Moving Towards Thought: Theatricality, Technology, and the Theatre

by

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Abstract
Inspired by the question of what forces us to think and employing the Deleuzian concepts of affect and the new, this thesis argues that the technologies used in theatre production construct an affective encounter from which new thinking may emerge. Moreover, this thesis maintains that a consideration of the affective encounter is a productive means of further understanding theatricality because the experience of theatricality is rooted in the affective encounter. This argument brings together theatricality and thinking through the experience of affect that is produced by the technologies used in performance. Technology becomes an integral element to this project because it is positioned as the disruptive element that incites the affective encounter from which theatricality and new thinking may emerge.

This examination of the relationship between thought, technology, and theatricality is grounded by an analysis of theatre productions by The Builders Association, Troika Ranch, Toni Dove, and Marie Brassard. It is further structured by an evaluation of ways that technology shapes and reshapes understandings of space, presence and event; each of which are significant elements in our conceptualizations of theatricality. More specifically, the individual chapters consider how technologies used in performance produce disruptions that open spaces for thinking the new. This is done through an examination of the ways that screens articulate the disjuncture inherent to theatrical space; how vocal mediation challenges conceptions of presence as an originary site; and how the theatrical event is reconstituted by the use of technologies that
place the spectator in the midst of a “happening” that intensifies and disrupts their common sensuous experience.

The empirical material of performance is used in this thesis as a means of working through the larger philosophical concerns of the project including: questions of thought, the new, and the role that technology plays in the creation and experience of theatricality. Building upon established discourses of intermedial performance, theatricality, and affect, this thesis outlines an expression of the creative potential of spectatorship, and is ultimately invested in considering how active participation may move the spectator to think the new.
To my sons, Grant Lawson and Everett Bryan

“Learning to swim or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us a part but also propels us into hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems. To what are we dedicated if not to those problems which demand the very transformation of our body and our language?”

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 192

May you jump whole-heartedly into the “hitherto unknown and unheard of world”.  
May it force you to think and fill you with joy.
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INTRODUCTION

Thought, Theatricality, and the Production of the New

The last paradox of theatricality may very well consist of the (Beckettian) task of being done (again) with theater while constantly dreaming of beginning theater all over again. For theater can only be achieved outside itself, whenever it is able to let go of theater, and this can only be accomplished if theater is recurrently emptied of theater.

--Jean Pierre Sarrazac, “The Invention of ‘Theatricality’” 70

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter.

--Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 139

The Theatre’s Paradox and the Impetus for Thought

Jean Pierre Sarrazac, in the first of the two quotations above, points to both a banal observation and a weighty conundrum. The theatre, in becoming theatre, troubles itself. It simultaneously moves towards its own destruction and dreams of its own creation. This paradox is illustrated by the fact that theorizations of Western theatre are often haunted by Plato’s anti-theatrical framework for the philosophical foundations of art. According to Martin Puchner, Plato, in his attempt to secure the emerging discipline of philosophy from the “antagonistic” practices of the theatre, creates a new form of theatricality in his dialogues; one that, like the closet drama, subverts the mimetic materiality of the theatre by distancing itself from the immediate physicality of performance and moving towards an understanding of theatricality as a quality embedded in the text (“Modernist Thought” 522-523). This movement establishes a tension between the mimetic ambiguities of performance and the apparent stability of the text. While the gesture of distancing oneself or one’s activities from those of the theatre has been repeated
throughout the history of Western philosophy, Puncher aptly notes that rather than establishing theatre and philosophy as independent enterprises, the philosophical anti-theatricalism inaugurated by Plato is a “symptom of the conflictual entanglement” that binds the theatre and theory together (“Modernist Thought” 522). Therefore, Western theatre from its very “origins” has been embattled with itself. It has been skeptical of its mimetic materiality, but reluctant to become fully disembodied. Hence, the theatre, in becoming theatre, troubles itself.

This paradox is clearly evident in the work of the theatre’s modernist avant-garde who initiated an attack on the institutionalization of art while at the same time sought to start a revolution by integrating artistic practices into everyday life. While for Plato, it was the theatre’s mimetic materiality that obscured access to truth, for the modernist avant-garde it was the theatre’s institutionalized textuality that withheld access to a more complete theatrical experience resonating within the everyday. In wanting more from the theatre, in wanting the theatre to infiltrate rather than simply reflect life, the modernist avant-garde became dissatisfied with the theatrical form and transferred its energy from existing theatre practices to the creation of manifestos and “impossible theatres” (Puchner, “Modernist Thought” 527). The modernist avant-garde, in this way, “let go of the theatre” in order to “dream the theatre all over again” (Sarrazac 70). However, while being ostensibly done with the theatre avant-gardists paradoxically continued to utilize the technologies of the theatre as a site of experimentation and critique.

Futurist Filippo Marinetti insisted that the only way to inspire Italy with a “warlike spirit” was through the theatre (123). Similarly, Antonin Artaud, despite his call for theatrical reform, never totally abandoned the theatre. In fact, he writes: “Like the plague, theatre is a crisis resolved by death or cure […] we can see that the effect of the theatre is beneficial as the plague
[...] It shakes off stifling material dullness which even overcomes the senses’ clearest testimony, and collectively reveals their dark powers and hidden strength” (Artaud 21). These proclamations depict an inherent tension within the theatre. They present a theatre that through its own processes has the potential to destroy itself and find unification with the experiences of everyday life. However, this same theatre while heralding the end of its own existence, simultaneously re-stages itself over and over again. The theatre is, therefore, caught in a battle with itself. It simultaneously destroys and re-creates itself. It is this characteristic of the theatre that interests me, and following Sarrazac, I identify the paradoxical forces of destruction and creation with theatricality.¹

Alongside these the paradoxical forces of theatricality this thesis is driven by the question of what forces us to think. I have pursued this project driven by the idea that there is something, or perhaps more aptly, there are things in the world that move us to think. These things move each of us at different speeds and in different directions. For myself, I have been moved by theatre. I would even go as far as to say that the theatre has moved me to thought. The theatre, in its continual process of self-destruction and re-creation, has drawn me in and has confounded me. This project therefore attempts to interrogate the mechanisms that produce the wonder and puzzlement that I experience in the theatre. I move to consider how and why the material actualities of the theatre relate to the affective virtualities of my own experiences of performance. Moreover, I interrogate how this dynamic play has the ability to move me, and potentially other spectators, to thought.

Gilles Deleuze proposes that there is something in the world that forces us to think. This thing is not an object not of recognition, but instead is the experience of an affective encounter (Difference and Repetition 139, original emphasis). The affective encounter is a site that is
independent of meaning and signification. It is an encounter that moves and perplexes the soul.
Its primary characteristic is that “it can only be sensed”, and by occurring at the level of sense it
does not produce recognition (Deleuze 139). Working outside reason and rationality the affective
encounter challenges habitual responses to experience and does not adhere to expectation. It
produces “sensibilities” or intensities that can only be grasped through “a range of affective
tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering” (Deleuze 139). These intensities de-territorialize
recognition, thereby challenging us with the unrecognizable and providing an opportunity for
either an increased or decreased potential to respond. Moreover, the intensities produced by the
affective encounter destroy the image of thought that presupposes itself, and provoke the act of
thinking (Difference and Repetition 139). Therefore, similar to the paradox of theatricality,
thought arises out of an ongoing process of destruction and creation. It arises out of the de-
territorialization of recognition that is produced by an encounter with sensibilities, or affects,
which encourage us to move in new and unexpected directions.

Related to the affective encounter is the concept of the new. Within the scope of this
project the new references the production of thought. Positioning thought as the product of
encounter, Deleuze provides a means to understand thought as the production of the new instead
of the confirmation of something that is already known. Thought is therefore aligned with the
processes of creation as opposed to representation. The new is also aligned with creation. It is to
be understood as a generative force that works towards establishing difference in the face of
habit. The new is not transcendent. It does not come from some otherworldly place. It is the
recombination of existing elements that when placed together create changes in intensity
(changes in affective forces), which produce different speeds and/or qualities within the present
state of affairs (O’Sullivan, “Production of the New” 91). Ultimately, the new may be grasped as
what potentially emerges in the gap between the affective encounter (the stimulus) and our rationalized cognition (the response).

By employing the Deleuzian concepts of ‘affect’ and ‘the new’ I argue that technologies used in the theatre produce affective encounters from which new thinking may ultimately emerge. Moreover, I argue that a consideration of this affective encounter is a productive means to further understand theatricality. This is because the experience of theatricality is ultimately rooted in the affective encounter. My argument brings together theatricality and thinking through the experience of affect that is produced via the technologies used in performance. Technology, therefore, becomes integral to this project. It is positioned as the disruptive element that incites the affective encounter from which theatricality, and thought or the new, may emerge. I turn to technology as a means for framing my discussion of theatricality because I see technology functioning as a disruptive element, both theoretically and materially, within the framework of representation. Theoretically, technology challenges us to think about our engagements with the world. It challenges us to consider the ways that we come to know and experience the world. Materially, technology literally frames and reframes our experience of the world. It extends and suspends our bodies and the spaces that our bodies occupy.

**Utopia, Technology, and Affect**
My analysis of theatricality is driven by the following questions: Can theatricality move us to think outside representation? If so, how might it move us to discover or experience thought not as a simple recognition of an object, but as sensual encounter that brings thought, self, and object into dynamic relation with one another? How does theatricality, in presenting us with such an encounter, open us towards an affective experience that ultimately situates the theatre as a site for the production of the new?
My approach to these questions, and therefore this project, may be seen as a reiteration of the very paradox that the project is investigating. It is yet another coming again to the theatre in order to empty it and start over. In many ways the project is my own “dreaming of beginning theater all over again” (Sarrazac 70). Like the activities of the modernist avant-garde (and one could argue Deleuze’s philosophy) this is a project rooted in utopian desire. It is a project sustained by a belief in potentiality, a belief—a hope for—the chance to create new worlds both aesthetic and material. While utopia literally refers to a ‘no-place’, I am concerned with how theatricality may allow for navigation between the naïve imaginings of a utopian no-place and the material realities of the stage and everyday life.

Jonathan Roffe argues that for Deleuze ‘utopia’ designates “the political vocation of philosophy: the attempt to bring about different ways of existing and new contexts for our existence” (qtd. in Parr 297). Utopia achieves this by naming the point of contact between the material world and philosophy’s creation of concepts. Philosophy therefore creates concepts in order to participate in the creative (utopian?) task of world-making. Deleuze (and Guattari) argue that art also engages in this practice of creation, but that it does this through the production of affect. In its disruptive practices theatricality opens a space for the new through the production of affect. The concept of utopia, therefore, connects the materiality of the stage to the immaterial affective sensibilities produced by the theatrical encounter.

In her book on the relationship between utopia and performance, Jill Dolan introduces the idea of the ‘utopian performative’ in order to describe the “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” (5).
There is an affinity between Dolan’s utopian performative and my interrogation of theatricality. Both are interested in describing and coming to understand the ways in which the theatre moves us, the ways in which it forces us to think. In moving its spectators, in forcing them to think, the theatre has the potential to instigate the construction of new worlds both on and off the stage.

My analysis of theatricality considers the work of several contemporary theatre artists—The Builders Association, Marie Brassard, Toni Dove and Troika Ranch—as a means of coming to understand how theatricality is produced and experienced as a productive force that, rather than providing us with the recognizable, pushes us to the threshold of the unrecognizable and forces us to think. I have selected these artists because, in different ways, they each place technology at the center of their work. The use of technology is significant, not because it produces theatricality, but rather because it provides a productive means of examining theatricality. In the introduction to Theatricality as Medium Samuel Weber highlights technology as both a perplexing element and a key factor in our understanding of theatricality:

> [G]iven that the medium of theatre and the effect of theatricality presuppose, as one of their indispensable preconditions, some sort of real, immediate, physical presence, and given that the status and significance of such presence has been rendered increasingly problematic by the advent of “new media” with their powerful “virtualizing” effects, one might expect to find that practices relating to the theatre and theatricality would tend to diminish progressively in scope and significance. Yet the contrary appears to be the case. Theatrical practices, attitudes, even organizations seem to proliferate, in conjunction with if not in response to the new media. (1)

Weber points to the fact that while discourses of theatricality tend to valorize the real, the immediate, and the physical presence of the body, theatre practice itself often directly challenges this valorization and continues to thrive in spite of it. The artists selected for this study are examples of this phenomenon. Their work proliferates in response to and in conjunction with developments in new media. The Builder’s Association organizes their productions around
specific questions about the use of media in our everyday lives. These questions structure their productions’ narratives and strongly influence how the company presents its work. This is expressed in the decisions to incorporate social networking sites or use live and recorded video in performance. Toni Dove, Troika Ranch, and Marie Brassard each design their own software, which becomes a site of experimentation and development for their productions. Their work does not necessarily respond to larger questions posed by technology, but it uses technology as a means of aesthetically exploring the outer boundaries of both performance and technology. Moreover, as Weber notes, the use of technology does not seem to diminish the desire for the creation and exploration of practices relating to the theatre. In fact, it opens a space for questioning and examining these very practices. Consequently, this project investigates how technology functions as a troubling element within theatre performance that permits us to consider theatricality not as the securer of artifice, but rather as the procurer of an affective experience that opens the spectator to the possibility of thinking and experiencing the new.

Patricia Clough argues that in contemporary discourse the turn to affect is an expression of “a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a shift in thought” that is brought on by transformations in the economic, political, and cultural realms (1-2). Affect becomes a means of expressing and exploring the relationship between the body and various technologies. Outlining the genealogy of affect that runs through the work of Brian Massumi, Deleuze and Guattari, Bergson, and Spinoza, Clough articulates affectivity as the body’s increased and/or decreased potential to act, engage, or connect with other bodies (Clough 2). Following this same genealogy, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth define affects as “vital forces” that are distinct from emotion (1). Emotion and feeling are products of meaning making. They are linked to specific individuals and the processes of recognition. Affects, on the other
hand, exceed consciousness, reference a pre-subjective agency, and work within the logic of sensation. Affect is therefore understood to be a force that produces movement or sensation. This is significant for this project, not only because I claim that theatricality arises from an affective encounter, but because, when understood in these terms, affect has the power to disrupt and mobilize thought.

**Theatricality/Performativity**

In her forward to a special issue of the journal *SubStance* (2002) on the theme of theatricality, Josette Féral proposes to investigate whether or not “theatricality is still a pertinent concept compared to performativity” and if it can still be considered “a useful device in today’s theoretical field” (“Forward” 3). Nearly ten years later, in *Performing Remains: Art and War in the Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011), Rebecca Schneider illustrates that theatricality remains significant. She argues: “there’s nothing mere about the theatrical, and moreover, theatricality, like interpretation, is not a matter of the *loss* of some prior, purer *actual*. Rather, in line with Aristotle’s rejoinder to Plato, mimesis is what we *do*” (18, original emphasis). 8

Significant is Schneider’s attention to temporality. Theatricality remains. It endures. It does not simply refer to recognition—to the already known, to the past. In remaining theatricality is present. It is an essential element of how we present and perform ourselves, how we tell stories, and how we construct the world around us. 9

Schneider illustrates the *doing* of theatricality through an analysis of Civil War reenactments that she identifies as “more than ‘mere’ remembering” (*Performing Remains* 32). Her analysis demonstrates how historical reenactments, though theatrical in the sense that they are a particular kind of performance, may be understood as the “ongoing event itself, negotiated through sometimes radically shifting affiliation with the past as the present” (32, original emphasis). Schneider argues that the repetition inherent to theatricality’s remaining is not simply
a means of remembering the past “as if the past were only behind”, but that it is “a pitching and stitching forward” (123). Theatricality is therefore oriented towards the future. It secures the past in its relation to representation, it articulates the present in its inherent immediateness, and it ultimately propels us towards the future.

The future orientation of theatricality is evident in Schneider’s discussion of Liz LeCompte’s production of Poor Theatre (2004). In appropriating elements of Grotowski’s Akropolis, Schneider suggests that the production not only dialogues with the past, but that it initiates a call for a future response (Performing Remains 123). Theatricality challenges the framework of representation, a framework structured around the recognizable, by drawing us towards the unknown possibility for future encounters. In this way, theatricality bypasses the containment of representation and opens us to a fundamental encounter from which thought may arise.

Widening my lens for a moment, it is important to contextualize the movement that takes place between Féral’s questioning the significance of theatricality, and Schneider’s insistence that theatricality remains a central theoretical concept. Féral was prompted, in 2002, to ask the question about theatricality’s significance because, at that time, she was working within a theoretical context where the proliferation of ‘performance’ and its derivatives, performative and performativity, were eclipsing theatricality as a critical term. This turn to performance came in the wake of work by people such as J. L. Austin\(^\text{10}\) and Richard Schechner\(^\text{11}\) who, in different ways, instilled performance with the sense of having a particular agency and a strong correlation to the ‘real’.\(^\text{12}\) The terms performance, performative, and performativity came to suggest a particular political agency and efficacy. They were positioned as having value because they were to be able to signify the doing of something. Furthermore, the potential efficacy and political
agency of performativity was advanced in the work of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler for whom respectively, performativity pointed to the iterability of a language and suggested the constitution of the act that it performed. In the face of performativity’s promise for the insurgence of the real, theatricality was approached with suspicion and associated with a sense of hollowness and inauthenticity. Due to this, Shannon Jackson suggested that, for theatre scholars in particular, the relation between theatricality and performativity was a pressing issue. She writes:

For American scholars and graduate students in theatre and performance studies, the circulation of the term “performative” exerted a contradictory force, paradoxically elevating and eclipsing our favorite objects of study. On the one hand, its theoretical prominence in the anti-foundationalist work of critical theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler seemed to pull theatre and theatricality into the crucial spotlight. On the other hand, performativity’s location inside a tradition of speech-act theory that was indifferent and, in some cases, hostile to all things theatrical dimmed that light considerably. (“Proper Objects” 186)

In 2011 the graduate department directing this project, the Graduate Centre of the Study of Drama at the University of Toronto, changed its name to the Graduate Centre of the Study of Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies. While this change does not mean much in regards to the process of completing this thesis it illustrates an attempt to deal with the tensions that Jackson identifies as pertinent for theatre scholars. It also marks this thesis as a literal product of the debates surrounding our understanding of, and relationship to, the concepts of theatre, performance, theatricality, and performativity. More than this, however, this project is my own grappling with the embattled theories of theatricality and performativity that have shaped my education in both theatre and performance studies.

In Performing Remains Schneider clearly and usefully complicates the binary logic embedded in many of the debates used to secure both theatre and performance studies as disciplines. By suggesting that acts of mimesis, which have a historical affiliation with the
theatrical, can *do something* Schneider begins to trouble the binary established between the theatrical and the performative.16 This project, following Schneider’s lead, is interested in examining how the theatrical opens a space for a kind of *doing*, and more specifically a kind of thinking. In claiming theatricality’s connection to thought I implicitly put into question the binary logic that has been used in shaping our understandings of theatricality and performativity.

Elsewhere Schneider has argued that theatre and performance scholarship is “less invested in resisting the so-called void of performatives in the theatre, and more interested in seeing what failure does, how infelicity succeeds, and what ambivalence achieves” (“Intermediality” 256).17 She notes in particular Shannon Jackson’s proposal that we evaluate how competing claims for theatricality and performativity produce an impasse in our thinking that forces us to reconsider traditional understandings of these concepts (256). Specifically Jackson advances that “[t]here might be a ‘threat to comprehensibility’ that actually can be made useful, forcing us to reckon with the conventions by which art forms (e.g. painting), movements (e.g. modernism), and occupations (e.g. the critical theorist) are made comprehensible” (Jackson, *Professing* 139, also qtd. in Schneider “Intermediality” 256). Therefore, Jackson suggests, and Schneider supports, an approach to understanding theatricality that takes into account the very slipperiness of concept itself.

**Introducing the Selected Artists**
The artistic works under consideration in this project are: *Continuous City* (2007-2010) by the New York based theatre company, The Builders Association; *loopdiver* (2009) by Portland based dance company, Troika Ranch; *Spectropia* (2008) and *Lucid Possession* (2010) by American interactive film artist Toni Dove; *Jimmy* (2005; 2009) *Peepshow* (2007), and *The Invisible* (2008) by Québécois theatre artist Marie Brassard. Each of these artists in different ways incorporates various technologies, both analogue (Brassard’s sound mixing) and digital (Troika...
Ranch’s computer generated choreography). Even though all of the artists incorporate new media into their productions, their work tends to be presented in conventional Western theatre spaces such as proscenium and black box theatres. Their work also employs more or less traditional modes of presentation, meaning that it does not significantly alter the distanced relationship between performer and spectator. There are many artists, including Stelarc, Orlan, Blast Theory, and Eduardo Kac, to name only a few, whose incorporation of technology has moved their performances outside established theatre spaces and modes of presentation, however for this project I am interested in work that utilizes the more or less traditional Western frameworks of theatre production. I have narrowed the work in this way in order to focus on how theatricality emerges within the specific space of the theatre. Furthermore, this kind of directed analysis permits a more specific examination of how we think about and experience the theatre’s production of theatricality.18

Using these stipulations I could include the work of artists such as the Wooster Group, Robert Wilson, and Robert Lepage in my analysis. Each of these artists produces work that exists predominantly in what we consider to be traditional Western theatre spaces and incorporates technology as a means of interrogating the processes of performance.19 Nevertheless, I do not focus my analysis on the work of these artists because their work has already been significantly archived. However, rather than mining this work again I hope to find connections between it and the work of the artists selected for this study. The connections I draw will illustrate how the work of artists like the Wooster Group, Wilson, and Lepage has provided a catalyst for another generation of artists. Beyond providing inspiration, these artists’ canonized work serves as a historical marker and touchstone for new work to reference and through which new work can be contextualized.
Writing on intermediality and the theatre, Chiel Kattenbelt posits that the theatrical stage is uniquely positioned as a site for intermediality because the theatre inherently incorporates various modes of media. The work of the selected artists illustrates how the theatre incorporates into its purview cinematic, acoustic, visual, and embodied signs. We are therefore not terribly surprised when we encounter performances such as the Builders Association’s *Continuous City*, which utilizes web cams to bring physically absent actors into the theatre. Furthermore, the mediated voices found in Marie Brassard’s work do not strike us as particularly revolutionary and the interactivity found in Toni Dove’s and Troika Ranch’s use of motion sensing software does not appear strange. In fact, the incorporation of technological tools—screens, video, motion sensing, or other digital technology—does not seem to fundamentally alter the processes of the theatre all. However, the incorporation of new media and digital technologies has undeniably generated new modes of representation that are evident in the work of the selected artists. We may argue, along with Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, that the primary effect of the incorporation of new technology in performance is that it provides theatre practitioners with new ways of telling stories, new ways of positioning bodies in time and space, and new ways of configuring the interrelation between the spatial and temporal realities (11).

While the new modes of representation that accompany the use of technology are significant, Kattenbelt has come to understand intermediality, and the related concepts multimediality and transmediality, as providing us with a framework for thinking about how the theatre creates a space where different art forms, which are themselves understood as media, can profoundly affect one another (“Intermediality in Theatre and Performance” 20). Kattenbelt goes so far as to suggest that: “when two or more different art forms come together a process of theatricalization occurs” (20).
Intermediality is therefore more than the simple incorporation of various modes of media into one aesthetic model. Intermediality “assumes a co-relation in the actual sense of the word, that is to say a mutual affect” (Kattenbelt 25). Through the production of mutual affect “previously existing medium specific conventions are changed, which allows for new dimensions of perception and experience to be explored” (25). This understanding of intermediality returns us to the issue of theatricality as a site of disruption from which we come to experience the new through the provocation of thought. Intermediality becomes associated with ideas of diversity and discrepancy. Rather then producing a sense of unity or recognition it assumes an “in-between space from which or within which the mutual affects take place” (26). It is this understanding of intermediality that shapes my approach to and understanding of the work of the artists selected for this project.

Prior to establishing the Builders Association in 1993, the founding members—Marianne Weems, Jeff Webster, and Jennifer Tipton—worked with the Wooster Group and Robert Wilson. The influence of these relationships is clear in Builders productions such as Master Builder (1994), Jet Lag (1998-2001), and Super Vision (2005-06). These productions draw on traditions established by the Wooster Group and Wilson, including experimentation with live video and the use of strong visual stage pictures. However, while the Builders have drawn from their predecessors, they have also developed their own unique style and approach to performance. Director Mariam Weems suggests that the Builders work is “an iteration of a completely different generation”, one where technology is staged as itself and becomes an active force with which each performance has to contend with (Gener, Electronic Campfires np). Technology is not simply a means to an end—a way of creating visually stunning scenography or interrogating fragmented subjectivities—it is an inquiry into the nature and impact of our own everyday
engagement with the world around us. This is clear in productions such as *Alladeen* (2002-05), which examines the phenomenon of international call centers in India. It is also evident in *Continuous City* (2007-10), which interrogates the construction of relationships made via online social networking.

Similar to the Builders, Marie Brassard’s work has also been strongly influenced by her relationships with other prominent artists, and most specifically her relationship with Robert Lepage. Before establishing her own performance company, Infrarouge, Brassard collaborated with Lepage and was a featured actress in his *The Dragon's Trilogy* (1985-92), *Polygraph* (1987), and *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* (1994-8). Brassard’s solo work continues to explore Lepage’s preoccupations with using technology to construct theatrical worlds, however for Brassard this exploration moves away from the primarily visual elements of theatrical experience towards an exploration of the theatre’s aural landscape. Brassard’s solo-show productions—*Jimmy* (2001, 2009), *Peepshow* (2005, 2007), *The Invisible* (2008), *Me Talking to Myself in the Future* (2010)—feature the real-time sound mixing of her voice. In each of these productions Brassard’s voice is mediated by a microphone, remixed by a sound designer off stage, and projected through the sound system for the audience to hear. This produces a cacophony of characters and imaginative sonic worlds that draw the spectator’s attention to the complexity of, and potential for, vocal presence.

Where the Builders Association and Brassard have direct connections to prominent figures in the history of contemporary theatre practice, Toni Dove’s explorations of interactivity and Troika Ranch’s digital choreography do not have such a clear lineage (though an argument could be made for Troika Ranch’s practices to be seen as an extension of the choreographic experimentations of Merce Cunningham). Toni Dove and Troika Ranch however, both
incorporate digital media into their work and strive to de-territorialize the boundaries of artistic mediums, which is a preoccupation of many post-modern theatre practitioners.

Toni Dove’s cinematic theatre reshapes the filmic and theatrical experience by placing the performer, and at times spectator, in immersive and responsive narrative environments. Using motion sensing and voice recognition devices Dove combines elements of cinema, theatre, and video games in order to create performances where performers and audience members interact in unexpected ways. Dove characterizes her work as “a techno-variation on Japanese Bunraku Puppet Theatre” (Dove, “The Space Between” 216). Live performers activate and orchestrate onscreen cinematic characters through the use of motion-sensing software. Bodily movements trigger conversations, produce alterations in the soundtrack, manipulate behavior, and/or change the perspective of the onscreen characters. Dove’s films—Artificial Changelings (1995-2000), Spectropia (2001-2010) and Lucid Possession (2009-present)—may be thought of as “scratchable” performances. Performers and spectators become DJ’s who mix tracks and various visual layers in order to create a world that extends the space of the cinema screen to enfold the bodies of the live performers and audience members in the theatre.

Troika Ranch was co-founded in 1994 by choreographer Dawn Stoppiello and composer/media artist Mark Coniglio. The driving force behind their work has been the desire to explore interactivity, or what they see as “the energetic linkage of human action to digital content and the feedback loop that is formed by this relationship—performer responds to system, system reacts to performer, performer makes informed choice to respond to system, etc.” (Troika Ranch website). Interactivity is established in Troika Ranch’s work through the use of Isadora, a graphic programming platform developed by Coniglio. Isadora offers artists a certain degree of control over the digital media that they use in production. It provides them with the ability to
manipulate, in real-time, technical elements such as digital video, music, sound modulation, and lighting. Control of these elements is accessed through sensory devices that gather information about the performer’s movement—speed, curvature, acceleration, size, and complexity—and use this information to modulate the selected media. For example, the speed of a performer’s movement may change a color in the light design or a kick of the leg may alter a video image or the acoustic score. Troika Ranch uses this technology to explore the complex relationship between the body and its digitally produced other. This is made particularly clear in their productions *The Future of Memory* (2003), *Surfacing* (2004), *16 [R]evolutions* (2006), and *looppdiver* (2009).

**Overview of This Thesis**
My examination of productions by the Builders Association, Troika Ranch, Toni Dove, and Marie Brassard is structured around three concepts that re-surface throughout the discourse of theatricality: space, presence, and event. These elements have been selected as framing concepts for two reasons: first, they are each material elements of the theatre; second, they are elements of performance that have become fundamental to our thinking about theatricality. The first chapter establishes the project’s larger theoretical framework and develops connections between theatricality, space, presence, and event. Each of the subsequent chapters provides an analysis of one of these concepts and their particular relation to theatricality and thought.

Chapter One continues to chart the theoretical connections between thought, theatricality, and technology by more fully exploring Deleuze’s conceptualization of thought and articulating how and why Deleuze provides a useful philosophical framework for an examination of theatricality. In this chapter I also outline the genealogical and theoretical arguments surrounding theatricality and position myself in relation to the work of Josette Féral, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Samuel Weber. While the work of these theorists does not always correspond easily, they
each deal with theatricality as it relates to the practices of the theatre and they all describe theatricality as a process that moves us towards an experience of disruption—a cleft, crisis, cut. Both of these claims are significant to my thinking about theatricality as a fundamental encounter that unsettles recognition, producing an experience of the new rather than reproducing the already known. Ultimately Chapter Four connects this underlying experience of disruption to the idea of event, while the Second and Third chapters draw out issues pertaining to the production of space and presence, which are also significant to the work of Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber.

