructions for the musicians into their scores, specifying movements that would be visible to a concert audience. The performative nature of concerts was

thus increasingly brought into focus. Further evidence can be found in such terms as "scenic music" (Karlheinz Stockhausen), "visual music" (Dieter Schnebel), or "instrumental theatre" (Mauricio Kagel), often coined by composers. These approaches to the concert event posited a new relationship of musicians and listeners (Christa Bruestle 2001: 271–83).

In literature, the performative turn is evident within the genre, for example in "interactive" novels that turn readers into authors by offering a vast array of material to be combined at will (Schmitz-Emans 2002: 179–207). But it also manifests itself in the enormous number of literary readings, attended by audiences that wish to listen to the voice of the poet/writer, such as Guenter Grass's spectacular reading from *The Flounder*, in which he was accompanied by a percussionist (on June 12, 1992, at the Thalia-Theater in Hamburg). However, audiences are not just attracted by readings of living authors; readings from the works of long-dead poets are equally popular. Some prominent examples include Edith Clever's rendering of Heinrich von Kleist's *The Marquise of O* – (1989), Bernhard Minetti's reading of Grimm's fairytales, *Bernhard Minetti Tells Fairytales* (1990), or also the event *Reading Homer*, which the group Angelus Novus put up at Vienna's Kuenstlerhaus in 1986. The members of the group took turns reading the 18,000 verses of the *Iliad* in 22 hours without intermission. Copies of the *Iliad* had been laid out in various rooms, inviting the wandering listener – accompanied by the reading voice – to read themselves. The particular difference between reading literature and listening to it being read – between reading as decoding a text and reading as performance – became evident here. Moreover, the attention of the listeners was directed toward the specific materiality of the respective reading voice with its timbre, volume, and intensity, which stood out unmistakably whenever one reader was replaced by another. Here, literature became emphatically realized as performance, as it came to life through the voices of the physically present readers and seeped into the imaginations of the physically present listeners by appealing to their various senses. The respective voice did not merely function as a medium for the delivery of the text. Precisely because the readers changed, each voice emerged clearly in its peculiarity and influenced the listeners with an immediacy that surpassed the meanings of the words spoken. Furthermore, the time factor shaped the performance. The lengthy period of 22 hours not only modified the participants' perception but also made them aware of this modification. The passage of time was consciously acknowledged as a condition for perception that triggered reflection and, in particular, as a condition for emotional transformations to occur. Participants later related that they felt they changed during the course of the event (Steinweg 1986).

Theatre, too, experienced a performative turn in the 1960s. In particular, it advocated a redefinition of the relationship between actors and spectators. Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience*, directed by Claus Peymann, premiered at the Theater am Turm in Frankfurt during the first "Experimenta" (June 3–10, 1966). It aspired to redefine theatre by redefining the relationship between actor and spectator. Theatre was no longer conceived as a representation of a fictive world,

which the audience, in turn, was expected to observe, interpret, and understand. Something was to occur *between* the actors and the spectators and that constituted theatre. It was crucial that *something* happened between the participants and less important *what* exactly this was. The aim no longer lay in creating a fictive world, within which the channels of communication were limited to the stage, i.e. between dramatic characters, as the basis for the external theatrical communication between actors and audience to take place. The pivotal relationship would be that between the actors and the spectators. The actors shaped and tested this relationship by addressing members of the audience directly and abusing them as "drips," "diddlers," "atheists," "double-dealers," and "switch-hitters" (Handke 1969: 30). They also established specific spatial relations to individual audience members through their movements, by pointing fingers at individual spectators and deliberately turning towards or away from them. The audience, for their part, also responded actively: by clapping, getting up, leaving the room, commenting, clambering onto the stage, quarreling with the actors, and so forth.

All participants seemed to agree that theatre was specifically process-oriented – through the actions of the actors, aimed at creating specific relations with the audience, and through the reactions of audience members, which either endorsed the actors' proposed relationship, modified, or sought to undo it. To negotiate the relationship between stage and auditorium in order to constitute the reality of the theatre was of crucial importance. First and foremost, the actions of the actors and spectators signified only what they accomplished. They were self-referential. By being both self-referential and constitutive of reality, they, along with all the other examples described so far, can be called "performative" in J.L. Austin's sense.[12]

On the opening night, the processes of negotiation occurred concurrently. The spectators took on the roles of actors by attracting the attention of the stage actors and other spectators through their actions and comments. They either refused to further negotiate by leaving the theatre or conceded to the actors by sitting down again as repeatedly requested. On the second night, however, the situation got out of hand when some members of the audience climbed onto the stage to join in the "acting" and refused contrary proposals from the actors and the director. The latter finally broke off the negotiations and tried to enforce his own definition of theatrical relationships by pushing the spectators off the stage (Rischbieter 1966: 8–17).

What had happened here? It was obvious that the director Claus Peymann and the spectators who stormed onto the stage had set out with differing notions about the theatre. Peymann acted in accordance with the assumption that he had staged a literary text that concerned itself with the relationship between actors and spectators. To him, this did not automatically imply the possibility of seriously negotiating the actor/spectator relationship. He had created a "work of art," which was to be presented to the audience. They, in turn, were permitted to express their pleasure or displeasure with his "work" by clapping, jeering, commenting, and so forth. But he denied them the right to physically interfere in his work and to change it through their actions. For Peymann, the spectators' crossing onto the

stage area was an assault on the nature of his staged production. It questioned his authority and authorship. Ultimately, he insisted on a traditional subject–object relationship.

Based on the ostensible consensus that theatre is constituted and defined by the relationship between actors and spectators, the audience, conversely, understood the performance not primarily as a work of art – traditionally assessed on the basis of how successfully one applies theatrical means to a text – but as an event. The audience aimed at a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between actors and spectators, opening the possibility of role reversal. According to them, the performance would only succeed as an event if there was equal participation by the spectators. For them, the performativity proposed by the performance was not to be realized through conventionalized actions such as clapping, jeering, or commenting, but through a genuine structural redefinition and an open-ended result, incorporating the reversal of roles.

While Peymann's intervention sought to save and restore the integrity of his artwork, it led instead to the failure of the performance as an event, at least from the perspective of the spectators that were pushed off the stage. In contrast, American avant-garde theatre, such as Julian Beck's and Judith Malina's Living Theatre (since *The Brig*, 1963) or Richard Schechner's Environmental Theater and his Performance Group (founded in 1967), incorporated audience participation into their program. The audience was not only allowed to participate but explicitly invited to do so. Physical contact with the actors as well as with other spectators was actively encouraged in order to achieve a kind of community ritual, as exemplified in *Paradise Now* (Avignon, 1968) by the Living Theatre and *Dionysus in 69* (New York, 1968) by the Performance Group (Beck 1972; Beck and Malina 1971; Schechner 1973, 1970). The redefined relationship between actors and spectators went hand-in-hand with a shift in the semiotic status of the actions and their respective potential meanings. Favored instead was the experience of physicality by all participants and their responses to it, from physiological, affective, energetic, and motor reactions to the ensuing intense sensual experiences.

The dissolution of boundaries in the arts, repeatedly proclaimed and observed by artists, art critics, scholars of art, and philosophers, can be defined as a performative turn. Be it art, music, literature, or theatre, the creative process tends to be realized in and as performance. Instead of creating works of art, artists increasingly produce events which involve not just themselves but also the observers, listeners, and spectators. Thus, the conditions for art production and reception changed in a crucial aspect. The pivotal point of these processes is no longer the work of art, detached from and independent of its creator and recipient, which arises as an object from the activities of the creator-subject and is entrusted to the perception and interpretation of the recipient-subject. Instead, we are dealing with an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators. Thus the relationship between the material and semiotic status of objects in performance and their use in it has changed. The material status does not merge with the signifier status; rather, the former severs

itself from the latter to claim a life of its own. In effect, objects and actions are no longer dependent on the meanings attributed to them. As events that reveal these special characteristics, artistic performance opens up the possibility for all participants to experience a metamorphosis.

Prevalent aesthetic theories hardly address the performative turn in the arts – even if they can still be applied to it in some respects. However, they are unable to grasp its key aspect – the transformation from a work of art into an event. To understand, analyze, and elucidate this shift requires a whole new set of aesthetic criteria, suited to describe the specific characteristics of performance – an aesthetics of the performative.

Chapter 2

Explaining concepts

Performativity and performance

Performativity

The term "performative" was coined by John L. Austin. He introduced it to language philosophy in his lecture series entitled "How to do things with words," held at Harvard University in 1955. The coinage of this term coincided with the period I have identified as the performative turn in the arts. While Austin initially used the term "performatory," he ultimately decided in favor of "performative," which is "shorter, less ugly, more tractable, and more traditional in formation" (1963: 6). One year later, he wrote an essay entitled "Performative Utterances" in which he elaborated on his choice: "You are more than entitled not to know what the word 'performative' means. It is a new word and an ugly word, and perhaps it does not mean anything very much. But at any rate there is one thing in its favor, it is not a profound word" (1970: 233).

The neologism became necessary because Austin had made a revolutionary discovery in language philosophy: linguistic utterances not only serve to make statements but they also perform actions, thus distinguishing constative from performative utterances. He named this second type of utterance "explicit performatives." When the words "I name this ship the 'Queen Elizabeth'" are uttered while a bottle is smashed against the stern of a ship or when a man speaks the words "I do [take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife]" in the course of a marriage ceremony, these statements do not simply assert a pre-existing circumstance. It is impossible to classify them as true or false. Instead, these utterances create an entirely new social reality: the ship now carries the name *Queen Elizabeth*; Ms. X and Mr. Y are now married to each other. Uttering these sentences effectively changes the world. Performative utterances are self-referential and constitutive in so far as they bring forth the social reality they are referring to. Austin formulated a theory that, while new to language philosophy, had been intuitively known to and practiced by speakers of all languages. Speech entails a transformative power.

The above examples fall under formulaic speech acts but using the correct phrase alone does not make an utterance performative. A number of other, non-linguistic conditions must be satisfied – or else, the utterance will fail. If, for example, the phrase "I now pronounce you man and wife" is not spoken either

by a registrar or a priest or any other explicitly authorized person, then it does not constitute a real marriage. The necessary conditions are not just linguistic but institutional by nature; they are social conditions. A performative utterance always addresses a community, represented by the people present in a given situation – it can therefore be regarded as the performance of a social act. It does not simply validate a marriage but performs it at the same time.

Austin collapsed the binary opposition between constatives and performatives in the course of his lectures. Instead, he suggested a division into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. He demonstrated that speaking always involves acting, which in turn makes it possible for statements to actually succeed or fail and for performative utterances to be true or false (Felman 1983; Kraemer and Stahlhut 2001: 35–64). Austin's strategy of collapsing the initial distinction between performatives and constatives led Sybille Kraemer to argue for "the susceptibility of all criteria and the exposure of all definitive terms to the uncertainties, the imponderability, and ambiguity connected with real life" (2001: 45). That is to say, Austin drew attention to the performative act as the vehicle for the dynamics "that destabilize the dichotomous terminological scheme as a whole" (Kraemer and Stahlhut 2001: 56).

This aspect is of particular importance for developing an aesthetics of the performative. As the introductory examples from theatre and performance and action art revealed, dichotomous pairs such as subject/object and signifier/signified lose their polarity and clear definition in performance; once set in motion they begin to oscillate. Despite Austin's deliberate abandonment of the constative-performative distinction, he nonetheless reaffirmed his definition of ("explicit") performatives as speech acts that are self-referential and constitute reality. As such, they can succeed or fail because of their particular institutional and social conditions (however, his extensive and detailed "doctrine of Infelicities" suggests that Austin was far more interested in their failure). Another characteristic of the performative lies in its ability to destabilize and even collapse binary oppositions.

Austin applied the term "performative" solely to speech acts but his definition does not rule out the possibility of relating it to physical actions such as those performed in *Lips of Thomas*. In fact, such an interpretation almost imposes itself on us because Abramović performed self-referential acts that constituted reality (which all actions finally do), thus transforming artist and spectators. But how do we measure success and failure in this case? Evidently, the artist really did consume too much honey and wine and injured herself with the razor blade and whip. The spectators, in turn, did put an end to Abramović's performance by removing her from the cross of ice. Did the performance succeed or fail? What are the necessary institutional conditions to assess the "success" or "failure" of this performance?

As an "artistic" performance, *Lips of Thomas* primarily referenced the conditions established by the institutions of art[1] (Buerger and Buerger1992). The performance space provided a frame of reference for the participants; in this case, the art gallery explicitly situated her actions within the institutions of art. But what follows from

this? What exactly were the conditions laid down by the institutions of art at the beginning of the 1970s – a period that fundamentally redefined and restructured these institutions both from the margins and the center? Unlike the institutional conditions of a marriage ceremony or baptism, the institutions of art simply do not provide any definitive criteria for reaching a confident verdict on the success or failure of a performance shaped by audience intervention.

Moreover, the performance was not framed by the parameters of art alone; it also exhibited elements of ritual as well as spectacle. This raises the question whether and to what extent the genres "ritual" and "spectacle" are transformed into an artistic performance. It remains to be explored to what extent these genres collide with each other and with the overarching framework given by the arts, and how they determine the success or failure of a performance (Bateson 1972: 177–93; Goffman 1974).

Evidently, Austin's list of prerequisites for a performative utterance to succeed[2] cannot simply be applied to an aesthetics of the performative. As Abramović's *Lips of Thomas* demonstrated, the very circumstance that the various frameworks interacted and collided also constituted an important aspect of the performance's aesthetic, especially with regard to the transformation of the participants. Who could claim the authority to ascertain whether a performance had succeeded or failed? At least in this context, the question of success or failure does not apply; evidently, the term "performative" requires further modification within an aesthetics of the performative.

While the term "performative" has lost some of its appeal within its original discipline of language philosophy – specifically since speech act theory popularized the notion of "speaking as acting" – it experienced a second heyday in cultural studies and cultural theory of the 1990s. Until the late 1980s, the notion of "culture as text" dominated cultural studies. Specific cultural phenomena as well as entire cultures were conceived as structured webs of signs waiting to be deciphered. Numerous attempts to describe and interpret culture were launched and designated as "readings." This notion specified the decoding and interpretation of texts as the central activity of cultural studies. Texts, preferably in foreign, nearly inscrutable, languages, were decoded and translated while other established texts were reread for their subtexts and thereby deconstructed in the act of interpretation.

In the 1990s, a shift in focus occurred, favoring the – hitherto largely ignored – performative traits of culture. Cultural studies increasingly employed this independent (practical) frame of reference for the analysis of existing or potential realities and acknowledged the specific "realness" of cultural activities and events, which lay beyond the grasp of traditional text models. This gave rise to the notion of "culture as performance" (Conquergood 1991: 179–94). Simultaneously, the term "performative" was given a theoretical reconsideration in order to accommodate explicitly bodily acts.

Without referring directly to Austin, Judith Butler introduced the term "performative" to cultural philosophy in her essay of 1988 entitled "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"

(1990: 270–82). Butler argues that gender identity – like all forms of identity – is not based on pre-existing (e.g. ontological or biological) categories but brought forth by the continuous constitution of bodily acts: "In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various speech acts proceed; rather, it is … an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (270). Butler labels these acts "performative," "where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential'" (273). While at first this definition seems to differ considerably from Austin's, the differences are actually minimal since they largely depend on Butler's reapplication of the term to bodily rather than speech acts.

Performative acts (as bodily acts) are "non-referential" because they do not refer to pre-existing conditions, such as an inner essence, substance, or being supposedly expressed in these acts; no fixed, stable identity exists that they could express. Expressivity thus stands in an oppositional relation to performativity. Bodily, performative acts do not express a pre-existing identity but engender identity through these very acts. Moreover, the term "dramatic" refers to this process of generating identities: "By dramatic I mean … that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body …" (272). The specific materiality of the body emerges out of the repetition of certain gestures and movements; these acts generate the body as individually, sexually, ethnically, and culturally marked. Performative acts thus are of crucial importance in constituting bodily as well as social identity. In so far, Butler's definition corresponds to Austin's "performative" as being "self-referential" and "constituting reality."

Yet, the shift from speech acts to bodily acts implies consequences that mark a crucial difference between Austin's and Butler's respective definitions. While Austin emphasized the criteria of success/failure and subsequently inquired after the functional conditions for success (posing a fundamental problem for us with regard to Abramović's performance), Butler investigates the phenomenal conditions for embodiment. She cites Merleau-Ponty, who does not regard the body merely as a historical idea but as a repertoire of infinite possibilities, that is as "an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities" (272). Butler stresses the performative constitution of identity that occurs in the process of embodiment, defining the latter as "a manner of doing, dramatizing and reproducing an *historical* situation" (272). The stylized repetition of performative acts embodies certain cultural and historical possibilities. Performative acts, in turn, generate the culturally and historically marked body as well as its identity.

Nonetheless, individuals alone do not control the conditions for the processes of embodiment; they are not free to choose what possibilities to embody, or which identity to adopt. Neither are they wholly determined by society. While society might attempt to enforce the embodiment of certain possibilities by punishing deviation, it cannot generally prevent individuals from pursuing them. Evidently, Butler's concept of performative acts reaffirms their capacity to collapse dichotomies, already recognized by Austin. On the one hand, society violates

the individual bodies by imposing performative acts that constitute gender and identity. On the other hand, performative acts offer the possibility for individuals to embody themselves, even if this means deviating from dominant norms and provoking social sanctions.

Butler likens the conditions for embodiment to those of theatrical performance. In both cases, the acts that generate and perform gender roles are "clearly not one's act alone." They constitute a "shared experience" and "collective action" because they have always already begun before "one arrived on the scene." Consequently, the repetition of an act comprises a "reenactment" and a "reexperiencing" based on a repertoire of meanings already socially instituted. Cultural codes neither inscribe themselves onto a passive body nor do the embodied selves precede cultural conventions that give meaning to the body. In a theatrical performance, a text can be staged in various ways, and the actors may interpret and realize their roles within its textual framework. Similarly, the gendered body acts within a bodily space, restricted by certain demands. It enacts its individual interpretations within the limits of the given "stage directions." The conditions for embodiment thus coincide with the conditions of performance.[3]

As formulated in this early essay,[4] Butler's theory of performative acts sets its focus on bodily performative acts and processes of embodiment, thus complementing Austin's theory of the success or failure of speech acts. However, a cursory review of Abramović's performance shows that Butler's definition requires further modification with regard to an aesthetics of the performative.

The notion of the body as an embodiment of certain historical possibilities can indeed – and very productively – be applied to Abramović's use of her body. In the course of her performance, Abramović embodied various historical possibilities, which were relevant not only at the time of the performance but were for the large part already established as such in her time. The flagellation scene, for example, oscillated between historical (flagellation practiced by nuns) and contemporary (punitive and torture procedures or sadomasochistic sex practices) possibilities. Abramović's actions also did not restage a historical pattern through mere repetition. Instead, she modified it significantly: she did not suffer the violence, the pain, and the ordeals she inflicted on herself passively. On the contrary – she remained the active perpetrator at all times. Moreover, we are not dealing with the repetition of performative acts that is central to Butler's argument since every act occurred only once in the course of Abramović's performance. The processes of embodiment enacted in *Lips of Thomas* as well as in all other types of performance – theatrical and non-theatrical – require additional definitions, as does Butler's notion of "performative," especially because we are dealing with aesthetic and therefore "displaced" reenactments here. Butler only refers to practices of everyday life and hardly to strictly aesthetic processes.

By setting up the conditions for embodiment as the conditions for performance, Butler emphasizes another interesting parallel between her and Austin's theory (once more without referring to Austin). Both see the accomplishment of performative acts as ritualized, public performances. The close relationship between performativity

and performance seems obvious and self-explanatory to them. Performativity results in performances or manifests itself in the performative nature of acts, as was already apparent in the performative turn in the arts. As a result, traditional art forms tended to realize themselves as performances and new art forms such as performance and action art were created, which in their terminology already explicitly referred to their performative nature. It follows that both Austin and Butler seemingly view performance as the epitome of the performative, even if neither of them further elucidates the notion of performance.

Yet it seems plausible, almost self-explanatory, to root an aesthetics of the performative in the concept of performance. This would add a new aesthetic theory of performance to existing theories of performativity. Since the 1960s and 1970s, numerous theories of performance have been developed in the social sciences, especially in cultural anthropology and sociology. In fact, their popularity grew to such an extent that today performance is seen as "an essentially contested concept" (Carlson 1996: 1). In the arts and social sciences, "performance" has already become an umbrella term, deplored by Dell Hymes as early as 1975: "If some grammarians have confused matters, by lumping what does not interest them under 'performance,' … cultural anthropologists and folklorists have not done much to clarify the situation. We have tended to lump what *does* interest us under 'performance'" (13). Since then the situation has deteriorated further still.[5]

Instead of appealing to different approaches to performance, ranging from sociology and cultural anthropology to cultural studies more generally, it would make more sense for an aesthetics of the performative to refer to the first (to my knowledge) attempts to theorize performance, dating back to the first two decades of the twentieth century. These attempts aimed at establishing a new discipline of art: theatre studies.[6]

Performance

The establishment of theatre studies as an independent academic discipline in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century and its popularization as an essential addition to the academic discourse of the arts represented a break with prevalent notions of theatre.[7] Since the eighteenth century, dramatic literature had become central to the concept of theatre in Germany; it was not just to serve as a moral institution but to be realized as a "textual" art. By the end of the nineteenth century, the artistic value of theatre seemed to be almost exclusively determined, even legitimized, by its reference to dramatic works, i.e. literary texts. Yet, as early as 1798, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe suggested that theatre as an art form ought to be judged on the basis of performance, as he lays out in his essay entitled "On truth and probability in works of art;" Richard Wagner elaborated on this idea in *The Artwork of the Future* (1849). Nevertheless, the majority of their nineteenth-century contemporaries based their assessments of a performance's artistic value on the staged text. As late as 1918, the theatre critic Alfred Klaar

polemicized about the budding discipline theatre studies: "The stage can only attain its full value if literature contributes its content" (1918).

Accordingly, theatre was regarded as the object of literary studies. Max Herrmann, founder of theatre studies in Berlin and a specialist in medieval and early modern German literature, turned to advocate the centrality of the performance itself. He urged for the establishment of a new discipline in the arts – theatre studies – arguing that performance, not literature, constituted theatre: "… it is the performance that matters …" (1914: 118). He considered the mere privileging of performance over text insufficient and proclaimed instead a fundamental polarity between the two that precluded a harmonious union: "I am convinced that … theatre and drama … are originally oppositional, … the symptoms of this opposition consistently reveal themselves: drama is the textual creation of an individual, theatre is the achievement of the audience and its servants" (1918 – in response to Alfred Klaar). Since existing disciplines dealt exclusively with texts and ignored performances as objects of study, theatre required the establishment of a new discipline. Hence, theatre studies was founded in Germany as the discipline devoted to performance.

Notably, the reversal of text and performance implemented by Herrmann in order to establish the new discipline of theatre as performance was not the only such development at the turn of the last century. Ritual studies emerged around the same time as an academic discipline. While the nineteenth century maintained a clear hierarchy of myth over ritual – whereby ritual merely illustrated, "performed," myth – this relationship was now reversed. In his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889), William Robertson Smith proposed that myths merely served the interpretation of rituals; ritual, not myth, deserved primary attention:

> So far as myths consist of explanations of ritual their value is altogether secondary, and it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable, the ritual was obligatory and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshipper.
>
> (1889: 19)

In consequence, religious studies shifted its focus toward rituals: they were hailed as the underlying principle of religion – practice superseded doctrinal teachings. In turn, the predominance of religious texts, prevalent in Protestant cultures, came under attack. In his research, Smith focused on sacrificial rituals, such as a camel sacrifice customary among Arab tribes described by the fourth century B.C. writer Nilus, or Jewish sacrificial rituals from the Old Testament. He interpreted the camel sacrifice as an ancient totemic practice and proposed it to be a "merry sacrificial feast" (239). The performance of the sacrifice by the community, the common consumption of the meat and blood of the sacrificial animal – a deity, as Smith presumed in accordance with totemic practices – permanently tied

all participants into "a bond of union" (252, 295). The feast evoked a sense of community and, as ritual, was able to produce a political community. Once more, the performative acts were pivotal for the ritual in order to bring forth what they performed: the social reality of a community.

Smith's theory of sacrificial rituals proved extremely influential not only in religious studies but also in cultural anthropology, sociology, and the classics. In the foreword to the first edition of *The Golden Bough* (1890), the anthropologist James George Frazer attributed the central idea of his book – the conception of a slain and resurrected god – to William Robertson Smith. The sociologist Emile Durkheim also felt indebted to Smith, acknowledging that his *Lectures* single-handedly convinced him of the central role of religion in social life.[8]

The arguments for the establishment of both ritual and theatre studies were similar in kind. Both cases advocated the reversal of hierarchical positions: from myth to ritual and from the literary text to the theatre performance. In other words, both ritual and theatre studies repudiated the privileged status of texts in favor of performances. It could thus be said that the first performative turn in twentieth-century European culture did not have its place in the performance culture of the 1960s and 1970s but occurred much earlier with the establishment of ritual and theatre studies at the turn of the last century.[9]

Jane Ellen Harrison, head of the so-called Cambridge Ritualists, a group of classical scholars, even went so far as to draw a direct, genealogical connection between ritual and theatre, emphasizing the pre-eminence of performance over text. In her extensive study entitled *Themis: A Study of the Social Origin of Greek Religion* (1912), she developed a theory of Greek theatre as originating out of ritual. Harrison based her arguments on a ritual dedicated to the spring daemon (*eniautos daemon*), which she saw as the precursor to the Dionysian ritual. Harrison strove to prove that the dithyramb – according to Aristotle, the origin of tragedy – was nothing but the song for the *eniautos daemon* and a fundamental component of the *eniautos daemon* ritual. Gilbert Murray contributed to Harrison's study with his "Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy" in which he discussed numerous tragedies, including Euripides' *The Bacchae*. It is noteworthy that of all the late tragedian's plays, Murray chose his last one to prove his theory. He argued that the elements of *Agon*, *Pathos*, *Messenger*, *Threnos*, and *Theophany* (epiphany), already attributed to the *eniautos daemon* ritual by Harrison, continued to play similar roles in the tragedies (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 30–45).

Harrison's theory fundamentally challenged contemporary beliefs about Greek culture as primarily textual and thus paradigmatic for modern cultural values. The much admired texts of Greek tragedy and comedy suddenly deflated into belated results of ritual actions, originally performed to celebrate a seasonal god. Theatre as well as text developed out of ritual; furthermore, text was written in order to be performed.

While Harrison's theories today are studied largely for their historical value, they still offer significant insights into the performative turn of culture, as a result of which the concept of performance gained central importance and demanded

careful theoretical reconsideration. Max Herrmann was one of the pioneers to undertake a detailed theorization of performance in his various writings between 1910 and 1930.

At the heart of his deliberations lies the relationship between actors and spectators:

> [The] original meaning of theatre refers to its conception as social play – played by all for all. A game in which everyone is a player – actors and spectators alike … The spectators are involved as co-players. In this sense the audience is the creator of the theatre. So many different participants constitute the theatrical event that its social nature cannot be lost. Theatre always produces a social community.
>
> (1981: 19)

The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators enables and constitutes performance. For a performance to occur, actors and spectators must assemble to interact in a specific place for a certain period of time. By describing it as "play by all for all," Herrmann is fundamentally redefining the relationship between actors and spectators. The latter no longer represent distanced or empathetic observers and interpreters of the actors' actions onstage; nor do they act as intellectual decoders of messages conveyed by the actions of the actors. Herrmann's theory also does not imply a subject–object relationship in which spectators turn actors into objects of their observation, while the actors (as subjects) cease to confront the audience (as objects) with non-negotiable messages. Instead, their bodily co-presence creates a relationship between co-subjects. Through their physical presence, perception, and response, the spectators become co-actors that generate the performance by participating in the "play." The rules that govern the performance correspond to the rules of a game, negotiated by all participants – actors and spectators alike; they are followed and broken by all in equal measure. The concept of performance proposed here and elaborated in the following by no means suggests an essentialist definition. Rather, it describes the underlying factors that, in my view, must be given when applying the term performance. This does not preclude the possibility of applying other definitions of the concept in other contexts.

Herrmann certainly did not reach his insights into the particular *mediality* of theatre solely on the basis of theoretical or historical deliberations. Contemporary theatre performances contributed their share. Max Reinhardt, in particular, pushed for new spatial compositions in his productions that forced the audience out of their occluded position in the proscenium theatre and enabled them to realize new ways of interacting with the actors. In *Sumurun* (1910), Reinhardt set up a *hanamichi*, a broad runway conventionally used in Japanese *Kabuki* theatre, across the auditorium of the *Kammerspiele* at the Deutsches Theater Berlin. Thus, all events occurred amidst the spectators. Both the stage area and the *hanamichi* were used by the actors simultaneously. In fact, they seemed to enter the *hanamichi*

precisely "at some vital point in each scene," as one theatre reviewer chidingly remarked at a New York City guest performance.[10] Inevitably, the audience was distracted from the events onstage by the actors that entered onto the *hanamichi*. Alternatively, those who fixedly watched the happenings onstage missed the appearances on the *hanamichi*. By being forced to independently prioritize their sensorial impressions, the spectators actively joined in creating the performance. The game of performance was played according to rules set up between actors and spectators – they were open to negotiation (Fischer-Lichte 1997: 61–72).

Reinhardt's productions of *King Oedipus* (1910) and the *Oresteia* (1911) at the Circus Schumann in Berlin exemplified the new-found negotiability, as the chorus repeatedly moved through the audience and actors emerged from behind and among the spectators. As the theatre critic Siegfried Jacobsohn noted: "… the heads of the spectators [could hardly] be distinguished from those of the extras who were actually standing amidst the audience" (1912: 51). Alfred Klaar, one of the defendants of the literary text against Herrmann's prioritization of the performance, complained that in Reinhardt's *Oresteia*

> the distribution of the acting onto the space in front of, beneath, behind, and among us; the never-ending demand to shift our points of view; the actors flooding into the auditorium with their fluttering costumes, wigs, and make-up, jostling against our bodies; the dialogues held across great distances; the sudden shouts from all corners of the theatre, which startle and misguide us – all this is confusing: It does not reinforce the illusion but destroys it.
>
> (1911)

It was evidently impossible for the spectators to maintain their traditional position of distanced or empathetic observers. Each audience member was forced to reposition themselves with regard to the actors and other spectators. The performance literally occurred *between* the actors and spectators, and even between the spectators themselves (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 46–68). In order to reenergize the relationship between actors and spectators, Reinhardt repeatedly questioned the given medial conditions of the theatre by reinterpreting the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators.

In accordance with his definition of performance as an *event* between actors and spectators – that is, not fixed or transferable but ephemeral and transient – Herrmann neither took the dramatic texts nor the set and props into consideration in the process of his analysis. Although he attributed artistic value to some set designs, he strongly argued against naturalistic and expressionistic backdrops, judging them "a fundamental mistake of great significance" (1930: 152). To him, these aspects did not contribute to the concept of performance. Instead, the actors' moving bodies constituted the unique, fleeting materiality of the performance: "Acting is the principal factor of theatre …" Acting alone was responsible for creating "the only true and pure work of art that theatre is capable of producing" (152). Herrmann shifted the focus away from the fictive characters in their fictive

world, brought forth by the acting, towards the "real body" and to "real space" (152). He did not regard the body on stage as a mere carrier of meaning – a popular notion since the eighteenth century – but foregrounded the specific materiality of bodies and space, which sets in motion the performance in the first place.

Max Reinhardt's approach to theatre equally foregrounded the specific materiality of performance. His innovative theatre spaces, such as the *hanamichi* or the arena of the Circus Schumann, were not meant to reveal fictive places in a new light. As "real" spaces, they offered new possibilities for the actors to enter, move, and act so as to stimulate unusual perceptual experiences in the audience.

Reinhardt took a similar approach in his productions with regard to the acting. In their reviews of his *Electra* production (adapted from Sophocles by Hugo von Hofmannsthal at the Kleines Theater Berlin in 1903) as well as of his *King Oedipus* and *Oresteia*, critics deplored the unabashed use of the actors' bodies that accentuated their physicality, distracting the audience from the fictional characters they were meant to portray. Particularly Gertrud Eysoldt, in her role as Electra, was criticized for flaunting her body immoderately and with tremendous intensity on stage. To the critics, Eysoldt violated the norms of performing Greek tragedies by lacking "force," "dignity," and a "sonorous tone." In their place they found "nervosity," "unrestrained passion," and "raucous shouting" (Engel 1903). Eysoldt transgressed from the accepted "healthy" ideal and ventured into the domain of the "unnatural" and "pathological." Many critics disapproved of the "shouting and fidgeting, the exaggerated sense of horror, distortion and intemperance at every turn" (Nordhausen n.d.) and the "passion ending only in absurdity," a sure indicator of "pathological conditions" (H.E. 1903). They rejected Eysoldt's "immoderate" and "uncontrolled" movements which did not serve to illustrate the text but evidently referred back to the body of the actress. They deemed her transgressive exploration of "pathology" "unbearable" (Goldmann n.d.) because it dissolved not merely the limits of her dramatic character but, more importantly, of Eysoldt's self (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 1–14).

Many reviewers also criticized Reinhardt's productions of *King Oedipus* and the *Oresteia* for the manner in which the actors drew the audience's attention to the particularities of their bodies. Most of all, this applied to the extras, the "naked torchbearers," who "shot through the orchestra bearing their torches and ran up the steps of the palace and down again like madmen" (Siegfried Jacobsohn, writing about *King Oedipus*, dismissed them as absurd and pointless). Alfred Klaar mocked them in his review of the *Oresteia*. He deplored the "peculiar twisting of bodies and the copious play of limbs, which yesterday's production dreamed up into Aeschylus' text," and scoffed that "the half-naked torchbearers at least did their part when, for once, they bent to the ground and offered a sight worthy of a gymnastic show" (1911).[11]

However, such criticism extended to the performance of the protagonists. Jacobsohn complained about the "nerve-racking mass entertainment of spectators who grew up with bull fights" (1912: 49). He described the following scene as a horrifying example:

> When Orestes wants to slay his mother, it is more than enough for him to rush through the door of the palace after her, restrain her by the door and push her back into the palace after the battle of words. In this production, he chases her down the steps into the arena, where he engages her in a scuffle and then drags her up the steps again much too slowly. It is dreadful.
>
> (Jacobsohn 1912: 49)

All of the above examples produced the similar result of drawing the audience's attention to the multiple ways in which the actors were using their "real" bodies. These bodies were not seen as carriers of meaning tied to specific dramatic characters. They imposed themselves on the audience with their open sensuality – condemning the productions to failure from the standpoint of the critics but greatly enhancing their success for the remaining spectators.

Max Herrmann equaled Max Reinhardt's radical approach to theatre practice in his theorization of the theatre. He moved away from the body as a carrier of signs to embrace the "real" body. We can assume that, much as Judith Butler, Herrmann saw expressivity and performativity as mutually exclusive opposites. His notion of performance appears to have supported this view. Herrmann based his definition of performance on the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and their physical actions. This dynamic and ultimately wholly unpredictable process precludes the expression and transmission of predetermined meanings; the performance itself generates its meanings. Yet, Herrmann did not make this claim explicit. His definition of performance neglected the specific semioticity that would generate meaning.

By defining performance as "festival" and "play," based on a fleeting and dynamic process and not an artifact, Herrmann excluded the notion of a "work of art" from performance. If he spoke of accomplished acting as the "true" and "purest work of art that theatre is capable of producing," this is part of his argument to recognize theatre as an independent art form. The prevalent notion of art in his time necessitated such a reference to a fixed work of art. From today's vantage point, however, Herrmann's definition of "performance" circumvents the concept of a work of art. The performance is regarded as art not because it enjoys the status of an artwork but because it takes place as an event. Herrmann's conception of a performance presupposed a unique, unrepeatable constellation which can only be determined and controlled to a limited degree. The created event remains unique as is inevitable when actors and spectators are confronted with each other in their various tempers, moods, desires, expectations, and intellects. Herrmann was first and foremost interested in the activities and dynamic processes that these two parties engaged in.

To Herrmann, the "creative" activity of the audience resulted from a "secret empathy, a shadowy reconstruction of the actors' performance, which is experienced not so much visually as through *physical sensations* [author's emphasis]. It is a secret urge to perform the same actions, to reproduce the same tone of voice in the throat" (1930: 153). Herrmann highlights that "the most important

theatrical factor" for perceiving a performance aesthetically is "to experience real bodies and real space" (153). The audience's physical participation is set in motion through synaesthetic perception, shaped not only by sight and sound but by physical sensations of the entire body.

The audience responds not only to the actors' physical actions but also to the behavior of the other spectators. Herrmann explained that "every audience includes people who are incapable of empathically experiencing the actors' performance and who then, by emotionally infecting the audience as a whole (otherwise a welcome phenomenon) curb the enthusiasm of the other spectators" (153).[12] The metaphor of "infection" highlights that the aesthetic experience of a performance does not depend on the "work of art" but on the interaction of the participants. What emerges from the interaction is given priority over any possible creation of meaning. The mere act of suddenly cutting into her own skin with a razor blade weighed heavier than the fact that Abramović cut a five-pointed, symbolically loaded star into her skin. What matters is the fact *that* something occurs and *that what* occurs affects, if to varying degrees and in different ways, everyone involved. It remains unresolved, however, whether Herrmann intended his formulations "[inner] empathy," "experiencing the performance," and "emotional infection" to indicate an actual transformation of the audience through the performance.

At the heart of Herrmann's notion of performance lies the shift from theatre as a work of art to theatre as an event. Hermeneutic aesthetics as well as the heuristic distinction between the aesthetics of production, work, and reception are incompatible with his understanding of performance. The specific *aestheticity* of performance lies in its very nature as an event.

As I have reconstructed Herrmann's concept of performance from his own and his students' writings,[13] it indeed broadens the idea of the "performative" *avant la lettre*, at least in terms of Austin's and Butler's later definitions. Herrmann is consistent with their respective definitions insofar as he does not consider performance to be a representation or an expression of something previously given. Performance describes a genuine act of creation: the very process of performing involves all participants and thus generates the performance in its specific materiality. Herrmann's notion of performance stretches beyond that of Austin and Butler insofar as he explicitly focuses on the shifting relationships between subject/object and materiality/semioticity achieved through performance. But he falls short of them by ignoring the problem of meaning generated in the course of a performance. On the whole, his concept of performance is particularly interesting for our discussion of aesthetic processes because his theory abandons the notion of an artwork for that of an event, even though he does not explicitly engage with the possible effects of such a move. Through the preceding analysis, we have established the possibility of developing an aesthetics of the performative out of the notion of performance.

Since the performative turn of 1960s demands the development of such a theory, I will first explore how the arts themselves modified the concept of performance and performativity. Such an approach lends itself, given that the topic of this book

is concerned primarily with a study of the arts and aesthetics. I will not engage in a discussion of different aesthetic theories that are in turn explained, modified, or contradicted with recourse to current trends in the arts. Instead, I will take the state of the arts as the starting point from which to probe varying theoretical approaches.

Reconstructing Herrmann's notion of performance revealed that, for heuristic purposes, it may be productive to investigate mediality, materiality, semioticity, and aestheticity separately, albeit keeping in mind that they are intrinsically interlinked through the performance event. The following four chapters will explore how performances since the 1960s have dealt with each of these categories. Special attention will be paid to theatre performances and to action and performance art. Theatre remains essential because Herrmann developed his concept of performance by analyzing theatrical events; action and performance art, in turn, completed the shift in the fine arts from producing works of art to creating performances.

Chapter 3

Shared bodies, shared spaces

The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators

Max Herrmann demonstrated that the specific mediality of performance consists of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators. Performance, then, requires two groups of people, one acting and the other observing, to gather at the same time and place for a given period of shared lifetime. Their encounter – interactive and confrontational – produces the event of the performance. To use traditional terminology: performance must satisfy specific conditions of "production" and "reception." The actors act, that is, they move through space, gesture, change their expression, manipulate objects, speak, or sing. The spectators perceive their actions and respond to them. Although some of these reactions might be limited to internal processes, their perceptible responses are equally significant: the spectators laugh, cheer, sigh, groan, sob, cry, scuff their feet, or hold their breath; they yawn, fall asleep, and begin to snore; they cough and sneeze, eat and drink, crumple wrapping paper, whisper, or shout comments, call "bravo" and "encore," applaud, jeer and boo, get up, leave the theatre, and bang the door on their way out.

Both the other spectators as well as the actors perceive and, in turn, respond to these reactions. The action on stage thus gains or loses intensity; the actors' voices get louder and unpleasant or, alternatively, more seductive; they feel animated to invent gags, to improvise, or get distracted and miss a cue; they step closer to the lights to address the audience directly or ask them to calm down, or even to leave the theatre. The other spectators might react to their fellow spectators' responses by increasing or decreasing the extent of their participation, interest, or suspense. Their laughter grows louder, even convulsive, or is suppressed suddenly. They begin to address, argue, or insult each other. In short, whatever the actors do elicits a response from the spectators, which impacts on the entire performance. In this sense, performances are generated and determined by a self-referential and ever-changing feedback loop. Hence, performance remains unpredictable and spontaneous to a certain degree.

By the end of the eighteenth century, this uncertainty was seen as theatre's inherent flaw, a nuisance which had to be eliminated at all cost. To this end, a variety of strategies were developed and tested. Apart from favoring textuality, the theatre of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries strove to discipline its audiences. Theatre laws were passed, prohibiting disruptive and unfortunately often infectious "misbehavior." The authorities tried to discourage eating, drinking, latecomers,

and talking during the performance by imposing penalties. The invention of gas lighting eliminated the biggest source of trouble: the visibility of the spectators to the actors and, particularly, to each other. From the 1840s onwards, Charles Kean experimented with the increased darkening of the auditorium. Then, Richard Wagner immersed the audience in complete darkness during the 1876 Festival at Bayreuth. These measures aimed at interrupting the feedback loop. Visible and audible – i.e. potentially distracting – audience reactions were to be channeled into "interior" responses that would be sensed intuitively by others but remained without outward expression. The audience was expected to show "empathy." The philosopher Friedrich Theodor Vischer was among those who actively propagated empathy, defining it as "lending one's soul" (Vischer 1874: 435).[1] And yet, theatre scandals such as the opening night of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise* (October 20, 1889) at the Freie Buehne Berlin,[2] suggest that these strategies were only partially crowned with success.

A fundamental change in strategy occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century when the theatre director moved into the limelight. The central paradigm no longer prescribed the elimination of all perceptible reactions by the spectators but carefully employed staging strategies to stir the audience into controlled and guided responses. The director's sphere of influence grew so far as to include the audience; the feedback loop was to be organized and controlled. Sergei M. Eisenstein succinctly articulated this ambition on the occasion of his production of Ostrovsky's *Even a Wise Man Stumbles* (1922/3). In his essay entitled "Montage of Attractions" (1923), he noted that the "basic materials of the theatre" are the spectators; he also defined the role of the performance as "guiding … the spectator in a desired direction (or a desired mood)" (Eisenstein 1977: 181). Similar staging strategies recurred in the 1920s, particularly in Soviet and German theatre, and the 1930s, for example in the National Socialist *Thingspiele*. Much before that, at the turn of the last century, Max Reinhardt had already employed such strategies, followed by the Italian Futurists.[3] Reinhardt's use of the *hanamichi* and arena as well as his emphasis on the individual corporeality of his actors suggest an attempt to introduce spectators to new modes of perception, thus stimulating perceptible responses from the audience. However, as one review of Erwin Piscator's *Hoppla, We're Alive!* (1927) suggests, not all productions succeeded in this respect: "Time alone will tell whether or not such performances impose too big a physical strain on the spectator" (Jacobs 1927 cited in Ruehle 1988: 794).

Contingency became a central aspect of performance with the performative turn of the 1960s. The pivotal role of the audience was not only acknowledged as a pre-condition for performance but explicitly invoked as such. The feedback loop as a self-referential, autopoietic system[4] enabling a fundamentally open, unpredictable process emerged as the defining principle of theatrical work. A shift in focus occurred from potentially controlling the system to inducing the specific modes of autopoiesis. Given this shift, it needs to be investigated how actors and spectators influence each other in performance; what the underlying conditions of this interaction might be; what factors determine the feedback loop's course

and outcome; and whether this process is primarily social rather than aesthetic in nature.

Performances since the 1960s have not only addressed these issues; they have increasingly been constructed as experiments that seek to offer answers. Today, performance is no longer seen as the mysterious locus for an inexplicable encounter between actors and spectators. Rather, performance provides the opportunity to explore the specific function, condition, and course of this interaction. The job of the director lies in developing relevant staging strategies which can establish appropriate conditions for this experiment. These preconditions aim at making the functioning of the feedback loop visible by foregrounding certain factors and variables, whilst minimizing, if not fully eliminating, others.

Yet, evaluating the outcome of these theatrical experiments proves difficult. The processes of negotiation vary, at times significantly, in each individual performance of a given production, making it impossible to draw even approximating conclusions from them. It cannot be clearly established whether a performance actually constitutes an experiment testing the autopoietic system or a play with its diverse variables and parameters. In either case, the playful nature of the experiment and the experimental nature of play reinforce each other.

The staging strategies or game instructions devised for such experiments consistently play with three closely related processes: first, the *role reversal* of actors and spectators; second, the *creation of a community* between them; and third, the creation of various modes of mutual, physical *contact* that help explore the interplay between proximity and distance, public and private, or visual and tactile contact. Despite the large diversity of these strategies (within a production, in the productions of one director, in the productions of various directors), they all have one feature in common: they do not – if at all – simply depict role reversal, the creation and collapse of communities, proximity and distance. Instead, they actually create instances of these processes. The spectators do not merely witness these situations; as participants in the performance they are made to physically experience them.

The reversal of roles

My introductory remarks on Abramović's *Lips of Thomas* established the reversal of roles as a process that transforms the conventional subject–object relationship (conventional for theatre and, even more so, for the visual arts) into a scintillating, ever-elusive negotiation. It therefore is essential to ask whether role reversal establishes a community of co-subjects or merely recreates the old relationship in a new guise.

This question arises in most cases of role reversal and audience participation; the answer remains as yet unclear. At the same time, the question is valued differently according to the emphasis given to the subject–object relationship in each performance. Role reversal is particularly pertinent to the analysis of the

autopoietic feedback loop between actors and spectators because it spurs the dynamic and multiple shifts in the subject–object relationship.

Richard Schechner and the Performance Group experimented with different forms of audience participation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on different aspects of the negotiation between actors and spectators in each production. Their first one, *Dionysus in 69* (1968, adapted from Euripides' *The Bacchae*), strove to establish a democratic relationship between all participants as co-subjects. Schechner identified two conditions for the role reversal of spectators and actors:

> First, participation occurred at those points where the play stopped being a play and became a social event – when spectators felt that they were free to enter the performance as equals … the second point is that most of the participation in *Dionysus* was according to the democratic model: letting people into the play to do as the performers were doing, to 'join the story.'
>
> (Schechner 1973: 44)

Audience participation began as soon as the spectators entered the theatre. Schechner had devised a special opening ceremony for them based on the initiation rites described by Arnold van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* (1909). The audience was invited to participate in the Dionysian Birth Ritual, Pentheus' Death Ritual, and the Ecstasy Dance: "Together we make a community. We can celebrate together. Be joyous together … So join us in what we do next. It's a circle dance around the sacred spot of my birth" (Dionysus in Schechner 1970: n.p.).

Most of these staged rituals were derived from descriptions of a variety of actual rituals from different cultures. The crux of the performance, the birth and death rituals, was based on an adoption ritual of the Asmat tribe in New Guinea. At the premiere, the performers conducted the rituals wearing light clothes but stripped for the scene in subsequent performances; spectators were encouraged to join in provided they shed their clothes. The men lay side by side on the floor while the women stood above them with splayed legs, upper bodies bent forward slightly. Together, their bodies formed a tunnel representing the birth canal. In the performance's opening scene, the Dionysus performer was reborn as a god – he was pushed out of the birth canal through rhythmic gyrations of the hips. The sequence was repeated in the opposite direction for Pentheus' death. The performance ended with an incorporation ritual. Performers and spectators formed a procession and walked out of the wide-open doors of the Performing Garage into the streets of New York.

Two aspects of Schechner's assessment of audience participation are particularly remarkable: he emphasizes the relationship between equal co-subjects ("to enter the performance as equals," "according to the democratic model") and sets up an opposition between the aesthetic process of "play" and the "social event" created through audience participation in the performance.

While the staging strategies described above aimed at treating the spectators as co-subjects, as "equals," individual audience members frequently took liberties that offended the performers. The female performers repeatedly felt mistreated and sexually exploited (Schechner 1973: 42). In another instance, a group of college students abducted the Pentheus-performer in order to prevent his sacrifice by Dionysus, injuring the performer (William Shephard) in the process. The "liberation" of the spectators as co-subjects animated them to subjugate the performers and inflict violence on them.

In later productions, Schechner employed a different model of audience participation based on the performers' ability to pressure and manipulate the spectators. In *Commune* (1970–2), which dealt with the Vietnam War and the My Lai massacre, the performer James Griffith randomly chose 15 spectators to step into a circle at the center of the space and represent the villagers of My Lai. Mostly, the spectators followed his orders without protesting. In some cases, however, spectators refused participation, in which case Griffith took off his shirt and declared:

> I am taking off my shirt to signify that the performance is now stopped. You people have the following choices. First, you can come into the circle, and the performance will continue; second, you can go to anyone else in the room and ask them to take your place, and, if they do, the performance will continue; third, you can stay where you are, and the performance will remain stopped; or fourth, you can go home, and the performance will continue in your absence.
>
> (Schechner 1973: 49)

The alternatives offered to the concerned spectators forced them into the roles of actors – even if they remained sitting in their place they would be responsible for ending the performance. The audience's traditional role – to remain seated and observe the actions on stage without actively participating – was no longer an option. Subject and object could no longer be clearly defined and distinguished. It became unclear who was exercising pressure and violence on whom here. Was it the performer, forcing the spectators to become actors? Or was it the spectator who stopped the performance by refusing to become an actor, thus upholding traditional role divisions regardless of the performers and their artistic intents? Each participant claimed a subject position for themselves that simultaneously objectified the other. In the case of *Commune*, lengthy negotiations between performers and spectators followed, only enhancing the dilemma resulting from the production's rules.

This particular case, described by Schechner in his journal entries (1973: 49–54), provides some fascinating insights into the workings of the autopoietic feedback loop. Schechner's case emphasized that role reversal considerably increases the uncertainty about the performance's outcome and allows us to observe the feedback loop as if under a magnifying glass. The refusal of four of

the 15 spectators chosen by Griffith to become actors by stepping into the circle attracted the attention of everyone present and, paradoxically, turned those four into actors against their will. The result was a performative contradiction: their refusal accomplished precisely what they were refusing. They triggered the discussion and actively participated in negotiating relationships; as actors they were insisting on participating in the performance as spectators. In the further course of the negotiations, some performers also cited equality and demanded the right to recruit other spectators for their roles so that they themselves might leave the theatre. Two spectators agreed but expressed reservations since neither knew the concerned "roles" or the further course of the performance. This further multiplied the unpredictability of the performance.

After three hours of discussion, three of the four who had refused decided to leave the theatre; the fourth was persuaded to step into the circle (perhaps encouraged by the fact that his girlfriend had taken on the part of one of the performers). While Schechner described this moment as a resumption of the performance, I would prefer to view the three-hour discussion as an equally integral part of the performance and rather speak of its continuation. Schechner read out lines for the two new performers to repeat. The performance ended with the scripted dialogue and the subsequent procession through the streets of New York.

At no point during the performance was its further development clearly predictable. The refusal did not trigger any foreseeable developments for the performance; rather, it multiplied the number of possibilities for its continuation. We can speak of the proverbial butterfly that flaps its wings and sets in motion a chain reaction that can cause or prevent a hurricane. Each moment of the negotiation brought about a new development, a different turn. The role reversal brought a general attribute of the feedback loop into focus: it is impossible to control or predict spectators' reactions in advance or gauge their effects on performers and other spectators. Although ordinarily these processes occur on a barely perceptible level, they are at work in all performances. With the help of the "magnifying glass" provided by role reversal, they merely become accessible to the spectators. The only condition for these processes to be set in motion lies in the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, constitutive of performance in general. Performance exemplifies that all forms of physical encounter between people stimulate interactions even if their shape is not always plainly evident. To adapt Watzlawick's famous dictum: you cannot *not* react to each other.

That is to say, any gathering of people always constitutes a social situation. It is therefore surprising that Schechner draws up performance in opposition to a social event. He states that "the play stopped being a play and became a social event," making this transition the condition for audience participation in *Dionysus in 69*. Such a distinction between performance as an aesthetic process and as social event obscures the specific achievement of audience participation as practiced by the Performance Group. Participation dynamized the dichotomous subject–object relationship and the opposition between art, theatre, and social event. The participants were able to experience the entire performance as essentially social.

However subtly, the event was continuously informed by the negotiation and definition of positions – by shifting power relations, that is. The analysis of the Performance Group's project shows that aesthetic, social, and political aspects are inextricably interlinked in performance. Such a connection is not established by political issues or agendas alone; the fundamental bodily co-presence of actors and spectators engenders and guarantees it. The indivisible link between the aesthetic and the political may always have been acknowledged implicitly. It might explain why nineteenth-century Germany denied the theatre its claim to art and placed it under police supervision. It certainly led artists to produce performances instead of works of art after the 1960s (maybe it also explains why philosophical aesthetics hardly ever refers to theatre even though the event concept plays such a key role in it). Role reversal based on bodily co-presence collapses the ostensible dichotomy of the aesthetic and the political – regardless of whether it redefines, projects, or partly realizes the relationship between actors and spectators as one of co-subjects, or whether it opens up possibilities for mutual manipulation. Role reversal lays bare *and* simultaneously affords the actors and spectators the experience of a performance that is by default as much aesthetic as it is political.

The insights gained from the theatrical experiments of the late 1960s and early 1970s provided the basis for subsequent experimentation with role reversal. On the occasion of the quincentenary celebrations of the "discovery" of America by Columbus (1992), the two American performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña staged their performance *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* … It was shown in a variety of places: public spaces such as Covent Garden in London or the Plaza Cristobal Colón in Madrid; art museums and galleries in Irvine, New York, Chicago, and elsewhere; or natural history museums, for example in Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and Sydney. The artists conceived the performance as an experiment to prove their theory that the mere act of perceiving the Other constituted a political act; that holding the Other (as much as oneself) in one's gaze was still determined by a colonialist discourse in Western cultures.

At each performance venue, Fusco and Gómez-Peña lived inside a golden cage as undiscovered Amerindians from a tiny island in the Gulf of Mexico that the Europeans had inexplicably forgotten to discover for the last five centuries. They referred to their home as Guatinau and to themselves as Guatinaui. Both were dressed in fantastical Amerindian guises. Fusco wore a grass skirt and tiger skin bra, a necklace of enormous claws, sunglasses and sneakers. Gómez-Peña's face was painted as a sort of tiger mask – an ironic reference to the stereotype of the "fierce Mexican wrestler" – his eyes hidden behind sunglasses. He donned a large headdress decorated with two images of a tribal chief. He wore elaborate jewellery covering his chest and a loincloth with dangling pearl-strings around his waist. Both Fusco and Gómez-Peña wore leashes around their necks; the guards outside the cage used these to lead the two to the restrooms.

Both performed what they called "traditional tasks" that included lifting weights, sewing voodoo dolls, watching TV, and working on a laptop. A donation

box outside the cage and an explanatory sign announced that for a small fee Fusco would dance (to rap music, as it turned out), Gómez-Peña would tell authentic Amerindian stories (in a nonsensical language), and both would pose for photos with visitors. Two large information panels stood in front of the cage. The first depicted a historical timeline with highlights from fairs and shows exhibiting indigenous peoples from non-Western cultures; the second displayed a mock entry on "Amerindians" from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and a manipulated map of the Gulf of Mexico.

In order to give credibility to their claims about the colonizing gaze, the artists employed three staging strategies in particular. First, they played with clichés from colonialist discourse: their external appearance and behavior embodied stereotypes of the mute, uncivilized Other – to be tamed, interpreted, and represented by members of the Western culture. The staging radically questioned and undermined colonial stereotypes and claims to authenticity, thus complicating any coherent understanding of the performance as colonialist discourse. Second, Fusco and Gómez-Peña framed each performance through a choice of distinctive venues that helped to steer and determine the audience's perception of the performance as, for example, primarily artistic (in an art museum or gallery), as a kind of ethnographic exhibition (at the Museum of Natural History), or as an event commemorating the so-called Discovery (at the Plaza Cristobal Colón). For the attentive observer, these framing strategies opened up the possibility of perceiving the performance not as affirming but rather negotiating the colonialist discourse. The third and central staging strategy comprised the reversal of roles. Unnoticed by the audience itself, the performers took on the roles of spectators. They observed and analyzed the behavior of the audience – their comments and reactions – in order to subsequently publish their findings (Fusco 1994: 145–67). To facilitate this task, the performers provoked the audience to action in multiple ways. They literally had to pay a price to see further action and change the course of the performance. Through their active interference, they exposed themselves to the gaze of the performers and other spectators. Whether the spectators asked the guards if they could feed Fusco, demanded plastic gloves to pet Gómez-Peña's legs, or inquired whether the two exhibited people publicly mated in the cage – each case constituted an instance of audience participation in the performance.

In their written observations, the performers divided the spectators-turned-actors into three categories, each exhibiting distinct patterns of perception and behavior:

(1) artists and cultural administrators who recognized and acknowledged the performance as art but publicly criticized it citing artistic, moral, and other reasons. They accused the performers of betraying public trust by misrepresenting the performance as an ethnological exposition;
(2) spectators who were aware of the performance's pretense but wished to play along, such as passing businessmen in Madrid and London,

or gallery visitors in New York insisting on being photographed while feeding Fusco a banana;

(3) spectators who saw the performance as a kind of ethnological exposition regardless of its venue and treated the artists with a mix of sympathy, disapproval, and curiosity.

The performers for their part claimed the roles of detached observers. To them, the performance represented an experiment. They conceived it, controlled it, and observed how their subjects behaved under these experimental conditions. According to the artists, they reversed the colonial order by creating and implicitly supervising situations that turned some spectators into objects of observation for other bystanders: these spectators took on the positions of "savages" (partly without their knowledge and against their will) – observed, defined, controlled, and interpreted by others.

However, the performers deliberately staged situations allowing for a wide range of shifting gazes: the playful gaze between performers and spectators (e.g. the businessmen joining in the pretense); the objectifying, partly sympathetic gaze of the "believers" confirming their own identities as members of a superior, civilized culture; the disciplining yet desiring gaze (partly resulting in sexual harassment); the disciplining gaze of a group of spectators (the "non-believers") on another (the "believers"); lastly, the observant, detached, and equally disciplining gaze of the performers on the spectators, confirming the performers' initial theory of the prevalence of colonialist discourses in Western culture and their own identities as the "Other" (Fischer-Lichte 2001: 297–315).

Although the artists may have felt that their experiment confirmed their initial theory, we need to qualify their conclusions in light of our present considerations. Their claim of the position of neutral observers is questionable and can be regarded as an a posteriori ascription because it suggests that the performers were able to break out of the feedback loop, thus contradicting all our deliberations so far. In fact, the performance demonstrated to every participant that the act of perceiving the other is always a political act that involves projections of self and other intermingled with a variety of disciplining mechanisms. This did not just apply to the audience's perception of the artists (as Fusco claims) but extends to the spectators' view of each other as well as the artists' perception of the audience. Their perception and the resulting actions and behavior patterns kept the feedback loop in motion, making it impossible to predict its exact course. Hence, it seems questionable to interpret the spectators' reactions as an expression of a presupposed colonialist mentality. The performance cited and reenacted the colonialist discourse in a way that allowed for, even provoked, significant discrepancies. Such discrepancies ranged from ironic details that the artists introduced to individual spectators responding playfully to the pretense of the performance. Conversely, other spectators sought to invalidate the performance by publicly addressing the artists by their names.

The actors and spectators tried to use role reversal to claim the right and power to control the other's perception and discourse, in which the event was to be situated and interpreted. The aesthetic turned out to be the political in this case. The constant dynamization of the subject–object relationship was realized as a power struggle, an incessant shifting of positions between performers and spectators. In her *Drama Review* publication, the artist used this struggle for her own ends; one could also say she pursued it further in a different medium. *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit …* utilized the frames set by the various performance venues as a crucial staging strategy. These frames not only suggested different perceptions and offered the spectators various possibilities for becoming actors. The decision to perform at different venues allowed for an isolated examination of each context.

In contrast, Christoph Schlingensief had a variety of framing devices collide within a single performance over the course of his productions during the 1990s. In *Chance 2000 – Campaign Circus '98* (*Chance 2000 – Wahlkampfzirkus '98*) at the Volksbuehne Berlin, it was impossible for the spectators to determine with certainty what kind of event they were attending: a theatre performance (by virtue of it being a Volksbuehne production with tickets being sold at its box office); a circus (indicated by the venue – a circus arena – as well as the acts presented by the circus family Sperlich in the course of the performance); a "freak-show" (perhaps suggested by the inclusion of mentally and physically disabled performers who were partly treated roughly); a talk-show (several interviews were conducted in the course of the performance); or a political event, perhaps even the formation of a political party. The latter was suggested by Schlingensief summoning the spectators to step into the arena and add their names as "Chance 2000" party members to prepared lists. Frequently, two or three event types concurred – complementing and contrasting, even undermining, each other.

When numerous audience members entered the arena to assert their political agency and join the party on Schlingensief's summon, the actor Martin Wuttke delivered a 15-minute tirade against them from above the entrance to the arena. He accused them of meekly following the crowd, willingly obeying their master's orders without reflection. Using a megaphone, he repeated one nonsensical sentence in particular: "I am the virus of the people and you are an autogenous stress sculpture!" The constant collision of frames and the resulting collapse of newly established frames evidently unsettled and irritated many spectators. Their often vocal reactions had them repeatedly enter into the performance as actors. The collision and disruption of frames was the most effective staging strategy for bringing about role reversal and for drastically increasing the unpredictability of the autopoietic feedback loop.

The performance consisted of a range of randomly ordered acts, always open to cuts or additions. The rules included the performers' right to refuse to perform a certain act or to invent new ones on the spot. In both cases, the conceptual frames of the performance as "theatre" or "circus" were destabilized. The spectators enjoyed the same right and exercised it with growing fervor. Whenever

the refusal of a performer created a gap – sometimes even in the middle of an act – spectators entered the arena to take their place. Usually, Schlingensief and the other performers then retreated to the seats inside the arena to watch. In such cases, the spectators seized the opportunity to join into the performance as equal partners, while Schlingensief observed them – at times encouraging them, at others brusquely cutting them short. Some minor exceptions aside, Schlingensief was present at and supposedly guided every performance; yet his dominance contradicted the performance's rules of democratic participation. In principle, every actor and spectator enjoyed the right to interfere in the course of the performance. This gave further proof to the randomness of the feedback loop. Whenever a spectator intervened or an actor refused to act, the performance took another unforeseen turn. Everyone, Schlingensief as much as each of the participants, had to react to each development, continuously prompting new turns, until the performance was randomly declared concluded. It could almost be said that every performance of *Chance 2000* served the sole purpose of presenting and experiencing the random process that constitutes the feedback loop.

The constant collision and disruption of frames repeatedly put the audience in situations where they could not react "automatically," that is to say according to a set of given rules. Instead, the spectator had to make choices and evaluations about each frame. When Schlingensief treated the disabled performers rudely, the audience had to decide whether to treat the situation as a theatrical or social interaction. Those favoring the theatre frame remained calmly in their seats, taking Schlingensief's harshness as pretense and part of the play; those in favor of the social frame protested against his discriminatory behavior.

The collision and disruption of frames plunged the audience into a crisis. For one, they were permanently deciding through which frame to view the action. Moreover, any given boundaries between these different frames became increasingly blurred and eventually invalidated. Political gathering, theatre or circus performance, and the founding of a party increasingly merged into a single event. All were performances negotiating and determining the relationship between participants and presenting different types of "artistic feats." Each of them concerned the relationship between agency and spectatorship.

Role reversal not only increased the performance's indeterminacy; the unpredictability of the feedback loop made its workings visible. Moreover, role reversal made the feedback loop's implicit political potential explicit. Schlingensief conceived a form of role reversal in *Chance 2000* that exceeded the spectators' ability to co-determine the course of the performance through their actions. In more than one way, the spectators paid a heavy price for their experience of role reversal. Engaged spectators had to watch how their interventions were easily undone by subsequent actions of other spectators or actors. Yet, spectators experienced how their behavior changed the course of the performance – regardless of whether they actively intervened or remained seated, tortured by self-doubt or amusedly detached. In other words, the audience experienced the simultaneous power and impotence of their responses. The spectators could not counteract the chance

principle that governed the performance; they could only use it to a limited degree for their own purposes.

The three examples of role reversal mentioned here derive from diverse aesthetic and political contexts. Schechner founded his Performance Group at a time when much of the Western world adhered to a proscenium model for the theatre that clearly distinguished actors and spectators and depended on an obligatory darkening of the auditorium. The Vietnam War was raging and the civil rights movement gained in strength in the United States. Schechner's *Dionysus in 69* counters and negotiates the prevalent aesthetic, social, and political conditions. His approach to role reversal opened up new possibilities for aesthetic experience by aspiring to a utopian symmetry of interpersonal relationships, i.e. of co-subjects – or, as in *Commune*, by exploring the intricacies of mutual manipulation.

In the 1990s, the performative turn of the arts was long completed. Performance art had become an established and generally recognized genre of art. A lively exchange existed between theatre and performance art, bringing both genres closer together. Theatre had since incorporated methods and approaches from performance art such as its use of non-traditional performance spaces; its presentation of aberrant and sick bodies onstage; or its infliction of violence onto the performer's body. Meanwhile, performance art uninhibitedly employed heretofore frowned upon modes of narration and the creation of illusions. Official U.S. policy aimed at creating equal opportunities for ethnic minorities. In this context, Fusco and Gómez-Peña used role reversal to afford the experience of being held under the gaze to all participants. The performance permanently redefined the relationship between performers and spectators, and amongst spectators, provoking a constant shift in their gazes, positions, and identities.

Christoph Schlingensief staged his production eight years after the German reunification and in the sixteenth year of Helmut Kohl's term as Germany's chancellor. The choice of the Volksbuehne Berlin with its luminous roof installation reading "OST" ("EAST" – referring to its location in former East Berlin) was also significant; it is reputed to be one of the most experimental and innovative contemporary theatres in Germany. Role reversal constituted an established practice in their repertoire. Schlingensief had already experimented with role reversal in four productions staged at the Volksbuehne since 1993. For a certain period, provoking the audience into reversing their roles also emblematized the productions of the Volksbuehne's artistic director, Frank Castorf. One year prior to *Chance 2000*, Castorf had staged *Trainspotting* (adapted from Irving Welsh's novel and Danny Boyle's film of the same name). The entire performance took place on stage – i.e. the "classical" location for actors. The audience was seated on stands backstage. In order to reach their seats they had to cross the main stage, which had been fitted with footlights. As the spectators took their seats, they could watch the others cross the stage, frequently stumbling over the lights and accidentally tearing them from their anchors. Role reversal thus began as soon as the doors opened. When crossing the stage before the eyes of those already seated, the spectators had to take on the roles of actors whether they liked it or not. In

order to become spectators, they had to first become actors and occupy an area of the theatre normally not accessible to them. This was an interesting addition to Castorf's repertoire of devices aimed at stimulating role reversal. Despite considerable modifications and variations, Schlingensief's productions did not represent an aesthetic innovation. The production was conceived as an experiment to empower the German citizens after sixteen years of disempowerment due to Kohl's chancellorship – it gave them public appearance as agents.

All three examples are situated in different political and aesthetic contexts. Yet they all have one notable feature in common: they negotiate processes of democratization and redefine relationships between members of a community. Each in their own way, they effected the implementation of civil rights, the elimination of, in some cases, latent discrimination, and the distribution of power among all participants. This ambition can only be successful if some surrender their power and privileges so that others may be empowered. Role reversal thus can be understood as an interplay of disempowerment and empowerment which applies to both artists and spectators. The artists relinquish their powerful positions as the performance's sole creators; they agree to share – to varying degrees, of course – their authorship and authority with the audience. However, that requires a prior empowerment of the actors and disempowerment of the audience: the artists force new behavior patterns onto the audience, often plunge them into crisis, thus denying the spectators the position of distanced, uninvolved observers.

In the above-mentioned examples, role reversal highlighted the peculiarities of performance, making the latter a useful model for drawing up an aesthetics of the performative. The reversal of roles revealed that the performance's aesthetic process is set in motion by a self-generating and ever-changing autopoietic feedback loop. Self-generation requires the participation of everyone, yet without any single participant being able to plan, control, or produce it alone. It thus becomes difficult to speak of producers and recipients. Rather, the performance brings forth the spectators and actors. Through their actions and behavior, the actors and spectators constitute elements of the feedback loop, which in turn generates the performance itself. Therefore, the performance ultimately cannot be "understood." It is still possible to ascribe meanings to specific elements, sequences, and processes – for example to interpret role reversal as establishing symmetrical relationships between co-subjects. The performance as such, however, cannot be understood as expressing pre-existing meanings or intentions. The elusiveness of performance is not due to an independent existence principally out of the reach of actors and spectators, as would be the case with the divine and the sacred. Rather, it aims at the involvement of all participants, in order to create a reciprocal relationship of influence.[5] The feedback loop thus identifies transformation as a fundamental category of an aesthetics of the performative.

The term elusiveness also disputes the notion that a performance can be planned. For this reason, the concept of staging, or *mise en scène*, must be clearly distinguished from that of performance. The term staging comprises a concept and a plan, devised by one or more artists and evolving through the rehearsals process

(as another, slightly different, feedback loop). This overarching concept of staging can indeed give a sense of the effects of any given element. Yet even if this plan is minutely adhered to in every single performance, each one will still differ from the next. Each so-called repetition deviates from the previous one – as was shown by the "magnifying glass" of role reversal – not only as a result of the shifting conditions and humors of the actors but also due to the autopoietic feedback loop. The latter is responsible for making every performance unique and unrepeatable.

By way of summary: the realms of art, social life, and politics cannot be clinically separated in performance. An aesthetics of the performative, founded in performance, must therefore develop concepts and categories that grasp these indistinct transformations and explosive fusions.

Community

The creation of a community out of actors and spectators based on their bodily co-presence plays a key role in generating the feedback loop. Here, too, the aesthetic and the socio-political coincide. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, theatre's potential community-building power has been the object of extensive discussion. In its initial phases, the discussion between theatre theoreticians and practitioners interlinked closely with the debate in ritual studies and sociology on how communities might have emerged from a group of individuals, or whether communities actually preceded individuals. Referring to William Robertson Smith's (sacrificial) ritual theory, Emile Durkheim wrote: "Collective life is not born from individual life, but it is, on the contrary, the second which is born from the first. It is on this condition alone that … personal individuality … has been able to be formed and enlarged without disintegrating society" (Durkheim 1964: 279). A profound interest in the processes of community-building manifested itself at the turn of the last century. It was a time in which individualism had progressed to a point at which, as Durkheim aptly put it, "the individual becomes the object of a sort of religion" (1964: 172), while increasing industrialization and urbanization led to the concurrent growth of anonymous masses. To many, the theatre presented a site from which to observe and experiment with these processes. Georg Fuchs, for example, was convinced that "according to their nature and their origin, player and spectator, stage and auditorium are not in opposition. They are a unit" (1959: 46). Like many theatre reformers and avant-gardists he felt that this unity could be reestablished by abolishing the division between stage and auditorium which Meyerhold lamented as "dividing the theatre into two mutually foreign worlds: those who act and those who watch" (1979: 131). Reinhardt's experiments with the *hanamichi* and the arena at the Circus Schumann aimed at creating such a unity between actors and spectators. Carl Vollmoeller, who had adapted the *Oresteia* for Reinhardt, even praised the arena theatre on the occasion of the opening of the Grosses Schauspielhaus (converted from the Circus Schumann in 1919) as "an assembly for the peoples of today … What the de-politicization of our people during fifty years of imperial reign prevented is possible today: a gathering of

thousands in a theatre space to build a community of active, enthusiastic, and empathetic citizens" (1920: 21). A performance in such a theatre was thought to have the power to transform individual actors and spectators into members of a community.

The concepts of community cited here are surprisingly diverse. Drawing on Nietzsche, Fuchs hoped that the new theatre building and corresponding acting style[6] would put the actors and spectators into a state of "strange intoxication which overcomes us when, as part of a crowd, we feel emotionally stirred … [T] his is certain: there is an emotion which runs through each of us when, as part of a crowd, we find ourselves united in an overwhelming passion" (1959: 3). In contrast, Erwin Piscator, who staged his political revue *In Spite of Everything!* in 1925 and devised plans with Walter Gropius for building their own "Total Theatre," understood community as a political and socialist collective (1978). During the first half of the 1930s, the National Socialists' *Thingspiele* movement added to the debate by fusing Greek-style theatres with staging strategies developed by both Reinhardt and Piscator in order to transform actors and spectators into "*Volks*-comrades." An exemplary "*Volks*-community" emerged out of the performances.[7] National Socialism brought discredit on all concepts that incorporated the individual into a community and disrespected, ultimately even dissolved, individuality. After World War II, the result was the removal of the term "community" from official parlance. Theatre once again became a purely aesthetic space – if not a temple of art – utterly devoid of all contamination from the political or social spheres.

When the performative turn led to the transgression and blurring of boundaries between art and non-art, between the aesthetic and the political, the debate about a community of actors and spectators was rekindled. This was furthered by various forms of so-called ritual theatre, which radically criticized industrial societies for denying the individual "wholeness, process/organic growth, concreteness, religious, transcendental experience" (Schechner 1973: 197):

> Links must be discovered or forged between industrial societies and nonindustrial ones, between individualistic and communal cultures. And a vast reform in the direction of communality – or at least a revision of individualism – is necessary. This reform and revision will leave no aspect of modern society untouched; not economies, government, social life, personal life, aesthetics, or anything else. Theatre takes a pivotal position in these movements because the movements are histrionic: a way of focusing attention and demanding change.
>
> (Schechner 1973: 197)

Through the creation of communities out of actors and spectators, participants were able to reconnect with these heretofore repressed experiences, thus initiating processes of transformation. Theatres such as the Viennese actionist Hermann Nitsch's Orgy Mystery Theatre or Schechner's Performance Group approached their work through the lens of ritual. Like William Robertson Smith and Emile

Durkheim before them, they were convinced that communities emerged when groups collectively performed a ritual. While Nitsch's approach was informed by Christian/Catholic and archaic-mythic rituals – such as Frazer's universal ritual of the dying and resurrected god – Schechner adapted rites of passage described by van Gennep. Both believed that a community could only be created on the condition of the collective performance of specifically adapted rituals. To achieve this, they employed two strategies: for one, they stimulated role reversal, prerequisite for any collective activity; second, they avoided traditional theatre buildings – temples of art – and chose socially integrated locations for their performances. Nitsch's actions of tearing a lamb to pieces took place in either his or his artist colleagues' apartments, in galleries, or, later, on the estate of Prinzendorf castle. Schechner staged *Dionysus in 69* at the Performing Garage, a former motor garage, thus allowing for the creation of multifarious environments.

Their performances radically redefined the notion of community. In contrast to Reinhardt's Theatre of the Five Thousand, Fuchs' "exalted masses," Piscator's theatre for the proletarian masses, or the *Thingspiel*'s Theatre of the Fifty to Hundred Thousand, here only a small number of participants joined into a temporary community. This community did not force itself on anyone. It was up to the individual to decide whether and when they wanted to join. As Richard Schechner explains, community was to be "a viable dialectic between solitude and being-with-others" (Cooper cited in Schechner 1973: 255). A community that respected the individual, i.e. a community of co-subjects, became possible only for very short periods at a time. It was not sustained for the entire duration of a performance but merely over fluctuating and limited spans.

Nitsch as well as Schechner aimed for the creation of community through collective action and experience. In *Dionysus in 69*, for example, the community was born from a peculiarly in-between position. For those spectators who remained observers to the community-building action, it presented itself as part of the fictive plot, the "play," while those participating in the community-building experienced it as a social reality collectively brought forth by actors and spectators. A "real" community thus only existed for those involved in the collective actions. It is impossible to determine whether those outside the community perceived it as fictive or real. The shift from spectator not only to participant but co-player was the prerequisite for the change in perspective and thus, for experiencing community. In this context, it cannot be clearly determined in how far theatrical pretense – the "as if" mode – modified or prejudiced the community experience for the participating performers and spectators.

In Nitsch's action events from the 1960s – the tearing to pieces of the lamb – the collective actions of actors and spectators were based on a different set of conditions. They were not framed by fictive play, even though some elements were highly symbolic. This is particularly relevant for the action's focal point: the lamb. In the Christian/Catholic Vienna of the 1960s, it would have immediately evoked the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and his sacrifice on the cross. Its symbolism was enhanced by hanging the lamb on a cross. The boundary between artistic action

and social event could not be clearly determined – as a result, Nitsch was taken to court on blasphemy charges.

Actors and spectators were free to join in many of the actions: they poured blood over each other, slopped around in blood, dishwater, and other fluids, kneaded and stepped barefoot onto entrails and excrement, and joined together to disembowel the lamb. The action culminated in a collective meal consisting of wine and meat. Each of these elements broke taboos in 1960s Western culture. Nitsch's actions offered all participants the possibility to publicly violate a carefully guarded sphere and engage in collective, sensual self-abandon and physical experiences ordinarily out of bounds. They triggered an "*ur*-excess" (Nitsch 1979: 87).

The symbolic order of our culture has long detached itself from its reference points: concrete objects and physical experiences from which the relevant processes of symbolization were born in the first place. Through a set of collective actions, Nitsch gave the participants the possibility to refer such symbolism back to the individual's experiential level. On one level, they produced a community of individuals that dared to violate existing taboos in public, i.e. in front of the eyes of the remaining spectators. On another level, they transformed the acting individual by providing a liminal experience that led to "excess" and triggered catharsis. The participants experienced a liberating fusion of physical and symbolic transformation. The collective meal of meat and wine invigorated this community of "purified" individuals. Nitsch's action events are thus reminiscent of communion – to which Nitsch explicitly refers – in which body and blood of Christ are symbolically consumed to renew and confirm the congregation as a Christian community. Nitsch also alludes to Smith's community feasts, which turn groups of hunters from a ritual into a political community (Fischer-Lichte 1998: 25–33 and 45–9). The communities engendered by Nitsch's actions of tearing a lamb to pieces are to be understood as symbolic and social, possibly even ritual, communities.

Nitsch's action events as well as *Dionysus in 69* alluded to sacrificial rituals that engendered and sustained a community only by sacrificing a scapegoat, by unleashing collective violence on an individual (Girard 1977). Unlike those ritual communities, Nitsch and Schechner brought forth communities which did not conflict with the individuals which created them – despite isolated disagreements between participants – or with those that remained outside the communities. They did not pressure their members but offered the opportunity of liminal, transformative experiences, and they did not inflict violence on those outside the community. The notorious strategies of exclusion and discrimination against individuals remained ineffective here. This particular aspect suggests a utopian moment inherent in such performative communities. Nevertheless, René Girard's cathartic violence of all against one reappears in a different form: in Nitsch's case, the violence was directed against the sacrificial lamb, the symbol of Christ's sacrificial death; in *Dionysus in 69*, Pentheus' banishment from a community he had wanted to subjugate and rule carried the crucial moment of symbolic violence.

The communities brought forth by these collective actions constituted a temporary social reality. They disappeared as soon as the actions were performed. The conditions for success did not depend on sustained deliberations and convictions that had to be shared by all members of the community. They merely required members of two otherwise clearly distinct groups – actors and spectators – to engage in common activities for the duration of the performance. Such a loose structure also highlights why this community must fall apart after a short period.[8]

These short-lived, transient theatrical communities of actors and spectators are particularly relevant for an aesthetics of the performative. First, they clearly highlight the fusion of the aesthetic and the social. The community is based on aesthetic principles but its members experience it as a social reality – even if uninvolved spectators might perceive it as purely aesthetic. Second, the communities are not the result of clever staging strategies, as was assumed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Instead, they occur due to the specific turns the autopoietic feedback loop takes. Role reversal – which may indeed be triggered by staging strategies – opens up the possibility for collective action. It is an opportunity for actors and spectators to physically experience community with another group from which they were originally excluded. This experience may be disrupted at any time by the community members or by the uninvolved spectators. The community in turn breaks down, leading the feedback loop to take yet another turn.

In the above-mentioned examples, dynamic role reversal constituted a crucial condition for the creation of a community of actors and spectators. The question arises whether the feedback loop could have produced such a community as a result of the interactive micro-processes between actors and spectators without the obvious reversal of roles. Einar Schleef's theatre might provide an answer to this question. From the mid-1980s until his untimely death in the summer of 2001, Schleef developed and experimented with a new choric theatre, in which communities – be it the chorus or actors and spectators – played a pivotal role. At the same time, Schleef's theatre could not differ more from Nitsch's Orgy Mystery Theatre or Schechner's Performance Group. He not only used conventional, if considerably modified theatre spaces, he also maintained the proscenium structure in his later productions (for example in *Puntila* at the Berliner Ensemble in 1996, in *Sport's Play* [*Sportstueck*] at the Burgtheater Vienna in 1998, or in *A People Betrayed* [*Verratenes Volk*] at the Deutsches Theater Berlin in 2002). Finally, he hardly worked with role reversal.[9] If at all, Schleef used collective actions of actors and spectators only ironically. If actors handed out chocolate money (*Before Sunrise*, Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, 1987), tea in plastic cups (*Actors* [*Die Schauspieler*], Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, 1988) or boiled potatoes (*Goetz von Berlichingen*, Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, 1989) to the audience inviting them to a communal "feast," it at best constituted an ironic reminiscence of Smith's community feast.

One common element persists in Schleef's, Nitsch's, and Schechner's theatres. All three developed new forms of theatre by referring to Greek tragedy or mythology.

Nitsch invoked the "tearing apart of dionysus/the blinding of oedipus/ … /the killing of orpheus/the killing of adonis/the castratation of attis …" (Nitsch 1979: 87); Schechner based *Dionysus in 69* on Euripides' *The Bacchae*, the play that Gilbert Murray had used to show that Greek theatre originated in ritual. Schleef, finally, adapted his first choric production, *Mothers* (*Die Muetter*, Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, 1986), from Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*.[10] In ancient Greece, performances of tragic plays took place as part of the biggest festival honoring Dionysus, known as the City or Great Dionysia. While a series of communal rituals, processions and sacrifices inaugurated the festival, the theatrical performances maintained a clear distinction between actors and spectators. The chorus, dancing and singing in the orchestra, provided the crucial bridge between the two. Greek theatre merely reaffirmed and renewed the existing community of the *polis*, which was already confirmed through the processions, sacrifices, and various other acts of national self-representation. Theatre arose out of this political community. It did not serve as its replacement, anti-thesis, or its aesthetic-utopian version, as in Nitsch's and Schechner's theatre.

Schleef took recourse to a more or less Nietzschean version of Greek theatre. In *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), Nietzsche proposed that tragic theatre originated in the dancing and singing chorus of satyrs. While the Apollonian principle aimed at individuation, the Dionysian principle shattered individuation by inducing a state of ecstasy and transforming the spectators into members of a dancing and singing community. In contrast to Nitsch and Schechner, whose productions engendered transient yet largely harmonious communities, Schleef's definition of community focused on the perpetual collision of the individual and the group. In his book *Droge Faust Parsifal*, he expounds:

> The ancient chorus is a terrifying image: crowds of figures, huddling close together, seeking shelter, yet energetically rejecting each other, as if the proximity of the other poisoned the air. This threatens the group, which would easily collapse on attack. Prematurely frightened, it finds and expels a victim to buy itself out. Although the chorus is aware of its betrayal, it does not rectify the situation. Instead, it clearly presents the victim as guilty. That is not just an aspect of the ancient chorus but a process repeated every day. The enemy-chorus does not primarily represent the millions of non-whites, the dying, war pillagers, and asylum seekers, but the dissenters, especially those speaking our own language; they are to be eliminated first and using all means available.
>
> Until that moment of elimination, the ancient constellation remains in place; the chorus and the individual will continue their struggle. Haunted by its relationship with the others, that is, the formerly isolated, and by their relationship amongst themselves and as a whole against the chorus, the latter successfully hopes to fend them off.
>
> (Schleef 1997: 14)

Schleef's characterization of the relationship between chorus and individual also holds for the relationship between actors and spectators.

In *Mothers*, Schleef created a unique space at the Schauspielhaus Frankfurt. He removed the seats from the auditorium (except for the last three rows, reserved for the elderly and the disabled) and created a gently sloped floor consisting of flat steps on which the audience sat. A broad runway stretched from the stage to the back wall of the auditorium, sloping with the steps. Behind the three remaining seat rows, the runway connected with a second, narrow stage that stretched along the back wall for the entire length of the last row of seats. The stage space thus stretched in front of, behind, and through the audience. In performance, the actors frequently surrounded and encircled the audience. Only the "escape route" through the exit doors always remained open.

Three female choruses occupied these stage areas: the widows' chorus, dressed in black and attacking Theseus (Martin Wuttke) with axes; the virgins' chorus, wearing white and later red tulle dresses; and the women's chorus, dressed in black overalls that evoked a munitions factory work force. They occupied and controlled the entire space: the stage right in front of the audience; the runway, on which they trampled, ran, and stomped up and down (especially in the second part) with black, iron-heeled boots; and the stage at the back. All members of the chorus moved to the same rhythm and spoke, shouted, shrieked, whimpered, whined, and whispered in unison. Yet the chorus did not act as a collective body which dissolved the individuality of each member. Instead, the chorus seemed to enact a permanent struggle between the individual wanting to join the community without giving up their individuality and the community, which strove for complete assimilation and threatened individuals with exclusion. This tension transferred the chorus into a state of constant flow and created a transformative dynamic affecting the individuals' position in the community and their relationship to it. The tension only increased throughout the performance, so that the chorus hardly ever morphed into a harmonious community. Again and again, the tension moved to the forefront in violent encounters between the individual and the chorus.

The moments of violence increased whenever the chorus was confronted with an outsider, such as Theseus or Eteocles (Heinrich Giskes). The conflict between the women of Thebes and Eteocles was enacted by constantly shifting positions on the runway: once, the women lay down on a step while Eteocles hovered over them; at another point, Eteocles cowered in front of the women. The power struggle between the male individual and the female chorus expressed itself in a constant flux of voice and movement. When the women suddenly stood up to literally shout down Eteocles solely through the power of their voices, the latter fell on his knees and recoiled.

The tension also extended to the relationship between actors and spectators. At the outset, the spatial composition that allowed actors to surround or mingle with the spectators created the false impression of a fundamental unity of the two. But whenever such a unity developed, it rapidly fell apart again. Any sense of unity was countered with hostility, which partly resulted from the ambiguous spatial set-up.

The runway cut right through the audience. While the runway's position enabled the actors to move among the spectators, it also permanently threatened to tear apart the audience's collective body by demonstratively bisecting it. Moreover, the spatial arrangement made the audience easy targets for the chorus' violent attacks in the form of thunderous trampling and shouting. This offended some spectators. They responded either by physically withdrawing from the performance or by actively defending themselves: they stamped their feet, clapped rhythmically, and shouted comments. It was another power struggle, fought out between actors and spectators. The ecstatic chorus sought to overpower the audience in order to infuse them with their ecstasy and thus force the audience to join their community. Some spectators loudly resisted or left the theatre. Some were frightened into submission, others enjoyed the union with the chorus. Yet, harmony only ever existed in moments of transition before the power struggle erupted anew and threatened to transform the theatre into a pandemonium.

During these fluctuating struggles the two groups neither performed communal actions nor did they directly assault each other. Nonetheless, struggles were fought between them; nonetheless, harmonious unions did come about, if rarely. Moreover, actors and spectators retained their roles throughout the entire performance. How was this possible? It seemed as if the feedback loop in this case released special, unifying energies in all participants. *Rhythm* – strongly emphasized by Schleef – played a key role in this matter. Georg Fuchs already assumed that "the rhythmic movements of the human body in space" were capable of "infecting other people with the same or similar rhythmic vibrations, putting them in a state of ecstasy" (1906: 13). In addition to abolishing the division between stage and auditorium, Fuchs proposed a new acting style based on rhythm to pave the way for a community of actors and spectators. Evidently, he aimed at setting free energies through rhythmic movements, but his interest was limited to rhythm's potential for forging communities joined in ecstasy. In *Mothers*, Schleef did not aim at inducing states of ecstasy. At the center of his production lay the processes of energy circulation generated through rhythmic movements and speech. The circulating energy was invisible and inaudible, of course, and yet, it could be sensed. Rhythm lies at the base of our fundamental physical and biological mechanisms. It regulates our breath and heart beat – the human body is rhythmically attuned. The body perceives rhythm as an external as well as internal principle. We see certain movements, hear certain words, sounds, and melodies and perceive them rhythmically. However, rhythm only develops into an energetic principle when we sense it physically – as with our own bodily rhythms.

Mothers demonstrated how to perceive rhythm synaesthetically, that is, not just through sight and sound but through our bodily senses as a whole. The energies released from the rhythmic movements and speech circulated between actors and spectators created a reciprocal release and intensification of energy. These energies then collided and resulted in the "struggle" between chorus and audience. The flow of energy could also harmonize and generate short moments of communal unity, albeit individuals could choose to distance themselves. The flow of energy

was unpredictable. It depended as much on the actors' ability to mobilize energy at any given point during the performance as on every single audience member's level of responsiveness and their ability to physically experience the energy. Among other factors, the proportion of responsive and resistant spectators played an important role in this context. The audience fueled the feedback loop and thus the course of the performance through their particular attitude and experience. The audience physically experienced and absorbed the energy[11] emitted by the actors and transferred it back to them.

Energy does not depend on a particular spatial arrangement. It can circulate just as well when actors and spectators gather in a proscenium theatre, as Schleef's production of Elfriede Jelinek's *Sport's Play* forcefully demonstrates. For 45 minutes, the actors in the chorus repeated a set of arduous exercises until they were physically exhausted, meanwhile repeating the same sentences in changing pitch and volume but with equal intensity. The circulating energies could be easily felt and overburdened some spectators after a few minutes, so that they left the theatre. Those who stayed experienced the field of energy between actors and spectators expand and intensify.

The theatrical communities of Schleef's choric theatre make an important contribution to an aesthetics of the performative. They revealed that the autopoietic feedback loop is generated and kept in motion not just through visible and audible actions and attitudes of actors and spectators but also through the energy circulating between them. This energy is no phantasm, as Hermann Schmitz was the first to point out (1965), but is indeed physically perceptible.

While Nitsch and Schechner used common actions to bring about communities, Schleef employed the actors' and spectators' ability to sense energy flows as a tool to create communal experience. Role reversal, in turn, utilized discernable actions and behavior patterns to keep the feedback loop in motion. It is easily overlooked that these actions and behaviors must first be perceived, that is, seen, heard, or sensed – perception plays a crucial role in the autopoietic processes of the feedback loop. Schleef's choric theatre focuses the attention on precisely this aspect. The audience's perception influences the performance from the outset and affects all participants reciprocally, so that energy begins to circulate in the performance space.

Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit … exemplified the transformative power of the gaze directed at another, either recognizing them as co-subjects or degrading them to objects, imposing identities on them, observing, controlling, or desiring them. Whereas the transformative potential of the gaze requires the direct confrontation with the other, the energetic potential is undirected. It does not circulate solely between actor X and spectator Z but between actors and spectators in general. The audience's perception in performances – whether as gaze or bodily sensation – thus cannot be conceived without considering the transformative potential it holds.

The spectator is transformed into an actor even before role reversal occurs. The opposition between acting and observing collapses. As the theatrical communities

of Schleef's choric theatre demonstrated, as perceiving subjects spectators are always already actors; they influence the performance by responding to the actions they experience. Hence, the conditions for perception created in a performance – through spatial arrangements, or certain types of embodiment – shape the dynamic of the feedback loop without securing full control over it.

Touch

The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators as the basis for a community between them also implies the possibility of physical contact. The notion of a community is singularly based on and seemingly legitimized by the concurrent presence of both groups in the same place. Frequently, specific spatial set-ups such as the Greek orchestra, the medieval market place, the Elizabethan stage, or Japanese *Kabuki* theatre's *hanamichi* are seen to represent the unity of both groups. Yet the idea of physical contact between actors and spectators seems absurd at first. As the term "theatre" suggests (Greek *theatron* from *theasthai* = to see, to behold; *thea* = a view), it is first and foremost a medium based on sight, emblematized by the enormous Greek theatres with capacities of over 10,000 spectators. This is not to say that European theatre history lacks examples of physical contact between actors and spectators. It is by all means possible that actors touched spectators in medieval Easter plays, for example during the so-called *Devil's Play* (*Teufelsspiel*), where the devils swarmed out to replenish hell after Jesus freed all its captive souls. Perhaps they pretended to grab hold of spectators, possibly touching them in the process. However, no accounts exist to prove this. Similarly, it cannot be ruled out that Puck bid his farewell by shaking hands with some spectators after his concluding words of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "So, good night unto you all./ Give me your hands, if we be friends,/ and Robin shall restore amends" (V. I, 425–7). But this, too, is uncertain. Despite possible instances of physical contact, the fundamental opposition between seeing and touching in theatre remains intact.

One of the reasons for this opposition springs from the fact that theatre represents a public medium while physical contact belongs to the sphere of intimacy. Nevertheless, well into the eighteenth century opponents of the theatre charged it with offering, even encouraging the possibility of mutual and obscene touching. Such physical contact was exclusive among spectators themselves and did not extend to any contact between actors and spectators (Barisch 1981). The development of illusionistic theatre in the eighteenth century presented another reason for the exclusion of physical contact between actors and spectators as a direct result of the opposition between seeing and touching. In *Mimik* (1784/85), Johann Jakob Engel explains that the audience's illusion is destroyed whenever the actor's body ceases to represent the dramatic character but is perceived as the real body of the particular actor. Physical contact seemed to enhance this danger by performing the invasion of the real into fiction. By observing the happenings on stage from a distance, the audience emotionally engaged with the dramatic

characters rather than the actors. In his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), Henry Home noted that "the external appearances of joy, grief, anger, fear, shame, and of the other passions," the visible signs constituting the dramatic character, express feelings and passions that "open a direct avenue to the heart" (Home 1785: 435), thus stimulating the spectators' emotions by gazing at the dramatic character.

As early as 1751, Denis Diderot described a self-experiment in his *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb*, in which he attempted to prove that the visual sense's function and significance in creating and sustaining illusion was the precondition for empathetic responses directed at dramatic characters. He describes how he plugged his ears in the theatre:

> I … kept my fingers obstinately in my ears as long as the gestures and actions of the actor corresponded with the dialogue which I remembered … But judge of my neighbors' surprise when they saw me shed tears at the pathetic passages, though I had my fingers in my ears.
>
> (Diderot 1751 in Diderot and Jourdain 1916: 173–4)

According to Diderot and other renowned eighteenth-century theoreticians, the spectators' gaze directed at the actors' representational portrayal allowed for the illusion to develop. Touching was supposed to occur on a metaphorical level alone: the "moving," "touching" parts of the play triggered emotions; the actors' "external appearances" could "touch" the spectators via their visual perception, thus prompting a sense of proximity to the dramatic characters. Physical contact with the actors would instead direct the audience's emotions away from the dramatic character and onto the actors' bodies. Awareness of the actors' bodies would threaten the illusion and destroy emotions towards the character. Even the desire to touch, which had sprung from watching the character, would evaporate. Illusionistic theatre precluded any physical contact between actors and spectators.

Reviews of Reinhardt's pantomime *Sumurun* or of his *Oresteia* production revealed that this maxim was still revered at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the occasion of the guest performance of *Sumurun* in New York, one critic expressed his surprise that the illusion was sustained despite the physical proximity between actors and spectators, especially when they moved across the runway:

> … it is all the more tribute to the acting of the German company, who present 'Sumurun' and to the staging that, although some of the audience could put out their hands and touch the garments of the actors as they passed them, none of the spell that enveloped the actors on the stage left them as they crossed the runway … and made their way back.
>
> (Gollomb 1912: n.p.)

In Alfred Klaar's above-quoted review of Reinhardt's *Oresteia* – hardly an illusionistic production – he explicitly criticized "the actors flooding into the

auditorium with their fluttering costumes, wigs, and make-up," which "[destroys] the illusion" (1911). Both critics – one surprised, the other aggravated – presumed that physical proximity diminishes the illusion. Both implicitly advocated a larger spatial distance, separating the actors from the spectators so that their "fluttering costumes," "wigs," and "make-up," which referred back to the theatre, could not be clearly discerned.

The various examples have shown that the fundamental opposition between seeing and touching in performance is connected to a number of other interrelated oppositional pairs: public vs. private, distance vs. proximity, fiction vs. reality. They are all based on the seemingly insurmountable, fixed opposition between seeing and touching. In his unfinished work "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," Maurice Merleau-Ponty undercuts this opposition when he writes:

> The look … envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things … We must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely, the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility, is not without visual existence. Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 133)

A glance exchanged between two people can constitute closeness and intimacy similar to physical contact. Seeing stimulates the desire to touch. If, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the opposition between seeing and touching cannot be maintained, what effect does this have on the other related oppositions in the theatre?

Since the 1960s, performances in which actors and spectators touch each other have been probing this question. *Dionysus in 69* contained one scene labeled "caress-scene" by Schechner. Performers sat or lay down next to audience members and began to caress them. The performers all wore light clothing, the women only bikinis. The spectators' reactions varied strongly. Some, especially female, spectators simply put up with it. Others, mostly if not entirely men, reciprocated the caresses and extended them to body parts which the performers had deliberately avoided. These spectators ignored the implicit rules laid down by the performers and redefined them as a real situation of intimacy beyond the pretense of "play." For their part, the performers understood the breakdown of rules as an indecent infringement and an unseemly definition of the situation, which degraded them to objects of lust. Even after several performances, the precarious situation between actors and spectators remained unresolved, and the scene was cut.

In this case, physical contact led to blatant misunderstandings between actors and spectators which could not be productively incorporated into the feedback loop. The performers touched the spectators as part of a "scene" that had no obvious links to the rest of the "play." From the perspective of the actors, the

contact occurred in accordance with their new aesthetic principles. It was meant to blur the boundaries between fiction – the "play" – and reality. The touch was also intended to "humanize" (Schechner 1973: 60) the relationship between actors and spectators. It explicitly recognized the audience as co-subjects. The spectators, however, were presented with an ambivalent situation. The light clothing of the performers – easily interpreted as an erotic invitation in the puritanical USA of the 1960s – and the obvious disconnectedness of the "caress-scene" to the rest of the "play" appeared as an invasion of the real into fiction, calling attention to the performers' real bodies. The audience understood the caresses as an offer of physical intimacy.

The actors evidently conceived the physical contact as an attempt to destabilize the binary relationship between reality and fiction, public and intimate, which offered a chance to move beyond established spheres of communication and into new experiential realms. The spectators, however, responded to the situation without ever questioning this very opposition. They referred to established models of experience about what is real and intimate. They forced the performers into a situation in which they felt exploited and violated. The actors were confronted with the boundary they had sought to destabilize. The "caress-scene" was doomed to fail; it foiled the attempt to use physical contact as a means to de-stabilize binary oppositions within performances.

In contrast, Joseph Beuys' action event *Celtic* + ~~~, performed with Henning Christiansen on April 5, 1971, in Basel, successfully employed touch to annul the opposition between public and private. The event took place in a former bunker. The 500 to 800 people participating (the exact number varies according to different accounts) were enough to effect continuous physical proximity and unintentional touching among the participants and to provoke general jostling and pushing, especially in places that afforded the best view of Beuys (Schneede 1994: 274–85; Kramer 1977). Beuys could not have fully planned these effects in so far as the number of participants was unpredictable for him. The conditions of the event created a tense relationship between public and private, distance and proximity, seeing and touching. Beuys not only addressed but also had to touch people in the crowd in order to pass through them.

The public nature of the happening was not only guaranteed by publicly announcing an artistic event with Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen but also by the large crowds of people attending. Such a large gathering precluded the possibility of intimacy. At the same time, the resulting density and closeness made physical contact between participants inevitable. In this sense, the public incorporated the intimate. Physical contact, in the form of forceful shoving and pushing for example, became necessary in the cramped space to secure a good view of the action. A few wooden benches had been placed around the room but they did not necessarily provide the best view of Beuys' actions. Since Beuys kept moving through the space, the audience, too, had to continuously adjust their positions and create new crowd clusters. The action could only be watched from up close unless one chose to move as far back as possible and stand on a bench.

Touch secured sight. Since the movements of all participants co-constituted the action, it was shaped by the experience of contradictory, tense, and yet somehow complementary relationships between the public and the private, distance and proximity, seeing and touching. None of these could any longer be regarded as opposites.

Beuys intensified the experience by demonstratively touching some spectators: he washed their feet. Foot washing is a highly symbolic gesture in our culture; usually, it represents a service rendered to superiors by their servants. Yet, since Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and the Pope annually repeats this act, foot washing has become a symbolic gesture of humility. Beuys however, did not perform the foot washing as a symbolic act but as a careful and thorough cleaning procedure. He knelt before one of the wooden benches and addressed a young woman wearing fashionable lacquered boots. She smiled and nodded, so Beuys matter-of-factly removed her boots. He did it professionally, almost like a shoe vendor. He dipped her feet into an enamel bowl filled with water. He lathered one foot in curd soap and slid it back into the bowl. Then, he rubbed her foot dry, including each separate toe, using a linen towel draped over his shoulder. He repeated this procedure with the second foot. During the washing Beuys avoided all eye-contact with the woman. He fixed his gaze on the feet and occasionally on the surrounding people, with whom he laughed and joked. After he had washed both feet, Beuys threw the towel over his shoulder again, stood up, went to the window and poured out the water. He refilled the bowl with water from a long rubber pipe. He repeated the foot washing in the same manner with six other people.[12]

The foot washing displayed an undeniably public character, which Beuys emphasized by repeatedly looking at, addressing, and laughing with the people surrounding him and the young woman. Beuys' ostensible aim of performing the foot washing not as symbolic act but as an intimate gesture, apparently only aimed at removing dirt, sweat, and smell from the feet, contradicted his determined inclusion of the public. By avoiding eye contact, the foot washing also eschewed all erotic connotations. The participants perceived the act as strangely oscillatory. The specific way in which Beuys performed the foot washing successfully collapsed the dichotomy between public and private and placed the participants outside familiar spheres. The general overcrowding and repeated struggle for a better viewing position further supported these contradictory experiences. The foot washing specifically focused on this state of "betwixt and between," to use Victor Turner's phrase (1969: 95): for the duration of the action, the audience experienced a transformation, moving them away from the stabilizing dichotomies of our culture.

While Beuys initiated the physical contact with the audience members himself, Marina Abramović frequently provoked spectators to touch her, as we have seen in Chapter 1. The physical contact in *Lips of Thomas* happened as a result of a liminal situation: the spectators were undecided whether to react aesthetically or ethically to situations in which the artist inflicted violence on her own body or let herself be abused and tortured for hours by other spectators randomly selected

from the street, as was the case with *Rhythm 0* at the Galleria Studio Mora in Naples (1974). As long as the spectators watched, they behaved "aesthetically;" which in this particular case meant that they took a voyeuristic, even sadistic stance. Touching, however, implied an "ethical" or "unethical" choice: they inflicted pain and injuries on the artist or put an end to her ordeal, as some spectators did in *Rhythm 0* and *Lips of Thomas*. The opposition between aesthetics and ethics could not be maintained in either of these cases.

In *Imponderabilia* (at the Galleria Communale d'Arte Moderna in Bologna, part of the event *La performance oggi: setimana internazionale della performance*, 1977), Abramović and her partner Ulay provoked physical contact to highlight the established dichotomies of public vs. private and seeing vs. touching. The spectators entered a liminal state as they encountered Abramović and Ulay, who stood naked, facing each other, on either side of the museum's front door. The space remaining between them was so narrow that to pass through the door, the audience had to touch either his or her naked body. Generally, the women preferred to come in contact with Abramović, while the men tended to pass on Ulay's side. The spectators avoided all eye contact with the performers. Spectators passing through were observed by other spectators on either side of the door. The nakedness shaped the physical contact as a public yet intensely intimate act. Stepping across the threshold of the door exemplified another situation of betwixt and between as this act undermined prevalent dichotomies.

While physical contact between actors and spectators in performance and action art of the late 1960s and 1970s contributed to the destabilization of the opposition of public and private that had been established along with the rising bourgeois society during the eighteenth century, the late 1990s mostly invalidated this dichotomy as a whole. On the subway, the train, at the airport, and in other public places we are constantly made to eavesdrop on the most intimate conversations, uninhibitedly conducted by fellow-citizens on their cell phones. Matters of extreme intimacy, such as Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, became public issues. The court hearing was publicized in great detail on television and the internet. The case did not just pose moral questions about the U.S. President's private and public betrayals, but every detail of the affair, including instances of oral sex, was the subject of public discussion. The strict boundaries between public and private still in place during the 1960s – when no senator or journalist would have dragged John F. Kennedy's numerous affairs into the public sphere – have increasingly become blurred since the 1990s.

This situation creates new conditions for performance as well. To destabilize an already obsolete opposition between public and private today hardly creates possibilities for new experiences. Nowadays, when actors and spectators touch each other in performances, they are aware that the binary between public and private belongs to the past. What, then, does such physical contact achieve today?

In his piece *Secret Service*[13] (2002), the Berlin choreographer Felix Ruckert experimented with the possibilities and potential of mutual contact between actors and spectators in an unprecedented and bold manner. Ruckert has worked as

dancer for numerous choreographers including Jean-François Duroure, Mathilde Mounier, Wanda Golanka, and was a member of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal from 1992–4. To my knowledge, his piece constitutes the first example in Western theatre that abolished the spectators' visual sense. They were denied their sight and remained blindfolded for the duration of the performance. Only the actors were able to see.

The piece consisted of two parts. Prior to each part, the visitors were introduced to its rules by a female dancer: they could signal to the dancers that they did not wish to continue at any time during the performance. The visitors then removed their shoes and socks; the dancer blindfolded them, took them by the hand, and led them into the performance area.

> After a while, a hand touches my torso, nudges me and shoves my body into the space, lifts my arm and releases it … Led by my hand, I am travelling through the space, running around in a circle, as suddenly my body is shouldered and I am now whirling through the space. Then I find myself lying on the floor where feet press against my body – and in the next moment, someone else is lying on top of me, slowly rolling over my body, then clutching my toes and tickling me … [T]he audience here becomes part of a strictly choreographed dance piece, with no-one apart from the dancers themselves being allowed to watch … Who, after all, would be the subject, who the object anyway? The dancers, who do not wear blindfolds, must watch *me* as I am myself groping for another body, shoving him to the beat of the techno-music. Is this other body one of the dancers at all? Or is he yet another of the spectators? Is he a *he*? It is hard to answer more than this latter question.
>
> (Boenisch 2003: 39)

The opposition between public and private spheres utterly dissolved. The intimate became public. Parts 1 and 2 were separated by an intermission. In the ante-room, the dancer again blindfolded those willing to continue. They were asked to remove as much clothing as they wished. Then, they were once again led into the stage area. This time, their freedom of movement was restricted considerably:

> While the first part of *Secret Service* probed various scales of kinaesthetic corporeality, of the experience of movement, Part Two continues this investigation on a somatic level, exploring diverse facets between pleasure and pain … [T]he spectators now get chained to a scaffold. So there I am, blindfolded, handcuffed and in my underpants. Hands slowly begin to caress my body, my arms, my face. Someone blows gently, then almost cruelly on my neck and in my ear. I feel a feather under my armpits. A hand smacks my arm, slaps my chest, my legs, my back. Then I am struck with a whip. Ultimately, my underpants long ago removed, two bodies tightly embrace my own, naked body.
>
> (Boenisch 2003: 39–40)

As in the other examples, the audience underwent a reversal of roles. The conditions, however, were completely different because they had surrendered their sight. They were not only forced to depend on their other senses – hearing, smelling and, particularly, touching – but had to trust the actors, who were able to see and control their actions. The "spectators" were faced with a tremendous challenge and an extreme situation of liminality. For one, they had to entrust themselves to total strangers, the actors, and literally surrender their bodies without knowing the consequences. They were forced into a passivity that by far exceeded the passivity of the proscenium audience, so deplored by members of the historical avant-garde. At the same time, Ruckert's audience was encouraged, even invited, to actively influence the performance through their tactile sense. With each touching, shoving, kicking, stroking, snuggling, the performance took a new turn in its development. Although the actors had their sight and the power to oversee the performance, the reactions of the audience at least could not be predicted or controlled by the actors. The performance drastically demonstrated to the spectators that they could physically influence but not control the event. By becoming aware of the autopoietic feedback loop the audience was transferred into a radically liminal state of betwixt and between, which many audience members relished in, as they admitted after the performance.[14]

The physical contact between actors and spectators in *Secret Service* revealed the hidden connection between the working of the autopoietic feedback loop and the experience of liminality that generates transformation. This liminal state results from the ostensible contradiction between actively participating in a performance – from sensing the circulating energy physically to joining the action on stage – while experiencing the elusiveness of the entire event. The spectators remain on the threshold for the duration of the performance. Their position is never fixed; they do not control the performance but their influence can be felt nonetheless. The audience constantly oscillates between these various states, ultimately enabled, defined, and triggered by the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators.

Liveness

With the increasing mediatization of our culture, the 1990s saw a renewed debate about the particular medial conditions of theatre performances, especially in the United States. The central focus lay on the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and the so-called "liveness" of the performance. Critics radically questioned the potential effects of bodily co-presence or, alternatively, celebrated it as "liberating." It was no coincidence that this debate originated during the early twentieth century when the new medium film began its triumphal entry into Western culture. It was not until the recording of acting on film became possible that the "real" body and space began to mark important and distinct categories, reflected, for example, in Herrmann's deliberations. Philip Auslander rightly noted that the possibility of electronic documentation of performances alone gives meaning to the term "live performance." Today all types of performance

events can simply be broadcast and made accessible to millions of people through their mediatization – be it theatre and performance art; rock concerts; political performances such as party conventions or the inauguration of the U.S. president; ritual performances such as funerals (e.g. Princess Diana's) or papal blessings *urbi et orbi*; or sporting events such as the Olympic Games. A new dichotomy has emerged between live performance constituted by the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and the autopoietic feedback loop and mediatized performances which sever the co-existence of production and reception. Mediatized performance invalidates the feedback loop.

Evidently, the above examples from theatre and action and performance art acknowledge and partly emphasize the fundamental conflict between liveness and mediatization. Reversing roles, creating communities, or motivating physical contact are possible only under the condition of liveness. They require the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators. Undeniably, the performances of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Schechner's Performance Group, the action events of Nitsch or Beuys, and the performances of Abramović in Europe, specifically reacted to the increasing mediatization of Western culture. "Immediacy" and "authenticity" represented the weapons in their battle against the processes of mediatization. These performances collapsed prevalent dichotomies while aiding the construction of a new opposition between live and non-live events in order to criticize the culture industry.

The pivotal role of liveness was endorsed by performance theorists even in the 1990s. For Peggy Phelan, the nature of the performance as a live event excludes all possibility for medial reproduction:

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction, it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology.
>
> (Phelan 1993: 146)

Phelan implicitly bestows a sense of authenticity and subversiveness on live performance.[15] In our thoroughly commercialized and mediatized culture, live performance constitutes a last resort for resisting the dominant culture of media economy. Live performance seems to carry remnants of an "authentic" culture that fortifies the opposition to mediatized performance as product of commercialism created by market interests.

Auslander, in contrast, considers the opposition emphasized by Phelan as already superseded. He argues that today live performance has long been assimilated by mediatized performance:

> … whatever distinction we may have supposed there to be between live and mediatized events is collapsing because live events are becoming more and

> more identical with mediatized ones … Ironically, intimacy and immediacy are precisely the qualities attributed to television that enabled it to displace live performance. In the case of such large-scale events … , (such as sporting events, Broadway shows, and rock concerts) live performance survives as television.
>
> (Auslander 1999: 32)

Auslander sees the reason for this development as springing from cultural-historical shifts that led to a change in values:

> The ubiquity of reproductions of performances of all kinds in our culture has led to the depreciation of live presence, which can only be compensated for by making the perceptual experience of the live as much as possible like that of the mediatized, even in cases where the live event provides its own brand of proximity.
>
> (Auslander 1999: 36)

Both Phelan's and Auslander's argumentations have a strong ideological dimension. Respectively, they assert or deny a fundamental opposition between live and mediatized performance in order to prove the cultural superiority of one over the other. Auslander's argument about the reproducibility of mediatized performance as permitting its dissemination to the masses and granting unlimited accessibility holds true. Nevertheless, the cultural superiority that Auslander claims for mediatized performance in the U.S. does not necessarily follow. It would be easy to argue against this view simply by attributing a higher cultural prestige to live performance, precisely because it is not infinitely reproducible and accessible. Hence, neither Auslander's denial of the difference nor Phelan's affirmation of its unique status solves the question of a so-called cultural superiority.

However, the debate about the (in)difference of live and mediatized performance cannot simply be dismissed. Auslander makes two significant claims in this context. The first concerns the blurring of boundaries between live and mediatized performance in favor of a generic mediatization: "the live event itself is shaped to the demands of mediatization … To the extent that live performances now emulate mediatized representations, they have become second-hand recreations of themselves as refracted through mediatization" (1999: 158). The second argument concerns the use of reproduction technologies: "Almost all live performances now incorporate the technology of reproduction, at the very least in the use of electric amplification, and sometimes to the point where they are hardly live at all" (1999: 158). In other words, the excessive use of reproduction technology in live performance largely eradicates its difference from mediatized performance.

The examples mentioned so far in this book seem to diametrically contradict Auslander's first argument. They specifically employ processes dependent on the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators that cannot be grasped by reproduction technologies. It can by no means be clearly ascertained that these

performances are modeled after mediatized performance. That is not to say that these performances ignore the mediatization of our culture. As mentioned above, the performances of the 1960s and 1970s partially evolved as a reaction to the increasing mediatization of culture, although they have not exhausted themselves in this function. In the 1940s and 1950s, the difference between live and mediatized performance was barely acknowledged, especially not as a stark opposition, because television modeled itself on the perceptual experience of theatregoers in a proscenium theatre. Early television even advertised itself by demonstrating its affinity to theatre. Images of a dressed-up couple taking their seats in front of their living room television set as if attending a theatre performance are all too familiar. With the subsequent rise of technological media, the medial as well as related ideological differences increased drastically. The performative turn in the arts, abandoning commercialized artifacts and commodified works of art in favor of transient and ephemeral performances, is undeniably linked to these developments (while avoiding the discussion of how live performances, too, can be commodified). The above-mentioned examples from the 1960s and 1970s clearly emphasized the fundamental, then still nascent, opposition between live and mediatized performance. The concerned artists had no reservations about working with new media but knew how to utilize them for documenting their fleeting and transitory performances. This resulted, for example, in film documentations of *Dionysus in 69* and *Celtic* + ~~~, serving not just as historical sources today but also valued independently as cinematic achievements. These artists were acutely aware of the differences between live performance and its mediatization and were therefore able to employ the specific artistic possibilities of these different media productively.

In the 1990s, performances dealt with this opposition rather playfully and often sought to collapse it (though not in Auslander's sense). Schlingensief and Ruckert, for example, ironically commented on the supposed or actual interactivity of the new media. Television shows such as *Big Brother* offered its audience the possibility to influence the further course of the show by vote. Nevertheless, the spectators could not influence the show directly, because their intervention only concerned a single, pre-determined aspect. The outvoted spectators could take no further action over the outcome of the episode. Likewise, the audience could never be sure whether their votes actually counted towards the final decision, or whether someone else made the crucial choices, keeping the audience under the illusion that they had influenced the outcome. Despite these factors, the show at least postulated and perhaps even permitted limited interaction.

On the occasion of the Vienna Festival in 2000, Schlingensief staged his production of *Please love Austria! First European coalition week* (*Bitte liebt Oesterreich! Erste europaeische Koalitionswoche*) which employed and satirized the televised voting model. He set up a container accommodating asylum seekers on the square in front of the Vienna Opera. From time to time, celebrities such as the actor Sepp Bierbichler visited and interviewed them. The goings-on inside the container were broadcast on a large screen. Next to the container stood a sign reading "Foreigners, out!"

Every day, the spectators and passers-by could vote off two of the inhabitants who were then, at least ostensibly, deported from Austria. Schlingensief deliberately left the audience in the dark about the actual consequences of their vote. It remained unclear whether the votes actually effected deportation or were of any consequence at all. They did influence the performance itself. As was the case with *Chance 2000*, interactivity was the fundamental principle. While theatre and television both can count as interactive media, theatre evidently offered a wider and more effective range of possibilities for interaction than television.

Likewise, computer technology has been hailed as the epitome of interactive media. Yet, Ruckert's *Secret Service* demonstrated that live performance's potential for the interaction of the senses has been far from exhausted. The data glove seems an impoverished tool in comparison. Neither Schlingensief nor Ruckert, however, attempted to draw up a contrast or competition between live and mediatized performance on the basis of ontological differences. On the contrary, any possible differences were downplayed. Both theatre and electronic media were seen as interactive, and no specific opposition between them was articulated. Yet it was plainly evident that the live by far surpassed the mediatized performance in terms of interactivity. In this respect, electronic media have much to learn from the autopoietic feedback loop that engenders live performance. Auslander's first argument that the difference between live and mediatized performance has been replaced by generic mediatization seems far from convincing in light of these performances.

Auslander's second argument concerns the excessive use of reproduction technology in live performance, supposedly robbing them of their live status and leading to their mediatization. Frank Castorf is a theatre director who uses reproduction technologies frequently and extensively in his productions.[16] In *The Idiot* (adapted from Dostoyevsky 2002), for example, he employed reproduction technologies to such an unprecedented extent that he transcended the audience's anticipations by far. This production therefore seems a particularly pertinent example for reviewing Auslander's second argument.

Castorf's set designer Bert Neumann created an environment called "New Town" for the performance at the Volksbuehne which stretched across the entire theatre and the auditorium. A revolving stage held a three-storey container structure, alluding to the temporary housing facilities for guest workers on construction sites; it could seat around 200 spectators. The structure omitted the "fourth wall" to afford the audience a view of the surrounding stage area. The steep parquet was covered with cantilevered steps. They stretched from the stage to a platform at the rear of the auditorium where a refreshment stall, a travel agency, and a poorly-equipped convenience store had been set up. Stage right of the parquet stood a beauty salon; next to it was an entrance with a sign reading "Cinema." The view behind the buildings at the back showed a cityscape of no particular city but a generic metropolis. Several multi-storey apartment buildings were situated at the sides of the stage; one of them housed the shabby-looking bar "Las Vegas." Further backstage stood a dark multi-storey house that was the

only building evoking Dostoyevsky's St. Petersburg. Prior to the performance and during the intermission, the audience was free to move around "New Town" and wander through the various rooms in order to marvel at the carefully constructed details of the interiors from the patterned wallpaper to the bed covers and the copy of Holbein's painting of Christ. During the performance itself the audience was seated underneath or inside the containers on a revolving stage.

The view was more or less restricted from every seat due in part to the enormity of the "stage" area and the fact that the floor was level. More importantly, the viewing restrictions increased since many scenes were not set in the visible arena in front of the buildings but inside the various rooms. The view into these rooms was obstructed by blinds and curtains; for the most part, the actors were partially or fully invisible to the audience. The perceptual loss of the actors' physical presence was compensated by reproduction technology: the cameraman Jan Speckenbach – frequently visible to the audience – followed the actors into the rooms and filmed each scene. The recordings were broadcast live on a number of very small monitors hung above the heads of the spectators and on several larger screens (for five euros one could watch the entire performance on a large screen in the uppermost container). Spectators thus glimpsed Prince Myshkin's (Martin Wuttke) back or the Yepanchina's (Sophie Rois) hands through a half-occluded window while watching their faces on the screen. As the play continued, the spans in which the actors withdrew their "real" and full bodies from the audience's view increased, leaving them with the fragmented images on the monitors. During the final hour of the six-hour performance the actors could only be seen on the monitors. In the rooms in which the final scenes were set the curtains remained drawn and the blinds pulled down. The spectators could scan the auditorium and observe other spectators but were dependent on the monitors to follow the plot. Moreover, they could never be entirely sure that the video actually was a live broadcast. Was it not possible, even likely, that the actors were taking a break and that the monitors showed a pre-recorded film? Was this even a live performance anymore, or had it turned into a mediatized event as was certainly the case with the film shown on the uppermost floor?

The end of the performance did not coincide with the end of the actions shown on the monitors. Rather, the end was marked by the physical reemergence of the actors on the central square in front of the buildings after the monitors went dark. By giving the curtain call, the actors reaffirmed the theatrical frame. Yet, the conventional gesture of receiving applause from the audience and thanking them by bowing gained an entirely new quality. More than an hour had passed since the actors were last seen on stage and now the light almost made them seem like transfigured bodies, even though the lighting was neutral – sober in Brecht's sense – rather than mystical. The long withdrawal endowed the mere reappearance of their bodies with a new quality.

The last hour of the performance in particular demonstrated that the audience far from preferred the video broadcast to the live performance. Instead, spectators became increasingly hostile and aggressive; it could almost be said that

they suffered from withdrawal symptoms. Every minute of the video increased the desire for the actors' "real" bodies; a desire that was repeatedly frustrated. Some finally gave up all hope for the physical return of the actors and left "New Town." Although the recordings were not amateurish but highly professional and captivated the "mediatized" audience in the upper container until the very end, the "live" audience found them dull, lengthy, and frustrating.

The first part of the performance up to the intermission mainly featured scenes in which large parts of or the entire bodies of the actors were visible. Complemented by the actors' faces on the monitors, this created fascinating theatrical effects. Individual spectators, ordinarily limited to a single perspective on the actors from their seat, now saw them from different angles as if they themselves were moving around on stage. At no point during the first part of the performance did the mediatized elements question the liveness of the event. After the intermission, the shifts between the body and its image, between liveness and mediatization, turned from an entertaining perceptual puzzle into a cruel teasing game. Increasingly, the actors withdrew physically from the audience. Then, briefly, the audience was granted a glimpse of one or the other actor: after one particularly long withdrawal period the actors emerged on the square in front of the buildings and walked through the audience. This moment created a fleeting intimacy, which the video images simply never achieved. In comparison, the images appeared sterile and only intensified the desire to have the actors appear physically in front of the audience.