The Second Chapter interrogates the relationship between the material spaces of the theatre and the immaterial spaces of the imagination that are simultaneously constituted within the theatre event. Drawing examples from Toni Dove’s Spectropia (2001-10), the Builders Association’s Continuous City (2009), and Troika Ranch’s loopdiver (2009), this chapter illustrates how the screen makes evident an inherent movement between the material and immaterial spaces of the theatre. Arguing that the movement between these spaces produces an experience of theatricality, I argue that theatricality exists not as a specific quality of performance, but is an affective force produced in, and arising from, the relations between the material spaces of performance, the immaterial spaces of our imagination, and the material and virtual realities of our everyday lives.

Beyond emphasizing the dynamics of theatrical space, I claim that the screen participates in a folding of space that produces what Josette Féral has referred to as the “cleft in the quotidian”, a “cleft that divides space into the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’ of theatricality” (97). The screen thus becomes a tool for examining the space of the in-between, a space that is always already inherent in the performance, but that becomes articulated materially by the presence of
the screen on stage. Moreover, I argue that the screen’s folding of space—its turning inside/turning outside, its production of the cleft—constructs an encounter with what Foucault, reading Blanchot, refers to as the outside of thought. It is the outside of thought that pushes us to the threshold of the unrecognizable and forces us to think.

Chapter Three examines the concept of presence and considers how we may come to understand presence outside the deconstructive reading presented by Derrida in his essay “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”. Derrida, referring to Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty argues that presence necessitates representation in order to appear: “Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has already begun to represent itself” (58). Such an understanding of presence traps the theatre within an ideology of representation, foreclosing the possibility for the creation of the new. In this chapter I consider presence as multiplicity rather than an individuated experience and I propose that the experience of presence as multiplicity allows us to understand presence as an affective encounter rather than a representational one. As an affective encounter, presence provides us with intensity of thought and sensation rather than with an essence or a particular meaning.

My discussion of presence draws on an analysis of the vocal mediation used by Marie Brassard and Toni Dove in their respective performances, *Jimmy* and *Lucid Possession*. I turn to the voice for my investigation of presence because the voice is often associated with the subject’s origin, or presence. Régis Durad writes: “Nothing is closer to me than my voice: the consciousness of the voice is consciousness itself” (301). Here the voice is positioned as a sign of interiority, authority, and authenticity. As such it becomes a definitive marker of subjectivity, originality, and truth. The voice therefore is understood as providing us with direct access to presence. It is this presumed access to presence that I complicate in this chapter. Drawing on
Brassard and Dove’s use of the mediated voice I illustrate that rather than providing us with a conduit for presence the voice may function as a disruption to language which produces presence as an experience of multiplicity, as an affective, rather than representational, encounter.

The fourth chapter returns to the idea of the theatre’s inherent troubling of itself, the idea that the theatre simultaneously moves towards its own destruction and dreams of its own creation. In order to consider this inherent troubling of the theatre I examine the theatrical in relation to the concept of the event. Deleuze describes the event as always being accompanied by a struggle. In its happening the event produces a kind of primary violence and therefore every event may be understood as a kind of wound (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 151). The struggle or happening of the event is evident in the manifestos of the modernist avant-garde and it is also present in the processes that move us to thought. Furthermore, I argue that this struggle is enfolded into the very processes of theatricality. This chapter unpacks theatricality in relation to the concept of event and considers how the struggle that accompanies the event may be understood as a site for the occurrence of the fundamental encounter that instigates thought.

More specifically, this chapter examines Deleuze’s conceptualization of events as processes of struggle that have no determined outcome, but that give rise to the new through their continuity and production of sensuous affect.

Drawing on the Deleuze’s proposed double structure of the event, its actualization and counter-actualization, I consider how the movement between these two series underscores the disruptive nature of the event through its displacement of the present and its creation of a ‘wound’. Moreover, I examine how Troika Ranch, Marie Brassard, and Toni Dove utilize theatricality as a force for the production of event that opens the world to us through the creation of affect. I argue that the double structure of the event frames the experience of theatricality
displacing the present and producing a wound in which the representational structures of performance are pushed aside and a space is opened for a fundamental encounter to occur.

**Final Thoughts**

Alain Badiou famously criticizes Deleuze for his paradoxical use of metaphor and representation as a means of working beyond these same concepts.\(^{24}\) In many ways a similar critique may be made of this project. It employs theatre as a means of working beyond the theatre. In fact, this is, to some degree, the paradox of theatricality that Sarrazac highlights in the quotation that opened this introduction: Sarrazac’s observation, like this thesis, points to both a banal observation and a weighty conundrum. What I believe will ultimately become clear is that theatricality’s promise of an escape from representation cannot ultimately be attained. We will therefore end where we began, “being done (again) with the theatre”. However, we will also not be where we began. Rather, our escape from representation, our escape from the theatre, our escaping into thinking the outside, will be expressed as a state of constant becoming. This may ultimately be the drama of theatricality: theatricality as a continual movement, a movement that drives us into the processes of self-destruction and creation—a force of becoming, a force of thought.
Notes to Introduction

1 Theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes have rightly challenged the stability of the text. These challenges make the relation between textuality and performance even more interesting because they highlight the inherent tension. While the relation between text and performance is not the focus of this study it haunts the subsequent arguments.

2 Jonas Barish identifies Western thought’s distancing itself from the theatre as an “anti-theatrical prejudice”. He sees it at play in the work of philosophers from Plato to St. Augustine to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. See: Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (1981).

3 For Peter Bürger, the modernist avant-garde, in all of its aesthetic manifestations including the theatre, worked in two opposing directions: first, it worked towards an attack on the dominate institutionalization of artistic practice, and second, it worked towards the utopian unification of art and life (“Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde” 696). Bürger argues that these two opposing forces made the revolutionary cries of the modernist avant-garde fail in their attempts for lasting reform. Their failure, however, does not diminish their significance.

4 My assertion theatricality functions as a disruption prompting new experience and understanding is not novel. It must be placed in relation to other aesthetic concepts describing the experience of a changed perspective following an encounter of estrangement such as the sublime or the uncanny. It may also be placed in relation to aesthetic techniques that seek to produce an experience of renewed perspective, such as Viktor Shklovsky’s *ostranenie* or Bertolt Brecht’s *verfremdungseffekt*. Despite the fact that we can draw affinities between theatricality and these specific aesthetic techniques, my interest is in considering theatricality more broadly rather than examining how it manifests in these particular aesthetic models.


6 For Deleuze concepts are not representations or tools for finding truth but are themselves the very activity of philosophy. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy, art, and science each engage in their own processes of world-making. Philosophy does this through the creation of concepts, art produces affects, and science constructs functions on a plane of reference.

7 There are many varied approaches to affect. For the purposes of this project I follow the “vitalist” tradition outlined in the work of Massumi, Deleuze, Bergson, Spinoza.

8 I identify a strong affinity between Schneider’s suggestion that, “mimesis is what we do” and Deleuze’s questioning about what bodies, objects, and materials may do rather than what they are.

9 We are also able to grasp theatricality’s relation to the present if we consider the way in which the term is often abstracted from its relation to the theatre and used to describe events of our
everyday lives as evidenced in the work of people like Erving Goffman and Victor Turner. In its production of the present theatricality becomes a condition of our being, one that secures our being through a particular kind of self-awareness.

The title of J. L. Austin’s book, *How To Do Things With Words*, suggests that certain words have an implicit power to do certain things. Austin defines these words that can *do* things as being performative and their utterances form what he names performative acts. The performative act “indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (Austin 6). Thus, the uttering of a performative act implies that in the act of making the utterance a change or reaction takes place. Austin suggests that statements of this nature are neither true nor false, but successful or unsuccessful (*felicitous* or *infelicitous*). Performatives are seen to carry power as demonstrated by the reaction that they may potentially produce. In this way words take on a material force, they become something that can be manipulated and used to incite specific reactions, or alternatively they may incite unintended reactions. Performatives also tend to require the future action in order to be *felicitous*. Key examples of this are the performatives “to promise”, “to bet”, or “to marry”, all which, in order to succeed must be continuously supported by specific actions. This necessity for future action makes Austin skeptical about the ability for any word spoken on stage to be considered a *felicitous* performative. He writes

[A] performative utterance will […] be in a peculiar way hallow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy […] language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not serious, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances […]are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances. (22)

It is in this way that Austin distances himself from the theatre.


I note Austin and Schechner as being influential in the move away from theatricality toward performativity, however this distancing from theatricality has a long and complex history to which these two men are simply more recent contributors. The anti-theatrical trope can be traced to Plato and is found throughout the history of Western theatre. Martin Puchner, who has written extensively on anti-theatricality, notes that theatricality and anti-theatricality are “deeply intertwined systems, enabling one another and propelling one another forward in history” ("Afterword" 355). For an examination of this history see: Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-theatricality, and Drama* (2002).
In his thoughtful critique of the relationship between theatre and performance studies, “The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid: Unpicking the Performance Studies/Theatre Studies Dichotomy”, Stephen Bottoms echoes Jackson’s, Féral’s and my own sentiments about the dichotomous relation between theatricality and performativity. Bottoms observes that we currently find ourselves in a situation where “much that once would have been regarded as ‘theatrical’ has been annexed off and relabeled as ‘performative’ [...] while the theatrical has become increasingly ‘etiolated’” (173). Bottoms proceeds to articulate the repercussions of this transformation noting that the relabeling of the ‘theatrical’ as ‘performative’ has expanded the field of study for theatre scholars; in effect theatre scholars now commonly look outside the theatre towards things such as rituals, cultural festivals, and the everyday life for objects of study. However, at the same time he observes that the study of theatre itself seems to be contracting because the definition of what constitutes theatre seems to have become extremely limited: “All too often, theatre is now categorized as the acting out of dramatic literature in a purpose-built building, whereas performance is taken to encompass pretty much anything and everything else” (Bottoms 173).

While the factors determining this change are multifaceted, and some idiosyncratic of the department itself, I do see that the change gestures towards a larger trend within the study of theatre to be inclusive of the issues that arise from performance.

My undergraduate work, at Queen’s University (1999-2003), was in theatre studies. My Master’s was completed at NYU in the department of Performance Studies (2004).

Theatricality and mimesis, though related, are distinct concepts (Davis and Postlewait 6).

Schneider’s Performing Remains may be viewed as such scholarship.

Theatricality can be experienced outside the theatre; however as already noted this study is primarily concerned with the experience of theatricality within the framework of the theatre event.

The work of Italian theatre director Romeo Castellucci at Societas Raffaello Sanzio and Belgian director Guy Cassiers are other examples. Castellucci’s and Cassiers’ work, though different in feel and style from the work of the aforementioned North American artists, incorporates the technological in traditional Western theatre spaces a means of troubling our understanding and experience of the theatrical event. Like the work of The Wooster Group, Wilson, and Lepage, Castellucci’s and Cassiers’ performances have become significant touchstones for rethinking theatricality. Their work is also often cited in discussions of intermediality and at times in relation to Deleuze.

Troika Ranch has recently moved to Portland after a fifteen-year residency in New York. Dawn Stoppelli is the current director of the company.

Isadora is available for purchase and has been used by companies such as The Wooster Group.
I would like to acknowledge that my putting Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber into conversation with one another arises from a course I took with Bruce Barton at the Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama in 2006. In this course Barton began to put these differing perspectives on theatricality into discussion with one another around issues of ‘liveness’. For his reading of these three authors see: Barton, “Bullet-Time, Becoming, and the Sway of Theatricality: Performance and Play in The Matrix” (2012).

Event is used here in the Deleuzian sense to refer to a process of transformation.

CHAPTER ONE

Establishing a Path for Thinking or Methodological Considerations

There is no doubt [...] that in fact it is difficult to think [...]
--Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 133

It's like asking a set of questions, or opening up a potential set of streams of thought, or giving people a place to explore an idea, or setting up something that gives a person a place to think from.
--Toni Dove, qtd. in Jennings, “Interpretations of the Electronic Landscape” np.

The goal is not to make an interpretation in total realism; rather, it is to have the strength – and the ability – to suggest that something will blossom in the mind of the audience after the play is over.
--Marie Brassard, qtd. in Halferty, “Sound Cyborg” 25

The Question of Thought
In What is Called Thinking? Heidegger argues that what is most thought provoking is that “we are still not thinking” (“Thinking” 346). Central to this argument is a critique of thought as an innate ability, a form of self-reflection, or the foundation of being. The fact that we are still not thinking signals that thinking happens outside the self. It therefore challenges the axiom “I think therefore I am”. Rather than forming the self, thinking, for Heidegger, is understood as a process that is acquired over time. It is a process of learning, a process of finding a path for thinking. The ‘still not’ that frames our thinking (or lack thereof) gestures towards the future possibility for thinking. In this way, thinking is connected to a temporal experience of the future. It does not secure the past or legitimate what is already known, and it is not a process of representation. Rather, thinking points to the unknown, the yet to come, the new. It is a site of creation that ushers in the future.
According to Deleuze, the question of thought, which permeates twentieth century continental philosophy, is an arrow first shot by Martin Heidegger when he asked: ‘What does thinking signify?’ and ‘What do we call thinking?’ (Foucault 116). These questions made a consideration of thought urgent and necessary. This is evident in the fact that the question of thought became significant for many twentieth century philosophers including Deleuze and his contemporaries, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. In their own ways Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault, each problematize the historical understanding of thought as the gathering of essential truth and they each work to establish thought as a process for the production of the new. It is Deleuze, however, who most clearly articulates this stance when he claims, with reference to Antonin Artaud, that: “to think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender ‘thinking’ in thought” (Difference and Repetition 147).

Following Heidegger’s lead Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze each attempt to understand thought as a dispersal of forces that produces the new, as opposed to a pre-established truth or something that points towards a secure original origin. For Derrida this takes the form of deconstructive strategies that function to uncover and subvert the inherent dualisms underlying our common ways of thinking. Derrida argues that the ‘metaphysics of presence’ pervading Western thought produces binary oppositions and hierarchies that privilege one element of the binary over the other. For example, presence is valued over absence, and speech before writing. Deconstruction challenges these hierarchies in order to uncover an inherent undecidability, or incompleteness, existing at the heart of every decision. To make a decision, to think a decision, requires an engagement with the undecidable, or that that resists totalization and plays in the ambiguity of difference. Undecidablity, therefore, disrupts the system of thought that presupposes established truth.
While for Derrida the troubling of thought has to do with encountering undecidability, for Foucault, building from the work of Maurice Blanchot, thought is procured from an encounter with the outside. The outside here refers to that that literally exists outside our familiar terrain of thinking. Foucault understands thought to be shaped by codes and institutional structures that historically constitute its limits. Therefore, to truly think, thought must attempt to reflect what exists outside the limits of these structures. In this way thinking is to produce a ‘thought of the outside’. Thinking is to embrace new ways of understanding that do not legitimate what is already known. A connection may be made here to Deleuze’s concept of thought as fundamental encounter. Both establish thought as an encounter that resists recognition and instead produces sensibilities, intensities, and affects.

For Deleuze, similar to Derrida and Foucault, our everyday methods of thinking adhere to predicable patterns that are established by what we already know. It is for this reason that he argues that modern thought was born out of “the failure of representation” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* xi). Deleuze attempts to resist our common representational modes of thinking because they not produce thinking at all. Instead, they return us to Heidegger’s point that what is most thought provoking is the fact that we are still not thinking. Therefore, in order to think—to think differently, to think difference—we must find ways to approach the undecideable, or the outside, and we must be open to the possibility of the fundamental encounter.

There is no doubt that this is difficult. Deleuze reminds us of this difficulty: “it is difficult to think” (133). The difficulty arises because we are indoctrinated into thinking via a particular image of thought that does not take seriously the problematic processes of thinking itself. Therefore, in order to think we must come to understand the means by which we engage the world. For Deleuze, this engagement takes the form of an image of thought that is comprised of
two parts: common sense and good sense. Together these parts “complete each other in the image of thought: together they constitute the two halves of the doxa” (134).

For its part, common sense refers to the shared opinions (doxa) that we rely on as a standard for structuring for our world. It encompasses the presupposition “everybody knows”. The assumption of shared knowledge makes it difficult to deny whatever it may be that “everybody knows”; and in this way common sense is secured as means of engaging the world and attaining knowledge (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 130). The knowledge attained via common sense is derived from recognition. We know something because we recognize it as the same as something we have already perceived, experienced, imagined, or remembered. We understand the object encountered as a representation of a pre-existing Idea (in the Platonic sense). Therefore, knowledge gained via common sense is reliant on some prior experience, making common sense temporally focused on the past. Such knowledge forecloses the present and the future by not allowing us to encounter the particularities of the object before us. This ultimately limits our thinking to predictable patterns of recognition and reduces our world to one of semblance rather than difference.

Good sense also functions to contain difference, however, rather than being secured by recognition it establishes itself in prediction (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 225). Good sense moves temporally from the past to the present and anticipates the future based on the past. It gathers knowledge by moving away from the particularity of a specific event towards a synthesized generality of events. In this way it moves from the remarkable to the ordinary (225). Even though good sense is not founded on recognition it draws on the similarities established by common sense, and thus, continues to confine us to an image of thought structured by representation and semblance rather than difference. Put another way, the image of thought,
constructed by both common and good sense, limits difference through recognition and the reproduction of the same. It produces a copy or an image derived from the way that common opinions relate to how things are in the world (Lawlor in Protevi 577). This kind of image, derived from a pre-conceived idea of the world, cannot produce difference or the new. Instead it requires a continual reproduction of the already known.

Ultimately, Deleuze wants to find a method of thinking that does not rely on this established image of thought. He wants to “think difference in itself, independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* xi). However, to think difference in itself goes against the dominant understanding of difference, which paradoxically establishes difference based on similarity. Things are understood to be different from one another based on something that they share in common, or the extent to which they can be identified “under the identity of a common genus” (de Beistegui in Protevi 151). For example, a tree and a flower can be different from one another because we are able to acknowledge that they both belong to the same category of plant. A tree, however, cannot be “different from”, but is simply “other to” a rock. This is because these two things do not share a common kind: one is plant and the other mineral. The otherness existing between the tree and the rock does not allow us to understand them as different. Instead it establishes an alterity between the two objects. Difference and alterity must be understood as distinct concepts: “the former presupposes the unity of a kind, and so is only ever specific (it specifies a genus), where as the latter indicates pure heterogeneity, of which, strictly speaking there is nothing to say” (152). Within this schema identity, or that which is the same, takes primacy and defines a thing in its essence. Difference provides access to a particular quality of
the thing in question, but is always secondary and is not necessary to define the thing or concept. Therefore, difference exists, but it is never enough to define a thing.

All of this is useful in our consideration of representation because, like difference, representation is typically understood to provide access to qualities of things, but is unable to provide contact with the thing itself. This is ultimately Plato’s point in regards to the “dangers” of representational practices: they distance us from the thing itself. However, in wanting to understand difference in itself, Deleuze strives to illustrate that difference is the ground on which reality, which we take to be stable and permanent, is ultimately established (de Beistegui in Protevi 152). Difference therefore is not the distinguishing of something from something else, but it is “something which distinguishes itself– and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 8). The example Deleuze provides is of lightning: “Lightning distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground” (8). In this way difference can be understood as a form of pure movement that does not have a determinable beginning or end.

The example of lightning distinguishing itself, but continuing to remain within the context of the sky, points to the significance of paradox in our understanding of thinking the new. In his desire to understand difference in itself, to think outside, or beyond the image of thought constituted by common and good sense, Deleuze argues (as Derrida and Foucault also do) that thinking must begin from paradoxa (Logic of Sense 74-81, Difference and Repetition 227). Thought must start with paradox because it is in the paradox that thought faces its limits:

Each faculty is unhinged, but what are the hinges if not the form of a common sense which causes all the faculties to function and converge? Each one, in its own order and
on its own account, has broken the form of common sense which kept it within the empirical element of *doxa* [...] Rather than all the faculties converging and contributing to a common project of recognizing an object, we see divergent projects in which, with regard to what concerns it essentially, each faculty is in the presence of that which is its ‘own’. Discord of the faculties, chain of force and fuse along which each confronts its limit. (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 141)

And it is therefore at the limit of recognition—the dispersion of representation, the site of the fundamental encounter—that we may begin to think.

At this point we may begin to draw connections between thinking and theatricality. If, following Sarrazac, we understand theatricality to be a site of paradox then theatricality is a force that moves us to the limit of recognition and has the potential to open us to thought. In the quotations cited at the beginning of this chapter Toni Dove and Marie Brassard both gesture towards this characteristic of theatricality, a characteristic that can be found in their own artistic practices. Dove and Brassard both claim that their work establishes a framework that allows for the possibility of an encounter to occur. Dove seeks to establish a site where people may “explore an idea” (Jennings np). And in her performances she strives to provide spectators with “a place to think from” (Jennings np). Similarly, Brassard suggests that the goal of the performance “is not to make an interpretation in total realism; rather, it is to have the strength – and the ability – to suggest that something will blossom in the mind of the audience after the play is over” (qtd. in Halferty 25). Remarkable here is the positioning of the theatre artist as an architect for the production of thinking, rather than being the creator of a particular representation. The goal of this project, then, is to come to understand how theatricality produces this space for thinking—a space that is oriented towards the future, rather than a space of representation that is secured by the past and the already known. It is in the space of the paradox, the space of thinking, where the theatre troubles itself. It also, potentially, troubles us by
constructing a space where an encounter may occur and thinking may begin outside the established image of thought.

**Theatricality’s Ambiguity**

Theatricality is frequently employed as both a metaphor and a critical concept. It is also used in different and often contradictory ways. In the introduction to *Theatricality* (2003) Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait provide an etymology for theatricality as a way to counteract how the term has become “comprehensive of all meanings yet empty of all specific sense” (1). The editors argue that theatricality is closely aligned, though distinct from, the concepts of mimesis, anti-theatricalism, *theatrum mundi*, metatheatre, and ritual (16). They are also cognizant that performativity is often “confused and sometimes conflated” with these same concepts. Even though these concepts point to elements of both theatricality and performativity, they ultimately fail to define either (16).

Davis and Postlewait are cautious of the supposed “global reach” of critical concepts like performance and performativity. They claim that performance studies, like semiotics before it, has attempted to establish itself as a “foundational, interdisciplinary field of study” and that theatricality, as a critical concept in its own right, has had its place in this process. Theatricality’s place has been to be positioned as “an essential quality of heightened communication or as an organizing term for a host of stage nomenclature, connoting the conscious arrangement of behavior and effect” (Davis and Postlewait 33). This positioning of theatricality functions to deprive it of critical purchase and leaves performativity as the favored critical tool.

Even though performativity has gained currency in contemporary discourse it is important to outline where and how theatricality is used. In a footnote to his article “Metaphors of Spectacle: Theatricality, Perception and Performative Encounters in the Pacific” Christopher Blame outlines what he identifies as the four phases of the current debate regarding theatricality.
These phases include: Erving Goffman’s sociological use of theatre metaphors to describe conscious and unconscious social behavior; Milton Singer and Clifford Geertz’s use of theatrical terminology in the analysis of cultural phenomena; poststructuralism’s philosophical suspicion of the theatrical as outlined by Timothy Murray in his collection of philosophical writings on theatricality, *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*; and the growing perception that processes and events are ‘staged’ for presentation in televisu images. These four discursive sites illustrate the diverse, and potentially contradictory, ways that theatricality is commonly incited. What becomes clear is that “theatricality functions ubiquitously and contradictorily” (Jackson, “Proper Objects” 189).

Glenn McGillivray comes to this same conclusion, however, he maintains that theatricality’s lack of specificity is what makes it a valuable critical concept.

For the purposes of this project I situate my reading of theatricality in relation to the work of Josette Féral, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Samuel Weber. Although the work of these three theorists does not always work harmoniously it provides a productive space for examining theatricality. Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber each theorize theatricality as a force moving us towards an experience of disruption—a cleft, crisis, cut. This understanding is significant to my argument for theatricality as a disruptive force that, rather than providing us with the recognizable, pushes us to the threshold of the unrecognizable, and forces us to think

Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber’s theorizations of theatricality can all be contextualized by the cultural crisis, experienced within language, at the end of the nineteenth century. Féral, and Fischer-Lichte in particular, note that at this time language was challenges as the dominant semiotic system. It was challenged because it seemed to fail at communicating the complexities of modern life. Unable to capture the ambiguities and nuances of experience, the rigid structure
of language seemed to quell other forms of expression. It was therefore important to find new ways to communicate; ways that would better express the experiences of modern life. Fischer-Lichte argues that, within the theatre, this crisis resulted in the “retheatricalization of theatre”, which was an attempt at deconstructing the semiotic systems used in Western culture as a means of potentially opening up possible solutions (“From Theatre” 98). The retheatricalization of the theatre manifested itself as a turn away from the text and a movement towards the prominence of the performing body. Féral notes that with the crisis of language the “text was no longer able to guarantee the theatricality of the stage” (“Theatricality” 94). The derogation of the text brought the body to the fore and positioned it as the primary signifying element within the theatre. This in turn permitted the body to function as a securer of theatricality (94). Fischer-Lichte and Féral, both, chart these changes in theatrical production through the artistic work of Richard Wagner, Edward Gordon Craig, Georg Fuchs, Max Reinhardt, Nikolai Evreinov, and Vsevolod Meyerhold.

The implication of this shift, from the primacy of the text to the primacy of the body, is evident in Roland Barthes pronouncement that theatricality is “theatre-minus-text” it is “a destiny of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument” (“Baudelaire’s Theatre” 26). Although Barthes does not banish the text completely his assertion distances theatricality from being an implicit element of a particular text, and moves towards an understanding of theatricality as being allied with corporeal expression. Theatricality thus arises from the body of the actor in his “attempts to transform the reality that surrounds him” (Féral, “Theatricality” 99). The actor and her body are both “the producer of theatricality and the channel though which it passes” (Fischer-Lichte, “From Theatre 100). The focus of modern theatre therefore shifts from language to the body, which produces a change in “the tendency
towards clarity in signs of acting to a tendency towards ambiguity” (“From Theatre” 100). This change ultimately produces a shift in how we read the semiotic systems of the theatre: “they no longer serve a representational function but an expressive and relational function instead” (102). This is a key point to for my consideration of theatricality: the movement from reading the theatre’s signs as representational, or through the faculty of recognition, towards a reading of them as relational, opens a space for thinking about how the theatre’s signs may be understood in terms of difference rather than similarity. Since thought arises from the difference inherent to the paradox, I argue, that the ambiguity of the expressive and relational sign constructs intensities of affect that bring forth the unrecognizable, and have the potential to move us towards thought.

**Theatricality’s Relation to the Body and Technology**

Barthes’, reading Baudelaire, suggests that it is something in the “actor’s disturbing corporeality” that moves us to read the body on stage as a sign of ambiguity. The ambiguity that arises from reading the performing body is rooted in the performing body’s inherent “artificiality”. This artificiality emerges from the fact that the body exists both inside and outside the semiological systems of the theatre (Barthes, “Baudelaire’s Theatre” 26). The body on stage exists both as a living body and as a sign of something other. This duality haunts the performing body and may ultimately drive it to betray itself. Féral argues that: “[The body] is a locus continually threatened by a certain inadequacy, by faults, by a certain lack. By definition, it is imperfect; as matter it is vulnerable” (“Theatricality” 100). The body, constituted to a certain extent by theatricality, cannot be understood as a totalizing whole. It is always already divided and it is continuously slipping from our grasp.

In the introduction to his collection of essays on contemporary French thinking about theatricality, *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, Timothy Murray suggests that theatricality is presented as “an unbalanced, non
representative force that undermines the coherence of the subject” (3). It is a force that works to destabilize the subject-object dichotomy. This destabilization is exemplified by the performing body, situated on stage as both, and neither, the subject and the object. Foucault argues that it is the dichotomy between the subject and object that sustains the mimetic paradigm “of a central and founding subject to which events occur while it deploys meaning around itself; and of an object that is a threshold and point of convergence for recognizable forms and the attributes we affirm” (Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum” 224). Murray, reading Foucault in relation to the other contemporary French thinkers, argues that what exists at the core of theatricality is “the ambivalent pathos evoked by the divisions of mimesis and their profound turn of subject and socius against themselves” (Murray, “Digital Baroque” 267-268). This turning of the subject and socius against themselves produces a space where “mimesis forcefully displays the painful divisions internal to representation and to the self” (267-268). Furthermore, the theater and performance provide a site for the “wrenching display” of this internal division (267-268). Theatricality, therefore, produces a kind of ambivalence towards the signs of representation intrinsic to it, including the body. It troubles them. It signals a cut, which is inherent to both the processes of representation and to the self. This cut unsettles our sense of identity, or sameness, and opens us to difference. Understood in these terms theatricality circles back to the claim made in the introduction that: the theatre, in becoming theatre, troubles itself. Theatricality troubles the processes of recognition and identity by which the theatre is produced.

In both theoretical and material practice, technology may be situated as an element that allows us to understand and explore the divisions that occur within the processes of representation and that are ultimately created by this force I am calling theatricality. While he recognizes the shift from text to body described by Féral and Fischer-Lichte, Samuel Weber is
the more explicit in his consideration of the role of technology in our experience of theatricality.