Usually, the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators is taken for granted in theatre performances. Likewise, it is not missed in a movie theatre or in front of the television. In this case, however, the bodily presence of the actors constantly threatened to disappear as the result of its own mediatization. These recorded sequences at least seemed to interrupt the feedback loop. The spectators watched the video images but could not influence them. Whether the actors in turn could perceive the audience's reactions remained indeterminable, since they were out of visual range. As far as the audience was concerned, the feedback loop was interrupted. The spectators' desire for the physical return of the actors mirrored their desire for a mutual exchange of perceiving and being-perceived, which would set the feedback loop and thus the performance in motion.

The Idiot successfully incorporated its own mediatization into the performance without losing its live status, as Auslander had claimed would be the case. Instead, the increasing mediatization stimulated the audience's desire for the bodily presence of the actors, bestowing a special aura on their "real" bodies. Perhaps it was not until the final moments of the performance – when the actors stepped into the light – that the audience experienced a sense of "transcendence" which, as many critics bitterly protested, this production otherwise persistently and demonstratively denied despite using Dostoyevsky's text. The hour-long interruption of the feedback loop turned the focus away from the interaction between actors and spectators and to other spectators who turned into actors by moving their chairs, getting up, leaving the room, yawning, talking, etc. Unlike

Commune, however, the monitors provided the spectators with a different center of attention, so that the hour-long hiatus indeed interrupted the feedback loop. Yet, the interruption did not result in the disappearance of the live performance. The interruption instead stimulated an increasing desire for the bodily presence of the actors; when they finally reappeared, the audience literally saw them in a new light.

Castorf's production of *The Idiot* employed reproduction technology to an extent that, at least according to Auslander's argument, should have led to the devaluation of its live status. Instead, it brought about the apotheosis of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators. The conventional curtain call of the actors was experienced as their transfiguration, celebrating their bodily presence. After six hours, the audience was granted an epiphany and realized that no matter whether and how a performance told a story, it is the bodily presence of the actors that affects them and sets the autopoietic feedback loop in motion. Therein lies the constitutive moment of performance.

Chapter 4

The performative generation of materiality

As we have seen in our analysis of the autopoietic feedback loop, the heuristic distinction between the aesthetics of production and reception is rendered useless when it comes to the workings of performance. This chapter deals with the implicit destabilization of the aesthetic category of the work of art itself and examines how performance, given its fundamental transience, generates and presents its specific materiality. It remains to be seen whether the materiality of performance is still compatible with the notion of a work of art.

Performance does not consist of fixed, transferable, and material artifacts; it is fleeting, transient, and exists only in the present. It is made up of the continuous becoming and passing of the autopoietic feedback loop. This is not to say that material objects – decorations, props, costumes – aren't put to good use in performances. In fact, they remain as traces of the performance after its conclusion and can be exhibited in a theatre or art museum (preferably the latter in the case of action and performance art). And yet, the performance is irrevocably lost once it is over; it can never be repeated in the exact same way. As Peggy Phelan rightly notes, a performance cannot be "saved" retrospectively. All attempts to record it aurally or visually are bound to fail and only highlight the unbridgeable chasm between the performance and a fixed, reproducible artifact. Any attempt to reproduce a performance turns into an attempt to document it. In this sense, I must disagree with Phelan's argument that performance cannot be documented. Such documentations rather create the conditions of possibility to speak about past performances at all. The apparent tension between its transience and attempts to fix performance through documentation on video, film, photographs, and as descriptions emphasizes ever more clearly the fundamental ephemerality and uniqueness characteristic of performance:

> Talking about performance marks its absence, a loss. It only exists as an accessible object – to be referred to, discussed and evaluated – insofar as we recognize its disappearance, and this experience presumes the acknowledgment of inaccessible conditions … Questions of artistic intent or the subjective experience of the artist's body are irrelevant to the art of performance. Instead, we need to ask about the distance between presentation and perception, articulated in the documents and memories of the spectators.
>
> (Bormann and Brandstetter 1999: 46 and 50)

Afterwards, the documents made about and left behind by the performance can indeed be accessed; however, the specific materiality of the performance itself simply vanishes. Only with the help of other media can the performance's materiality be made accessible. This book, too, must revert to such documentation, if only represented by my own notes and memory. The performance's specific materiality, however, eludes one's grasp. The performance brings forth its materiality exclusively in the present and immediately destroys it again the moment it is created, setting in motion a continuous cycle of generating materiality.

Since the performative turn in the 1960s, theatre and action and performance art have developed a range of methods to direct attention to this performative generation of materiality. Much like a scientific research laboratory, these performative events have made it their aim to stress and isolate various crucial factors and experimental processes that partake in the act of generating materiality onstage. Here, artists experiment with a wide range of aspects, including the performance's corporeality, spatiality, and tonality.[1] These experimental strategies have provided an almost microscopic insight into the specific processes that generate materiality in performance. They serve as points of orientation for the following analysis.

Corporeality

The nature of performance dictates that artists-in-action cannot be severed from their material. They make their "artwork" from a highly peculiar, even wilful material: their bodies or, as Helmuth Plessner aptly put it, "the material of one's own existence" (1982: 407). The peculiar role of the body as aesthetic material has had a central place in theories of theatre and acting. The emphasis lies in the tension between the phenomenal body of the actor, or their bodily being-in-the-world, and their representation of the dramatic character. For Plessner, this tension marks the ontological distance of human beings to themselves; in other words, the actor in particular symbolizes the *conditio humana*. Humans *have* bodies, which they can manipulate and instrumentalize just like any other object. At the same time, they *are* their bodies, they are body-subjects. By stepping out of themselves to portray a dramatic character in "the material of one's own existence," the actor refers to this doubling and man's "eccentric position" (Plessner 1970) inherent in the distance from one's self. According to Plessner, the tension between the actors' phenomenal bodies and their portrayal of a character bestows a deeper anthropological significance and special dignity on the performance.

In contrast, Edward Gordon Craig considered the tension between actor and character the main reason for attempting to ban actors from the theatre altogether and for replacing them by an *ueber*-marionette. The actor's material is not freely accessible and cannot be shaped and controlled at will. The actor instead is subject to very specific conditions established by the doubling of "being a body" and "having a body" and therefore unreliable in the aesthetic process. In order to

guarantee the status of the artwork in performance, Craig argued, the actor would have to be removed from the stage:

> The whole nature of man tends towards freedom; he therefore carries the proof in his own person, that as *material* for the theatre he is useless. In the modern theatre, owing to the use of the bodies of men and women *as their material*, all which is presented there is of an accidental nature … Art as we have said, can admit of no accidents. That then which the actor gives us, is not a work of art …
>
> (Craig 1908: 3)

I will refrain from attributing such symbolic meaning to the tension between the bodily being-in-the-world of the actor and his representation of a dramatic character as Plessner did, or banning actors from the stage, as Craig envisioned. Instead, I would like to set the focus of my analysis on this very tension between these two states of existence, between "having" and "being." In my view, the tension provides the conditions of possibility for generating corporeality in performance and enables the audience's specific perception of such corporeality onstage. Both generating and perceiving corporeality in performance depend on two phenomena in particular: processes of embodiment and the phenomenon of presence.

Embodiment

In the second half of the eighteenth century a new concept of acting emerged, which was to be termed "embodiment." Previously, actors were described as playing or presenting a character; they even *were* those roles (as Lessing says in the twentieth piece of the *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, "Cenie is Madame Hensel"). Now, the actor "embodied" a dramatic character. What did this term mean?

German theatre witnessed some significant developments in the second half of the eighteenth century: first, the emergence of literary theatre; second, the development of a new – realistic and psychological – art of acting. The two are closely connected. A number of bourgeois intellectuals attempted to weaken the actor's predominance in the theatre in order to elevate the dramatic text to a level of overarching authority. The actors were no longer to be guided by their whims and fancies, their talent of improvisation, sense of humor, genius, or vanity. Rather, their function would be limited to communicating to the audience the meanings expressed by the poets in their texts. The art of acting in its particular performativity would serve as a vessel for expressing only the meanings contained in the poetic text.

Therefore, the art of acting had to be drastically revised. Actors had to become proficient at expressing physically the meanings that the poet had expressed textually– especially the emotions, mental states, thought processes, and character traits of the *dramatis personae*. To assist the actors in obliterating their bodily being-

in-the-world on stage, this reconceived art of acting would transform their bodies into a "text" consisting of signs for the emotions and mental states that build a character. The aim was to eliminate the tension between the actors' phenomenal bodies and their portrayal of the dramatic characters in favor of representation.

Johann Jakob Engel chides actors in his *Mimik* (1785/6) for drawing the audience's attention to their phenomenal bodies and disrupting the perception of the signs that constituted their dramatic characters:

> I do not know what hostile demon possesses our actors, especially of the female sex, that they make such a grand art out of falling, or shall I say, tumbling. One has seen an Ariadne who, when she hears her sad fate from the mountain goddess, crashes to the floor with the whole length of her body faster than if she had been struck by lightning and with a force as if she wanted to split open her skull. If such an unnatural, repugnant episode is followed by loud applause, it must sound from the hands of the ignorant who are unable to empathize with the true interest of a play, who bought their tickets only to gape and would have preferred to go to a circus or a bull fight. The connoisseur, if he claps along, probably does so out of sympathetic relief that the poor creature, a bad actress but a good girl, came away without any injuries. Break-neck tricks … belong to the fairground alone where all attention is directed at the real human being and its physical agility … [Here, the attention] increases the more the daredevil endangers himself.
>
> (Engel 1804: 59)

In the theatre, the spectators were to perceive and empathize exclusively with the dramatic character. If their attention was diverted to the actors' phenomenal bodies, it would "invariably destroy the illusion" (1804: 58). The audience would be forced to leave the fictive world of the play and enter the world of real physicality. Engel's discussion provides some insight into what was meant by the new term "embodiment." The actor was meant to transform his sensual body into a semiotic one which would serve as a material carrier for textual meaning. All physical aspects that exaggerated, falsified, abused, undermined, or altered its meaning in any way were to be eliminated.

This art of acting has its roots in the mind–body dualism, or the two-world theory. Meanings are seen as mental or "spiritual" entities which become apparent only with the help of a corresponding sign system. While language represented an almost ideal system of signs which expressed meanings truthfully and "purely," the human body offered a much less reliable medium and material for signification. Friedrich Schiller explicitly warned against "the very questionable benefits of theatrical embodiment" (cited in Grimm 1984: column 683). For the body to be employed in the art of acting at all, it must first be stripped of its corporeality and undergo a process of disembodiment. Any reference to the actor's bodily being-in-the-world must be exorcised from his material body in order to produce

an entirely semiotic body. Only a "purely" semiotic body could communicate the text's meanings "truthfully" and perceptibly to the audience. Embodiment thus presupposes disembodiment. Moreover, this process of embodiment as disembodiment resists the performance's transience. While the actors' gestures, movements, and sounds are transitory, the meanings they bring forth continue to exist beyond these fleeting signs.

Although this particular concept of meaning is long obsolete, the term embodiment is still frequently used in theories of acting and continues to imply a doubled process of disembodiment and embodiment. As late as 1983, the literary scholar Wolfgang Iser wrote: "To create the certitude of an unreal character the actor must make himself unreal, reconfiguring the reality of his body as an analogue and thus opening the possibility for the fictional character to emerge" (Iser 1983: 145). His statement carries elements both of the two-world theory as well as the notion of embodiment through disembodiment. The actor embodies the character Hamlet constituted through language by "reconfiguring … his body as an analogue" to the text.

Georg Simmel argued against this view as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. In the unfinished essay *On the Philosophy of the Actor* (1909, published posthumously in 1923) he reasoned that the embodiment of a *dramatis persona* by an actor cannot be understood and explained as the transmission of linguistically constructed meanings through another, specifically adapted medium (i.e. the actor's semiotic body). Simmel made a fundamental distinction between linguistically and physically constructed meaning:

> The dramatic character given in a text is, in some sense, an incomplete human being; he does not represent a sensual human being but the sum of all that can be known about a human being through literature. The poet cannot predetermine the voice or pitch, the *ritardando* or *accelerando* of his speech, his gestures or even the special aura of the living figure. Instead, the poet has assigned fate, appearance, and the soul to the merely one-dimensional processes of the mind. As a work of poetry the drama denotes a self-sustaining whole; with regard to the totality of the staged event it remains a symbol from which alone it [the totality of the staged event] cannot be logically developed.
>
> (Simmel 1968: 75)

In his *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb* (1751), Diderot sought to prove that all statements about concrete objects and abstract ideas – as long as they are expressed metaphorically – can be expressed equally well through language or gesture and thus also be translated from one to the other medium. This laid the theoretical foundation for the concept of embodiment. In opposition to Diderot, Simmel emphasized the difference between language and the body. No easy exchange between linguistic signs and gestures was possible:

> … as if the ideal way of playing a role was inherently obvious and necessarily given along with that role; as if for the sharp eye and logical mind the theatrical sensualization of Hamlet would simply reveal itself on the pages of the book; so that there is but one "correct" representation of every role which the empirical actor approaches. This is already contradicted by the fact that three famous actors will play the role in three very different manners, each one equal to the other and neither more "correct" than the next; Hamlet thus [cannot] … simply be played based on the text because it legitimizes Moissi's interpretation as much as it does that of Kainz or Salviati[2] [sic].
>
> (Simmel 1968: 78)

Simmel here referred to various "interpretations" of the Hamlet part by the actors Moissi, Kainz, and Salvini. The three actors' various Hamlets do not simply represent different "interpretations" but are the product of their individual corporealities: their "voices," "pitch," "gestures," and the "special aura" of their "living figures." In other words, Moissi's, Kainz's, and Salvini's Hamlet does not represent the embodiment of a purely linguistic character; rather, each engenders a different Hamlet. In each case, the dramatic character is created through their respective physicalities and the performative acts that constitute their bodies. Moissi's Hamlet thus cannot be identical to either Salvini's or Kainz's or the Hamlet of the literary text. The concept of embodiment as developed at the end of the eighteenth century no longer applies.

Generally, theatre practitioners and theoreticians launched a fierce attack on the idea of embodiment at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a shift away from a theatre based on literature. Theatre proclaimed itself an independent art form no longer satisfied with expressing textually predetermined meanings. This performative turn also affected the art of acting, conceived now as a physical and simultaneously creative activity that brought forth new meanings on its own. When Meyerhold explicitly referred to the circus, the fairground booth, or the *balagan* to illustrate the new concept of theatre, it seems as if he implicitly took issue with Engel. Likewise, a dull echo of Engel's position can be traced through the critics' disapproval of the body's sensual use in Reinhardt's productions of *King Oedipus* and the *Oresteia*, who considered the productions "circus-like in the most vulgar sense of the word" and suitable only for an audience that grew up "with bull fights" (Jacobsohn 1912: 49).

The new approach to acting focused on reflecting the human body's material nature. While Craig wanted to ban the body on the grounds of its unreliability, Meyerhold, Eisenstein, Tairov, and many others saw the body instead as an infinitely malleable and pliable material for the actor to employ creatively:

> In art our constant concern is the organization of raw material … The art of the actor consists in organizing his material; that is, in his capacity to utilize correctly his body's means of expression.

> The actor embodies in himself both the organizer and that which is organized (i.e. the artist and his material). The formula for acting may be expressed as follows:
>
> N = A1 + A2 (where N = the actor; A1 = the artist who conceives the idea and issues the instructions necessary for its execution; A2 = the executant who executes the conception of A1).
>
> The actor must train his material (the body), so that it is capable of executing instantaneously those tasks which are dictated externally (by the actor, the director).
>
> (Meyerhold 1969: 198)

The actor is liberated from his dependence on literature. Yet, even here, the underlying concept of the body reveals striking similarities to the embodiment concept. In both cases the tension between "being a body" and "having a body" disappears: the subject, scarcely conceived as body-subject is granted complete control over the body-object. The majority of eighteenth-century theoreticians had hoped that all sensual, ephemeral, and deficient aspects of the human body could be made to disappear in the course of its semioticization – even if some, such as Schiller, gravely doubted this. Meyerhold and the other avant-gardists, however, saw the body as an endlessly perfectible machine optimized through clever calculations by its engineer. Thus, any susceptibility to malfunction was significantly reduced, guaranteeing a seamless progression. In both cases we are dealing with the phantasm of exercising total control over the human body. This eliminates "being a body" in favor of an almost omnipotent subject which is not determined by its body but freely exercises control over it as over any pliable material. Yet, a crucial difference remains: while the embodiment concept did not view corporeality in terms of materiality but semioticity, Meyerhold and the other avant-gardists in contrast emphasized the idea of materiality. The various exercises of biomechanics were not conceived as signs transmitting meanings. They focused on and displayed the body's specific kinaesthetic potential and drew attention to its flexibility – its "*innate capacity for reflex excitability*" which "grips the spectator"[3] (199), inducing a state of excitability. Meaning is generated differently here. The emphatic accentuation of the actor-body's materiality creates the possibility for an audience to draw entirely new meaning from what it perceived and thus become the "*creator of a new meaning*" (Meyerhold 1974: 72, italics in original). The actor brings forth his corporeality with the potential to affect the audience directly and, at the same time, allows for the generation of new meaning.

Meyerhold developed his concept of a new art of acting as an explicit antithesis to the embodiment concept. The actor's effect on the spectators no longer depended on the spectators' ability to de-code signs given in the actor's movements; it was now presumed that the actor's malleable body itself had an immediate effect on the body of the spectator. Previously the actor's movements were designed to translate meaning laid down in the literary text. Now they served as a stimulus to induce excitement in the spectators and/or motivate them to

generate new meaning themselves. While the first enlisted performativity in the service of expressivity, it was now seen to possess an energetic, affective potential.

Theatre and performance art events since the 1960s have been experimenting with and developing the use of the body by frequently referring to and drawing on the historical avant-garde's emphasis on the body's materiality. The artists of the 1960s differ from it insofar as they do not take the body for granted as an entirely malleable and controllable material but consistently acknowledge the doubling of "being a body" and "having a body," the co-existence of the phenomenal and semiotic body. Use of the body is grounded in the actors' bodily being-in-the-world. This opens the possibility for a reintroduction of a radically redefined idea of the term embodiment.

In this context, four strategies employed in performance have proven to be particularly productive: first, reversing the relationship between the performer and their role; second, emphasizing and exhibiting the individual performer(-body); third, highlighting the performer(-body)'s fragility, vulnerability, and shortcomings; and fourth, cross-casting. Frequently two or more of these strategies are combined in a single performance.

Jerzy Grotowski fundamentally redefined the relationship between the performer and his role. In his view, the performer cannot serve the purpose of portraying – thus embodying – a dramatic character. He sees the dramatic role created by the playwright as a tool: "… [the actor] must learn to use his role as if it were a surgeon's scalpel, to dissect himself" (1968: 37). The role no longer constitutes the ultimate goal of the actors. Instead, their bodies themselves appear as something spiritual, mental – as embodied minds. Thus, the two-world theory as the basis of the old embodiment concept becomes obsolete. The actor no longer lends his body to an exclusively mental process but makes the mind appear through the body, thus granting the body agency.

In training the actor, Grotowski avoids

> … teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. Ours then is a *via negativa* – not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.
>
> (Grotowski 1968: 16)

For Grotowski, "having a body" cannot be separated from "being a body." The body does not represent a tool – it is neither a means for expression nor material for the creation of signs. Instead, its "material" is "burned" and converted into energy through acting. The actors do not control their body – neither in Engel's nor Meyerhold's sense – they rather turn it into an actor itself: the body acts as embodied mind.

For Grotowski, the actor capable of such a transformation is a "holy" actor: "It is a serious and solemn act of revelation … It is like a step towards the summit of the actor's organism in which consciousness and instinct are united" (1968: 210). The religious terminology implicitly links the actor to the resurrected Christ who through his suffering creates a body which was both flesh and spirit. In the figure of Christ, the distinction between body and mind is abolished; it sees the mind as entirely embodied and the body as fully "em-minded."

Grotowski's notion of the "holy" actor was perhaps best approximated by Ryszard Cieślak in *The Constant Prince* (1965). The critic Józef Kelera writes in *ODRA XI* (1965):

> The essence … does not in reality reside in the fact that the actor makes amazing use of his voice, nor in the way that he uses his almost naked body to sculpt mobile forms that are striking in their expressiveness; nor is it in the way that the technique of the body and voice form a unity during the long and exhausting monologues which vocally and physically border on acrobatics. It is a question of something quite different … Until now, I accepted with reserve the terms such as 'secular holiness,' 'act of humility,' 'purification' which Grotowski uses. Today I admit that they can be applied perfectly to the character of the Constant Prince. A sort of psychic illumination emanates from the actor. I cannot find any other definition. In the culminating moments of the role, everything that is technique is as though illuminated from within … At any moment the actor will levitate … He is in a state of grace. And all around him this 'cruel theatre' with its blasphemies and excesses is transformed into a theatre in a state of grace.
>
> (cited in Grotowski 1968: 109)

The critic's choice of words, too, suggests that the performance of the *Constant Prince* transcended the two-world theory by presenting the actor's body as embodied mind. The parallels between Grotowski's theatre practice and Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy are striking. The latter's philosophy of the lived-body (*chair*, "flesh") represents the ambitious attempt to mediate between body and soul, sense and non-sense, by using a non-dualistic and non-transcendental approach. Merleau-Ponty conceives of the relationship between these two entities asymmetrically, that is, in favor of the sensual body. The body is always already connected to the world through its "flesh." Any human grasp on the world occurs through the body; it must be embodied. In this sense, the body transcends each of its instrumental and semiotic functions through its fleshiness (1968: 130–55).

Merleau-Ponty thus cleared the path for a new application of the term "embodiment" as it is used today in cultural anthropology, cognitive sciences, and theatre studies. Merleau-Ponty's contribution to philosophy is comparable to Grotowski's to theatre. In the person of Ryszard Cieślak, an actor appeared on stage who eliminated the dualism of body and mind, his body appearing as "illuminated" as his mind appeared embodied. By reversing the relationship

of actor and role, Grotowski created the conditions for a redefinition of the embodiment concept. Here embodying denotes the emergence of something that exists only as body. If the character Prince Fernando appeared in and through the body of Ryszard Cieślak, then it was a unique event tied to that specific body. The bodily being-in-the-world of the actor provides the dramatic character with its existential ground and the condition for its coming into being. The character exists in the actor's physical performance alone and is brought forth both by his performative acts and his particular corporeality.

The emphasis and exhibition of the individual performer(-body) makes this redefinition explicit by highlighting the basic processes of embodiment. Robert Wilson consistently and incisively employs this strategy of exhibiting the performer in his productions. His starting point always concerns the actor's individual physicality: "I observe the actor, observe his body, listen to his voice and then together with [them] I try to do the piece."[4] From the very beginning of his work in the late 1960s, Wilson has focused on the individual characteristics of the particular layman, disabled person, acting student, performer, or actor he happened to be working with. During their collaboration on *Death, Destruction and Detroit II* (1987), Wilson said of Christine Oesterlein:

> You see, with an actress like Christine Oesterlein the eyes are so expressive even when she is barely moving. It is so staggering and penetrating … Sometimes, when she just sits still, it is so full of energy. Only few people manage this on stage … Most actors would seem like statues but she is always alive and dangerous, mysterious … There is something very special in her that only the fewest could achieve. I know this was meant for her.[5]

By conventional criteria, actors who have their "specific genius" freed by Wilson, as Ivan Nagel put it, actually do very little on stage. They enter and walk across the stage; they stop or sit down; they lift a hand, an arm, or a leg and distort their face into a smile. They perform actions that constitute basic stage vocabulary: entering, crossing, standing, and exiting. At other points, they take highly unusual positions: they hang from a rope (*Golden Windows*, Munich 1982) or balance on a ladder (*the Civil warS*, Cologne 1984). Each movement is performed according to rhythmic and geometric patterns, mostly in slow motion and repeated many times over.

The structure of these movements directs the audience's attention to the performer's individual corporeality. One might argue that the strict rhythmic and geometric patterns have a mechanical quality that eliminates the body's individual peculiarities and equalizes all actor-bodies. However, the collective mechanical movement highlights the true peculiarities of each body more than so-called individual expression could ever do. In Wilson's productions the moving body of the individual actor becomes the central subject and focus of the performance. Exhibiting their specific beings on stage achieved what Arthur Danto labeled the "Transfiguration of the Commonplace" (1981). By being exhibited, the actors' bodies experience a transfiguration on stage.

The act of transfiguration is further marked through the use of light. In Wilson's production of *Hamlet-Machine* (Thalia Theater Hamburg 1986), for example, a woman sat at a table scratching her head and smiling while another woman spoke Ophelia's lines: "With my bloody hands I tear up the photographs of the men whom I loved … ". In this scene, the light fell on the first woman from above. In *Parzival* (Thalia Theater Hamburg 1987), Christopher Knowles entered singing (he sang an entire song on a single note), balancing a board on his head and spinning around on the spot; wherever he sang and spun, a light lit up from the ground. In *Lear* (Schauspielhaus Frankfurt at the Bockenheimer depot 1990) a bright, glaring light came on the moment Marianne Hoppe (Lear) froze and Lear died. Wilson's preferred lighting technique, *contre-jour*, gives the actors' bodies, their gestures, and their movements the appearance of being suffused by light, making their bodies glow in their specific individuality.

The exhibition of bodies is enhanced by another strategy. Wilson mostly works with flat backdrops often comprising a screen for projecting film and light reflexes or abstract painting. Wilson's actors mostly perform their movements across the space parallel to the backdrop. This creates the effect of dissolving the actor's corporeality in the flatness of the image as long as it is not simultaneously highlighted in its three-dimensionality through contre-jour or overhead lighting. Wilson's productions frequently evoke the passage of the actor's body from the stage into the image. The actor's body threatens to vanish entirely in the process.

Frequently, Wilson's strategies for letting the actor's physical uniqueness emerge – whether through slow motion or the repetition of rhythmic and geometric patterns – has been interpreted as a vehicle for the de-semanticization and deconstruction of the dramatic character.[6] Slow motion and repetition, but also the realization of the same pattern by different actors, prevents the audience from reading the actors' gestures and movements as signs for the dramatic character, even if the actors' costumes or their names on the program's cast list identifies them as such. The audience's attention is drawn to the tempo, intensity, force, energy, and direction of the actor, i.e. to their specific, individual physicality.

Wilson's method was successful to the extent that the actors' bodies and their characters indeed did not constitute a unified entity. As was the case with Grotowski, the actors' task is not to represent a character. The actors highlight their unique corporeality as individual, thus shedding light on the artistic body they create (aided by costume and make-up). Reference to the dramatic character seems almost accidental. It is ultimately not needed as a pretext for the actors' appearance. They could just as well be acting as themselves.

Nevertheless, the performers' movements are not wholly de-semanticized. Rather, they signify exactly what they perform, for example, the action of lifting one's arm from the waist to eye level in 45 seconds. They are self-referential and constitute a particular reality. At the same time, the process of intensifying the performativity of movement multiplies meaning: the movements might evoke the most diverse associations, memories, and fantasies in the spectators.[7]

Likewise, the category of the dramatic character has not become obsolete: it only underwent – an albeit radical – redefinition. The character now is no longer composed of inner states which the actors express with their body. Rather, the character is defined by what is brought forth by the sum of performative acts, which in turn constitute the actors' own physicality. To say that the spectators' attention is directed towards the actors' individual physicality merely means that it is directed towards the only condition of possibility for the dramatic character to emerge. No dramatic character exists beyond individual physicalities of the actors. Particularly in Wilson's work, the obvious divergence of actor and character highlights this circumstance.

While Wilson often produced embodiment through the transfiguration of actor-bodies, the group Societas Raffaello Sanzio presented monstrous, deformed – "cursed" – bodies on stage, which appear to have escaped from a Breughelian hell spectacle. Here, materiality emerges by highlighting the deficiencies of the performers' bodies. Actors appeared on stage whose bodies strikingly deviated from the "norm" – their decrepitude, caducity, or physical excess were presented in ways that shocked the spectators. They broke into cold sweat, their hands began to shake, their breath slowed down or accelerated; they felt frightened, disgusted, or ashamed. In *Giulio Cesare* (Hebbel Theater Berlin 1998), for example, a very frail and infirm old man (Caesar) came on stage, barely able to keep himself upright. In his frailty, he touched as well as appalled the spectators. Another performer had just undergone an operation on his larynx (Antonius). A microphone was implanted in its place that helped make audible his tortured, voiceless attempts to articulate himself, incessantly reminding the spectators of his wound. A half-naked, obese giant reminiscent of a Sumo wrestler entered the stage as Cicero. He seemed to be drowning in his obese body; the woollen mask pulled over his face only enhanced the sense of a faceless monster lacking all sense of identity. The ensemble further comprised two anorexic actresses who seemed poised on the threshold of death (one of them died just before her guest appearance in Berlin and was replaced by a very slim, fragile dancer). The actors' and actresses' individual physicality had such an immediate and disturbing impact on the spectators that they were unable to establish any relationship to the dramatic characters the performers supposedly represented – even if one might have interpreted their various bodies according to the characters they were portraying in retrospect. During the performance itself, the actors were not perceived as signs for a particular character but solely in terms of their specific materiality.

While it seemed difficult, even impossible, to perceive and interpret the bodies of the actors as signs of a particular dramatic character, this did not mean that the spectators' perception was devoid of meanings and associations. The corporeality brought forth in this play was marked by age, sickness, decay, mortality, and physical excess. The effect was so terrifying that it triggered immediate physiological and affective reactions. Any attempt to interpret the performers' individual physicality in terms of their characters after the end of the performance must be understood as a way of distancing oneself from the immediate threat

that these bodies emanated. It was a way to master and repress them. During the performance, the actors' phenomenal bodies were semiotic only insofar as they revealed signs of age, sickness, or death. The dominance of their specific phenomenality induced fear.[8]

For the audience, the performer's body and the dramatic character diverged because the actor's bodily being-in-the world dominated the stage so exclusively. This triggered a vicious cycle. The performers' phenomenal bodies had such a disturbing effect on the spectators that they had difficulty identifying a semiotic body relating to a dramatic character and were unable to maintain a reflective distance. Without such a defence mechanism the audience was further exposed to the effects of their phenomenal bodies. Neither acting techniques nor their portrayal of the dramatic character made this impact on the audience possible; it was the product of the peculiar presence of the phenomenal bodies onstage.

Before subjecting these various strategies to closer scrutiny with regard to action and performance art, I would like to discuss cross-casting as a further method for emphasizing the actor's phenomenal body and for creating distance to the dramatic character. In his production of Carl Zuckmayer's *The Devil's General* (Volksbuehne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, 1996), Frank Castorf cast two actors for the part of General Harras. For the first half of the performance, he was played by the actress Corinna Harfouch and for the second half by actor Bernhard Schuetz. At her first appearance, Corinna Harfouch wore the uniform of a German *Luftwaffe* general from the Second World War. Beneath the uniform's cap her head was shaven. She delivered Harras' pithy and manly speeches without deepening her voice but using a harsh, rough tone. Her movements and gestures were "manly" in a very pronounced manner. All the while, the spectators were well aware that General Harras' part was "played" by a woman even if she displayed "typically" masculine behavior. From the very beginning the audience perceived a split between the actress Corinna Harfouch and the dramatic character of General Harras. The difficulties and frustrations only increased in the course of the performance, particularly when Corinna Harfouch began to unbutton her uniform and undress. Beneath the uniform she wore a netted leotard that highlighted her unmistakably feminine body. Harfouch sat on the lap of her partner Kurt Naumann (Hartmann) who had just confided that he was in love with Puetzchen but that she had rejected him because of his "racially" questionable family tree. Harfouch touched Naumann's waist and hips with her hands and slowly ran them down his thighs. At the same time, she delivered Harras' speech on having roots in the Rhineland as the best possible racial heritage, to which her partner repeatedly replied "Yes, Herr General." The scene was highly disturbing. The actress's outward appearance bore little resemblance to a male character. Unmistakably, a woman was sitting on a man's lap. But she did not behave like a woman trying to seduce a man – rather like someone about to commit rape. Yet, the words Harfouch uttered in this scene contradicted both these notions. Were her actions reflecting the dramatic character of General Harras, the actress Corinna Harfouch, or yet another part she was playing? Was a fictional male character

attempting to rape another fictional male character?[9] Was Corinna Harfouch trying to seduce a fictional male character or her colleague Kurt Naumann? Was the actress playing a completely different role in order to seduce or rape someone else entirely? The spectators were not in a position to make a clear decision. There remained an irrevocable divergence between the undeniably female body and the unmistakably male behavior that marked the fictional character of General Harras.[10]

Here, too, the conditions for bringing forth a character are of key importance. The femininity of Harfouch's body unmistakably pointed to her bodily being-in-the-world. Her phenomenal body could neither be separated from nor dissolved into the skillfully created semiotic body of General Harras. Character and phenomenal body could not be separated. On this stage the character existed through a specific physicality alone and nowhere beyond it. The dilemma increased after the intermission when Bernhard Schuetz took over the role. The character that he generated was completely different, and not because he and Harfouch "interpreted" the roles differently. Their individual phenomenal bodies differed significantly from each other because they emphasized their respective femininity or masculinity.

Despite significant differences, all of the above strategies share a common effect. They emphatically direct the audience's attention to the specific and individual qualities of the actor's phenomenal body. In consequence, the audience stumbles in their perception and experiences a constant oscillation between phenomenal body and character. In some cases, as in *Giulio Cesare*, the dramatic character even dissolves temporarily, although it never disappears entirely. While the acting and staging techniques (or, in the case of *Giulio Cesare*, the unmistakable "abnormity" of the performers' bodies) repeatedly fixes the attention on the performers' phenomenal bodies, the dramaturgy allows the audience to focus on the character from time to time – more or less frequently depending on the situation and the performance. The exhibition of the specific, individual physicality of the actor induces a perceptual multistability similar to perspectival multistability, visual paradoxes (e.g. human face or vase/ornament) and ambiguities of referentiality (e.g. the "Duck-Rabbit," "My Wife or My Mother-in-law") (Mitchell 1994: 45–57). The causes for this perceptual oscillation are as of yet unclear. A spectator first perceives a certain movement of an actor in its specific energy, intensity, thrust, direction, and tempo, and then suddenly understands it as a symbolic appeal to or threat of the character. Despite the shift from the material to the symbolic sphere, the actor's specific physicality might still affect the spectator in a particularly intense manner. Is this process determined solely or at least primarily by staging and dramaturgical techniques, which aim at stimulating a perceptual shift at a specific moment in the performance? Or does it also – and if so, to what extent – depend on the particular disposition of the perceiving subject that, consciously or not, "tunes" their perception accordingly? Perhaps, the perceptual change even occurs regardless of dramaturgical and staging techniques or the perceiving subject's intention. At all events, aesthetic perception here takes

the form of oscillation. It switches focus between the actor's phenomenal and semiotic body, thus transferring the perceiving subject into a state of betwixt and between.

While psychological, realistic theatre since the eighteenth century repeatedly postulated that the actor's body should be perceived by the spectator only as the character's body – a postulate which, as the excerpts from Simmel have shown, cannot be realized in practice – contemporary theatre plays with perceptive multistability. The main focus lies on the moment of destabilization, in which perception switches between phenomenal body and character. The perceiving subject stands on the threshold between two modes of perception, as alternately the actor's real body and the fictive character step into the foreground. Perceptive oscillation as an aesthetic phenomenon, especially with regard to the aesthetics of the performative, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Our practice of referring to characters, variously constituted by the writer, the reader, the actor, and the audience, with a single name, such as Hamlet, Fernando, Cicero, or General Harras, suggests the continuing validity of the two-world theory. The character first exists as a text, classified as fictive by the reader. This fictive character is subsequently embodied by a range of actors. That is to say the character merely takes a different shape in each performance. It could certainly be argued that the various characters conglomerated under a single name exhibit a certain family resemblance, to use Wittgenstein's expression – just as we refer to the wide range of existing games simply as "games." Yet, it must be reiterated that the character cannot exist beyond the individual phenomenal body, *nor* can it eliminate this body.

At this point, we are able to radically redefine the term embodiment. By emphasizing the bodily being-in-the-world of humans, embodiment creates the possibility for the body to function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic construction, as well as the product of cultural inscriptions. Theatre and literary studies long overlooked this obvious fact. The same is true for cultural anthropology. Until very recently, cultural anthropology mostly concerned itself with the body as a mere symbolic tool in various cultural discourses, such as religion or social structures. Accordingly, cultural anthropology was dominated by the explanatory metaphor of "culture as text," which Thomas Csórdas contrasts with the concept of embodiment.[11] He defines it as the "existential ground of culture and self" (1994: 6) and confronts the concept of representation with that of "lived experience" and "experiencing." Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Csórdas laments that none of the definitions of culture proposed by the various cultural studies disciplines "have taken seriously the idea that culture is grounded in the human body" (6). This insight alone functions as the starting point for meaningfully discussing culture and the body.

Csórdas aims for a similarly paradigmatic shift that grants the body a place equal rather than in subordination to the text. The concept of embodiment allows for such a disciplinary reorganization. It opens a new methodical field with the phenomenal body at its center, and takes the bodily being-in-the-world

of humankind as the condition for any cultural production. The concept of embodiment thus signifies a correctional shift in methodology away from such explanatory concepts as "text" or "representation." A similar shift took place in the cognitive sciences which increasingly moved to consider not only neurophysiological data but the body in its entirety. Some of today's most important fields of research such as enactivism (Varela *et al.* 1991) and experientialism (Johnson and Lakoff 1980; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Johnson 1992; Lakoff 1987) were derived from the insight that cognition must be understood and studied as embodied activity – that the mind is always embodied.

As already shown, the concept of embodiment is also of key importance to the aesthetics of the performative. Performances mark corporeality as fundamental to the processes of embodiment, regardless of whether they simultaneously bring forth a fictive character – as was mostly the case in the above analysis – or not, as is often the case with action and performance art.

To what extent the embodiment concept has a high explanatory value especially with regard to action and performance art becomes clear when we consider performances in which the artists injure or poison themselves, inflict violence on their bodies in multiple ways, or endanger their own lives, as Marina Abramović did in *Lips of Thomas* and *Rhythm 0*. Whatever the performers do unto their bodies leaves perceptible traces on those bodies, indicating a process of transformation. By bringing forth their specific and individual corporeality, the artists perform processes that embody their bodies' vulnerability, their exposure to violence, their aliveness, and the resulting dangers and risks. The constant transformation that every living organism is subjected to is marked, amplified, and made accessible to perception in the visible, lasting injuries inflicted on their bodies.

Like Marina Abramović, the American performance artist Chris Burden staged an entire series of performances featuring self-endangerment or self-injury. In his *Five-Day-Locker-Piece* (1971) at the University of California, Irvine, he confined himself to a locker measuring two feet high, two feet wide, and three feet deep after having fasted for a few days. The locker above contained a five-gallon bottle of water from which a pipe led into the locker below. The locker below contained an empty five-gallon bottle. After Burden was locked in, all spectators had to leave the room which was then locked. It was only reopened five days later. In another piece of the same year, *Shoot*, Burden had himself shot in the left arm from a distance of about five steps. In *Through the Night Softly*, performed on Main Street in Los Angeles in September, 1973, Burden crawled virtually naked over fifty feet of broken glass, holding his hands behind his back, breathing heavily and bleeding from the small cuts. Hardly any spectators were present. Most were random passers-by (the action was filmed). *Trans-Fixed* (Venice, California 1974) was performed inside and in front of a small garage on Speedway Avenue in Venice. Burden stood on the rear bumper of his VW and bent over backwards onto the car's roof with his arms stretched across it. Nails were driven through his hands and into the car's roof. The garage door was opened and the car pushed into the street. Thus crucified, he appeared before the spectators with the car's

motor revved up. Two minutes later the engine was turned off, the car pushed back into the garage and the doors closed (Burden and Butterfield 1982: 222–39; Burden 1988; Burden 1990 (VHS); Burden 1996).

Both the performances of Burden and Abramović exhibited unmistakable ritualistic traits also characteristic of other performance artists who created and developed a genre of performative self-mutilation. Michel Journiac drew his own blood before the audience's eyes in *Messe pour un corps* (1969), and used it to prepare a pudding which he offered to the audience for consumption: "Taketh, this is my blood …" In *Rituel pour un mort* (1976) he inflicted injuries on himself with a lit cigarette. Even more radical in the treatment of her own body was Gina Pane. Since her first *Projets de silence* (1970) and especially after *Escalade sanglante* (1971), a studio piece in which the artist climbed up a ladder-like structure studded with razor-sharp edges, she repeatedly exposed her life and limb to acute dangers, as in *Sang, lait chaud* (1972), *Transfert* (1973), *Psyché* (1974), and *Le cas n. 2 sur le ring* (1976). She consumed half a pound of rotten mincemeat while watching the news on television in a contortioned position; she inflicted various injuries on herself using a razor blade; she gargled with milk for hours until it mixed with her blood; she broke glass in her mouth or a glass pane with her body. In another case, she walked over an iron grille under which a fire burned. Flames rose through the grille and licked at her feet, alluding to a medieval Judgment of God (Pluchart 1982: 125–34).[12]

These acts of artistic self-mutilation and self-endangerment are somewhat reminiscent of cultural practices of nuns, monks, martyrs, saints, and also lunatics, that seek to emulate the self-sacrifice of Christ. However, it would be misguided to equate the performances with or assess them on the basis of these practices. For the historical audience of self-sacrificial rituals, any outrage or sadistic-voyeuristic lust was attenuated or transformed by the framing context of Christian culture and the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The violence inflicted in the course of the event magically guaranteed the physical integrity and well-being of the spectators. The performances described above lacked this context. As artistic performances they might have invoked such cultural contexts; yet, they were neither performed in such contexts nor ultimately perceived as such.

In fact, the performances could only achieve their specific effects because they lacked this context. They exposed the spectators to actions that pushed beyond the limits of the performers' physical well-being. The artists did unto themselves what the spectators feared for themselves. Furthermore, they actively avoided a referential context that would temper the brutality of their actions, bestow a transcendental aura on the event, or grant the spectators the magical assurance of being themselves protected from such violence. On the contrary, the spectators were entirely exposed to the brutality of these actions, their own horror, and sadistic-voyeuristic lust. Presumably, the spectators experienced strong and overwhelming physiological, affective, energetic, and motor responses. The profound effect of these performances is due to the artists' refusal to bestow specific meanings to their self-injuries, based on a two-world model. Instead, they

literally embodied the violence done against themselves. If the redefined concept of embodiment refers to all that performative acts bring forth, with which the performers first and foremost bring forth their own corporeality in performance, then this concept is particularly suited to grasp what the artists did in their self-mutilating performances.

Grotowski labeled the actor capable of giving agency to their body, of embodying it both as "being a body" and "having a body" as a "holy actor" and the act of embodiment as an "act of revelation." The critic Kelera used the terms "illumination" and "state of grace" in reference to Ryszard Cieślak. In the context of Wilson's productions I spoke of "transfigured" bodies and processes of "transfiguration." When referring to *Giulio Cesare* by the Societas Raffaello Sanzio I spoke of "cursed" bodies out of a Breughelian hell scene, and I associated the self-mutilating performances with "ritual violence." There are good reasons for the use of such a religious or at least religiously connoted vocabulary. Yet my intention is *not* to sanctify the actor-body or even suggest its sanctification. I intend to stress that the human body is not a material like any other (as Craig already recognized) to be shaped and controlled at will. It constitutes a living organism, constantly engaged in the process of becoming, of permanent transformation. The human body knows no state of being; it exists only in a state of becoming. It recreates itself with every blink of the eye, every breath and movement embodies a new body. For that reason, the body is ultimately elusive. The bodily being-in-the world, which cannot *be* but becomes, vehemently refutes all notions of the completed work of art. The human body might turn into an artwork only through its mortification, as a corpse. Only then does the body temporarily achieve a state of actual being, even if this state can be maintained only by a swift mummification. In this state it can be employed as material to be prepared, used, and decorated in ritualistic or artistic processes. Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS exhibitions offer a vivid example of such bodies. The living body however, vehemently refuses to be declared a work of art, or be made into one. The actor instead undergoes processes of embodiment. Through these processes, the body is transformed and recreated – the body happens.

It is no coincidence that theatre and action and performance art events since the late 1960s, with their emphasis on the corporeality of the performer, cannot be described and understood in terms of a work of art. In fact, they are fundamentally incommensurable with the idea of a work of art. The development may also be seen as a reaction to an increasing mediatization of culture. Norbert Elias described the civilizing process as a constantly progressing process of abstraction in which the distance between the human beings to their own bodies and to those of other human beings steadily increases (1978). This process of abstraction reached its zenith with the development of new media beginning with the invention of photography: bodies evaporate into media images, far away despite the ostensible proximity, precluding all physical contact. Theatre and performance art deliberately confront the resulting fantasies of the virtual body or the technologically reproducible astral body by proposing an alternative

version of its bodily being-in-the-world conjoined with an embodied mind. By abstracting themselves in the electronic image, humans cannot approximate their bodies to the transfigured body of God, which always remains "flesh" and living organism. They need to continuously recreate the body out of the dialectic of "being a body" and "having a body," which lies at the bottom of their existence as a living organism granted consciousness. By directing the audience's attention to the performer's specific corporeality, theatre and performance art make a claim: "Look at these bodies, which you would have disappear in the name of another. See their suffering and their radiance and you will understand – they already are what you would like to become: a transfigured body." The civilizing process' *promesse de bonheur*, its promise of happiness, has long been fulfilled in these bodies.

The performer's body here retrieves its aura – which Castorf illuminated in *The Idiot* by means of withdrawal – previously robbed through the civilizing process. In theatre and performance art, the infinitely reproducible images of technical and electronic media stand in opposition to the unique becoming of the human body – especially the suffering, sick, injured, or dying body. Suffused by light and "glorious as on the first day" it appears despite its insufficiencies.

Presence

The above analysis gives rise to a number of important questions. Can the "reauratization" of the body in Benjamin's sense be equated to presence? Does presence refer to the present body alone or does it relate to the very specific processes of embodiment – such as the processes of embodying "being a body?" And why would this presence be capable of fulfilling a *promesse de bonheur*? Today's aesthetics discourse sees presence as a specific aesthetic quality not just of the human body but, perhaps first and foremost, of objects from our environment, including products of technical and electronic media (in terms of their "presence effects"). I will begin by applying the term presence to the performer's body and subsequently examine whether, within the frame of the aesthetics of the performative, it can be meaningfully related to these other objects from our environment.

While the terms "presence" and "presentness" only rose to prominence in the aesthetic discourse of the last decades, these terms (or their respective historical equivalents) have determined the theatre-historical discourse since its inception. This is particularly true for the church fathers in the late antiquity and the so-called *Querelle de la moralité du théâtre* from the seventeenth century. In the introduction to his tract of 1747, *Le Comédien*, Rémond de Sainte Albine summarized the current state of the discussion by comparing painting to theatre: "The painter merely presents a situation. The actor in some manner lets it happen again" (14–15). Two hundred and fifty years later the director Peter Stein came to a similar conclusion when he compared theatre to painting and praised the "miracle" of theatre which still provides "the actor with the possibility to say: 'I am Prometheus'… If today someone were to paint like Piero della Francesca and say 'I am using colors made

of egg-shells' then that would be imitation at best. The actor, however, is not imitating anything. He himself embodies the role as he did 2,500 years ago" (cited in von Becker 1997). Both Sainte Albine and Stein insist that performance always occurs here and now, immediately before the eyes and ears of the audience which perceives and witnesses it. Both uphold the validity of the topos of presentness in theatre.

This topos primarily signifies that theatre – unlike the epos, novel, or a series of images – does not tell a story taking place at another time and place but portrays events that occur and are perceived by the audience *hic et nunc*. What the spectators see and hear in performance is always present. Performance is experienced as the completion, presentation, and passage of the present.

Presentness, today usually a descriptive term, acquires an evaluative quality in the debate on theatre. With it, theatre's superiority over the other arts is either asserted or its inferior placement confirmed. Both the church fathers and those involved in the *Querelle* (Thirouin 1998) acknowledged theatre's ability to exercise an immediate sensual effect on the audience and trigger strong, even overwhelming affects based on its presentness. The atmosphere inside a theatre has been interpreted and described as highly infectious.[13] The actors perform passionate actions on stage, the spectators perceive and are infected by them: they, too, begin to feel passionate. Through the act of perception, the infection is transferred from the actor's present body to the spectator's present body. Both theatre-enthusiasts and theatre critics agree that this transmission is possible only through the presentness of actors, spectators, and events. They only differ in the evaluation of this presentness and either see the excitement of passion as a healing catharsis or as a profoundly harmful, destructive, and estranging (from oneself and God) disturbance, as Rousseau still argued in the second half of the eighteenth century.[14] Both emphasize that the presentness of the theatre leads to a transformation of the spectator: it "heals" the "sickness" of passion, results in the loss of self-control, or can change one's identity. In this sense, the presentness of the theatre bears a highly effective potential for transformation.

Apart from the presentness of the depicted events, the *Querelle*'s theatre critics identified another source for the power of performance. They located it in the performer's body itself, regardless of the dramatic character or actions performed. They claimed that the sheer physical attributes of an actress or actor exercised an erotic attraction for members of the opposite sex and stirred immoderate, even adulterous desires in the audience. The bodies of the actors seduced the spectators.

The enemies of theatre thus distinguished between two types of presence in the theatre: the presentness created by the actor's semiotic body in the portrayal of a fictional character's passionate actions, and the presentness exerted by the actor's phenomenal body, by his sheer presence. While the semiotic body infected the spectators emotionally, the phenomenal body impressed itself on them through purely physical eroticism. I will term the type of presentness given by the sheer presence of the actor's phenomenal body the *weak concept of presence*.

Theatre critics proved far more insightful in this differentiation than theatre enthusiasts. Their argumentation played a significant part in eighteenth-century attempts to make the actor's phenomenal body disappear into his semiotic body. The "infection" provided by the semiotic body and the character it portrayed was to be maintained but modified, while the performer's erotic physicality was to be subsumed by the character's specific aura, certainly also erotic in kind. Hence, the spectator's desires were directed at the character instead of the actor.

As already explained, the attempt to dissolve the performer's phenomenal body into his semiotic one failed for several reasons. In the further development of the embodiment concept during the nineteenth and partly the twentieth century (even today it has its followers) this incongruence led to another differentiation. What had been the difference between the presentness of character and of the performer was inadvertently transformed into a distinction between different artistic strategies that the performer employed: those that served the presentness of the character and those that realized a special "aura" of the performer that reached above and beyond their depicted character. Performance reviews of the famous German actor Gustaf Gruendgens, dating between 1922 and 1962, reveal numerous strategies to draw the critics' and audience's attention not just to the depicted character but also to the performer's own presentness. Gruendgens, an actor decidedly in line with literary theatre and embodiment in its eighteenth-century interpretation employed two strategies in particular in this context: first, the occupation and command of space. One critic stated in an early review of Gruendgens' Marinelli in *Emilia Galotti* (Stadttheater Kiel 1922): "How he commands the space – with an almost dancer-like freedom of movement! Yes, that was the most memorable. It was so stunning that one at first forgot what [role] he was playing" (cited in Kienzl 1999: 29). The critic Gert Vielhaber wrote of Gruendgens' portrayal of Oedipus in his own production of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* (Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus, 1947): "How to explain the stream of magic that spreads over the audience as Gruendgens all but appears? … [H]e crosses the space, shaping it …" (1947). Despite the 25 year gap between them, both reviews emphasize how Gruendgens commanded the space as soon as he entered the stage and profoundly affected the spectators even before they could form an impression of his character portrayal. He revealed this ability in every role, irrespective of the particular character.

The performer managed not only to command the stage but the entire auditorium. He commanded it by – mysteriously, or "magically" – affecting the spectators and claiming their undivided attention. The latter represents the second striking quality with which Gruendgens made himself present to the spectators. According to the critic Herbert Ihering commenting on Gruendgens' portrayal of Mephisto in Lothar Muethel's *Faust* production (Staatstheater, Schauspielhaus at the Gendarmenmarkt, Berlin 1932), "… [i]t is not easy to break through the reserved bearing of a *Staatstheater* audience. This audience has worn out quite a few of us. Gruendgens shakes things up. He makes things happen. He is provocative.

But he forces people to listen … Breaking through the boredom is an unusual event in the *Staatstheater*" (1932).

For Gruendgens, his ability to generate presence was not opposed to representation – the portrayal of a character. But it could also not be attributed to that character. Rather, it was created by processes of embodiment in which the actor brought forth his phenomenal instead of his semiotic body in a very specific manner.

On this basis, I would like to introduce another definition of the term presence. It, too, refers to the phenomenal body of the performer. Presence marks not an expressive but a purely performative quality. Through specific processes of embodiment, the actor can bring forth his phenomenal body in a way that enables him to command both space and the audience's attention. It can be assumed that the performer's ability to generate presence is based on his mastery of certain techniques and practices to which the spectators respond – be it from his first appearance on stage and throughout the performance or only for very specific moments. To the spectators, who are struck by this presence as by lightning – a "stream of magic" – it appears unforeseeably; its inexplicable appearance lies beyond their control. They sense the power emanating from the actor that forces them to focus their full attention on him without feeling overwhelmed and perceive it as a source of energy. The spectators sense that the actor is present in an unusually intense way, granting them in turn an intense sensation of themselves as present. To them, presence occurs as an intense experience of presentness. I will call the actor's ability of commanding space and holding attention the *strong concept of presence*.

However, this still provisional definition of presence – largely based on assessments of Gustaf Gruendgens' appearance on stage – ignores the performative turn of the 1960s and thus only partially solves our questions about the workings of presence. It identifies presence as the result of specific processes of embodiment; yet it provides few insights on how it relates to the processes of reauratization mentioned in the previous section. Benjamin famously defined aura as the "unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be" (1969: 222). This implies that auratization creates a sense of displacement. Even if an auratic phenomenon is close at hand it still eludes one's grasp by appearing distant. Presence, however, appears as a particularly intense mode of presentness. Yet, Benjamin continues: "If while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience [*atmen*] the aura of those mountains, of that branch." Aura is experienced – "inhaled" or physically absorbed – just like presence, which has the spectators physically sense the actor's force affecting them. It still remains unclear why presence as defined above suggests a promise of happiness. Martin Seel is right to assert that "we yearn for a sense of the *presence* of our lives" and "want to experience the presences in which we exist as sensual presences" (2001: 53). And still, Seel merely confirms our need to experience presence at certain times but does not speak to its ability to fulfill a promise of happiness.

The above definition of presence not only provides insufficient answers to our opening questions; it also throws up new questions. How is this "stream of magic" to be understood that I have described as a "force" for now? More importantly: what exactly emerges when the performer appears present? Is it *the* presence of his phenomenal body or a more specific quality of this phenomenal body?

Since the 1960s, theatre, action and performance artists have repeatedly tried to find answers to these questions. They based their performative experiments on a radical opposition of presence and representation, which allowed them to isolate and magnify the phenomenon of presence. The newly established genre of action and performance art did not only place itself, as already emphasized, against the commercialization of art but also vehemently opposed the theatre's convention to depict as present fictive literary worlds and their characters. This form of theatre epitomized representation. Its presentness remained an "as if," a pretense. The action and performance artists called for "real" presence. What occurred in an action or performance always really happened in the present – in real space and time, always *hic et nunc*.

Theatre in the 1960s completed the oppositionality of representation and presence by erasing the still widely assumed unity of actor and dramatic character and created ever new ways of separating the two. The character even disappeared entirely from time to time. This led to a redefinition of embodiment, as shown in the preceding section, and subjected the phenomenon of presence to a closer scrutiny.

Eugenio Barba almost obsessively concerned himself with the first of these questions concerning the "magic" of presence. He did so in his productions, e.g. *Ornitofilene* (1965–6), *Kaspariana* (1967–8), *The Million* (1978; fourth version 1982–4), *Brecht's Ashes* (1982–4), and *Evangelist Oxyrhincus* (1985), which he developed with his Odin Teatret in Holstebro (the "Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium for Skuespillerkunst") and presented in various parts of the world to diverse audiences. He also founded the International Schools of Theatre Anthropology, which regularly held conferences in different European cities since 1980. Barba distinguished between the pre-expressive and the expressive level of artistic articulation. While expressive articulation represented something, Barba located presence solely on the pre-expressive level of artistic articulation. The "stream of magic" communicated itself to Barba with a particular intensity at performances of Indian and far Eastern theatre forms, which he studied closely. In his discussions with the performers he came to the conclusion that their techniques and practices served the purpose of generating energy in the performer, which then transferred to the spectator (Barba 1986: 49–156; Barba and Savarese 1991: 186–204 and 74–94).

Were one to follow Barba's insights, a mere corporeality capable of commanding space and attention would not be a sufficient definition of the embodiment processes at play here. First and foremost, these embodiment processes create energy, that is to say they require the body to be brought forth as energetic. The performer employs specific techniques and practices of embodiment enabling him to generate energy, which circulates between him and the spectators, immediately

affecting the latter. The "magic" of presence therefore lies in the performer's particular ability to generate energy so that it can be sensed by the spectators as it circulates in space and affects, even tinges, them. This energy constitutes the force emanating from the performer.[15] Insofar as it animates the spectators to generate energy themselves, they will perceive the actor as a source of power. This unexpected energy flow thus transforms actor and spectator alike.

Barba defined the techniques and practices that allowed the masters of Indian and far Eastern theatre to generate such a special type of energy and realize it for the audience as a play of opposing tensions. The basic postures of oriental actors and dancers derived from an alteration of balance which characterized the performer's extra-daily technique and created a new balance requiring more effort and utilizing new tensions to keep the body upright. Moreover, oriental actors often began their actions in the opposite direction to their intended goal: if one wanted to walk left, one first took a step to the right only to suddenly spin around and go left.[16] They represented body techniques that, as emphasized by Barba, broke with ordinary physicality and caused a disruption of the audience's expectations.

The members of Schleef's choruses employed techniques involving rhythmic body movements and rhythmic speech to bring forth their phenomenal bodies as energetic. They generated an enormous energy, sensed and acknowledged by the spectators, who in turn could infuse their own bodies with energy. Here, too, rhythm affected a break in the audience's perception and put it in a transitional state that allowed for constantly shifting tensions.

In Grotowski's case, the concurrence of impulse and reaction created the impression of a special presence that animated the spectators, just as the techniques of slow motion, rhythmic movement, and repetition did in Wilson's productions. Overall, the techniques discussed in the previous sections for splitting actors from their character and for heightening ostentatious corporeality can count as important tools to generate presence. They enable the performer to bring forth his body as energetic and thereby animate the spectators to experience themselves as energized.

It is striking that the discourse on the concept of presence undertaken by theatre, action and performance art and aesthetic theory since the performative turn also touches upon the mind–body problem that dominates occidental tradition. What is fascinating about the phenomenon of presence is that, evidently, components of body and mind meet and interact. Consequently, presence is not "primarily a physical but a mental phenomenon" notwithstanding its physical effects on performers and audience. "Presence is an 'untimely' process of consciousness – located simultaneously within and without the passage of time" (Lehmann 1999: 13). I agree with Lehmann's definition of presence as a process of consciousness – but one that is articulated through the body and sensed by the spectators through their bodies. In my view, presence represents a phenomenon which cannot be grasped by such a dichotomy as body vs. mind or consciousness. In fact, presence collapses such a dichotomy. When the actor brings forth their body as energetic

and thus generates presence, they appear as embodied mind. The actor exemplifies that body and mind cannot be separated from each other. Each is always already implied in the other. This does not just apply to the oriental actors and dancers whom Eugenio Barba witnessed, or to the "holy" actor Ryszard Cieślak. Although their particularly strong, intense presence highlights the erasure of the opposition between body and mind/consciousness, such erasure is true for all performers with presence. Through the performer's presence, the spectator experiences the performer and himself as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming – he perceives the circulating energy as a transformative and vital energy. I would like to call this the *radical concept of presence*.

This final manifestation of presence illuminates why the performer's presence fulfils the civilizing process's promise of happiness. The occidental civilizing process presupposes the mind–body dualism. Its smooth progression is allegedly guaranteed when humans succeed in bringing the body under the control of the mind and abstract themselves from their body, thus freeing themselves from the conditions set by physical existence. At the conclusion of this process the body dissolves completely in the mind. Presence indeed fulfills this promise and erases the dichotomy between body and mind but in a different way than Elias had assumed. It revokes the dichotomy by making the concerned performer appear as embodied mind, thus enabling the spectators to experience the performer as well as themselves as embodied minds. Instead of postponing the fulfillment of the promise of happiness to the end of the civilizing process, the performer's presence fulfills it instantly. Man *is embodied mind*. No human can be reduced just to body or mind, and even less to a battlefield where body and mind fight for supreme authority. The mind cannot exist without the body; it articulates itself through physicality.

Due to their cultural traditions, Western audiences are used to defining themselves on the basis of the mind–body dualism. They project its erasure to the distant future or see it as a rare boon granted only to a few chosen people, usually as the result of spiritual epiphanies. When spectators sense the performers' presence and simultaneously bring themselves forth as embodied minds, they experience a moment of happiness which cannot be recreated in daily life. To recreate it would require another experience of presence. Consequently, the spectators might become addicted to these rare moments of happiness which the performer's presence alone offers them in the theatre. Presence does not make something extraordinary appear. Instead, it marks the emergence of something very ordinary and develops it into an event: the nature of man as embodied mind. To experience the other and oneself as present means to experience them as embodied minds; thus, ordinary existence is experienced as extraordinary – as transformed and even transfigured.

The term aura emphasizes the displacement inherent to this transfiguration, its *noli me tangere*, which is still apprehended physically and "inhaled." The term presence stresses the becoming-conspicuous and becoming-present of the ordinary, experienced physically as an event. As such, reauratization and presence cannot

simply be equated; yet they are also not mutually exclusive. Rather, they mark different aspects of a single transformative process for the spectators.

While aura is frequently applied to objects, only the first two concepts of presence allow for such an application. Objects can command space and attention and qualify for the strong concept of presence as long as these qualities are detached from the embodiment processes. The radical concept, however, cannot be attributed to objects. Objects are frequently perceived as present, especially in theatre performances and performance events. The radical concept of presence requires the idea of an embodied mind at its center and therefore has to be limited to human beings. Gernot Boehme's phrase of the "ecstasy of things" describes the presence of objects more accurately. Presence brings forth humans as that which they always already are: embodied minds. Ecstasy, in turn, makes things appear as what they already are but which usually remains unnoticed in everyday life because of their instrumentalization (Boehme 1995: 31–4).[17] We must therefore reflect on the correlations between the concept of the presence of the performer and that of the ecstasy of things.

Both terms, however, exclude products of technical and electronic media. While they might simulate effects of presence, they are unable to generate presence itself. For, presence erases the dichotomy of being and appearing so fundamental to the aesthetic discourse of the last centuries, but the presence effects created by technical and electronic media actually depend on this very dichotomy. They create the *impression* of presentness without actually bringing forth these bodies or objects as present. With the help of technology they are able to make the promise of presence. Human bodies, their fragments, objects, and landscapes are made to seem present in a particularly immediate manner but they remain constituted only of moving lights or pixel arrangements on a screen. Real human bodies, objects, or landscapes actually remain absent anywhere on the movie, television, or computer screen.

Evidently, technical and electronic media also try to fulfill the civilizing process's promise of happiness by erasing the mind–body dualism. However, their approach is diametrically opposed to generating presence. While presence brings forth the human body in its materiality, as energetic body and living organism, technical and electronic media create the impression of human presence by dematerializing and disembodying it. The more refined the techniques for dissolving the materiality of the human body, objects, and landscapes, the more intense and overwhelming the impression of their presence will appear. The impressions created might move the spectators to tears or thoroughly frighten them, causing bouts of cold sweat and making their hearts race, as was the case with the theatre of the eighteenth century. The illusion created by the technical and electronic media is often even more successful than illusionistic theatre in triggering strong physiological, affective, energetic, and motor reactions in the spectators. Crucially, however, the illusion does not bring forth the performer's phenomenal body as present. Yet, the effect and impression of presence rather fulfills the promise of happiness implicit in the civilizing process by immaterializing the performers'

actual physicality and disembodying them. Their presentness is to be experienced solely as an aesthetic appearance, lacking any real, material physicality.

Both presence and presence effects may be understood as fulfilling the promise of happiness implied in the civilizing process. While the presence effects of technical and electronic media follow the logic of the civilizing process for their accomplishment, presence in performance repudiates and subverts this inherently flawed logic. In this sense, an aesthetics of the performative is to be regarded as an aesthetics of presence (Lehmann 1999: 22), rather than of presence effects, and as the aesthetics of "appearing" (Seel 2004), rather than of appearance.

Animal bodies

When discussing corporeality, one look at theatre and performance art since the 1960s reveals that considering the corporealities brought forth by the actors and performers alone far from suffices. Frequently, animals feature in these performances. Some particularly prominent examples include the horses in Grueber's production of *The Bacchae* (Schaubuehne am Halleschen Ufer, 1974), present on stage throughout each performance, if behind a glass pane, and the coyote in Beuys' action *I like America and America likes me* (René Block Gallery New York 1974). During the 1990s, animal "appearances" onstage multiplied. Marina Abramović, who had already involved a snake in a 1978 performance (together with Ulay), worked with pythons wrapped around her body in her performances of *Dragon Heads* (performed at different venues between 1990 and 1994). Jan Fabre, whose *Power of Theatrical Madness* (Venice Biennale 1984) featured two parrots and frogs, had a "boy with the moon and the stars on his head" enter, carrying an African owl on his shoulder in *Glass in the head will be made of glass* (Vlaamse Opera Antwerp 1990). Another African owl participated in *Sweet Temptations* (Vienna Festival 1991), this time sitting on a branch. In *She was and she is, even* (Felix Meritis Amsterdam1991), the seam of Els Deceukelier's dress repeatedly brushed over three black tarantulas crawling across the stage. In *Faking as it is, un-faked* (*Vervalsing zoals ze is, onvervalst*, Théâtre National Brussels 1992), 21 cats held on short leashes yowled on stage (the cats featured only in the premiere, they did not reappear in subsequent performances). Frank Castorf's productions at the Volksbuehne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz have also swarmed with animals: a python in *Pension Schoeller* (1994); goats in *Hauptmann's Weavers* (1997); a horse in *City of Women* (1995); a monkey in *Dirty Hands* (1998); a goldfish in *Demons* (1999); a dog in *Fatherland* (1999/2000) and in *The Insulted and Injured* (2001).

Onstage appearances of animals can hardly count as a new development. Persuasive documentation speaks to their participation as far back as Medieval passion plays and court performances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is a well-known fact that a dog played the "lead role" in Castelli's *The Dog of Aubry de Mont-Didier*.[18] When Caroline Jagemann arranged for a guest performance at the Weimar Hoftheater in 1817, the theatre's artistic director, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, took this occasion to resign from his post.

In the passion plays animals supplied symbolic meaning, while those in the court performances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries carried an emblematic-symbolic meaning. Since the eighteenth century, animals fulfilled dramaturgical functions. They provided a context for the social milieu in naturalistic performances or were used to enhance the atmosphere. Reinhardt's *Oresteia* may serve as an example for the latter. The critic Jacobsohn dismissed the horses in *Agamemnon* as "circus-like in the most vulgar sense" and appropriate in their animalistic sensuality only to spectator masses "who grew up with bull fights." However, it is virtually impossible to ascribe a similar set of meanings and functions to the animals present onstage in the above mentioned performances since the 1970s.[19] Statements by the concerned artists rather point to a new form of communication between man and animal. Beuys called his action with the coyote an "energy dialogue" (Tisdall 1988: 13), while Marina Abramović described her interaction with the pythons as follows: "I sit motionless on the chair with 5 pythons wrapped around my body. The pythons, 10 to 15 feet long, have not been fed for two weeks prior to the performance. A circle of ice blocks surrounds me. During the performance the snakes move around my body in accordance with my energy lines" (Stooss 1998: 326).[20]

In both cases, the artists were dealing with wild, untamed animals; their instinctual behavior was not predictable or controllable. Yet both artists claimed to have discovered a channel of communication to them, which they identified as an exchange of energy. At first, this seems obscure and mystifying. Beuys' *Coyote* action will serve as an example for clarification. The action, carefully documented by the photographer Caroline Tisdall at the urging of the artist, took place at the René Block Gallery in New York every day from 10 am to 6 pm between May 23 and 25, 1974.[21] Beuys arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport, where he was wrapped in felt and driven to the gallery in an ambulance. During his five-day stay in the U.S. he remained inside the gallery. The action was performed in one of the gallery's long rooms lit by three windows. The room was divided into two sections by a fence, which separated Beuys and the coyote from the audience. In the farthest corner at the back lay a pile of straw which had been brought to the gallery along with the coyote. The artist himself brought two long stretches of felt, a walking stick, gloves, a flashlight, and 50 copies of the *Wall Street Journal*, each day's edition delivered in the morning and added to the existing piles of newspaper. Beuys showed them to the coyote who smelled and urinated on them.

The artist laid out both stretches of felt in the center of the room; he arranged one of them in a heap with the flashlight shining out at the audience. Beuys placed the copies of the *Wall Street Journal* at the front of the room in two piles. With the brown walking stick over his arm, Beuys walked towards the second stretch of felt, put on the brown gloves and then wrapped himself completely in felt, his raised walking stick poking out at the top. Thus clad, his figure underwent a series of transformations: standing upright with the crook pointing upwards; bent at a right angle with the crook on the ground; kneeling on the ground, then cowering, with the stick held towards the ground. Throughout, the figure moved around its

own axis in accordance with the movements and direction of the coyote. Then he would suddenly fall sideways to the ground, where he remained lying stretched out. Abruptly, he would then jump up again, let the felt wrap slide off and strike three notes on the triangle he wore around his neck. When silence returned to the room, Beuys played a 20-second long tape of booming turbines from the other side of the fence. When it was silent again, Beuys pulled off the gloves and threw them at the coyote who tore at them with his teeth. Then Beuys walked over to the newspapers, which the coyote had scattered and partly ripped, and rearranged them in two piles. He settled down on the straw to smoke a cigarette. Usually, the coyote joined him there. Otherwise, the coyote preferred to rest on the felt heap. Facing the same direction as the flashlight, the coyote never turned its back to the audience. Frequently, it would pace the room restlessly, or stand still by one of the windows and stare out. Then again, it would return to the newspapers to chew on them, drag them across the room or do its business on them.

The coyote kept its distance to the felt figure; now and then, it would circle the figure scenting and excited, attack the stick or dig its teeth into it, chew on the felt and rip it to tiny pieces. When the figure lay stretched out on the ground, the coyote sniffed, pawed at, and nudged him; once it even settled down next to the body and tried to crawl under the felt. Mostly however, it stayed away, keeping the stiff figure in sight. Only when Beuys lit his cigarette on the straw did the coyote seek out his company. When he finished smoking his cigarette, Beuys got up, arranged the felt and wrapped himself in it anew. In the course of the three days, man and animal increasingly grew together. At the end of the performance, Beuys slowly scattered the straw over the room, gave the coyote a tight farewell hug, and left the gallery in the same manner as he had come.

What had happened between man and animal in those three days?

The objects used by Beuys in his action mostly hailed from the everyday: newspapers, cigarettes, flashlight, gloves, walking stick, tape recorder, triangle. He performed ordinary tasks with them: arranging the newspapers, smoking, turning on the tape recorder. Yet all these objects and actions invoked processes that generated, preserved, transmitted, or obstructed energy. Beuys used the felt as tool of "isolation and for warmth:" "isolation from America and transmission of heat to the coyote" (Tisdall 1988: 14). The flashlight, in particular, epitomized energy to Beuys. "First, it collects the energy and then, in the course of the day, this energy vanishes until the batteries have to be exchanged" (Tisdall 1988: 14). The flashlight was hidden inside the felt to avoid revealing it as a technical gadget: "It was meant as a source of light, a fireplace, the glow of the setting sun … from this gray heap" (Tisdall 1988: 15). For Beuys, the curved walking stick, first used in his action *Eurasia* (1965), symbolized the flow of energy passing between East and West. The only two deliberate noises – the notes from the triangle and the roaring turbines – also served the potential release of energy. He explained the roar of the turbines as "the echo of ruling technology: energy which is not used," while the notes of the triangle should remind of "unity and oneness" and was conceived as "a thrust of consciousness directed at the coyote" (Tisdall 1988: 15). Importantly,

the chosen objects did not just signify a flow of energy but also generated or transmitted it.

The energy held or transmitted by those objects (for example when the coyote lay down on the felt, sniffed at the stick, or listened to the notes of the triangle) complemented the energy set free by the artist himself. Beuys not only staged himself as a shaman in these actions – alluding to the Navajo shaman by dressing in a hat, wide cloak, a piece of rabbit fur on his vest as well as the triangle around his neck. Beuys actually saw himself as a shaman, a figure ordained with special spiritual powers able to effect changes in animals, humans, and the entire cosmos:

> I really did adopt the figure of the shaman during the action … But not to return to the past, into the time in which the shaman's existence was justified … I am using this old figure to express something about the future by saying that the shaman stood for something that was capable of uniting material as well as spiritual contexts into a single entity.
>
> (Schneede 1994: 336)

Beuys' actions aimed at releasing energies in the artist and the coyote in order to initiate transformation. The action event had a mythological context. According to Native American myths and legends, the coyote represented one of its most powerful deities.[22] The coyote embodied the power of transformation and was capable of changing from a physical into a spiritual state and vice versa. It understood every language, and knew how to persuade fences to let it pass through. When its anger was aroused it could bring bad fortune to man; when appeased it could cure illnesses. During their healing ceremonials that lasted nine nights, Navajo shamans put on coyote masks to evoke the coyote's power to heal the sick (Luckert 1979). The arrival of the White Man changed the coyote's status. Its ingenuity and competence, admired and worshipped by the Native Americans as a subversive force, was now construed as artfulness and cunning. It became the "mean coyote," free to be hunted and killed.

In Beuys' own words, his action evoked this "traumatic point" of American history: "One could say we ought to make restitution to the coyote. Only then can this wound be healed" (Tisdall 1988: 10). The action itself constituted a sort of healing ritual, employing the energies released in the artist as well as the coyote to effect healing. In a sense, Beuys indeed acted like a shaman. By permanently shifting positions and circumstances, he sought to bring forth a liminal situation which could effect the transformation of the coyote and restore its "original" status. Beuys himself settled down on the straw that arrived with the coyote, while the coyote chose to rest on the felt brought along and arranged by Beuys. On the one hand, he let the coyote rip up and defecate on the *Wall Street Journal*, which to him emblematized the "ossified rigor mortis of the notion of CAPITAL" (Tisdall 1988: 16) and on the other, he allowed it to sniff and bite the gloves – a symbolic reference to human hands and their creative, transformative potential. He exposed

it to the roar of the turbines, the "echo of ruling technology," as well as the tone of the triangle, aimed directly at the coyote's "consciousness." Through these procedures, Beuys conjured the energy hidden inside these objects and set free his own and the coyote's "healing power," so that it might effect a transformation in both man and beast. The "energy dialogue" between Beuys and the coyote aimed at the possibility of spiritual transformation.

It remains highly questionable whether the audience actually perceived the action as such an "energy dialogue" and healing ritual. Beuys and the coyote were separated from the audience by a wire screen used in wild animal shows at zoos and circuses. The barrier was only undone partially when Beuys stepped up to the screen to greet one of his acquaintances who had entered the gallery. On the whole, however, the division represented one of the action's constitutive elements that went beyond a mere safety precaution for the audience. The spectators were cast as voyeurs, watching from a safe distance as Beuys performed his risky activities. Were they denied the energy potential released in the action? Could they sense the energy flow circulating between Beuys and the coyote? For an American audience, the strangeness of seeing Beuys, flown in from Europe, acting like a Native American shaman, was not only *not* eradicated but enhanced by the spatial arrangements.

Yet, we must presume that the interplay between the artist's actions and the animal's behavior made a striking impression on its audience. Beuys treated the coyote as an equal partner. He tried to influence it without violating it (if we temporarily overlook the fact that the animal had to be caught and caged for this action). Beuys allowed the coyote every possible liberty within the limits set by the artist, which applied to both equally. Even if the spectators did not realize that Beuys granted the coyote consciousness, they still understood that the relationship between man and animal was not defined hierarchically, as is the case in wild animal acts at zoos and circuses, but through mutual exchange. Man acknowledged the animal in its fundamental elusiveness as an equal partner – a claim potentially disturbing to many spectators.

The action confronted the audience with the animal's elusiveness, which other theatre performances and performance events involving animals have repeatedly focused on since the 1960s. On the one hand, this elusiveness stressed the performance's materiality and on the other, it exemplified the autopoietic feedback loop.

In Beuys' action the animal body emerged as an energetic, living organism – a body-in-becoming. There was no difference between the materiality of the human body and that of the animal. Neither could be shaped or controlled at will in order to create a work of art. Like the human body, the animal body became material only in its mortification, as highlighted in Hermann Nitsch's actions, in which he worked on a lamb's carcass, poured blood on it, stuffed it with entrails, and tied it to a human being. Another case in point would be Marina Abramović's performance *Cleaning the House* (Sean Kelly Gallery New York 1995), in which she sat on a small stool surrounded by a heap of fresh cattle bones. She picked up one bone at a

time, scrubbed off the meat and washed it. She treated the bones, removed the last remnants of meat reminiscent of the live animal and transformed them through her actions into objects and artifacts.

The live animal body, however, remains elusive. Similar to the human body, it attains the status of an event rather than a finished work of art. In this crucial sense, man and animal are alike, as the audiences of Beuys' action piece and other performances involving animals were forced to acknowledge. It is a matter of speculation whether the audience's insights into the similarities between animal and man extended beyond the comparability of living organisms and also triggered immediate physiological, affective, and energetic reactions in them. It is uncertain whether the direct confrontation with the animal's living organism resulted in the spectators' "becoming-animal," a claim made by Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 175), or whether the spectators became aware and responded physically to their own inherent animalism. It must be assumed, however, that such an erasure of the difference between man and beast did not leave the audience cold, given that it went against the grain of centuries of occidental thought and behavior that had gone unchallenged until recent findings in genetic research.

In more than one way, the animal's elusiveness has held a special charm for audiences. Animals unfold an almost uncanny "presence" of the strong order whenever they appear onstage: they seem to cover the entire stage and attract everyone's attention. They steal the actors' show. This particularly affects performances in which animals fulfill a clearly defined dramaturgical function because along with the animal – whether domesticated or actively trained – its "primeval," "mysterious," "unpredictable" nature enters the stage. The spectators can assume of the actors that they are acting according to some sort of a plan. What fascinates the audience about the animal's appearance onstage is the sense of unpredictability. With the animal onstage reality invades into fiction, chance enters into order, nature into culture. When an animal appears onstage, it invokes a moment of crisis – similar to hurricanes and floods – in which everything is put into question and human order threatens to be submerged by nature. Unlike with hurricanes and floods, however, the anticipation that the human order will be destroyed – that the animal will suspend the *mise en scène* – seems far more enjoyable than the hope that everything go according to plan. The animal's appearance adds a subversive element to the production which at once threatens it and exerts a strong fascination over the audience.

Since the 1960s, the alarming elusiveness of animals has been repeatedly sought out and employed by theatre directors and performance artists for whom the animals usually do not have a more expansive function. Their mere elusive presence on stage suffices. Whatever they do becomes a constitutive element of the performance. The animals enhance and make visible the fundamental elusiveness of performance as such to the audience, and perhaps also to the actors. Irrespective of its course, the interaction between actors and spectators in a performance causes the autopoietic feedback loop to take unforeseeable turns. Since both actors and spectators are involved, these turns are often not even perceived as emergent

(Bunge 2003; Cantoni 1999).[23] By constantly stimulating emergent phenomena through their behavior, the animals sensitize actors and spectators. In the eye of the beholder, performances featuring animals may resemble an organic system which cannot be assumed to function according to an accurately calculated "plan" but – as in the case of the immune system – which is constantly exposed to spontaneous changes.

Spatiality

Spatiality, too, is transitory and fleeting. It does not exist before, beyond, or after the performance but emerges in and through it, as do corporeality and tonality. As such, spatiality needs to be distinguished from the space in which it occurs.

First, the space in which a performance takes place represents an architectural-geometric space that pre-dates the performance and endures after it has ended. The architectural-geometric space consists of a specific ground plan, measures a certain height, breadth, length, volume, and is fixed and stable. Because of these attributes it can be maintained for a long time. It is often compared to a container. Accordingly, the space contains what takes place inside it, leaving it undisturbed in its basic attributes. Even when the floor becomes uneven and reveals holes, the wall's colors turn paler and its plaster begins to crumble, the architectural-geometric space remains largely unaltered.

In contrast, the space in which a performance occurs can be regarded as a performative space. It opens special possibilities for the relationship between actors and spectators and for movement and perception. Whatever the ways in which these possibilities are used, applied, realized, treated, or, alternatively, subverted, they affect the performative space. Every movement of people, objects, lights, and every noise can transform this unstable and fluctuating space. The performance's spatiality is brought forth by the performative space and must be examined within the parameters set by it.

Performative spaces

Theatre spaces, whether they are permanently installed or merely provisional, are always performative spaces. The history of theatre architecture and stage design – mostly written as the history of architectural-geometric spaces – must also be seen in terms of a history of performative spaces. It provides a lively document for the relationship between actors and spectators and traces the kinaesthetic and perceptual opportunities granted to actors and spectators respectively. The relationship between actors and spectators changes depending on the audience's position: encircling the stage; standing; moving around three sides of a rectangular or square stage; sitting full frontal to the stage, separated from it by the footlights. Likewise, crucial preconditions for potential movement through the space are set depending on whether the actors have a spacious circular and almost empty orchestra at their disposal, or whether they must act in a condensed space in

front of the first set of wings on a proscenium stage with backdrops. Spatial arrangement offers the audience a wide array of perceptual possibilities. In one instance, the audience may be able to run their gaze over the entire playable space, the surrounding landscape, and back to the actors in front of the *skene*, the chorus in the orchestra, and the other spectators in the changing daylight. In another, they might be seated in the middle or towards the side of a candle-lit proscenium auditorium viewing the action according to the principles of central perspective. Admittedly, the side seat offers only a skewed view of the stage but nevertheless a finer one into the opposite box. Each constellation offers the audience different perceptual possibilities.

However, the fact that the performance space structures and organizes movement, perception, and the overall relationship between actors and spectators does not automatically imply that it controls them entirely. The performative space opens up possibilities without defining how they will ultimately be used and realized. Moreover, the performative space can be employed in ways neither planned nor foreseeable. Since such uses of space go against the audience's preconceptions, such extraordinary cases are occasionally mentioned in travelogues, diary entries, autobiographical notes, letters, and newspaper reports. Hence we know that aristocratic spectators in the French theatre of the seventeenth century frequently seated themselves onstage and talked to each other loudly and uninhibitedly during the performance. They disrupted not only the relationship between actors and spectators set by the spatial order but also influenced movement and perception. Theatre scandals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tell similar stories. In Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise* at the Freie Buehne Berlin (October 20, 1889), one member of the audience rose from his seat in the darkened auditorium, swung a pair of forceps over his head, and suggested he join the play and assist in the evidently difficult birth taking place backstage, thus offering one radical redefinition of actor–spectator relationships. He was not the only one. According to newspaper reports, the entire audience subsequently delivered a

> … play within a play … The battles between enthusiasm and outrage, bravos and boos, jeering and clapping, the catcalls, the demonstrations, the agitation, the excitement, which followed – burst into! – each act, redesignated the Lessing-Theater as a meeting place filled with a passionate, surging crowd of people.
>
> (Baake cited in Jaron *et al.* 1986: 96)

The performative space is characterized by that very possibility of being used in unintended ways, even if some participants considered such an unpredictable use inappropriate and infuriating. Claus Peymann, for example, took offence still in 1965 when some spectators stormed the stage during the second performance of *Offending the Audience*. Each individual use constitutes the performative space and brings forth a specific spatiality.

The historical avant-garde cleared the path for this insight insofar as it offered a radical break from the prevalent model of theatre with its proscenium, separating the actors from the audience in the darkened auditorium. The avant-gardists experimented with different types of theatre spaces and restructured concepts of movement and perception as well as the relationships between actors and spectators. They drew on and modified various historical models such as the orchestra, the stage of the medieval market place or the *hanamichi* from *Kabuki* theatre. When Reinhardt explored the possibilities of the orchestra in his *King Oedipus* at the Circus Schumann in Berlin, he was not trying to revive ancient Greek theatre. He opened up new spaces that promoted a community between actors and spectators and in which actors, habituated to the proscenium stage, could discover and present themselves differently to the spectators. Critics often fiercely attacked Reinhardt's spatial experiments. Alfred Klaar criticized "the distribution of the acting onto the space in front of, beneath, behind, and among us, the never-ending demand to shift our points of view" (1911).

Moreover, theatre reformists and avant-gardists created performances in spaces with a thematic relation to the play they were staging – at the "originary sites," so to speak. Reinhardt staged his *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the pinewoods of Berlin-Nikolassee (1910), the *The Great World Theatre of Salzburg* at the Collegiate Church in Salzburg (1922), and the *Merchant of Venice* on the Campo San Trovaso in Venice (1934). Nikolai Evreinov performed his mass spectacle *The Storming of the Winter Palace* on the square in front and in the windows of the Winter Palace (Petrograd, 1920), and Sergei Eisenstein chose a Moscow gasworks as the performance venue for his production of Tretyakov's *Gas Masks* (1923). Each of these spaces promised new possibilities for the negotiation of relationships between actors and spectators, for movement and perception. The early twentieth century also saw the realization of new theatre buildings that restructured the use of space, such as Reinhardt's conversion of Circus Schumann into the Grosse Schauspielhaus and Piscator's and Gropius' design of their "Total Theatre."

The theatre reformists and members of the historical avant-garde movements at the turn of the last century were aware of the performativity of space. They explored the possibilities offered by different spaces and dismantled received notions about theatrical space in order to stimulate new theatrical experiences for the audience. The theatre directors of the avant-garde above all endeavored to maintain control over the autopoietic feedback loop.

After the Second World War and partly already in the late 1930s, the proscenium stage returned as the dominant theatre model. Most of the new theatres built in Germany in the 1950s also followed that model, and theatres with variable spaces were no longer built. To the best of my knowledge, the Schaubuehne am Lehniner Platz (inaugurated in 1980) marked the first of its kind and must be seen in the context of the performative turn of the 1960s.

In the 1960s a second – much more severe and radical – exodus from the theatres set in. New performance venues were created in former factories, slaughterhouses, bunkers, street car depots, market halls, shopping malls, fair centers, sports

stadiums, on streets, squares and subway platforms, in public parks and beer tents, on landfill sites, in auto garages and ruins, in cemeteries. Increasingly, preference was given to spaces that were not originally conceived as performance venues because they did not set any clear guidelines for the relationship between actors and spectators. These spaces constantly redefined performative relationships by refusing to allot a specific spatial segment to either group. In these spaces, performance itself regulated the relationship between actors and spectators and opened up possibilities for movement and perception. Performance generated spatiality.

Three strategies in particular intensified the performativity of space: first, the use of an (almost) empty space or one with variable arrangements allowing for the unrestricted movement of actors and spectators; second, the creation of spatial arrangements enabling so far unexplored possibilities for the negotiation of relationships between actors and spectators, movement and perception; and third, the experimentation with given spaces usually fulfilling other purposes.

Celtic + ~~~ exemplifies the productive use of empty space. No spatial arrangements in the bunker, not even the wooden benches, imposed any clear guidelines on the participants. Beuys and the spectators moved around the entire space. The relationship between Beuys and the spectators was wholly determined by the artist's actions and the spectators' reactions. Audience perception solely depended on their fluctuating position in the space: atop the benches; stuck in the middle of the crowd; on the crowd's periphery; immediately in front of the performer; or pushed to the side. The performer and the spectators generated a permanently changing spatiality through their actions.

In contrast, *Dionysus in 69* in the Performing Garage did have a specific spatial arrangement. Black rubber mats had been placed in the middle of the former motor garage, apparently charting out the space for the actors. Multi-storeyed structures rose up by the walls, each floor connected by ladders. Among them was a particularly high construction that almost touched the ceiling: the so-called tower. The spectators could sit on the carpet surrounding the rubber mats, crawl underneath the structure, or climb onto any floor of the structures. They were entirely free to choose the distance and perspective they wished to keep to the central area. Moreover, the possibilities offered by this spatial arrangement were significantly expanded on during the performance. The performers did not restrict themselves to the central area but moved through the entire space. The Pentheus performer climbed atop the tower to deliver his speech to the citizens of Thebes. During the "caress-scene," the performers spread across the entire space, reaching out even to the spectators "hidden" underneath the structures. The audience, in turn, enjoyed the right to move around the space throughout the performance, enabling them to reposition themselves towards the action. Some spectators even occupied the central area and thus "joined the story". In comparison to an empty space, this spatial arrangement multiplied the possibilities for moving through the space and perceiving the events. The performativity of space was particularly pronounced in this set-up because it did not favor or exclude any spatial choices

from the outset. *Dionysus in 69* exemplifies that spatiality is brought forth by the movements and perceptions of actors and spectators.

When creating specific spatial arrangements to stimulate new experiences, the use of space in performance can also deliberately favor certain possibilities and exclude others. Grotowski created situations of extreme proximity between actors and spectators in his productions. Here, the audience could feel the actors' breath and smell their sweat. In his production of Słowacki's *Kordian* (1961), he set up iron bunk beds in three separate locations throughout the auditorium on which the spectators – not more than 65 – had to take their seats. At the same time, the bunk beds served as podiums on which the performance's central events took place. Actors and spectators actively shared the same space. The spectators, too, were treated as inmates of the mental asylum. When the doctor called upon the actors and spectators to sing a certain song, he stormed towards those spectators who refused, ordered their compliance, and threateningly held a stick under their noses. The actors moved through the entire space while the spectators were bound to their beds, so to speak. Their perceptual possibilities depended on where their bed was located and whether they occupied the lower or upper bunk. The resulting spatiality determined the experience of the spectators.

Grotowski's production of Calderón's *The Constant Prince* adapted by Słowacki (1965) operated on a similar principle. Here the theatre resembled a *theatrum anatomicum*. The all but 30 to 40 spectators stood around the stage in concentric circles and upward sloping rows; the rows were separated from each other by walls so high that only the heads of the spectators were visible above it. This not only immobilized the spectators but also pushed them into the roles of voyeurs *vis-à-vis* the horrifying events on stage. In both cases the restrictions of the spatial arrangements channeled the energy circulating in the performative space. The affective potential of spatiality moved into the foreground and unfolded for actors and spectators alike.

This was also true in *Mothers* at the significantly larger Frankfurt Schauspielhaus and in *Goetz von Berlichingen* at the warehouse-like Bockenheimer tram depot, although Einar Schleef deployed somewhat different spatial constellations. In the latter production, Schleef constructed a broad double-storied runway across the length of the depot, cutting through the middle of the space and leading directly to one of the back doors, which opened at various times during the performance. The actors, wearing iron-heeled boots, crossed the two levels of the runway and mingled with the spectators while distributing boiled potatoes. The spectators sat facing each other in upward sloping rows on both sides of the runway. While the upper rows offered only a partial view of the events underneath the runway, they provided a good view of the spectators sitting on the opposite side. The runway events in turn frequently distracted those seated in the lower and middle rows from observing the other spectators. The spectators in the lowest rows sat so close to the runway that they were able to smell the actors' sweat as they stormed past them. These movements on and underneath the runway constantly redefined the relationship between actors and spectators and opened or restricted specific

possibilities for perception. The spatiality of the performance shifted constantly. At one moment it favored the creation of a community between actors and spectators only to destroy it again in the next.

The third strategy for the creation of spatiality builds on the possibilities offered by a given space which is used, often simultaneously, in ways divergent from its original purpose. Klaus Michael Grueber frequently employed this strategy. He staged the *Faust Salpêtrière* (adapted from Goethe) at the Chapelle Saint Louis, Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris in 1975, *Winter Journey* (*Winterreise*) at the Olympic Stadium Berlin in 1977, *Rudi* inside the ruins of Berlin's Hotel Esplanade in 1979, and *Pale Mother, Gentle Sister* (*Bleiche Mutter, Zarte Schwester*) at the Soviet Cemetery located on the north slope of Castle Belvedere in Oberweimar (the summer residence of Goethe's patron, Duke Carl Augustus) in 1995. Grueber did not leave these spaces unaltered; rather, his set designers (Gilles Aillaud and Eduardo Arroyo or Antonio Recalcati) added details to enhance the space's performativity and change or increase their historical significance.

For *Rudi*, Antonio Recalcati put up installations in the front foyer, the palm garden, the breakfast hall, and the "emperor's hall"[24] of the former Grand Hotel Esplanade, which had received light or no damage from bombings during the war. Up to the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, these rooms had still been regularly used for opera, press or film balls and other gala events, for fashion shows, and beauty pageants. With the Berlin Wall, the hotel's forecourt, opening to the Tiergarten, was blocked off by concrete and barbed wire, and the now much less sought-after building gradually became dilapidated. To this building Grueber and Recalcati invited the audience for the performance of *Rudi*. The actor Paul Burian sat in the breakfast hall and read out Bernard von Brentano's 1934 novella *Rudi* in a monotonous voice. With a slight delay loudspeakers transmitted his voice into the other rooms. The other performers included a boy with long hair wearing jeans, a shirt with an unusually large collar, and a sweater, who played in the other room. Keeping him company was a plump, gray-haired woman in a wheelchair, dressed in a black dress and vest. The spectators could stroll through each of the rooms in their own time. They could listen to the voice coming from the loudspeakers, sit down or move on and return to each room as often as they wished (Kreuder 2000: 22–38). While they could be sure that Burian, reading aloud, was a performer, the identity of the boy or the old woman was less certain. In fact, such uncertainty extended to the other spectators moving around. One's relationship to people in the room changed depending on whether one perceived them as performers or fellow spectators. In one case, one might closely follow their every move, in another ask them about their observations and impressions. In other words, the spectators themselves largely generated *Rudi*'s spatiality through their movements and perceptions. In addition, the spectators interpreted the objects in the rooms and related them to text fragments. These meanings influenced their perception and motivated movements and actions that further shaped the performative space. Perception, association, memory, and imagination overlapped. The spectators

simultaneously experienced the real spaces of the former Grand Hotel Esplanade as spaces of imaginary or remembered scenarios (Fischer-Lichte 2008).

The Los Angeles-based group Cornerstone Theater employed this strategy in an entirely different way in their collage of texts by Beckett and Pirandello, entitled *Foot/Mouth* (2001), performed at a shopping mall in Santa Monica. The spectators were greeted on the mall's lower level, equipped with headphones, and led to an upper floor by one of the group's members. Here, they enjoyed a good view onto the floors below. The spectators could not only wander around their floor but through the entire mall if they wished. The performers, too, were spread over the entire mall but mostly performed on the lower level, visible to the audience from above. This lower plaza was also used by passers-by. Since the spectators were left in the dark about who was a performer, they initially perceived everyone strolling by as performers. Even after it had become clear who qualified consistently as a performer and who was a random stroller, the latter still remained present as a special kind of performer, attracting attention. Some passers-by strolled, or hastened, past; others lingered in front of shop windows, reviewed the displays, entered and exited the stores at various interims, not seldomly laden with new bags. Some people became irritated when an elderly lady (an actress) leaned so far over the balustrade that one feared she wanted to hurl herself down. Other passers-by in their turn stared at the spectators equipped with headphones.

Under these circumstances, it was difficult to distinguish actors and spectators. Whoever strolled through the mall could be turned into an actor and/or spectator. The configuration of the actor–spectator relationship was unique to each individual and depended on who saw whom in what role. Each participant enjoyed a variety of possibilities in terms of movement and perception, particularly those who had bought a ticket and could claim their spectator status. Where they moved, what they saw, and whether they kept their headphones on to hear the actors' voices or removed them intermittently to hear the mall's hubbub determined their sense of the space. In each individual case, the activities around the mall and the performers' actions overlapped and interfaced.

The group Hygiene heute uses a similar principle to generate spatiality in their "audio-tours." So far, their tours have taken place in Giessen (*Reference Kirchner* [*Verweis Kirchner*] 2000), Frankfurt am Main (*System Kirchner* 2000), Munich (*Channel Kirchner* [*Kanal Kirchner*] 2001), and Graz (*Kirchner's Sister* [*Kirchners Schwester*] 2002). Drawing on audio-tours at museums, castles, and other historical sites, each of these tours furnished spectators with an audio guide that led them on a roughly hour-long tour through the city. The spectators were sent off by themselves at 15-minute intervals. The tour tape allegedly represented a rare sign of life of the librarian Kirchner, who had disappeared under mysterious circumstances in 1998. The Munich tape was supposedly found in a public toilet, making it the starting point for the tour. As the recorded voice told the story of the librarian's disappearance, the listeners were gradually dragged into the story. Pursuer and pursued at the same time, the listeners were apparently in danger of being trapped and caught by the "snail." The listeners turned into the lead actors and

protagonists of the story. In one of Munich's huge underground parking lots they heard the voice urge them under a hurried breath: "Run! Open the door. The snail is close, can you smell it? Run faster! Open the door at the end of the hall!" At a tram-stop the voice instructed: "Observe the people at the tram-stop. Do you see the ones carrying suitcases?" Obviously, there usually are numerous people carrying suitcases at any tram-stop in central Munich. Likewise, the voice warned against men wearing blue shirts walking through Frankfurt's financial district, and invoked the watching eye of CCTV cameras in public spaces to supply further evidence for the reality of the chase. In the course of the performance, it became hard, if not impossible, for the spectators to determine with certainty who was an actor and who just an ordinary citizen. The dilemma grew as the participants themselves behaved increasingly strangely when following the instructions of the voice, so that people were bound to stop and stare back at them. The spectators turned into actors without being able to discern between actors, other spectators, and random passers-by.

After only a short period, the spectators' perception of their heretofore familiar and well-known city changed. They entered familiar streets, squares, parks, buildings as sites where a mysterious, fictive story was unfolding according to instructions, warnings, and explanations of the recorded voice, and in which, evidently, the spectators themselves played a major role. By moving through the city's space under the guidance of the voice, each and every spectator brought forth the city's spatiality as a strange blend of real and fictional spaces, people, and actions.

Each of the examples and their strategies for using spatiality emphasizes the nature of performative space as constantly mutating. Spatiality is generated through the movements and perceptions of actors and spectators. While the first strategy focuses on the process through which the autopoietic feedback loop brings forth spatiality, the second directs attention to the affective potential of the circulating energies. Finally, the third strategy engenders spatiality as a blend of real and imagined spaces. It identifies the performative space as a "space between."

All three strategies highlight that spatiality is not a given but constantly brought forth anew. Unlike architectural-geometric space, performative space does not represent an artifact for which one or more creators are responsible. By nature, the performative space pertains to events rather than works of art.

Atmospheres

The performative space always also creates an atmospheric space. The bunker, the street car depot, the former grand hotel – from each of these emanates a very specific atmosphere. Spatiality results not just from the specific spatial uses of the actors and spectators but also from the particular atmospheres these spaces exude. In the case of the Cornerstone Theater performance, spatiality and atmosphere were intricately linked. The possibility of strolling through the shopping mall or of observing from the gallery the various occurrences ranging from an ordinary

Friday rush hour to the enactments of Beckett's and Pirandello's texts allowed for the mall's particular atmosphere to unfold and affect the spectators. The event permanently oscillated between reality and fiction.

Atmospheres also contribute to creating a specific spatiality in conventional theatre spaces that maintain the division between stage and auditorium, reserving the stage for the actors. A very peculiar atmosphere greeted the spectators entering the Volksbuehne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz for a performance of *Snuff out the European! Snuff him! Snuff him! Snuff him! Snuff him out!* (*Murx den Europaeer! Murx ihn! Murx ihn! Murx ihn! Murx ihn ab!*, Berlin 1993, set design Anna Viebrock). The atmosphere was that of a slightly discomforting waiting room with a ghostly and unreal touch. Upon entering, the spectators faced a stage lined with synthetic panels, a hideous continuation of the auditorium's warm wood paneling. In the middle of the stage stood a sliding door as if leading to a hallway and restroom doors were placed on both sides. Above the sliding door hung a (stopped) clock resembling those in German railway stations. Next to it were written the words "so that time may not stand still." Stage left stood rusty heating units and two huge coal ovens, while a piano took up downstage right. Finally, 11 figures sat rigidly in two straight rows at square plastic tables with plastic chairs, set in the middle of the stage. The particular atmosphere could not be traced back to any single object on the stage, even if the clock or the coal ovens, for example, attracted special attention. The atmosphere resulted from the general impression. It was the first element to affect the spectators upon entering the auditorium and influenced their perception throughout the performance.

As Gernot Boehme explicates, atmospheres are not bound to a place but nonetheless pour out into, and thus shape, the space. They neither belong just to the objects or people who appear to radiate them nor to the people who enter a space and physically sense them. They usually constitute the spectators' first sensation on entering the auditorium and enable a very specific experience of spatiality. None of this can be explained by reference to individual objects because atmospheres exist in the interplay of elements and usually form a carefully calculated part of a theatre production. Boehme, credited with introducing the concept of atmosphere into aesthetic discourse, draws on and modifies Benjamin's notion of aura. He defines atmospheres as: "… spaces insofar as they are tinged by the presence of things, people, or their surrounding constellations, that is, their 'ecstasies.' These ecstasies themselves are the spheres of presence of something else – their reality in space" (1995: 33). As such, atmospheres appertain to the performative, not the architectural-geometric, space. They are

> … not thought of as free-floating but as something emanating from and created by things, people, or their constellations. Conceived as such, atmospheres are not objective, like certain properties that things have, and yet they are tangible, belonging to that thing insofar as these things articulate the spheres of their presence through their properties – thought of as ecstasies. Neither are atmospheres something subjective, such as a mental state of mind. And

> yet, they are of the subject, form a part of it, insofar as they are sensed by people physically present. Simultaneously, these sensations reflect the bodily being-present of the subjects in the space.
>
> (Boehme 1995: 33)

This description and definition of atmosphere reveals two particularly interesting aspects for our context. For one, Boehme defines atmospheres as "spheres of presence." Second, he neither locates them in the things that exude them, nor in the subjects who physically sense them, but in between and in both of them at the same time. The term "spheres of presence" evidently refers to a specific mode of presence pertaining to things. Boehme further explains it as the "ecstasy of things," or the special manner in which a thing appears present to a perceiver. Not only the thing's colors, odors, or sounds – its secondary qualities – are thought of as ecstasies but also its primary qualities such as its form. "The form of a thing also *affects* … its surroundings. It practically radiates into its environment, takes away the surrounding space's homogeneity, fills it with tension and possibilities for motion" (1995: 33). Form transforms space. The same applies to the dimension and volume of things. They are not only to be thought of as the thing's properties that occupy a specific space. "The dimension of a thing and its volume … can be felt from without, they bestow weight and orientation on the room in which the thing is present" (1995: 33).

In their state of ecstasy, things have an immense effect on anyone perceiving them because they appear as particularly present. Hence, the term ecstasy does not mean quite the same as presence. While ecstasy corresponds to presence not only in its weak but also its strong form, presence concerns the energetic processes between people; it is only somewhat possible to attribute to things an energy generated by them. Yet something emanates from them which is distinct from the visual or aural perceptions of a person, which can nevertheless be physically experienced when seeing or hearing that thing; something, which pours itself out into the performative space *between* the thing and the perceiving subject – a specific atmosphere. Something similar happens to space. When the architectural-geometric turns into the performative space, its so-called primary qualities – i.e. its dimension and volume – can be sensed and begin to affect the perceiving subject.

In performance, atmosphere is to the creation of spatiality what presence is to the generation of corporeality. Through its atmosphere, the entering subject experiences the space and its things as emphatically present. Not only do they appear in their primary and secondary qualities, they also intrude on and penetrate the perceiving subject's body and surround it atmospherically. The spectators are not positioned opposite to or outside the atmosphere; they are enclosed by and steeped in it.

Odor may serve as a particularly useful example for the elements that take part in the creation of atmosphere. Theatre spaces usually teem with odors – regardless of whether they are undesired but unstoppable side effects or the result

of theatrical devices. Therefore, it is all the more surprising how little critical attention has been paid to odors in the theatre. While open air theatres imbibed the fragrances of the surrounding environment for the creation of its atmosphere, indoor theatres (until the invention of gas lighting in the 1820s) were filled with the smells of smoldering candles and oil lamps mingled with whiffs of make-up, powder, perfume, and sweat.

At least since the onset of naturalism smells have been consciously employed for the creation of specific atmospheres. A foul smelling manure heap on stage or the now proverbial cabbage smell significantly contributed to drawing the spectators atmospherically into the milieu of farmers or the poor more generally. Odor brought the two into physical contact. Max Reinhardt employed odors to generate different types of atmosphere. His rotating forest in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Neues Theater Berlin 1904) became a sensation partly because it represented the first-ever rotating stage in Western theatre since its conception in 1898 after the *Kabuki* theatre model. Its particular appeal also was due to the entrancing fragrance emanating from the moss-covered stage floor. The scent gave the audience a most vivid evocation of the forest. The symbolists in their turn employed odors in the theatre to create specific synaesthetic experiences for the audience.

The conscious and intentional use of odors operated on the assumption that odor could spread over the entire space and trigger strong physical affects in the audience. Through their odor, spaces, objects, and people can literally penetrate the body of the scenting subject. Georg Simmel focused on this peculiarity of smell when he wrote:

> When we smell something, we draw that impression deeply into the center of our being, assimilate it intimately, as it were, through the vital process of breathing, which is not possible for any other sense to do of an object – unless we eat it. That we can smell the atmosphere of someone else is the most intimate perception of him; he permeates our insides in gas form.
>
> (Simmel 1922: 490)

Since the 1960s, theatre and performance art have repeatedly employed odors. In Nitsch's Orgy Mystery Theatre, the particular smell emanating from the lamb's carcass, blood, and entrails created a unique atmosphere for the audience, triggering strong feelings of disgust or, alternatively, desire. Grotowski crowded actors and spectators so close together in his spaces that the audience could smell the actors perspiring. The corporeality of the actors impressed itself onto the audience and intensified the atmosphere that pervaded the space.

Other than the typical smell of the notorious fog machines, food odors in particular have been repeatedly employed on stage. In Johann Kresnik's Berlin production on Artaud, *Antonin Nalpas* (Prater 1997), the actors grilled large chunks of fish. At least hungry spectators might initially have connected pleasant sensations with the smell, but once the fish became charred, disgust and nausea predominated.

The audience of Castorf's *Last Stop America* ([*Endstation Amerika*] adapted from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Volkbuehne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz 2000) underwent a very similar experience when Kathrin Angerer burned fried eggs and flooded the auditorium with the unmistakable smell of burned egg-white. In the group Hollandia's production of *The Duck Hunt* ([*De Metsiers*] guest performance at the Schaubuehne Berlin 2003), one of the actresses grabbed a beer bottle, opened it, and sprayed one of her colleagues from top to bottom with the sputtering liquid. Beer puddles formed on the stage floor. The actor as well as the floor emitted a penetrating beer smell which rapidly spread through the entire theatre. Although the stage was wiped clean during the intermission, the stench lingered in the theatre until the performance's conclusion, shaping its atmosphere.

As Simmel noted, only eating constitutes a more thorough process of assimilation than smelling. Having entered the body through respiration, food and drink odors also affect the salivation process in the oral cavity and, by extension, the intestines, causing strong feelings of desire or disgust. In the act of smelling, the spectators become aware of their inner physical processes and of themselves as living organisms.

Smell undeniably represents one of the strongest components of atmospheres. This is partly because smells, once they have spread, cannot simply be "undone;" they prove to be exceedingly resistant. Long after the artificial fog has lifted, its smell still bears down on the audience; long after the burned eggs have been removed from the stage, their stench still lingers. Smell thus resembles the famous genie in a bottle which, once released, is almost impossible to capture. It eludes the control of actors and spectators alike and vehemently resists all attempts to alter the atmosphere it created.

This is part of the reason why theatre and performance art since the 1960s frequently have utilized odors in their respective events. In addition, these events aimed at the intensification of all other components contributing to the creation of atmospheres. Artists have sought to intensify the "primary" as well as "secondary" qualities inherent to the ecstasy of things. Spaces have been used so that even their dimension, volume, and material qualities emerged with intensity. This goes for *Celtic* + ~~~, for all productions by Einar Schleef at the Bockenheimer tram depot, and also for the cement apse at the Berlin Schaubuehne's Mendelsohn-building for Grueber's *Hamlet* (1981) and Sasha Waltz's *Koerper* (2000). In some cases, objects were used that tended to dominate the atmosphere particularly strongly because of their dimension, volume, or material qualities. The giant funnel trickling sand in Heiner Goebbel's production of *Or the hapless landing* (TAT/Frankfurt am Main 1993; Hebbel-Theater/Berlin 1994) or the metal container occupying center-stage in Zadek's latest *Hamlet* production (premiere at Vienna's Volkstheater, May 1999, subsequently staged at Schaubuehne Berlin from September 1999) may serve as examples here.

Light and sound also play significant roles in the creation of atmosphere and are able to bring about change instantly. Robert Wilson works with light computers in his productions that allow him to realize over 300 light cues within

120 minutes, producing a constant change in light and color. The atmosphere changes simultaneously. Due to their high frequency, these changes mostly occur at the threshold of conscious perception. Light is not only absorbed by the human eye but also by the skin. The human organism reacts particularly sensitively to light. Spectators exposed to continuous changes of light will find their disposition changing frequently and abruptly without being able to consciously register, even less control these swings. Wilson's productions lure the spectator under their influence because their atmosphere carries a strongly suggestive power, especially enhanced through the deliberate slowness of the movements. The performative space here appears as a particularly atmospheric space.

Sounds, noises, and music also have the potential to impact on atmosphere. Wilson, praised by critics time and again for his visuality, collaborates closely with such composers as Philip Glass, David Byrne, Tom Waits, and especially Hans Peter Kuhn, who are responsible for creating very effective atmospheres through noises, sounds, and music – ranging from the sound of water drops to the chanting of songs.

Sounds resemble odors insofar as they surround and envelop the perceiving subject and penetrate their bodies. The perceived sounds resound through the body. Certain sounds might even trigger localized physical pain. The spectators' only defense against sound is to plug their ears. As is the case with smells, the spectators are usually defenselessly exposed to the effects of sound. Once more, sounds enter the body and break down its limits. When a sound resounds in the listeners' chests, inflicting physical pain or stimulating goose-bumps, they no longer hear it as something entering their ears from outside but feel it from within as a physical process creating oceanic sensations. Through sound, the atmosphere opens and enters the spectators' bodies.

Other prominent examples of sound experimentation besides Wilson include Heiner Goebbels and Christoph Marthaler. In *Snuff the European!*, for example, the above-mentioned atmosphere of shabbiness and grotesquely comical desolation abruptly changed whenever the actors formed a choir to sing a song. Their singing allowed one to forget the depressing hideousness of the waiting-room set as well as the pettiness and spitefulness with which the characters treated each other. Their singing seemed to lift them and the spectators above this oppressive, day-to-day environment. In song they created a proto-utopian atmosphere characterized by opulence, accord, and harmony beyond all the oppressive adversities of this miserable life. After the singing ceased completely, the atmosphere of desolation spread across the space anew and hit the spectators.

Theatre and performance art since the 1960s emphatically have brought forth the atmospheric potential of performative space. For the aesthetics of the performative, three aspects need to be highlighted: first, spatiality in performances is to be accorded the quality of an event rather than that of a work of art because of its fleeting and transitory nature. Second, the spectators become aware of their own corporeality in atmospheric spaces. They experience themselves as living organisms involved in an exchange with their environments. The atmosphere

enters their bodies and breaks down their limits. This third process marks the performative space as a liminal space of transformation.

Boehme developed his aesthetics of atmosphere as an antithesis to semiotic aesthetics. While semiotic aesthetics proceeded from the assumption that art must be understood as language and thus focus on generating meaning, an aesthetics of atmosphere directed the attention to physical experiences. I share Boehme's view on shifting the focus from meaning to physical experience. Yet I suspect that meaning cannot be wholly excluded from physical experience, especially when it comes to the experience of atmospheres. Atmospheres simply cannot be explained as physiological reflexes in terms of a stimulus-response scheme which is automatically released in every subject. One does not experience atmosphere in the same way as one automatically closes one's eyes when a foreign body touches them. Things, such as the container in *Hamlet* or the coal ovens in *Snuff*, can carry as much meaning for the audience as the odors, sounds, and light effects – such as the smell of fried fish in *Antonin Nalpas* or the sound of dripping water and dazzling light after Gloucester's blinding in Wilson's *Lear* (Schauspielhaus Frankfurt at the Bockenheimer depot 1990). Each of these elements might recall contexts and situations or trigger memories that carry strong emotional connotations for the perceiving subject. It is hard to imagine that this dimension of meaning is of no consequence at all to the workings of atmosphere. I would assume instead that such meanings indeed contribute to the power of atmosphere. It remains to be discussed in greater detail how the materiality of things that is revealed in their ecstasy and contributes to atmosphere interacts with the implied meaning created by the perceiving subject.[25]

Tonality

The transience of performance is epitomized in its tonality. What is more fleeting than sound? Emerging from the silence of the space, sound fills the space only to die and vanish in the next moment. Fleeting though it may be, sound still has immediate – and often lasting – effects on those who hear it. First of all, sounds impart a sense of space. After all, our sense of balance resides in our ears. Sounds also penetrate the body and often trigger physiological and affective reactions. The listeners shudder, get goose bumps, their pulse accelerates, they breathe faster and heavier, become melancholic, or euphoric. They are seized by a desire for *je-ne-sais-quoi* as memories surge up in them, and so forth. Tonality carries a strong affective potential.

Theatre is constituted not just through sight (*theatron*) but always also through sound (*auditorium*) (Fischer-Lichte 2004b: 329–60). It is a visual and an aural space. Speaking or singing voices, music, and other sounds resound through it. Even ancient Greek theatre used special sound effects. The sound of thunder, for example, was recreated with the *bronteion*, a taut skin onto which lead balls were poured from a container made of ore, or with pebbles poured into a metal basin.

Until today, both op-ed contributors and literary scholars agree that European theatre distinguishes itself from the theatre of other cultures through a tonality that can largely be equated to spoken language. They infer that tonality as such is not really relevant to the performance and merely serves as the medium in and through which language appears. Yet it is well-known that not just words are recited in the theatre. Ancient Greek tragedies based their recitations on trochaic tetrameters, while comedy used iambic and anapestic verses in the parabases. Both were accompanied by the flute. All text segments written in lyrical form were sung with an alternating chorus and partly with virtuoso solo arias. The tragedy's ritualistic death lamentation known as *commos* is an example of this practice. Hence, we can hardly speak of a dominance of spoken language.

The invention of opera makes another strong point in case here. It was the result of late sixteenth-century efforts by the Florentine Camerata to revive Greek tragedy. Since then, genres of musical theatre in particular account for the special charm of tonality beyond linguistic mediation. The widespread popularity of opera, musical comedy, ballet, operetta, and, finally, the musical speaks to this charm. Moreover, traditional theatre cannot fully justify the supposed dominance of the spoken word. Even if one disregards that until the late eighteenth century performances consisted of a series of separate theatrical acts which included a play and often concluded in a ballet, the play itself incorporated musical inserts at regular intervals. The intermissions allowed the light cleaner to go about his work and cut back the candlewicks in order to keep the smoke within bearable limits, while onstage the so-called "musical interludes" began. Until the mid-eighteenth century, these interludes generally bore no relation to the play they were interrupting. In the late 1730s, the actress-manager Friederike Caroline Neuber began her collaboration with the composer Johann Adolph Scheibe, which led to a new approach to the music between acts. Scheibe created a link between the music and the play's plot, characters, and affects.[26] Music thus was given a dramaturgical function, which above all aimed at "seamlessly lead[ing] the audience from one set of emotions to the next" (Scheibe 1745: 616). Following these guidelines, Scheibe composed the music for Neuber to *Polyeuctes* and *Mithridates*, staged in Hamburg on April 30 and June 2, 1738. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, theatre music was not only restricted to pieces played between acts but was composed for specific sections or sequences within the play.[27]

Performances featuring the comical characters Hanswurst or Harlequin and later Bernadon (Felix von Kurz, 1717–84), as well as Viennese popular performances up to Raimund and Nestroy made frequent use of song and musical accompaniment – "arias" at first, and later "couplets." It was Nestroy who introduced the new theatrical genre of the operetta to Vienna, which gradually came to replace popular theatre. On October 16, 1858, Jacques Offenbach's *Marriage by Lantern-Light* (*Hochzeit bei Laternenschein*) premiered at the Carltheater under the artistic direction of Nestroy. It began the operetta's quick rise to popularity in Vienna. For the operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Carltheater, 1860) Nestroy adapted Ludwig Kalisch's 1859 translation and also played the role of

Pan himself: "Nestroy as Pan topped his own gallery of comical creations by a multitude. His acting, speech, and song proved irresistibly comical" (*Blaetter fuer Theater, Musik und Kunst* 1861: 75).

Even after the turn of the last century, music played a prominent part in the theatre, at times even an excessive one. Reinhardt commissioned musical scores for many more of his productions than just such pantomimes as *Sumurun*. He deliberately used sounds in order to create certain atmospheres. Performances of *The Merchant of Venice* (Deutsches Theater Berlin 1905) opened with a prelude that Engelbert Humperdinck had composed out of various sounds. First, one heard animal sounds; then rattling, clattering, and clanging, followed by the distinct shouts of gondoliers; more and more voices joined them, culminating in the noise of a crowd: the city had awoken. Song and distant violins were heard which, unnoticeably at first, faded into marching music. Bruno Walter writes about this composition: "A rigid marching tune …, of which the listener is not even conscious and which nonetheless enhances – unconsciously – the happier, fiercer mood of the moment" (1974: 383).

As this brief survey shows, tonality in European theatre is not exclusively, or even largely, generated by speaking voices or spoken language. The theatre's aural spaces are made up of music and voices – including speaking, singing, laughing, sobbing, crying – and a wide range of other sounds, even if their importance varies depending on era and genre. The performers' voices attain a special significance in this regard. In the analysis of tonality in performances since the 1960s, I will focus on the kinds of aural spaces they create and the aspects of vocality that artists chose to stress in this process.

Aural spaces

As the historical examples since the eighteenth century showed, only those sounds were considered constitutive of the theatre's aural spaces that were created by theatre professionals during the performance: performers, musicians, or technicians. These professionals were increasingly painfully aware of the sounds produced by the audience. The sounds counted as a nuisance and were suppressed as disruptive noises. In the 1781 edition of the Gotha *Theater-Kalender*, the editor, Reichard, lamented the loud noises caused by audiences: "For attentive listeners and spectators it is an unspeakable torment when others make so much noise with their mouths, feet, or sticks so that often one cannot hear what the actor is saying … " (1781: 57). "Jostling and noise" irritated Reichard to such an extent that he suggested publishing a warning on theatre programs threatening that "anyone disrupting the other spectators through noise and misbehavior will be expelled from the theatre" (1781: 58). Very similar complaints were voiced until well into the nineteenth century. As such, Friedrich Ludwig Schmidt, an artistic director from Hamburg, deplored that "late arrivals, clattering with their seats, rustling with their dresses are very common among the majority of theatre audiences, which then wonder why – while they failed to hear a substantial part of

the performance – they cannot empathize with it" (1878: 175). The spectators had to be disciplined so that they might sit still in their seats, their undivided attention directed at the events on stage, listening to the actors. Such discipline was never fully achieved. By the 1950s however, audiences had internalized these demands to such an extent that they largely refrained from making any unwelcome noises.

On April 29, 1952, John Cage's first *Silent Piece* entitled *4'33"* premiered at the Maverick Hall in Woodstock, New York. The piece consisted of three movements. The pianist David Tudor entered the stage dressed in a black tailcoat and sat down at the piano. He lifted its lid and remained seated in front of the open piano for a while without beginning to play. Then he closed the lid. Thirty-three seconds later he raised it again. After a short period, he lowered it and reopened it 2 minutes and 40 seconds later. Then he closed the lid for a third time – lasting 1minute and 20 seconds. He opened it for the last time. The piece was over. David Tudor had not played a single note on the piano. He rose and took his bows before the audience.

The artist contributed to the aural space only with the noise of his steps and the sounds produced by closing the piano lid. The aural space was not created intentionally by the artist but largely by accidental sounds from outside and from the audience itself. The tonality emerged out of the interplay of random sounds, such as the sound of wind and rain or the displeased comments of some spectators. None of these noises, however, were considered part of the performance by the listeners/spectators. Since the pianist had not played a tone, they assumed not to have heard anything but silence, which irritated them. They did not feel animated by Tudor's supposed silence, and failed to listen into the silence and hear the randomly produced sounds, or add to them consciously by producing sounds of their own. According to Cage's observation:

> They missed the point. There's no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence [in *4'33"*], because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental noises. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement [in the premiere]. During the second, raindrops began pattering the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out.
>
> (Cage cited in Kostelanetz 2003: 70)

The performance's aural space, its tonality, was generated precisely by what until then had been shut out of performances as far as possible: incidental sounds from outside and noises produced by the audience through coughing, scuffing their feet, talking, getting up, or banging the concert hall's doors. Because it was neither planned nor predictable, the tonality eluded the control of any single person. It was the result of unforeseeable actions of actors and spectators that constituted the autopoietic feedback loop, and of external sounds beyond the realm of the theatre. The tonality's uncontrollability was markedly emphasized by eluding the intentions and plans of individuals and taking unpredictable turns. The

different sounds arose in the space, spread through it for varying periods of time, created diverse sound patterns, and then vanished again. Cage's piece displayed that tonality is subject to permanent change; it is constantly in transformation. Evidently, tonality pertains to the sphere of events rather than works of art.

Moreover, the aural space dissolves the boundaries of the performative space. It blurs the line between inside and outside. The surrounding space enters the performative space through sounds and noises and expands it considerably: every random sound that is heard becomes an element of the performance and carries the potential to transform the performative space.