For Weber, there is a necessary connection between our thinking about the body and our understanding of technology. There is also a connection between our thinking about theatricality and our thinking about technology. These connections become evident in Weber’s reading of Benjamin’s interpretation of gesture in Brecht’s Epic theatre. For Benjamin, one of the primary characteristics of Epic theatre is gesture. However, according to Weber Epic theatre is not only gestural, “[I]t is citational. It renders gestures citable” (Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* 44). This does not mean that a gesture may simply be copied or quoted. Rather, Weber explains that “to cite” also means to arrest movement (he give the example of receiving of a traffic citation). Therefore, the gesture of Epic theatre is arresting. It “interrupts and suspends […] the intentional-teleological-narrative progression toward a meaningful goal and thereby opens us the possibility of a different kind of space” (46).

When understood as interruption the gesture puts into question the experience of the body as a continuous entity. Even though the gesture is bound to the body it is not reducible to it. In this way the gesture is connected to, but distinct from the body that produces it. Weber suggests that Benjamin’s notion of the “citable gesture” expresses an experience of the body “not simply as a continuous medium or entity, but as the possibility of an imperfect, disjointed machine” (*Theatricality as Medium* 48). By invoking the citability of gesture as a factor in contemporary theatricality, Weber calls to our attention to the fact that the body is something other than an organic whole. Moreover, he argues, “it is against this context of the transformation of place and body through electronic media that the renewed significance of theater and the theatrical is to be sought” (48). Weber’s discussion of gesture as interruption begins to articulate how the body and technology are both implicated in a discussion of theatricality. Moreover, his outlining of the
relationship between bodies, technology, and theatricality, facilities an understanding of technology as a conceptual model, rather than simply a set of particular tools. This is significant for this project because my focus is how technology may be used as a conceptual model for an analysis of theatricality, rather than on how specific technological tools are employed by the selected artists.

Three essays by Martin Heidegger further frame my thinking about technology as a conceptual model: *Question Concerning Technology* (1949), *The Age of the World Picture* (1938), and *Origin of the Work of Art* (1936). Even though these essays were written in the mid-twentieth century they are still relevant to our thinking about technology and art because they provide the foundation on which more recent thinking has been built. While distinct in their individual arguments, these three essays illustrate a significant interrelation between technology, thought, representation, and artistic practice. They provide a useful critique of representation that not only paves the way for Deleuze’s critique of representation, but also helps to illustrate how technology, representation, and art are mutually constituted.

For Heidegger, the purpose of philosophy is to inquire about the essence of a thing. It is to come to understand what a thing is and to be able to know a thing in its thingness. Since he is interested in coming to understand the essence of things he does not focus his discussion of technology on its utility. He is not interested in thinking about technology as particular tools and he argues that the tools we encounter are “not equivalent to the essence of technology” (Heidegger, “Technology” 287). In fact, “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological” (287). Heidegger describes the essence of technology, its thingness, as a bringing forth, or a mode of revealing. Technology is a mode of production; it refers to the specific ways
that things are brought into presence in the world. Heidegger arrives at this understanding by examining the etymology of the Greek term *technē*.

*Technikon* means that which belongs to *technē*. We must observe two things with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that *technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belong to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poetic. The other thing that we should observe with regard to *technē* is even more important. Form earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words are terms for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up. As an opening up it is a revealing. (294-295)

What becomes apparent in this etymology is that technology is not simply a means to an end or a set of specific tools. It is a particular orientation to the world. Furthermore, technology is not the only kind of orientation to world. Art, and more specifically poetry, are other modes of opening up or revealing the world.

The complication that Heidegger notes, however, is that technology does not present itself as a means of revealing. Instead, it presents itself as ‘enframing’, or standing reserve. It appears as an object to be put to use, and for this reason technology is commonly viewed through its utility or its ability to achieve a particular goal. According to Heidegger, this focus on the instrumentality of technology reduces our engagement with the world and obscures technology’s essence as a revealer of truth. To circumvent this complication Heidegger argues that “essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art” (Heidegger, “Technology” 317). Hence, the question concerning technology is one that inherently implicates aesthetics. The relationship between technology and aesthetics is evident in Heidegger’s etymology of *technē*, and he further draws connections between the two
when he argues that artistic practice (*poiēsis*) may help to navigate the dangers that conceal the essence of technology (317).

Heidegger understands art to be a practice that, like technology, organizes and reveals the world to us. The artist, however, does not present, or enframe, the world as ‘standing reserve’. Rather, the work of art—in conjunction with the artist, the tools used for creation, and the spectator—produces a ‘worlding’ that does not simply represent or symbolize the material world we live in, but creates a new world unto itself. Heidegger, therefore, argues that the work of art reveals “the becoming and happening of truth” (Heidegger, “Origin” 183). Furthermore, it is for this reason that art may bring us closer to an understanding of technology in itself.

Heidegger’s shift from thinking about technology as instrumentality towards thinking about technology as a means of engaging and organizing the world is useful for this project because it provides a means to critically examine the technological characteristics of theatre, rather than focusing on particular technological tools. Of course, the tools themselves are important, and will be considered, but they do not, in themselves, necessarily help us to understand the significance of their presence. Moreover, I find Heidegger’s challenge to representational thinking, established in his understanding of art, to be useful for engaging the larger question presented in this project regarding the place of thought in our experience of the theatre.

In my dealing with technology and its relationship to theatricality I do not intend to suggest that somehow the use of technology, or the idea of the technological, produces what we experience to be theatricality. Furthermore, I do not intend to suggest that technology itself has created radical transformations within the theatre. In fact, I am skeptical of such claims and will argue throughout this thesis that the use of technology, as a disruptive element in theatre
production, has primarily made accessible the inherent processes of the theatre itself rather than producing or transforming these processes in any significant way.

Writing on intermediality, Chiel Kattenbelt makes a similar argument. He notes that the theatre, as the art of the performer, does not require technology to create its worlds or to complicate the “closed continuum of the here and now” that is produced by the live performance. To support his claims Kattenbelt points to how the theatre has developed its own “techniques of interruption”—asides, changes in lighting, direct address—that circumvent or put into question the present-ness of the theatrical performance (“Theatre as the Art of the Performer” 35). The theatre clearly does not need technologies in order to question itself or draw attention to its processes of construction, however, technology has the potential to extend and complicate the theatre’s various modes of representation. This, in turn, may open the spectator to an “intensity of experience” and produce a “reflexivity of thought” (37). The use of technology in theatre, thus, becomes another device for framing and highlighting the processes of aesthetic perception. Moreover, the concept of intermediality provides a theoretical lens through which to consider how technology shapes and alters our perceptions of performance.

Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt situate intermediality as the:

meeting point in-between the performers, the observers, and the confluence of media involved in a performance at a particular moment in time. The intermedial inhabits a space in-between the different realities that the performance creates and thus it becomes, at the minimum, a tripartite phenomenon. Intermediality is a powerful and potentially radical force, which operates in-between performer and audience; in-between theatre, performance and other media; and in-between realities—with the theatre providing a staging space for the performance of intermediality. (12)

Since proposing intermediately as the space “in-between” the IFTR working group on intermediality in theatre and performance (the group to which Chapple and Kattenbelt are members) has come to view the idea of the in-between as being unsatisfactory for describing the operations of intermediality. This is primarily because in-between depends on a “negative
definition (neither this nor that but something in the middle)” (Nelson 17). The working group sees this negative definition as insufficient for creating specificity in our thinking about the relationships constructed within the intermedial space of the theatre. In the working group’s most recent publication, *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, Robin Nelson articulate how the group attempts “to mark the concrete effects of being definitively multiple and interrelational” and that they have come to see that “detailed attention needs to be paid to the range of ‘inters’ in ‘interrelationships’, differentiating them in their various functions and effects” (17). To do this they do not completely abandon the idea of “in-between”, but “have come to think that the compound ‘both—and’ better characterises contemporary performance culture” (17).

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck provides a useful framework for interrogating the “both—and” of intermediality in *Cyborg Theatre: corporeal/technological intersection in multimedia performance* (2012). Parker-Starbuck argues that cyborg theatre:

focuses on the metaphoric qualities of the cyborg, rather than overly straightforward combinations, and the potentials for both critical and possible mergings between the organic and non-organic, the body and technology. The on-stage interactions of bodies (enfleshed, breathing bodies) and technologies differentiates this space for the audience from the fixed already technologized gaze of film and TV. These unpredictable alliances and tensions make the cyborg theatre a unique testing ground for corporeal and technological configurations. (*Cyborg Theatre* 37)

What is useful about Parker-Starbuck’s approach to the intermediality she experiences in contemporary performance is her astute examination of the relationship between the performing body and the technologies (understood in the widest sense to incorporate both analogue and digital tools) that it encounters on stage. She is purposeful in upholding the body—“enfleshed and breathing”—as an integral site of theatrical performance. She works to situate the body, or more accurately, specific bodies—individually gendered, classed, raced, and otherwise categorized—as always already embedded and intertwined with “cultural and somatic notions of bodies, bodies that are understood not solely through the ideas filtered through them, not
overlooked or resisting disappearance, but bodies that, when subject-ed, emerge regardless to claim agency on stage, bodies that carry their own weight on stage amidst largely immersive technological landscapes” (46). For Parker-Starbuck the material body is not lost in its relationship to technology, in fact it is the body’s relationship to technology provides us with a productive point of entrance for coming to understand the material body, its relations, and capacities.

In his history of digital performance Steve Dixon cites Susan Broadhurst’s claim that, “[digital] technology’s most important contribution to art may well be the enhancement and reconfiguration of an aesthetic creative potential which consists of interacting with and reacting to a physical body not an abandonment of the body” (56, emphasis added). Both Broadhurst and Parker-Starbuck challenge the simple dichotomy that is often constructed between the human body and the machine. Moreover, Parker-Starbuck’s use of cyborg, as both a metaphor and a literal form of embodiment, allows her to examine how engagements with technology shift over time. The cyborg encapsulates conceptual fears about the intrusion of technology into and onto our living bodies, but it also encompasses the possibilities for new and productive relations to be established. This understanding of the body takes the fragmented and hybridized subject as a given, and it opens a place for a consideration of the Spinozist question that is repeated by Deleuze: “What can a body do?”⁹ Deleuze writes:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects or another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange action and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand Plateaus 257).

Similar to Heidegger’s shift away from thinking about technology simply as a set of tools the question of what a body can do rather than what a body is shifts our attention to the creative
potential of the body. The body is not understood as being the site of consciousness nor is it necessarily an entity determined biologically. Rather the question “what can the body do?” points us towards thinking about the connections and linkages that the body can make with other bodies (human and not), what transformations it can undergo, how it can accelerate or diminish its capacities. This is something that Parker-Starbuck identifies as significant to twentieth and early twenty-first century theatre, where we witness a shift from a simultaneous co-presence of performers and technologies on stage to an integration between performers and technologies (Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre* 4). This integration positions the body as an open and dynamic system of exchange as opposed to a self-contained and closed entity.

Understanding the body as an element in a complex system allows us to think through the relations constructed between bodies and technologies, and it also brings us back to the question of thought. In a discussion on the process of learning Deleuze argues that, “learning takes place not in the relation between a representation and an action (reproduction of the Same) but in the relation between a sign and a response (encounter with the Other)” (Difference and Repetition 22). Learning, like thinking, is not simple imitation. It is a response, a creative action incited by the relation, by an encounter between subject and object. As an encounter both learning and thought demand a body that is willing to *do with me* as opposed to doing as I do, a body that is “able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce” (23). For it is when bodies encounter and *do with* one another, and other objects, that we begin to learn. And furthermore, that we begin to think.

Ultimately, I hope that by considering the role that the relation between body and technology plays in our understanding of theatricality I will to be able to more fully consider how technology, as both materiality and philosophical concept, may open the body of the
performer and the spectator to intensities of experience or what Deleuze might call “the beginnings of thought”. At stake in this project is the possibility of coming to think of the theatrical event as a site of affective experience rather than meaning reproduction. It is a movement from thinking the theatrical in terms of representation and meaning to thinking the theatrical in terms of affect and sensation. Moreover, it is about thinking the theatrical as the site for the exploration of the creative potential of spectatorship or the way that our active participation with, and not passive reception of, theatre may move us to thought.

**Doings with Deleuze: Contextualizing the Use of Deleuze in This Project**

My desire for reading the theatrical in this way stems from my encounters with the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. These encounters have often left me disoriented and have forced me to think beyond the familiar. Moreover, these encounters have provided me with a framework to discuss, and attempt to make sense of, particular experiences that I have had in the theatre. These experiences, highlighted in the forthcoming chapters, are predominantly experiences of disorientation. They are moments when my own faculties seem to have become unhinged and I was taken to the limit of my own recognition. In these moments I have been unable to rely on either common or good sense to situate myself in relation to the given performance, and, therefore, they are moments where I have been forced to thought by an intensive or affective experience.

I am not the first to be interested in examining how Deleuze’s thought may be useful for considerations of theatre and performance. Laura Cull has pioneered a critical engagement between Deleuze’s thought, theatre, and performance theory. She argues that such an engagement arises from an affinity between Deleuze’s philosophical project and the broader concerns of performance studies. ¹⁰ Despite the affinities that Cull identifies performance scholars have been slow to adopt Deleuze’s thought as a critical tool for performance analysis.¹¹ The
reasons for the lack of attention to Deleuze’s work (specifically in the Anglo-American world) are multifaceted, and Cull suggests that they may be both geographic and institutional. However, this lack of attention to Deleuze’s work, especially in relation to the theatre, may also stem from the fact that even though his writings are full of references to diverse aesthetic practices, he rarely refers specifically to the theatre. In fact, Deleuze declares distaste for the theatre in an interview with Claire Parnet, stating that the theatre does not present him with a place for potential encounters. Furthermore, when Deleuze does write about the theatre, it is not with the most affirmative tone. For example, in his discussion of learning in *Difference and Repetition* he argues that “signs are deadly” because they hold us to a particular positioning and constrain us within similarity or representation (Deleuze 23). In the same paragraph he notes, “signs are the true elements of the theatre” (23). From this we may conclude that Deleuze’s frustration with the theatre has to do with its relation to representation—with its production and emission of signs. Therefore, Deleuze’s limited writing on theatre responds to the question of how to create signs that function outside of representation.

Deleuze’s only sustained writing on the theatre, *One Less Manifesto* (1979), is a short meditation on the work of Italian film and theatre director Carmelo Bene. Using examples from Bene’s theatrical practice Deleuze argues for the potential of the theatre to become a site of “continuous variation” (difference-in-itself, becoming), rather than a purely representational enterprise. In order to do this, Deleuze argues that we must find ways to, “break free of the situation of conflictual, official, and institutionalized representation”, furthermore we must, “account for the underground workings of a free and present variation” (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 253). For Deleuze, this means finding a way to create a ‘minor theatre’, or a theatre that places its own elements—language, space, bodies, costumes, props—in continuous
variation. This is a theatre where language, space, bodies, costumes, and props are constructed in such a way that they produce an experience of pure movement.

Bene’s productions provide Deleuze with examples of such a theatre. They achieve this by deducting “everything that would constitute an element of power, in language and in gestures, in the representation and in the represented” (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 245). This subtraction of power sets in motion a process of de-territorialization. It is a dismantling of the established order that opens a space for new relations to be constructed. Furthermore, it is a site where the movement of variation and becoming may occur. Ronald Bogue explains that Bene’s adaption of Richard III removes half of the original text and all of the male characters except for Richard. These alterations shift the emphasis of the plot from the role of state power to a tale of Richard’s own obsession with the remaining female characters: “As Richard and the women characters recite Shakespeare’s lines, the women engage in various seductive actions while Richard straps diverse prosetheses to his body and lurches in increasingly bizarre movements” (Bogue in Stivale, 138). Striped of his state power and identity Richard, the quintessential “man of war”, undergoes a transformation into other that disrupts the established hierarchies of power.

Bene disrupts established theatrical signs and presents a deterriorialization of representation by altering elements of the narrative and also in his staging. Of particular significance is his use of language and gesture. Deleuze observes that when Lady Anne announces, “you disgust me!” the performer playing this role must strive to capture all of the possible variations of this utterance therefore, “[i]t is hardly the same énoncé when uttered by a woman at war, a child facing a toad or a young girl feeling pity that is already consenting and loving […] Lady Anne will have to move through all these variables. She will have to stand erect like a woman warrior, regress to a childlike state, and return as a young girl—as quickly as
possible on a line of continuous variation” (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 246). The way that the performer moves through these different states of being produces what Deleuze identifies as “a line of continuous variation”. This line of continuous variation is like a sliding musical scale on which all notes exist both as singularities and as elements within a continuous whole. This is an open line of multiple (endless even) possibilities.

Bene produces continual variation through a reworking of the original text, the use of various vocal inflections and electronically altered sounds, and also through the use of gesture:

So it works in Salome: the apple being continually swallowed and spit up; costumes never ceasing to fall off and needing continually to be put back on; the stage props always useless rather than useful, as with the table that separates instead of supporting things—one must always surmount objects instead of using them. The same goes for S.A.D.E. (Bene’s Richard III) with the perpetually delayed act of copulation, and especially, with the Servant, who hinders and impedes himself in a continuous series of his own metamorphoses because he must not master his role as servant, and, at the beginning of Richard III, with Richard never ceasing to lose his balance, to totter, to slip from the dresses on which he leans. (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 248)

Significantly for this thesis, these methods allow Bene to construct the familiar in such a way that it is experienced as new. Bene therefore provides Deleuze with an example for the way that I am proposing we come to understand theatricality. I argue that theatricality is the force at work here, it is that which destabilizes the means of representation and opens us to continual variation, the new, and possibly the beginnings of thought. Therefore, while Deleuze, at first, may not seem the most obvious theorist for a discussion of theatre and theatricality, for this project his work is useful predominantly because of its radical critique of representation, its challenge to produce “within the work [of art or theatre] a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 8). For Deleuze it is a question of:

making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. This is the idea of a man of the theatre, the idea of
a director before his time. (8)¹⁵

Moreover, Deleuze’s work strives for a theorization of creation and the new. His work, with its emphasis on becoming rather than being, provides us with a means to radically rethink representation—a framework that, as we have seen, supports the production of theatricality and our thinking in its creation of signs.

**Navigating Deleuze’s Oeuvre: Textual Assemblages and Defining Concepts**

In approaching Deleuze we are faced with a conundrum: what do we do, not only with his highly diverse oeuvre, but also with his collaboration with psychiatrist, philosopher, and semiotician Felix Guattari.¹⁶ According to Ronald Bogue this is a “peculiar problem” that does not have easy answer (9). The co-authored texts have a distinctive style; the voices of the individual authors come together seamlessly and create a Deleuze-Guattari assemblage that is distinct from the individual style of either author. Furthermore, the co-authored texts incorporate and expand on ideas that are established in each of the author’s individual oeuvres making it difficult to distinguish between who is thinking and or saying what.¹⁷ Moreover, when each author returns to their own projects, after working in collaboration, they both refer to the co-authored texts as if they were their own.¹⁸ So, how do we deal with these texts? Bogue argues that he has “no choice but to treat Deleuze’s books and the Deleuze-Guattari volumes as constituents of a single body of work”(9). I see this as a productive move because it retains the spirit of the work as a whole. It provides continuity or a continual movement through the work, but it also opens a space for multiple readings, multiple becomings. Thus, following Bogue’s lead, I read Deleuze’s work, written both independently and collaboratively, as a single body of work.¹⁹

Deleuzian concepts have a way of resisting clear definition. They continually overlap and fold into one another. In fact, many of Deleuze’s concepts appear to be iterations of the same concept: difference in itself. The creation and use of a terminology that multiplies exponentially
needs to be read as part of Deleuze’s own methodological structure and it functions as a continual reminder of the significance of difference within his larger project. For while his concepts are indeed closely related, they differ from one another in subtle, but significant ways, which will become clear in the following attempt to define some of the key concepts used in this project.

**Becoming:** The concept of becoming helps to clarify and underscore Deleuze’s investigation of difference. Becoming is to be distinguished from being. Where being is traditionally understood as absolute and immutable, becoming is that which is constantly changing and in continual flux. Becoming provides Deleuze with a means of describing how being continually exhibits difference in itself. In other words, becoming is the continual internal self-differing of being that exemplifies how difference persists at the very foundation of our existence in the world. Becoming points to the fact that nothing simply is, rather everything becomes. And that as something becomes it continually differs from itself.

Becoming is a crucial concept within Deleuze’s ontology because, “if the primacy of identity is what defines a world re-presentation (presenting the same world once again), then becoming (by which Deleuze means ‘becoming different’) defines a world of presentations anew” (Stagoll in Parr 26). Becoming, therefore, helps us to think outside the image of thought, to move beyond continual representation and toward a creation of the new. Becoming is, in fact, closely connected to the idea of creation. Deleuze and Guattari write: “…becoming is creation” (*Thousand Plateaus* 106). This does not mean that becoming is oriented towards a particular end, goal or product. In fact, such totalizing results do not factor into the processes of becoming: “Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it
producing […] Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, ‘appearing’, ‘being’, ‘equaling’, or ‘producing’” (239).

While Deleuze’s references to becoming are numerous in his work with Felix Guattari, we are able to identify the mechanics of this complex concept if we turn to Deleuze’s theorization of time, outlined in *Difference and Repetition*. It is specifically in his conceptualization of the third synthesis of time we are able to understand the ways that various becomings manifest in the world. I would also argue that the third synthesis of time is useful in conceiving of the gap, or the in-between space that is produced by theatricality. I will return to this, but first I will briefly outline Deleuze’s conceptualization of the third synthesis of time.

Deleuze divides time into three passive syntheses (passive refers to the fact that these processes occur despite our full consciousness of them). The first synthesis, or the “living present”, can be understood as our common experience of time as a succession of present moments. The second synthesis is the experience of memory, or the passing of the present. The third synthesis may broadly be thought of as the time of the future, or the time of becoming. It does not revolve around recognition, or recollection, but of production of the new. It is the force driving us into the future and struggling to differentiate itself from both the past and the present.

James Williams notes that the third synthesis divides the present from the past and opens us a radically different future. This synthesis is therefore built on an ordering of time that is non-circular and is deeply connected to Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return. The separation or cut between the past and future opens space where nothing can be the same again because the all of the past is cut off from all of the future (Williams 103). Williams argues that it is because of this cut in time that the “third synthesis of time must be understood as the eternal return of
difference. Identities, or the same, from the past and the present, pass away forever, transformed by the return of that which makes them differ—Deleuze’s pure difference or difference in itself” (103). We can see here the connection between the third synthesis and Deleuze’s interest in difference in itself. The third synthesis helps us to account for the ways that difference manifests. The same passes away, cut off from the future by the third synthesis, and difference in itself eternally returns.

The question remaining is: how does this relate to our concern with theatricality? I have previously suggested that theatricality may be a site that opens us to difference. If we take this to be true, then the processes of becoming are intertwined with the processes of theatricality since becoming also opens us to the experience of difference. More than this, I am interested in exploring how the cut in time produced by the third synthesis may help us to account for the experience of the gap established within theatricality. As previously noted Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber all describe the establishment of a chasm within the experience of theatricality. For Féral it is a “cleft in quotation”, for Fischer-Lichte it is a space of ambiguity where the spectators are invited to “let their eyes wander”, and for Weber it is an experience of displacement or dislocation. How might we come to understand this space as a cut in time that shapes theatricality as a transformative experience, as an encounter with difference?

I am not the first to note the relationship between becoming and performance practice. Adrian Parr notes in *The Deleuze Dictionary* that the concept of becoming has been useful in articulating the changed relationship between artist, artwork, and viewer that was brought about with the emergence of performance art (30). She argues that it has been significant primarily because “it allows us to consider art in terms of a transformative experience as well as conceptualise the process of subjectification performance art sustains” (30). While my current
project does not deal specifically with performance art I would suggest that many of the same concerns arise within the framework of theatre production, and more specifically that they arise within the contemporary productions under consideration in this project. The concept of becoming is therefore useful in describing processes of transformation that are implicit in the act of performance itself.

**Affect:** Closely related to becoming is the concept of affect. Affect may be understood as the force that stimulates or produces various becomings; in fact, in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari argue that affects are becomings (256). In the translation notes to *A Thousand Plateaus* Brian Massumi writes:

> AFFECT/AFFECTTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (*sentiment* in Deleuze and Guattari). *L’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affection* (Spinoza’s *affection*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies. (xvi)

There are two significant things to note. First, affect is not a personal experience of feeling or emotion. It is “prepersonal” meaning that it does not arise from within the subject, but rather it originates outside the subject and forces her to engage with that which is other than herself. In this way Deleuze positions affect as a force that destabilizes rather than reifies the subject; affect “throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (240). It is through this “reeling” that we come to the second point of note. Affect is the transformation that takes place when different bodies come into contact with one another. It is therefore a marker of the changes in intensity that arise from the destabilization of the subject. Fundamental to this process is the body. The changes that occur within the body either increase or diminish the body’s ability to act in the world. In this way affect corresponds to the power that any given body has to perform in the world. This power
continually increases or decreases depending on the relations that are established, the becomings that are engaged.

For the purposes of this project I am interested in the affects produced by the various bodily relations constructed within the theatrical event. More specifically I am interested in how the affects created here function as forces that increase our capacities to make new relations, to engage new sites of becoming, to think and sense the new.

There is another dimension of affect that is significant to this project and this is the relation that Deleuze and Guattari establish between affect and art. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy, science and art are three primary ways that we deal with the chaos of life. As a means of organizing and understanding the world philosophy creates concepts, science establishes functions, and art produces affects and percepts. In this way artistic practice creates what Deleuze calls “blocs of sensations”. These sensations do not carry meaning; they are not representational. Rather they are sensed through experience. However, the affects and percepts created by art are distinct from affections and perceptions in that affects and percepts are, as noted above, “prepersonal” arising outside the subject. Claire Colebrook notes that: “Affections are what happen to us (disgust, or the recoil of the nostrils at the smell of cheese); perceptions are what we receive (odour, or the smell itself). Affects and percepts, in art, free these forces from the particular observers or bodies who experience them” (21-22). To illustrate this depersonalization of affect Colebrook provides an example:

The twentieth-century English playwright, Harold Pinter (1930--), was a great creator of the affect of ‘boredom’. This is achieved by long pauses in the dialogue, by characters who exchange questions (rather than questions and answers), by interactions that seem to have no reference or direction. It is not his characters who are bored, nor are his plays boring; but they convey the boredom of modern bourgeois life. Boredom is created as a general affect. We are presented with ‘boredom’ –not bored persons or a boring play. It is this creation of impersonal affects that enables art to dissect the order of everyday experience. (23)
We can begin to see that affect, similar to how I have been characterizing theatricality, has the power to free the forces of affectation and perception from their recognizable and expected origins (23). In other words affect disrupts the associations that we continually make over and over again. And this disruption carries the power to mobilize creative becomings, to mobilize thought.

Virtual/Actual: Significant to his critique of representation is Deleuze’s insistence on the interaction between the virtual and the actual. Deleuze does not understand there to be a world (the actual) that can be accurately represented by images (the virtual). Rather, life is the continual interaction between the actual and the virtual. Deleuze draws his conceptualization of this relationship from Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* and uses the relation between the virtual/actual instead of the relation between the possible/real. Deleuze distances himself from the possible because he understands possibility as something constructed retrospectively from the image of the already real. The possible can, therefore, never produce something entirely new because it is always produced in relation to a real, which already is. In *Difference and Repetition* he writes:

> The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore ‘realisation’. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself. (211)

For Deleuze, the virtual, therefore, does not refer to the artificial or the simulated. It is not a means of describing virtual reality in the sense of a reality that is completely outside the one in which we currently exist. Virtually is immanent to our experience of the world. And its immanent existence helps to account for the difference that Deleuze positions as central to our
experience of life. Daniel W. Smith comments that Deleuze substitutes the possible/real opposition for, “what he calls virtual-actual complementarity: the virtual is constituted through and by difference (and not identity); and when it is actualised, it therefore differs from itself, such that every process of actualisation is, by its very nature, the production of the new, that is, the production of a new difference” (Smith 6). We can here begin to see that the virtual is connected to the concepts of difference, becoming and affect. James Williams notes that Deleuze’s third synthesis of time, the time of becoming, helps to, “explain how the virtual and actual are necessarily related but without being reducible to one another” (Williams 104). And Simon O’Sullivan argues that the virtual may be understood as the space of affects (129).

The virtual may therefore be thought of as that which is yet to come; or that which may, at one time, become actualized through the processes of becoming. On the other hand the actual refers to elements in the world that have already undergone the process of actualization. We often think of the connection between the virtual and the actual as one of a direct line from virtuality to actuality, from the potential of someone or something to the actualization of that thing. While this movement from virtuality to actuality is valid Deleuze also speaks of a counter-actualization. Counter-actualization is a movement towards accessing the pre-individual singularities—affects—that exist prior to actualization. It is a doubling back, not to that which was, but to a different future. I would argue that this process of counter-actualization might occur in performance. In “One Less Manifesto” Deleuze argues that in its most productive form the theatre works by subtraction. We may think of this subtraction as a kind of counter-actualization. It is an attempt to move from the actualized state of affairs towards the virtual. In Logic of Sense Deleuze explores the idea of counter-actualization in relation to the event (a concept I will outline in the next section) and the actor. He writes:
[...] there is an actor’s paradox; the actor maintains himself in the instant in order to act out something perpetually anticipated and delayed, hoped for and recalled. The role played is never that of a character; it is a theme (the complex theme or sense) constituted by the components of the event, that is, by the communicating singularities effectively liberated from the limits of individuals and persons. The actor strains his entire personality in a moment which is always further divisible in order to open himself up to the impersonal and pre-individual role. The actor is always acting out the other roles when acting one role. [...] The actor thus actualizes the event, but in a way which is entirely different from the actualization of the event in the depth of things. Or rather, the actor redoubles this cosmic, or physical actualization, in his own way, which is singularly superficial—but because of it more distinct, trenchant and pure. Thus, the actor delimits the original, disengages from it an abstract line, and keeps from the event only its contour and its splendor, becoming thereby the actor of one’s own events—a counter actualization. (150, original emphasis)

The image of the actor helps to clarify the process of counter-actualization for in that we see the actual: the role produced from a written script. We also witness the process of actualization: the actor embodying and presenting the role on stage. At the same time however something else is happening, the actor “delimits the original, disengages from it an abstract line”, or as stated in “One Less Manifesto”, the actor moves “as quickly as possible on a line of continuous variation” (246). In this movement the actor not only actualizes the role in the present, but:

[...]there is the future and the past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present, being free of the limitations of a state of affairs, impersonal and pre-individual, neutral, neither general nor particular…It has no other present that that of the mobile instant which represents it, always divided into past-future, and forming what must be called the counter-actualization. (Logic of Sense 151)

Counter actualization is therefore the movement between the virtual and the actual. It is the movement of affects, a process of becoming, an opening to difference in itself.