Cage explicitly referred to this experience as a theatrical experience: "I think the thing that distinguished my work from the others …[28] was that it was more theatrical. My experience is theatrical" (Cage cited in Furlong 1994: 63). Cage's notion of theatre is defined by this very lack of intentionality and planning; openness for what could occur; the impossibility of control; coincidence, transience, and perpetual transformation without any outside intervention. For Cage, the performance of *4'33"* epitomized theatricality: "What could be more theatrical than the silent pieces – somebody comes on the stage and does absolutely nothing" (Cage cited in Kostelanetz 2003: 112). He merely lets something happen which occurs without his interference.

While the *Silent Pieces* represent an extreme end of the spectrum, its underlying principles continued to shape Cage's later theatre work. Cage introduced chance operations and time brackets to his performances so as to ensure their lasting structural incorporation and impact. For the *Europeras 1 and 2* (Frankfurt am Main 1987), Cage randomly chose 64 operas no longer protected by copyright from the Metropolitan Opera's archives, which were then randomly modified on the basis of the *I Ching*, the Chinese *Book of Changes*. With the help of this chance procedure, he determined which operas would provide the source for the parts to be played by each instrument. The fragments to be performed were then chosen on the basis of further refined chance operations. The time brackets determined the earliest beginning and the latest ending of each fragment. Each orchestra member rehearsed their part independently from all the others. The 19 singers, who spanned the entire operatic voice spectrum from dramatic to lyric and buffo across all voices, performed arias chosen from their repertoire within the prescribed time brackets.

Following the principles of the *I Ching*, the stage was divided into 64 spaces. A computer-generated program developed by the composer Andrew Culver then determined the position of the singers and their "assistants" – dancers, stage technicians – as well as their actions, the positions of the orchestra members, and props. The instrumentalists were spread across the entire stage area including the orchestra pit. Four groups, each made up of four brass players, woodwind and strings, were positioned in the four corners of the stage in chamber music arrangements. All percussionists sat or stood in the orchestra pit. Based on a schedule determined by chance operations, loudspeakers installed on stage and

in the auditorium regularly played a mix prerecorded in New York from one 101 opera recordings.

The use of chance operations guaranteed that none of the performance material was planned or selected intentionally. The individual elements bore no relation to one another – they revealed no intended connection or desired link. Moreover, the assistants were instructed to scan the theatre for potential sounds and noises produced in the auditorium or entering from outside audible to actors and spectators. The sounds produced by the spectators were thus amplified and thrown back at them; they were made aware of the fact that, as spectators, they contributed to the creation of the aural space and the performance's tonality.

Since the time brackets merely indicated the actions' earliest possible beginnings and latest endings, and since the lengths of the musical material selected by chance operations or chosen by the singers by no means corresponded to the longest possible period of time, each performance produced unexpected and unanticipated shifts. The aural space generated in each performance varied every time – not least because the sounds coming from inside and outside the auditorium varied each night. Each performance emphasized the randomness, transience, and elusiveness of tonality and its overall nature as event. As aural space, the performative space shifted permanently, breaking down pre-set limits and extending far beyond the architectural-geometric space in which the performance took place.

Voices

Tonality always also creates spatiality and, as we have seen, not only an atmospheric space. Vocality, however, always also brings forth corporeality. A voice creates all three types of materiality: corporeality, spatiality, and tonality. The voice leaps from the body and vibrates through space so that it is heard by both the speaker/singer and others. The intimate relationship between body and voice becomes particularly evident in screams, sighs, moans, sobs, and laughter. Unmistakably, these sounds engage in a process that involves the entire body: it bends over, is contorted, or tenses up. Simultaneously, these speechless assertions of the voice might deeply move those who hear them. To hear somebody scream, sigh, moan, sob, or laugh is to perceive these sounds as a specific process of embodiment. The listener perceives the concerned person in their bodily being-in-the-world, which immediately affects the listener's own being-in-the-world as the scream penetrates, resonates in, and is absorbed by the listener's body (Plessner 1970). When a performer lets out a scream, they create a moment in which the voice brings itself forth in its own sensual materiality (Risi 2003).

In performance, vocal expressions have mostly become indivisibly linked to language, since they mostly employ singing or speaking voices. Theories of rhetoric and declamation popular since the seventeenth century have stressed this link between voice and language. Actors of the time had to employ their voices as parasyntactic, parasemantic, and parapragmatic tools to convey linguistic meaning. For one, the voice would clarify the syntactic structure of what is spoken;

second, it would accentuate and emphasize the intended meaning; and third, it could further reinforce its desired effect on the listener. By the same token, Goethe explained the voice's role in his "Rules for Actors" (1803):

> When I first completely understand the sense of a word and feel it completely within, then I must seek to fit it with a suitable vocal tone and deliver it strongly or weakly, quickly or slowly, as the sense of each sentence requires. For example:
> 'The crowd murmured' must be spoken half loud, murmuring.
> 'The names rang out' must be spoken clearly, ringingly.
> 'Dark forgetfulness,' 'The wings spread, dark as night,' 'Unto all generations' must be spoken in deep, hollow, fearful tones …
> And in the following case:
> 'Quickly throwing myself from my steed
> I pursued him … '
> a different and much more rapid tempo should be selected than in the preceding cases; for the context of the words requires it.
>
> (Goethe cited in Carlson 1978: 312)

The voice had to serve the spoken word. Its sole purpose lay in facilitating the comprehension of the spoken words.

With naturalism, a significant change occurred. The seemingly indivisible link between voice and language loosened. The voice could now be used without necessarily corresponding to the spoken words in intonation, emphasis, pitch, and volume. While the words spoken might suggest a friendly greeting, the voice itself might imply fear or aggression and be enhanced by corresponding facial expressions, gestures, or movements. The result was a break in perception that indicated the inherent contradiction between conscious behavior and actual, perhaps only subconsciously given, attitude. While language was capable of lying, the body was seen as true and authentic. Together with other physical forms of expression, voice revealed the character's "true" state of mind, even if the character was not aware of it. Voice and language split. Nevertheless, such divergence still had to be interpreted and understood in terms of the dramatic character.

Since its inception, a very different tension exists in opera between voice and language. The slogan "Prima la musica/la voce, poi le parole" consistently competes with its counterpart, "Prima le parole, poi la musica/la voce." Even if the invention of opera initially established the words' pre-eminence over the voice through *parlar cantando* or *recitativo*, such emphasis was gradually reversed despite repeated contrary demands as opera compositions increasingly forced higher tones. For the higher the voice is driven to go, the more detached it becomes from language. It is impossible to articulate intelligibly in a high pitch:

> A singer is more likely to be understood by the audience when the greatest part of his or her tessitura (the range of frequencies that can be emitted

> without difficulty) falls within the zone of optimal intelligibility; in other words, below 312 Hz. The fact that it is easier to understand a bass than a soprano need not surprise us, then, considering that the entire tessitura of the bass lies within the zone of optimal intelligibility, while only one-fourth of the soprano tessitura and one-fifth of the tessitura of the coloratura soprano (the highest female voice) falls within this zone.
>
> (di Carlo cited in Poizat 1992: 42)

These high pitches of the singer's voice do not allow the listeners to understand the words but give them a shudder of lust. It turns into a shudder of terror as the voice approaches the scream. However, the effect is not due to the unintelligibility of the words themselves. One instead has to speak of a gradual detachment from meaning which culminates at a certain pitch, for example in the coloraturas, when the voice leaves behind all meaning and speaks to the listener with "the angel's cry" (Poizat 1992). The inexplicable interaction of sensuality and transfiguration has an equally incredible effect on the listener: a mutual experience of intense desire and deep terror.

In his essay on *Bourgeois Opera* (1955), Adorno emphasizes this very peculiarity of opera singing:

> Opera … has … to do with empirical people, namely, with those who are reduced to their mere natural essence. This accounts for its peculiar costume-quality: mortals are disguised as heroes or gods, and this disguise is similar to their singing. Through song they are exalted and transfigured …The gesture of dramatic characters singing covers up the fact that, even though they are already stylized, they have as little reason to sing as they have opportunity. But in their song there resounds something of the hope for reconciliation with nature: singing, the utopia of prosaic existence [*Dasein*], is at the same time also the memory of the prelinguistic, undivided state of Creation … Opera's song is the language of passion: not just the exaggerating stylization of existence [*Dasein*] but also an expression that nature prevails in man against all convention and mediation, an evocation of pure immediacy.
>
> (Adorno 1993: 38)

Through their singing, especially in the higher pitches, the singers exude what I have called presence. They radiate a tremendous energy which the voice spreads through the space and that physically takes hold of the listeners. Detached from language, the voice emerges as the opposite of logos. Having escaped the power of rationality, the voice becomes dangerous and seductive. To succumb to it does not necessarily lead to downfall and death as the story of the sirens forewarns. It rather promises the equally lustful and terrifying emotional experience of one's own corporeality at its most sensual *and* simultaneously its most transfigured.

Such a detachment of voice from language has repeatedly been probed by performance art and theatre since the 1960s. The so-called autobiographical

performances by Spalding Grey, Laurie Anderson, Rachel Rosenthal, and Karen Finley and, particularly, the performances by Diamanda Galás and David Moss sought out the moment in which the speaking or singing voice ceased to articulate intelligibly and passed over into screams, high pitched sounds, laughter, moaning, and distortions. Such moments were not only produced through specific voice techniques but also – especially in the cases of Anderson, Galás, and Moss – through electronic media, which amplified or multiplied the voice so as to distribute it fragmented and distorted across a space, thus transforming the aural space into a soundscape. The voice became polymorphous but was never de-materialized as it would have been in video or film recordings that lack an actual physical body. It lost all gender, age, ethnic affiliation, or any other determining characteristic. The aural space it generated was experienced as a liminal space of permanent transitions, passages, and transformations.

The above-mentioned artists achieved these transformations even when articulating clearly. Their speaking or singing voices were both connected to language and yet never ceased to exist independently, directing the listener's attention to its split existence. The artists did not restrict their voices to serve as the medium for language. Instead, the voice made itself heard for its own sake. The self-serving voice did not necessarily imply a de-semantization, as has often been claimed. Rather, the voice's polymorphism released a multiplicity of meaning in the words. It only complicated an unambiguous interpretation but did not destroy linguistic intelligibility as a whole. With each breath, the voice also, if not first and foremost, directed the listener's attention to its own special qualities and expressed the subject's bodily being-in-the-world to others.

The permanent tension between voice and language is emblematic for the performances since the 1960s, which seek to ensure that the voice never disappears behind language but always makes its individuality heard. In his *Oresteia* (Schaubuehne Berlin 1980), Peter Stein explicitly devised a darkened and thus primarily aural space for the first two parts of the tragedy. Human voices rang out from the dark. They articulated strange sounds which could not easily be identified as speech. Similarly, the old men's chorus produced a disquieting mumble through closed lips which then merged into a whimpering whistle. Then they sounded the *ololygmos*, i.e. the "jubilant cry," "a sound shouted out, sung, and tuned with a flittering tongue in falsetto, half cricket chirp and half birdcall" (Michaelis 1980: n.p.). Yet, the voices primarily articulated segments of speech. If one of the old men murmured a sentence, the others spread across the room and repeated it at varying volume, pitch, and tempo to emphasize the diverse range of the voices. In addition, the various intonations reached the spectators' ears from different directions. Then a Greek word was added in from another direction, contrasting and complementing the sound of the German in its foreignness. The materiality of the voices became evident. The tense relationship between the particular tonalities of voice and language was sustained throughout.[29]

Robert Wilson took an entirely different approach to produce tension between voice and language in his productions. As one of his methods he chose linguistic

"ready mades," set phrases from daily life, in order to break them down into their word or sound segments for different performers to use and repeat multiple times. The German segment of the five-part international project *the CIVIL warS* (Schauspielhaus Cologne 1984) began with the following interaction between a woman on a ladder (1) and a man on another ladder (2):

1 are
2 a
1 are
2 are
1 you
2 all right
1 are you
2 are you
1 all right
2 are you all right
2 E NOW
1 there
2 there's
1 there's nothing
2 there
1 there
2 there's nothing the
1 are you
…

(Wilson 1984: 72)

The voices were amplified by microphones and produced a sort of spherical reverberation. Fused with sounds and music from offstage they formed a sound collage that detached the voices from the words and linguistic sounds they were articulating. In Einar Schleef's productions, the tension between voice and language became particularly evident in the dominating chorus sections that consisted of multiply repeated sentences, overlapping individual voices, and a medley of whispering versus painfully loud exclamations. Especially the chorus in *Mothers* frequently turned to screaming as their voices fully detached themselves from language. The moment in which voice and language thus detach seems to be the final culmination or reversal of the tension between the two. The tension disappears as the voice itself becomes language. The voice no longer transmits language; it *is* language, in which a bodily being-in-the-world expresses him/herself and addresses the audience purely. The materiality of the voice reveals the performance's materiality in its entirety. The voice captures tonality as it resounds in space; it emphasizes corporeality because it leaves the body through respiration; it marks spatiality because its sound flows out into the space and enters the ears of spectators and articulating subjects alike. Through

its materiality the voice already is language without having to first become a signifier.

In many ways, the voice represents a remarkable if strange material that contradicts all semiotic principles. It comes into existence only when it sounds out. It cannot survive the breath that created it but must be brought forth again with every new breath; it is a material that exists only in "ecstasy." Not only does the voice unite tonality, corporeality, and spatiality so that the performance's materiality constantly regenerates itself within it. Through it, the bodily being-in-the-world of the articulating subject expresses him/herself and addresses those who hear him/her in their own bodily being-in-the-world. The voice builds a bridge and establishes a relationship between two subjects. It fills the space between them. By making their voices audible, people reach out to touch those who hear it.

Temporality

Unlike corporeality, spatiality, and tonality, temporality cannot be subsumed in the performance's materiality. Yet it constitutes the condition of possibility for their appearance in space. As we have seen, the performance's materiality is not simply given; it rather appears and disappears in the course of the performance. Materiality represents an emergent phenomenon: it emerges, is stabilized for varying periods of time, and vanishes again. Individual subjects contribute to its generation without being able to determine or control it. On the contrary, they must be willing to submit to it to a certain degree.

Since performances take place in time with varying durations from 4 minutes and 33 seconds to several hours and sometimes even days, they require specific structural procedures to regulate the duration and sequence of the different materials and their relation to each other. Traditionally, these procedures range from intermissions, and the raising and lowering of the curtain to, more importantly, the dramaturgy of the plot and character psychology. Since the 1960s, the theatre curtain has been largely obliterated even on the proscenium stage. Opera remains the exception here. Many performances also no longer have an intermission. In the 1970s, Wilson created numerous performances lasting several hours or days, such as the seven-day performance of *KA Mountain Guardenia Terrace* presented at the 1972 Shiraz Festival. Throughout, he maintained that intermissions were superfluous since all spectators were free to decide for themselves when to participate in a performance and when to tune out.

Abolishing the curtain and the intermission was part of the emphasis on the autopoietic feedback loop and on the emergence of materiality in performance. If performance is generated by a continuous interaction between actors and spectators out of which materiality grows as an emergent phenomenon, a falling curtain and intermissions can only be counterproductive. Not integral to the feedback loop, they disrupt the smooth process of appearing, stabilizing, and disappearing of material unless they can be incorporated into this process as Schleef achieved in his *Salome* production.[30]

If the audience's attention is to be directed at the phenomenon of emergence, a temporal organization that supports a causal chain of events or reasoning becomes irrelevant. Plot and character psychology recede. In this context, we need to return to time brackets (discussed in the last section) and rhythm (discussed in the section on community) to explore their ability to sensitize the audience to the emergence of materiality.

Time brackets

Cage used time brackets for the first time in his *Untitled Event*, organized during the 1952 summer school of Black Mountain College. The event took place in the college canteen. The spectators' seats were arranged in four triangles, one to each side of its four walls, pointing towards the center of the room without touching each other. This left a large, empty space in the middle, although only few activities actually took place there. Instead, the empty space served as a kind of passageway. Broad aisles between the triangles stretched across the entire space like two invisible diagonals crossing each other at the center. On each chair stood a white cup. The spectators were left in the dark about their possible uses; some spectators used them as ashtrays. The ceiling was decorated with Robert Rauschenberg's "white paintings." Apart from Cage and Rauschenberg, David Tudor, the composer Jay Watt, the dancer Merce Cunningham, and the poets Charles Olsen and Mary Caroline Richards participated in the happening. Cage, dressed in a black suit and tie, stood atop a stepladder and read out a text on the relationship between music and Zen Buddhism and excerpts from Meister Eckhart's writings. After that, he performed a "composition with a radio." At the same time, Rauschenberg played old records on a wind-up gramophone with a dog sitting beside it. David Tudor played a "prepared piano." Later he began pouring water from one bucket into another while Olsen and Richard recited their own poems, first standing amidst the audience and then atop a ladder leaning against one of the room's narrow side walls. Cunningham danced together with other dancers through the passageways and in between the spectators, chased by the dog, which by that stage had gone completely berserk. Rauschenberg projected abstract slides and film onto the ceiling and along one of the long sides of the room. The slides were created by rubbing colored gelatin between two glass plates, while the film first showed the college cook and then the setting sun as these images gradually moved across the ceiling and onto the wall. In another corner, the composer Jay Watt played different musical instruments. The performance ended with four boys dressed in white pouring coffee into the cups – regardless of whether these had been used as ashtrays or not.

The performance's preparation consisted of Cage giving each participant a "score" with the time brackets. They determined the maximum duration of the action as well as how many times a participant could repeat it. The individual artist was entirely free to decide what type of action to perform and when to begin or end it within the given time bracket. They agreed not to inform each

other of their respective actions in advance. The time brackets restricted as well as liberated the artists. The artists were restricted in terms of the overall length of their actions. Under no circumstances were these allowed to outlast the prescribed bracket. From the moment of conception, the actions had to be strictly timed. The restrictions also affected the beginning and end of each action. However, the artists were free to determine all other aspects: they could do as they liked and ignore each other's actions. They did not need to lower the gramophone's volume so that the audience might hear the reading voices; they did not need to harmonize each other's clothing or props, or select them in accordance with some overarching "idea" or "intention."

All that occurred in sound and sight seemed entirely unmotivated to the audience because no action grew from another. If spectators happened to detect a connection between two elements, it could only be ascribed to coincidence or their subjective circumstances. Each action stood on its own. It appeared at a specific but unpredictable moment in time, stabilized itself in its permanent state of transition before ceasing to exist at an equally unforeseeable moment. Spectators were able to direct their attention to an action of their choice until suddenly emerging sounds or movements might pull them towards another.

The pursuit of a coherent plot – even if it does not unfold according to the "classical" pattern of exposition, development, crisis, suspension, and denouement – and the psychological development of characters allow the audience to experience time as a meaningfully structured arch, in which everything that occurs is connected comprehensibly with one another. Effectively, everything from beginning to end is justified. Yet the *Untitled Event* created a whole other sense of temporality. Neither beginning nor end were motivated by the course of the performance but represented random temporal incisions equally conceivable at any other point. In a sense, the experience of timelessness was created. That is to say, time became perceptible in the moment in which something appeared and then vanished, absorbing all attention for the duration of its appearance. No feeling of continuity could be evoked. Time did not progress steadily as in naturalistic theatre productions, where time nevertheless differs from measured time in rhythm, tempo, and intensity. Instead, the recourse to measured time to maintain the time brackets created a sense of temporal vacuums or time pockets, each following its own rhythm, tempo, and intensity. None of these time pockets produced a sense of continuity. On the contrary, they created an experience of discontinuity, fragmentation, and de-contextualization.

It could be said that the time pockets juxtaposed each other, that time became spatial through them. A time pocket emerged when something appeared, and spread in space; it sank again when that which had appeared left the space and was beyond perception. *Europeras 1 and 2* made an even stronger impression of this kind since its material, whether costumes and pictures or musical scores and the actions of the singers and their assistants were chosen by chance operations (with the exception of the arias that were selected by the singers). The pictures were chosen from an archive of images kept at the City and University Library Frankfurt. They

showed images from various centuries depicting composers, singers, as well as animals and landscapes. Chance operations also determined the size and section of the image that was to be used. A previously designed space-time-plan regulated their movements from beginning to end. In another chance operation, Cage chose the singers' costumes from an unmanageable mass of exquisite figurines from different centuries and countries, depicted in the *Encyclopedia of Historical Costumes* at New York's Fashion Institute. The actions to be performed by the singers – which, if too complicated, were performed by dancers or stage assistants – were determined by chance operations from Webster's *Dictionary of the English Language*. They included step dancing, knitting, taking apart and putting back together a children's building set, and swimming across the stage like a "flounder." Random time brackets ascertained the total length of time available, and the beginning and end point for the completion of these actions. This structure radicalized the principle of de-contextualization: "Everything is separated, simply *everything from everything else*. The scene is not conceived so that the different theatrical elements support … or even just relate to one another, but each has its own status, its own entirely independent conditions of activity" (Cage 1987: 11).

Each element constituted a separate time pocket; each was granted its own temporality. Just as a single-celled organism, a human being, a mountain range, and the universe each possess their own temporality, so did the pictures, costumes, actions, arias, and sound sequences of the different instruments in *Europeras 1 and 2*. Through the combined structural force of time brackets and chance operations, time pockets emerged more emphatically and could be experienced by the audience with particular intensity.

Rhythm

Today, rhythm has attained a special significance for the organization and structuring of time in performances. Rhythm puts corporeality, spatiality, and tonality into a relationship with one another and regulates their appearance and disappearance in space. Unlike time brackets, rhythm is no new invention. There could simply be no performance in which rhythm does not somehow contribute to the overall temporal structure. Even in traditional drama where plot and character development provide the leading structural principles, rhythm will be of central importance in the succession of scenes, speech, movement, and within individual scenes themselves. In these cases, however, rhythm remains subordinated to the dominant logic of the plot and only assists its structural principles. In contrast, theatre and performance art since the 1960s make rhythm the guiding, superior, if not the sole principle of organizing and structuring time.

In this context, I define rhythm as an organizing principle that stands in contrast to temporal units of beats and meter; it aims not at total symmetry but regularity. As explicated by Hanno Helbling, it designates a dynamic principle, which "is and will be in transit: always concerned with the production and representation of specific conditions and always also in a position to redesign these

conditions" (1999: 18). In rhythm, the foreseeable and the unforeseeable interact. The exchange between repetition and deviation produces rhythm. Repetition alone would not create rhythm. Rhythm can thus be described as an organizing principle that presupposes permanent transformation and operates in order to further such change (Risi 2004: 165–77; Bruestle *et al.* 2005). When rhythm turns into the primary, if not sole, organizing principle of performance, it produces constantly fluctuating conditions for the interplay between corporeality, spatiality, and tonality, regulating their appearance and disappearance through repetition and deviation.

Through his use of rhythm, Robert Wilson achieved a similar effect to John Cage and his time brackets, especially in his works until the mid-1980s. Each system of theatrical elements followed its own rhythm: the lighting changed in the fraction of a second while the performers moved in slow motion. Voices, sounds, music, and tones became interwoven into a sound collage which produced its very own rhythm. Rhythm de-hierarchized the elements, and made them appear in isolation. It established a separate temporal structure for each one, which differed perceptibly from each other. In this sense, the spectators experienced different temporalities simultaneously. Their perception was de-synchronized and became sensitized to each individual effect of the various performance elements. The differing rhythms made it harder to relate corporeality, spatiality, and tonality directly to each other. If some spectators saw connections between these elements, it was they who made these connections, just as in Cage's performances.

A very different approach to rhythm was taken by Schleef. His choruses initially conveyed the impression that corporeality, spatiality, and tonality were synchronized rhythmically. But a closer examination of visual and aural elements quickly proved the contrary. The constant rhythmic shifts in movement and speech marked the chorus as a battleground. It emphasized the struggle between individual and community and between body and language. The rhythm of the spoken sentences tried to impose itself on the bodies by forcing them to move accordingly and subordinate physicality to the symbolic order of language. In response, the bodies not only defended themselves against such attempts but sought to transmit their rhythm to language through the voice: their rhythm shattered the syntactical order of language and distorted it so much that the sentences lost their meaning and became unintelligible. The symbolic order of language was destroyed by the rhythm of voice and body movements. At times, the voice yielded to the rhythm prescribed by the syntactic and semantic order of speech and transferred it onto the moving body; at other times the body imposed its own rhythm onto the voice so that it ruptured the language's rhythm and meaning along with it.

This battle produced neither winners nor losers, much like the struggle between individual and community. Rhythm established language and body as two opposing forces which must interact and yet cannot but fight each other. Schleef's choruses recalled Nietzsche's founding idea of the birth of tragedy out of the spirit of music. They emblematized the struggle between the Dionysian principle, realized by bodies in ecstasy, and the Apollonian principle, realized in

the symbolic order of language. The outcome of this struggle remained open. In Schleef's choruses, rhythm was responsible for placing corporeality, spatiality, and tonality in a tense, hardly harmonious relationship to one another. This rhythm constantly made attempts to impose a hierarchy between them but effectively created a de-hierarchization. Each element of the performance retained its own temporality, which could be transferred to another element through rhythm only temporarily.

Wilson's and Schleef's work might appear as two extremes on a scale ranging from utter disconnectedness between theatrical elements (such as body movements, lighting, sound) to a permanent flux of relationships between them. In each case, rhythm established either a connection or a disconnection. Despite all differences, the works of Schleef and Wilson share rhythm as a tool to prevent a fixed hierarchical relationship between elements. They all appear equally important. Their specific materiality and their individual appearance in space move into the foreground.

Moreover, rhythm emerges as the founding principle of the dramaturgy of performance – not just for Wilson and Schleef, but also for Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, the Wooster Group, Heiner Goebbels, Christoph Marthaler, and many others. How and for how long elements appear largely depends on the rhythm of each performance. A popular technique employs the repetition of elements with a slight deviation each time. Some productions, such as Marthaler's *Snuff, The Hour Zero or the Art of Serving* ([*Die Stunde Null oder Die Kunst des Servierens*] Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg 1995), or *The Beautiful Miller Maid* ([*Die schoene Muellerin*] Schauspielhaus Zurich 2002) almost consist of nothing but repetitions: one element is introduced only to be repeated in the course of the evening in ever new variations. A second element is added, and the pattern is repeated, and so forth. The variations span different degrees of deviation, but even minimal deviation may achieve a strong effect.

In *Snuff*, which remained in the Volksbuehne's repertoire until 2006, one of the repetitions with minor variation included Susanne Duellmann's trip to the men's room, which Juergen Rothert knew to prevent each time with a different choice of words, syntactic order, and intonation. Ueli Jaeggi's multiple versions of the story about how the cooking course "Baking without flour," which he missed, led him to end up in the course "Fucking without a woman" instead, can count as another such example of deviation. In the further course of the evening, these sorts of repetitions were increasingly acknowledged with a weary smile. However, a minimal deviation incorporated into the 16-stanza hymn "Thank you," intoned and accompanied on the piano by Juerg Kienberger, drew overwhelming reactions. Each stanza was set half a note higher than the previous one, causing convulsive, uncontrollable laughter in the audience. The amusement reached a frenzy during the final stanzas that threatened to tear the singers' vocal chords.

At certain intervals, Ruedi Haeusermann walked over to the big ovens, opened them, and poked around in them with fire tongs. His movements differed only slightly each time. During the last third of the performance, however, a colossal

deviation occurred. The former GDR national anthem played from the opened oven, creating an overwhelming effect. In the course of the performance, the actors also repeatedly came together without apparent motivation to sing a song. Only the rhythm, that is the temporal sequences in which the phenomenon of choral singing was repeated, motivated its occurrence. Each time, deviations – partly even significant ones – resulted from the respective song choice, which also seemed entirely unmotivated. Their repertoire ranged from Eichendorff's "Cool Ground" ("Kuehler Grund") over "Safe Germany, art thou still asleep" ("Sichres Deutschland schlaefst du noch") (from 1650), and the choral "Awaken, thou German *Reich*" ("Wach auf, du deutsches Reich") to Paul Lincke's "Glowworm idyll" ("Gluehwuermchenidyll"), and the pop hit "I will have my body painted black" ("Ich lass mir meinen Koerper schwarz bepinseln").

The rhythm of this performance was not one of juxtaposition, in which one "number" randomly followed the next. Instead, different elements appeared, seemingly unconnected at first, which were woven together over the course of the performance and were connected through the constantly varying repetitions and deviations – through rhythm, that is. The first appearance of any given element occurred abruptly and independently from the others. Once it emerged, it spread and changed in a more or less clearly traceable manner. However, none of this happened continuously. The presence of the 11 actors on stage alone created and represented continuity. Yet their actions, which seemed to have no connection to each other, were so fleeting that they seemed to vanish without trace once performed. Then again they reappeared at a later point. Our presumptions were thus reversed: now none of their actions vanished without trace. Once an action was put into the world it reappeared, if never in the exact same form. What caused the variation was as unclear and inexplicable as its first appearance. Only a rhythmic pattern was discernible, which in turn made the audience aware of rhythm in the first place. The repetitions created a sort of feedback loop which rendered obsolete the question of cause and effect. Rhythm thus proved to be the overarching organizing principle for the performance.

Rhythm, as noted before, is a principle based on the human body. The heart beat, the blood circulation, and respiration each follow their own rhythm, as do the movements we carry out when walking, dancing, swimming, writing, and so forth. The same goes for the sounds we make when speaking, singing, laughing, and crying. The inner movements of our bodies that we are incapable of perceiving are also organized rhythmically (Baier 2001). The human body is indeed rhythmically tuned.

We have a particular capacity for perceiving rhythms and tuning our bodies to them. When the temporality of a performance is organized and structured through rhythm, different "rhythmic systems" clash. The rhythm of the performance collides with the various rhythms of each individual spectator. In such cases an analysis of the rhythmic tuning is particularly relevant because the autopoietic feedback loop can show whether and to what extent the performance succeeds in drawing the audience into its rhythm, so that the actors receive fresh

impulses from the spectators. It also reveals whether and to what extent several spectators with similar rhythmic tunings might influence the other spectators and actors. Whichever direction this process might take in any individual case, it can be assumed that the autopoietic feedback loop largely organizes itself according to rhythmic shifts, variations, and changes. The feedback loop bases itself on the alternating rhythmic tuning, also realized in the direct and reciprocal physical interaction of actors and spectators. This suggests that a rhythmic structure provides the autopoietic feedback loop with particularly favorable conditions for its fulfillment. Furthermore, it draws the audience's attention to just this process. By organizing and structuring the performative generation of materiality, rhythm also enables this materiality to emerge as an agent in the feedback loop's autopoiesis. Through rhythm, the performative generation of materiality and the feedback loop's autopoiesis are productively engaged with one another in a manner perceptible to the audience.

Chapter 5

The emergence of meaning

In the process of developing his concept of performance, Max Herrmann thoroughly examined the mediality, materiality, and aestheticity of performance. Yet, he mostly ignored the semioticity of performance because, in his time, it still was identified with the semioticity of the dramatic text. Theatre critics and literary scholars asserted that the meanings drawn from the text would be expressed through theatrical means in the performance and thus conveyed to the audience. According to Herrmann's contemporaries, performativity was subordinated to expressivity in performance. The relationship between actors and spectators was considered only in so far as the actors were capable of "appropriately" expressing the "correct" meanings and communicating those to the audience. In contrast, Max Herrmann understood the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators to constitute performance. Insofar as the performance's semioticity was derived from a literary text and evaluated accordingly, it held no interest for him.

The abandonment of literary theatre advocated by members of the historical avant-garde – especially Craig, the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists, Meyerhold, the Bauhaus theatre, and Artaud – rendered obsolete the reference to meaning generated by the literary texts. Theatre was repeatedly called upon to stop conveying meaning and instead to concentrate on producing effects. Variety theatre and the circus were hailed as alternatives to literary and, particularly, realistic-psychological theatre. In their two manifestos, "The Variety Theatre" (1913) and "The Futurist Synthetic Theatre" (1915), the Italian Futurists proclaimed that, following the principles of variety and circus shows, theatre should be "transform[ed] … into a theatre of amazement, record-setting, and body-madness" (Marinetti 1973: 130). Numerous attempts to create a new form of theatre that did not aim at conveying meaning were also undertaken in the nascent Soviet Union. They, too, took recourse to the circus. In 1920, Sergei Radlov, who had worked in Meyerhold's studio between 1913 and 1916, founded a circus theatre in which clowns, acrobats, and jugglers appeared on stage next to and also as actors. His goal was to establish a new form of comic popular theatre (he had to shut it down again in 1922 because the initially numerous audiences stayed away). In the years 1922 and 1923 the so-called "Factory of the Eccentric Actor" (FEKS) also experimented with circus and variety.

For our purposes, Meyerhold's attempts to apply circus to theatre are particularly relevant. His production of Sukhovo-Kobylin's grotesque farce *The Death of Tarelkin* (1922), in which Sergei M. Eisenstein also participated, was the most successful and well-known result of these efforts. A year later, Eisenstein in his turn based his production of Ostrovsky's comedy *Even a Wise Man Stumbles* (1922/23) on a circus model. In his view, emphasized even 20 years later in the tract *Method* (1943–7),

> circus shows [are] … a case in which we are dealing with a subgenre of art, which in its pure form preserves only the sensual component … which in all other cases merely is a form of embodiment of some material-notional contents. This is why the circus necessarily functions like a peculiar, sensualizing bath … This is why the circus simply does not allow for any 'meaning' or application which aims at conveying meaning.
>
> (cited in Ivanov 1985: 248)

Although Meyerhold and Eisenstein agreed that sensuality in the circus aimed not at the transmission of meaning but produced immediate effects, making it so suitable a model for a new theatre, Meyerhold nonetheless diverged in his artistic conclusions. In his view, theatre had to account for the very circumstance that spectators now defined themselves as "co-participant[s] and *creator[s] of a new meaning*." Once the actors refrained from transmitting predetermined meaning to the spectators and restricted themselves to emitting sensuality and materiality, it would be up to the individual spectator to generate meaning on the basis of this materiality. The spectator thus becomes the creator of new meaning.

Theatre and performance artists since the 1960s as well as the above-mentioned members of the historical avant-garde movement have proceeded from the assumption that the aim of the performance cannot be to transmit meaning generated only by one segment of its participants – be it the actors, the director, set designer, composer, or even playwright – to another, that is, the audience. Performances do not serve the transmission of meaning, as Eisenstein put it. This causes problems for the avant-garde and the artists of the 1960s when it comes to the relationship between materiality and semioticity and between effect and meaning. Those members of the historical avant-garde who tried to formulate a new aesthetics of effect (*Wirkungsaesthetik*) came to the following conclusion: reducing theatrical means to their materiality/sensuality prevented the actors from constituting meaning but enabled the spectators to generate meaning in their turn. The constitution of meaning through the actors precluded the desired immediate effect on the spectators. An aesthetics of effect thus required the actors to refrain from any sort of meaning constitution.

Over the course of the last 30 or 40 years, theatre and performance artists have not yet found definitive answers to these questions. As our analysis thus far revealed, they are also not interested in finding such answers. Fundamentally, they do not think of materiality and semioticity or effect and meaning as mutually

exclusive, that is to say as constituting a dichotomous relationship *per se*. Instead, they persistently question how these categories relate to one another and take multiple approaches to probing these relationships in every performance. The artists examine how meaning is generated in performance, what it does, and what its effects are. In this chapter, I will try to make explicit what the performances considered above have implicitly formulated about the specific semioticity of performances within the aesthetics of the performative.

Materiality, signifier, signified

Performances since the 1960s have repeatedly disconnected individual theatrical tools from their larger contexts. They have not only ceased to subordinate those tools to the logic of action and psychology but tried to liberate them from all causal interconnection. Following specific geometric or rhythmic patterns, or determined by chance operations, these elements appear in space, are stabilized for varying periods of time, and, in some cases, undergo a continuous process of transformation before they vanish again without a comprehensible reason or specific motivation for either appearing or disappearing. It seems that the appearing elements can largely, if not exclusively, be described as emergent phenomena.

The emergence of the various elements leads to a process which, at first, seems paradoxical and which bears for the performances' semioticity. Emerging in isolation, these elements appear de-semanticized because they are perceived in their specific materiality and not as carriers of meaning; they are neither put in relation to other elements nor to any other context. In this sense, the elements are insignificant – devoid of meaning.

Once perceived in their materiality, these isolated emergent phenomena trigger a wealth of associations, ideas, thoughts, memories, and emotions in the perceiving subjects, enabling them to make connections to various other phenomena. They are evidently perceived as signifiers which refer to diverse ideas and contexts and can be related to a range of signifieds. The isolated materiality of the various elements thus effects an immense pluralization of potential meaning. How can we explain this paradox? I briefly touched upon the de-semanticization thesis;[1] I tried to demonstrate in how far it might be justified (that is, within the larger logic of action and psychology which attributes a single or several specific meanings to each element) but why it still is insufficient. When analyzing Wilson's use of slow motion I showed that this technique did not de-semanticize but highlight the gestures' self-referentiality. A gesture therefore means exactly what it performs; it is perceived as a movement, say, of the bent arm from the hip to eye level. The analysis of this example applies to all other cases in which the de-semanticization thesis becomes relevant. When the gesture with which Marina Abramović carved a five-pointed star into her skin was perceived as just that – and not as a symbolic act signifying the inscription of the state onto a citizen's individual body – it was not perceived as insignificant but merely as that which it performed. When the spectators did not perceive the fat, excessive body of Giancarlo Paludi as representing the figure

of Cicero but as an almost shapeless body that filled the space, they perceived him in the very way he appeared – in his phenomenal being.

What I have illustrated in reference to bodies and gestures also applies to spaces, things, colors, sounds, and so forth. To perceive theatrical elements in their specific materiality is to perceive them as self-referential and in their phenomenal being. Does that simultaneously imply perceiving them as insignificant? Is it possible to equate the perception of objects in their specific materiality to their perception as insignificant, purely "sensual" phenomena?

When I perceive the actor's body as a unique body; when I observe the specific redness and taste the peculiar sweetness of the blood sprayed on the lamb's carcass, the actors, and spectators in Nitsch's actions; when I feel the intestines under my feet in their particular consistency and elasticity, I am perceiving all these phenomena *as something*. I do not respond to an unspecific stimulus, I perceive something as something. The things signify what they are or as what they appear. To perceive something as something means to perceive it as meaningful. Materiality, signifier, and signified coincide in the case of self-referentiality. Materiality does not act as a signifier to which this or that signified can be attributed. Rather, materiality itself has to be seen as the signified already given in the materiality perceived by the subject. To use a tautology, the thing's materiality adopts the meaning of its materiality, that is, of its phenomenal being. What the object is perceived as is what it signifies.

This applies only to conscious perception. To perceive something consciously means to perceive it as something. While we constantly perceive things that do not cross the threshold of consciousness but still influence our behavior (Roth 2001: 217), these subconscious perceptions remain meaningless for the perceiving subject and cannot be taken into consideration here because nobody can claim any knowledge of them. Only the observable behavior they might stimulate offers a trace of these subconscious processes. These visible responses in turn become part of the autopoietic feedback loop.

Since, strictly speaking, the de-semanticization thesis concerns the phenomenon of self-referentiality, it can be more accurately defined as a very specific process of constituting meaning. In this process, perception grasps something as something. Hence something is not first perceived as something to which meaning is subsequently attributed. Rather, meaning is generated in and through the act of perception.

The sudden, unmotivated emergence of a phenomenon directs the spectators' attention to that particular gesture, that specific thing, or that one melody. As a result, the spectators' perception might gain a special quality, which precludes the question of other possible meanings, functions, or usages, or also of other framing contexts for the phenomena's emergence. Perception unfolds as a kind of contemplative immersion into that gesture, thing, or melody, in which the perceived elements show themselves to the perceiving subject as what they are: they reveal their "intrinsic meaning." Such a revelation occurs when the perceiving subject experiences the presence of an actor or the ecstasy of a thing. A secret is seemingly

unearthed in that moment: the secret meaning "given" in the phenomenal being of the object is "uncovered," or rather, brought forth, in the act of perception.

Hence, we are not dealing with a process of de-semanticization but of self-referentiality. Self-referentiality collapses the binary opposition that plays such a central role for the historical avant-garde and in aesthetic theories more generally: the divide between the sensual perception of an object, seen mostly as a physiological process, and the attribution of meaning, considered a mental activity.

Once again, I would like to illustrate my point with an example from the everyday. When I perceive the particular redness of a traffic light in the rain, and become fascinated by its constantly changing and glittering nuances so far so that I get lost in the image, I am perceiving it as something other than the sign to stop. In both cases my perception gives rise to specific meanings: first, to that of a particularly fascinating sensual impression, and second, to a code of conduct. To put it plainly and perhaps provocatively: conscious perception always creates meaning. "Sensual impressions" can therefore be more accurately described as meaning of which I become *conscious* through specific sensual impressions. None of these impressions can easily be expressed linguistically. I might actually have trouble putting them into words, finding them ultimately incommensurable with linguistic expression and only very inadequately describable. This circumstance strongly suggests that these meanings can be equated to states of consciousness but not to linguistic meanings.

In the past 30 years, performances have frequently severed their theatrical components from any sort of wider context or causal chain but instead infused them with repetition in order to show them clearly as emergent, self-referential phenomena. Thus, audiences have been sensitized to the insight that perception and the generation of meaning constitute one and the same process. Beyond grasping materiality, the sudden inexplicable and unmotivated emergence of a phenomenon forms the condition for another type of perception. While the phenomenon is initially perceived in its phenomenal being, it begins to be perceived as a signifier as soon as the focus strays away from the perceived object and into the realm of association. It thus becomes interlinked with ideas, memories, sensations, and emotions as signifieds. It remains to be seen according to which rules these associations appear and what effect they have.

If a spectator suffers from a phobia, such as the fear of horses – like Freud's little Hans – or spiders and snakes, then Grueber's *Bacchae*, Fabre's *She was and she is, even*, and Abramović's *Dragon Heads* would likely have revived that phobia, even if we cannot say this with absolute certainty. If we exclude these exceptional cases, it seems utterly impossible to predict what types of associations might be induced by the perception of an object, regardless of whether the perceiving subject is able to identify legitimate chains of thought in retrospect. The most famous example in this context would be Proust's madeleine dipped in tea which, once smelled and tasted, released a flow of memories in him. The example illustrates that there exists a direct link between smell, taste, and the memories released by them. Yet,

the particular memories are neither imperative nor even particularly likely. They appear in the perceiving subject's consciousness through an unfixed process. The smell and taste of a madeleine dipped in tea will not trigger these memories each time they are perceived by Proust – neither did he seek and invite them consciously and deliberately.

The disconnection of emergent phenomena from predetermined contexts evidently creates favorable conditions for putting the perceiving spectators in a state similar to that experienced by Proust with his madeleine. The phenomena can be attached to any spontaneous or associative context. These connections are made only rarely at a conscious and intentional level, as for example in *Snuff*, where a spectator perceiving the ovens tried to remember where they had seen such ovens before and chanced on autobiographical instances in the process. Associations, however, occur without being called for or sought out. They simply arise in the consciousness of the perceiving subject. As memories, associations refer to past experiences, lessons, or knowledge. They interweave unique subjective experiences with inter-subjectively valid cultural codes. Moreover, the same associations might appear as sudden intuitions, new ideas, or thoughts and thus surprise the perceiving subject more than any other type of association (because they cannot fathom how association and perception interrelate).

In both cases, meanings are generated unintentionally by the perceiving subject. They appear neither as a result of any sort of causal nexus nor of the concerned subject's intentions. Their emergence is inexplicable and unmotivated. In this context, the associative generation of meaning strikingly differs from an intentional process of interpretation. Interpretation depends on searching for meanings which might "match" according to certain criteria, although, even in this case, they might not always be accessible to the interpreting subject. Associative meaning, however, emerges without the intention and effort of the concerned subjects and sometimes even against their wills. The associative generation of meaning can therefore be described as an instance of emergence.

Insofar as associations occur as thoughts, they remain within consciousness both as memories and new meanings, except when the concerned subject is gripped by the novelty of their own thoughts. In that case, the subject's excitement might articulate itself physically in a palpitating heart, bouts of sweat, or motoric restlessness perceivable by others. Alternatively, the subject may feel the urge to note down their experiences, which again leads to a perceptible action. Sensations and emotions tend to articulate themselves physically and often in perceptible ways, be it through shivers, sobs, or, most often, motoric restlessness. As long as they can be seen, heard, smelt, or sensed by the other spectators and/or actors, these articulations become part of the autopoietic feedback loop. Effectively, the meanings emerging in the consciousness as signifieds for the objects perceived as signifiers can indeed contribute to the autopoietic feedback loop. Both are acts of materialization: either meanings become perceptible once articulated physically, or they stimulate physically traceable reactions.

By isolating the various theatrical elements, performance since the 1960s gives rise to two very different types of perception and generation of meaning. In each case, the relationship between materiality, signifier, and signified is different. In the first case, the phenomenon is perceived as what it appears, i.e. in its phenomenal being, so that materiality, signifier, and signified coincide. In the second case, they markedly diverge from each other. The phenomenon is perceived as a signifier that can be linked to a diverse range of signifieds. The meanings ascribed to the phenomenon are not dependent on the subject's will but appear in consciousness spontaneously – even if, retrospectively, they can oftentimes be explained rationally. While initially emerging meanings still directly relate to the perceived object, later ones hardly bear any relation at all. Already generated meanings thus produce more meanings. Both types of generated meanings share a common trait: they are not based on inter-subjective codes or conventionally accepted ascriptions.

The ways in which these acts of perceiving and generating meaning operate reveal remarkable parallels to Benjamin's concepts of "symbol" and "allegory." While the similarity is obscured by the fact that Benjamin's art theory is rooted in his language theory and was developed in conjunction with a particular philosophy of history, the relation between the two remains striking. Benjamin constructs the concept of the symbol from Goerres' theory of the symbol, "which emphasizes the organic, mountain and plant-like quality in the make-up of the symbol" (Benjamin 1998: 165). Benjamin also refers to Creuzer's *Mythologie* in which symbols are characterized by "the momentary, the total, the inscrutability of its origin, the necessary" (Creuzer cited in Benjamin 1998: 163). "The measure of time for the experience of the symbol is the mystical instant in which the symbol assumes the meaning into its hidden and, if one might say so, wooded interior" (Benjamin 1998: 165). The symbol is conceived so as to deny a subjective participation in the act of generating meaning because the symbol has already absorbed its meaning into its "interior." The symbol invokes its intrinsic meaning. Even if the symbol is created by subjects – as is the case with artistic symbols – its subjectivity nonetheless tends to become erased. It eliminates itself in the act of creating the symbol and disappears. The artistic symbol seems to elude all attempts, whether by the creative artist and the interpreting viewer, to brand it with meaning. It can merely be perceived. Even the symbol created by a subject receives and reveals its meaning in the same way as things did in the stage when meanings were awarded to them by God in paradise before the beginning of history: materiality, signifier, and signified coincide. Hence, the symbol's meaning seems neither random nor subjective but given in the symbol itself.

The symbol revokes the subjective component and seeks to exclude it from its sphere of meaning. In Benjamin's philosophy of history, it therefore also anticipates the future. Just as the symbol hides and reveals its meaning in its interior, so nature, too, will reveal its hidden meaning in an "instant" on the day of redemption. The symbol thus points forward to the end of history, which it also symbolizes because in it, "destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption" (Benjamin 1998: 166).

The similarity between the two concepts – symbol and self-referentiality – is striking. In both cases materiality, signifier, and signified coincide, and in both cases we could speak of an intrinsic meaning. Yet, we must not overlook the grave differences arising from Benjamin's particular notion of the philosophy of history because in the case of self-referentiality, the contribution of the perceiving subjects is far from denied. Rather, the subject's perception of things in their phenomenonal being allows us to speak of an intrinsic meaning at all. The act of perception itself is the condition that creates meaning as the object's phenomenal being.

By disconnecting the emergent phenomena from their given contexts, theatre and performance artists have established the condition for giving appearance to an equivalent of a Benjaminian symbol – in the emergence of things in space and in the act of perceiving them.

Benjamin contrasts his concept of the symbol to allegory, which refers to "the earliest history of signifying." Allegory relates meaning as it is given by the historical world, which comes into existence after the fall of man and before the day of redemption. It thus proceeds from the assumption that nature and language have diverged. As nature remains silent, man is continuously forced to attribute meanings to it. Allegorical meaning results from a subjective ascription that is ultimately random.

Benjamin describes allegory as a process of generating meaning that explicitly refers to its randomness and thus to the prominent role of subjectivity. "Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (Benjamin 1998: 175). In the historical world, things cease to have intrinsic meaning in themselves. Regardless of its specific materiality, each individual object can be used as a sign for any other object. Materiality, signifier, and signified diverge.

What is appropriated by the allegorist lacks meaning; things become insignificant. The meanings attributed to those objects result from a subjective ascription undertaken by the allegorist. The object is

> … exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is to say it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has, it acquires from the allegorist. He places it within it … In his hands the object becomes something different.
>
> (Benjamin 1998: 183–4)

The allegorist's ascription makes the things at once insignificant and significant: insignificant, because the intentionality of his subjectivity precludes all possibility to reveal the object's original, divinely granted inner meaning; significant, because such intentional subjectivity reinvests it with meaning. By investing meaning into things, by turning the originally signified into a signifier, the allegorist opens up the possibility for things to revert to their status as signifieds in the historical world. The things-turned-signifiers refer to each other as signifieds in a theoretically infinite process.

The allegorical contemplation of a single object can determine that object merely as a fragment, as a thing disconnected from any context, and refer to its disconnectedness. Given the subjective arbitrariness of the allegorical act the object can be invested with new meaning only as a fragment. Benjamin views the process of bestowing meaning on things in this fragmented state as their "salvation." Otherwise, things would remain meaningless and mute, succumbing to their transitoriness. The meaning ascribed to an object by the allegorist obviously has little in common with its original, prelapsarian meaning, which it was able to reveal. But because it still is meaning, the allegorical process in its turn refers forward allegorically to the messianic state of redemption, in which things will again be able to express their intrinsic meaning (Fischer-Lichte 1979: 180–206 and 1997: 275–89).

The disconnection from given contexts is the condition both for the allegorical investment of meaning and the associative generation of meaning we discussed. Allegory and association are alike because they attribute or generate meaning that depends exclusively on the perceiver's subjectivity. The crucial difference, however, lies in the fact that, for allegorical meaning, the allegorist's intention alone is relevant – it is he who wilfully attributes a particular meaning to the perceived thing. In contrast, association evokes meanings in the consciousness of the perceiving subject who is unable to either consciously guide this process or fully control the emerging meanings.

Symbol and allegory constitute a binary opposition that appears to be mutually exclusive. The chasm of history keeps them apart, even if both categories ultimately refer ahead to the state of messianic redemption in which things revert to expressing the meanings bestowed on them by God. Yet in performance, the perception of a phenomenal being and the related associative generation of meaning, enabled by the process of emergence, form a different interrelationship. The one can switch to become the other at any moment: what is perceived as the phenomenal being of something at one moment, can in the next be perceived as a signifier to which the most diverse chain of signifieds can be attributed. Perception can suddenly switch from identifying something as a "symbol" to perceiving it as "allegory." Benjamin's philosophy of history contains a corresponding interpretation for this process, too. In allegory,

> … transitoriness is not signified or allegorically represented, so much as, in its own significance, displayed as allegory. As the allegory of resurrection. Ultimately, in the death-signs of the baroque the direction of allegorical reflection is reversed; on the second part of its wide arc it returns, to redeem … In God's world the allegorist awakens.
>
> (Benjamin 1998: 232)

I introduced Benjamin's art and signification theory into my analysis in order to further illuminate one particularly important aspect of semioticity in performance which performances since the 1960s have repeatedly brought to the forefront: the

oscillation between two completely different types of generating meaning. First, we find the seemingly "objective" meaning akin to Benjamin's symbol. Second, we can identify associative meaning, the emergence of which depends on conditions appearing to be connected with the perceiving subject and thus comparable to Benjamin's allegory. In both cases, meaning is not generated on the basis of inter-subjectively valid codes.

In this context I would like to reiterate that – in contrast to Benjamin – the meanings generated in performance are largely not identical with linguistic meanings. Rather, they are mostly meanings that vehemently elude the grasp of linguistic formulation. The process through which we attempt to "translate" them into language always sets in retrospectively in order to reflect on or transmit them to others.

"Presence" and "representation"

In the chapter on the materiality of performance I introduced the term perceptual multistability and explained it using the example of the oscillating focus between the actor's specific corporeality and the character portrayed. Using this example as a starting point I would like to discuss the relationship between the terms "presence" and "representation" in order to further investigate how meanings affect the dynamic of perceptual processes and what they *do* in performance.

In aesthetic theories, "presence" and "representation" were long considered oppositional concepts, wherein presence was equated with immediacy and seen as the experience of opulence and completeness, as authenticity. Representation, in turn, belonged to the grand narratives, exerting an authoritative controlling mechanism. Apparently fixed and rigid in its meaning, it seemed suspect because its semioticity only provided mediated access to the world. Within the culture of performance of especially the 1960s and early 1970s, the actor's body, and particularly their naked body, was seen as the locus and epitome of presence. In contrast, the dramatic character incarnated representation. Predetermined by the "authoritative controlling mechanism" of the literary text and recreated by the actor as a physical representation of such textual prescriptiveness, the stage character was considered proof for the text's ultimate repression of actors and particularly their bodies. Their bodies thus had to be liberated from the strangling chains of representation in order to break free into the spontaneity and authenticity of their physical existence.

As the section on embodiment demonstrated, such an absolute opposition between "presence" and "representation" is not sustainable. Both presence and the dramatic character are brought forth through specific processes of embodiment. The character does not come into being as a replica of an external, predetermined sphere but is instead generated through the very process of embodiment. Each character is bound to the specific corporeality of the actor who engenders it. The actor's phenomenal body, their bodily being-in-the-world, constitutes the

existential ground for the coming into being of the character. It does not exist beyond the individual body.

When an actor portrays a character, they are not replicating what is already given elsewhere, say in a text, but creating something entirely new and unique which can exist in this manner only through their individual corporeality. If we want to retain the term representation to denote the process of generating a character, it must be radically redefined. Yet presence and representation are not one and the same. Even if the specific processes of embodiment are the same – which is the case whenever an actor "playing" a role appears present throughout – the resulting perception differs significantly in each case. The difference between these various kinds of embodiment is a result of perception, as the phenomenon of perceptual multistability makes particularly evident.

As already discussed, perception can switch in the very act of perceiving. What is perceived as the actor's presence in one moment is perceived as the character in the next and vice versa. In our context it would make little sense to find a psychological explanation for this phenomenon. Even if there is no obvious relation between the characters listed in the program and the actors onstage, individual spectators will nonetheless see the actors as the characters. Similarly, they will at times sense the actors' presence behind a consistently realistic-psychological performance of a given character. Hence we must conclude that, according to the current state of knowledge, the sudden shifts in perception constitute an emergent phenomenon.

Much more interesting in our context is the question of the effects of perceptual multistability in performance. As we have seen, performances since the 1960s use a range of strategies which seem to enable perceptual multistability to far greater extents than is the case in realistic-psychological performance. Productions by Wilson, Castorf, Fabre, and others seem to provoke instances of perceptual multistability. Each shift produces a break, a discontinuity. As the previous order of perception is disrupted and abandoned, a new one is established. To perceive the actor's body in his bodily being-in-the-world establishes one order of perception, while understanding the actor as signifying a character establishes another. The first order generates meaning around the perceived's phenomenal being that might trigger chains of association, while the second order produces meaning which, in its entirety, constitutes the character. Building on the weak concept of presence we can identify them as, first, the order of presence, and second, the order of representation.

What exactly happens when the shift occurs? What happens in the moment of transition when one valid order of perception is disrupted while the other one is not yet established? The transitional moment is accompanied by a profound sense of destabilization. The perceiving subjects remain suspended between two orders of perception, caught in a state of "betwixt and between." The perceiving subjects find themselves on the threshold which constitutes the transition from one order to another; they experience a liminal state.

If, over the course of a performance, perception remains in a state of flux, leaving the spectators suspended between two orders of perception, the difference between the two loses its significance. Instead, the perceiving subject's attention focuses on the transitions themselves and notices the disruption of stability, the state of instability, and finally the establishment of a new stability. The more frequently the shifts occur, the more frequently the perceiving subjects become wanderers between two worlds, between two orders of perception. Throughout, the spectators become increasingly aware that they are unable to control these transitions. Some might try to "retune" their perception intentionally to retain either the order of presence or that of representation. However, they soon realize that they cannot prevent the unintentional shifts and are fluctuating against their will. In such a moment they are conscious of their own perception as emergent and elusive.

We are dealing with conscious but not wilfully produced perceptions. Thus, the meanings generated through these perceptions are not intentional. They simply emerge in consciousness in the act of perception. The question arises whether the meanings generated within both orders of perception fundamentally differ from one another. Does the perceptual order of presence, for instance, tend to produce meanings as sensations and emotions that are articulated physically and can be perceived by others as physiological, affective, energetic, and motor reactions? Likewise, does the perceptual order of representation tend to stimulate thoughts, ideas, and emotions which are articulated internally but hardly ever grow to a point at which they overwhelm the spectators, allowing them to maintain a certain distance to what they perceived? The performances discussed so far seem to confirm this conclusion. Moreover, the meanings of the first order are conceived as pertaining to reality, while those of the second order denote a fictive world or symbolic sphere. Yet we know from theatre history, especially of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that these types of meaning also generated strong emotions. Hence we cannot draw universally valid conclusions from this question. In the more limited context of the performances discussed so far, such a conclusion seems entirely plausible.

Each order generates its respective meanings according to different principles which become predominant when one order is established. Thus all that is perceived within the order of representation reflects on and creates a character, a certain fictive world, or a particular symbolic order. The process of perception is evidently driven by the desire to produce a character, so that other elements that do not contribute to the character's representation recede into the background. The generated meanings that bring forth the character affect the dynamic of the perceptual process: the perceiving subject selects only those elements relevant to the character. The process is thus purposeful and predictable to a certain degree.

Theoreticians of the eighteenth century focused their efforts on this order of perception. As they came to realize, a single order of perception could not be stabilized. At some point it would inevitably shift – the order of representation would be disrupted and another, if temporary, order would be established: the

order of presence. A completely different set of principles applies to the perceptual order of presence. The meaning that the perceiving subject attaches to the object's phenomenal being generates an ensuing chain of associative meanings not necessarily related to what is perceived. Once the perceptual order of presence is stabilized, perception and the generation of meaning begin to operate unpredictably or better "chaotically." One cannot foresee which meanings will be generated associatively; one cannot foresee which meanings will direct perception to which theatrical element. In this case, the order is governed by an extreme measure of unpredictability.[2] Perception turns into an entirely emergent process. Based on self-referentiality, the order of presence allows meanings to emerge over which the perceiving subjects have no control.

Perceptual multistability ensures that neither of the two orders can stabilize themselves permanently. With each shift, the dynamic of the perceptual process takes a new turn, creating ever more instances of destabilization. Either the perceptual process loses its arbitrariness and becomes purposeful, or it loses its purpose and begins to drift. Each turn allows for new perceptual content that contributes to the stabilization of the newly established order and, effectively, helps generate new meanings.

In addition, the shifts direct the attention to the dynamics of the perceptual process itself. The perceiving subjects begin to perceive themselves self-reflexively, thus opening up a further sphere of meaning and influence on the perceptual dynamics.

The more frequent the perceptual shift between the arbitrary order of presence and the purposeful order of representation, the more unpredictable the entire process and the more focused the subject becomes on perception itself. In the process, the spectators become increasingly aware that meaning is not transmitted to but brought forth by them. They realize that the creation of meaning depends on and changes with the timing and frequency of the shifts.

While the processes of perception and the generation of meaning can be described as subjective, they are not solipsistic. Instead, they contribute to the autopoiesis of the feedback loop. They draw the actors' and spectators' attention back onto themselves, whether through physical articulations (sensations and emotions) or via the perceptible actions that these articulations cause. Undeniably, they have an effect. The nature of the relationship between meaning and effect remains to be decided, which the historical avant-garde postulated as a binary opposition.

Meaning and effect

The avant-gardists repeatedly listed two methods of achieving the desired effects of performances: the use of shock and other overwhelming emotions and actions. Even if they rarely acknowledged it, the members of the avant-garde actually continued a long and honorable tradition with their emphasis on shock. From Aristotle's *Poetics* to the end of the eighteenth century, the arousal of passions, feelings, and

affects denoted the commonly desired effect of theatrical performances within the wider framework of the aesthetics of effect. Such emotional effect primarily determined the value of or danger posed by a performance. It was presumed that the portrayal of passions by the actors – i.e. a specific mode of signifying those passions – excited passions in the spectators, albeit distinct for the most part from the ones represented onstage. Meaning here served the purpose of effect. The desired effects would only be stimulated in the audience if specific meanings were correctly transmitted to the audience as prescribed by the rules of acting. Recognizing each portrayed emotion accurately and immediately became the most important condition for stimulating emotions. The gestural code of baroque theatre based itself on this condition and was put into writing by P. Franciscus Lang in his *Dissertatio de actione scenica* (1727) (Engle 1968). In turn, Johann Jakob Engel's *Mimik* (1784/5) summarized the code for a "natural" art of acting in his period (Fischer-Lichte 1992: 143–69). The accurate transmission of a specific meaning seemed to be the condition of possibility for the performance's effective stimulation of affects in the spectators.

The historical avant-garde, however, turned against the representational aesthetics of the nineteenth-century realistic-psychological theatre and proclaimed a new aesthetics of effect. They saw meaning primarily as an intellectual phenomenon which set in motion rational processes but not emotions. Moreover, they understood meaning as a message reflecting a specific – bourgeois – ideology which they rejected. As described and demanded by Marinetti in "The Variety Theatre," they identified effects (which cannot be triggered by meaning as it is defined above) as powerful physical reactions perceptible to others. In their view, such reactions could only be evoked through actions which attacked the spectator's body and lacked all meaning in the above sense.

Whether meaning and effect are seen as opposites or reciprocal conditions ultimately depends on the respective definitions of these terms and on the accompanying psychological theory. Hence, the relationship between meaning and effect can only be discussed meaningfully in the context of each set of conditions.

I determined sensations and emotions as meanings because I generally defined meanings as states of consciousness.[3] Sensations and emotions are thus regarded as meanings that are articulated physically and of which one becomes conscious only through their physicalization. These physical articulations, such as irregular breathing, breaking into bouts of sweat, or goose bumps should not be seen as symptoms, as signs for emotions located elsewhere – such as "within" someone, inside their soul. They are not, as eighteenth-century theoreticians held, merely expressed by the body. On the contrary, I am proceeding from the assumption that emotions are generated physically and that we become aware of them only as physical articulations. In this sense, emotions can indeed be transmitted to others without ever having been "translated" into words.

In order to further illuminate the relationship between meaning and effect, I shall first concentrate on a specific type of meaning, namely emotions. If "effect"

is described as the interference into the process of the feedback loop's self-organization, it follows that meanings can be defined as effects as long as they impact on the feedback loop. The central question to pose is how meanings affect the autopoiesis of the feedback loop.

At the outset of this chapter, I contended that if perceptions (as states of consciousness) are defined as meanings, it follows that meanings are generally responsible for bringing forth further meanings. The second step of the argument sheds light on how these new meanings affect perception. The perceiving subject is far from a *tabula rasa* when attending a performance. On the contrary, they have produced and remembered a wide range of meanings pertaining to their life thus far. Therefore, even the "first" perception in a performance is already the result of previously generated meanings, whether they are purely subjective or based on cultural codes.

Applied to emotions stimulated during the performance, this implies that if the perception of a theatrical element produces emotions these can be traced to meanings generated earlier. As the example of phobia illustrated, someone suffering from a snake phobia will always perceive a snake as an object of fear. The phobia is an integral part of the meaning that the object "snake" carries for that person. Since the phobia is part of the meaning of the object "snake" and since it is *meaning* that creates perception as meaning, the perception of a snake will induce fear at that very moment.

Phobias constitute subjective meanings, rooted in the individual's biography. Likewise, certain objects and processes could, when perceived, trigger identical, highly affective emotions in a large number of people of a certain culture. Traditionally, theatre performances have contextualized these theatrical elements, thereby diminishing, if not neutralizing, their overall emotional influence on the spectators' perception. The performances described above, however, disconnect these elements from their contexts and create favorable conditions for liberating the emotional potential that any theatrical element might carry for a given perceiver. Commonly shared emotions can be stimulated in several spectators when the performance breaches a cultural taboo, as apparently was the case in *Lips of Thomas* or *Giulio Cesare*, to refer back to two prominent examples.

Our culture is dominated by a craze for youth, slimness, and fitness. Bodies that blatantly contradict this ideal are stigmatized as abnormal and banned from the public sphere as far as possible. Likewise sickness and death, though not a taboo, represent an anathema in our society. Sick and dying bodies trigger resistance, loathing, disgust, fear, and also shame. By putting these very bodies on stage without specially justifying their deviation from the expected norm – for example through the character description of a certain role, such as the limping Richard III – they left the audience "defencelessly" exposed to the sight of these bodies. The force of social convention produced corresponding emotional responses in the perceiving subjects, which they articulated physically and which then were perceived by others. The meanings were undeniably culturally predetermined and

thus adopted and shared by its individual members, guiding their perception and inducing strong emotions.

Much the same goes for Abramović's performances, such as *Lips of Thomas* and *Rhythm 0*. Both broke with strict taboos. In our culture the individual's life and physical well-being are considered the most precious gift. To injure the body of another, to put another's life in danger, or, worse, kill someone, is to become guilty of the gravest possible crime, which must be punished with the maximum sentence and the exclusion from society. To injure or attempt to kill oneself also means to place oneself outside society. Such people are labeled sick, are placed under surveillance, monitored, and prevented from inflicting any harm onto their bodies. Violence against others and oneself constitutes a strong taboo in our society. While violence against other members of one's own community appears to be a taboo in all societies, as particularly Girard illuminated in his theory of sacrifice, violence against oneself was not always considered objectionable in Christian culture. Practiced as an Imitation of Christ, such violence existed in the form of self-flagellations by monks and nuns since the eleventh century and in mass movements of flagellants since the sixteenth century. For our contemporary society today these practices, too, have become a taboo. In general, taboos are charged with strong, highly ambivalent emotions for the members of the concerned society. The desire to break a taboo equals the lust to watch others, who actually have broken them, being punished and banished from society.

In *Lips of Thomas* and *Rhythm 0*, Abramović broke both taboos. When the spectators witnessed Abramović injuring herself in *Lips of Thomas* by carving the five-pointed star into her skin, flagellating her back until it bled, and lying down on a block of ice, they exhibited strong emotions. Spectators reacted similarly to *Rhythm 0*, as others tortured, injured, and humiliated Abramović. These emotions were not caused by a physiological reflex such as the closing of the eye when it is unexpectedly touched, or by the physical pain triggered by certain sounds. The spectators experienced these emotions because violence against self and others had been charged and connoted with intense emotions for them prior to the performance.

These previously acquired meanings influenced the dynamic of the perceptual process: meanings were generated through the act of perception and articulated themselves physically in the form of intense emotions. For one, these emotions demonstrate that meanings are not just "mental" phenomena which can only be explained with the help of a two-world theory. According to the concept of man as embodied mind, meanings instead find physical articulation, even if not always perceptible to others. The example of the emotional responses to taboos demonstrates ihow far meanings generated by the spectators influence the feedback loop's autopoiesis. It shows how far meanings generate effects. The physical articulations which are seen, heard, smelled, or sensed by other spectators or actors in turn generate perceptible behavior patterns and actions in those who perceive them and so forth.

Emotions also are able to influence the feedback loop's autopoiesis in other ways: as the latest neuro-psychological research has shown, our actions are largely not informed by calm reflections, convictions, or theoretical assumptions about the nature of our world. Rather, our emotions offer the most decisive motivation for our actions (Ciompi 1988, 1999; Damasio 1999; Roth and Wullimann 2000; Roth 2001; de Soussa 1997).

As could be observed in Abramović's performances, the emotions generated by perception triggered impulses for action. In *Lips of Thomas*, the spectators approached the artist holding out on the ice block, removed her from it, and carried her away. In *Rhythm 0*, some spectators prevented others from continuing to torture the artist. In other cases, emotions strongly affected the feedback loop's autopoiesis, even if the emotional responses did not lead to an abortion of the performance. When spectators of Schleef's productions left the auditorium making loud remarks and banging the door as they exited, the feedback loop took a new turn. The same applies to all actions through which a spectator turns into an actor, as elaborated in the third chapter. What is interesting in the context of the semioticity of performance is the question how action is a product of generating meaning. As we have seen in the previous example, making meaning indeed can bring about the impulse to act. If these impulses are repressed and if the corresponding emotions are not articulated physically and perceptibly, they remain inconsequential for the autopoiesis of the feedback loop. If one follows the impulses, the performance's progress is largely co-determined by the meanings generated by the audience. Each individual brings forth meanings according to their subjective conditions. What applies to the feedback loop's autopoiesis in general also applies to the generation of meaning: everyone contributes to it and is influenced by it but no one controls it.

Effect is no longer conceived as a one-sided process, as was still the case with both the "old" (valid until the end of the eighteenth century) and "new" aesthetics of effect (the historical avant-garde). In the former, the meanings conveyed by the performance induced certain effects in the spectators, such as pity and terror, admiration, horror, sympathy, and so forth. The latter exposed the spectators to "attacks" on the body, which provoked action or effected transformations. It was the actors in and behind the scenes who set out to induce specific effects.

In performances since the 1960s, effect is conceived as a reciprocal process. The actors make something appear which the spectators perceive as something. The meanings generated in the act of or in response to perception can in turn affect other spectators and actors, as long as they are articulated physically and perceptibly. The meanings generated by the spectators in particular influence the feedback loop's autopoiesis and trigger effects.

Once again, we see that the performance's semioticity can only be adequately described within the context of the aesthetics of the performative, and not in opposition to the sphere of performativity. The emergence of meaning proves to be particularly relevant in this context. The process of generating meaning in a performance reveals a number of significant similarities to the autopoietic

feedback loop. As much as the individual participant co-determines the course of the performance and is in turn determined by it, so the perceiving subject undergoes a similar experience in its individual generation of meaning. The subject determines the processes within a single order, say that of representation, and purposefully perceives and generates corresponding meanings. The subject is in turn determined by the processes whenever yielding to the associations, sensations, ideas, and thoughts which suddenly appear in their consciousness and which they cannot prevent from appearing. In the processes of generating meaning the subjects experience themselves actively as well as passively, neither as fully autonomous subjects nor totally at the mercy of inexplicable forces. This binary opposition simply does not hold any longer.

At this point a question arises that has been lurking in the shadows since the beginning of this chapter: is the subject we are talking about a hermeneutic subject? The hermeneutic subject would bring forth meaning in order to understand the performance regardless of whether it believes to actually reach a level of understanding or eventually concludes that every attempt to understand is doomed to fail. To answer this question we must reexamine the processes of generating meaning in order to analyze whether they can be incorporated into the paradigm of hermeneutic aesthetics (Gadamer 2005).

Can performances be understood?

In performance generally (and not just since the 1960s), spectators are not distanced from the event when generating meaning but rather act as involved participants. Even if some spectators ostensibly distance themselves from the performance by reclining in their seats in boredom or making loud scornful comments, they nonetheless continue to participate and influence the feedback loop's autopoiesis. As long as they remain in the auditorium they cannot *not* participate. In the auditorium, they cannot maintain the same distanced position as when regarding a painting or reading a poem.

At no point is it possible for the spectators to regard a performance in its entirety – like a picture – and to relate the individual theatrical elements they are perceiving to this whole. Similarly, they cannot skip or reread pages. Whether they attend a performance once or multiple times, they may only draw connections between each newly emerging element and the previous, remembered ones. Since every single performance of any given production constitutes itself newly and differently through its autopoietic feedback loop, spectators can never attend the exact same performance twice. In this context, it seems necessary to once again differentiate between performance and *mise en scène*. Most importantly, the spectators generate meaning in a performance by virtue of the peculiar fact that they themselves partake in creating the process they wish to understand. Only once the performance is over does this situation change. In retrospect, the spectators can try to relate each perceived and remembered element to the whole in order to understand, or fail to understand,

the performance. This retrospective attempt to understand is no longer part of the aesthetic process, which ends with the performance. Any retrospective attempt cannot be integrated into the actual aesthetic experience, which occurs only during the performance. It could merely serve as the prerequisite for another aesthetic experience during a later performance. We must therefore concern ourselves with the question of whether the processes of generating meaning, which I have analyzed in this chapter, should be regarded and explained as hermeneutic processes.

What is there to understand in the oscillation between "symbol" and "allegory," for example? What types of interpretative processes are at work here? The perception of an object (or of a body, movement, thing, color, or sound) as what it appears establishes a curious "fusion" of the perceived object and the perceiving subject, not to be mistaken for Gadamer's fusion of horizons (Gadamer 2005). The perceiver's gaze palpates the object, as Merleau-Ponty put it. Either the gaze touches the object or, as in the performances of Felix Ruckert's theatre, bodies are put into actual physical contact. Sound, light, and smell penetrate the perceiving subject's body and influence and transform it. Can we say that the perceiving subjects understand the expansion in space of the thing they are observing, the smell they are breathing in, the sound resonating in their chests, the blinding light which dazzles their eyes? Hardly. They rather experience them in their phenomenal beings.[4] Perception affects the spectators physically here. But they do not "understand" it. Aesthetic theories have repeatedly emphasized that understanding hits its limits or is radically questioned whenever materiality is pushed to the forefront and grabs the attention of the perceiving subject (Derrida 1987: 255–382; Menke 1988). Even more important for our case is the fact that materiality, signifier, and signified coincide, precluding all possibility to "decode" its meaning. Meaning cannot be separated from materiality or subsumed under a single concept. Rather, meaning is coterminous with the object's material appearance.

All associations triggered in the perceiving subject by the object of perception must indeed be seen as responses. They respond to the challenge posed by the object's appearance rather than an attempt to understand it. The perceiving subject could only try to understand why those very associations appeared at that particular moment. It is certainly conceivable that some spectators will engage in hermeneutic self-inspection to discover how object and association relate to their own biography. Thus, perception does not lead to an attempt to understand the performance but one's identity and biography (Lorenzer 1970 and 1972). Such an attempt, too, will likely be disrupted as new phenomena appear in space and redirect the spectators' perception – if at first only subliminally – from pondering themselves and their biographies back to the performance.

The processes of generating meaning that operate with the help of self-referentiality and association, that oscillate between "symbol" and "allegory," can thus hardly be described as a hermeneutic process aimed at understanding the performance. As the analysis shows, the generation of meaning instead affects

the autopoiesis of the feedback loop. It actively partakes in the creation of the performance.

A wholly different set of problems is posed by perceptual multistability and unpredictable perceptual shifts between the order of representation and the order of presence. As long as the perceiving subjects follow the order of representation, they create meanings which are simultaneously part of hermeneutic processes. The construction of a dramatic character, fictive world, and a symbolic sphere can indeed be described as an attempt to understand the concerned character, fictive world, or symbolic sphere. Since the spectators can only contemplate this fiction consecutively, they grasp the character only as it develops. As the performance progresses, they use their initial understanding as a tentative guiding hypothesis for constituting the character further. If the performance begins to contradict the spectators' tentative hypotheses, they will adapt their notion of the character, the fictive world, and the symbolic order accordingly until the performance's conclusion (Fischer-Lichte 1992: 206–17 and 218–53). To an extent, then, we can indeed speak of hermeneutic processes that co-constitute the aesthetic experience.

In my description of these processes, I have, thus far, neglected the crucial aspect of the perceptual shifts between the order of representation and the order of presence. A theatrical element is perceived in its phenomenal being and physically affects the audience. Consequently, the process of constituting a fictive world is brusquely interrupted. In its place we find the "fusion" of perceiving subject and perceived object. The spectator submits to a stream of associations which may lead to further auto-biographical reflection. When the perception shifts once more to the order of representation, the causal chain of understanding and constituting the character cohesively is broken. The spectators will have to resume wherever their memory allows them to. The attempt to generate meaning hermeneutically proves a Sisyphean task.

The shifts leave the perceiving subjects in a state of instability. The aesthetic experience here is largely characterized by the experience of destabilization, which suspends the perceiving subjects betwixt and between two perceptual orders. A permanent stabilization lies beyond their control. The perceiving subjects may even reflect on the destabilization and the resulting experience of liminality before they are, once again, physically affected by the performance. In effect, the hermeneutic processes they engage in intermittently remain marginal to the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience is shaped more by the experience of the liminality, instability, and elusiveness that pervades the entire event than by the attempts at understanding. It is important to consider the spectators' disposition in this context. If the failure to understand is experienced as fundamentally frustrating, the ensuing instability is likely to be experienced as a crisis.

At this point I would like to return to the problem of the specifics of aesthetic experience raised in Chapter 1, which we can now tackle on a different basis. These particulars reveal themselves when we examine the emotions brought forth in and by the act of perception. The emotions are meanings which, as we have seen,

can decisively influence the autopoiesis of the feedback loop, as the example of emotional responses to taboo breaches in performance has shown. The spectators experience the breach of a taboo as a crisis. In the case of *Lips of Thomas*, they suddenly found themselves in a situation that invalidated prevalent norms and certainties. This crisis transferred the spectators into a state of radical betwixt and between. Evidently, the spectators could not overcome the crisis through reflection in order to understand the extraordinary demands of the situation. Instead, they had to respond emotionally, bypassing all reflection and precluding all attempts to understand. Aesthetic experience here was lived as a crisis which could not be resolved by pure contemplation.

How do the spectators escape this liminal situation? By entering another one? As established above, the mere strength of emotions can stimulate the impulse to act. Not following the impulse meant being trapped in this situation; one continued to exist on the threshold, incapable of utilizing the available space to counter the crisis by establishing a new order. Those spectators who followed the impulse to act by removing the artist from the ice block invalidated the prevalent dichotomy between aesthetics and ethics and opened up a new interaction between the two. Aesthetics no longer liberated the spectators from the pressure to act. On the contrary, the aesthetic situation challenged them to take action. The intervention of the spectators redefined and overcame the critical situation, although they ran the risk of acting against the artist's intentions by putting an end to the performance. Reflection on and knowledge of the situation did nothing to alleviate the crisis; they possibly even triggered another crisis. Acting on emotional impulses brought a resolution that hermeneutic processes could not contribute to.

For the most part, the processes of generating meaning discussed in this chapter are not hermeneutic processes. Overall, the generated meaning does not facilitate the comprehension of the performance but enables an experiential range. While hermeneutic processes can partially be incorporated into this aesthetic experience they are ultimately of marginal importance for it. The performances I referred to above did not seek to be understood but experienced. They cannot be incorporated into the paradigm of hermeneutic aesthetics.

Purposeful efforts to understand performance can be launched only after its conclusion. Such attempts however, are beyond aesthetic experience; they are unable to co-constitute it. Retrospective attempts to understand performance also pose a unique set of problems. Two of those are of a particularly grave kind. For one, such attempts have to rely on memory. To understand a performance retrospectively, one must remember it. Second, retrospective understanding is based on linguistic expression whereas meanings generated during performance are largely extra-linguistic. To understand a performance retrospectively, one must thus "translate" the remembered extra-linguistic meanings into linguistic ones. That can pose insurmountable difficulties for the spectators.

Episodic and semantic memories are particularly relevant to a retrospective understanding of performance (Schacter 1996).[5] Episodic memory allows us, for instance, to remember the details of the set; the positions and movements of the

actors in space; the melody, rhythm, and arrangement of the music; the particular way in which the light hits the actors; the harmony or disharmony between the rhythm of speech and movement. Episodic memory allows us to remember the numerous concrete appearances in a performance.

Semantic memory is responsible for recalling linguistic meanings, ranging from the words spoken onstage to one's own thoughts and interpretations during the performance. It includes the acts of translation undertaken during the performance itself. These can range from identifying a certain color as red, a movement as abrupt, or an atmosphere as eerie. In turn, episodic memory remembers the specific nuance of the red, the particular thrust of the movement, or the specific sensation one had upon entering the auditorium including the concrete space and its details that exuded a certain atmosphere. Usually, semantic and episodic memories interact and support one another. Remembering the action's progression and the associated linguistic meanings might support the episodic memory in its corresponding tasks. Since the performances to which I referred largely did not follow a logic of action or some other type of causal nexus, every attempt to understand it in retrospect places a special weight on episodic memory. Once one remembers individual instances of a performance, one can make new connections that place them in an entirely new context.

Finally, another problem requires further consideration in this context. Recent memory research confirmed the familiar experience that our memory is "unreliable" in many respects. It does not function like a warehouse, which faithfully preserves the remnants of the past deposited in it, but reconstructs the past anew and differently according to each situation and context. Moreover, it might bring forth lively but inaccurate memories of illusory events (Schacter 1996). It also often refuses to provide us with memories on recall. This defect of our memory cannot be remedied by attending multiple performances of the same production. With every new visit the spectators will see and experience things that previously eluded them and which must be added to existing memories. In addition, one's memory of the first visit tints and modifies any following experience of it. The performance's novelty value, considerable during the first visit, is subsequently diminished, so that the spectators are differently affected. Last but not least, each performance remains unique and is therefore perceived differently in each instance, accumulating even further memories for recall.

Under these circumstances understanding performance retrospectively by taking recourse to memory proves somewhat tricky even if we are not concerned with the question of "right" or "wrong" interpretations. The same applies to the translation of experience into language that becomes relevant here. As I have emphasized, the larger part of the meanings the perceiving subject generates during the performance and remembers afterwards cannot be equated with linguistic meanings. Extra-linguistic images, fantasies, memories, or states of mind, sensations, and emotions become conscious only as physical articulations and are "translated" into language with difficulty. Linguistic signs carry a certain degree of abstraction, which enables them to establish relationships and connections in the

first place. The concretely perceived bodies, things, sounds, or lights, however, are robbed of their specific phenomenal being if one condenses them into language retrospectively, whether during or after the performance. Even the most accurate of linguistic description cannot achieve materiality. It can merely trigger the reader's or listener's imagination which might deviate considerably from what was perceived and is now being described. Ultimately, the experience remains unfathomable. What episodic memory recalls, language can access only to a very limited degree. In contrast, semantic memory structures its memories linguistically *per se* and can therefore be expressed linguistically. Nevertheless, we are also dealing with deformations here, determined by the limits of language. Semantic memory remembers concepts and descriptions already subject to processes of translation during the performance itself.

Every attempt at understanding has to overcome the limits of language, ultimately without hope for success. As a special medium, language commands a specific and unique materiality; as a particular semiotic system, it is governed only by its own, specific rules. The process of writing becomes independent because any of its descriptions must adhere to these rules. Writing develops its own dynamic which, while it might provide a certain sense of proximity to the remembered perceptions, necessarily leads away from them. In short: every attempt to understand a performance retrospectively contributes to the creation of a text which follows its own rules, becomes independent in the process of its creation, and perpetually distances itself from its starting point – the memory of the performance. The attempt to understand performance retrospectively thus produces an independent text which, in its turn, seeks to be understood. We are led to the following conclusion: language also does not enable the retrospective understanding of performance.

Chapter 6

The performance as event

The nature of performance as event gained in relevance at the turn of the last century, when Peter Behrens, Georg Fuchs, and others proclaimed that theatre must again become festival.[1] Soon after, Max Herrmann claimed to have found the "original meaning of theatre" in the "theatre-fest" which was constituted by its different participants, actors and spectators alike. All of them felt that the specific aestheticity of theatre was manifest in the nature of performance as event. Behrens, Fuchs, and Herrmann contradicted traditional convictions of an aesthetics rooted in the work of art and opened new perspectives for the debate on the arts and aesthetics.

For a long time, the work of art held a central position within this debate along with its creator, the omnipotent genius figure of the artist. The production of a work of art was frequently – if later only metaphorically– seen and described as analogous to God's creation of the world: just as God had created the world completely and holistically, the artist also brought forth his work of art. And just as the eternal divine truth lay hidden within God's work and only revealed itself to those capable of reading the book of the world, the artist's work held a similar truth. Revelation would be the likely reward for immersing oneself in and patiently seeking to decipher the work of art. With the onset of the cult of genius at the close of the eighteenth century, the artist appeared as an autonomous subject that created an autonomous work of art, concealing truth. The assumption that the work of art is a cache of truth and that truth sets itself into work in it (*das Sich-ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit*), as Heidegger put it, also applies to philosophical aesthetics from Hegel to Adorno, with the striking exception of Nietzsche. It also characterizes Gadamer's conception of the classical work of art, even if his concept of hermeneutics does not effectively support such an assumption.[2]

While structuralist aesthetics and the aesthetics of reception not only relativized but even categorically rejected the claim to truth in the work of art, the central position the work of art held in aesthetic reflection as a whole remained untouched. The recipient was granted the role of a co-creator and was even declared responsible for generating meaning. Nevertheless, the work of art remained the point of reference for all aesthetic reflection, allowing the recipients to perform their hermeneutic operations. The work of art is created as a "thing" whose "thingness" never vanishes. It exists as an artifact, which remains consistent

with itself regardless of the recipient's presence or even despite the changes that might occur over time: the colors darken, collaged newspaper cuttings yellow, and so forth. As a sculpture, monument, or score, the artifact is accessible to different recipients at different times. In the case of texts and music scores, its availability extends to different spaces. In principle, recipients can return repeatedly to the same work of art over the course of their life, discovering ever new peculiarities and possibilities for reflection and thereby generating new meanings within the work of art. In this sense, a recipient can be engaged in a life-long dialogue with a work of art.

Given the long-standing and venerable history of the concept of the work of art, Behrens', Fuchs', and Herrmann's implicit negation of the concept in favor of the notion of event (even if, as we have seen, they were hardly consistent in dismissing the term entirely with regard to theatre but continued to use it) seems almost sacrilegious. It was sacrilege insofar as they denied the existence of two of the work of art's fundamental prerequisites in the sphere of the theatre, thus challenging the traditional idea of art as a whole but nonetheless continued to insist on theatre as an art form. They replaced the artifact with fleeting, unique, and unrepeatable processes and relativized, if not abolished entirely, the fundamental division of producers and recipients. Therefore, they attacked the prerequisites for an aesthetics of the work of art, of production and reception. Its parameters could no longer be reasonably applied to performance. The artistic and aesthetic nature of performance would instead be derived solely from its nature as event.

What individual theoreticians postulated at the turn of the last century in order to establish a new form of theatre – and a new academic discipline – applies as a self-evident *conditio sine qua non* to performances of theatre and performance art since the 1960s. Among the many impulses for the creation of action and performance art was the urge to resist the production of artworks as marketable artifacts and commodities and instead replace them with fleeting events which nobody was able to buy and store away in a safe or display in their living room. The ephemerality of the event, its uniqueness, and singularity became a focal point.

As the analysis of mediality, materiality, and semioticity revealed, each has their share in constituting the performance as event, and they influence one another throughout. In other words, not just performance as a whole occurs within the feedback loop's autopoiesis but also each of its individual elements. Materiality is not given as an artifact but occurs as the result of the performative generation of corporeality, spatiality, and tonality. The actor's presence, the ecstasy of things, atmospheres, and the circulation of energy "occur" in the same way as the meanings brought forth as perceptions or the emotions, ideas, or thoughts resulting from them. The performance's aestheticity is manifested in its nature as event: the spectators respond to what they perceive just as the actors react to perceived audience responses and behavior patterns.

In order to describe and define it more accurately and in accordance with my overall approach, I will refrain from identifying established concepts of the event

– such as Heidegger's, Derrida's, or Lyotard's – to apply them to the performances examined above. Instead, I will employ the findings produced by my analyses of mediality, materiality, and semioticity in performance as a basis to grasp the specific aestheticity of performance since the 1960s. In particular, three aspects have crystallized that directly constitute the nature of performance as event and indubitably are of central importance to its specific aestheticity. These are: first, the feedback loop's autopoiesis, which engenders the performance, and the phenomenon of emergence; second, a destabilization, even erasure, of binary oppositions; and third, situations of liminality that transform the participants of the performance. I expect that a closer look at these three aspects will yield clearer insights into the particular aestheticity of performances.

Autopoiesis and emergence

As we saw in Chapter 3, the autopoietic feedback loop, consisting of the mutual interaction between actors and spectators, brings forth the performance. The notion of the artist as autonomous subject creating an autonomous work of art, which each recipient may interpret differently but cannot change in its materiality, evidently no longer applies here, even if the majority of audiences still fails to acknowledge it.

This conclusion gives rise to a number of questions. Is it really legitimate to equate actors and spectators? Is not the contribution of the artists who prepare the production larger, given that they determine the course of the performance, while the audience at best reacts to it? How can the proclaimed dismissal of the artist as autonomous subject be reconciled with the common complaints about the despotism of theatre directors since the late 1960s who seem to consider themselves almighty? In order to answer these questions, I would first like to distinguish between performances of performance art, usually initiated by a single performer, and theatre performances, which are prepared by the director, set designer, composer, actors, musicians, and so forth.

Through their performances, the performance artists create specific situations to which they expose themselves and the spectators. When Beuys spent three days living with a coyote, or when Abramović wrapped pythons around her body, the artists relinquished whatever limited control they might have had over the course of the performance. They created situations which made predictions about the performance's further development difficult, if not impossible. The development depended no longer on the artist alone but for a large part on the audience and, in this case, also the animals. The artists exposed themselves and others to an uncontrollable situation created by them and thus made the spectators aware of their shared responsibility in the event. Negative influences on the coyote or the snakes could literally have catastrophic consequences for the artist. The behavior of the animals was largely unpredictable. All other participants, first and foremost the artists but also the spectators, had to adapt to the situation. The scenario also reveals the dependence of the artists on the spectators. The artists relied

on the spectators' sense of responsibility to contribute to the given situation by participating in the performance.

It can therefore be argued that such performances articulated a new self-understanding of the artists. No longer god-like creators of the work of art, they instead established similar conditions to laboratory researchers to which they exposed themselves and others. The artists could determine a specific time frame for the performance, though it remained uncertain whether it could be upheld in the actual event, as Schlingensief's case demonstrated.

We must clearly distinguish here between the intensive preparation of theatrical performances, often lasting several weeks or even months, and the performance itself. The rehearsal process plays an important role for the overall shape of the performance insofar as they determine which theatrical elements are to appear in what form, place, and time. The rehearsal process establishes crucial guidelines for the audience's perception during the performance. The director, although he is the ultimate decision maker, is not comparable to the author of a poem, who creates his work of art on his own. Rather, the other artists and, to an extent, the technical and design staff who develop ideas and make suggestions collaborate on the entirety of the production.[3] Generally, the autopoietic feedback loop is affected only by what actually appears in the performance regardless of what was discussed, decided, and planned.

The director does not usually participate in a performance and cannot directly influence the autopoietic feedback loop – except as actor or spectator. While every actor, technician, and stagehand constantly influences the feedback loop's autopoiesis – albeit in ways different from that prepared in rehearsal – the director is generally incapable of influencing the performance event while it occurs.

The theatre performances to which I have referred are comparable to performance art events insofar as the *mise en scène* established certain situations to which all participants were exposed and to which each individual responded differently. Here, too, we are dealing with experimental set-ups that invited diverse reactions – be those Schechner's guidelines for audience participation, the spatial arrangement at the Frankfurt Depot in Schleef's productions, or Castorf's use of video technology.

Since performances from the 1960s onwards have been drawing attention to the feedback loop's autopoiesis through role reversal, community building, and other strategies, they have simultaneously been articulating a new image of the artist. One might even go as far as to say that these performances have propagated a new image of humans and society, although it remains questionable whether this new image has as yet arrived in society at large. The effect of the autopoietic feedback loop negates the notion of the autonomous subject. The artist, like all participants, is assumed to be a subject engaged in a continuous process of determining and being determined. This mutual determination contradicts the notion of a subject that sovereignly exerts their free will and can fashion themselves independently of others and of external directives. Equally, this conception vehemently opposes the notion of a spectator determined exclusively by outside forces and escaping

all responsibility for their actions. The perceptible workings of the autopoietic feedback loop, apparent in all forms of role reversal between actors and spectators, allows all participants to experience themselves as co-determinate participants of the action. Neither fully autonomous nor fully determined by others, everyone experiences themselves as involved and responsible for a situation nobody single-handedly created. Herein lies a fundamental component of aesthetic experience that enables the autopoiesis of the feedback loop.

The feedback loop functions as a self-organizing system which must permanently integrate newly emerging, unplanned, and unpredictable elements. For the actors, these elements include, most prominently, the spectators' behavior and actions together with their own or their colleagues' reactions. Furthermore, they extend to unpredictable events on the stage, such as a sudden stumbling, a spot-light crashing down, a missing prop, or the behavior of participating animals – a monkey biting an actress, a horse defecating on stage, a barking dog leaping into the auditorium. From the audience's viewpoint, all elements flowing into the autopoiesis of the feedback loop constitute emergent phenomena. In the performances discussed, the appearance or disappearance of emergent phenomena did not follow a clearly comprehensible and predictable logic of action or causal nexuses but was dependent on rhythmic patterns, time brackets, chance operations, and so forth. Therefore, spectators might have found instances of emergence and their own reaction or the behavior of other spectators equally difficult to predict. To them, everything must have appeared emergent.

This circumstance has far-reaching consequences for how spectators watch a performance. For as long as a certain, possibly familiar, logic of action is upheld, one's perception can operate selectively. That is to say, spectators do not distribute their attention equally over all that appears in the space but merely follow that which aids the understanding of the plot or character development. Without such principles of selection that structure both performance and everyday life, the much talked-about attention economy (Goldhaber 1997; Crary 1999) must reorganize itself according to different criteria. These include the level of intensity of the appearance, deviation, surprise, or conspicuousness (Seitter 2002: 171–82).

However all of these criteria easily apply to the performances analyzed above. Generally, multiple selection criteria interact in the emergent phenomena at play in the performance. The intensity of emergence, for example, becomes relevant for the actor's presence, the ecstasy of things, and the atmosphere, to which presence and ecstasy contribute to a considerable extent. The strong concept of presence guarantees that the physical appearance of an actor dominates the space and forces the spectators to direct their attention to them. By setting free forces in themselves and the spectators, the actor generates a shared energy circulation in the space that can be physically sensed by all. In the ecstasy of things, objects are no longer self-contained but step out of and exhibit themselves. They appear as particularly intense and grab the spectators' attention. In particular, this applies to the so-called secondary qualities of things: their colors, smells, or sounds. Since atmosphere is constituted both by the actors' presence as well as the ecstasy

of things, it impresses itself particularly intensely onto the perceiving subjects. Atmosphere envelops the subjects who become immersed in them, penetrating the subjects' bodies as light, sounds, or odors.

As demonstrated above, theatre and performance art since the 1960s have developed a number of methods marking the presence of the actors as well as the ecstasy of things. Together, they contribute to creating dense atmospheres. The created intensity is evidently not an isolated experience but can last for an entire performance. In Schleef's *Sport's Play* production, for example, the 45-minute chorus scene maintained a high level of intensity, which even increased over its course. Merely considering the intensity factor makes it clear that performances demand a heightened level of attention from the spectators for extended time spans, if not for their entire duration.

Similarly, deviation and surprise featured in all performances. Since the performances established their temporal sequences through time brackets and rhythm, deviation was a predominant principle. In each time bracket, the beginning and ending of the activity could be determined individually. Rhythm, likewise, is defined by deviation. No repetition actually repeated that to which it referred in exactly the same way, as the Noh-walks in Wilson's *Knee plays* and the various chorus scenes in *Snuff* demonstrated. It is typical for the performances under discussion that they directed the audience's attention to even the smallest, most "inconspicuous" deviations, which usually elude us in our daily lives. Here, they were the focus of attention. Rhythms were created through repetition with slight variations. Constantly on the lookout for deviation, the spectator could still be surprised by its actual, unexpected appearance. The principle of deviation and surprise applied throughout the performances. It offered a special challenge for the spectators' attention.

Finally, let us probe the criterion of conspicuousness that guides the audience's attention. For one, we find a range of phenomena in performances, which would stand out not only in our daily lives but even in the context of sensationalist shows and spectacles, as is the case with performances involving self-injury. Within the frame of performance art events and theatre performances such actions undeniably become particularly conspicuous. As we have seen, participating animals are always conspicuously present, be it wild animals, such as the snakes, the coyote, a monkey, an African night owl, or a tarantula that even attract attention in a zoo, or domestic animals such as dogs, cats, horses, canaries, and fish, which are more common in daily life. Second, the performances also repeatedly succeeded in making the ordinary appear conspicuous. When actors appear to the spectators as embodied minds, or an ordinary coal oven dominates the spectator's full attention, a situation occurs which Arthur Danto labeled the transfiguration of the commonplace. The commonplace appears transfigured and becomes conspicuous. Moreover, performances repeatedly draw attention to how spectators perceive by motivating shifts between the orders of presence and representation. The art of performance evidently consists in making conspicuous all that appears within

it. Since everything in performance appears unpredictably, conspicuousness and surprise lie side by side here.

The performances under discussion thus fulfill all three criteria for capturing attention intermittently but persistently. An economy of attention in the original sense of the word does not apply here. We are dealing instead with an excess of attention, a "waste" of this precious resource. This applies not only to the actors, in whom we take a heightened level of awareness of themselves and others for granted but also to the spectators whose attention is captured by each element appearing onstage. Nevertheless, individual spectators possess their individual economy of attention, which will prevent them from being permanently alert. A heightened level of attention can only be maintained intermittently.

We can define attention in accordance with Seitter as a "relatively strong inclination of the consciousness towards an object or issue of any kind" (Seitter 2002: 171). In addition, Csórdas contends that attention comprises a "more bodily and multisensory engagement than we usually allow for in psychological definitions of attention," that "[s]omatic modes of attention are culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (1993: 138). Csórdas' more expansive definition illuminates the deeper sense of what I termed "waste." A state of permanently heightened attention helps the perceiving subjects to experience themselves as embodied minds in particular ways. Here, then, we can identify a further fundamental component of aesthetic experience in the sphere of performance.

The demand made by these performances for a state of permanently heightened attention, which describes an extraordinary state, certainly originates in the emergence of appearances. Emergence and autopoiesis, however, enable experiences otherwise not uncommon in our everyday lives. The experience of being unable to command processes and events entirely, of instead being determined by them to a degree, can be described as commonplace, ordinary, and even trivial. In our daily lives, in social and political contexts, and in the wider historical developments, we are frequently confronted with the experience of ungovernable or unforeseeable events. We become aware that a given course could have just as well taken a different turn. Why it took that particular turn remains ultimately inscrutable, however hard we look for explanations. Now and then, we encounter people in our daily lives who seem to possess and emit a radiance that transfers onto others; when such people take up socially or politically significant positions we speak of charismatic personalities without being able to explain their charisma. To name one last example: we may even experience the ecstasy of things in utterly inconspicuous parts of our daily lives, which nonetheless and for whatever reason acquire a special significance, an aura, for the perceiving subject.

Although we are talking about experiences that everybody might have had at some point in their lives, these experiences remain largely excluded from public discourse. Insofar as this discourse is determined by Enlightenment theories, these experiences are not openly admitted to. Their articulation is strictly contested by

exposing their false premises: human beings are autonomous subjects and masters of their fate. In this discourse, humans are capable of rationally determining the processes they are involved in and realizing their plans accordingly. Whatever is emergent – in the cosmos or in culture – can be explained rationally. When something new enters the world, it usually happens as the result of carefully planned actions. Since all humans are equal, charismatic personalities cannot exist. They only appear as such to others because, like actors, they have learned certain techniques and practices – "tricks" – which can create the impression of charisma. As regards the aura of things, it can only be the brainchild of pathological minds. Things serve certain purposes and depending on whether they do or do not fulfill them, they must be cherished or destroyed. Beyond that, material things have no influence over people.

However, the Enlightenment discourse is not alone in rejecting the experience of being an embodied mind; postmodernism has done so in its turn. Since the subject is to be thought of as wholly decentered, all notions suggesting that the subject can co-determine anything are considered sheer illusion. Instead, the subject turns into the object, acted upon by abstract entities such as language or cultural inscriptions. The subject does not speak and use language but is spoken by that language. The dialectic of "being a body" and "having a body" proves to be an idle fancy. The body is instead seen as a passive surface for cultural inscriptions. Since everything is arbitrary and every experience ultimately represents a subjective construction, it cannot be ruled out that subjects exist who might construct an experience of charisma in people and aura in things.

The Enlightenment discourse denounces these everyday experiences as relics and remnants of pre-enlightened thinking – perhaps considered natural only for a religious or even magical mindset. Such a pre-enlightened mindset relies on unrestrained, mysterious powers and forces that lie beyond the control of humans. This is why humans must always let themselves be determined by those forces whenever they affect processes in which they are involved. Moreover, these forces cause other new and inexplicable phenomena to suddenly appear which may take effect through people and things, thus making them appear charismatic or auratic.

The postmodern discourse denounces these everyday experiences as illusions and fancies, which are haunted by such enlightened concepts as the autonomous subject on the one hand and by romantic notions of an enchanted world on the other.

Both discourses devalue what we experience in the everyday. By working with autopoiesis and emergence, theatre performances and performance art events try to rehabilitate if not ennoble these everyday experiences. Performance induces an extraordinary state of permanently heightened attention in the spectator, thus transforming what has been ordinary into components of aesthetic experience. The commonplace is transfigured here, too.

Collapsing dichotomies

Let us remind ourselves: after Austin had distinguished between the binary of constative and performative speech acts, he allowed his distinction to fail. His decision feeds the suspicion that performative, self-referential speech acts set in motion a dynamic which collapses terminological binaries and, as Sybille Kraemer puts it, "destabilizes the dichotomous terminological scheme as a whole" (Kraemer and Stahlhut 2001: 56). This suspicion is further supported by my analysis of the various performances. As we have seen, particularly those terminological binaries central to our culture, such as art and reality, subject and object, body and mind, man and beast, or signifier and signified, lose their unambiguous meaning, are set in motion, begin to oscillate, and possibly collapse entirely. How far is this dynamic an integral part of the nature of performance as event? How does it affect the aestheticity of performance?

Since antiquity, the distinction between art and reality has been of fundamental importance to art theory. In its long history, it never fully ceased to conceive and define the work of art from the viewpoint of this distinction. This definition underlies all evaluations about the aestheticity of a work of art. Regardless of whether art is seen as imitating a pre-established reality or, alternatively, as creating an independent reality, a reality *sui generis* only to be found in this way in the artwork, the fundamental difference between art and reality remains a given. This is even more surprising as the work of art is a "thing" (if of a very special type) among things and thus belongs to the realm of so-called objective reality as just one among other man-made things such as a spoon, table, or house. The "thingness" of the work of art applies irrespective of whether reality is seen as the given or as a subjective construction of my perception. At most, the work of art distinguishes itself from other man-made things by virtue of not fulfilling a specific utilitarian purpose. While I may live in a house, sit at a table, and eat soup with the spoon, works of art are hardly useful in daily life where they are merely decorative. Since the proclaimed autonomy of art, artworks have increasingly lost their role in cultic-religious and political-representative contexts prevalent in earlier epochs and other cultures. Yet, they remain connected to economic pressures. Artists are paid for their works in the same way as manufacturers of porcelain or steam engines. With the nineteenth century the market assigned the value of art as a commodity, a prerogative heretofore largely determined by the customer or patron.

Broad public recognition of this distinction between art and reality protected artists from persecution if their work fell into disfavor and simultaneously saved the art works from censorship. Autonomy not only referred to the disjunction between the artwork and day-to-day utilities, it also implied that the work of art itself was transformed into a cache of truth and transfigured into a kind of grail. It advanced to an almost cultic veneration. Art for art's sake was elevated to the status of a substitute religion worshipped in its temples. Autonomy also stressed the idea that the truth of the work of art never dissolved into a direct statement or display but remained hidden in its depths. Artworks never meant what they showed

or said. They were not to be misunderstood as political or moral statements, as blasphemy or pornography, even if at first sight they appeared to instigate mutiny or revolution, and seemed to glorify murder, adultery, theft, slander God, or portray naked people. But appearance fails here. A deep chasm separated art from such a reality in which people may be convinced to start a mutiny or revolution, and crime, blasphemy, and pornography were the order of the day. The autonomy of art asserted a fundamental difference between art and reality.

Performances of theatre and performance art since the 1960s decidedly and vehemently contradict this assertion. Meaning coincides with what is shown and said. The artists constantly perform self-referential actions in these performances that constitute reality. When Marina Abramović began to bleed after breaking the wine glass in her hand, this meant that she had broken the wine glass and begun to bleed. The action constituted the reality of a broken glass and a bleeding hand. In *Lips of Thomas* there was no significant difference between art and reality. Everything that was done or shown in it meant exactly that what was done or shown and thus constituted a corresponding reality.

All performances are self-referential and constitute reality. When an actor playing Hamlet walks across the stage it primarily signifies the reality of the actor walking across the stage. The actor is not just pretending to walk. He is actually walking and changing reality through his act. The context alone allows for the walk to acquire another meaning – for example Hamlet walking to Gertrude's chamber. As Max Herrmann correctly remarks, we are always dealing with "real bodies" in "real spaces" in theatre performances. When the actors move in and through the space, they are actually changing the position of their bodies and with it the performative space. The generation of materiality in performance ensures that what appears actually occurs before any additional meaning can be attributed to these events.

Setting up art and reality as binary oppositions generated a whole range of other dichotomies, such as aesthetic vs. social, aesthetic vs. political, and aesthetic vs. ethical. As we have seen, such dichotomies have been collapsed demonstratively in performances since the 1960s. Role reversal and community building in particular have laid bare the fact that performance simultaneously constitutes a social situation and creates social interaction. Whatever transpires between actors and spectators or among spectators in a performance occurs as a specific social process and constitutes a specific social reality. Such processes mutate into political ones if negotiating these relationships turns into a power play. Wherever individuals or groups try to impose certain positions, behavior patterns, actions, and, ultimately, convictions on others, we are dealing with political processes. James Griffith committed a political act whenever he called on spectators to portray the villagers of My Lai in *Commune*. Schlingensief's actions turned political when he threatened spectators with exclusion from the performance for their behavior in *Chance 2000*. When the "non-believers" in *Two Amerindians Visit* … ridiculed the "believers" by pointing out how untenable their notions were, they acted politically. The political dimension became particularly evident whenever events went out of control

because some participants failed to play along: in *Commune*, some people refused to step into the circle; some expressed their solidarity with the spectator threatened by Schlingensief; others defended themselves against the "non-believers" in *Two Amerindians Visit* … In these and other cases, the opposition between aesthetics and politics does not hold. The situations the artists had created and to which they exposed themselves and others were simultaneously aesthetic and political. To separate or oppose the aesthetic from the political became entirely impossible.

In his notorious speech before the electoral German Society in Mannheim, Schiller defined the theatre as a moral institution because the stage "more than any other public institution, is a school of practical wisdom, a guide through social life, an infallible key to the most secret passages of the human soul" (1959: 271). Brecht, in turn, advised the audience to find their own solution to the problems presented on the stage: "You write the happy ending to the play! / There must, there must, there's got to be a way!" (1966: 141). Nevertheless, both Brecht and Schiller considered theatre itself a space devoid of any pressures to act. The spectators were not to intervene in the performance but in the social and political conditions prevalent outside the theatre. The performance was meant to provide them with images that stirred them to reflect on the political and social conditions; this would cause them to take actions in the social and political realities surrounding them. In Schiller's and Brecht's idea of theatre the aesthetic was also conceived in opposition to the ethical. When examining numerous performances of theatre and performance art since the 1960s, we find that this opposition, too, collapses. Again and again, spectators are maneuvered into situations in which they must make decisions and act. The spectators share with the artist a responsibility for the situation they find themselves in.

Hence, we can speak of a reversal of circumstances in recent years. In "real life" people behave increasingly like spectators, witnessing acts of violence without feeling an obligation to intervene – if only by calling the police on their cell phones. In contrast, artists are working towards exposing people to performance situations that shatter the spectators' safe positions and require them to become co-participants in the action. By setting up extreme conditions and exposing themselves to deadly risks, the artists call on the spectators' sense of responsibility and provoke them to act.

In these performances, then, aesthetics cannot be grasped without ethics. The ethical turns into a constitutive dimension of the aesthetic. That is why these performances pose such a challenge. They demand a fundamental rethinking and radical reconceptualization of the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical.

Can we thus conclude that these performances wholly erase the distinction between art and reality, that they equate the two and ultimately negate the autonomy of art? We must remember that the artists in their performances intentionally create situations by artistic means – and partly through elaborate preparations and lengthy rehearsal processes. These situations only resemble daily life but effectively constitute laboratory set-ups. A laboratory set-up, however,

cannot be equated to ordinary life and neither can an artistic performance, even if this might provide insights into human behavior. They differ from but are not opposed to one another.

In view of this analysis, the idea of an autonomous art has to be reconsidered. At least the performances under discussion here cannot be adequately described with the help of a binary that insists on diametrically opposing aesthetic and non-aesthetic spheres. Instead, the performances in question postulate that the aesthetic melts into the social, the political, and the ethical. While oppositional binaries claim these categories to be strictly apart, performance blends them together as if naturally. In fact, each category cannot be conceived without the other; each category already is its dialectic other, supposedly opposite, contradictory one. Herein lies the peculiarity of aesthetic experience as offered in these performances. In them, the aesthetic wonderfully, if not to say magically, incorporates its respective "opposites" – the social, political, and ethical. The aesthetic fuses with the non-aesthetic, blurring the boundaries between the two. The autonomy of art itself becomes the object of self-reflection in performance as the opposition between art and reality, and between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic collapses. The very collapse of these oppositions, their fusion, is to be understood as a performative reflection on and radical questioning of the autonomy of art.

In this moment of collapse, the performances in question simultaneously reflect on the condition of their possibility as art events. Yet the performances do not limit themselves to collapsing binaries referring to themselves as art events. They also set in motion oppositional binaries that have been central to occidental culture since antiquity, such as subject vs. object, body vs. mind, and sign vs. meaning. What happens when these begin to oscillate or threaten to collapse?

Here, too, categories are not mutually exclusive but actually concurrent. In the autopoietic feedback loop, all participants always act both as subjects *and* objects. They co-determine the entire process, stimulating new performative turns while also being determined by the turns effected by others. Instances of role reversal, audience participation, and the responses of participants make this reciprocal relationship particularly evident. In this context, the spectator is the subject of perception, whereas the perceived is the object and may affect the perceiving subject in a variety of ways. The perceived explodes the boundaries of the body, penetrating it as odors, sounds, or light. The perceiving subjects cannot help but breathe in the odor; the voices of the actors or singers resonate in their chests. A constant exchange takes place between the perceiving subject and the object perceived, which dissolves the fundamental subject–object opposition that philosophy and the history of ideas so ardently insist on. Both autopoietic feedback loop and perception permanently glide back and forth between subject and object positions. "Subject" and "object" no longer form an opposition but merely mark different states or positions of the perceiving subject and the object perceived which can occur consecutively or, in some cases, simultaneously. While such shifts may be part of our daily perceptual processes, we only become aware of this circumstance through the particular attention we grant performances. Here, in

the act of perception, we experience ourselves as actively perceiving subjects and simultaneously pervaded by the perceived; we become subjects and objects alike.

The performances mentioned above take an even more radical approach to the mind–body dichotomy. They not only destabilize its binary opposition but rather erase it uncompromisingly. Performances consist of processes of embodiment that bring forth both the acting body and meaning. In contrast to common usage since the late eighteenth century, I have not, as the two-world theory would suggest, used the term embodiment as an expression of something previously established and given, but to describe a creative process. That is to say, the mind does not exist in opposition to the body. Rather, the mind finds its existential ground in the body, which brings it forth and can thus appear as embodied mind. The phenomenon of presence in particular rejects the binary opposition of body and mind as an entirely inappropriate concept to describe human existence.

To Schiller, the ordinary human being was indeed describable in terms of this opposition between body and mind, between sensual nature and reason. Only in the ideal human these two eternally clashing forces would be reconciled and in balance. In the historical world, such a union would only be possible in art because in art the sensuous, material instinct (*Stofftrieb*) merged with the formal instinct (*Formtrieb*) to release the instinct to play. The much-quoted lines from Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) emphasize art's power to erase this opposition: "… with beauty man shall *only play*, and it is *with beauty only* that he shall play … man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and *he is only fully a human being when he plays*" (1993: 131). Art earns its exceptional significance because it is uniquely able to transfer human beings at least temporarily into a state in which the meaning of "human" fulfils itself – an aesthetic state. In the aesthetic state alone body and mind, the sensual nature of man and his reason, the material and the formal instinct reconcile and are at peace.

This brief outline clarifies that our concept of the human being as embodied mind cannot be equated with the reconciliation of oppositions envisioned by Schiller or with the Hegelian concept of sublation (*Aufhebung*). The embodiment concept instead establishes that the mind is always given in the human body as a living organism. Instead of a distant ideal, the embodied mind describes the ordinary human being. Thus, the ordinary human being appears in these performances, transfigured through the phenomenon of presence. Presence makes the ordinary remarkable and lifts it into consciousness.

The concept of the human being as embodied mind also relativizes another opposition – that between man and beast. When Beuys entered into the energy dialogue with the coyote and Abramović communicated with the snakes through her energy lines, the performance presupposed man and animal equally as producers of energy. A gradual differentiation replaced the principal opposition between humans and animals.

As we have seen in the course of our analysis, there are numerous other binary oppositions which performance collapses. At this point, I would merely like to

consider the binary of signifier vs. signified. Our performances deal with this binary in two drastically divergent ways. On the one hand, they deny any difference or opposition between signifier and signified by evoking self-referentiality throughout. Signification and appearance coincide in the act of perception. On the other hand, the opposition is apparently enhanced when, as in the case of associations, one signifier is attributed with numerous signifieds; in this case, meaning multiplies. This "enhancement" of the signifier/signified opposition is founded in its very negation. Precisely because the perceived phenomenon in the act of perception signifies what it appears as, it may also signify anything else. The opposition between signifier and signified and any stable one-to-one match of signified and signifier ceases to be plausible.

Performances that undermine and undo such dichotomies constitute a new reality in which one thing can simultaneously appear as another; this reality is unstable, blurred, ambiguous, transitory, and dissolves boundaries. The reality of performance cannot be grasped in binary opposition. These performances direct attention and transfigure ordinary experiences of the everyday while rejecting binaries as inadequately suited to describing these experiences. It remains to be asked whether such binaries are at all useful for describing non-aesthetic reality.[4] As performances destabilize the structure of binary opposites with the help of which we are used to grasping and describing reality, they raise the question whether such binaries construct a reality that contradicts our daily experience. They seem to postulate a reality based on an "either–or" rather than an "as well as" approach which would be much more accurate. This is why these binaries are neither valid as heuristic tools to illuminate and describe reality nor as rules governing our behavior and actions. If performance approximates life in its unpredictability and imponderability, it seems likely that parameters which fail performance are equally ill equipped to illuminate and describe life altogether.

Liminality and transformation

When oppositions dissolve into one another our attention focuses on the transition from one state to the next. The space between opposites opens up; the in-between thus becomes a preferred category. Again and again we have seen that the aesthetic experience enabled by performances can primarily be described as a liminal experience, capable of transforming the experiencing subject. Evidently, this type of aesthetic experience is of pivotal importance to the aesthetics of the performative as it captures the nature of performance as event.

The pivotal term liminality that is used here originated neither in art theory nor philosophical aesthetics but in ritual studies. It was coined by Richard Schechner's close collaborator Victor Turner in reference to the works of Arnold van Gennep. In his study *The Rites of Passage* (1909), van Gennep compiled a vast array of ethnological material demonstrating that rituals are linked to liminal and transitional experiences loaded with the highest measure of symbolic meaning. He divided transitional rites into three phases:

(1) the phase of separation, in which the subjects partaking in the ritual are taken from their daily contexts and removed from their social milieu;
(2) the liminal or transformational phase, in which the subjects partaking in the ritual are put into an extraordinary state, allowing for entirely new and partly disturbing experiences, and
(3) the incorporation phase, in which the transformed subjects are reincorporated into society and accepted in their new statuses and altered identities.

According to van Gennep, this structure can be observed in a diverse range of cultures. The content alone distinguishes one specific culture from another. Victor Turner labeled the state induced during the second phase the state of liminality (from Latin *limen* – threshold) and defined it as a state of a labile existence, "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial" (1969: 95). He elaborates that the liminal phase creates an experimental and innovative sphere for cultures insofar as "in liminality, new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols, are tried out, to be discarded or accepted" (1977: 40). According to Turner, the changes brought about by the liminal phase usually affect the social status of the participants in the ritual and extends to the entire society. Young boys are transformed into warriors, a woman and a man turn into a married couple, a sick man becomes healthy, and so forth. Referring to entire societies, Turner defines rituals as a means for the renewal and establishment of certain groups as communities. In this context, he identifies two particular mechanisms at work in rituals. First, he notes the moment of *communitas* created by rituals, which he describes as intensified sense of communality able to erase the boundaries between individuals. Second, ritual makes a specific usage of symbols, turning them into dense and ambiguous carriers of meaning, allowing actors and spectators alike to set diverse interpretative frames.

In a continuation and critique of Turner's approach, Rao and Koepping emphasize the ambiguity of rituals as well as their specific performative nature. They define rituals as events or "transformative acts" that are "attributed with the power to *transform* all contexts of action and meaning as well as every frame, including their constitutive elements and people in all possible respects, thus imposing a new status of being on people and symbols" (Rao and Koepping 2000: 10). Consequently, they argue that the liminal phase does not only lead to the transformation of the participants' social status but transforms their perception of reality "in all possible respects."

When I describe the aesthetic experience enabled by performances in theatre and performance art as liminal experience, I am not equating artistic performances with ritualistic ones. Yet it is difficult to find criteria for a clear distinction between them. It also seems likely that the artistic performances themselves, such as those of Abramović, Beuys, Nitsch, Schechner, or Schleef, repeatedly questioned and undermined just such distinctions. Artistic as well as ritualistic performances grow out of a careful *mise en scène*; both can work with

scripts and rehearsals as much as with improvisation; both construct realities and entertain their audiences; both make provisions for actors and spectators to alter their roles. Moreover, in the performances discussed, the traditional frame that prescribes "this is a theatre performance" or "this is a ritual" no longer applies. As we have seen, actors and spectators can equally undermine established settings. Yet one difference remains. While the liminal experience in ritual may transform the participants' social status and alter their publicly recognized identity, no comparable effect seems to exist for the aesthetic experience of artistic performances.

In the course of my analysis I have repeatedly used examples from performance to show when and how a state of liminality comes about and marked its possibility for transforming those who experience it. In retrospect, two factors can be identified which repeatedly created liminal experiences: first, autopoiesis and emergence; and second, the collapse of dichotomies. They enable experiences that always carry a liminal dimension.

In particular, the collapse of the opposition between art and reality and of all binaries resulting from this opposition transfers the participants into a liminal state. This becomes especially apparent in the performances involving self-injury. These performances erase valid rules and norms and establish a state of radical betwixt and between for all participants, even for the artists inflicting injuries on themselves. In this situation, a purely "aesthetic" response would border on voyeurism and sadism. Ethical responses, however, contain the risk of violating the artist's intentions. These performances plunge the spectators into a crisis, in which the recourse to conventional behavior patterns is pointless. The established standards are no longer valid and new ones not yet formulated. The spectators enter a liminal situation which they can only overcome by seeking out new standards of behavior despite the constant threat of possible failure.

Productions by Schechner, Castorf, Schlingensief, or the performance event of Fusco and Gómez-Peña created liminality by collapsing the dichotomies between the aesthetic and the social, between art and politics. Schechner had the spectators consciously alternating between their status as spectators and participants in the play. Castorf, however, often exposed them to the uncertainty of their own status as spectators or actors; whether they were watching the activities on stage as unobserved observers or were themselves turned into objects of observation; whether they had a dramatic character before them or an actor who had forgotten his role and spoke in his own name; whether they were confronted with a "fictive" world, or moving through "reality," or perhaps even part of a fictive world. Castorf's performances frequently played inscrutable games with the spectators that transferred them into liminal situations but also allowed them to engage with them playfully.

Schlingensief played a similar game with his audience, but somewhat less playful and more brutal. He deprived the spectators of their foundation to decide in which type of cultural performance they were participating, which frames to refer to, and which norms to apply. He pushed them into states of extreme

uncertainty that they had to overcome by themselves. Schlingensief was not acting as a well-intentioned "shaman" who ensured the spectators' safety through the turbulences and disturbances of performance, or assisted them in finding new perceptions about the world and themselves. Each spectator had to achieve this on their own, even if their attempts to overcome the crisis in the performance ultimately led to further liminality and destabilization.

Since binary oppositions serve not only as tools to describe the world but also regulate our behavior and actions, their destabilization and collapse shatters both our perceptual and behavioral framework. Binaries allow us to deduce various frameworks, such as "this is theatre" or "this is a social or political situation." Each of their frames contains guidelines for appropriate behavior in any of the situations they encompass. By allowing seemingly contrasting frames to collide, the performances moved spectators in between the prescribed rules, norms, and orders. Some might dismiss this state as "inappropriate" to art. Frustrated by audience reactions, the organizers of the Vienna Festival of 2000 handed out slips of paper reading "This is art!" to the participants of Schlingensief's *Please love Austria!* Apparently, the organizers felt the need to identify Schlingensief's piece in order to elicit an "appropriate" reaction and "aesthetic," non-interventional behavior. But what was the "appropriate" reaction to this type of event? As an experiment, it challenged actors and passers-by so as to play with and illuminate precisely the line of demarcation between aesthetically and ethically motivated behavior. Needless to say, Schlingensief collected the slips of paper from the spectators.

The state of betwixt and between, the experience of a crisis, is primarily realized as a physical transformation, in other words a change to the physiological, energetic, affective, and motoric state. A liminal state or crisis may also be induced by the conscious realization of physical change. Strong emotions triggered in the perceiving subject when confronted with sudden appearances in the space, fall under this category. The experience of pity, fear, and horror upon seeing the fragile, doomed bodies in *Giulio Cesare* might fall under this category. As we have seen, strong emotions bear the largest responsibility for triggering impulses to intervene and create a new set of norms for the acting subject. In the aesthetics of the performative, generating emotions and inducing a liminal state go side by side and cannot be separated from one another.