The virtual/actual relationship is significant to this project for two primary reasons. First, because the project is concerned with the use of and relations to technology a discussion of the virtual is necessary. This is because technology and virtuality have a distinct relationship in contemporary culture and this relationship—the idea that technology produces a virtual or
simulated reality outside the reality of our lived experience—is challenged by Deleuze’s conceptualization of the virtual. In fact, I would suggest that Deleuze’s conceptualization of the virtual provides a much more nuanced and interesting account of our experience with technology, and I will utilize his concept of the virtual as means of exploring the theatre as a site for the production of the thought. Moreover, I will argue that theatricality itself is wrapped up in the process of the actualization of the virtual and possibly more significantly in the process of counter-actualization. I see this as significant for thinking the new because the process of counter-actualization has the potential to disrupt the actualized state of affairs.

**Event:** Event is a concept that will be taken up directly in the fourth chapter of this thesis. However, as a prominent concept in Deleuze’s thought it is useful to make some general statements now regarding how Deleuze conceives of the event.

Events are often thought to be unique occurrences, happenings contained by a particular context that alter the current state of affairs. In contrast Deleuze posits that everything is event, however some events demonstrate their event-like qualities better than others (Williams in Stivale 80-81). An event is a process. It is concerned with communication, however it does not provide a direct understanding of an object or an engage in the exchange of information (ibid). An event is the confluence of various becomings. And for Deleuze all events are connected; their interconnectivity brings them together in one great Event (*The Logic of Sense* 152). The event therefore may be thought in relation to the production of the new because it marks a process of becoming, the emergence of affect, and the movements of actualization and counter-actualization.

For Deleuze the event is comprised of a double structure. It is actualized in a specific state of affairs and has a “pure” or virtual dimension:
With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization, the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, or a person, the moment we designate by saying 'here, the moment has come'. The future and the past of the event are only evaluated with respect to this definitive present, and from the point of view of that which embodies it. But, on the other hand, there is the future and past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present, being free of the limitations of a state of affairs, impersonal, pre-individual, neutral […]. (Logic of Sense 151)

We have seen this double structure in Deleuze’s example of the actor. The event is first actualized in the material world as a state of affairs or what is. In the case of our example the event actualized is performance of a role, derived from a written script, and performed by an actor on stage. The event though is also the simultaneous force of counter-actualization, or the abstracting of the event from the state of affairs. Actualization may be thought of as moving us away from the creative potential of the event while counter-actualization moves to provide the event a new energy, a new life. We can see here that the event is intimately connected with the concepts of the virtual and the actual. In a sense the event is experience of the interplay between these two occurrences.

**Repeating The Path Differently**

Thinking often eludes us. Thinking happens in spite of us. Theatricality remains. Theatricality slips. Our bodies give way. Our bodies connect. Our bodies persist. Technology alters our experience of the world. Technology is our experience of the world. We enter the theatre and take our seat. Our body and mind engage. The curtain rises. Bodies are placed before us. What do we make of these figures before us? How can our relationship to the bodies and images set before us be understood as an affective encounter: an encounter that moves us from thinking the theatrical in terms of representation and meaning, to thinking the theatrical in terms of affect and sensation—an encounter that moves us to thought.
Notes to Chapter One

1 Leonard Lawlor notes that even though Deleuze identifies Heidegger as the one who instituted thought as a key question for twentieth century continental philosophy Husserl had actually initiated this move prior: “Husserl had already turned philosophy towards thought when he defined consciousness as a correlation between noeis and noema (literally, between thinking and thought-object” (Lawlor in Protevi 576). For more on the relationship between Deleuze and Heidegger’s understanding of thought see: Dillet, “What is Called Thinking?: When Deleuze Walks along Heideggerian Paths” (2013).

2 Deconstruction brings to light specific ‘undeciables’. These are words, or things, that disturb dualistic thinking. Specific examples provided by Derrida include: ghost, pharmakon, and hymen. Undecieables gesture toward an undecidablity that exists at the heart of the decision. Thought requires an engagement with undecidablity because decisions cannot be made without a “leap beyond all prior preparations” (Derrida, The Gift of Death 77).

3 For Foucault’s reading of Blanchot see: Foucault, Foucault/Blanchot (1987).

4 Leonard Lawlor notes, “by starting from para-doxa (literally, that which is against opinion), the French philosophy of the 1960s (despite being an anti-Platonism) remains faithful to the Platonic inspiration for philosophy, which consists in escaping from doxa” (Lawlor in Protevi 577).

5 Fischer-Lichte writes: “The semiotic systems and their interrelation- ships are restructured in several respects. First, the relationship between the semiotic systems is fundamentally changed: language is excluded and the dominance shifts to the materiality of the body. Secondly, the relationship between the semiotic levels is altered: the semantic level is no longer dominant; the focus shifts to the sign bodies, on the one hand, to the materiality of the theatrical signs employed and to the pragmatic level, on the other. Thirdly, the principles underlying and ruling the combination of signs are changed: instead of linearity, causality, logic (of action), or psychology (of dramatic figures), rhythm governs the combination of the theatrical signs chosen.” (Semiotics 102). For more on rhythm and theatricality see Bruce Barton, “Bullet-Time, Becoming, and the sway of Theatricality: Performance and Play in The Matrix” (2012).

6 Interestingly we can draw comparisons here to the arguments surrounding mimesis. For Plato mimesis was that which produced an inferior copy of an object’s essence and therefore obscured truth and authenticity. While on the other hand, for Aristotle mimesis was cast in a more positive manner and accounted for the success of representation to provide a conduit for an ideal reality. Technology, like mimesis, may work in two directions: one of concealment (Plato) and one of revealing (Aristotle).

7 Kattenbelt’s essay, “Theatre as the Art of the Performer and the Stage of Intermediality” is found in a collection of essays on intermediality and performance put together by the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) working group on intermediality in theatre and performance. Since the publication of Intermediality in Theatre and Performance (2006) the group has continued their investigation and has published another collection of essays entitled
Mapping Intermediality in Theatre Performance (2010). Between the two collections there is clear development in the current discourse around intermediality in performance. While I will be drawing on some of the most recent thinking, I see that Kattenbelt’s 2006 discussion of theatre’s intermediality is useful for this project because of its concern with theatrical works that occur within more or less traditional Western theatre spaces. The 2010 collection adds much to the discussion of intermediality as experienced in less traditional performance spaces. Robin Nelson notes in his Introduction to Mapping Intermediality in Theatre Performance:

In part, we remain interested in performances staged in building-based theatres with such an established spatial organisation but which also embrace new media technologies. It is in this context that Kattenbelt’s notion of theatre as a hypermedium that stages other mediums, remains particularly important. But digital culture has generated a widespread interactive engagement and playfulness in environments which require a fundamental reconfiguration of temporal and spatial relationships, since they do not adhere entirely to Kattenbelt’s defining characteristic of theatre as ‘the social meeting between performer and spectator in the live presence of the here and now’. (18-19)

For his part Kattenbelt has also further developed his definition of intermediality to refer to:

co-relations between different media that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other, which in turn leads to a refreshed perception. Intermediality assumes a co-relation in the actual sense of the word, that is to say a mutual affect. Taken together, the redefinition of media co-relations and a refreshed perception resulting from the co-relationship of media means that previously existing medium specific conventions are changed, which allows for new dimensions of perception and experience to be explored […] Intermediality assumes an in-between space – «an inter» – from which or within which the mutual affects take place. (Kattenbelt, “Intermediality in Theatre and Performance” 25-26)

While Kattenbelt still refers to a space ‘in-between’ the new emphasis on ‘co-relations’ and mutual influence is useful in thinking about and describing the interaction that exists within the intermedial framework.

For background on how Deleuze and Guattari utilize Spinoza in their configuration of the body see: Buchanan, “The Problem of the Body in Deleuze and Guattari, Or, What Can a Body Do?” (1997).

Following the comments of performance studies founder Richard Schechner, Cull suggests that Deleuze’s project and performance studies share a shift in “focus from thinking in terms of discrete objects and subjects, towards a concern with processes, relations and happenings” (Cull Deleuze and Performance 3). Cull also acknowledges the tension between the terms ‘theatre’ and ‘performance’. She briefly outlines the ways that performance studies both includes and distances itself from the theatre. She argues that the collection of articles in Deleuze and Performance is focused “on performance as it takes place in the arts” (Cull, Deleuze and Performance 3).
While people have been slow to adopt Deleuze’s philosophical framework, performance scholars have readily turned to Deleuze’s contemporary, Jacques Derrida. Derrida’s deconstructive methodologies have, arguably, played a significant role in shaping theatre and performance theory. For examples of Derrida’s influence on theatre and performance studies see: Auslander, ““Just Be Yourself” Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory.” (1995); and Fuchs, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Rethinking Theatre After Derrida.” (1985).

Cull notes the fact that, unlike Derrida, Deleuze did not travel significantly outside of France. Also, unlike Derrida, Deleuze did not teach or lecture in America. These factors may have slowed the dissemination of his ideas in the English-speaking world (Deleuze and Performance 20).

Deleuze’s lack of discussion on the theatre is interesting in light of the fact that his work critically engages a diverse set of other aesthetic processes (cinematic, literary, and visual) including: films by Alain Resnais, Sergei Eisenstein, and Louis Buñuel; the novels of Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Lewis Carroll; and the paintings of Paul Klee and Francis Bacon. Deleuze does have one essay that engages the theatre specifically: “One Less Manifesto”. The English translation of this essay can be found in Timothy Murray’s Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: the politics of theatricality in Contemporary French Thought (1997).

Gilles Deleuze from A to Z. Boutang, Pierre-André, Gilles Deleuze, and Claire Parnet. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2011. DVD.
Deleuze’s comments about the theatre can be found in the section C is for Culture.

This quote is taken from a section of Difference and Repetition in which Deleuze is speaking in regards to the work Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Deleuze sees these two men and beginning something new: “something completely new begins with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They no longer reflect on the theatre in the Hegelian manner. Neither do they set up a philosophical theatre. They invent an incredible equivalent of theatre within philosophy, thereby founding simultaneously this theatre of the future and a new philosophy” (Difference and Repetition 8). We see here the complex relation between theatre and philosophy that was discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

In the Dictionary of Continental Philosophy John Protevi, argues that Deleuze’s work may be divided into three key periods. The first period includes his work on individual philosophers including Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson (132). Protevi describes the second period as the period where Deleuze gained an independence of thought and “no longer expressed himself vicariously through commentary” (132). This independence of thought is found in publication of Difference and Repetition (1968) and The Logic of Sense (1969). The third period is characterized by Deleuze’s collaboration with Félix Guattari resulting in the publication of the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus (1972) and A Thousand Plateaus (1980). While Deleuze’s collaborative work has been used in many interdisciplinary studies, it is the individual work of Deleuze’s second period that has recently come to be seen as most significant. In his critical introductions to Deleuze’s work John Williams notes that Difference and Repetition may be seen as “the keystone for Deleuze’s work as a whole” (Williams 2) and that The Logic of Sense “pre-figures Deleuze’s later works with Félix Guattari and their wide-ranging social and
political pragmatic descriptions” (Williams 7). In fact it has been argued, namely in criticisms by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, that Deleuze’s collaborative work undercuts his individual work of the second period.

17 For Deleuze and Guattari this is, of course, an important methodological choice because it makes their writing perform the ideas that they are exploring. The co-authored works are a Deleuze-Guattari assemblage. They are the manifestation of a Deleuze becoming Guattari, Guattari becoming Deleuze.

18 This, again, is a performative move that exemplifies the complexities and fluidity of their ontology of becoming.

19 It is important to note that I am reading the co-authored volumes in light of the question of the thought that guides this project. Therefore some of the strong socio-political critiques presented in the co-authored volumes will not fully examined because these critiques exist beyond the scope of the current project. However, the implications of the broader socio-political critiques made in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* would be interesting to examine in a future project.

20 The first synthesis may be recognized as our common experience of time as a succession of contracted present moments that follow one another in a habitual manner. This is a linear time where the past converges on the present and pushes towards a future: “it goes from the past to the future in the present, thus from the particular to the general, thereby imparting direction to the arrow of time” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 71). The future of the living present is experienced as habitual. It is a future of expectations based on our previous experiences—the sun rose yesterday and today, I expect that it will rise again tomorrow. This habitual experience of time Deleuze draws from Hume who understands it habit as changing “nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it” (70).

21 The second synthesis of time is a description for the ways that the present moment passes or for how the present moment falls away while at the same time remaining present (in the form of memory). Deleuze’s understanding of memory is in many respects an iteration of Bergson’s concept of the ‘pure past’, which may be thought of as the preservation of the past independent of its actualization in the present. For Bergson, and Deleuze, the present in order to pass must already be imbued with the past. It must already be past, be a memory. However when the present, along with the past, passes away it becomes the past for all future presents: “all the past coexists with the new present in relation to which it is now past” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 82). In this way we can see time as folding onto itself rather than being linear.
CHAPTER TWO

Space, Screens, and the Eruption of Thought

The theatre has always been virtual, a space of illusory immediacy.
--Matthew Causey, Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture 15

By the swiftness of its action, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future.
--Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space xxxiv

The screen makes something issue from chaos, and even if this something differs only slightly.
--Gilles Deleuze, The Fold 76

Happenings in the Slipperiness of the In-Between

Three large cinema screens frame the upstage wall of the theatre. The performance space is a hybrid construction somewhere between a proscenium style theatre and a cinema. Two performers stand downstage and each is positioned behind a computer that is lit from below. The performers face the audience. Their focus moves between their personal computer screens and the cinema screens situated behind them. Unfolding on the cinema screens is the story of Spectropia, a young woman from a future where recorded history is forbidden. In an act of obsession and defiance Spectropia spends her time illegally collecting objects that have been tossed aside and forgotten. She compulsively scans her collection of artifacts with a device that provides her with information about each object’s past. The stories discovered in each object help Spectropia piece together clues about the mysterious disappearance of her father.

As Spectropia gathers traces from her past something happens in the space between her actions unfolding in the film and the bodies of the live performers standing on stage. Moving
their hands the live performers enter the space of the film through the use of motion capture software. Their movements alter the sound, perspective, pace, and rhythm of the action occurring on the screen. Spectropia scans a piece of silk and this conjures the burlesque dancer Sally Rand, who proceeds to perform a version of the ‘bubble dance’ that she made famous in burlesque shows of the 1930’s. Sally twirls, throws her bubble into the air, and catches it. The dance slows to a crawl and then picks up speed. At the same time the hands of the live performers draw concentric circles in the air, resulting in Sally spinning over, and over again, as if she were a cinematic puppet. The simultaneity of the performance in the theatre—the performer’s conducting hands—and its effects in the space of the film—Rand’s relentless spinning—creates an uncanny experience. The doubling of the live performers’ presence in the cinematic image is haunting. It points to something happening between the bodies of the live performers and the images on the screen. It points to something happening between the spectating body and the seemingly spectral images placed on stage.

Toni Dove’s *Spectropia: A Ghost Story on the Infinite Deferral of Desire* (2001-10) navigates the territory between the material space of the theatre event and what I will refer to as the space of the virtual. This navigation is made evident within the narrative when Spectropia divines stories from material objects, a gesture that underscores the ways that things and spaces gather, and sustain, histories that exist beyond their own materiality. More significant, however, is the way that Dove embeds the movement between material space and its virtual ‘outside’ into the very structure of her performance. As a film that is simultaneously performed for a live audience, *Spectropia* not only challenges the boundaries of aesthetic form, but it literally moves the performer and spectator between various spaces: the material space of the theatre, the immaterial space of the cinema, and the virtual space of the spectator’s imagination.
Dove’s work takes place at the threshold where performers navigate various embodiments of space and time, and spectators, while seemingly passive, become engaged with individual negotiations of their own embodiment via the images displayed before them. Within the work the screen functions as this threshold. It is the site where the audience’s attention is drawn to a certain spatial fluidity that is always already present in performance. Dove’s performing in the space between the live performer and the cinematic image expresses the subtle relation between distinct spatial fields: the material field of our physical world and body, and the immaterial field of what phenomenologists refer to as the nowhere of the psyche or the imagination.\(^2\) It is the movement between these spatial fields that Dove negotiates within her work, and that ultimately comes to constitute the space of any performance.

This chapter interrogates the relationship between the material spaces of the theatre and the immaterial spaces of the imagination that are simultaneously constituted within the theatre event. I draw on examples from Toni Dove’s *Spectropia* (2001-10), The Builders Association’s *Continuous City* (2009), and Troika Ranch’s *loopdiver* (2009) in order to illustrate how the screen, when employed in particular ways, makes evident the movement within the performance event between the spaces of materiality and virtuality. I argue that the movement between these spaces produces an experience of theatricality that exists, not as a quality of performance, but as an affective force produced in, and arising from, the relations between the material spaces of performance and the virtual spaces of our imagination.

Beyond emphasizing the dynamics of theatrical space I claim that the screen participates in a folding of space that produces what Josette Féral has referred to as the “cleft in the quotidian”, a “cleft that divides space into the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’ of theatricality” (“Theatricality” 97). In other words, screen becomes a tool for examining this space of the in-
between—a space that is always already inherent to performance, but that becomes materially articulated by the presence of the screen on stage. Moreover, I argue that the screen’s folding of space constructs an encounter with the unrecognizable that incites an experience of theatricality, which has the potential to move us thought.

**Theorizing the Space of Performance: Materiality and the Imagination**

Inextricably linked to space, the theatre is the physical site of performance: a building, stage, or place for viewing. It is also the process of creating space, the art of organizing objects and bodies in relation to one another. Defined as such, theatre becomes the art of place making. It is a site for dividing, parsing, and allocating space. In its allocation of space the theatre continually demands that we navigate the boundaries between material spaces—building, stage, set, props, text—and immaterial or virtual spaces of the imagination—the space between text and image, between body and screen, between performing body and spectator. The theatre is therefore a site for the continual negotiation between these various spatial fields.

Attempts to schematize the space of performance make evident the complexity of this negotiation. Patrice Pavis and Anne Ubersfeld provide semiotic analyses of the space of performance. Each individually details the multiple relations that are established within the theatrical event between elements such as: text, the reading of text, the embodiment of text in performance, the material space of performance (both the stage and the larger theatre venue), the space of text, the audience, and the wider social/cultural/political context of the performance itself. My particular interest, however, is in the relationship between what Pavis identifies as ‘stage space/theatre space’ and ‘dramatic space’. Stage/theatre space refers to the material spaces of performance. It concerns what is found on the stage and is “visible to the audience” (Pavis 360). Furthermore, ‘theatre space’ encompasses the ‘stage space’, but also refers to the larger performance venue, including the physical space of the spectator (344). On the other hand,
‘dramatic space’ refers to the immaterial spaces that are constructed by the spectator during the process of viewing (344). Samuel Weber, Josette Féral, and Erika Fischer-Lichte all establish theatricality as a negotiation of space, and more specifically, as a negotiation between the material elements of the performance and the spectator’s experience of these elements. Thus, for Weber, Féral, and Fischer-Lichte theatricality emerges in the negotiation between Pavis’ understanding of ‘stage space’ and ‘dramatic space’.

Of these theorists Weber is the most explicit in the establishment of space as a primary element in our understanding of theatricality. He argues that the theatre’s theatricality is produced by its potential to move, displace, and divide—by its ability to “subvert” or “pervert” the stability of a place by making accessible the inherent heterogeneity of space itself (Weber, Theatricality as Medium 36-37). The volatility of theatrical space becomes clear when Weber draws a connection between the term “theatre” in its aesthetic context and the use of the term in military contexts. The military uses the term “theatre of operation” to described actions that work to define and control spaces in conflict. In a theatre of operation the military transforms an area from a general space to a particular place through the intervention of external forces:

The nonaesthetic—here, military—use of the word brings to the fore what is perhaps its salient trait, namely, theatre considered as a medium in which conflicting forces strive to secure the perimeter of a place in dispute. “Theatre” signifies the imposition of borders rather than a representational-aesthetic genre. The former focuses on the manner in which a place is secured, whereas the latter regards the place as already taken or given, and therefore as a means or instrument of that which is to be represented. In respect to its mediality, then, theatricality, is defined as a problematic process of placing, framing, situating, rather than as a process of representation. (315, original emphasis)

By defining theatricality in terms of the process of securing particular borders Weber draws attention to the means by which theatrical space is constructed. His definition moves us to
consider the space of performance not as a place already produced, but instead, to consider the *manner* by which the space is constructed. This forces us to deal with the various elements, both material and immaterial, which are at play within the space and positions theatricality as the problematic processes of constructing specific places from more general spaces. This process eventually disrupts the stability of space as a concrete place of unity and self-identity and thereby challenges an experience of coherence between the exteriority of the world and interiority of the self.

Similar to Weber’s problematic process of placing, Féral understands theatricality to be activated by a “re-allocation of quotidian space” (“Theatricality” 97). This reallocation of space occurs within the relationship between the viewer and the viewed: “by watching, the spectator creates an ‘other’ space, no longer subject to the laws of the quotidian, and in this space he inscribes what he observes, perceiving it as belonging to a space where he has no place except as external observer” (105). By drawing on the relation between spectator and performer Féral links theatricality to the gaze of the spectator. The spectator activates theatricality as much as the performer or perceived object. In the act of looking the spectator enters into a particular relationship with the material world of performance, and it is therefore the spectator who “postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, from which fiction can emerge” (97). Jenn Stephenson argues that this process of looking produces a “binocular vision” where the audience perceives “both the imagined fiction and the quotidian material of its creation” (25, emphasis added). The incorporation of the materiality of our everyday reality into the constructed fiction is a significant quality of theatrical space, which “steals from actual space to create fictional space” and in so doing gains a “doubled quality” (25). This doubled quality of theatrical space is significant because it moves the spectator between his or her own interiority
and exteriority. And it is this movement that ultimately articulates the world in which we live.

The doubled quality of theatrical space is also evident in Erika Fischer-Lichte’s discussions of theatricality. For Fischer-Lichte the doubling of theatrical space produces the potential for the creation of reality. This potential is clear in her analysis of the reviews for Reinhardt’s 1910-1912 production of Sumurun. Here Fischer-Lichte charts an important change in the theatre’s semiotic system. She notes that this production’s use of signs allows for alternations in the spectator’s attention that opens a space where the theatrical signs may be read differently. Her argument hinges on an analysis of Reinhardt’s use of the hanamichi. The hanamichi, or the raised stage platform running from the back of the theatre to the stage and used for character entrances and exits in Japanese Kabuki theatre, becomes a literal bridge that functions as passage between different spaces within the theatre and ultimately allows for shifts in focus to occur (Fischer-Lichte, “From Theatre” 99). Referring specifically to the hanamichi she outlines how it produces at least two different ways of looking:

The spectators had two different levels of interest and two different perspectives. They were able to let their eyes wander not only over the stage but between stage and hanamichi as well. Since the actors made 'their entrances at some vital point' the spectators who turned around in order to see who was coming missed what was happening on stage at that moment. On the other hand, if they chose to keep their eyes fixed on the stage, they missed what was going on the hanamichi. Thus, whatever the spectators elected to watch, they missed something that their neighbors—deciding otherwise—would perceive. (101)

Fischer-Lichte identifies these shifts in attention as “deeply affect[ing] the process of perception and cognition” (102). Citing historical practices from European theatres she notes that theatrical performance, particularly in the Western context, has typically been understood as providing a representation of a fictional reality. She argues, however, that Reinhardt’s Sumurun challenged this assumption by providing a different way of understanding performance: “[t]he performance
did not represent any objectively given reality. Rather, it functioned as a model of the process of how to construct reality” (103).

Most significant to Fischer-Lichte’s analysis is an acknowledgment that Reinhardt’s production did not require the spectator to recognize and/or understand a particular representation of reality. Rather, Reinhardt’s production invited the spectator to engage in the creation of their own reality by moving them between the various perspectives presented on the stage. This, according to Fischer-Lichte, establishes a new relationship between the subject and object. This new relationship means that the theatre can no longer be defined by its representational practices, but instead, similar to Weber’s argument, must be understood by the processes of production that it provokes.

In going to the theatre each spectator creates their own world through the activity of viewing the events that unfold in the theatre’s material space. The spectator constructs their own hanamichi, or produces their own “binocular vision”, which bridges the theatre’s material space with the virtual space of their individual perception. By creating or moving across this bridge the spectator is invited to experiment with the possibilities of constructing reality. This experimentation is made possible by the theatre’s ability to shuttle the spectator between various spatial fields—to move them between the fictions constructed on stage, the reality of their everyday lives, and their own imaginative processes. The theatre is able to do this because of its transformation of general space into specific places, its appropriation of the materiality of the everyday, and its placement of space and bodies before other human beings. All of these processes, which constitute the theatre, also make evident the inherent dynamism by which we experience the world. This is a dynamism that continuously negotiates the relation between the external physical world and our internal imaginative responses to that world. It is in this dynamic
negotiation that worlds are produced, realities are constructed, and thinking occurs.

**The Actual and the Virtual**

In order to more fully examine the dynamism of theatrical space it is useful to contextualize and explain my use of the concept of the virtual. I understand the virtual to be a force existing outside the material space of performance that is encountered and reincorporated into the performance space via the imagination. It is a force existing outside of our physical world, but simultaneously always already in relation to that physical world. Furthermore, it is a force that works through the imagination to construct our individual experiences of the world.

This understanding of the virtual comes from Deleuze who identifies the virtual as real: it “is *fully real in so far as it is virtual*” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 208, original emphasis). Instead of distinguishing between the real and the virtual Deleuze establishes a distinction between the actual and the virtual. The virtual is understood as a reality that exists, but that does not exist in actuality. Citing Proust, Deleuze articulates the virtual as: “*[r]eal without being actual, ideal without being abstract*…indeed the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object—as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension” (208-209). Steven Shaviro likens this to: “a field of energies that have not yet been expended, or a reservoir of potentialities that have not yet been tapped” (34). The virtual is, therefore, not made up of actual entities, but instead presents us with a space that encapsulates the potential for real change.

On the other hand, the actual refers to the current state of affairs. It “occurs at the point of intersection of the possible, the potential, and the virtual” and actualizes itself as “the effect of their momentous meeting, mixing, and re-separation” (Massumi, *Parables* 136). In this way, the virtual and the actual are two components of our experience of the world that “coexist, and enter into a tight circuit which we are continually retracing from one to the other” (Deleuze, “Actual
and Virtual” 150). Deleuze argues that this coexistence produces a process of individuation that results in the production of the actual and its virtual. It is the production of these two complementary forces that constitutes what we generally refer to as reality.

In his discussion of the actual/virtual Deleuze makes an important distinction between the relationships of the actual/virtual and the real/possible. His distinction makes clear that the virtual and the possible are not synonymous. Virtuality cannot refer to what is possible because the possible is already foreclosed by the parameters of expectation. The possible relies on the image of thought that is rooted in the already known. In this way the possible does not produce the new, but reworks that which is already established. In contrast, the virtual, like the paradox, is an active force of potential—a site of creation and difference. Building from Deleuze’s conceptualization of the virtual Brian Massumi suggests that the virtual is a “lived paradox”, a site where “opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained. For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression will emerge and be registered consciously…to become a content of one’s life—by dint of inhibition” (Parables 30-31, original emphasis).

With its doubling of the live performers’ presence in the cinematic image Toni Dove’s Spectropia helps us to think through and experience the virtual as “lived paradox”. In an interview with Dove, Massumi suggests that what becomes clear in her work is that:

[…] the doubling takes place in the space between the screen and the body. What happens, happens in-between, in the relationships and rhythms, the movements and connections. I think that's a really important step, because it gets away from the idea that the virtual is what's on the screen or what's behind the screen in the machine. What's on the screen is an icon. What's behind it is a set of permutations and algorithms and logical possibilities. None of these things are the virtual. It seems to me that the virtual is that slipperiness of experience. It has to do with the relation and what happens in between. This makes virtuality a dimension of everyday reality that the work is bringing out and expressing more directly. (“The Interface and I” np)
For Massumi, Dove’s work is an articulation of the virtual as an ever-present force within our daily lives. It is the virtual as lived paradox. Her work expresses the virtual, not because it engages digital technologies, but rather because she marks the movement and interrelation between things. In doing this she illustrates that the ghosting of the live performer in the cinematic image is not something beyond the reality of our world, but is the result of the various forces (actual, imaginative, and virtual) that work together to constitute our world. It is the “slipperiness of experience”.