In performance, aesthetic experience and liminal experience ultimately coincide due to the workings and effects of the autopoietic feedback loop. The liminal situation is not only a result of the experience of elusiveness, generated by the permanent, reciprocal transitions between subject and object positions. Rather, every turn the feedback loop takes must also be seen as a transition and hence as a liminal situation. Every crossing of a threshold creates a state of instability with unpredictable consequences and as much of a risk of failure as a chance of successful transformation. The performances discussed in this book emphasize the liminal potential since the transitions were far from gentle but erupted abruptly. The process of the autopoietic feedback loop may thus be described and defined

as a sequence of transitions which carry a high potential for creating liminality throughout the performance.

Beginning and end of a performance represent a special type of transition because they mark the beginning and endpoint of the autopoietic feedback loop. Since the performances under discussion frequently did not take place in conventional theatre buildings or failed to follow established conventions and rules, the transition from the familiarity of daily life into performance – from ordinary citizens into spectators – carried its very own difficulties. The initial transition into and the final transition out of the performance were therefore clearly marked for the spectators.

Both these transitions allude to the separation and incorporation rituals described by van Gennep. In this context, Schechner conceived a special opening ceremony (every spectator had to enter the theatre space individually through a semi-darkened passage) and a specific incorporation ritual (the collective procession through the streets of New York). Each ritual was meant to ensure the safe passage into dangerous spheres: the transformation of visitors into participants and the reincorporation of the transformed participants into society. The entire performance came to mark a liminal and transformational phase.

In Ruckert's *Secret Service* the separation from daily life and transition into performance was achieved by a company member, who blindfolded each spectator and led them into the performance space by their hands. They crossed the threshold together. For the second part of the performance, the spectators shed their clothes – a frequent procedure in rituals. Undressing and dressing oneself symbolized the individual's separation from the daily milieu and their subsequent reincorporation. The transition from the performance into society was performed in reverse: each spectator was accompanied out of the performance space, the blindfold was removed, and the clothes put back on. Evidently, safe passages were of central importance here, too. What occurred during the performance aimed at enabling the spectators as "blind" participants to have extremely unusual and enervating experiences. In this case, too, the crossing of the threshold marked the performance itself as a liminal and transformational phase.

In *Trainspotting*, Castorf took an entirely different approach. Spectators were welcomed by an employee of the theatre in the foyer and instructed to wait in front of a certain door. After a group of spectators had gathered there, the employee guided them through twisted, labyrinthine hallways, up and down staircases, and into the performance space. Each of the spectators entered individually through a narrow door and onto the stage. After their eyes had adjusted to the dim light, the spectators recognized the stands backstage and took their seats. For a long time, the already seated spectators could observe new arrivals as they stumbled across the stage uncertain whether their transition had been completed and the performance begun, or whether they were still crossing the threshold. Castorf's scenario heightened the principal uncertainty typical of transitions generally. The

transition was experienced as a disorientating phase, a liminal situation to the extreme. The same applied to the transition out of the performance. Since the actors continued to return to the stage and hindered spectators from leaving by involving them in conversations about the performance and then formally bidding some female spectators farewell with a hand-kiss, the spectators leaving the room could ultimately not be certain whether the performance had already ended and this represented a sort of "closing ritual" – it continued until the last spectator left the room. From entering the foyer to leaving it again, the spectators experienced a liminal and transformational situation.

Abramović and Ulay took a particularly radical approach in their performance *Imponderabilia*, where the two performers stood naked at the museum's front door. Facing each other, they left a narrow passage between them. The entire performance consisted of the spectators squeezing their way between the two naked performers to cross the threshold into the museum. Entering, crossing, and leaving the threshold, in other words the transition itself, was the performance. More than any other, this example illustrates the liminal potential within performance.

By generating the performance, the autopoietic feedback loop simultaneously creates states of liminality. The two are closely related because liminality emerges out of the event character inherent to autopoiesis. The autopoietic feedback loop transfers the spectators into a state which alienates them from their daily environment and its rules and norms without offering any guidelines for a reorientation. Liminality therefore can provide a torturous or lustful experience for the spectators.

The transformations caused by liminality are predominantly temporary; they take effect but for the duration of the performance or for limited periods of time within the performance. Such transformations create physiological, affective, energetic, and motoric changes to the body. They can also achieve an actual change of status from spectator to actor status, or they produce communities. Whether the experience of the concerned subjects – caused by the destabilization of the self, the world, and its norms – leads to a reorientation and lasting transformation depends on each individual case. Spectators could also dismiss their transitory destabilization as silly and unfounded when leaving the auditorium and revert to their previous value system. Alternatively, they might remain in a state of destabilization for long after the performance's end and only reorient themselves much later upon reflection. In both cases, the participation in the performance provides a liminal experience. As we have seen, liminality in performance lacks two traits that apply exclusively to ritualistic liminality: first, durability (irreversibility); and second, social recognition.

Aesthetic experience is not just created by exceptional events but also by perceiving the ordinary. I have pointed out in various contexts that performances, to a certain extent, offer equivalents to the spectators' daily experiences, even if those are ordinarily excluded from public discourse. Performance allows entirely ordinary bodies, actions, movements, things, sounds, or odors to be perceived and has them appear as extra-ordinary and transfigured. Performance

makes the ordinary conspicuous. Cage's *silent pieces* that make so-called silence audible may serve as an example here. When the ordinary becomes conspicuous, when dichotomies collapse and things turn into their opposites, the spectators perceive the world as "enchanted." Through this enchantment the spectators are transformed.

Chapter 7

The reenchantment of the world

By transforming its participants, performance achieves the reenchantment of the world. The nature of performance as event – articulated and brought forth in the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, the performative generation of materiality, and the emergence of meaning – enables such transformation. Theatre and performance art since the 1960s have repeatedly demonstrated a peculiar interest in playing with and reflecting on these constitutive conditions of performance and its inter-related processes of transformation. In consequence, we have begun to understand these conditions as inherent to all performance, regardless of its genre or historical placement. The aesthetics of the performative I have developed in this book bases itself on these conditions.

The aesthetics of the performative does not aim to replace but to add to established theories of the aesthetics of work, production, and reception. Whenever artistic processes can be adequately described within the categories of "work," "production," and "reception," the aesthetics of the performative does not seek to be a substitute, but merely offer the possibility to complement the existing categories productively. The aesthetics of the performative primarily addresses artistic processes that have traditionally been beyond the grasp of "work," "production," and "reception." Such processes have consequently, if at all, been dealt with inadequately and been frequently distorted within the frame of the aesthetics of work, production, and reception. It is noteworthy that "non-theatrical" art forms since the early twentieth century and especially since the 1960s have tended to privilege the performance mode. In light of this development in the arts, the formulation of an aesthetic theory of the performative seems imperative not merely for the theatrical context but for all the arts.

As I am grounding the aesthetics of the performative in the concept of performance, its scope expands beyond artistic performance so as to encompass all other types of performance. Since the performative turn of the 1960s and the spread of new media, a range of new performance genres have emerged in such diverse domains of our culture as politics, sports, and spectacle and festival culture. These performances do not claim to be art; yet they are staged and perceived as new possibilities for the theatricalization and aestheticization of our environment; they partake in the reenchantment of the world.[1] Since the aesthetics of the performative must be applicable to all types of performance, it offers a context

for discussing the constantly shifting relationship between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, art and non-art, and for reiterating the question of the autonomy of art in today's world.

In the course of our analysis and especially in the preceding chapter on the nature of performance as event, I have left two undeniably fundamental terms for the aesthetics of the performative unexplained: *mise en scène* and aesthetic experience. Both are closely linked to the processes of reenchanting the world and transforming the performance's participants. Both were coined in the nineteenth century and have since undergone a series of reimaginations. For very different reasons, they enjoyed but a limited scope until the 1970s. While the concept of the *mise en scène* was exclusively applied to theatre, the term aesthetic experience abruptly fell out of the theoretical vocabulary with the onset of World War II. In the 1970s, philosophical aesthetics and the newly conceived aesthetics of reception resurrected the idea of aesthetic experience to address the specific relationship between the subject and the work of art. Except for a few isolated attempts in the 1970s, the concept of *mise en scène* was only broadened into a more general, aesthetic term in the 1980s. Ever since then, it has enjoyed undiminished popularity.

It is no coincidence that both terms were rediscovered, redefined, and popularized in the course of the performative turn of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The performative turn contributed to the dissolution of boundaries within the arts and between art and non-art. The new artistic development required an accompanying terminology that would apply to the most diverse art forms and, at the same time, be able to capture the aesthetic within non-artistic phenomena and processes. Both terms, *mise en scène*[2] and aesthetic experience, seem particularly suited to fulfill this dual purpose. Today, *mise en scène* does not just refer to the arts but also to non-artistic performances and all spheres that theatricalize and aestheticize daily life. Likewise, aesthetic experience captures experiences responding to a wide range of phenomena from fashion, design, cosmetics, and advertising to sports, urban and landscape design, and nature; they all share an aesthetic function without belonging, strictly speaking, to one of the arts.

Where the concept of the work of art is accompanied by the terms production and reception, the notion of event is complemented by *mise en scène* and aesthetic experience. Their terminological triad constitutes the conceptual backbone of the aesthetics of the performative. I will therefore elaborate on *mise en scène* and aesthetic experience before concluding by discussing the scope and merit of this aesthetic theory in its entirety.

Mise en scène

Despite the fact that the term *mise en scène* was coined only in the nineteenth century, the process it refers to goes back to antiquity, given that all performances contain staging of some kind or another. All performances require preparation and often meticulous and elaborate rehearsals. In Athens, performances of tragedies took place as part of the biggest and most representative festival of the *polis*, the Great

Dionysia. According to credible sources, preparations lasted several months. Responsibility for each performance usually lay with a single person, who scripted the text and rehearsed the parts with the members of the chorus and the actors (the responsibility for production costs, however, lay with a wealthy Athenian citizen). The rehearsals with the singing and dancing citizens that formed the chorus constituted a particularly time-consuming and laborious task. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, who all took up this task of poet/director, invested great care and effort into the staging process. Successful theatre people who repeatedly earned the victory in the tragic *agon* gained great prestige and extraordinary public esteem throughout the *polis*. A successful poet/director enjoyed such a high regard with his fellow citizens that he frequently was afforded important political and military offices. Sophocles, who between 468 B.C. (the year of his first participation) and 406 B.C. (the year of his death) had won 20 victories in the tragic *agon*, was elected onto the board of the *hellenotamiai* or treasurers in 443/2 B.C. In 441/439 B.C. he held strategic leadership for the Samian War alongside Pericles – apparently because of the extraordinary impression his *Antigone* performance had made. In 428 B.C., he again was responsible for military strategy together with Thucydides and finally, in 411 B.C., he was elected *probulos* or chief advisor. These examples clearly illustrate that the ability to develop successfully staged performances was considered an essential qualification for executing a political or military office.

As a technical expression, the term "Inszenierung" (*mise en scène*) was introduced to the German language only at the beginning of the nineteenth century. August Lewald elaborates in his essay *In die Scene setzen* (*To Put on Stage*, 1837):

> In recent times the expression "to stage" [*in die Scene setzen*] has been introduced at all German theatres; I heard it for the first time in the fall of the year 1818 in Vienna and at that time did not quite know what to think of it. Herr Carl Blum, whom I met on the street, informed me: he would remain in Vienna until he had completed staging [*in die Scene gesetzt*] his latest ballet, "Aline." It certainly sounds more elegant than: giving or performing a play, and we evidently appropriated it from the French. The French also say "la mise en scène" – the staging of a play – which has not as yet become customary here.
>
> (Lewald 1991: 306)

While preparing the essay for print Lewald added the following footnote: "Of late, the phrase 'Inscenierung' has become popular." He goes on to define the concept: "To stage a play means to illustrate a dramatic text in its entirety in order to complement the poet's intentions through exterior means and enhance the play's effect" (1991: 306). The term here applies to literary theatre and was developed within the framework of the two-world theory. *Mise en scène* went beyond the process of a one-to-one translation of linguistic signs into theatrical signs that eighteenth-century theoreticians had emphasized. Rather, the term foregrounds

that something is given physical appearance onstage that can otherwise only exist in the reader's imagination.

As indicated by Lewald, the term *mise en scène* originates in the French.[3] References to it appeared only after 1800 and accumulated after 1835. The term was used to signify "measures taken to transform a play into a state of being represented" (von Wartburg 1964: 294) or in the sense of "to transform [a dramatic text] into a stage performance" (Rey 1994: 1892). The meaning of the verb "mettre en scène," to stage, changed accordingly. These definitions, too, referred to literary theatre. They proceeded from the assumption that the primary, given essence was the literary play text which was to be transformed into a performance with the help of the *mise en scène*. The introduction of the term proves that this process of transformation was no longer performed as a self-evident and simple task; one became increasingly aware that staging required the development of certain strategies of representation.

The notion of the *mise en scène* was created at a time when fundamental changes set in at the theatre. It coincided with the rise of the theatre director from an organizer to an artist-creator of the "artwork" of performance. In Germany, Goethe was one of the first to realize this new function of the director during the years of his artistic direction at the Weimar Hoftheater (1791–1817). Goethe introduced reading-rehearsals to acquaint the actors with the entire play and thus with the specific function of their roles; until then, actors generally knew only their own parts. He discussed the backdrops in detail with the painter and carefully matched the colors of the backdrops with those of the costumes. He also devised gaits and postures for the actors and rehearsed declamation, gesture, and movement with them. Finally, he chose the "appropriate" musical accompaniment. These tasks precisely matched the list of directorial tasks given by the 1846 *General Theatre Dictionary* (Blum *et al.*) and by Lewald in his article. However, the Weimar Hoftheater was the exception rather than the rule. Not until the 1840s did the "arrangement of staff and material for the performance of a dramatic text as a whole" (284) generally bec0me a part of the director's job, as the dictionary states. The practice of naming the director on the playbill became customary during the same period.

In the 1840s, there was still no consensus as to whether the director's work of staging plays could be deemed an aesthetic process or was a purely technical task. Both Lewald and the theatre dictionary entry stress that the director's job required a variety of abilities and knowledge not limited to the different arts – poetry, the art of acting, painting, and music – but included awareness of various historical building styles and costumes "in order to avoid anachronisms" (Lewald 1991: 308). Although Lewald describes the staging of plays as a highly complicated business, he never refers to it as an artistic activity. Franz von Akáts separates "scenic art" into "arrangement and decoration" and "arrangement of the living," in his study entitled *Kunst der Scenik in aesthetischer und oekonomischer Hinsicht* (*Aesthetic and Economic Aspects of Scenic Art*, 1841). Although he includes the *mise en scène* in the visual arts because it intends "the representation of aesthetic ideas through images," he explicitly negates its status as a "creative art" (IV). Akáts also explains scenic art,

seen as a merely technical occupation, in terms of the two-world theory: the world of aesthetic ideas is opposed to images, which are created by the *mise en scène* in order to represent and give these ideas appearance. Throughout the nineteenth century, the term *mise en scène* denoted the appearance of something given which existed "elsewhere," in the play text or in the realm of aesthetic ideas. However, lacking visualization, that something remained abstract and inaccessible to the senses and was restricted to taking shape in our imagination or thoughts. It was the job and role of the *mise en scène* to bring the abstract sphere of ideas into appearance. Hence, the *mise en scène* referred to strategies of representation.

At the turn of the last century, the staging of plays became elevated to an artistic activity as the literary text of the play ceased to be the sole basis of performance. The historical avant-garde declared theatre a self-sufficient art form independent of literature. In his study *On the Art of the Theatre*, Edward Gordon Craig noted that

> … the Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.
>
> (Craig 1911: 138)

In other words, performance was not the product of a literary text but a collage of its smallest constitutive elements – action, words, line, color, and rhythm. The choices are made by the director who, "when he will have mastered the uses of action, words, line, color, and rhythm, then … may become an artist" (1911: 148). The performance thus becomes an "independent artwork" and the theatre an "independent art" (50) as Lothar Schreyer explicated in his study entitled *Das Buehnenkunstwerk* (*Stage Work*, 1916). The job of the director – the staging – advanced to a creative activity. The scope of the *mise en scène* now extended beyond "illustrat[ing] a dramatic text in its entirety in order to complement the poet's intentions … and enhance the play's effect," as Lewald had phrased it. Nonetheless, when Craig defined it as rendering "the invisible" (1911: 46) visible it seems that he, too, ultimately took recourse to the two-world theory; the *mise en scène* would make something appear which is given "somewhere" else, in the realm of the invisible. Craig's further explications, however, raise doubts about such a conclusion:

> There is a thing which man has not yet learned to master, a thing which man dreamed not was waiting for him to approach with love; it was invisible and yet ever present with him. Superb in its attraction and swift to retreat, a thing waiting but for the approach of the right men, prepared to soar with them through all the circles beyond the earth – it is Movement.
>
> (1911: 46)

Hence, the task of the *mise en scène* lies in making movement appear and seem present. While movement can always be seen as present, it frequently remains "invisible." Whenever the *mise en scène* works towards making movement appear, it means that the staging enables movement to become visible as itself. While Lewald, Akáts, and others saw the value of the *mise en scène* in its ability to illustrate and represent something else, Craig's conception of the *mise en scène* stresses the use of all artistic and technical means to make something appear as itself. For Craig, this means that it is perceived in its "[s]uperb … attraction," magically appealing to the perceiving subject and capable of transforming it. *Mise en scène* here does not refer to a strategy of representation but to one of creation. The *mise en scène* brings forth the presence of the perceived object – its ecstasy.

Despite this radically new view of staging as an independent process, a modified version of Lewald's definition of the *mise en scène* has persisted until today. In his article for the *French Encyclopaedia* (Paris, 1936), Jacques Copeau defines directing and staging as "the sum of the artistic and technical processes with whose help the work compiled by an author as written text is transferred from its mental and hidden state of existence into the real and present state of theatre" (1991: 341). He considers the text a pre-existent, "mental" entity to be transformed into sensual presence through the process of the *mise en scène*.

Reinforcing the validity of the two-world theory, Wolfgang Iser also uses this definition when expanding the term *mise en scène* from an aesthetic to an anthropological term. He builds on Plessner's theory that stresses the fundamental distance of human beings to themselves: "what is staged is the appearance of something that cannot become present" (Iser 1993: 297). Staging must therefore

> … be preceded by something to which it has to give appearance. This something can never be completely covered by the staging, because otherwise staging would become its own enactment. In other words, every staging lives on what it is not. For everything that materializes in it stands in the service of something absent, which, although given presence through something else that is present, cannot be present itself.
>
> (Iser 1993: 301)

As we have seen in Chapter 4, staging since the late 1960s and 1970s largely disassociates itself from the two-world theory. As with Craig, staging becomes a strategy of creation. Artistic and technical means have the task to enhance the actor's presence and the ecstasy of things; they direct the spectators' attention to their phenomenal beings, and they render this phenomenal being conspicuous. Thus, the body of the actor and the objects appear and show themselves to the spectators in their own ephemeral presence. When people and things appear as what they are the world becomes enchanted. At its core, enchantment comprises self-referentiality. It is the liberation from all endeavors to understand and the revelation of the "intrinsic meaning" of man and things.

The process of staging is a trial by which to find the best way for generating materiality; decisions are made and frequently changed after performances. Staging is a planned process that employs various strategies from chance operations to self-organized rehearsal techniques in order to probe which elements are to be brought forth performatively. Staging decides what will appear or disappear at what place and time during the performance. The staging process circumscribes a strategy of creation, which performatively engenders presence in a certain temporal sequence and spatial constellation.

This process is most accurately captured by Martin Seel's recent definition of the term *mise en scène*. He defines it as "the staging of presence. It is the conspicuous creation and emphasis of the presence of something which occurs here and now, and which, because it is the present, utterly eludes the complete grasp" (2001: 53). Staging gives appearance to the present. Yet, Seel points out a significant distinction between artistic and non-artistic *mises en scène*. His definition of artistic *mises en scène* reinforces my performance analyses;[4] he defines them as "a special type of presentations. They not only produce and stress a special presence but perform it … [T]hey not only *produce* presence but *present* presence … They are transient presences of human life. They *are* what they show" (2001: 58).[5] Seel explicitly mentions that *mises en scène* are "sensual processes begun or performed intentionally which are *presented before an audience*" (2001: 50). However, he does not distinguish between *mise en scène* and performance. In his definition, preparation for and conception of the performance coincide with the performance itself: "They are transient presences of human life. They *are* what they appear to be." While this might be an accurate description of performance, he fails to acknowledge any distinction between *mise en scène* and performance.

None of the definitions of the staging process discussed here adequately differentiates between *mise en scène* and performance. Consequently, one has to assume that what is planned and decided in a performance precisely repeats itself every evening. The powerful effect of the autopoietic feedback loop that generates the performance in the first place eludes all of these accounts. As Seel noted, the staging is undertaken with the audience's perception in mind. The process of staging proceeds from the very assumption of a difference between staging and performance. In other words, staging proceeds from the insight that the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators is required to generate the performance. Any definition of *mise en scène* has to take that into consideration.

At this point I would like to return to what I suggested in the preceding chapters. By determining performative strategies for generating materiality, the process of staging creates a specific situation into which actors and spectators enter. Principally, the situation is open since it cannot be predicted how actors and spectators will respond to one another. By default, the process of staging leaves space to play with the unplanned, the un-staged, and the unpredictable in performance, even if some artistic and non-artistic *mises en scène* will attempt to minimize that experimental space as far as possible. The history of theatre and culture is full of instances in which performances did not go according to plan

and the participants utilized the resulting experimental and ludic space to utterly change the performances' intended thrust.

Thus I shall define staging as the process of planning (including chance operations and emergent phenomena in rehearsal), testing, and determining strategies which aim at bringing forth the performance's materiality. On the one hand, these strategies create presence and physicality; on the other, they allow for open, experimental and ludic spaces for unplanned and un-staged behavior, actions, and events. The *mise en scène* provides a strong framework for the performance and the feedback loop's autopoiesis but is nonetheless unable to determine or control the autopoietic process. The concept of staging thus always already includes a moment of reflection on its own limits.

That sense of limitation may not always be clearly discernable to all participants in equal measure. When a spotlight crashes to the ground during the performance, the spectators will generally assume it to be an unplanned, unpredictable, un-staged accident. Only if spectators see the performance for a second time and witness the spotlight crashing to the ground again at the exact same moment during the performance will they acknowledge it as part of the *mise en scène*. Witty exchanges between actors and a spectator in row ten at regular intervals may be classed as a hired gig by the other spectators until they visit the performance a second time and find no further incidents of "spontaneous" audience reaction. Only then would they realize that the spectator in question was staging himself and the quick-witted reactions by the actors were equally spontaneous and occurred without having been planned or staged by the director. In the first example, the actors knew the "accident" to be a part of the pre-set staging; in the second case, they could not have been certain whether it was a planned action by a spectator or by an anonymous colleague. The limits of the *mise en scène* are always set by the perceptions of the participating subjects.

The concept of *mise en scène* as it is proposed here is closely linked to the idea of the event. Staging creates a situation that stimulates action. Therefore, it is somewhat incomprehensible why the aesthetics of the event would not be compatible with the aesthetics of the *mise en scène*, as advocates of an emphatic concept of the event claim. They treat *mise en scène* with a definite sense of disgust, thus echoing a stance current during much of the art-historical debate of the 1960s and 1970s. In the same vein, Michael Fried created an opposition between the negatively beset terms of "theatre," "theatrical," and "theatricality" that refer to processes of the *mise en scène* and the positive ideas of "objecthood," "absorption," and "authenticity." In the 1960s, Fried studied the reception of the American avant-garde in its second generation and concentrated on the fundamental phenomenal qualia of artworks. In this context, he insisted on the necessity of "objecthood" in order "*to defeat theatre*" (1967: 139). Theatricality as *mise en scène* indicated a crisis in the definition of the art object. In his book on French painting of the eighteenth century, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, 1980), Fried identified a range of painted figures as "theatrical." Under their thick layers of paint, these figures seemed

aware of the fact that they were being painted; they acknowledged the existence of an audience. He classed their apparently staged behavior as less valuable than figures that displayed a more absorbed behavior – whether at play or at work – and remained unaware of the painter as observer of their activities.

It is clear that the binary of authenticity vs. *mise en scène* is brought to a collapse in the performances described over the course of this book. The *mise en scène* creates experimental and ludic spaces which allow for unforeseen and unpredictable events to take place. Those who argue for an emphatic event concept today, wish to develop the aesthetics of the event in opposition to the aesthetics of the *mise en scène*. Their argumentation casts the aesthetics of the event as a remnant of the notion of the sanctity of art – of art as religious substitute. This notion sees a divine, numinous dimension in the encounter with art (Mersch 2002). As we have seen, there is little space for such a conception in the aesthetics of the performative. In it, the aesthetics of the event and of the *mise en scène* are inseparably linked.

Yet, so far, the definition of staging lacks one essential component, already discussed in the preceding chapter. The staging process also develops the strategies aimed at exciting and directing the audience's attention. Staging is responsible for the performative generation of materiality in such a way that the appearing elements attract the audience's attention and simultaneously highlight the very act of perceiving itself. Staging brings about situations in which even inconspicuous and ordinary elements become remarkable and appear transfigured. Moreover, the spectators become aware that they are affected and transformed by their experience of the movements, light, colors, sounds, odors, and so forth. The *mise en scène* can therefore be defined and described as a process that aims at the reenchantment of the world and the metamorphosis of the performance's participants.

The general characteristic of openness between *mise en scène* and performance still applies. The *mise en scène* might aim at directing the audience's attention to a specific element, but there is no guarantee that all spectators will definitely focus on a particular element. The intentions of the *mise en scène* and the actual occurrences during a performance are frequently incongruent. This is not the result of an inappropriate choice of staging strategies, which, quite possibly, might have proven their suitability in a previous performance of the same production. Yet, any given performance might develop circumstances that undermine their effectiveness – if only because that part of the audience described by Herrmann as "incapable of empathically experiencing the actors' performance" dominates and "infects" the others so that they become numbed to the staging strategies' effects. The *mise en scène* cannot guarantee that moments of reenchantment occur during every performance and are experienced by every single spectator. In spite of clever and empirically effective staging strategies, the success of the *mise en scène* ultimately cannot be planned; it is to be seen as an emergent phenomenon.

The definition of the term staging developed so far applies to all types of *mises en scène*, artistic and non-artistic. That is to say, it applies to the staging of theatre performances and performance art, exhibitions, installations, concerts, as well as

the staging of rituals, festivals, spectacles, sports competitions, trials, and political gatherings. The term staging refers to the aesthetic dimension in all possible types of performance. As an aesthetic category the *mise en scène* relates to perception in a very distinct manner that we need to specify further.

Mises en scène can be divided into two main categories according to whether they are perceived as staged or not. Usually, the effectiveness of artistic *mises en scène* depend on their being perceived and identified as such. Schlingensief, however, consistently undermines this condition and shows that this premise hardly applies to all types of *mises en scène*. Likewise, when a visitor in an English garden perceives a carefully staged environment as "natural," the landscape is indeed perceived in accordance with the staging strategies but not as staged. In other words, the *mise en scène* unfolds its effects specifically because it is not perceived as staged. The impression of authenticity results from the very background of the careful and thorough staging work. Social life gives rise to further situations in which the staging of an environment, an appearance, or a behavior would indeed be perceived and admired as a staged event without diminishing its effectiveness. In fact, their effectiveness frequently depends on this very recognition. The above analysis reveals why the criterion of perceiving a *mise en scène* as staged or not is entirely unsuitable as a basis for the distinction between artistic and non-artistic *mises en scène*. I will discuss the possibility of other useful criteria in the final section of this chapter. As our discussion has shown, each and every process of staging aims at the reenchantment of the world.

"Aesthetic experience"

In addition to the *mise en scène*, a specific perception capable of transforming the spectator is needed to bring about the reenchantment of the world. In the preceding chapter, I defined aesthetic experience in theatre performances and performance art events since the later 1960s as a liminal experience which can lead to transformations or which is in itself already experienced as transformative. I also put forward the claim that this type of aesthetic experience is central to the aesthetics of the performative. Because I postulated that such an aesthetic theory applies to all performances, the question arises whether the definition of aesthetic experience as liminal experience also applies to theatre performances (and all other types of non-artistic performances) of other epochs or cultures.

Extant texts in Western culture since Greek antiquity and in Indian culture roughly between the first and third centuries B.C. explicitly discuss the experience that performance affords both actors and spectators. Although the concept of aesthetic experience was only formulated with the proclamation of the autonomy of art, the question about the special quality of experience induced by performance goes back to the origins of aesthetic reflection in occidental and Indian culture. Both these examples roughly fall into the same period. Various terms were coined to describe this experience, such as the Aristotelian catharsis or the term *rasa* from the Indian theatre treatise *Natyasastra*. In the following, I would

like to briefly examine how these reflections are compatible with the definition of aesthetic experience as liminal experience. Despite their diverse definitions, the various tracts all seem to proceed from the assumption that theatre performances possess a transformative potential. They recognize that performance motivates the transformation of their participants – actors and spectators alike.

When Aristotle described the effect of tragic theatre in his *Poetics* as the excitement of ἔλεος (*eleos*) and φόβος (*phobos*), pity and terror, he was aiming at an exceptional affective state which is brought about in and through performance, articulated physically and able to alter the person concerned. Catharsis, the term he introduced to define the goal of tragic theatre, cannot negate its ritual origins and its idea of purging evokes healing rituals. While the excitement of affects transfers the spectators into a liminal state, catharsis brings about the actual transformation. The experience of catharsis enabled by performances of tragic theatre constitutes a liminal and transformative experience (Belfiore 1992; Hoessly 2001). The concept of catharsis significantly influenced the discussion on aesthetic experience in performance until the late eighteenth century that saw the end of the aesthetics of effect.

The concept of *rasa* developed in the *Natyasastra* had a comparable impact. The central focus of this treatise on theatre lies in exploring the special kind of experience enabled by performances in dancers/actors and spectators alike. *Rasa* eschews straightforward translation; in German, it is frequently rendered as "taste," "juice," or also "emotional state," while in English "sentiment," "aesthetic rapture," or "emotional consciousness" predominate. *Rasa* is differentiated into eight different expressions, such as the erotic or the heroic *rasa*, which correspond to certain modes of being or emotional dispositions, commonly shared by all human beings. Triggered in the actors and spectators through gestures, costume, music, and so forth, *rasa* transforms this disposition into an actual physical and emotional state. In this respect, the term *rasa* also evokes a liminal and transformative experience (Bansat-Brudon 1992; Gerow 1981; Masson and Pathwardhan 2001).

Both opponents and supporters of the theatre throughout the ages made repeated appeals to the transformative potential of performance, which was to be either avoided or pursued. When the church fathers in late antiquity and other opponents of the theatre in the medieval and early modern period warned against the dangers of theatrical performances they worried about the spectator's spiritual health. Conversely, when the imperial physician explicitly recommended a visit to the theatre in 1609, he explained that seeing comedies "expands the mind and heart and generally provides well-being" (cited in Flemming 1965: 14). The danger or hope of transformation is always situated within the specific medial conditions of performance; that is to say, they are implied in the physical co-presence of actors and spectators. The possibility for transformation is opened up especially through the actors' use of their bodies. In his *Dissertatio de actione scenica*, Father Franciscus Lang summarized the most important rules for affecting the spectators that Jesuit theatre developed over the course of the seventeenth century:

> an even stronger affect takes hold in the spectators the stronger, livelier, and more gripping the acting of the person on stage. For the senses are the gates to the soul through which … the appearances of things enter the chamber of affects.
>
> (Lang 1975: 200)

Father Lang's basic assumption that perceiving affects visualized through the actors' command of their bodies would arouse emotions in the spectators was wide-spread far into the eighteenth century. Henry Home wrote in his *Elements of Criticism* of 1762 that "external appearances … open a direct avenue to the heart" (1785: 435). As late as 1794, Sulzer claimed in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schoenen Kuenste* (*General Theory of the Fine Arts*): "It is certain that no circumstance creates livelier impressions and emotions in human beings than a public performance … Nothing in the world is more infectious and effective than the emotions sensed in a crowd of people" (254). Perception caused the *infection* by transferring the emotions perceived on the actor's body to the spectator's body during the performance. "Infection" denotes an essentially "classical" state of liminality, an in-between state which marks the passage from good health to illness. The concept of "emotional infection" evidences the transformative power of performances. Rousseau cursed the transformative power of theatre because "[t]he continual emotion which is felt in the theatre excites us, enervates us, enfeebles us and makes us less able to resist our passions" (2004: 293). To Rousseau, this liminal state was the root of all the danger in the theatre because it threatened the spectator with a loss of self. In contrast, Diderot, Lessing, Lichtenberg, Engel, and numerous other theoreticians of the eighteenth century propagated theatre performances precisely because of their metamorphic power. Lessing, qualifying the transformative power of performance in his "Letter to Nicolai" (1756), stresses their ability to "make it palpable for us so that the unlucky fellow moves and fully engages us at all times and more than all the other characters" (Lessing 1970–9: 163).

With the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century came the postulate of the autonomy of art, the end of the aesthetics of effect, and the development of the concepts of aesthetics and aesthetic experience. In consequence, the notion of theatre's transformative power gradually became marginalized or entirely obsolete. Yet, it is not too far-fetched to recognize a new version of the idea of theatre's transformative potential in Goethe's and Schiller's *Bildungstheater*,[6] developed especially in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. The central term in the *Letters* can indeed be interpreted in terms of a betwixt and between, a liminal experience. In playing, the ordinary human being, in whom the sensuous, material instinct (*Stofftrieb*) and the formal instinct (*Formtrieb*) diverge and are at constant war with each other, undergoes a metamorphosis. The transformation is temporary – ideally, the aesthetic experience lasts for the duration of the play and reconciles material and formal instincts.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the notion of perception as a somatic process of infection that occurs in the theatrical performance also lost its validity and was replaced by the concept of empathy (Fontius 2001: 121–42). It would be possible to integrate the concept of empathy with the transformative power of the theatre. Empathy, particularly empathy with several people as happens in performance, could be understood as a tentative testing and acting out of new roles and identities and thus qualify as a liminal experience. However, the leading theoreticians of empathy seemed to have something different in mind. In his *Aesthetics* (1846–58), Friedrich Theodor Vischer defined the term as a "borrowing gaze" (cited in Fontius 2001: 130), and later in his "Symbol" essay (1887) as the "act of lending one's soul" (Vischer 1922: 435). His son Robert described it as follows: "My mental-sensual I transports itself *within* the object and senses its formal nature from within" (R. Vischer 1927: 48). The possibility that the gazing subject might equally be transformed by lending their soul seems to have been neglected but is also not categorically rejected in this definition. However, any transformation that includes the perceptible physical articulation of emotions is categorically dismissed. A popular city guidebook from the 1870s remarked as much on the Parisian Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin:

> In the middle of the nineteenth century there still exist such primitive creatures that cannot restrain their tears when they witness the misfortunes of some stage heroine at the hands of a traitor. Do not visit these theatres, unless you wish to experience the uncontrolled sobbing of these open-hearted workers, these genial members of the petty bourgeoisie.
>
> (Véron 1874: n.d.)

With the performative turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and the proclamation of a culture of the body, the displaced and largely marginalized notion of theatre as transformative performance reentered the theoretical discourse on theatre performances. In his *Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), Nietzsche stated that "the hope … was the rebirth of Dionysus, which we can now interpret, with some foreboding, as the end of individuation" (Nietzsche 1993: 52). In the years that followed, Nietzsche undertook a fundamental reformulation of the aesthetics of effect (Pfotenhauer 1985). Clearly alluding to Nietzsche, Georg Fuchs demanded that the theatre bring about the transformation of the bourgeois individual into a "new," trans-individual human being. As earlier theoreticians had done, Fuchs saw the possibility for a transformation given in the physical co-presence of actors and spectators. The shared space and time opened up the possibility for transmitting the actors' rhythmic movements onto the spectators and transferring them into a state of "strange intoxication."

It is of particular interest to our context that Fuchs restored the transformative potential of theatre performances to the discourse on theatre by placing it in relation to another genre of performance whose transformative power had just been discovered in the academic world: ritual. As already discussed, ritual quickly

rose to epitomize transformative performance at the turn of the last century. If theatre performance was to regain its transformative potency ostensibly lost in the nineteenth century, it had to orient itself on the paradigm of ritual and enable the same liminal experiences that were transmitted by rituals.

A similar thought lies at the heart of Artaud's deliberations on radical change in the theatre. Much like Fuchs, although for different reasons, Artaud proceeded to critique his contemporary European culture. Among the dominant, deeply destructive, and fallacious ideas of life left behind by the Renaissance, Artaud highlighted logocentrism, rationalism, and individualism (1975: 164). In order to overcome them, theatre was to bring the occidental human being into contact with his pre-logical, pre-rational, and pre-individualistic origins. Theatre would have to "induce trance" (1958: 83) – "classical" states of liminality – in the spectator. By directly affecting the spectator's subconscious, theatre would allow the spectactor to "attain … awareness and a possession of certain dominant forces … that control all others" (1958: 80). Theatre would be transformed into a magical ritual which would perform exorcisms in the form of rites of passage on all spectators. Theatre would heal the occidental human being diseased with civilization by restoring the spectator to "life" and "humanness" (1975: 167). Artaud was not referring to "psychological man, with his well-dissected character and feelings" nor to "social man, submissive to laws and misshapen by religions and precepts" but to the "total man" (1958: 123). Again and again, Artaud emphasized that theatre performances aimed at liminal states: "The theatre like the plague is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure" (1958: 31). With the image of the plague another ancient concept returned to the discourse on theatre – the concept of infection: "First of all we must recognize that the theater, like the plague, is a delirium and is communicative" (1958: 27). As a form of communication, it infects not only the spectator's "soul" but also immediately affects their body and alters its state (Kolesch 1999: 115–43; Scheer 2004).

For Fuchs and especially Artaud, theatre as an autonomous art form put forward by the literary, empathetic theatre of the nineteenth century ceased to be endowed with metamorphic powers. In order to regain those powers, theatre must become ritual. Theatre as ritual regains its metamorphic powers, which it had been granted until the end of the eighteenth century by enemies and supporters alike. Not just the so-called ritual theatre of Grotowski, Nitsch, and Schechner but many performances of theatre and performance art since the 1960s have repeatedly emphasized and focused on this transformative potential of performances. Now that the notion of theatre as transformative performance has been reabsorbed by the discourse on theatre, it seems pointless and counter-productive to equate the particular, liminal experience enabled by performance with ritual experience. Instead, it is high time to reclaim the term aesthetic experience in this context and redefine it accordingly, as we have done above.

Even if the notion of theatre as transformative performance was widespread among theatre theoreticians and practitioners from antiquity until the eighteenth century and once more in the twentieth century, the specific historical, cultural,

and aesthetic conditions of this distinctive transformative potential must be differentiated. Throughout each epoch, spectators were required to leave their homes and arrive at the performance venue. Depending on the performance venue's location and the necessary route to it, this may have enhanced their alienation from a familiar environment to varying degrees. Yet, in each case, the characters and stories, the scenic means, and staging strategies with which the spectators were to be alienated from their daily life, exposed to new experiences, and led into transformation would have been different.[7] Around 1800 it may have been the very "disinterested and free pleasure" of the event that took the spectators out of their familiar environments and stimulated experiences in which "not interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval" (Kant 2000: 95). The absence of a rational or sensual approach, dominant in daily life, thus might have stimulated transformation. In this context, I would even go so far as to claim that one of the reasons why the aesthetics of autonomy developed the concept of the aesthetic experience was to describe a fundamentally new form of liminal experience which differed significantly from those induced by traditional rituals. The "disinterested and free pleasure" which the subject experienced in perceiving artworks as well as nature, opened up the possibility for experiencing the self in its free subjectivity.

The case lies differently at the turn of the twenty-first century. In times of an entertainment and event culture that is marked by an ever growing aestheticization of one's daily surroundings, "disinterested and free pleasure" does not seem the appropriate emotion to transfer the subject into a liminal state. Instead, the subject requires a disruption both of the "senses" and of "reason" through irritation, the collision of frames, and the destabilization of perceiving oneself, others, and the world. In short, stimulating crises seems the much more appropriate vehicle for achieving liminal states. Crises enable deeply disturbing experiences which can effect transformation in those who live through them.

As our cursory examination revealed, theatre performances are not only always staged but are also principally capable of triggering liminal experiences, even if the experiences afforded and methods used differ. In the same way that the *mise en scène* aims at reenchanting the world, aesthetic experience as liminal experience strives to transform the performance's participants. Transformation thus constitutes a fundamental category of the aesthetics of the performative.

We can come to the conclusion that theatre through the ages has largely been seen as a site for performances of exceptional transformative power. But what about other types of performance? What kind of experience do rituals, festivals, spectacles, sports competitions, or political gatherings enable? This would be to name just a few of the genres of cultural performance into which the historical avant-garde wished to transform theatre. Perhaps, the avant-garde proclaimed these cultural events as models for a new theatre precisely because they might be able to lend their transformative powers to a theatre lacking them at the turn of the century. Quite possibly, the avant-garde recognized the ability of these cultural performances to transfer their participants into states of liminality. The

new aesthetics of effect, which the historical avant-garde strove for, undeniably points in that direction. The emphatic calls for transforming theatre into ritual and festival reflect the desire to create new theatrical communities. Rituals and festivals were used as tools to create, intensify, and sustain communities. A similar role was attributed to political gatherings. They, too, achieved the creation or reaffirmation of certain political communities by performing collective actions and sharing experiences. Circuses and sports events were called on as a "sensualizing bath," as Eisenstein termed them. They carried an inherent refusal to transmit meaning and instead triggered wonder, amazement, horror, and shock in the spectators, thus immediately affecting their bodies. Liminal experience, in these cases, had two aims: first, a social transformation; and second, a somatic – physiological, affective – metamorphosis. The avant-garde hoped to reenergize theatre performances by drawing on these other performance genres for their effects.

This study cannot include a historical examination of the relationship between theatre performance and other genres of performance, as interesting as such an undertaking might be from a cultural-historical viewpoint. With regard to the aesthetics of the performative, which is being developed here in reference to theatre and performance art since the 1960s, the question of the relationship between artistic and non-artistic performances since the performative turn becomes crucial. That is to say, we have to ask whether the experience provided by festivals, sports competitions, various types of political events, and other performances today fundamentally differs from the aesthetic experience defined here as liminal experience or whether it can be included within it.

The 1990s have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the performative turn not only gave rise to new types of performance but brought about a general aestheticization and theatricalization of all types of performance. In the course of this development, the borders between artistic and non-artistic performances have increasingly become permeable and have partially collapsed. This is particularly true for festivals in public spaces. Festivals such as the Love Parade in Berlin, Christopher Street Day in New York City, or the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro are conducted as processions and parades that do not only occupy public space but also actively transform it into a liminal space. Where should the line be drawn between such festivals and theatre performances that leave conventional theatre spaces and move to various locations in the public arena – as was the case for the discussed performances by the Cornerstone Theater or Hygiene heute, for example? The transformation of public space by festivals as well as theatre performances is complemented by the transformation of quotidian time into transitional time (Koepping 1997: 1048–65). Theatre performances and festivals have grown closer together in striking ways as, for example, in the now rapidly increasing genre of city-stagings. The tenth "Documenta" utilized the entire city of Kassel as a single exhibition, performance and festival space, into which the performances of their theatre program blended with ease. The performance group Gob Squad's *15-minutes to comply* at a tram station or Heiner Goebbels'

Landscape with the man killed by the snake (*Landschaft mit dem von der Schlange getoeteten Mann*) underneath a tall bridge were among the theatrical participants here. The Italian group Teatro Potlach has been conducting such city-stagings regularly for the past ten years under the title of *Città invisibile* in Fara Sabina, Farfa, Klagenfurt, Malta, and Cardiff. In Fara Sabina, for example, the city's inhabitants made their cellars and courtyards available to theatre artists from all over the world so that they could redecorate them over a two-week period, using Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* as their inspirational basis. The thus transformed city was subsequently opened to the public. Was this a theatre performance or a festival? There is no definitive answer to this question. Undeniably, the event refashioned the city's private spaces into public ones, opening up the possibility to all its visitors for experiencing liminality.

Modern festivals also resemble theatre performances in so far as they establish temporary communities. Only in extreme cases do these communities last for the entire duration of the festival. For the most part, they emerge at some point and disintegrate at the latest when the performance ends. Contemporary political events usually aim at encouraging or intensifying the creation of communities over longer periods so that they exceed the performance's duration. Political events have realized this function through aestheticization and theatricalization in the past as much as today. Courtly spectacles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the festivals of the French Revolution, and the events of the workers' movement in the 1920s exemplify such theatricalized politics (Watanabe O'Kelly and Simon 2000; Mulryne *et al.* 2004; Warstat 2004). Therefore, it is all the more surprising that the theatricalization of political events is so lamented today and identified as a shocking cause for the demise of our political culture. When the lighting plot of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) annual convention in Leipzig was accidentally included in the journalists' press folders in April, 1998, it triggered a stream of spiteful and outraged comments directed at the organizers. A number of newspapers printed detailed quotes from the plot in order to corroborate their criticism of the party convention as a staged event. Heribert Prantl, in charge of the domestic affairs section of one of Germany's most widely read dailies, the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, explained this criticism as "an allergic reaction to feeling exploited as a prop" (cited in *Sage und Schreibe 9* 1998: 45). The incident brought home the fact that contemporary German politics was not exempt from the considerable impact of staging techniques. Highly effective *mises en scène* include Kohl and Mitterand on the battlefields at Verdun and Klaus Toepfer swimming across the Rhine as Environment Minister. Nevertheless, the uproar in Germany revealed that the staging of annual party conventions had been considered an archetypically American approach to politics, neglecting the fact that these types of performance always require staging.

The course and structure of the party convention in this case not only aimed at arousing emotions of communality but also at generating a sense of victory. The convention began with the arrival of Gerhard Schroeder and Oskar Lafontaine. Waving both arms, they entered the hall to the rousing fanfare of

a hymn specially composed for the occasion. The hymn strongly affected the participants, who were stirred by hope, trust, and certainty of electoral victory. Judging from the delegates' facial expressions, these emotions were equally triggered in them, endorsed their body language, and transferred their aura onto everyone present. The body language was "infectious." The further course of the party convention was intended to transform the delegates into a community of victors. The insights gained from the SPD party convention at Leipzig apply *mutatis mutandis* to other political events. They employ common gestures, actions, and experiences to generate a community that is meant to last beyond the end of the event (Case and Reinelt 1991; Meyer and Kampmann 1998; Muenkler 2001; Soeffner and Taenzler 2002). This characteristic distinguishes them from theatre performances.

What about Schlingensief's *Chance 2000*? Was he not undermining this very distinction when he apparently founded a new political party, namely "Chance 2000?" It seems that here, too, the created community was meant to last beyond the performance's end. Moreover, the performance aimed at blurring and leveling the differences between theatre performances and political events. Ultimately, it helped intensify the fundamental ambiguity surrounding the distinction between art and politics. Generally, however, it seems that political events are less and less capable of establishing communities that actually last beyond the performance's duration. Apparently, we are once again dealing with aesthetic communities that Vattimo (1992) defined as communities that emerge out of a shared aesthetic experience and are bound to fall apart after a short period.

Sports competitions also make it one of their aims to create and affirm communities through the transformation of individuals into members of fan communities. By sharing fan paraphernalia, slogans, gestures, and emotions, the members of certain soccer clubs are transformed into fan communities. Likewise, during international soccer matches individual fans are turned into members of national communities. While certain affective links undeniably exist before each game, such as to specific soccer clubs or national teams, the community itself develops only through their intensified affirmation during the game. Soccer matches constitute a type of performance that generates particularly strong emotions in the actors and spectators. They create high-level energy fields between the spectators surrounding the sports field and the players on the lawn. The intensity produces an often unendurable tension that leads to explosive reactions by the spectators. The emotional crisis, the dissolution of the individual into a community, and the characteristic (valid for sports events and festivals) paradox of order and excess transfers all participants into a state of a radical betwixt and between, enabling liminal experiences.

The fact that sports competitions are based on an agonal principle precludes the possibility for a single, unified community of all participants to emerge. Instead, we are dealing with antagonistic communities: whoever is incorporated into one is necessarily excluded from the other. Hence, these communities frequently are created both through common experiences and communal actions and by directing

emotions and actions *against* the other group. The eruption of violence during or immediately after matches, as can be observed at international championships, is only partially owed to the paradox of order and excess. It can be traced to the circumstance that one community confirms itself by inflicting violence on the other community. The paradox between order and excess, however, remains the main factor for stimulating the violence that often erupts in festivals. In festivals and soccer matches (or also in artistic performances, such as Beuys' *Kukei, akopee – nein! braunkreuz, fettecken, modellfettecken* in Aachen), the state of liminality gives rise to violence, which in turn enables further liminal experiences.

The context of community-building so prominent in soccer matches and other team games that unite each team of players with their fan community is of negligible importance in other sports events. Figure skating, gymnastics, and many athletics disciplines such as running, long jump, and high jump are perceived by spectators as more of a spectacle – as is the case with circus events. The primary emotions triggered in the spectators are awe and admiration at the extraordinary achievement of the athletes. At the same time, the spectators enjoy the sight of young, beautiful, strong, and dexterous bodies that stimulate largely positive feelings in them. They stand in stark contrast to the bodies marked by age, sickness, frailty, and death in the Societas Raffaello Sanzio piece. By observing how the athletes move in and through the space, the spectators perceive a new, beautiful world created in and through their movements. This world is defined by youth, beauty, eroticism, fitness, fairness, courage to compete, and the eagerness to win. It is a world of presence in its weak and, to an extent, its strong sense, which is governed by the principle of achievement and enables the spectators to leave behind their daily world in order to have new experiences (Sands 1999; McKenzie 2001).

Whether we are talking about festivals, political events, or sports competitions, we are dealing with performances which open up the possibility for liminal experience. This comes as no surprise since performances are generally brought forth by the feedback loop's autopoiesis, which, as I have shown, is based on the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and primarily creates liminality. Yet, while I defined aesthetic experience as liminal experience and simultaneously asserted that all genres of performance open up the possibility for liminal experience, this does not necessarily imply that all types of liminal experience can be subsumed under the category of aesthetic experience. While I will label those liminal experiences aesthetic which make the journey the goal, the liminal experiences which use the journey to reach "another" goal are non-aesthetic. Such goals could consist of a socially recognized change of status; the creation of winners and losers or communities; the legitimization of claims to power; the creation of social bond; entertainment. That is to say, aesthetic experience concerns the experience of a threshold, a passage in itself; the very process of transition already constitutes the experience. Non-aesthetic liminal experience concerns the transition *to* something and the resulting transformation *into* this or that.

This difference lies not in a simple distinction between artistic and non-artistic performances. Aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences can alternate in the course of a single performance. It depends on the individual's perception whether they are concentrating on the liminal state into which their perception has led them or whether they are experiencing it as a transition to a specific goal. Such shifts can occur from minute to minute, whether we are talking about *Lips of Thomas* or the Germany–Italy semi-finals in the 2006 World Cup.

Artists in particular endeavor to cross the borders between art and non-art, between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, so as to blur and erase them entirely. They ceaselessly work on creating situations which complicate or render impossible one's ability to view the liminal experience itself as the goal. These situations require decision-making which refer to goal-oriented actions. At the same time, the aesthetic experience, that is, the experience of liminality as such, regulates and structures the non-aesthetic experience of liminality.

Conversely, festivals, political events, and sports competitions, particularly the Olympic Games, multiply their inherent possibilities to concentrate on the experience of liminality, making the liminal state the goal. The at times pejorative talk about the aestheticization and theatricalization of non-artistic performances takes issue with these performative strategies. Our current differentiation between aesthetic experience as a special type of liminal experience and other kinds of liminal experience does not coincide with the distinction between artistic and non-artistic performances. The fusion and intermingling of the two kinds of liminality is precisely the aim of artistic performances that intend to cross and erase conceptual borders in contemporary culture. Aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences may alternate in all types of performance. Whether artistic performances can be distinguished from non-artistic ones because they are supposedly dominated by aesthetic experience is highly questionable judging from my deliberations so far. Neither Abramović's performances nor Schlingensief's productions justify such an assumption. How, then, are artistic and non-artistic performances to be distinguished? If it turned out that they can only be partially differentiated, would this not erode the basis for the autonomy of art?

Art and life

Neither the concept of *mise en scène* nor that of aesthetic experience establishes criteria which would allow us to clearly distinguish artistic from non-artistic performances. If Seel is of the opinion that artistic *mises en scène* distinguish themselves by virtue of not only producing but presenting presence, the same could be said of sports events, to name just one example (Gumbrecht 2006). Here, too, presence is not only brought forth but also presented as presence. Likewise, aesthetic experience occurs in both artistic and non-artistic performances.

Richard Shusterman, who in all his writings consistently refuses to formulate an essentialist definition of art in order to distinguish art from non-art, recently took it upon himself to propose a working definition as a heuristic tool "to emphasize

certain features of art that may not be receiving enough attention" (2002: 228). His suggestion to define art as dramatization is two-fold: on the one hand, art can be distinguished from ordinary reality through "the staging or framing of scenes;" on the other, it differs by virtue of its "greater vividness of experience and action" (2002: 233). Now we are dealing with a characteristic that is common to all performances regardless of whether they are artistic or non-artistic in nature. A soccer match, a parliament session, a court hearing, a religious service, a wedding, a funeral and other types of cultural performances "dramatize." They frame and demarcate certain scenes and enable a greater vividness of experience and action. This may also have been the reason for Milton Singer to coin the phrase "cultural performance" in the late 1950s. He defined it as the smallest observable unit of a cultural structure in which a culture's self-image and self-understanding are articulated and presented before its own members and to outsiders (1959: XIII). The process of dramatization successfully distinguishes cultural performances from ordinary reality. Therefore, it seems pointless to search for further criteria to distinguish between artistic and non-artistic performances.

Even if such criteria do not seem to exist, we nonetheless have little difficulty in granting Nitsch's lamb-tearing actions, Schechner's *Dionysus in 69*, Beuys' *I Like America*, the numerous performances featuring self-injury, Schleef's *Sport's Play*, and Schlingensief's *Please love Austria!* the status of artistic performances, while classifying the Love Parade as a festival, the SPD's party convention in Leipzig as a political gathering, and the Olympic Games as a sports event. If, on the one hand, both artistic and non-artistic performances strive to cross each other's borders and, on the other, non-artistic performances continually approximate artistic performances in their increasing aestheticization and theatricalization, such a distinction ought not to be possible. Yet, this distinction is constantly reiterated, if only to instruct random passers-by how to behave "appropriately" when chancing upon a generically ambiguous performance in a public space, as was the case during the Vienna Festival in 2000. The sole basis for making such an assertion lay in the affiliation with a specific institution. Generally, a performance is considered artistic when it takes place under the umbrella of an art institution. It is classified as non-artistic when it occurs within political, religious, legal, or sports institutions. The institutional frame rather than the staging or general nature of the event itself categorizes a performance as either artistic or non-artistic.

Even if artists seek to transcend, blur, and erase the division between art and life, between aesthetic and social, or political and ethical spheres, their performances might reflect on the autonomy of art but are hardly in a position to abolish such autonomy. In the end, art's autonomy is guaranteed by its institutions. Every iconoclastic gesture of the artist, every action aiming at eliminating these institutions still occurs within their established framework and hits its limit there. The aesthetics of the performative cannot change this either.

These institutions of art have crystallized in response to the demand for an autonomous art. In the place of the aesthetics of effect, which was inherently normative and strove to fulfill certain religious and moral purposes, arose the

aesthetics of autonomy. In this period, art established itself as a self-sufficient domain independent of non-artistic, social, or economic interests and forces, and developed on its own terms. This autonomy did, in fact, serve the "higher" purpose of "education" and the refinement of man. Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* bears witness to this ultimate purpose as much as Wagner's nineteenth-century theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or Total Work of Art. With its newfound autonomy, art hoped to compensate for a loss. It wanted to "restore" the "complete" human being and regain a totality allegedly lost in the historical world, and lacking particularly in bourgeois society. With the demand for completeness came art's claim to truth, intrinsically linked to its autonomy.

With the rising significance of art it seemed impossible to leave it exclusively to the artists, those mysterious and brilliant creators of the artworks. Henceforth, a constantly growing army of critics, theoreticians, administrators, censors, and agents supervised the necessary compliance with art's autonomy. They not only oversaw the citizens educating themselves through the "pleasure" provided by art but, more importantly, precluded all artistic instances that threatened to fall short of the claim to truth and totality by engaging in politics, religion, or public morale. Out of such a mutual co-operation of artists, critics, and spectators developed the institutions of art that have endured to this day.

If the theatre was to do justice to its claim of educating the spectators by contributing to their personal development (first proclaimed by Goethe and Schiller), it would first have to teach its audience to see the auditorium no longer as a social space but as one enabling focused perception. The theatre laws passed in the first half of the nineteenth century served this purpose, although they failed to be enforced successfully. A far more successful disciplinary measure was the darkening of the auditorium, undertaken in the second half of the same century. Despite all efforts, the border between stage and auditorium nonetheless continued to be crossed in performance. It is reported that turmoil broke out during the performance of Auber's *Mute Girl of Portici* at the Brussels Opera. The upheaval grew into the uprising that brought about the political secession from the Netherlands and the subsequent creation of the Belgian nation-state. Though less momentous in its consequences, many performances of the Viennese *Volkstheater* in which Nestroy performed also fell into this category. Nestroy's verbal and gestural improvisations that attacked both church and state and blatantly violated prevalent moral beliefs repeatedly caused the theatre police to interfere and demand a fine from Nestroy mid-performance. The premiere of Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise*, mentioned already in another context, is equally relevant here, as the auditorium turned into a public meeting place according to one critic. Evidently, the theatre was not always successful in fulfilling its educational purpose. In all of the above cases, the autopoietic feedback loop's "infection" of actors and spectators posed a challenge to the calls for truth and education. Literature and the visual arts were far better suited for this contemplative education, given their wholly different set of conditions for production and reception.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the avant-garde made its appeal for the approximation of art and life. They proclaimed a new aesthetics of effect because they could no longer believe in the claim to truth or the educational mission of an autonomous art but saw its complete detachment from life as its dooming quality. The examples of artists working to abolish the difference between art and life range from Marcel Duchamp's urinal to the "Oberdada" (Superdada), Johannes Baader's disruption of the morning service in the Berlin cathedral in November 1918. Baader also disturbed a session of the Weimar National Assembly by throwing flyers entitled "The Green Corpse," part of which read "We will blow up Weimar. Berlin is the place DA-DA." In the 1960s, others were to follow the examples of the avant-garde. Yet, by the beginning of the twentieth century, art institutions had already rooted themselves so deeply into society that all attacks against them remained vacuous because they could be subsumed into the institutional structure. It came as no surprise even to the artists themselves that Baader, just as Hermann Nitsch 40 years later, was acquitted of blasphemy charges with an appeal to art's autonomy.

The aesthetics of the performative cannot pose a serious challenge to the notion of the autonomy of art insofar as the latter is guaranteed institutionally. However, insofar as this autonomy evokes a separation from everyday life, many artists since the 1960s have been working against such a division. They practice their art as border-crossing. As we have seen, artists have been continuously blurring and erasing the very border that Western culture of the late eighteenth century set up between art and non-art, between art and "reality," between art and life. In addition to theatre performances and performance art events, exhibitions that perform rather than simply exhibit art exemplify such border-crossing. The last two Documenta exhibitions are prominent examples of such practice. The curators Catherine David (Documenta X, 1997) and Okwui Enzor (Documenta XI, 2002) asserted that the artworks presented did not stop at showing "critical images of today's world and of the phenomena that move and change it" (David 2000: n.p.) but that the Documenta actually functioned as a "platform" for "crossing theoretical ideas with practice" (*Documenta XI: Democracy Unrealized* 2001: n.p.). Another exhibition, initiated and held on the occasion of the festival Theater der Welt 2002 ("Theatre of the World 2002") in co-operation with Cologne's Museum Ludwig, was programmatically entitled *I promise it's political. Performativity in the arts*. Such an exhibition concept attests "how blurry terms such as 'theatre,' 'art,' and 'world' have become" (Lilienthal 2002: 5). The exhibition searched for "new forms of mutuality, in which relations no longer exist (only) between observers and objects but between observers and spaces," so that the "processes of perception" give rise to "a new WE" (Rogoff 2002: 53). In this manner, the exhibition was able to unfold its transformative potential.

The aesthetics of the performative focuses on art that crosses borders. It unflaggingly attempts to transcend historically established borders which have since become so ossified that they appear natural. Among these supposedly natural borders are the border between art and life, high culture and popular culture, and Western

art and non-Western art. The latter binary stems from the traditional notion that non-Western art lacks the concept of the autonomy of art. By transcending these divisions, the artists in question were attempting to redefine the very concept of the border. In contrast to the dominant principle of division and partitioning, the aesthetics of the performative emphasizes moments of transgression and transition. The border turns into a frontier and a threshold, which does not separate but connects. In the place of unbridgeable oppositions we find gradual differences. The aesthetics of the performative does not pursue the project of homogenization, which according to Girard's theory of sacrifice would invariably lead to eruptions of violence. Rather, its aim is to transcend rigid oppositions and to convert them into dynamic gradations. The project of the aesthetics of the performative lies in collapsing binary oppositions and replacing the notion of "either/or" with one of "as well as." It is an attempt to reenchant the world by transforming the borders established in the eighteenth century and opening them up into thresholds.