In his analysis of digital theatre Matthew Causey argues that there is nothing inherent to screen technologies that has not already been performed on stage. In other words, “the theatre has always been virtual” (Causey15). The virtuality of the theatre is evident in the double articulation of theatrical space, which requires a movement of energies between the immateriality of our imagination and the fiction presented on stage, and also the materiality of the performance and our everyday reality. Despite popular claims to the immediacy of ‘live’ performance the theatre, in its negotiation of space, has always been virtual. It has always already produced a space that is immaterial, but real. Causey supports his claim of the theatre’s inherent virtuality by citing Žižek who challenges the common assumption that during cyber sex, sexual contact, with a real partner is relinquished to masturbatory enjoyment, which comes only from a virtual other (15). Žižek dismisses this assumption using Lacan’s argument that “there is no sexual relationship”, which, according to Žižek, indicates that “the structure of the real sexual act (of the act with a flesh and blood partner) is already inherently phantasmic—the real body of the other serves only as a support for our phantasmic projections” (Žižek 5, qtd. in Causey 15). Thus, for Lacan, and Žižek reading Lacan, the real sexual act is always already constructed via imagined projections in a space that we might refer to as the virtual. This is significant for
Causey’s argument, and the one I am making in this chapter, because it illustrates how the material theatre may be produced in conjunction with our own imaginative processes. Our experience of the theatre is a continual negotiation between the material world—both on stage and in the everyday—and the virtual space of our “phantasmic projections”. The virtual, and its relation to the imagination, can therefore be taken as the lynchpin in our understanding of how the space of performance becomes doubly articulated, how it steals from actual space to create fictional space, and how it utilizes fictional space to construct new realities in actual space.

The Screen: Moving Between
Causey’s claim to the theatre’s inherent virtuality not only helps us to understand the movement between the material and immaterial spaces of the theatre, but it also opens a space for us to begin a discussion about the role and function of the screen on stage. Causey’s argument is rooted in a context where digital technology is regularly put to use in performance practice. More than this, his argument arises in response to the well documented ‘liveness debate’ within performance discourse. This debate positions live performance and technological reproduction as two essentially different phenomena. Furthermore, it hinges on how the term ‘live’ has come to be utilized in performance theory. On one side of the debate, Peggy Phelan uses the term to denote a bodily presence that is capable of resisting the structures of commercial capitalism that surround it. On the other hand, Philip Auslander understands the term to describe a concept that emerges because of the mediatizing effects of commercial capitalism. Causey’s assertion that the screen does nothing within the context of the stage that has not already been achieved troubles the dualistic interpretations of the ‘live’ that are established by Phelan’s and Auslander’s arguments.

Furthermore, by claiming that “the theatre has always been virtual” Causey implicitly suggests that the screened technologies used on stage do nothing inherently new to the space of
performance. Or at least, they produce nothing that could not have already been produced by some other means. What, though, are we to make of the screens that we find ubiquitously performing on stages every night? What are we to make of the relationship between the screen and the body constructed in Toni Dove’s work? If screens do not dramatically change the space of performance, then what is their function? What do they do? What can they do?

The screen is both a material object and a conceptual threshold. As a material object the screen is canvas stretched across a frame. It is the cinema screen and its derivatives—television, computer, cellphone. The screen is an ambivalent object that masquerades as a wall, window, or mirror. It is a piece of furniture that creates a permeable boundary that divides space into inside and outside. In its division of space the screen hides as much as it reveals. Moreover, it instigates a specific action: to screen. This action begins a process of ordering in which the screen itself becomes obscured. It recedes into space while it simultaneously foregrounds a particular set of information. The act of screening includes and excludes—it moves us between the two distinct spaces that are established by the screen itself.

Lev Manovich divides the screen into three topologies, which he outlines in The Language of New Media. Manovich’s brief genealogy of the screen illustrates how the screen moves us between distinct spatial fields. Each of Manovich’s screen topologies are characterized by their production of another space situated within the space of our everyday reality. In this way the screen frames “two absolutely different spaces that somehow coexist” (Manovich 95). This assertion resonates with Weber’s, Féral’s, and Fischer-Lichte’s analysis of theatrical space as a space that is both doubly articulated and where multiple perspectives are simultaneously constituted. The screen may, therefore, be read as a metaphor for the dynamics of theatrical
space. The strength of this metaphor grows if we read Manovich’s topology of the screen in relation to specific historical constructions of theatrical space.

Manovich begins his topological analysis with the classical screen. Historically the classical screen is aligned with painting and is described as a flat, rectangular surface, established for frontal viewing. It exists in the space of the everyday and, as with all of the screen topologies, provides a window into a distinct representational space (Manovich 95). Similarities between the theatre and the classical screen are clear. The theatre is a space existing in the everyday that is framed, or set apart, providing us with a “window into another space”. The classical screen most closely aligns with constructions of the theatre such as classical Greek or Renaissance theatre. This is because in these theatres there is a clear distinction between the playing space and the space of the audience, however the distinction between these two spaces is not highly regulated. Therefore, similar to viewing a painting, the configuration of space in these theatres allows the spectator to shift their attention relatively easily between what is framed and what is not.

The second type of screen that Manovich identifies is the dynamic screen. The dynamic screen is similar to the classical screen, but the images that it displays change over time. Primary examples of the dynamic screen are: the cinema, televisual and video screens. Manovich argues that the significance of the dynamic screen is that it solidifies a “viewing regime” that requires the spectator to identify with, and fully concentrate on, the images presented by the screen (96). This viewing regime makes the world beyond the screen’s frame recede while highlighting the world presented within the screen’s frame (96). Such a process of viewing is also constructed in the theatre with the installation of the proscenium arch and the curtain, both of which help to regulate the relation between the action on stage and the world of the everyday. This regulation of space is furthered by the dimming of the lights in the audience, which focuses the attention of
the spectator towards the action framed on stage. Wagner’s Bayreuth theatre, with its darkened auditorium and single fan of seating, is a prime example of such a theatre. The Bayreuth theatre, as well as the dynamic screen, is structured in such a way as to orient the spectator internally, rather than externally. The Bayreuth theatre ultimately produced a place where “individuals could lose their imprisoning individuality in the world of art” (Wiles 229). Therefore, it was no longer the act of collectively coming together to view art that mattered, but rather the focus shifted to the aesthetic object itself (229).

Manovich’s final category, the real time screen, is one that disrupts the stability of the other two. The real time screen may be aligned with the computer. It is a screen that displays multiple images at once and where images displayed change in real time so that no single image has the viewer’s complete attention. More than its predecessors, the real time screen disappears into its surroundings, but simultaneously remains fully present. For Manovich, it is the real time screen that has come to dominate modern visual culture—it is our iPhone, computer, tablet, or mapping device (97). It is a screen that is fully incorporated into a particular device so that the screen itself appears absent. Such screens (devices?) complicate the relation between subjects and objects that has been instituted by the other screen topologies. The real time screen situates the subject as simultaneously viewer and user, which alters our relation to space. We are presented not only with a space distinct from where we find ourselves, but we are also allowed to interact with this space in tangible and material ways. In regards to its relation to theatrical space, the real time screen does not so much provide us with a metaphor for the ways that theatrical space is constructed, but rather it articulates the place of the material screen on stage. When a screen is placed on stage, even if it is a dynamic or classical screen, it begins to function like the
real time screen—it complicates the established relationship between subjects and objects and in so doing makes evident the dynamics of the space itself.

Significant in Manovich’s topology of the screen is that it positions the screen as a necessary object for navigating the contemporary world. Furthermore, it positions the screen as an object that has been historically constituted by and through specific representational techniques including: perspectival representation, the development of various image-capturing technologies (camera obscura, photographic camera, cinematic camera), and the development of real time interactive virtual spaces (video games, military training technologies). Understood as a device that establishes specific relationships between subjects and objects, the screen, in all of its incarnations, participates in moving us between distinct spaces. It moves us between the space occupied by our body, and the space framed by the screen. It moves us between the space framed by the screen, and our own internal imaginative processes. In the examples that follow I illustrate how the screen not only metaphorically shapes the dynamics of theatrical space, but more significantly how, when physically present on stage, the screen allows us to experience the dynamic movement of theatrical space—the movement between material space and the virtual, which unsettles perception, and moves us towards thought.

**Screens on Stage: Builders Association**

Like many Builders Association productions *Continuous City* (2007-2010) utilizes digital media in various ways. Of particular significance to the production is the screen, which is used both as a storytelling device and as site of an interrogation into the ways that we connect to one another in our increasingly digitally mediatized world. Structured more or less linearly the narrative is familiar: stories of individuals who travel the globe and attempt to stay in contact with one another through the use of computers and other mobile devices. Drawing inspiration from contemporary life *Continuous City* stages the tensions, joys, and ambivalences that are
experienced through our engagement with popular media including, social networks, video chats, and blogs.

In its promotional material the company describes the production as “a meditation on how contemporary experiences of location and dislocation stretch us to the maximum as our ‘networked selves’ occupy multiple locations” (Builders Association website). The mise en scene—which is structured around some twenty to thirty screens of various sizes, positioned at differing heights, and opening and folding on pneumatic hinges—provides an experience of our “networked self” occupying and moving through multiple locations at once. Additionally, the screens, in their ability to both open and fold in on themselves, are simultaneously visible and invisible. When opened they produce multiple and simultaneous frames of reference that move us between the lives of the characters in the play and further provide an experience of our own multi-fractured engagement with both connective media and the world at large.

Director Marianne Weems has said that part of the inspiration for Continuous City came from reading Italo Calvino’s 1972 novel, Invisible Cities. Calvino’s novel is an allegorical account of a conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan in which Polo describes to Khan fanciful cityscapes that eventually reveal themselves to be descriptions of a single city—Venice. One of the distinct features of Invisible Cities is that it asks its reader to consider the role that the imagination plays in their understanding and experience of the physical world. This question is established by the descriptions of Khan’s empire that originate primarily in Polo’s imagination. What these descriptions ultimately illustrate is that places are constituted not only by their physicality, but also, and perhaps more importantly, by the impressions that they evoke in those who encounter them. These encounters can be either material or immaterial. They can come from literally inhabiting the physical place or by encountering the place through another
means—literary, photographic, cinematic. In this way, Calvino’s novel illustrates a similar relationship between the material and immaterial world as that which is experienced in the theatre. Furthermore, Calvino’s novel creates a world, like the space of the theatre, where we begin to experience the inherent multiplicity of space itself. Polo’s descriptions of Khan’s empire are both unique and general. They describe anyplace and simultaneously describe a single place, Venice. Places are therefore always, “already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable” (Calvino 125).

Like Calvino’s Venice the performance space for Continuous City is constructed in such a way that multiple and distinct places coalesce within the theatrical frame. This is most clearly illustrated by the fact that the screens, that constitute the production’s mise en scene, continually fold and unfold throughout the performance. This produces a permeable and ever changing backdrop for the production. No single image projected onto the screens is ever held within the frame of any single screen. Instead the images are continually split and dispersed between multiple screens. Spectators are required to fill in the gaps between the images and, therefore, construct their own whole from the fragments provided. This process articulates one way that the production requires a negotiation between the material world of the performance and our own imagination.

Adding to this, as images move across the screens the shifting background inscribes a certain sense of placeless-ness. This happens even though the images projected onto the screens are images of the world’s largest cities: Paris, Shanghai, Mexico City. On the screens these cities literally blur into one another producing the feeling that we could be anywhere, or nowhere at all. This sense of placeless-ness is echoed in rest of the set, which is comprised of a bed, a desk, and several computers. These everyday objects emphasize a sense of anonymity within the space.
The lack of distinctiveness within the performance space is furthered by the fact that the production’s narrative is constructed in such a way that the action occurs in whatever city the performance is being presented. This conceit literalizes the idea of a continuous city by highlighting the similarities amongst various cities, however it also highlights the particularities of place. It does this by having the narrative follow one of the characters as they move and settle into the city where the production is being performed. In the context of the performance this happens through the creation of a blog that documents the character’s experience of the given city. The blog posts become explorations and snapshots of the city just outside the walls of the theatre. Beyond illustrating how places in our ever increasingly globalized world both blur together and stand distinct, this framework invites the spectator to explore their own city in new ways.

To a certain degree this framework asks us to become virtual flâneurs of our own cities. Throughout the performance spectators explore and engage the city from a distance. They attempt to rid themselves of ennui, not by walking the arcades of Paris, but by engaging their surroundings through mediation. Like Benjamin’s flâneur, the spectator’s mediated engagement with the city places them in a particular relationship with their own interiority and exteriority. They become aware of their ability to be active, both physically and psychically, in their engagements with space. Personal experiences and engagements with the city just outside the walls of the theatre are juxtaposed with the images presented on stage. The screens move the spectator between the space of the theatre and the world outside—between the live event on stage and a past captured on film, between their own imagined reality and the material world in which we exist. This oscillation between the spaces of the theatre and the spaces of everyday life
outside the theatre makes the spectator acutely aware of how they imagine and create the spaces they occupy. Nick Kaye argues:

*Continuous City* suggests a ‘place’ defined in multiple virtual architectures: in architectures of signs and desires, of individual narratives formed and reformed in the malleability of WEB 2.0. Here, the spatial dynamic between live and electronic presence evident in The Builders Association’s work is extended out toward the audience and participants as chorus. In the *Continuous City* the interactive electronic network is a primary architecture of contemporary place and experience: a place defined and occupied in an awareness of the simultaneous performance of diverse acts of location; of collocations of performances, of virtual cities [...] (Nick Kaye, *Presence Project* website)

Therefore, similar to Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, which has been described as a text that invites its readers to create their own cities in the margins of Polo’s descriptions, and also similar to the long strolls of Benjamin’s flâneur, *Continuous City* invites its audience to build space with the performers as they engage both the material and imagined spaces of the performance’s city—the spectator’s city.

The Builders Association undertook a similar exploration of the relation between material and imagined space in their first production, Ibsen’s *The Master Builder* (1994). This production was performed in an industrial space in Chelsea where the company built a full-scale, dilapidated, three-story house to be used as the set. The house pivoted, rotated, and was equipped with various screens for video projection. Additionally, throughout the performance the house was gradually demolished revealing the changing perspectives of the characters. Director Marianne Weems has said that in this production:

we experimented with a very primitive but lively electronic network of sound and video triggers that lined the house--the performers set off sounds, from breaking plates to falling down stairs, much like Foley artists. This also reflects my engagement with what [composer] John Cage described as making the invisible visible—materializing our struggle with the technology-saturated environment while playing on the social forces that construct us. (Weems, *Interview Magazine*)
Significant here is Weems’ desire to make the invisible visible. This is something that occurs through the company’s foregrounding of technology in performance. Even from their very first production the Builders Association has worked to foreground, and visualize, their reliance on and exploration of technology. In *The Master Builder* this is evident in the set design that integrated video and television screens that were activated by performers during the performance. In *Continuous City*, this is achieved with the movement of the screens, which is an action that draws our attention to the otherwise opaque device within our everyday experience. The company’s various attempts to make the invisible visible reaches beyond their foregrounding of technology. In fact, their foregrounding of technology helps to mark, or make visible, our complex and invisible relations to theatrical space.

Marianne Weems and designer John Cleater have said that the motivation behind their approach to mise en scene for *The Master Builder* was a desire to physicalize the psychological breakdown happening within the play itself.\(^\text{10}\) In other words, the set may be seen as an attempt to make visible the invisible; or a way to explore the relationship between physical and virtual space through the externalization of the interior space of the individual psyche. This movement between exteriority and interiority is clearly evident at the end of the production when the audience is given an opportunity to explore the set for themselves. This act transforms the space both physically and psychically. The audience, who has up until this moment been placed outside the space, is invited inside. As they move through chests, drawers, cabinets, MIDI triggers, and video screens they are able to explore not only the material space of the performance, but their own internal landscapes—the memories and imaginative passages that have been opened through both the performance and their engagement with this particular space.
Such an encounter with space is reminiscent of Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*. Here Bachelard explores attics, cellars, drawers, and cabinets as a means of establishing an intimate relationship between our external realities and the internal landscapes of our imaginations and memories. For Bachelard our experience of space marks the coming together of the material world and our imaginations. When we encounter particular spaces past experiences surge to the surface of our being and reverberate within us. While our experience with space connects us to the past, our imaginations gesture towards the potentialities of the future. Bachelard writes: “By the swiftness of its actions, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future” (Bachelard xxxiv). Significant is Bachelard’s positioning of the imagination as a “major power of human nature” (xxxiv). The poetic image, or the human process of imaging, is given an ontological status of its own. It is site of power and creation. Bachelard likens our engagement with the poetic image to reading, suggesting that, “it becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being” (xxiii).

By using the screen to place spectators in particular relationships with theatrical space Builder’s productions incite the poetic image, or, said differently, they incite the imagination. They call us to retreat into the past by exploring physical space, be it the corners of a house or the streets of our city, but at the same time they challenge us to envision a future, to imagine spaces anew. In doing this they express the becoming of our being. They move us between our past and our future. The encounters with built space created in Builder’s productions drag the past into the present. They take us to familiar places—I am thinking here of the blog posts in *Continuous City* that highlight the markets in my city, at which I often shop; the memories flood. However, the spaces, the markets, presented on stage both are and are not what I remember. I am
thrust into the future as a new relationship is formed and this happens in and through the imagination. And importantly, the imagination is not the site of the unreal or illusionary it is, as Bachelard establishes it, a site of creation.

**Imagination: Between the Actual and the Virtual**
To better understand the imagination as a site of creation it is useful to consider Foucault’s concept of heterotopia and to place this in relation to Deleuze’s conceptualization of the virtual. In his 1967 lecture, “Of Other Spaces”, Michel Foucault names the theatre as an example of heterotopia. Heterotopia is a term used to describe spaces existing in the material world that act as “counter-sites” to our traditional understanding and experience of space. Heterotopias are found in every culture and their separateness from the everyday allows them to function differently, or to function under different rules than spaces incorporated in the world of our everyday lives. Foucault’s prime examples of heterotopia are cemeteries, gardens, museums, and the theatre.¹¹

Building from Foucault’s limited description of heterotopia, Kevin Hetherington defines heterotopia as, “spaces of alternate ordering” (Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity* vii). They are spaces that organize elements of the social world differently from that which surrounds them and in so doing, “mark them out as Other and allow them to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things” (vii). Significant to Hetherington’s exploration of heterotopia is the role that the imagination plays in our understanding of such spaces. Charting the etymology of the term ‘utopia’, Hetherington illustrates that the term collapses the Greek words ‘eutopia’, or good place, and ‘ou-topia’, meaning no-place or nowhere (viii). Thus, utopia is a good place that exists nowhere, except in the imagination (viii). Hetherington suggests that possibly Foucault’s heterotopia refers to the chasm created between *eu-topia* and *ou-topia*. It is the space between materiality and our imagination. Similar to Deleuze’s virtual—a reality that exists, but that does
not exist in actuality—Foucault’s heterotopia are spaces existing between the actual world and the imagination. They are spaces where reality takes on different shapes and forms then it does in ordinary, or everyday, space. However, even though heterotopia often contradict reality they are, again like Deleuze’s virtual, always already in touch with the actuality of our everyday. And it is the imagination that allows heterotopic space to move between reality and its other side—its outside, the virtual.

The virtual and the imagination are therefore connected, however they are not reducible to one another. Referencing Deleuze’s conceptualization of the virtual, Brian Massumi presents the relation between the virtual and the imagination this way: “Imagination is the mode of thought most precisely suited to the differentiating vagueness of the virtual” (*Parables* 134). Synonymous with intuition, the imagination is a kind of “thinking feeling” (134). Distinct from simply feeling something the imagination is about movement and process. It is “post instrumental” and “preoperative”. It is “[o]utside any given thing, outside any given sense, outside actuality” (134). It is the “Outside coming in” (134).

The imagination, therefore, provides access to the forces of the virtual. It is the circuit existing between the actual and the virtual (between reality and heterotopia). It is the means by which we are able to experience the processes of actualization. Deleuze suggests: “it is the imagination which must grasp the process of actualization […] It is imagination which crosses domains, orders and levels, knocking down the partitions coextensive with the world, guiding our bodies and inspiring our souls, grasping the unity of mind and nature; a larval consciousness which moves endlessly from science to dream and back again” (*Difference and Repetition* 220). By presenting us with the processes of actualization—the processes of the virtual becoming actual—the imagination may be understood as a force that has the ability “to bring into being
that which does not yet exist” (147). It can do this because, for Deleuze, like Bachelard and Foucault, the imagination is an active force. It is the ability and power to create. It is, “[t]he role of the imagination[…]to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it” (76).

The theatre, in its theatricality—in its moving between material space and the space of the imagination—allows us to experiment with the possibility of constructing a different reality by providing a space where the imagination may move us between the actual and virtual.

Deleuze’s understanding of the virtual and imagination is useful for thinking about the dynamics of theatrical space because it helps us to understand how the theatre, as Fischer-Lichte has argued, “turns out to be a field of experimentation where we can test our capacity for the possibilities of constructing reality” (“From Theatre” 104). The theatre moves between the external material space of the stage, and the internal virtual space of the spectator’s imagination. In so doing the theatre accentuates the processes by which we continually produce our realities. It is in this way, too, that Causey can claim that the theatre is always already virtual. The theatre invites us to reallocate the space of the quotidian, to invest ourselves in the performative act of creating space for the virtual, a space that, “clears a passage, allowing both the performing subject as well as the spectator to pass from ‘here’ to ‘elsewhere’” (Féral, “Theatricality” 98).

**Screens on Stage: Troika Ranch**

The set for Troika Ranch’s *loopdiver* (2009), designed by visual artist Colin Kilian, is composed of three screens arranged down the central line of a long, narrow, traverse playing space with the audience is seated on either side. The screens are closer to three-dimensional sculptures made of skrim than rectangular surfaces and they are lit to reveal a crystal-like center. The lighting flickers to emphasize their crystalline image. Blackout. Fade up. The crystal structures glow. Performers, who have been seated in the audience, stand and are quickly pulled back into their seats by a force whose origin is unclear. This is the first loop: stand, pull back, stand. It repeats.
The performers eventually work their way through this loop of standing and being pulled back into their chair. They begin to walk methodically through the space: step, step, pause. Lift leg to step again, leg returns to starting position. Pause. The pattern repeats. The music keeps pace; a steady tick-tock is underscored by a metallic, atmospheric hum that envelopes the space. One performer stops, looks behind himself, and begins to walk again. He stops and looks again, as if to see if someone is following. He then turns to retrace his steps. Another performer approaches the screens and looks inquisitively. All six performers seem to be looking for something, but are equally immersed in the repetition of own their particular patterns. They catch one another’s glances for a moment and then turn away as if compelled to repeat the sequence of actions that they have each individually started. Walk forward. Pause. Start to move again. Pause. Finish the line across the stage. Stop. Look in both directions. Turn to the left. Cross the stage. Repeat. Each performer is immersed in their own movement and inhabits their own space. They seem unable to fully engage those around them. The loops that structure their movement force each performer to turn their attention inward. And while loopdiver’s performance space is social, in the sense that the performers work together within the space, it is also a space of isolation (Bechtel 79). The loops draw the performers together, but they also consume the performers individually.

The rhythm changes and the performer’s individual gestures gradually converge so that they are all repeating the same loop at the same time. They abruptly stop and turn to face the audience. In this moment there is a sense of being startled by the audience’s presence. There is a sense of surprise to find someone sitting in the seats that they were occupying only minutes before. Furthermore, there is a general sense of misrecognition. Where am I? Who are these people? What are we doing? Repeat. The pace quickens and climaxes when the screens are
seemingly pulled apart from their center and rotate to reveal, not only their sculptural quality, but also their screen-ness. In this action the spectator’s attention is moved to the structures that divide the stage. In their rotation the screens unfold and cut across the entire length of the stage. This isolates performers from one another, and it also isolates the spectators from the performers on the far side of the stage and from the other spectators sitting across the theatre. Blackout. The lights slowly brighten and a ghostly image, that is only vaguely identifiable as a human form, pulsates on the screens.

Troika Ranch’s *loopdive* was developed from a desire to explore how the computer could be used to disrupt the choreographic process. Mark Coniglio, co-founder of the dance company, approached this question by creating a looping program for his established dance software, Isadora. The program he created constructs loops in previously recorded video or sound in order to produce entirely new and randomized sequences within the original material. Coniglio, along with choreographer and co-founder Dawn Stoppiello, used these loop structures created by this program to control the video, audio, and lights in the production. However, most importantly, the computer generated loop structures were used to produce the choreography that comprises *loopdive*.

The process began with the dancers improvising five minutes of base material. This improvisation was recorded and looped through Isadora resulting in a forty-minute movement score. The dancers memorized this score by watching the looped base material, which was projected onto screens. What becomes apparent throughout the production is not only the random nature of the computer’s loops, but the inherent tension between the repetition of the human body and the repetition of the computer algorithm. The dancers seem to be continuously slipping, either swept up in, or catching up to, the various looped repetitions. This struggle is
emphasized by the projection of the original base material, which was used for the choreography, onto the screen-sculptures. The images are ghostly and they move in and out of focus. There is a continual disjunction between the live dancers and their projected images; is nearly impossible for the dancers to adapt, and adhere to, the externally imposed rhythm of the machine-generated choreography. What is interesting, however, is that even though the spectator is presented with the screen and the base material, the relationship between the machine and the body is internalized rather then externalized. With each iteration the machine is enfolded into the individual bodies of the dancers. The screen, rather than being an external manifestation of the self and body, is internalized as we witness the dancers struggle to repeat the movements that they have learned from imitating their bodies doubled and captured on the screen.

In his reading of Foucault, Deleuze suggests that the double is never simply a projection of the interior, but rather it “is an interiorization of the outside” (Foucault 97). The outside, at its most fundamental, is what literally exists outside our familiar terrain of thinking, it is what we do not know and cannot represent (Colebrook 75). The outside refers to the exteriority of experience, the outside of being, the outside of language, and the outside of thinking. While the outside is a convenient spatial metaphor, it does not necessarily refer to spatiality in any material sense. Rather, the outside is aligned with the unrecognizable. And like the relation between the virtual and the actual, the outside is always immanent to the inside. The unrecognizable is therefore always closely aligned with the familiar. The oscillation between outside and inside is evident in the relationship between the dancers and the screens in loopdiver. The screens fold together the material space and the dancer’s bodies. This folding presents the simultaneous presence of two seemingly opposed ways of being. It illustrates that, in regards to the construction of the subject, interiority and exteriority are produced from the radical ‘outside’ of
impersonal experience and perception. Furthermore, even though the outside is infinitely exterior it has a fundamental and dynamic relation to interiority: the ‘outside’ is “something more distant than any external world. But it’s also something closer than any inner world” (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 110).

While there is a shift towards thinking about the ways that the bodies of the dancers internalize the screen, the screen is also a physical object that literally divides the space of the performance cutting both performer and spectator off from one another. In their forceful appearance and division of space the screens produce a kind of shock. They assert an overwhelming presence that literally forces the bodies of the performers to the ground. They also potentially move the audience. In his analysis of the production Roger Bechtel suggests that the screen’s, “sudden, forceful, and unexpected unfolding no doubt registers directly on the bodies of the audience, in the same way that any powerful movement of a large-scale object in close proximity—the passing of a train, for example—can produce a viscerally felt shock” (89). This experience of shock is significant because it opens the spectator to the unrecognizable. The screens produce a material divide—a cleft in the quotidian—that gestures toward a disruptive experience that is fundamental to both the theatre’s system of representation, and our own experience of our being in the world. And in this way the screens construct a site for the production of theatricality.

To further understand how this is accomplished it is useful to consider the screen as a dominant image in psychoanalytic models of subjectivity. This is most explicit in Lacan’s theorization of the mirror stage, which positions the mirror as screen, or a site of division and concealment. Depicting the moment of the subject’s subjectification, the mirror stage marks an experience of trauma. Through the gaze the subject encounters his or her own image in the
mirror and becomes aware of itself, not only as an individuated being, but as a being that is always already divided. By identifying the self as object in the mirror, the subject becomes alienated from itself and this creates a chiasm within the self between the symbolic order and the real. Significant is that the gaze, while positioned outside the subject, is simultaneously internal to the subject and, therefore, the subject is both seeing and seen. This “reversibility” of vision, appropriated from Merleau-Ponty, is significant to Lacan because it allows for the possibility of being observed. Lacan writes: “…in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture…What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. …the gaze is the instrument through which …I am photo-graphed” (Lacan 106).

Lacan, therefore, positions the mirror as screen, or a site that brings the inside and outside of the self into conversation through the division instigated by the gaze.

While Lacan’s theorization of subjectification positions the mirror as screen, appropriations of Lacan’s mirror stage by film theorists have been, according to Joan Copjec, intrinsically flawed. In her 1989 article, “The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan”, Copjec argues that eminent film theorists such as Baudry and Metz have espoused the reversal of Lacan’s proposition. Instead of situating the mirror as screen they have positioned the screen as mirror. In doing this the cinematic screen is read as a site where the subject is constituted as, more or less, a stable subject, rather than being faced with its inherent division, which Lacan proposes in the mirror stage. Film theory, therefore, positions the screen as a site that brings together the once fragmented self into a totalizing image. The screen becomes a mirror through which the cinematic spectator identifies herself as a coherent and omnipotential ego. The power that comes with this positioning is derived from the spectator’s identification with the camera, which provides them with the illusion of power over the images
displayed on the screen. This power is then secured by the spectator’s avoidance of ever being seen sitting silently in the darkened auditorium. Unlike Lacan’s subject before the mirror, the cinematic spectator never experiences their subjectivity as both subject and object—as both seeing and seen. This points to a key difference between the functioning of the screen in the cinema and the screen on stage. The screens on stage in *loopdiver*—and I would argue, also *Continuous City* and *Spectrovia*—do not function as articulated in psychoanalytic theories of film. The screen on stage does not provide the spectator with a totalizing image that they master over, as suggested by the dominant theories of film put forth by Metz and Baudry. In fact, more closely aligned with Lacan’s mirror as screen, the screen on stage points to the division at the very heart of the body and self—the inherent doubling of the self within itself.

The screens in *loopdiver* provide an example of this doubling in their projection of the dancer’s bodies. The subject, in this instance the dancer, encounters his or her own being in the projected image. Identifying themselves as object, the subject or the dancer, caught between screen and audience, attempts to adhere to the prescribed movement. In doing this, however, she only alienates herself further as she struggles with the forces of the predetermined, mechanistic choreography and her own living will. This struggle culminates in the six performers literally racing the length of the stage. They run alone, but in parallel. This action is an attempt to escape the relentless patterns that the body finds itself entrenched in. The bodies race, not against one another, but against themselves. They attempt to outrun the self, to escape the body, but are unable to win. They are forced to the ground at the far side of the stage by an invisible barrier that the body cannot cross. There is never a full integration of the screened double. There is never a mastery over the relentless loops that make up the choreography. There is no mastery of the body. We are left with the inherent division of the self. This division shows us that, “the
Other, the Distant, is also the Near and the Same” (Deleuze, *Foucault* 97-98). The lights dim, and one performer announces: “I start again, back to the beginning”. The subject is therefore not annihilated, but is found to be always doubled, always repeating.

In agreement with William Egginton, I see Lacan’s psychoanalytic model of the constitution of self through the visual, to be essentially theatrical. And therefore, the mode of identification that arises through an engagement with the screen may also be understood as theatrical. Egginton argues:

Theatrical identification (while it can still be considered as a sub-type of the identification described by Lacan as fundamental to all linguistic beings) is distinct in that it occurs within the confines of a spatiality that allows for the production of character; it depends upon, in other words, the screen as a division between the space of the audience’s and actors’ bodies (wherein sits the theatrical version of the subject of the enunciation) and the space of the stage (whereon the subject is represented by the theatrical version of its subject of the utterance: a character). The characters on stage (or on a movie screen, in the theatre of world affairs, or sometimes right in our living rooms) become the site of our imaginary performances of ourselves for the approving (or disproving, depending on the fantasy) gaze of the audience, an audience playing, in our personal fantasy, the role of our ego-ideals, that place from which we are desired. (151-152)

Of course, as much as we desire the unity presented by the screen there is always a failure or misrecognition—clearly articulated by the screen’s division of space in *loopholder*—that results in a “cleft in the quotidian”, rather than knitting together of disparate spaces. This disruption is a result of the processes of theatricality. And we can, therefore, see that the use of the material screen in performance, materially marks this disruption—cleft, gap, or chiasm—between the self and other, interiority and exteriority, actual and virtual.

**The Outside: Screens, Folding, and Thinking**
Likening screens to Freud’s discussion of dolls, mirrors, and automatons, Causey understands the screen, in live performance, to produce a space where we are doubled and witness ourselves
as other. Through an examination of Beckett’s *Film*, Causey supports this claim by the screen as the optical, and virtual, space that hides the object from the eye, marking what is behind, or embedded, in the screen as unknowable (26). Furthermore, in reading Genet’s *The Screens*, Causey argues that the screen positions real objects beside their virtual image, and in so doing reveals a symbiotic relation (27). All of this, for Causey, illustrates that the screen used in live performance, “constitutes the staging of the privileged object of the split subject, that which assists in the subject’s division, capturing the gaze, enacting the subject’s annihilation, its nothingness, while presenting the un-presentable approach of the real through the televisual screen” (17).

To this analysis I would add, that material screens used in performance, make evident our continued movement between the actual and virtual elements of our experience. The screen folds the space of the theatre, turning the space of performance inside-out/outside-in, revealing a “cleft in the quotidian”, and producing an encounter with the other or with the outside. Said differently, screens fold space, marking that which exists outside the theatre and also outside the self. This is evident in *Continuous City*’s performed blog posts, and also in *looppider*’s projection of the dancer’s bodies on screen. However, as also illustrated in these two productions, the screens simultaneously mark the outside as being intrinsically linked to an inside. They illustrate that the cities and bodies presented on the screen are also, always already intertwined with our own interiority, our own imaginative processes. Thus, the screen while inherent to mechanics of theatrical viewing disrupts the established boundaries of the aesthetic field, and forces us to deal with seemingly incongruent orders of being. The screens’ folding of space brings the spectator to an encounter with the self as other, an encounter with the Other existing within the self.
Moreover, the screens folding of space allows for the simultaneous presence of two seeming opposed ways of being, which are produced from and encounter with the outside.

Another way to consider the outside is in relation to the chaos of the universe from which life and creativity emerges. Interestingly, for our purposes, the chaos of the outside requires a mediating force—a screen of sorts—to bring order to the forces at play. In the chapter of *The Fold* entitled “What is the Event?” Deleuze writes:

> Chaos does not exist; it is an abstraction because it is inseparable from a screen that makes something - something rather than nothing - emerge from it. Chaos would be a pure Many, a purely disjunctive diversity, while the something is a One, not a pregiven unity, but instead the indefinite article that designates a certain singularity. How can the Many become the One? A great screen has to be placed in between them. Like a formless elastic membrane, an electromagnetic field, or the receptacle of the *Timaeus*, the screen makes something issue from chaos, and *even if this something differs only slightly*. (76, original emphasis)

The notion of the outside is therefore bound to a kind of chaotic potentiality that is mediated by the screen. And it is this chaotic potentiality—this outside—that is folded into the movement between the theatre’s materiality and immaterial spaces. Furthermore, this folding of space—this encounter with the outside—brings something into existence. Thought emerges. It emerges through the chaos organized by the screen. It emerges in the movement across the screen, or the movement between material and immaterial space.

Toni Dove’s use of screens demonstrates the emergence of something from the screen itself. As we navigate the ghosting of the live performer’s gesture in the cinematic image, we are presented with something that is beyond, or outside, the parameters of either the familiar theatre or cinematic experience. The live performer’s presence is felt in the material space of the theatre and in space of light that created from the projection of the cinematic image. For its part, the cinematic image comes alive in a new way. It moves in unexpected rhythms, catching up with the live gesture, or pulling the live gesture along with it. Brain Massumi, writing on Dove’s
Artificial Changelings (1995-2000), describes this relationship as the experience of being sucked into, “a movement that isn't quite yours, but doesn’t feel totally outside you” (Massumi Interface and I np). In this way, Dove’s work is uncanny, simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. For Dove, the uncanny is, “the other side of ordinary experience. It’s the heimlich and the unheimlich—if you don’t have the familiar, the comfortable, you can’t have the strange” (Massumi Interface and I np). In Dove’s work the cinema is used a familiar ground, it is, “a place to locate yourself and be ease, and then these new technology make the cinematic experience go strange” (Massumi Interface and I np). Significantly, it is in the experience of “going strange” that we are able to slip between the two sides of ordinary experience, between that which we know and are familiar with, and that which is becoming before us. Here, in the “going strange” we experience the “slipperiness of experience” (Massumi Interface and I np).

This movement is expressed in the way that Spectropia allows us to experience and witness the movement between the live gesture and the cinematic image. It is also expressed in the production’s narrative. Within the narrative, Spectropia transports herself through time in search for information that may help her piece together the mystery of her father’s disappearance. In her time traveling, Spectropia finds herself inhabiting the body of another woman living in New York in the 1930’s. What is most interesting about this element of the narrative is the way that the character of Spectropia, like the live performers and audience members, must navigate multiple spaces. Outside her own body, like the live performers in the theatre, Spectropia repeatedly encounters reflective surfaces. She passes a mirror, a window. The brass elevator door presents her with her own image. However, in each of instances Spectropia does not encounter her own reflection, but rather she sees the reflection of the women whose body she has possessed. Each of these instances, in which Spectropia encounters herself,
but not quite, echoes the experience of watching the live gestures inhabit the film. The live performer is there, in the screened image, but not quite.

Here, the screen enfolds us and moves us between the spaces of our own interiority and exteriority, opening us to that which exists outside. It is this encounter with the outside—that which is not within our familiar modes of thinking and which we do not know, and cannot represent—that has the potential to move us to thought. Deleuze suggests, that the screen, “makes something issue from chaos” (Deleuze, The Fold 76). What emerges from chaos via the screen may be the subject, thought, or something else. But, what is significant is that, something is constituted in the spaces that the screen separates “even if this something differs only slightly” (76).
Notes to Chapter Two

1 The character of Sally Rand eventually provides Spectropia with pertinent information about her father’s business dealings. However, the character is based on Sally Rand (1904-1979), an American actress and burlesque dancer most famous for her ‘fan’ and ‘bubble’ dances. Toni Dove first introduced Sally Rand as a character in an interactive DVD-ROM project, Sally or the Bubble Burst (2002). Elements of this project, including the bubble dance scene described in this chapter, are incorporated into Spectropia. Within the performance’s narrative, the bubble becomes an important metaphor referring to the stock market crash of 1929, an event that shapes the actions of the characters. Dove also uses it as a way of linking the historical events of her story to the 2008 market crash. The character of Sally Rand is performed by Helen Pickett, who has performed with the Wooster Group and William Forsythe’s company.

2 For more on the phenomenological account of space see: Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception. (1962); Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. (1994).

3 While these analyses are useful in taxonomizing the elements of the space of performance, it is important to acknowledge that underscoring both Pavis and Ubersfeld’s approaches is an ideal, and passive, spectator who is understood to read the stage from a seemingly distant and objective position. This reflects a particular mode of theatre that is structured around the separation of stage and auditorium, a separation that can be linked to the Cartesian separation of mind and body. Jill Dolan, Rebecca Schneider, and Elin Diamond have all worked, from a feminist perspective to explore how such a positioning of the spectator can be challenged.

4 The terms space and place are interrelated and their connections, and distinctions, are worth brief acknowledgement. In The Practice of Everyday Life Michel de Certeau suggests that, “space is practiced place” (117). In other words, space is intersection of the relations and connections between places. Places are specific points within the larger territory of space. In this way space can be understood as transitory, made up of mobile elements, and only loosely ordered. On the other hand, place can be thought of as the ordering of space and this ordering brings a kind of stability to what we experience as place. Certeau’s understanding of space as practiced follows a similar line of thought to that of Lefebvre, who understands space to the product of social, cultural, and political relations.

5 Stealing from the material reality of our everyday occurs in the theatre’s use of human bodies and everyday objects. The body of the actor is “stolen” and reincorporated into the fiction created on stage, in the same way that a chair from the actual world is incorporated into the fictional world. Stephenson suggests, “in this way, actual-world objects of all kinds participate in the interior fictional world acquiring a phenomenological duality. Without this perceptual duality, there can be no theatre” (25).


7 Documentation of the liveness debate can be found in: Dixon, Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation (2007); Giesekam, Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre (2007); Reinelt and Roach, “Mediatized
Related to this debate, but with a slightly different emphasis, Rebecca Schneider is currently rethinking the relationship between the ‘live’ and the ‘dead’ in performance. She detailed the initial stages of her thinking on this in her lecture, “Acting in Ruins”, given at the Performance Studies Canada Speaker Series. March 1, 2013.


It is worth noting that the Builder’s recent production, *House/Divided*, returns to the image of the house. The set for *House/Divided* (2011-2012) is a foreclosed home. The company used architectural elements from actual foreclosed homes in the set design.

Information on the design process can be found in John Cleater’s interview with Nick Kaye for the Presence Project. A transcript of this interview can be found on the Presence Project website.

Foucault suggests that the theatre is a heterotopia because it is, “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (“Of Other Spaces” 25). The theater constructs in one place, the stage, “a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (25).

It could be argued that the imagination, while not a central concept to Deleuze’s overall philosophy, is significant because he positions it as a force of creation. This force is a necessary element in his attempt to overturn Platonism in *Difference and Repetition*.

This quote is taken from a section where Deleuze is discussing Artaud’s relation to thought. He writes: “He [Artaud] know that the problem is not to direct or methodically apply a thought which pre-exists in principle and in nature, but to being into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other work, all the rest is arbitrary, mere decoration). To think is to create—there is not other creation—but to create is first of all to engender ‘thinking’ in thought” (*Difference and Repetition* 147).

While the dancers improvised the base material, the computer may be understood as the choreographer since it ultimately selected the repetition of movements for the piece. This seemingly random approach to choreography has its origins in the works of Merce Cunningham. However, where Cunningham used the role of a die or the tossing of a coin to determine the structure of a dance, *loopdiver* uses a computer algorithm.

In theoretical discourse the concept of the outside appears in many guises. It can be understood as related to Nietzsche’s ‘Dionysian energy’, Heidegger’s ‘Sein’ and ‘Earth’, Freud’s ‘unconscious’, Lacan’s ‘Real’, Levinas’ ‘Other’, and Deleuze’s own ‘virtual’. My understanding of the outside is situated in the assemblage of Blanchot/Foucault/Deleuze. And, more specifically, in Foucault’s reading of Blanchot’s literary outside, and Deleuze’s reading of Foucault. Foucault appropriates the concept of the outside from Blanchot, for whom the outside is simply anything that is radically beyond—that which is beyond Being, language or thinking.
16 Bechtel reads *loopdive* as, “an exemplary instance of a performance that both explores and depends on kinesthetic empathy to achieve its effects” (78). Furthermore, he identifies the production as an exploration of the ways that, “bodies of trauma onstage impact the bodies in the audience” and specifically, he is interested in how an experience of empathy may result from this encounter (78). Bechtel positions *loopdive* as a non-representational exploration of the trauma experienced in our contemporary media culture, and seeks to envision how the production may be read as a possible means for us to collectively work through this trauma.

17 Joan Copjec argues in, “The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan”, that film theory’s appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis has fundamentally misread Lacan’s main argument regarding the subject’s encounter with the mirror. Film theory has positioned the cinematic screen as mirror, where Lacan argues the inverse: the mirror as screen.

18 See Egginton p. 151
CHAPTER THREE

Presence, Voices, and a Stammering Towards Thought

*The present is necessarily the erosion and slippage of presence.* It denotes an event that empties the now and in this emptiness itself lets memory and anticipation flash up. The present cannot be grasped conceptually but only as a perpetual self-division of the now into ever new…(429,187),(528,208)

--Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* 144

We have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe that the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused Being with being-present.

--Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 55

Falling into Emptiness or Encountering Multiplicity

The theatre is small. The stage jammed into a corner. A single mirror hangs on the upstage wall. Québécois actress Marie Brassard sits, her back to the audience, a long black ponytail falling between her bare shoulder blades. Pulling on a suit jacket she turns to face us: a woman, dressed as a man, looking like a child. She begins to speak and a visible microphone mediates her voice. The sound emanating from this body (from the microphone? the speakers?) is distant, mechanical, and unearthly. The character seems to emerge from an unfamiliar (or possibly too familiar) place somewhere in the tension between the physical body and the voice’s manipulation. In spite of our familiarity with mechanized sound and mediated voices the disjunction between voice and body that Brassard’s performance constructs is affecting. This strange creature tucked into a dark corner of the theatre, escapable only by a mirror hung on otherwise bare walls, leads us through a haunting account of dreams, desires, and loss.

Marie Brassard’s solo show, *Jimmy* (2001, 2009), is the tale of a homosexual hairdresser who was born in the dream of an American general. At the moment when Jimmy is about to kiss his lover the general dies, and thus leaves Jimmy suspended in desire until he is re-dreamed fifty
years later by an actress from Montreal. Here, in Brassard’s dreaming unconscious, we witness Jimmy’s attempts to reawaken his suspended desire as he struggles for possession of Brassard’s performing body. Playing on the inherent tension between performer and character the performance poses the question of who possesses whom. The microphone used to distort Brassard’s voice, and to create new voices, emphasizes this tension by displacing the origin of the voice. In performance we are left to distinguish between the discreet presences of Brassard and the many characters that arrive on stage. The difficulty of this task is evident when in the midst of confessing his deepest fear, the always-possible potential of falling into emptiness, the microphone that has been used to bring the character Jimmy into existence suddenly goes dead. In this moment the theatre fills with silence. The silence lingers. Is this our own falling into emptiness? Finally, a small unfamiliar voice, Brassard’s own unmediated voice, pierces the silence: “I’m really sorry… In a normal show, I would improvise something and just go on, but here… Without this voice I cannot do anything…” (Brassard 21).

To a certain degree, this moment can be thought of as the deconstruction of the theatrical event itself. It is the stripping away of pretense in order to construct a new reality between the object on stage and the spectator. However, at the same time this moment is meticulously assembled. In fact, this moment is built entirely on the theatrical pretense that the previous statement suggests may be stripped away. Playfully scripted into the performance the malfunction of the microphone is a device that creates a particular affective experience. It produces both terror and pleasure, and encapsulates what Josette Féral identifies as the “ongoing battle between the mastery and the outbursts of disorder that stalk the actor” (“Forward” 12). For Féral, it is the tension between chaos and order that renders theatrical performance invigorating. In this space between order and chaos the “spectator grasps the otherness in the actor—the actor
as himself but also as other” (12). Furthermore, the spectator becomes aware of the “codes and flows” the “symbolic forces and the impulsive detours” that play on and through the actor’s body (12). In the moment described above, we are acutely aware of Brassard’s doubled presence, her existence as both performer and character. Such instances produce a disjuncture in the performance space where theatricality emerges.

Brassard’s constructed silence forces us to confront a space outside our familiar terrain of thinking or our familiar experience of the theatre. We are asked to conceive of Brassard’s unmediated presence and this requires that we continually move between the space existing between performer and character. Our encounter with Brassard’s presence is a confrontation with what we do not know and cannot expect. It is a destabilization that requires us to see and experience the world, and our encounters with it, in a new way. While the anxiety in this moment is high—the anxiety of being stripped bare, left with nothing—we do not fall into emptiness, but rather we experience presence as a force existing in the space between order and chaos, between self and other. This is what I will come to call an encounter with presence as multiplicity. The variation experienced in this moment does not link self-presence to some a priori sense of being, but rather it, “throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand Plateaus 240). We are unsettled, or swept up, by presence as an affective force or multiplicity. Here, presence’s variation produces a new relationship between Brassard as performer and us as spectators. Just as we are ready to give up on the possibility of returning to any semblance of a “normal show”, the microphone reengages and Brassard, the performer, recedes while the character of Jimmy reappears. Our relationship is changed as we are, again, pulled into Jimmy’s attempts to claim Brassard’s body as his own. However, at the same time, we are also faced with the unrecognizable presence of Brassard as a performer. And in this doubling, of Brassard as
performer and character, we are brought to the unrecognizable and challenged to thought.

This chapter critically engages the question of presence in relation to the creation of theatricality. More specifically, it examines how the vocal mediation produced by Marie Brassard in her productions of Jimmy (2009) and Peepshow (2007), as well as by Toni Dove in her most recent film/theatre hybrid production Lucid Possession (2009-present), destabilizes the relationship between voice and body, unsettles language, and punctuates silence in order to situate presence as an opening to multiplicity rather than individuality.

Multiplicity is used here in the Deleuzian sense to refer to the capture of variation. This variation may be illustrated by the, “the continuous infinity of shades of red between this dark red and that light red” (Williams 145, original emphasis). For Deleuze, writing with Guattari, a multiplicity cannot be defined by its particular elements or by the unification and comprehension of these elements into a singular whole (Thousand Plateaus 249). Rather, a multiplicity “is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension without changing its nature” (249, original emphasis). Multiplicity, therefore, allows us to apprehend presence as a state of continuous change and variation, as opposed to a state of static origin.¹ This is significant for thinking about the relationship between the voice and presence because the voice has historically been rendered a site that marks an individual’s presence by signifying a place of origin, essence, or stable identity. I argue, however, that Brassard and Dove’s employment of the voice in performance challenges this assertion and opens a place to understand the voice as indicating presence to be a force of continual variation rather than a site that contains and delimits being.² This allows presence to be apprehended as an affective encounter, or an encounter with intensity and sensation, as opposed to an encounter with essence.
and particular meaning. I ultimately argue that this opens a space for a movement toward thought by creating an opening in which a fundamental encounter may occur.

**Differential Presence**

It is important to acknowledge the significance of Laura Cull’s work on Deleuze and performance theory to the arguments of this chapter. Her work has not only put Deleuze in conversation with performance discourse, but it has focused on reading Deleuze in relation to issues of presence. This has resulted in her articulating a theory of what she calls ‘differential presence’.³ Defining differential presence in the negative Cull argues that it does not aim:

> to transcend difference in order to reach the self-identical presence of Western metaphysics…rather [it] gives us access to the real as difference in itself, as an immanent ‘perpetual variation’ from which mere representational differences are derived…Differential presence names an encounter with difference, or perpetual variation, as that which exceeds the representational consciousness of a subject, forcing thought through rupture rather than communicating meanings through sameness. (“Organs” 244)

From this definition it is clear that differential presence is may be closely aligned with both Deleuze’s understanding of multiplicity as a state of continuous change, and his articulation of the fundamental encounter. This is because differential presence refers to an experience existing outside representation that has the potential to move us to thought through an encounter with difference. Such an experience of presence may be found in the example provided from Brassard’s *Jimmy*. Here, presence is experienced as an affective force rather than a form of representational recognition. Brassard’s use of vocal meditation constructs an encounter between performer and spectator that produces an intensity of sensation, rather than an image or referent that adheres to a particular meaning. Unsettled by the silence of the microphone malfunction and the assertion that the performance can no longer proceed the spectator is asked to re-envision their relationship to the being standing before them. Brassard’s presence does not correlate to a
particular known image, and therefore the spectator is left to experience her presence as sensation instead of recognition. This experience moves the spectator from naming and/or knowing what is positioned before them, to engaging with the object in potentially unexpected ways. It is therefore through an encounter with presence as difference that the spectator may be moved beyond their limits and towards thought.

Defining Presence
Presence is multifaceted. It is temporal and spatial. It refers to a present moment or a particular event in time and space. It is bodily. It names a state of Being and describes the experience of a particular body. Presence is relational. It is implicated in the relationship between subject and object. In the introduction to *Performing Presence: Between the Live and the Simulated*, Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye argue that presence is connected to, “the dynamics and motilities of experiences of witnessing and being witnessed” (3). Drawing on the definition provided by the *OED*, Giannachi and Kaye demonstrate that “presence” indicates that which is “before I am”. It is that which is “in front of” or within my view (4). Presence, therefore, implies a self-conscious “being before” another person or object. Implicit in this relation is an “unsettling of oppositions” that gives rise to “uncertain divisions and differences” which are inherent to the relation between self and other (3). In this way, presence emphasizes the complexities of the relationship between perceiver and perceived, between subject and object. Furthermore, it defines the parameters of representation by requiring an engagement between one’s own self-presence and an otherness—alterity or difference—that exists along side the self.

As a site that places objects and bodies before spectators the theatre evokes presence. It continually re-establishes and re-imagines the relationship between subject and object. However, as a critical concept presence has been, and continues to be, used in various ways and to differing ends in the discourses of theatre and performance studies. In relation to the theatre, presence is
most commonly used to describe the spectator’s experience of the performer’s materiality at a particular moment in time. Semiologist Patrice Pavis describes it as: ‘to have presence […] means knowing how to captivate the audience, being endowed with an indefinable quality that immediately arouses the spectators’ identification, giving them the impression of being elsewhere, in an eternal present (Pavis 285). This is often referred to as the “the actor’s presence”, their “aura”, or “energy” and is difficult to define because it is often connected to a sense of mystery, truth, and/or spirituality that ostensibly gestures to something beyond the representational scheme of the theatre.

This conceptualization of presence was particularly significant for the experimental theatre practitioners of the 1960’s including: the Living Theatre, Allan Kaprow, Eugenio Barba, and Richard Schechner. Strongly influenced by the work of Artaud, Brecht, Beckett, and Grotowski, these artists argued that the essence of theatre was to be found in the actor’s presence before the audience. For them presence was derived from the performer’s “embodiment of, or even possession by, the character defined in a play text” or “from the archetypal psychic impulses accessible through the actor’s physicality” (Auslander, Presence and Resistance 37).

Presence, therefore, referred to either the “relationship between actor and audience—the actor as manifestation before an audience—or, more specifically, to the actor’s psychophysical attractiveness to the audience” (37). Presence was understood as something cultivated by the actor as a means of arousing a response in the viewer. However, if we return to Pavis’ statement, it is clear that presence is not only a quality within the observed object, but it is also an affective response within the viewing subject, toward the object observed. Furthermore, Pavis introduces presence as being associated with an experience of immediacy, communication, and the possibility for spatiotemporal transcendence. Thus, we come to see that presence not only
describes the experience of the actor’s presence—their physicality, energy or aura and our spectatorial response to this presence—but, that it also refers to a particular feeling of “being there”, of being present at, or to, an event. In this way, presence has to do with spatial and temporal relations and refers to the sense of “nearness” or “nowness” that is produced by the theatre’s collapsing of the distinction between fiction and reality (Pavis 286). In his critique of the theatre’s theories of presence, Cormac Power classifies this experience of presence as the “fictional mode of presence”, a mode of presence in which the fictional world on stage produces a sense of immediacy, or the feeling that what is occurring on stage is happening in the present moment (15). Such moments make us aware of the theatre’s suturing of the representational world of the stage and text to the material worlds of the actor and spectator. Presence, as such, creates a concurrent present moment to which everyone in the theatre becomes witnesses.

Writing in response to the MOMA retrospective of Marina Abramović’s work entitled, *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present* (2010), Amelia Jones succinctly defines presence as a commonly understood state of “unmediated co-extensivity in time and place of what I perceive and myself” (18). She suggests that presence promises the observer a certain transparency that allows them to experience what *is* at the moment at which it takes place (18). This definition not only highlights a concern for the relationship between subject and object, but incorporates two other central elements: a sense of temporality (the subject and object exist within the same moment in time) and a sense of immediacy (the relationship between the subject and the object is unmediated). The incorporation of temporality and immediacy points to a sense of authenticity that is also apparent in discussions of presence. When discussing presence there is often an implied reference to an experience of an essential and/or truthful characteristic of whatever is being discussed. Jones articulates this as the “what *is*”—the seemingly essential and unchanging
qualities of the subject or object (18). The tendency to equate presence with being, or that which *is*, runs throughout Western philosophy. It is evident in Plato’s distain for mimesis on the basis that, for him, mimesis places a barrier between the-thing-itself and our contemplation of it. It draws the mind away from a contemplation of true being and is dangerous because it may potentially hide ‘truth’ and obscure ‘presence’. Such reasoning places presence, in Western thought, next to truth and reality. Paradoxically, this reasoning also reinforces certain approaches to presence in the theatre. For example, the modernist avant-garde, in their quest for an autonomous art object, stressed presence as a central element to the work of art. And more specifically, as an art form that incorporates the live human body in real time, the theatre has historically been positioned as a site capable of securing presence more fully than other representational mediums such as photography or cinema. This potential for encountering presence has been exploited even further by performance art practitioners and art historians who argue that performance art brings us even closer to an encounter with presence by abandoning the representational elements of the theatre (narrative, character, text).

Herbert Blau, Philip Auslander and Jacques Derrida have been critical of positioning theatre and performance as mediums that secure presence. In different contexts they each argue that there is nothing more illusionary in performance than the illusion of unmediated or pure presence. Therefore, while presence is commonly understood as providing a certain kind of authenticity, this authenticity is not easily established in the theatre. Amelia Jones articulates this in her examination of Abramović’s work. She argues that, “in spite of claims in the media to the contrary […] there cannot be a definitively ‘truthful’ or ‘authentic’ form of the live event even at the moment of its enactment […] there cannot, therefore, be a re-enactment that faithfully renders the truth of this original event” (19).
To understand the logic of this statement it is useful to turn to Derrida, who makes a similar point in his critique of the metaphysics of presence. Critical of the formulation of “presence as being”, Derrida’s deconstructive analysis demonstrates how the present moment can never be fully experienced. Instead, the present and is always already in a constant state of deferral. It is always already absent. This absence of presence is identified by Derrida as the “trace”, which is, “not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself” (Voice and Phenomenon 156). The trace—the delay, the deferral, or difference—is the remnants of the past and the future. It is the remnants of all possible meanings that foreclose on the present moment and complicate it by imbuing it with non-presence. Therefore, at the foundation of presence, at the foundation of every present moment, there is an absence that keeps us from ever being fully present to either ourselves or to one another. We are unable to be present because experience is always divided. The present moment—now—is never simply the experience of that which is taking place before me. There is always something more that is continually concealed. This is the remnant of that which has just past and/or that which is to come to pass. Therefore, the present or presence, the that which is before I am, is always already moving towards its own disappearance. It is always already bounded by absence.6

The relationship between presence and absence ultimately defines the relationship between subject and the object, and this returns us to Giannachi and Kaye’s definition of presence as that which is before I am. The presence of an object is contingent on the oscillation of the object between its own appearance and disappearance. In the relationship between viewer and viewed, the thing viewed makes an appearance. The object can therefore only be viewed because of the inevitability of its own disappearance—its own coming into presence and
inevitable departure. The oscillation between presence and absence is evident in the example from Brassard’s *Jimmy* outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Brassard has stated that the production can no longer go on. The theatre has filled with silence and just as the spectator is about to give up on any possibility of returning to the performance the microphone reengages. In this moment, Brassard, the performer, disappears and the character of Jimmy reappears to claim his presence. However, it is impossible to only see the character of Jimmy. Brassard’s performing body now haunts Jimmy, and Brassard’s presence is made visible because of its disappearance into the character.⁷

Presence is found the liminal space between appearance and disappearance, between subject and object. This liminal space is significant for understanding presence as an affective encounter because it is dynamic, never static, and felt through movements and disturbances. In the case of Brassard’s performance, the disturbance is the silence that cuts through both the mediated and unmediated voice. It is the silence that produces a disruption within the established theatrical frame and exposes the complex relationship between a present “I” (Brassard herself, or your and I the spectator) addressing some “other” (you and I the spectator, or Brassard herself) in the here and now.