Both, border and threshold, present a certain potential for risk. Violating borders often incurs sanctions. Whoever constructs a border is bound to guard and monitor it and pass certain rules and laws for a potential, if exceptional, crossing, while penalizing all unauthorized attempts to do so. The crossing of thresholds, too, bears numerous risks because one cannot know what to expect beyond the threshold. New challenges, uncertainties, and appearances might await one. The monsters one has left behind on one side of the threshold could quite possibly reappear on the other side. The difference between border and threshold can thus not be defined in terms of the dangers linked to its crossing. Instead, it lies in the range of associations attached to both concepts. The concept of the border connotes exclusion, partition – an endpoint. When one reaches one's limit, it is impossible to continue. In their limiting function, borders clearly mark difference; beyond the border there lies desired freedom, a paradise or, conversely, the detested, feared, hell. To cross a border legally requires certain, frequently complicated processes and justificatory procedures, specific documents, passports, and travel permits. To cross it illegally represents a dangerous, clandestine, and subversive act. To break through it openly, leading an insurgency or revolutionary movement, counts as a hostile or heroic attack.

A very different set of connotations is linked to the concept of the threshold. It implies nothing forbidden or guarded by the law. While the border seeks to prevent one from crossing, the threshold seems to invite such a crossover. Since the space beyond is uncertain, its crossing requires certain provisions and precautionary measures. Thresholds frequently denote magical, partly even ominous places. It takes special skills and knowledge to ban their magic and transform their lurking evil into a blessing. If the threshold is unclean it must be purified before passing through it. Despite all possible adversities, risks, and dangers linked to the crossing of thresholds, their passage, if done in the right manner, holds a promise: the restoration of health, the mercy of the gods, the acquisition of a new social status, a precious gift or a secret skill. If, however, one makes mistakes in the passage across the threshold, it can have disastrous results: the person concerned may

drown in a swamp or a fall into a secret trap door, may be attacked by ghosts or wild animals, be driven to madness, or hunted, stabbed, and mauled to death. Thresholds are highly ambivalent.

While borders first and foremost evoke the law, thresholds instead point towards the occult. While borders are thought of as partitionary lines which include something and exclude the rest, the threshold is imagined as a liminal space in which anything is possible. While borders create clear divisions, thresholds mark a space of possibilities, empowerment, and metamorphosis. Nevertheless, the distinction between borders and thresholds is a matter of perception: what one person may perceive as an insurmountable borderline might appear to another as an inviting threshold. Moreover, borders are often only experienced as such in the act of crossing them, that is to say, when they are used as thresholds.

In the above-mentioned performances, the feedback loop transforms borders into thresholds, such as the border between stage and auditorium, actors and spectators, individual and community, or art and life. As we have seen, various staging strategies help us to perceive thresholds instead of borders. When I claimed that the aesthetics of the performative aims at a border-crossing art, this means that it transforms borders into thresholds. The aesthetics of the performative allows for an art of passage.

In this sense, the performances also reflect on their underlying anthropological conditions. As Plessner showed, humans require the sense of thresholds in the act of distancing themselves from themselves. Humans must cross thresholds to (re) turn to themselves as another. As living organisms endowed with a consciousness, as embodied minds, they can become themselves only by permanently bringing themselves forth anew, constantly transforming themselves, and continuing to cross thresholds. Performance allows or forces them to do so. In a way, performance can be thought of both as life itself and as its model. It is life itself because it takes up the real time of the participants' lives and offers them the possibility to constantly bring themselves forth anew. It is life's model because these processes occur with a particular intensity and conspicuousness that focuses the participants' attention. Our lives are given appearance in performance – they become present and past.

Such a proposition calls to mind the ancient metaphor of the *theatrum vitae humanae*. Since performances are as illusory and transient as human life, they can act as life's fullest allegory and point out its transience. By making the spectators aware of the illusion and transience of life, performance moves them to turn away from worldly things and seek truth and eternity in their belief in God. The metaphor of the *theatrum vitae humanae* works only within the frame of a Christian world view.

The aesthetics of the performative, however, concerns itself with the appearances of people and things, not with illusion; it concerns itself with the ephemerality of their appearance and not with life's transience. It identifies performances not as the allegory and image of human life but both as human life in itself and simultaneously as its model. The lives of all participants are

entwined in performance, not just metaphorically but in actual fact. Art could hardly get more deeply involved with life or approximate it more closely than in performance.

The reenchantment of the world is accomplished through this linkage of art and life, which is the aim of the aesthetics of the performative. Yet, it should not be read as a relapse into the religious world view of the seventeenth century or even into the magical consciousness of those long-gone times in which wishful thinking still made a difference. With the dawn of the Enlightenment, the magic has irretrievably vanished that once was inherent to a world created and held together by God and pervaded by HIS invisible forces. Even the arts could not revive this magic. We must come to terms with the fact of this loss.

Over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, a new spell has emerged, which, surprising though it may sound, is a "direct" if late descendent of the Enlightenment. In fact, the modern sciences and the cultural, technological, and social developments they enabled were responsible for unleashing this spell. Increasingly, these developments spread the conviction that the world is indeed suffused by invisible forces. These invisible forces affect us physically even if we cannot see or hear them. They allow for emergent phenomena in nature and in society that elude all intentionality, planning, or forecasts. They seem to interlink everything, so that the flapping wings of a butterfly in one hemisphere could prevent a hurricane in the other. They imply that globalized societies have become so complex that the possible consequences of planned changes can hardly be fathomed although they must be made. They assert that the Freudian "I" is far from the master of his own house – rather, as leading representatives of modern brain research increasingly believe, decisions have long been made before they become conscious. The modern sciences have contributed significantly to the notion that within the human being itself mysterious forces are at work that elude their conscious will and knowledge.

Yet, neither emergent phenomena nor the invisible forces at work in humans and nature count as magical forces. In fact, they can be explained rationally and still remain elusive. While pre-Enlightenment culture in the West was believed to have a certain influence over their citizens' health, well-being, harvest, the ravages of epidemics, hail storms, and wars by praying, practicing penance, or opening themselves to spiritual epiphanies, today we believe in the power of science. In the end, both prayers and scientific research have turned out to be of equally insufficient powers in this regard. Paradoxically, the greater the progress of science and the more spectacular its results, the quicker vanishes the Enlightenment illusion of the infinite perfectibility of man and the world. Today, chaos theory or microbiology in particular bring home the fact that the world is "enchanted" and that it forever eludes the grasp of science and technology – probably to the advantage of humankind. In much the same manner, the elusive autopoietic feedback loop effects performances. Humans are ultimately incapable of controlling the "invisible forces" that shape the world. Even if they aspire to

govern and define these powers, they will always also have to let themselves be governed and defined by them.

While this recognition has become prevalent in the sciences only towards the very end of the twentieth century, it has formed the underlying principle of art since the performative turn in the 1960s. What took many scientists a long time to acknowledge and what still finds much resistance today, has already been intuitively sensed by artists for decades. They have approached their art accordingly. In their action and performance events, installations, and other performances they enabled themselves and their spectators to experience and live through the very recognition of this mysterious elusiveness. In performance, both artists and spectators could experience the world as enchanted. As creatures in transition, they could apprehend themselves in the process of transformation.

Even if the aesthetics of the performative enables us to experience the reenchantment of the world through emphasizing self-referentiality and relinquishing our efforts to only think rationally, it should not be understood as a counter-Enlightenment tendency. Instead, the aesthetics of the performative marks the limits of the Enlightenment by undermining Enlightenment reliance on binary oppositions to describe the world, and by enabling people to appear as embodied minds. Thus, the aesthetics of the performative reveals itself as a "new" Enlightenment. It does not call upon all human beings to govern over nature – neither their own nor that surrounding them – but instead encourages them to enter into a new relationship with themselves and the world. This relationship is not determined by an "either/or" situation but by an "as well as." The reenchantment of the world is inclusive rather than exclusive; it asks everyone to act in life as in performance.

Notes

Introduction

1 Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
2 Jon McKenzie, *Perform – or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 47.
3 Richard Schechner, "A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy," *The Drama Review* 36:4 (1992), 10.
4 Gerald Hinkle, *Art as Event* (Washington, 1979), 40.
5 Phillip Zarrilli, "For Whom is the King a King? Issues of Intercultural Production, Perception and Reception in a Kathakali *King Lear*", in Joseph Roach and Janelle Reinelt, *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 16.
6 Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12. Italics Shklovsky's.
7 Joseph Tabbi, *Composite Fictions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
8 Ira Livingston, *Between Science and Literature: An Introduction to Autopoiesis* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).
9 Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, eds., *Teaching Performance Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002).
10 Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, quoted in William O. Beeman, "Performance Theory in an Anthropology Program," in Stucky and Wimmer, *Teaching Performance Studies*, 85.
11 Beeman, "Performance Theory," 86–7.
12 Beeman, "Performance Theory," 95.
13 Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
14 Dolan, *Utopia*, 5.
15 Dolan, *Utopia*, 6–7.
16 Dolan, *Utopia*, 97.
17 Dolan, *Utopia*, 99.

1 The transformative power of performance

1 I am proceeding from the assumption here that spectators are not automatically also voyeurs. In the context of my argument, spectators become voyeurs when they seek to watch something which is not meant for their eyes or when they willingly watch something which is unethical by universal criteria.
2 One exception was Antonin Artaud. He realized his vision for a theatre of cruelty not onstage but on his own body, abused by drugs and electric shock treatment. He compared theatre to the plague, culminating in either death or healing.

3 For this reference I am grateful to Niklaus Largier.
4 See Bertaud 1957. Bertaud contends that the balanced practice of self-flagellation allows "those who practice it to approach Christ's suffering during his castigation with humility … Flagellation practices are by no means part of primitive monastic spirituality or early Christianity, where the real penance practices were fasting, celibacy, and sleep deprivation through prolonged prayer. They must therefore be seen as estimable exercises, practiced by saints ever since their popularity began to spread. They constitute a fundamental component of religious life today" (cited in Largier 2001: 40).
5 This is precisely what the performance artist Rachel Rosenthal aims at when she asserts: "In performance art, the audience, from its role as sadist, subtly becomes the victim. It is forced to endure the artist's plight emphatically or to examine its own response of voyeurism and pleasure, or smugness and superiority … In any case, the performer holds the reins … The audience usually 'gives up' before the artist" (1981/2: 24).
6 See the section in Chapter 6 entitled "Liminality and transformation" for an elaboration of the term "ritual."
7 I will be using the terms "work," "artwork," and "work of art" as the equivalents of the German "Werk," as in "Werkaesthetik."
8 See Chapter 2 for an elaboration of my application of the term "performative."
9 For a detailed analysis of atmospheric spaces see the section entitled "Atmospheres" in Chapter 4.
10 This date would have been of great significance to a German audience as it was the twentieth anniversary of resistance leader Claus von Stauffenberg's failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler. Stauffenberg was subsequently sentenced to death and executed along with numerous other plotters.
11 I am referring to the *Untitled Event* in particular, which took place at Black Mountain College in 1952.
12 See Chapter 2.

2 Explaining concepts

1 The English title of Buerger's book, *The Institutions of Art*, is misleading because, like Buerger, I am referring to art as an institution rather than to the individual institutions of art, such as theatres, museums, galleries, concert halls, and so forth.
2 "(A. 1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
(A. 2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
(B. 1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
(B. 2) completely.
(Γ. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
(Γ. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently"
(Austin 1963: 15)
3 Butler's notion of theatre is hardly compatible with contemporary theatre – an issue that she herself raises by referring to Richard Schechner. Yet, Butler does not draw any conclusions for her argumentation. This discrepancy affects her later comparison

between the transvestite on stage and the realities of everyday social life, although not the relationship between conditions of embodiment and those of performance.

4 In her book, *Gender Trouble*, published shortly thereafter, Butler makes some significant modifications which are somewhat contradictory to the definitions proposed in the above-mentioned essay. These are further obscured in her later publications.

5 One exception is Jon McKenzie's *Peform – or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, in which he suggests a remarkably innovative reconceptualization of the term "performance" in cultural theory that examines the full semantic potential of the term.

6 I am referring to the German "Theaterwissenschaft," which was established as an independent discipline in the arts and distinguished itself from the study of dramatic literature.

7 For a corresponding development in the United States, compare Shannon Jackson's *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (2004).

8 For further reading on the shift from myth to ritual see Kippenberg 2002.

9 This is not to be misunderstood as the first performative turn in European culture as a whole, rather as the first in the twentieth century. There exists some scholarly controversy on whether the prominent role of cultural performances in the centuries following the invention and spread of the printing press up to the end of the nineteenth century ought to be considered in terms of a performative turn.

10 "Why Lot's Wife Could not Have Sat out 'Sumurun'. The pedestrians on that bridge would have aroused her curiosity so that she would have turned into twenty pillars of salt." Unidentified New York review from the archive of the Viennese Theatre Museum.

11 Jacobsohn lamented that the torchbearers represented "neither historical accuracy nor a new classicism" and concluded that "it is a regrettable waste of energy … to attempt an approximation of the idea of ancient Greek theatre in a circus, which after all can only ever be an approximation" (*Die Schaubuehne 46*, November 17, 1910). However, Gilbert Murray, Jane E. Harrison's colleague, reached a different conclusion. He had adapted *King Oedipus* into English for Reinhardt's London production and referred to the torchbearers to defend the production against the English reviewers' accusations of it being "unGreek": "Professor Reinhardt was frankly pre-Hellenic (as is the *Oedipus* story itself), partly Cretan and Mycenaean, partly Oriental, partly – to my great admiration – merely savage. The half-naked torchbearers with loincloths and long black hair made my heart leap with joy. There was real early Greece about them, not the Greece of the schoolroom or the conventional art studio" (cited in Carter 1914: 221). Evidently, Reinhardt's use of the body wholly corresponded to Murray's – and Harrison's – idea of Greek culture as a primarily performative culture.

12 It is fascinating and significant that Herrmann includes the desire for a "shadowy reconstruction of the actors' performance" and the "secret urge to perform the same actions, to reproduce the same tone of voice in the throat" in his deliberations on how one experiences performance. The theory of so-called mirror neurons, formulated by Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman in the 1990s, proposes a similar notion. This theory suggests that the body's neurons trigger an impulse in the observer to repeat the observed actions, which, however, is usually repressed before the repetition occurs (Gallese and Goldman 1998: 493–501).

13 Compare this reconstruction to Muenz 1998: 43–52.

3 Shared bodies, shared spaces

1 For further reading see also Vischer 1922 and R. Vischer 1927.

2 See p. 108 of Chapter 4.

3 See Marinetti's essay *The Variety Theatre*, quoted in Chapter 1.

4 Here it becomes necessary to apply the term "autopoietic feedback loop" to this process in order to adequately describe it. I would like to emphasize that I am using the term "autopoiesis" as defined in cognitive biology by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1992) and not Niklas Luhmann's definition. The introduction of this term to our discourse forms a part of the larger effort of this book to develop a vocabulary for an aesthetics of the performative, which extends beyond traditional theories.

5 This aspect ought to be given closer attention in the field of political performances, namely the debate about National Socialist mass events such as the annual party rallies. These employed staging strategies that were meant to influence and manipulate actors as well as spectators. These strategies were not necessarily successful. After all, what really transpired between the two groups depended on the actual performance. Scholars ought to pay more attention to first-hand accounts of the events rather than merely consult documents concerning their planning. The spectators, too, were responsible for the course of these performances.

6 In his early publication, *Der Tanz*, Fuchs defines the new acting style as a "rhythmic movement of the human body through space, born from the creative urge to physically communicate sensations, thereby releasing this inner urge and infecting other people with the same or similar rhythmic vibrations and driving them into a similar exaltation" (1906: 13).

7 For more details on its planning, see the speech by the *Reichs*-dramaturge Rainer Schloesser entitled "On the advent of *Volks*-theatre" (Schloesser 1935); on the *Thingspiel* in general, see Biccari 2001 and Fischer-Lichte 2005: 122–58.

8 According to Vattimo, this is a general indicator of "aesthetic communities" (Vattimo 1992: 67).

9 His *Salome* production in Duesseldorf (1997) represented a remarkable exception. Here, role reversal was stimulated by a collision between the theatrical and visual arts. As the curtain rose, the audience was presented with a *tableau vivant*. Gray-blue light flooded the stage; 18 figures dressed in gray or black stood completely motionless in picturesque configurations. The audience was shown this very beautiful, delicately shaded, and well-proportioned image for ten minutes. After that, the curtain fell, indicating the intermission. When I went to see the production in Berlin in 1998, the *tableau vivant* was welcomed with several appreciative calls. After about one minute, however, the audience's reaction began to diversify. Some applauded, whistled, shouted "bravo," and generally exhibited behavior appropriate to the theatre. Others explicitly took on the roles of actors: they made witty comments and attracted the attention of the other spectators. Yet another group chided the commenting spectators for disturbing their peace of mind while contemplating the *tableau vivant*. Whatever their reactions, the actors onstage observed the audience (the auditorium was adequately illuminated), without displaying any physical movement. Because of the actors' presence onstage and their inability to "not not respond," it would have been their ostensibly passive behavior that stimulated, even provoked, some spectators to actively participate. Again, the examination of the feedback loop's functioning depended on very specific conditions.

10 For further reading on the influence of Greek theatre on theatre after the performative turn, see Hall 2004.

11 My use of the term "energy" here is not based on a clearly defined concept – unlike in physics, for example. A certain vagueness about its concept is acknowledged which results from the immediacy of the perceptual experience.

12 This action is documented in the films shot by Bernd Klueser (Super 8, b/w, *c.* 20 minutes) and Hans Emmerling (b/w, *c.* 40 minutes). The films can be viewed at the Beuys Media Archive of the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum for Modern Art, Berlin.

13 The ambiguous title at once alludes to the secret services offered by prostitutes and to the various political Secret Services, which employ spying on even the most intimate actions and resort to torture practices.
14 See letters from spectators at http://www.dock11-berlin.de/presssecret02.html (accessed 4 March 2007). The above examples reveal an interesting cultural-historical development of the body from the late 1960s until today. In the 1960s, all forms of exhibiting the body in public, including "going naked" (Schechner), were seen as a "liberation of the body" (Herbert Blau) and a culturally revolutionary act in Herbert Marcuse's sense. Today however, the widespread narcissistic concentration on the body and the efforts to mould it through fitness, wellness, and beautification feed into the desire to publicly display an ideal body. *Secret Service* plays with this idea precisely by *not* allowing the spectators to see the reactions to their bodily display.
15 For further details on Phelan's argument of the elusiveness of performance as well as on the problem of documentation of performance see the introduction to Chapter 4.
16 In *Trainspotting* (premiere 1997), for example, a screen at the back of the stage showed alternating video clips of a spring landscape shot from a moving train and a documentary on the Velvet Underground's star, Nico Icon; additionally, numerous music clips were shown, for example by The Velvet Underground, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Karel Gott, and Arnold Schoenberg. In *Last Stop America* (*Endstation Amerika*, adapted from Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 2000) the scenes occurring inside the locked bathroom were recorded and shown on a monitor. In *The Insulted and Injured* (adapted from Dostoyevsky, 2001), Castorf placed many scenes on the insides of container-like bungalows, some of which were only partially visible, others completely invisible, to the audience. These were filmed and projected onto a screen installed on the roof of the bungalow and alternated with pre-recorded material.

4 The performative generation of materiality

1 I will henceforth use the term tonality to describe the overall sound quality of a performance consisting of the entirety of audible sounds in the auditorium, such as music, speech, human noises, accidental sounds, and so forth.
2 During Simmel's time no exceptional actor by the name of Salviati existed, so we must assume that this was merely a printing error and that he was referring to Tommaso Salvini (1829–1915).
3 The theoreticians of the eighteenth century, too, expected the actor to "grip" the spectator and trigger emotions. But this "gripping" was dependent on the spectator's ability to interpret the actor's "external appearances" (Home 1785: 435) as expressions of certain emotions (Fischer-Lichte 2000: 67–80).
4 In Otto Riewoldt, "Herrscher ueber Raum und Zeit: Das Theater Robert Wilsons," feature of Suedfunk from June 3, 1987.
5 Ibid.
6 Translator's note: in the German edition, the author uses the term "dramatische Figur" (dramatic figure) to denote both character and figure. I have decided not to distinguish between the two English terms here to maintain the author's clarity of argument. The author traces the genealogy of the concept of the dramatic character back to its historical origins (e.g. Diderot, Lessing, Home, Engel), only to critique and deconstruct it with examples from contemporary theatre and performance (e.g. Wilson, Castorf, Societas Raffaello Sanzio). In order to avoid disrupting the continuity of the argument, I have therefore chosen to continue using the term "character" even within the contemporary context. Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* validly uses the term "figure" throughout in its discussions of this new, postdramatic form of theatre. This book, however, uses contemporary theatre and performance as a starting point to

identify and discuss features of performance in general – even beyond the realm of art and theatre – without, however, ontologizing it. It thus becomes necessary to embed the concept of the "character" within its historical context before highlighting the shift which it underwent in the last fifty years.

7 See Chapter 5 for an elaboration of this problem.

8 See Chapter 5.

9 In this case, cross-casting certainly also alluded to the latent homosexuality of the Nazis. This aspect, however, is not of prime importance to my analysis.

10 This has nothing to do with Brecht's alienation effect. In order to achieve it, the actor, so to speak, portrays two characters: one character that is given a specific name (e.g. Mother Courage) and that of the performer who steps out of the role and comments on the behavior of the character (e.g. Helene Weigel). This was certainly not the case here.

11 For further reading on this debate in cultural anthropology see his introduction, "The body as representation and being in the world," to *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (1994: 1–24).

12 Unfortunately, these documentations of performances hardly reveal anything about the respective audience reactions.

13 It is striking how frequently the metaphor of infection, which renders the aesthetic experience in theatre as a somatic process, is applied to these debates. The term is also experiencing a renaissance in current debates on aesthetics (Fischer-Lichte 2004a).

14 Rousseau condemned theatre because the "continual emotion which is felt in the theatre … enervates …[and] enfeebles" the spectators, making them "less able to resist … [their] passions." Theatre threatens the loss of self-control (Rousseau 2004: 293).

15 Frequently, the actor is able to generate energy through specific training methods (Weiler 2003: 204–14).

16 While Barba assumed universal laws to underlie these practices, I believe them to be culturally specific practices.

17 See the section entitled "Atmospheres" in the following part on spatiality.

18 In the nineteenth century, it was popular practice to use so-called "onstage canines" for performances all over Europe. Written specifically for dogs in the lead roles, they quickly became a veritable attraction (Dobson 2000: 116–24).

19 This is not to say that animals are no longer used for dramaturgical functions in performances today. The king poodle in Peter Stein's *Faust* production (Hannover/Berlin/Vienna 2000/1) and the python in Thomas Ostermeier's production of Marius von Mayenburg's *Parasites* (Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg/Schaubuehne Berlin 2000) serve as examples here.

20 The performance took place in 1992 at the Mediale Deichtorhalle in Hamburg and lasted 60 minutes.

21 Originally, the action was supposed to take place between May 21 at 10 am and May 25 at 6 pm to coincide with the official opening of the René Block Gallery. However, Beuys was not satisfied with the preparations on his arrival, so the action began on May 23. The following description is based on Caroline Tisdall's documentation as well as Uwe M. Schneede's report; also see Helmuth Wietz's film, *Joseph Beuys: I like America and America likes me* (1974).

22 Beuys based his insights on Frank J. Dobie's book *The Voice of the Coyote* (1949).

23 The concept of emergence is not entirely new. The term was coined during the first decades of the twentieth century in the context of evolutionary cosmologies and quickly turned into a key concept. The main publications from England and America date from the 1920s and 1930s (Alexander 1920; Lloyd Morgan 1923 and 1926; Sellars 1922 and 1926; Broad 1925). In the 1990s the concept of emergence experienced a

renaissance. Since then, a range of publications on emergent phenomena and the theory of emergence have been published. Emergence thus reentered the discourse around the same time that the metaphor of "culture as performance" began its rise. It is currently used by the natural and social sciences and the humanities in such diverse areas as the philosophy of the mind, theories of self-organization, in connectionism, synergetics, and chaos theory. However, the term has yet to establish itself within aesthetic theory and cultural studies. I use the term emergence to denote unforeseeable and unmotivated appearances which might seem entirely plausible in retrospect.

24 These rooms were later shifted with the help of complicated technical procedures and can be visited inside the Sony-Center on Berlin's Potsdamer Platz today.

25 See Chapter 5.

26 In the sixty-seventh issue of the journal *Der Critische Musicus* edited by Scheibe, he formulates the new principles as follows: "The opening symphony of a play … must … refer to the play as a whole, yet it must also prepare for its beginning and thus complement the first entrance … The symphonies set between the acts must relate to the end of the preceding as well as the beginning of the subsequent act. In other words, they must form a link between both acts, and seamlessly lead the audience from one set of emotions to the next. For this reason it would be good to have two movements. The first could engage with the preceding act, the second with what follows. However, this is necessary only in cases where the two differ significantly; otherwise one single movement suffices, as long as its length allows for the cleaning of the lights, or for the costuming of an actor, if necessary.

When the play has finally ended, the ensuing symphony must be in harmony with it in every detail in order to impress its mood on the audience all the more emphatically. What is more laughable than if the hero has tragically lost his life and this is followed by a joyful and lively symphony? And what is more vulgar than if a comedy is concluded on a happy note and there follows a sad or touching symphony?" (Scheibe 1745: 616).

27 Since theatre music was considered a sort of "utilitarian" form of music, it was long ignored in music studies. Its study only began a few years ago. For further reading, see Altenburg 1998 and 2002: 183–208.

28 He is referring to Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, and David Tudor, with whom Cage closely collaborated in the 1950s.

29 With the exception of the *Uebungen fuer Schauspieler* in the *Antikenprojekt* at the Schaubuehne (1974), the *Oresteia* represented Peter Stein's only production to markedly emphasize the tension between voice and language.

30 See Chapter 3, note 9.

5 The emergence of meaning

1 See p. 85.

2 This has significant epistemological repercussions, which must be taken into consideration particularly with regard to the possibilities and methods of performance analysis.

3 See my deliberations on pp. 141ff – this definition of meaning has far-reaching consequences for semiotics, which cannot be further explored in this context.

4 Recognizing self-referentiality, however, could indeed be described as understanding it.

5 Schacter distinguishes between three types of memory: "*episodic* memory, which allows us to recollect specific incidents from our pasts; *semantic* memory, the vast network of associations and concepts that underlies our general knowledge of the world; and *procedural* memory, which allows us to learn skills and know how to do things" (134).

Procedural memory denotes functions of the brain which aid us in learning new motoric patterns, such as cycling, swimming, dancing, playing tennis, trapeze gymnastics, and so forth. Procedural memory is consolidated through repeated practice. This type of memory, sometimes referred to as body memory, is of prime importance to actors/performers. Yet for the attempt to understand a performance it plays but a marginal role – for example, repeating an actor's movement in order to bring it to mind. This is why I will ignore it in the further discussion.

6 The performance as event

1 See pp. 51ff.
2 For further reading on Gadamer's concept of hermeneutics see Coltman 1998; Dostal 2002; Kogler 1996; and Warnke 1987.
3 For further reading on the term production and the concept of staging see the corresponding section in Chapter 7.
4 The distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic reality also falls under one of those binaries which the aesthetics of the performative collapses. Performances belong to both realities.

7 The reenchantment of the world

1 Yet, the inverse conclusion does not hold: the process of disenchanting the world during the Enlightenment was not linked to a simultaneous regression and degeneration of performances. While some forms of performance, such as public executions, were indeed discontinued in the nineteenth century, new genres emerged in their place, such as circuses, ethnological and colonial expositions, and striptease shows (arguably, department stores could be added to this list). However, these performances were either officially ratified as serving didactic-educational purposes or silently tolerated as compensations for losses caused by the progressing Enlightenment process. We can assume that each participant in these performances experienced them very differently. For further reading on ethnological expositions in this context, see, for example, Altenberg 1987; Burris 2001; Breckenridge 1989: 195–216.
2 I am using staging and *mise en scène* interchangeably to denote any staging process, derived from the German "Inszenierung."
3 As early as 1660 the idiom "mettre quelqu'un, quelque chose sur la scène" had become customary in France – though with a very different meaning, i.e. "to position somebody or something within a literary or other artistic work," e.g. a painting. It was replaced by the expression "mettre sur scène" in the late eighteenth century. The earliest reference to it can be found in Diderot's *Salons* dating from 1765 where it refers to painting.
4 See pp. 93–101 and 114–20 in Chapter 4.
5 For further reading on the distinction between artistic and non-artistic *mises en scène* see the third section in this chapter.
6 *Bildungstheater* refers to a theatre that allows the spectator to develop and fully unfold their personality and their potential as a human being.
7 Here the transformation concept encounters its biggest problem since it refers to a large variety of changes. Hence, we cannot identify specific types of changes to which only the term transformation applies.

Bibliography

Ackerman, A. and Puchner, M. (2006) *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Adorno, T.W. (1955) "Bourgeois Opera," in D.J. Levin (ed.) (1993) *Opera Through Other Eyes*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 25–43.

von Akáts, F. (1841) *Kunst der Scenik in aesthetischer und oekonomischer Hinsicht*, Vienna: Anton Mausberger.

Alexander, S. (1920) *Space, Time, and Deity. The Gifford Lectures at Glasgow*, 2 vols, London: Macmillan.

Altenburg, D. (1998) "Schauspielmusik," in L. Finscher (ed.) *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd revised edn, vol. 8, Kassel: Baerenreiter.

Altenburg, D. (2002) "Das Phantom des Theaters: Zur Schauspielmusik im spaeten 18. und fruehen 19. Jahrhundert," in H.-P. Bayerdoerfer (ed.) *Stimmen – Klaenge – Toene: Synergien im szenischen Spiel* (= *Forum Modernes Theater* 30), Tuebingen: Narr: 183–208.

Altenberg, P. (1987) *Ashantee* (1898), Berlin: S. Fischer.

Ancelet-Hustache, J. (1930) "Les 'Vitae sororum' d'Unterlinden. Edition critique du manuscrit 508 de la bibliothèque de Colmar," in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin: 317–509.

Artaud, A. (1958) *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. M.C. Richards, New York: Grove Press.

Artaud, A. (1975) *Die Tarahumaras. Revolutionaere Botschaften*, Munich: Rogner & Bernhardt.

Auslander, P. (1999) *Liveness – Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, London and New York: Routledge.

Austin, J.L. (1963) *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Austin, J.L. (1970) "Performative Utterances," in J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds), *Philosophical Papers*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon.

Baier, G. (2001) *Rhythmus: Tanz in Koerper und Gehirn*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Bansat-Brudon, L. (1992) *Poétique du théâtre indien. Lecture sur Natyashastra*, Paris: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient.

Barba, E. (1986) *Beyond the Floating Islands*, New York: PAJ Publications.

Barba, E. and Savarese, N. (eds) (1991) *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, London and New York: Routledge.

Barisch, J. (1981) *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Bateson, G. (1955) "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in G. Bateson (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*, Northval, NJ and London: Jason Aronson Inc.: 177–93.

Beck, J. (1972) *The Life of the Theatre*, San Francisco: City Lights Publishers.

Beck, J. and Malina, J. (1971) *Paradise Now*, New York: Vintage Books.

von Becker, P. (Oct. 1, 1997) "Die Sehnsucht nach dem Vollkommenen. Ueber Peter Stein, den Regisseur und sein Stueck Theatergeschichte – zum sechzigsten Geburtstag," *Der Tagesspiegel*.

Belfiore, E.S. (1992) *Tragic Pleasures. Aristotle on Plot and Emotion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1969) "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in W. Benjamin and H. Arendt (eds) *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn, New York: Schocken Books.

Benjamin, W. (1998) *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. J. Osborne, London and New York: Verso.

Bertaud, E. (1957) *Discipline: Dictionnaire de la spiritualité 3*, Paris: Beauchesne.

Biccari, G. (2001) *"Zuflucht des Geistes"?: konservativ-revolutionaer, faschistische und nationalistische Theaterdiskurse in Deutschland und Italien, 1900–1944*, Tuebingen: Narr.

Blaetter fuer Theater, Musik und Kunst (March 5, 1861), Vienna.

Blum, R., Herlossohn, K., and Marggraff, H. (eds) (1846) *Allgemeines Theater Lexicon oder Encyclopaedie alles Wissenswerthen fuer Buehnenkuenstler, Dilettanten und Theaterfreunde*, 3 vols, Leipzig: Altenburg.

Boehme, G. (1995) *Atmosphaere: Essays zur neuen Aesthetik*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Boenisch, P. (2003) "ElectrONic Bodies. Corpo-Realities in Contemporary Dance Performance," *Moving Bodies. Performance Research* 8.4/03, D. Williams and R. Allsop (eds), London and New York: Routledge: 33–41.

Bormann, H.-F. and Brandstetter, G. (1999) "An der Schwelle: Performance als Forschungslabor," in H. Seitz (ed.) *Schreiben auf Wasser. Performative Verfahren in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Bildung*, Bonn: Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft: 45–55.

Brecht, B. (1966) *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, trans. E. Bentley, New York: Grove Press.

Breckenridge, C. (April 1989) "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31, no. 2: 195–216.

Broad, C. (1925) *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, London: Kegan Paul.

Bruestle, C. (2001) "Performance/Performativitaet in der neuen Musik," in E. Fischer-Lichte and C. Wulf (eds), *Theorien des Performativen*, *Paragrana*, vol. 10, no. 1: 271–83.

Bruestle, C., Ghattas, N., Risi, C., and Schouten, S. (eds) (2005) *Aus dem Takt. Rhythmus in Kunst, Kultur und Natur*, Bielefeld: transcript.

Buerger, P. and Buerger, C. (1992) *The Institutions of Art*, trans. Loren Kruger, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Bunge, M. (2003) *Emergence and Convergence: Qualitative Novelty and the Unity of Knowledge*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Burden, C. (1988) *Chris Burden: A Twenty Year Survey*. Exhibition catalogue of the Newport Harbor Museum, New Port Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum.

Burden, C. (USA 1990) *Documentation of Selected Works 1971–1974*, VHS 34 mins., A. Wirth (ed.) in collaboration with F. Malsch and the Cologne *Kunstverein* (1990).

Burden, C. (1996) *Chris Burden: Beyond the Limits*, P. Noever (ed.) exhibition catalogue of the Museum of Applied Art, Vienna.

Burden, C. and Butterfield, J. (1982) "Through the Night Softly," in G. Battcock and R. Nickas (eds) *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Dutton: 222–39.

Burris, J.P. (2001) *Exhibiting Religion*: *Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851–93*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia.

Butler, J. (1990) "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in S.-E. Case (ed.) *Performing Feminism, Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press: 270–82.

Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn, London and New York: Routledge.

Cage, J. (Oct./Nov., 1987) *Die Opernzeitung Frankfurt*, No. 1/2, Frankfurt.

Cantoni, V., di Gesù, V., Setti, A., and Tegolo, D. (ed.) (1999) *Human and Machine Perception 2: Emergence, Attention and Creativity*, New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Carlson, M. (1978) *Goethe and the Weimar Theater*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Carlson, M. (1996) *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge.

Carter, H. (1914) *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt*, New York: Benjamin Blom.

Case, S.-E. and Reinelt, J. (eds) (1991) *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Ciompi, L. (1988) *The Psyche and Schizophrenia: The Bond between Affect and Logic*, trans. D.L. Schneider, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ciompi, L. (1999) *Die emotionalen Grundlagen des Denkens. Entwurf einer fraktalen Affektlogik*, 2nd edn, Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Coltman, R.R. (1998) *The Language of Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Heidegger in Dialogue*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Conquergood, D. (1991) "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," *Communication Monographs*, vol. 58: 179–94.

Copeau, J. (1936) "Die Inszenierung" in C. Balme and K. Lazarowicz (eds) (1991) *Texte zur Theorie des Theaters*, Stuttgart: Reclam: 340–6.

Craig, E.G. (April, 1908) "The Actor and the Ueber-Marionette," *The Mask*, vol. 2.
Craig, E.G. (1911) *On the Art of the Theatre*, London: William Heinemann.
Crary, J. (1999) *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Csórdas, T.J. (May 1993) "Somatic Modes of Attention," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 8, no. 2: 135–56.
Csórdas, T.J. (ed.) (1994) *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Damasio, A.R. (1999) *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, New York: Harcourt Brace.
Danto, A.C. (1981) *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
David, C. (2000) *Stand der Dinge*, part I, Katalog Kunstwerke, Berlin: Kunstwerke.
Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994) *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press.
Derrida, J. (1987) "Restitutions" in J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: 255–382.
Diderot, D. (1751) "Letter on the Deaf and the Dumb," in D. Diderot and M. Jourdain (1916) *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, trans. M. Jourdain, Chicago and London: Open Court Publishing: 158–218.
Dobie, F.J. (1949) *The Voice of the Coyote*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
Dobson, M. (2000) "Renaissance Dogs: The Transformation of the Onstage Canine, 1550–1850," in A. Read (ed.) *Performance Research. On Animals*, vol. 5, no. 2, London: Routledge: 116–24.
Documenta XI: Democracy Unrealized (2001), Platform I, Kassel and Berlin.
Dostal, R.J. (ed.) (2002) *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
van Duelmen, R. (1988) *Theater des Schreckens. Gerichtspraxis und Strafrituale der fruehen Neuzeit*, Munich: C.H. Beck.
Durkheim, E. (1964) *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. G. Simpson, New York: The Free Press.
Eisenstein, S.M. (1977) "The Montage of Attractions," in S.M. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. J. Leyda, London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Elias, N. (1978) *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. E. Jephcott, New York: Urizen Books.
Engel, F. (Oct. 31, 1903) review of Max Reinhardt's *Electra*, *Berliner Tageblatt*.
Engel, J.J. (1804) *Ideen zu einer Mimik 1785/86*, in *Schriften*, vols. 7 and 8, Berlin: Mylius.
Engle, R.G. (1968) "Franz Lang and the Jesuit Stage," unpublished thesis (University of Illinois), University Microfilms, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
Felman, S. (1983) *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, trans. C. Porter, Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (1979) *Bedeutung – Probleme einer semiotischen Hermeneutik und Aesthetik*, Munich: C.H. Beck.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (1992) *The Semiotics of Theater*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (1997) *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (ed.) (1998) *Theater seit den sechziger Jahren*, Tuebingen and Basel: Francke.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2000) "Der Koerper als Zeichen und als Erfahrung," in E. Fischer-Lichte (ed.) *Theater im Prozess der Zivilisation*, Tuebingen and Basel: Francke: 67–80.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2001) "*Rite de passage* im Spiel der Blicke," in K. Gernig (ed.) *Fremde Körper: Zur Konstruktion des Anderen im europäischen Diskurs*," Berlin: Achims: 297–315.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2002) "Grenzgänge und Tauschhandel. Auf dem Wege zu einer performativen Kultur," in U. Wirth (ed.) *Performanz: Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp: 277–300.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2004a) "Zuschauen als Ansteckung," in M. Schraub and N. Suthor (eds) *Ansteckung: Zur Koerperlichkeit eines aesthetischen Prinzips*, Munich: Fink: 35–50.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2004b) "Thinking about the Origins of Theatre since the 1970s," in E. Hall, F. Macintosh and A. Wrigley (eds) *Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 329–60.
Fischer-Lichte, E. (2005) *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, London and New York: Routledge.

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008) "Reality and Fiction in Contemporary Theatre," *Theatre Research International*, 33, I: 84-96.
Flemming, W. (1965) *Barockdrama*, vol. 3, *Das Schauspiel der Wanderbuehne*, 2nd revised edn, Hildesheim: Olms.
Fontius, M. (2001) "Einfuehlung/Empathie/Identifikation," in K. Barck (ed.) *Aesthetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2, Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler: 121–42.
Fried, M. (1967) "Art and Objecthood," in G. Battcock (ed.) (1995) *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press: 116–47.
Fried, M. (1980) *Absorption and Theatricality. Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
Fuchs, G. (1906) *Der Tanz*, Stuttgart: Verlag von Strecker & Schroeder.
Fuchs, G. (1959) *Revolution in the Theatre: Conclusions Concerning the Munich Artists' Theatre*, trans. C.C. Kuhn, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Furlong, W. (1994) *Audio Arts: Discourse and Practice in Contemporary Art*, New York: Academy Editions.
Fusco, C. (spring 1994) "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *The Drama Review*, 38, I: 145–67.
Gadamer, H.-G. (2005) *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edn, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, New York: Continuum.
Gallese, V. and Goldman, A. (Dec. 1998) "Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-reading," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 12: 493–501.
Gerow, E. (1981) "Rasa as a Category. What are the Limits of its Application," in R. van Baumer and J. Brandon (eds) *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii: 226–57.
Girard, R. (1977) *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Goldhaber, M.H. (1997) *The Attention Economy and the Net*. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue2_4/goldhaber/ (accessed 3 March 2007).
Goldmann, P., unidentified review, archive of the Theatermuseum, Cologne.
Gollomb, J. (Feb. 4, 1912), review of Max Reinhardt's *Sumurun*, *New York City Call*.
Grimm, J. and Grimm, W. (eds) (1984) *Deutsches Woerterbuch*, vols 1–31, Munich: DTB.
Grotowski, J. (1968) *Towards a Poor Theatre*, New York: Simon and Schuster.
Gumbrecht, H.U. (2006) *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
H.E. (Nov. 3, 1903) Review of Max Reinhardt's *Electra*, *Freisinnige Zeitung*.
Hall, E., Macintosh, F., and Wrigley, A. (ed.) (2004) *Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy and the Public Imagination at the end of the Second Millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Handke, P. (1969) *Offending the Audience*, trans. M. Roloff, in P. Handke, *Kaspar and other Plays*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Helbling, H. (1999) *Rhythmus: Ein Versuch*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Herrmann, M. (1914) *Forschungen zur deutschen Theatergeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, part II, Berlin: Weidmann.
Herrmann, M. (July 30, 1918) "Bühne und Drama" (in response to Alfred Klaar), *Vossische Zeitung*.
Herrmann, M. (1920) "Ueber die Aufgaben eines theaterwissenschaftlichen Instituts," in H. Klier (ed.) (1981) *Theaterwissenschaft im deutschsprachigen Raum*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: 15–24.
Herrmann, M. (1930) "Das theatralische Raumerlebnis," in *Bericht vom 4. Kongress fuer Aesthetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin.
Hoessly, F. (2001) *Katharsis. Reinigung als Heilverfahren. Studien zum Ritual der archaischen und klassischen Zeit*, Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Home, H. (1785) *Elements of Criticism*, vol. I, Edinburgh: Bell and Creech.
HTTP: http://www.dock11–berlin.de/presssecret02.html (accessed 4 March 2007).
Hymes, D. (1975) "Breakthrough into Performance," in D. Ben-Amos and K.S. Goldstein (eds) *Folklore: Performance and Communication*, The Hague: Mouton.
Ihering, H. (Dec. 3, 1932) review of *Mephisto*, *Berliner Boersen-Courier*.
Iser, W. (1983) "Akte des Fingierens oder Was ist das Fiktive im fiktionalen Text?," in D. Heinrich and W. Iser (eds) *Funktionen des Fiktiven*, Munich: Fink: 121–51.
Iser, W. (1993) *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Ivanov, V.V. (1985) *Einfuehrung in die allgemeine Problematik der Semiotik*, Tuebingen: Guenter Narr.

Jackson, S. (2004) *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Jacobsohn, S. (Nov. 17, 1910) Review of Max Reinhardt's *Oresteia*, *Die Schaubuehne 46*.
Jacobsohn, S. (1912) *Das Jahr der Bühne*, vol. I, Berlin: Oesterheld & Co.
Jaron, N., Moehrmann, R. and Mueller, H. (eds) (1986) *Berlin-Theater der Jahrhundertwende: Buehnengeschichte der Reichshauptstadt im Spiegel der Kritik (1889–1914)*, Tuebingen: Niemeyer.
Johnson, M. (1992) *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Johnson, M. and Lakoff, G. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Kant, I. (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kienzl, F. (1999) "Gustaf mit 'f'. Wie Gustaf Gruendgens entdeckt wurde," in D. Walach (ed.) *"Aber ich habe nicht mein Gesicht": Gustaf Gruendgens – eine deutsche Karriere.* Catalogue to the exhibition of the same name at the State Library in Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage, December 9, 1999–February 12, 2000, Berlin.
Kippenberg, H.G. (2002) *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Klaar, A. (Oct. 14, 1911) Review of Max Reinhardt's *Oresteia*, *Vossische Zeitung*.
Klaar, A. (July 18, 1918) "Bühne und Drama. Zum Programm der deutschen dramatischen Gesellschaft von Prof. Max Herrmann," *Vossische Zeitung*.
Koepping, K.-P. (1997) "Fest," in C. Wulf (ed.) *Der Mensch. Handbuch Historische Anthropologie*, Weinheim and Basel: Beltz: 1048–65.
Koepping, K.-P. and Rao, U. (2000) "Die 'performative Wende': Leben – Ritual – Theater," in K.-P. Koepping and U. Rao (eds) *Im Rausch des Rituals: Gestaltung und Transformation der Wirklichkeit in koerperlicher Performanz*, Muenster, Hamburg, and London: LIT: 1–31.
Kogler, H.H. (1996) *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Kolesch, D. (1999) "'Listen to the radio': Artauds Radio-Stimme(n)," *FORUM MODERNES THEATER*, vol. 14, no. 2: 115–43.
Kostelanetz, R. (2003) *Conversing with Cage*, 2nd edn, New York and London: Routledge.
Kraemer, S. and Stahlhut, M. (2001) "Das 'Performative' als Thema der Sprach- und Kulturphilosophie," in E. Fischer-Lichte and C. Wulf (eds) *Theorien des Performativen*, *Paragrana*, vol. 10, no. 1: 35–64.
Kramer, M. (1977) *Joseph Beuys: "Das Kapital Raum 1970–1977,"* Heidelberg: Ed. Staeck.
Kreuder, F. (May 2000) "Hotel Esplanade: The Cultural History of a Berlin Location," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, special issue *Berlin 2000*, vol. XXII, no. 2: 22–38.
Lakoff, G. (1987) *Woman, Fire and Dangerous Things – What Categories Reveal About the Mind*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, New York: Basic Books.
Lang, P.F. (1975) *Abhandlung ueber die Schauspielkunst*, trans. A. Rudin (ed.) Bern and Munich: Francke.
Largier, N. (2001) *Lob der Peitsche. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Erregung*, Munich: C.H. Beck.
Lehmann, H.-T. (1999) "Die Gegenwart des Theaters," in E. Fischer-Lichte, D. Kolesch and C. Weiler (eds) *Transformationen: Theater der neunziger Jahre*, Berlin: Verlag der Autoren: 13–26.
Lehmann, H.-T. (2006) *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Juers-Munby, London and New York: Routledge.
Lessing, G.E. (Nov. 1756) "Brief an Nicolai," in G.E. Lessing and H.G. Goepfert (ed.) (1970–9) *Werke*, vol. 4, Munich: Carl Hanser.
Lewald, A. (1837) "In die Scene setzen," in C. Balme and K. Lazarowicz (eds) (1991) *Texte zur Theorie des Theaters*, Stuttgart: Reclam: 306–11.
Lilienthal, M. (2002) "Preface," in *I promise it's political. Performativitaet in der Kunst*, Cologne: Theater der Welt: 5–6.
Lloyd Morgan, C. (1923) *Emergent Evolution. The Gifford Lectures* (delivered at St. Andrews in 1922), New York and London: Williams & Norgate.
Lloyd, Morgan, C. (1926) *Life, Mind, and Spirit. The Gifford Lectures* (delivered at St. Andrews in 1923), New York and London: Williams & Norgate.
Lorenzer, A. (1970) *Kritik des psychoanalytischen Symbolbegriffs*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Lorenzer, A. (1972) *Zur Begruendung einer materialistischen Sozialisationstheorie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Luckert, K.W. (1979) *Coyoteway: A Navajo Holyway Healing Ceremonial*, Tucson and Flagstaff: University of Arizona Press/Museum of Northern Arizona Press.
McKenzie, J. (2001) *Perform – or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, London and New York: Routledge.
Marinetti, F.T. (1913) "The Variety Theatre," trans. R.W. Flint; reprinted in U. Apollonio (ed.) (1973) *Futurist Manifestos*, London: Thames and Hudson: 126–31.
Marinetti, F.T. (1915) "The Futurist Synthetic Theatre," in F.T. Marinetti (1971) *Selected Writings*, trans. R.W. Flint (ed.), New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 123–9.
Masson, J.L. and Pathwardhan, M.V. (1970) *Aesthetic Rapture – The Rasadhyaya of the Natyasastra*, Poona: Deccan College.
Maturana, H.R. and Varela, F.J. (1992) *Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, revised edn, trans. R. Paolucci, Boston: Shambhala.
Menke, C. (1988) *Die Souveraenitaet der Kunst*, Frankfurt am Main: Athenaeum.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
Mersch, D. (2002) *Aura und Ereignis*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Meyer, T. and Kampmann, M. (1998) *Politik als Theater. Die neue Macht der Darstellungskunst*, Berlin: Aufbau.
Meyerhold, V. (1969) "The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics," in E. Braun (ed.) *Meyerhold on Theatre*, New York: Hill and Wang.
Meyerhold, V. (1974) "Rezension des Buches 'Aufzeichnungen eines Regisseurs' von A. Ja. Tairov (1921/22)," in R. Tietze (ed.) *Vsevolod Meyerhold: Theaterarbeit 1917–1930*, Munich: Hanser: 63–72.
Meyerhold, V. (1979) "Zur Geschichte und Technik des Theaters," in V. Meyerhold, *Schriften*, vol. 1, Berlin: Henschel.
Michaelis, R. (October 24, 1980) "Die Geburt des Rechtsstaates im Regen," *DIE ZEIT 35*.
Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994) *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Muenkler, H. (2001) "Die Theatralisierung der Politik," in J. Fruechtl and J. Zimmermann (eds) *Aesthetik der Inszenierung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp: 144–63.
Muenz, R. (1998) "'Theater – eine Leistung des Publikums und seiner Diener:' Zu Max Herrmanns Vorstellungen von Theater," in E. Fischer-Lichte, D. Kolesch and C. Weiler (ed.) *Berliner Theater im 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Fannei & Walz: 43–52.
Mulryne, J.R., Shewring, M., and Watanabe O'Kelly, H. (eds) (2004) *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, vol. I, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing.
Nietzsche, F. (1993) *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. S. Whiteside and M. Tanner (ed.) London: Penguin Books.
Nitsch, H. (1979) *Das Orgien – Mysterien – Theater: Die Partituren aller aufgeführten Aktionen 1960–1979*, vol. I, Naples, Munich and Vienna: Edition Freibord/Studio Morra.
Nordhausen, R., unidentified review, archive of the Theatermuseum, Cologne.
Pfotenhauer, H. (1985) *Kunst als Physiologie. Nietzsches aesthetische Theorie und literarische Produktion*, Stuttgart: Metzler.
Phelan, P. (1993) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London and New York: Routledge.
Piscator, E. (1978) *The Political Theatre: A History, 1914–1929*, trans H. Rorrison, New York: Avon.
Plessner, H. (1970) *Laughing and Crying. A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*, trans. J.S. Churchill and M. Grene, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
Plessner, H. (1982) "Zur Anthropologie des Schauspielers," in G. Dux, O. Marquard, and E. Stroeker (eds) *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp: 399–418.
Pluchart, F. (1982) "Risk as Practice of Thought," in G. Battcock and R. Nickas (eds) *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Dutton: 125–34.
Poizat, M. (1992) *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. A. Denner, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Prantl, H. (1998) "Wir denken zu sehr in PR-Kategorien," interview with R. Schatz, *Sage und Schreibe* 9: 44–5.
Reichard, H.A.O. (ed.) (1781) *Theater-Kalender auf das Jahr 1781*, Gotha: Ettinger.
Rey, Alain (ed.) (1994) *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, vol. 2, Paris: Le Robert.

Riewoldt, O. (June 3, 1987) "Herrscher ueber Raum und Zeit: Das Theater Robert Wilsons," featured on Suedfunk.
Rilke, R.M. (1985) "*Sonnet to Orpheus*," *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, part II, XII, trans. S. Mitchell, New York: Simon and Schuster.
Rischbieter, H. (July 1966) "Experimenta. Theater und Publikum neu definiert," *Theater heute* 6: 8–17.
Risi, C. (2003) "Die bewegende Saengerin: Zu stimmlichen und koerperlichen Austauschprozessen in Opernauffuehrungen," in C. Bruestle and A. Riethmueller (eds) *Klang und Bewegung: Beitraege zu einer Grundkonstellation*, Aachen: Shaker.
Risi, C. (2004) "Rhythmen der Auffuehrung: Kollidierende Rhythmen bei Steve Reich und Heiner Goebbels," in E. Fischer-Lichte, C. Risi, and J. Roselt (eds), *Kunst der Auffuehrung – Auffuehrung der Kunst*, Berlin: Theater der Zeit: 165–77.
Rogoff, I. (2002) "WIR. Kollektivitaeten, Mutualitaeten, Partizipation," in *I promise it's political*, Cologne: Museum Ludwig: 53–60.
Rosenthal, R. (Winter 1981/2) "Performance and the Masochist Tradition," *High Performance*: 20–5.
Roth, G. (2001) *Fuehlen, Denken, Handeln. Wie das Gehirn unser Verhalten steuert*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Roth, G. and Wulliman, M.F. (eds) (2000) *Brain Evolution and Cognition*, New York and Heidelberg: Wiley-Spektrum.
Rousseau, J.-J. (2004) "Letter to M. d'Alembert," in J.-J. Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert and Writings for the Theatre, The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, trans. A. Bloom, C.E. Butterworth, C. Kelly (eds) vol. 10, Hanover and London: University Press of New England: 251–352.
Ruehle, G. (1988) *Theater fuer die Republik*, vol. 2:1926–33, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
de Sainte Albine, R. (1747) *Le Comédien*, Paris: Desaint & Saillant.
Sands, R.R. (ed.) (1999) *Anthropology, Sport, and Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Schacter, D.L. (1996) *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past*, New York: BasicBooks.
Schechner, R. (1970) *Dionysus in 69*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Schechner, R. (1973) *Environmental Theater*, New York: Hawthorn Books.
Schechner, R. (Fall 2001) "Rasaesthetics," *TDR*, vol. 45, no. 3 (T171): 27–50.
Scheer, E. (ed.) (2004) *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.
Scheibe, J.A. (1745) *Der Critische Musicus*, Leipzig: Breitkopf.
Schiller, F. (1795) "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man (fifteenth letter)," in F. Schiller (1993) *Essays*, trans. W. Hinderer and D.O. Dahlstrom (eds), New York: Continuum: 86–178.
Schiller, F. (1959) "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution," in F. Schiller and F. Ungar (ed.) *An Anthology for Our Time*, trans. A. Gode von Aesch, J.B. Greene and C.E. Passage, New York: Frederick Ungar: 263–83.
Schleef, E. (1997) *Droge Faust Parsifal*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Schloesser, R. (1935) "Vom kommenden Volksschauspiel," in R. Schloesser, *Das Volk und seine Buehne*, Berlin: Langen & Mueller.
Schmidt, F.L. and Uhde, H. (ed.) (1878) *Denkwuerdigkeiten des Schauspielers, Schauspieldichters und Schauspieldirectors Friedrich Ludwig Schmidt (1772–1841)*, vol. 2, Stuttgart: Cotta.
Schmitz, H. (1965) *System der Philosophie*, vol. I: *Der Leib*, Bonn: Bouvier.
Schmitz-Emans, M. (2002) "Labyrinthbuecher als Spielanleitungen," in E. Fischer-Lichte and G. Lehnert (eds), *[(v)er]SPIEL[en] Felder – Figuren – Regeln*, *Paragrana*, vol. 11, no. 1: 179–207.
Schneede, U. M. (1994) *Joseph Beuys – Die Aktionen*, annotated bibliography of works with photographic documentation, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz.
Schreyer, L. (August, 1916) "Das Buehnenkunstwerk," *Der Sturm 7*, 5: 50–1.
Seel, M. (2001) "Inszenieren als Erscheinenlassen. Thesen ueber die Reichweite eines Begriffs," in J. Fruechtl and J. Zimmermann (eds) *Aesthetik der Inszenierung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp: 48–62.
Seel, M. (2004) *Aesthetics of Appearing: Cultural Memory in the Present*, trans. J. Farrell, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Seitter, W. (2002) "Aufmerksamkeitskorrelate auf der Ebene der Erscheinungen," in A. Assmann and J. Assmann (eds) *Aufmerksamkeiten: Archaeologie der literarischen Kommunikation*, Munich: Fink: 171–82.
Sellars, R.W. (1922) *Evolutionary Naturalism*, Chicago: Open Court.
Sellars, R.W. (1926) *The Principals and Problems of Philosophy*, New York: Russell & Russell.
Shusterman, R. (2002) *Surface and Depth: Dialectics of Criticism and Culture*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Simmel, G. (1922) *Soziologie. Untersuchungen ueber die Form der Vergesellschaftung*, 2nd edn, Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt.
Simmel, G. (1968) "Zur Philosophie des Schauspielers," in G. Simmel, *Das individuelle Gesetz: Philosophische Exkurse*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp: 75–95.
Singer, M. (1959) *Traditional India – Structure and Change*, Philadelphia: American Folklore Society.
Smith, W.R. (1889) *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, First Series: *The Fundamental Institutions*, Burnett Lectures 1888/9, Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black.
Soeffner, H.G. and Taenzler, D. (eds) (2002) *Figurative Politik. Zur Performanz der Macht in der modernen Gesellschaft*, Opladen: Leske & Budrich.
de Soussa, R. (1997) *Die Rationalitaet des Gefuehls*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
States, B.O. (1985) *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
Steinweg, R. (1986) "Ein 'Theater der Zukunft.' Ueber die Arbeit von Angelus Novus am Beispiel von Brecht und Homer," *Maske und Kothurn*, no. 34: 20–9.
Stooss, T. (ed.) (1998) *Marina Abramović Artist Body, Performances 1969–97*, Milan: Charta.
Sulzer, J.G. (1794) *Allgemeine Theorie der schoenen Kuenste*, vol. 4, 2nd edn, Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
Thirouin, L. (ed.) (1998) *Pierre Nicole, Traité de la comédie et autres pièces d'un procès du théâtre*, Paris: Champion.
Tisdall, C. (1988) *Joseph Beuys Coyote*, 3rd edn, Munich: Schirmer-Mosel.
Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process – Structure and Anti-Structure*, London and New York: Routledge.
Turner, V. (1977) "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," in S.F. Moore and B.C. Myerhoff (eds) *Secular Ritual*, Assen: Van Gorcum: 36–57.
Varela, F.J., Thompson, E. and Rosch, E. (1991) *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Vattimo, G. (1992) *The Transparent Society*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Véron, P. (1874) *Paris s'amuse*, Paris: E. Dentu.
Vielhaber, G. (Oct. 2, 1947) "Oedipus Komplex auf der Buehne," *Die Zeit*.
Vischer, F.T. (1887) "Das Symbol," in F.T. Vischer (1922) *Kritische Gaenge*, vol. 4, Munich: Robert Vischer.
Vischer, F.T. (1922) *Aesthetik*, Munich: Meyer & Jessen.
Vischer, R. (1874) "Der aesthetische Akt und die reine Form," in R. Vischer (1927) *Drei Schriften zum aesthetischen Formproblem*, Halle: Niemeyer.
Vollmoeller, C. (1920) "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Großen Hauses," in *Das Große Schauspielhaus: Zur Eroeffnung des Hauses*, Berlin: Deutsches Theater.
Walter, B. (1910) "Gespraech ueber Reinhardt mit Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Alfred Roller und Bruno Walter," in H. Fetting (ed.) (1974) Max Reinhardt, Schriften: Briefe, Reden, Aufsaetze, Interviews, Gespraeche und Auszuege aus den Regiebuechern, Berlin: Henschel.
Warnke, G. (1987) *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Warstat, M. (2004) *Theatrale Gemeinschaften. Zur Festkultur der Arbeiterbewegung 1918–1933*, Tuebingen and Basel: Francke.
von Wartburg, Walther (ed.) (1964) *Franzoesisches etymologisches Woerterbuch*, vol. 11, Basel: Zbinden.
Watanabe O'Kelly, H. and Simon, A. (2000) *Festivals and Ceremonies: A Bibliography of Works relating to Court, Civic, and Religious Festivals in Europe 1500–1800*, London: Mansell.
Weiler, C. (2003) "Haschen nach dem Vogelschwanz: Ueberlegungen zu den Grundlagen schauspielerischer Praxis," in C. Weiler and H.-T. Lehmann (eds) *Szenarien von Theater (und) Wissenschaft, Theater der Zeit, Recherchen 15*, Berlin: Theater der Zeit: 204–14.
"Why Lot's Wife Could not Have Sat out 'Sumurun.' The pedestrians on that bridge would have aroused her curiosity so that she would have turned into twenty pillars of salt," unidentified New York review from the archive of the Viennese Theater Museum.
Wietz, H. (1974) *Joseph Beuys: I like America and America likes me*, VHS, René Block, Berlin.
Wilson, R. (1984) *the CIVIL warS, a tree is best measured when it is down*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Index of works

Index of names

Subject index