In the silence variations of affect—fear, surprise, joy, shame—arise and play on, and through, the spectating body. There is awareness that both the object on view and the spectator’s relation to it are not stable. Meaning, being and presence are, experienced as variation or multiplicity, as the disruption produced by the silence moves the spectator along a continuous and new trajectory. In this space Derrida’s proclamation that, “[p]lay is the disruption of presence” (Derrida, “Sign, Structure, Play” 292).⁸ Play challenges the supposed fixity and permanence of full presence and offers us two choices: we can long for stability and mourn the
loss of presence as a fixed and stable truth; or we can begin to play in the variations afforded by multiplicity and reveal presence as a site of production, a site of play.

Play and disruption are key components for creating a site where presence is experienced as the liminal space between absence and presence, rather than a foundational state of being. It is in liminal space that we may be able to loosen the hold established between subject and object and allow them to form new relations that may challenge their binary relation. Furthermore, the liminal space created may be conceived of as a place where one comes to participate in the process of presence production, as opposed to observing presence as a pre-given characteristic of either subjectivity, or the object on display. Brassard’s play with technology not only produces a disturbance in the theatrical frame, but it invites us to participate in the theatre event in a new way. Our relation to the object before us is changed. We are opened to a space where the spectator is invited to experience the fluctuation of differences—of affect—that ultimately construct presence. Significant here is the possibility that technology, rather than abolishing presence, which dichotomies of the live and mediated at times suggest, may actually make variations of presence evident within performance.

**Presence and the Voice**

As the primary link between performer and character the voice is one of the fundamental building blocks of theatrical mimesis. Patrice Pavis describes the actor’s voice as, “the last step before reception of text and performance by the spectator’” and because of this he locates the voice, “at a point of junction of dialectical tension between body and text, acting and linguistic signs” (435-36). It is the performer’s voice that carries and brings forth the character’s speech, and it is the interplay between the performer’s voice and their body that ultimately produces the object of theatrical imitation. In this way the performer’s voice is, “simultaneously pure physical presence and the barer of a system of linguistic signs” (435-36). The tension between
the function of the signifier within a particular semiotic system and pure physical presence is evident in Brassard’s microphone malfunction. In this moment we become aware of the paradox of the voice, or how it functions both inside and outside the theatre’s representational systems. We recognize the voice as a particular sign that signals the character of Jimmy, but we also experience the voice as a marker of Brassard’s own physical presence.

This presentation of the voice underscores the Western intellectual tradition that considers the voice to be a site where the subject’s presence manifests. Commonly linked to our sense of Being, the voice is understood as providing direct access to the subject’s presence or essence. The voice marks the subject’s interiority, authority and authenticity. This is illustrated by the quivering voice that is recognized as revealing something beyond the meaning of the spoken word. It is also evident in the way that the Freudian analysand’s voice is accepted as a symptom of their neurosis. In both cases the voice signifies something inherent to, but also in excess of, the subject. It signals the subject’s presence.

The assertion that there is a direct link between the subject’s presence and their voice drives Derrida’s seminal critique of Western metaphysics. In *On Grammatology* (1967), Derrida illustrates how Western thought is predicted on phonocentrism, or the suppression of the written sign in favor of the spoken utterance. He argues that particularly within the philosophical tradition, writing stands in for the author when their voice cannot be present to articulate their thoughts. This positions the act of writing as supplemental. It is something that is resorted to when the origin of thought, the authors’ vocalized language, is unavailable. Thus, the voice becomes the bearer of, and/or sign of, the speakers’ being. There is an, “absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning” (*Of Grammatology* 11). Hence, the voice is upheld as a point of origin, a place where thought,
meaning and being become manifest through language.\textsuperscript{11}

Derrida is skeptical of this privileging of speech because it implies an accessible presence, which he understands to be impossible because of the inherent relation between presence and absence. It is for this reason that Derrida’s deconstruction of presence has profoundly altered interpretations of theatrical presence. It is also for this reason that Marvin Carlson is able to claim that after Derrida it was difficult for theatre theorists and performers to, “comfortably embrace the goal of pure presence”, which had been the defining element of modernist conceptions of the theatre (Carlson 135-6).\textsuperscript{12} Derrida’s deconstruction of presence, therefore, ultimately places pressure on interpretations of the work of artists such as Constantine Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski who, in different ways, have been conceived of as desiring to create a theatrical experience where pure presence was foregrounded.\textsuperscript{13}

The influence and strength of Derrida’s critique of presence is evident in Elinor Fuchs 1985 essay, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Re-thinking Theatre After Derrida”.\textsuperscript{14} Fuchs’ seminal essay outlines the historical shift from thinking about theatre as a site of that renders pure presence accessible, to thinking about the theatre as a site of absence. Fuchs charts the way that theatre practitioners of the mid-twentieth century (Julian Beck, Richard Schechner, Joseph Chaikin, Peter Brook) turned to the work of people like Artaud and Grotowski in an attempt to (re?)claim presence as a defining element of the theatre. Simultaneously, however, she identifies a divergent group of artists (Mabou Mines, The Wooster Group, Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson) who sought to put the very notion of presence as a defining element of theatre into question. Drawing on Derrida’s critique of presence, Fuchs argues that the work originating from the later group of artists can be understood as an attempt to create “aesthetics of Absence rather than of Presence”. The privileging of absence ultimately, “disperses the center, displaces the
Subject, [and] destabilizes meaning” (Fuchs 165).

The relationship between speech, writing, and the voice plays a significant role in the rethinking of presence. Fuchs draws particular attention to the relationship between speech and writing by opening her essay with an acknowledgment of how the dramatic text, in Western performance practice, has historically been effaced in order to secure the illusion of being-as-presence: “Since the Renaissance, Drama has traditionally been the form of writing that strives to create the illusion that it is composed of spontaneous speech, a form of writing that paradoxically seems to assert the claim of speech to be a direct conduit to Being” (Fuchs 163). Fuchs continues, suggesting: “In a motion that parallels Derrida’s deconstruction of speech and writing theatre practitioners have begun to expose the normally ‘occulted’ textuality behind the phonocentric fabric of performance” (166). Citing practitioners including as The Wooster Group and Richard Foreman, Fuchs claims that certain performance practices position the text itself on the stage, which makes it difficult to consider the text as the origin of theatrical illusion and, thus, denies the possibility to claim presence as spontaneous speech that secures the being of the performer (163).

The question of presence does not end with the relation between speech and text. In the essay, “Disposition of the Voice”, Régis Durad writes: “[n]othing is closer to me than my voice: the consciousness of the voice is consciousness itself […] My words are 'alive' because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance; not to cease to belong to me…The voice is present, presence itself” (301-302). While Durad’s statements seem to support speech as a privileged form of communication, and one that most directly and authentically represents human thought, he is quick to acknowledge that the voice is distinct from speech: “Speech is not voice. It is a voice that has run over and through language” (302).
Deleuze makes a similar claim in *The Logic of Sense*: “the paradox of the voice” is that it “has the dimension of a language without having its conditions; it awaits the event that will make it language. It is no longer noise but not yet language” (194). The precariousness of the voice is important because it allows the voice to produce both affect and meaning. When tethered to language the voice marks particular meaning by adhering to recognizable patterns within the established representational system. When freed from language, or at least from the rules associated with language, the voice moves from a site of meaning production to one of affect production. Rather than representing a thought or an idea, the voice produces changes and variations in relations that upset the stability of being constructed by language’s representational system. The distinction between voice and speech is, therefore, important because it reminds us that even though the voice is intimately connected to speech it ultimately exists in excess of, and points to something beyond, language’s systematized communication. The voice may therefore be, as Durad claims, presence itself. This is not because it signals a stability of being, but because it continually slips and challenges the stability of being imposed by the structure of language.

It may be for this reason that the voice has historically been significant to theatre theorists and practitioners concerned with working outside the prescriptive terms of representationalism. In his attempts to challenge the boundaries of theatre practice Artaud stove to subvert language and remove the voice form the confines of linguistic structures. He did this by abandoning Occidental usages of speech and striving to create a theatre that was capable of turning words into “incantations” and thus extending the voice. His theatre of cruelty worked to use vocal vibrations and qualities as a means of breaking from “language’s intellectual subjugation by conveying the sense of a new, deeper intellectualism hidden under these gestures and signs”
(Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double* 64). Similarly, Hélène Cixous’ feminist manifesto for the theatre, *Aller à la Mer*, turns to the voice as a site for repositioning the feminine within theatricality. Cixous claims that by focusing on the voice we may, “go beyond the confines of the stage, lessening our dependency on the visual and stressing the auditory, learning to attune all our ears, especially those that are sensitive to the pulse of the unconscious, to hear the silences and what lies beyond them” (547). For Cixous, the stressing of the auditory and the attuning of the ear produces a space where we may challenge and rewrite the feminine body for the stage. Deleuze, too, understands the voice to be a powerful theatrical device. Writing on the theatre of Camelo Bene, Deleuze proclaims the importance for finding ways to make speech stutter. He argues that the stutter allows the subject to become a foreigner in his or her own tongue and that this in turn creates a site of disruption and surprise, a site where new connections and assemblages may be made (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 246).

While the theatre is a site that has fused voice, speech, and presence, it has simultaneously sought to find ways to disrupt this seemingly innate connection. I have outlined some of the theoretical articulations of these contradictory impulses. Michael Darroch charts these same contradictory impulses within twentieth century performance practice. Darroch notes Brecht’s onstage radio experiments (*Lehrstücke* 1929-1930), Cocteau’s telephone in *La Voix Humaine* (1930) and Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958) as productions where sound recording technologies and the reproduction, and transmission, of the voice were used to experiment with the possibilities of “extending the realm of the material voice for the production of space and the production of presence” (“Digital Multivocality” 101). Simultaneously, Darroch observes that Artaud’s *Theatre of Cruelty*, the Bauhaus’ synaesthetic projects for a “total theatre,” and Robert Wilson’s *Theatre of Images* strove to break the strong link between voice and language by
attempting to eradiate language from the stage all together (101). Significant is Darroch’s attention to the role of technology in the history of the voice’s position in performance. He suggests that the history charted above illustrates that the growing prominence of acoustic media in cultural production has made it easier to distinguish between the “presence effects of the human voice” and the “meaning effects of human language” (101). Moreover, Darroch contends that central to the ability to make this distinction are innovations in digital sound technologies that reconfigure the materiality of the human voice, and in turn the mediality of theatre (96). The implications of this are great since the voice is one of the fundamental building blocks for theatrical mimesis. Therefore, the diverse use of digital sound technologies by artists, such as Marie Brassard and Toni Dove, continues to reshape the possibilities for the position of the voice in the theatre. Furthermore, their work revives and revises long-standing discussions of presence. More specifically, their incorporation of vocal mediation destabilizes the relationship between voice and body, unsettles language, and punctuates silence in ways that situate presence as an opening to multiplicity rather individuality.

**Voicing the Uncanny: Destabilization of the Relationship Between Voice and Body**

The ability to distinguish between what Darroch calls the “presence effects of the human voice” and the “meaning effects of human language” was made easier because of advancements, in the 19th and 20th century, to in recording technologies. The phonograph and audiotape made it possible to literally separate the voice from the materiality of the body, which, in turn, made it easier to position the human voice as a discrete force, rather than a stable sign of its speaker’s presence. Furthermore, today the voice can, “not only able to be recorded, cut up and spliced together again, but [is] also modulated, reconfigured or simply generated via modern speech technologies” (Darroch, “Multivocality” 96). Due to this, the voice has become a “dematerialised construct” that appears “independent of any body or mind and hence external to embodied
experience or cultural identity” (96). The dematerialization of the voice, or its dissociation from the body, is expressed and explored by both Toni Dove, and Marie Brassard. Dove and Brassard, following a linage that includes Artaud, Beckett, and Wilson, use recording technologies to disconnect the voice from the body. While the deconstruction of the relationship between of voice and body in performance is nothing new, it continues to be significant because it marks the displacement of the voice as a sign of the subject’s inner being. This in turn allows us to question, again, the experience and production of presence.

Toni Dove’s current, interactive live-mix video performance, *Lucid Possession*, develops its narrative around the character of Bean, a designer of virtual avatars, who because of her heightened programming skills, has a mind that functions like a radio receiver that picks up people instead of sound waves. When first introduced to Bean the spectator learns that she designed an online alter ego that has gone viral and has turned her into a minor celebrity. This attention makes Bean’s already sensitive mind feel as though it is “stuffed with people”. In the opening scene she explains that her head is filled with static noise and that she feels like the blank spaces of her mind are filling up: “People clog her servers – they want something, but she isn’t sure what. There’s a noise building in her head” (Dove, *Lucid Possession* website). *Lucid Possession*’s narrative follows Bean as she negotiates the voices in her head, and the noise from the outside world that continues to try to take possession of her.

The trope of possession runs throughout the production’s narrative. It is also literally manifest in the structure and staging of the production. This is significant because it is from the structuring and staging of the production that questions of presence become most evident. Like Dove’s *Spectropia*, *Lucid Possession* is part video and part live performance. These two elements are integral to one another and to the production as a whole. The video elements are not
complete until they interact with specific vocal and gestural movements that are produced by live performers. Conversely, the live performance is not complete without its interaction with the video components. During the performance there are three performers live on stage: Dove, mezzo-soprano Hai-Ting Chinn, and violinist Mari Kimura. All three women are present on stage for the entire production. Dove is positioned stage right with her computer and motion sensing software. Chinn and Kimura are stage left with computers and microphones. Upstage center there is a large central screen and several smaller screens are positioned near the ground. Center left there is a human sized mechanical robot/puppet that is made of scrim and looks like a cascading veil. This ghostly statue is programmed to move and change shape based on the movements, and voices, of the live performers. It also doubles as a screen where images of the specters haunting Bean come to life.

The live performers do not embody specific characters. Instead they function as digital puppeteers who convey the narrative that unfolds predominantly within the video. Dove guides the character’s movements and is able to change the perspective and pace of the video by moving her hands. Kimura controls certain movements of the video, as well as the robotic elements of the mise en scene, by playing her violin. Kimura and Chinn also produce the production soundtrack in real time. Chinn’s vocals not only add to the production’s soundtrack, but she provides the voice for Bean’s avatar. The fact that Chinn is the voice for Bean’s avatar is significant because Chinn also appears in the video as Bean. This means that throughout the production the spectator is continually negotiating between Chinn’s live performance and her doubling on the screen. This mirrors the negotiation that takes place in the narrative between Bean and her avatar. The staging and structure of the production, therefore, allow Chinn, like Bean and her avatar, to converse with herself across time and space, across the stage and screen.
Chinn’s vocalizations give voice to Bean’s avatar, which in turn, because of the interactions made possible by the software used by Dove and Kimura, responds back to Chinn. Chinn is doubled. She is literally present and absent at the same time. She is present on stage occupying the same space and time as the spectators. However, mimicking the specters infiltrating Bean’s mind, she is also an absent presence flickering on the screens that compose the mise en scène.

This doubling produces a disjunction between voice and body. Chinn’s voice does not reference her live performing body, but gestures towards something else. The mixing of the live and recorded voice, as well as, the live and recorded body gives Chinn’s voice autonomy within the production. It no longer represents a particular character and simultaneously it no longer references Chinn as the speaking subject. Chinn’s voice is no longer her own, however, unlike Brassard’s Jimmy her voice is not really the voice of any character either. Her voice becomes simply, a voice. It is a beautiful voice sounding itself in the midst of a cacophony of other sounds. It is a beautiful sound in the static noise that fills Bean’s head. This voice does not further the narrative. It is not necessarily there to be listened to for specific meaning or information. Like Bean’s avatar it is no longer tethered to a specific body. It is a voice that wanders, and as such it interacts with and transforms the space of the performance. It requires the spectator to alter how she listens to and engages the objects before her. This voice does not produce characters by linking text and the spoken word. It does not produce coherent presences, or stable signs that reference a something known, but absent. This voice articulates an assemblage. It constructs a complex arrangement of “objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories” that come together “to ideally create new ways of functioning” (Livesey in Parr 18).

The disconnection between voice and body is emblematic of Marie Brassard’s work. It is evident in the example from Jimmy described earlier in the chapter. In this example we witness
the character of Jimmy, signified by the mediated voice, search for a body to possess. Brassard uses a similar vocal modification technique in *Peepshow* (2007). However, the variation and difference in character is pushed even further. *Peepshow* opens in the dark. A child’s voice recalls the event of becoming lost in a forest. The child does not appear to be scared. When night falls she finds herself accompanied by a monster that holds her hand and comforts her. The lights come up, as if to pull the spectator out of this dream, but the mise en scene, reproducing the effect of looking into a peep box (the partitioned space where fantasies are projected) does not allow the dream to end. Instead, the spectator is invited to watch and listen as dreams and nightmares unfold on stage before them. The stage, made peep box, is lit from the back with a screen flanking the upstage wall. Here images and light are projected and reinforce the voyeuristic nature of the peep box. A thick green shag carpet covers the stage floor. Brassard sits on a chair center stage. She is dressed in a red dress, blond wig, black boots, and sunglasses. A microphone is attached to her body, and, as in *Jimmy*, her voice is re-mixed live and in real-time by a sound designer off stage.

Brassard appears as a man, a woman, a child, an animal, and a monster. All of this is done with no physical change to the actress’ body. She remains in the red dress, blond wig, black boots, and sunglasses. She is feminine and highly sexualized. The manipulation of the voice transforms her controlled delivery into a varying soundscape of multiple identities. Female voices become male, become child, become monster. One voice becomes two, becomes three, becomes many. On one level these voices originate from with Brassard’s performing body, but they also come from elsewhere. The voices emanate from the sound system, the speakers, and the darkness that envelops the performance space. They quickly flee from Brassard’s body, or they may never have been connected to it. This establishes a disjuncture between the voice and
In *Peepshow*, as in *Lucid Possession* and *Jimmy*, the performing body and the sounds produced by this body do not always correlate. Chinn and Brassard’s voices, the sounds that are created by pushing air through their vocal cords, are engulfed by the technology and strange new voices emerge and are searching for bodies. Multiple voices emerge from one voice, and new voices are constructed from non-vocal sounds. The original source of the voice, the live performing body, seems to recede into absence as the technological manipulation of the voice points to its materiality apart from its historical place as a sign of the subject’s being.

In *A Voice and Nothing More*, Mladan Dolar argues that while we commonly perceive of a coherency between voice and body, this coherency is fundamentally not possible. The voice is always already exceeding the body. It is continually distancing itself from the body, and therefore making its original source inaccessible. Dolar suggests that because of this we should not be surprised by the fact that what we see and what we hear do not always correspond. And in fact, we are not often surprised by this discord. The ubiquity of our interactions with technologies including the telephone, cinema, and video chat, has accustomed us to the experience of incoherence between voice and body. They make material the fact that, “there is always something totally incongruous in the relationship between the appearance, the aspect, of a person and his or her voice, before we adapt to it. It is absurd, this voice cannot possibly stem from this body, it doesn’t sound like this person at all, or this person doesn’t look at all like his or her voice. Every emission of the voice is by its very essence ventriloquism” (Dolar 70).

While every emission of the voice may be a kind of ventriloquism, or a severing of the voice from the body, Dolar is apt to note that the voice, even in its extension from the body, is simultaneously tethered to it (73). Therefore, even though Chinn and Brassard’s voices seem to
efface their performing bodies—Chinn’s body recedes as her voice moves and interacts with the various elements of the video, and Brassard’s body diminishes as multiple of voices are produced from her single voice—these seemingly effaced bodies are also brought into relief during performance. As their voices fill the empty spaces of the theatre and then dissipate the spectator becomes acutely aware of the bodies present and on stage. It is here that the spectator may come to understand that it is not necessarily the disconnection between body and voice that makes Dove and Brassard’s performances so affecting, but rather it is the way in which the disconnection between voice and body repositions the relationship between subject and object, between performer and spectator.

During an encounter between subject and object we are asked to recognize the thing placed before us. In this recognition we strive to make meaningful sense out of this engagement. The process of making sense reinforces the boundaries of our own, previously established self-presence, and the presence of the object before us. The difficulty with this interaction is that we are not always able to secure recognition. There are times when meaning eludes us and we are left to experience the encounter with the object as a site of variation, rather than stable meaning. Presence is here destabilized and experienced as no longer being tied to any a priori.

Giannachi and Kaye usefully draw a connection between the failure to recognize the object placed before the subject and Freud’s conceptualization of the uncanny. Freud situates the uncanny in space where the comfortable, the familiar, and the secret become uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and disclosed (222-223). It is a point where meaning and recognition collapse, which leaves us outside the structures of representation that normally hold our world together. Giannachi and Kaye argue that presence brings us to a similar encounter:

Presence becomes the instant or action by which that which is Heimlich (belonging to the “I am” but also secret to it) faces that which is unheimlich (which is in front or before it)
and it is in the event of coincidence of these two facets that the uncanny occurs. Through this act, the uncanny, entailed by what is in front of or before the “I am”, returns to the “I am”, and thus discloses in this movement, that which was contained in the “I am” but was “always already” secret to it (7).

The relation between presence and the uncanny illustrates presence as something existing outside the self and experienced in its occurrence. In the examples from Dove and Brassard’s work the disconnection between voice and body creates a place where this relation between subject and object may be experienced. The voice, inherent to the body, extends beyond and exceeds the body, only to encounter the body again as other. This encounter may be described as uncanny. In this encounter the voice and body are both thrust into a state variation producing new voices and bodies that exceed already established parameters. This experience, therefore, does not secure our own self-presence or the separateness of the object before us. It does not secure our being or individuality, rather it indicates an interrelation between subject and object, or self and other, that points to how these two aspects of our experience function in terms of oscillation and variation as opposed to stability and similarity.

The Unsettling of Language: Differential Presence and the Destratified Voice
Artaud’s desire to create a theatre of cruelty—a theatre where words and other theatrical signs have the significance they have in dreams, a theatre that challenges the structures of representation inherent to the theatre itself—has been lauded by those who desire a theatre of pure presence and criticized by poststructuralists who, influenced by Derrida, see pure presence as an impossibility. Many contemporary readings of Artaud within theatre and performance studies have been strongly shaped by Derrida’s seminal deconstruction of Artaud’s concept of the theatre of cruelty outlined in his 1978 essay, “Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”.

In this essay Derrida criticizes Artaud’s project for desiring to create a theatre that no
longer represents, but instead provides access to kind of primal unmediated presence. For Derrida, this project is impossible because it always faces the:

inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a re- presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent. The present offers itself as such, appears, presents itself, opens the stage of time or the time of the stage only by harbouring its own intestine difference, and only in the interior fold of its original repetition, in representation (“Theatre of Cruelty” 16).

Derrida associates the ‘intestine difference’ of the present with the processes of representation arguing that, “[p]resence in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself” (16). This is the paradox of Artaud’s theatre that Derrida is critical of: in order to create a theatre outside of representation Artaud must first construct a way of representing it. Therefore, the stage is always already a site of representation and repetition instead of immediacy and presence. Nothing on stage, including the present presence, is immediate. The stage is always already mediated. It is always already repeating through representation. Derrida qualifies this assertion that the theatre is more about repetition and absence rather than presence stating:

[t]he menace of repetition is nowhere else as well organized as in the theater. Nowhere else is one so close to the stage as the origin of repetition[...]This is indeed how things appear: theatrical representation is finite, and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry off. It is neither a book nor a work, but an energy… In this sense the theater of cruelty would be the art of difference and of expenditure without economy, without reserve, without return, without history. Pure presence as pure difference. (“Theatre of Cruelty” 15)

“Pure presence as pure difference” is, as Laura Cull observes, impossible in Derrida’s reading of Artaud because, “presence requires representation to appear” (Cull, “How To Make” 244). The theatre becomes trapped within an ideology of representation and forecloses the possibility for the creation of the new by leaving the spectator in a space of recognition rather than creation.

While Derrida is clearly skeptical of the theatre’s ability to provide access to unmediated
presence, Cormac Power argues that Derrida does not ultimately “exclude or ‘close’ the notion of theatrical presence” in order to posit absence in its place (Power 139). For Power Derrida’s reading of Artaud holds the idea of theatre’s pure presence in tension with the idea of absence. Accordingly, Derrida argues that Artaud, “cannot resign himself to theater as repetition, and cannot renounce theater as non-repetition” (“Theatre of Cruelty” 17). Artaud, and the theatre more generally, are caught in the trappings of Derrida’s deconstructive analysis, and therefore: “The stage is not threatened by anything but itself” (Derrida, Of Grammatology 307). It is threatened by its own inherent representationalism and its demand for repetition. It is threatened by its own presenting of the present through re-presentation. This conundrum echoes the claim made in the introduction: that the theatre, in becoming, theatre troubles itself.

The question is: how is this possible? How do we let go of theatre or empty the theatre of itself? How do we work within and outside the confines of both the theatre’s inherent representationalism and its demand for repetition? And moreover, how do we do this in such a way that allows us to experience presence as free from recognition or representation? How do we, instead, allow it to open us to and participate with in the various forces at play in performance? And how do we engage these forces as difference-in-itself rather than difference as the repetition and representation of the same?

The answer to these questions, for Artaud, can be found in his demand for the creation of a new language for the stage, one that seeks to disentangle the relationship between voice and language in performance. He writes:

[I]nstead of harking back to texts regarded as sacred and definitive, we must first break theatre’s subjugation to the text and rediscover the idea of a kind of unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought. We can only define this language as expressive, dynamic spatial potential in contrast with expressive spoken-dialogue potential [...] We must take inflection into account here, the particular way a word is pronounced, as well as the visual language of things (audible, sound language aside), also
movement, attitudes and gestures, providing their meanings are extended […] We do not intend to do away with dialogue, but to give words something of the significance they have in dreams. (Artaud, *Theatre and its Double* 63-66)

Here Artaud argues for finding a way to utilize the vibrations and qualities of the voice in order to extend it and turn words into incantations. This extending of voice is as a means of breaking language from intellectual subjugation. It is a freeing of language from recognition by finding ways to express a different kind of knowledge, one that exists beneath the gestures and signs that are associated with the representational system of speech. Artaud’s experimentation with the voice and language therefore produces a space for him to think outside of representationalism. By separating the voice from the signifying confines of textual language he is able to emphasize the somatic, rather than the rational, experience of the theatre. He is able to bring forth dimensions of the voice that exist prior to language, but are no longer simply noise. These dimensions, for whatever reason, grab the spectator’s attention, and while not necessarily recognizable, they demand a response.

Significantly, Artaud does not suggest abandoning language all together, but rather he desires to make words exist as affect and intensity instead of representation. He strives to make words, and more significantly the voice, *do* something. The ability for words to do something in this context has less to do with the meaning that is attached to them, and more to do with what Erika Fischer-Lichte has defined, in *The Semiotics of the Theatre*, as paralinguistic signs. These are vocal sounds that are not identifiable as linguistic, musical, or iconic (22-23). Features of paralinguistic signs include the quality of a vocalization such as pitch, intensity, articulation, rhythm, and resonance. Other features may be completely non-verbal sounds, for instance: breath, laughter, or vocal clicks. The meaning of paralinguistic signs is not fixed and, thus, they function as signs of difference, which point to that which exceeds established meaning.
In her examination of differential presence Laura Cull draws together Artaud’s theatrical experimentations with the voice and Deleuze’s appropriation, and examination, of Artaud’s work. Looking specifically on Artaud’s radio play, *To Have Done With the Judgment of God*, and Deleuze’s reading of Artaud, in *The Logic of Sense*, Cull develops the concept of the destratified voice. She argues that the destratification of the voice, “involves putting elements like intonation, diction, pitch and meaning into variation” (“How Do You Make” 248-49). This comes to fulfillment in Artaud’s *To Have Done With the Judgment of God* since, here, every aspect of the theatre is subtracted except for the voice. Moreover, phonolgocial variation is clearly articulated in both the use of glossolalia that erupts from the text and in Artaud’s resonating cries (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 72). These voices do not convey specific meaning. They do not mark a particular ‘sadness’, ‘joy’, ‘fear’, or ‘longing’. Instead they operate in the spaces between these identifiable categories. They draw our attention to the variation of forces and possibilities at play. The destratified voice, therefore, brings forth a kind of pure movement that does not begin or end by distinguishing itself from something else. It is for this reason that Cull argues that the destratified voice is a useful “alternative to dominate deconstructive interpretations of Artaud’s work” (79). The destratified voice allows us to think difference, and the relationship between difference, repetition, and representation, in new ways.

Marie Brassard’s *Peepshow* has been described as, “a dark, fractured fairy tale peopled with horny wolves, bickering queens, bewitching little girls and dangerous things that bump and grind in the night” (Gauthier np). The narrative is loosely held together by the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. A young girl is pursued by a wolfish character, meanwhile, the narrative moves between the stories of a teenage girl’s sexual awakening, the break up of two gay men, the erotic gaze of a stalker, brief encounters between past lovers, and a child’s development of nightmares.
and desires. These individual stories probe into the dark, lonely, and sometimes dangerous, places that relationships create. Brassard stands center stage, her body is feminine and sexy in a red dress and black boots. This same body produces giggles and the cadences of a tentative child. Still, center stage, but now sitting on a wooden chair with her legs crossed, the same body produces a voice two octaves lower. Is it a man or a monster? It’s hard to tell, but the sentence ends in either a growl or a howl.

In this moment there is a continuous grade of variation between speech, the growl, and the howl. This variation does not secure a particular meaning or presence, but instead unsettles language and meaning while opening us to continual difference. The spectator experiences Brassard as she enters into a series of becomings that are initiated by her use of the voice. When the pitch of the voice shifts from that of a young girl to a man it becomes difficult to identify the sex of the speaker according to the traditional representational categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’. Here the spectator begins to experience a becoming-woman of Brassard’s voice. This is significant because, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the process of becoming-woman is the opening to all other becomings: “Although all becomings are already molecular, including becoming-woman, it must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman” (Thousand Plateaus 277). Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, position becoming-woman as the preliminary entry into becoming other. It is an entry into the world of potential multiplicities. In performance, the becomings of Brassard’s voice, or the production of her multiplicity, do not end. The variations occurring between the growl and the howl alert us to a becoming-animal. This is literally manifest in the articulation of the animalistic growl and howl, but more significantly, becoming-animal manifests in using the voice in such a way that the spectator to comprehends meaning without the mediation of language.
Midway through *Peepshow* a young girl, a Little Red Riding Hood character, begins singing Elvis’s classic song, “Are You Lonesome Tonight.” As she sings, her becoming, or her entering into multiplicity, produces another, deeper, voice that slowly begins to sing with her. This voice is ostensibly that of the wolf character that we have witnessed chasing the young girl throughout the narrative. However, the becoming-girl-becoming-wolf that is made accessible via Brassard’s vocal modulation puts into question the individual separation between girl and wolf—between desire and fear.

Several things are worth noting about this moment. First, the spectator is presented with two disembodied voices that find materialization in the single body of the performing Brassard. This reinforces the complex, and not necessarily unidirectional, relationship between voice and body. It also highlights the uncanny experience of the disjunction between voice and body. Second, adding to the complexity of this relationship is the fact that in the vocalization of the song the spectator not only hears the voice of the young girl and the “wolf”, but also hears Brassard’s own voice moving in and out of focus. Brassard’s voice is heard before, or under, its mediation. Words are uttered and then, almost simultaneously, they are heard again re-mixed through the sound system. Furthermore, Brassard’s breath and sibilance are auditable at the beginning and end of each phrase. These slippages of voice mark that which exceeds Brassard’s representation. They deny the voice any privileged position in securing presence and illustrate how technologies are able to do more to the voice than record and replay it.

Michael Darroch argues that the technology used by Brassard, “places the human voice at the centre of a synaesthetic experience, where digitally-enhanced voices operate on a sonorous plane that mingles the meanings of human speech with other sounds, images and tactile sensations” (Multivocality” 114). This is also true of the technology in Dove’s *Lucid Possession,*
where the destratification of the voice and language occurs in Chinn’s continual playing with her vocalizations. One moment she is blowing her lips, and the next she is moving up and down her vocal scale. These slips of language, or moments where speech stutters and the voice becomes affective sound rather than undistinguishable noise, point to sites of tension where the voice disconnects from the representational structures of speech and enters into continual variation.

In “One Less Manifesto”, Deleuze argues for the importance of finding ways to make speech stutter (246). The stutter is one signifier of the destratified voice. It opens a space for the possibility of becoming a foreigner in one’s own tongue. It produces variation and difference, rather than self-presence as correlation to the thing-itself (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 247). This, in turn, produces a place where disruption and surprise may occur. A place where difference is encountered and new connections and assemblages can be made. Brassard and Dove’s use of technology provides them each with a means to construct and explore the potential of the destratified voice.

**Presence and Silence**

In *The Fate of the Object: From modern object to postmodern sign in performance, art and poetry* Jon Erikson suggests that “[p]resence has an inverse relationship to language” (63). This relationship may be illustrated by the destratified voice in its refusal to adhere to the structures of language and its opening to a space of variation and difference. Beyond the destratified voice, the inverse relationship between presence and language is also demonstrated by the creation and maintenance of silence:

> Presence seems to be most evident in silence, since it resists the disembodying proclivities of discourse. One is holding back the articulate meaning that the audience is expecting. Presence of the body is strong when linguistic desublimation is absent; more precisely, not absent, but not yet manifested. Presence becomes most acute at the moment of its possibility of dispersion into language, the moment of working into speech, at the edge of articulation. (Erikson 63)
What becomes evident here is that an experience of presence is not entirely determined by the voice. The voice is not the sole procurer of presence, and as illustrated with the destratification of the voice presence continually exceeds the voice’s boundaries. Erikson’s observation that presence is most acute at the point of its possible dispersal into language echoes Deleuze’s arguments in *The Logic of Sense* about the paradox of the voice being that it has “the dimensions of a language without having its condition; it awaits the *event* that will make it language. It [the voice] is no longer noise, but not yet language…” (194). Deleuze continues:

In a certain way, this voice has at its disposal all the dimensions of organized language: it denotes the good object as such or, on the contrary, the introjected objects; it signifies something, namely, all the concepts and classes which structure the domain of preexistence; and it manifests the emotional variations of the whole person (the voice that loves and reassures, attacks and scolds, that itself complains about being wounded, or withdraws and keeps quiet). The voice, though, presents the dimensions of an organized language, without yet being able to grasp the organizing principle according to which the voice would be language. And so we are left outside sense, far from it, this time in a *pre-sense* (*pré-sens*) […] Truth to tell, to the extent that it denotes the lost object, one does not know what the voice denotes; one does not know what it signifies since it signifies the order of preexisting entities; one does not know what it manifests since it manifests withdrawal into its principle, or silence. (193-194)

The paradox of the voice then is that it is capable of existing at the “edge of articulation” or in a space awaiting the ‘event’. It exists outside of sense and therefore recognition and representation. It takes the form of paralinguistic signs—grunts, sighs, and breaths—that disrupt and alter language producing a destratified voice. However, existing simultaneously at “the edge of articulation” means that the voice exists in the space that precedes or comes before itself. It exists in silence.

Silence, as a site at “the edge of articulation”, or as a site outside sense, is aptly exemplified in the moment from Brassard’s *Jimmy* described at the beginning of this chapter. In the midst of confessing his deepest fear, the always-possible potential of falling into emptiness,
the microphone being used to bring the character Jimmy into existence suddenly goes dead. The theatre fills with silence. The silence lingers. Is this our own falling into emptiness? Finally, a small unfamiliar voice, Brassard’s own unmediated voice, pierces the silence. “I’m really sorry… In a normal show, I would improvise something and just go on, but here… Without this voice I cannot do anything…” (Brassard 21). In this moment the mediated voice functions as a marker of the character of Jimmy’s presence. Without “the voice”, in silence, there is no Jimmy. However, at the same time Brassard’s unmediated voice functions as a marker of her own self-presence. Therefore, it is by juxtaposing her mediated and unmediated voice that Brassard not only illustrates the historical understanding of the voice as the securer of presence, but that she also puts this understanding into question by disrupting, with an extended silence, the experience of a stable and secure presence. In the silence Brassard is brought uncomfortably close to the spectator. By disrupting the established theatrical frame the silence exposes the complex relationship between a present “I” (Brassard herself) addressing some “other” (the spectator) in the here and now. This disruption—this silence—is affecting. It constructs an encounter to which it is unclear how to respond. In the silence the spectator becomes acutely aware of the fact that they are sharing the same space and time with the being (another presence) on stage. This encounter produces a site of misrecognition, a site of non-sense, where the spectator is unaware of their relation to the object that has been transformed before them. In this misrecognition variation proliferates as the experience of the stability of presence is put into question. In this space, charged by silence, new alignments between subject and object are created. When Brassard’s microphone clicks back on and the production “resumes” we are transformed.

Within the narrative Brassard contextualizes this silence with the confession of Jimmy’s deepest fear, the possibility of falling into emptiness, the falling into death. The silence produced
in this moment reflects, and draws the spectator, into this fear of falling into emptiness, into death, into silence itself. In the silence the spectator is brought to the edge of pure presence. They are then denied any desire for such presence when the microphone clicks back on and the performance begins again. With this Brassard illustrates that presence is always at the limit of its own disappearance. Presence is experienced at the point of discontinuity or interruption—the limit. Brassard takes us to this limit, the friction between her own and our own appearance and disappearance. What becomes evident here is that presence does not ultimately provide meaning or continuity. Instead, presence is something that disturbs. It falls. However, it does not fall into emptiness (silence as death) as Jimmy fears, but rather it falls into a space of variation and possibility (silence as the beginning of thought).

In the experience of discontinuity the spectator’s attention is drawn to something that may otherwise have been out of view. By drawing attention to this otherwise absent present we come to experience how presence produces sensation rather than stable meaning or understanding. Reviewing the production Paul Lefebvre writes:

Not only was this feigned breakdown quasi perfect (nearly the whole audience, even professionals from the scene, believed it to be true at the beginning) but, in one agonizing moment, she also managed to epitomize the fragility of both theatrical performance and contemporary humanity…Here, it is not a case of (falsely) legitimizing fiction by anchoring it in reality, but of permitting the artist to express on stage that her I is also that of another. (6-7)

Lefebvre’s review articulates how the literal disruption and breaking down of the technology forces the spectator into an awareness of the fundamental constructions of the theatrical event, the placement of an “I” before an “other”. In this encounter the boundaries between “I” and “other” are not maintained and therefore do not produce an experience of presence as a stable continuity. Rather, Brassard’s expression of her “I” as that of “another” (or possibly (an)other)
produces an experience of presence as discontinuity and sensation. This marks presence as a site of multiplicity and becoming. Multiplicity refers to “precisely what happens between the two” (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy* 153). More specifically it refers to what happens between the “I” and the “other” that exist both internal and external to the “I”.

Derrida examines the dual internal/external relationship between “I” and “other” in his critique of Husserl’s phenomenology, *Voice and Phenomenon* (1976). Interrogating the auto-affection of the voice Derrida seeks to show how hearing oneself speak at the same time as speaking is essentially an experience of hetero-affection, or the experience of self-as-other. It is this experience of self-as-other that ultimately allows for auto-affection, or the ability to affect oneself to occur. To hear oneself speak is to be doubly articulated. It is to hear and to speak at the same time. It is to be the orator and the listener simultaneously with no external mediation between the hearing and speaking. The immediacy of hearing oneself speak in the process of speaking produces a complete self-proximity:

The “apparent transcendence” of the voice, therefore, is based on the fact that the signified, which is always essentially ideal, the “expressed” Bedeutung, is immediately present to the act of expression. This immediate presence is based on the fact that the phenomenological “body” of the signifier seems to erase itself in the very moment it is produced. From this point on, it seems to belong to the element of ideality…when I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that I hear myself during the time that I speak. The signifier that is animated by my breath and by the intention of signification… is absolutely close to me. The living act, the act that gives life, the Lebendigkeit that animates the body of the signifier that transforms it into an expression that wants to say, the soul of language, seems to separate itself from itself, from its presence to itself. (Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon* 66-67)

The voice is positioned as a signifier of self-presence that appears to be self-generating and self-originating. Derrida is critical of such claims to self-presence and therefore moves to illustrate how the experience of self-presence originating from the voice’s auto-affection is ultimately divided. This division arises because in the act of hearing yourself speak you affect yourself or
return to yourself through your own words. In returning to yourself through your own words you return to yourself not as the “I” that you were, but as other. The auto-affection of the voice constructs an encounter between the self and the-self-as-other. In this immediate communication between self and other the voice silences itself through its own auto-affection and becomes the “voice that remains silent”. 25 Leonard Lawlor summarizes this process: “while this other speaks to me, inside me, this other hides silence in the voice” (79). Furthermore, the other “me” encountered through the auto-affection of the voice “is always already non-present, beyond being, thus dead” (79). For Derrida, the experience of the voice’s auto-affection, its ability to communicate immediately and remain silent, is an encounter with death. It is an encounter with an eternal silence.

This returns us to Brassard’s Peepshow and the scene where the young girl is found singing “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”. This scene illustrates the becoming-woman-becoming-animal of the destratified voice, however, it also highlights the auto-affection of the voice. As Brassard sings the sound designer remixes her voice, but through its mediation the audience can still hear Brassard’s voice under its mediation; her breath audible at the end of each phrase. It becomes uncannily clear that this is not a duet in the conventional sense of the term. This is Brassard singing with herself. It is Brassard’s breath, her voice, touching itself and instigating a relation between self and self-as-other. In this relation Brassard undergoes a becoming-woman-becoming-girl-becoming-animal as her voice is slowly engulfed and shaped to that of a young girl and then finally devoured by that of the wolf. In the process Brassard’s breath, once distinguishable, becomes barely auditable and as in the fairy tale, the wolf eats Little Red alive, he takes her voice. Silence fills the theatre as we digest the Other living inside us that hides itself in the silence of our own voice.
Like Derrida, Deleuze understands the voice to operate between two sides, and while he does not refer to auto-affectation specifically he posits that there is an immediate relation between two sides of any surface; for example between sense and nonsense, past and future, self and other. Furthermore, it is only in silence that “immediate communication” between any two sides can occur: “to speak without speaking: this is not at all the ineffable up above or down below, but rather the frontier and the surface where language becomes possible and, by becoming possible, inspires only a silent and immediate communication” (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 137, emphasis added). Therefore, the verb or the voice that operates between any two sides, at the edges of articulation, is silent:

Speaking, in the complete sense of the word, presupposes the verb and passes through the verb, which projects the mouth onto the metaphysical surface, filling it with the ideal events of this surface[...]The verb, however, is silent, and we must take literally the idea that Eros is sonorous and the death instinct is silence [...]. (241, emphasis added)

We can see here that for Deleuze, too, there is a significant relation between the voice, silence, and death. However, following Blanchot, Deleuze understands death to be double.26 Death is not something that can be reduced to negation, instead it is “something which I can confront in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case encounter in a present which causes everything to pass” and simultaneously it is “strangely impersonal, with no relation to ‘me’, neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 112). The double nature of death makes it both personal and impersonal. It is something to confront in the present and something always in the future. The first dimension of death is personal and is articulated by the phrase: “I am dying”. Death takes hold of my present body and causes me to call out, to produce noise. The second dimension of death, however, is impersonal, incorporeal, and silent. This death does not afflict the body, but attaches itself to an
other; it is “they” and “their” bodies that are to die. This impersonal death occurs in the infinitive and is never complete. It is also silent, always already awaiting articulation. Most important, however, is that this second impersonal death is: “the point at which death turns against death; where dying is the negation of death, and the impersonality of dying no longer indicates only the moment when I disappear outside myself, but rather the moment when death loses itself in itself, and also the figure which the most singular life takes on in order to substitute itself for me” (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* 153). Silence and death, therefore, do not produce a non-presence. Rather, the silent and immediate communication that arises from being faced with the other disappearing outside the self in the action of his or her own becoming present is a site for becoming in itself.

In the silence produced by both Brassard’s “falling into emptiness” and the devouring of Brassard’s voice in *Peepshow*, the spectator is faced with the silence of this second death. In this silence they are confronted with presence as multiplicity, presence as the site not of essence which is bound to ideas of identity, fixity, and transcendence, but presence as a site of continual variation brought forth by the encounter between the I and that which is placed before it. While, for Derrida, the other that constitutes self presence resides in the “I” and therefore continually folds us back on ourselves, for Deleuze the other resides outside the self as a force of becoming, a force of multiplicity:

The I and the Self, by contrast, are immediately characterised by functions of development or explication…they tend to explicate or develop the world expressed by the other, either in order to participate in it or to deny it (I unravel the frightened face of the other, I either develop it into a frightening world the reality of which seizes me, or I denounce its unreality). However, these relations of development, which form our commonalities as well as our disagreements with the other, also dissolve its structure and reduce it either to the status of an object or to the status of a subject. That is why, in order to grasp the other as such, we were right to insist upon special conditions of experience, however artificial - namely, the moment at which the expressed has (for us) no existence apart from that which expresses it: the Other as *the expression of a possible world.*
The other placed before us is an expression, not of absence or the impossibility of presence, but of a possible world, of that which may come to be and which we could never have imagined otherwise. The theatre, by placing objects before us, opens us to this other, to this expression of a possible world, which is ultimately an impetus for creation or the beginning of thought. It is significant that this encounter occurs in silence because for Deleuze the beginnings of thought come most effectively in silence (167). Therefore, both Brassard’s “falling into emptiness”, and the silence produced by the devouring of Brassard’s voice in Peepshow may be taken as the push into thought. For, it is only in silence that a space is opened for immediate communication between the two sides—between self and other, performer and spectator.

**Presence, Multiplicity, and Thought**
What ultimately occurs in both Brassard and Dove’s work is that they each participate in the production of performing bodies, or presence, which functions as an entrance into multiplicity as opposed to representation. Their production of multiplicity is reliant on an engagement with technologies of vocal mediation that connect the voice to an experience of the body in unexpected ways. Therefore, presence does not secure the performing body to a particular identity or origin, but moves the body, including those bodies in the audience, in multiple and contradictory directions. This re-orientation of the relationship between voice and body opens a rich site for the exploration of presence as an affective experience of multiplicity.

Moreover, the creation of multiplicities bodies and voices are set free to wander. This is clearly articulated in a moment from Jimmy where Brassard, chasing after the escaping character of Jimmy transforms into a speeding train. Standing in profile, the sound processor matches Brassard’s voice to the pitch of a train whistle: "JIM-MEEEEEEEE! JIM-MEEEEEEE!!" The seats in the theatre rumble. Sound becomes tactical. Brassard and her body disappear as a train
rushed past. This moment is arresting. With a single gesture Brassard interrupts and suspends the progression of the narrative. In a single gesture time resides and space opens. Language and gesture are unable to remain in parallel. There is a continuous variation between them that interrupts their continuity. The gesture is not an expression or fulfillment of an intention. It is a suspension of any expression or fulfillment. It is a rupture in the ordering of things, an opening into a space beyond the borders of the performance itself. In his personal blog, Globe and Mail theatre critic J. Kelly Nestruck, has commented that it is this moment from Jimmy that haunts him. It haunts me too. I carry it with me. In that moment the borders that held the representational narrative together, that held the body together, that delimited Brassard from Jimmy, human from machine, me from you dissolved as she whistled. Here, the ordered space of performance, that held the production together, rushed past with the train, and I was left alone on the platform. In this moment, we see how the destratified voice produces objects, or sites of encounter, instead of recognition. The body is moved in new and unexpected directions. And, in this movement we experience presence as an encounter with an object that disturbs, that produces affect, and moves us despite ourselves. The directions in which the body is moved need not be fully understood. In fact, an understanding of them, in the sense that they are named and categorized, would only move us back towards representation, and therefore, keep us adhering to the already established image of thought which does not move us towards thinking. It is, therefore, only in encounters with objects that disturb or move us, where recognition is made impossible that we are able to come to thought.
Notes to Chapter Three

1 For Deleuze and Guattari becoming and multiplicity are synonymous (A Thousand Plateaus 249).

2 Laura Cull makes the argument that presence is a force of continual variation in her work on Deleuze, theatre, and ‘differential presence’. Cull’s work is significant to the arguments of this chapter and will be further detailed throughout. See: Differential Presence: Deleuze and Performance (2009); How Do You Make Yourself a Theatre without Organ? Deleuze, Artaud and the Concept of Differential Presence (2009).

3 Cull fully outlines her conceptualization of “differential presence” in her doctoral dissertation, Differential Presence: Deleuze and Performance (2009), and the journal article How Do You Make Yourself a Theatre without Organ? Deleuze, Artaud and the Concept of Differential Presence (2009). It is also explored to some degree in her most recent book, Theatres of Immanence (2012).

4 Cormac Power’s 2009 book, Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre, strives to make sense of the often-conflicting understandings of presence in performance theory. He argues that, within the theatre, presence can be understood in three primary ways: “making-present”, “having-presence”, and “being-present”. For Power, these three modes of presence are not mutually exclusive and work in various combinations, both complimentary an antagonist, depending on the performance. The interrelation of these modes of presence helps us to see that, within the theatre, presence is not something that is, or can be, fixed. Instead, it is the “subject of a constantly shifting interplay between the theatrical signification and the context in which a performance takes place” (Power 14).

5 Despite the varying conceptualizations of presence in theatre and performance discourse, it is arguably Derrida’s critique of ‘the metaphysics of presence’, and his desire to highlight the absence or nonpresence at the center of every present moment, that has most fundamentally shaped how theatre and performance theorists understand presence. In fact, in his critical introduction to performance, Marvin Carlson argues that after Derrida it was difficult for theatre theorists and performers to strive for the goal of pure presence, which had been the defining element of modernist conceptions of the theatre (Carlson 135-6). For examples of the various ways that Derrida has influence theatre and performance discourse see: Auslander, “‘Just Be Yourself” Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory.” (1995); Fuchs, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Rethinking Theatre After Derrida.” (1985); Phelan, Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (1993).

6 Derrida comes to this conclusion through careful consideration of the relationship between language and meaning. Criticizing the structural linguistics established by Ferdinand de Saussure, Derrida illustrates that within the paradigm of structuralism signs produce meaning only in relation to themselves. They gain meaning from what they are not rather than by any inherent essence that they possess on their own. Meaning is constructed by the differences that exist between terms, and because of this there can be no original or foundational meaning outside
of language. The consequence of this is what Derrida names *différance*, or the belief that words and other signs can never fully bring forth what they intend to mean because meaning is continually “deferred”, or thrown into an endless chain of signifiers (an endless chain of what the signified is *not*). Derrida writes:

> The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, ‘thing’ here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign [...] The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence. 

(*Différance* 9)

Due to this continual deferral of presence (or meaning) nothing in the text, be it written or embodied, has a stable identity. And, therefore, nothing, including presence, can be given the authority of having a secure meaning, foundation, or *logos*. However, while *différance* destabilizes meaning, Derrida suggests that, it is this destabilization that opens a place where excluded terms—signs, meanings—may become apparent, and where we may be able to see how they operate beneath the intended meaning of the privileged term.

7 The negotiation between performer and character happens in most theatre productions. Brassard’s specific example is particularly relevant to the current discussion because it makes this inherent negotiation visible, and allows us a place to discuss the dynamics of the theatrical production.

8 The full quote is: “Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always the play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence; being must be conceived of as presence or absence beginning with the possibility of freeplay and not the other way around” (Derrida, “Sign Structure Play” 292).

9 This relationship between the ‘live’ and the ‘mediated’ is examined by Roger Copeland in “The Presence of Mediation” and by Philip Auslander in his seminal book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Both, Copeland and Auslander are critical of claims that theatre’s ‘liveness’, or its production of presence, is able to differentiate it from other technological performance. Copeland writes that:

> The balance between what we glean about the world directly through our senses and what we absorb vicariously through the media has been irreversibly tipped in the direction of the latter. And to assume that a few hours of “live” theatre will somehow restore a healthy sense of “being there” is naive and self-deceptive. The ongoing critique of theatrical presence is also valuable insofar as it reminds us that no experience (no matter how “live”) is entirely unmediated. The “copy theory of knowledge” was invalidated long ago. The innocent eye never existed. Furthermore, the idea that the theatre's “liveness” is—in and of itself—a virtue, a source of automatic, unearned moral
The problem with this formulation is that it ultimately conflates the idea of literally being present, in a shared space, with presence as some kind of authority. In other words, it values the presence of the live body as providing a conduit for the real. While Auslander also sees this conflation as problematic, he builds his critique of liveness around the understanding that live performance cannot be said to have ontological or historical priority over mediated performance. This is because the very idea of liveness was only made possible by the introduction of technical reproduction (Auslander, *Liveness* 53-54). For Auslander the theatre is always already mediated. The increased incorporation of various technologies into live performance only makes the inherent mediation of the theatre more accessible.

In tension with this is Peggy Phelan’s, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. In this book Phelan argues that performance lives for and in the present, “it cannot be save, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations” (147). For Phelan, ephemerality is an essential element of performance and, therefore, performance becomes itself only through the inevitability of its own disappearance. This argument has been critiqued by Auslander who suggests that Phelan privileges the ‘live’ over the mediated (Auslander, *Liveness* 40). This critique, while useful for complicating Phelan, does not necessarily take the complexity of Phelan’s argument into account. Phelan is not working to make a clear distinction between live and recorded performance. For her, live performance is not any more “authentic” than recorded performance, but it provides a potential site for illustrating the problematic status of the real in our mediatized world.

10 The relation between theatre performer and voice is distinct from the storyteller, who also uses their voice, but describes and/or expresses an object rather than producing the object itself. I would add to this comment that this particular understanding of the relationship between performer and character is not universal, though it does have a significant place within Western theatre traditions. Brecht is an interesting example of a practitioner who has attempted to complicate and untangle this relation between performer and character through his use of gestus and *Verfremdungseffekt*.

11 In order to understand how the voice is likened to an originary site, it is necessary to comprehend Derrida’s use of the term *logos*. Derrida argues that the privileging of presence brings forth an inherent logocentrism, or an “orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning—thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word—conceived as existing in itself, as foundation” (Culler 92). For Derrida, the term *logos*, referring to truth or word, is employed to reference the processes in thought and reason that return us to some kind of originary concept; to a truth or stable meaning, to the primacy of the word of God. Therefore, logocentrism, like phonocentrism is concerned with speech as a conduit for being.

12 The tendency to assert presence as an essential quality of the theatrical experience may be traced to the modernist project that sought to reduce a work of art to its singular essential element. In such a project, the materiality of the theatre provided an argument for the theatre’s production of presence; this is because the theatre’s materiality provides a site where the thing
being represented on stage is often represented by the object itself (the chair, the desk, the human body).

13 For Stanislavski presence was grounded in the actor who could mine his or her own experience, and emotions as a source of truth for performance. Here, we see presence clearly linked with a sense of being and a place from which knowledge and meaning may arise. In a different way, Artaud was concerned with finding a means to foreground presence in his theatre. In his “First Manifesto on the Theatre of Cruelty” he proclaims that, “We cannot go on prostituting the idea of theater whose only value is in its excruciating, magical relation to reality and danger.” Instead Artaud insists that we construct a new kind of theatre one where the pure presence of the performer eclipses the dominance of the text and where the relation between the theatrical sign and its referent can no longer be deemed “magical”. For Artaud the creation of such a theatre included an emphasis on the performing body and finding ways to subvert the prominence of the representational sign, including the text.

Grotowski was similarly interested in body of the performer and like Stanislavski understood the body of the performer to be a site of self-presence. In Towards a Poor Theatre he writes that, “By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion” (19). We see here that for Grotowski, fundamental to the theatrical experience is the relationship and presence—“‘live’ communion”—between performer and spectator. This relationship was outlined in the previous section defining presence to include the simultaneous presence of bodies in space and time. And for Stanislavski, Artaud, and Grotowski this simultaneity of the live event lead to the possibility of the lying bare of the self, to a kind of pure presence.

14 Another seminal text that clearly articulates the influence of Derrida’s deconstruction of presence on theories of the theatre is Philip Auslander’s “‘Just Be Yourself’: Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory” (1995). In this essay Auslander highlights the discomfort that arises in our understanding and approach to theories of acting that have historically been rooted in producing an experience of pure presence. More specifically Auslander deconstructs the theories of Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Brecht in order to challenge any presumption that acting could possibly provide a medium for revealing the actor’s self. Ultimately he seeks to challenge the idea that acting may be a place where we can experience the pure presence of the performer. Auslander first points to the ways in which each of these distinct styles of acting is founded on the notion that the actor’s self functions in the acting process as a source of truth. He then argues that the ability to expose the actor’s self in performance is not a revealing of a pure presence, but instead a presence that can only be understood as this in light of the theatrical language which is “inseparable from the language by which it expresses itself” (Auslander, “Just Be Yourself” 34). In this way theatrical presence can be seen as being shaped by the language that we use to describe it and is not necessarily self-evident.

15 Darroch’s distinction between “presence effects” and “meaning effects” is derived from Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht critical analysis of presence in Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey (2004).
Even though aurality has not necessarily been central to discussions of Western theatre, which have focused on visually and textuality, the relationship between voice and body has always been implicit in performance practice and in fact the disconnection between voice and body has been present since the earliest use of masks that distorted and amplified the human voice.

Lucid Possession premiered in the spring of 2013 at the Roulette Theatre in New York. My observations of the production come from a working performance of it in January 2010 at the Here Arts Centre where Toni Dove was an artist in residence. They also come from Toni Dove’s own video postings of the work in progress on her blog @BUSTLELAMP and on Vimeo. This particular piece was workshopped at the Spielart Festival in Munich and at Republique in Copenhagen.

Mari Kamura does not perform in the 2013 production. In the 2013 production Todd Reynolds plays digital violin.

This is done in a similar way to her interactions with the characters in Spectropia. See previous chapter for more information on Spectropia.

The soundtrack includes original compositions by Kimura and Elliot Sharpe.

The title references not only a performance practice that distributes erotic images, but also a theatrical tradition in which people pay to look at scenes constructed within a small box. In this way Peepshow is framed by the complexities of the gaze and the relationship between the subject and the object. The performance engages these complexities in both its narrative and in its execution.

The comparison of the emission of the voice to ventriloquism is interesting and worth further development outside the parameters of this project. In an investigation of the semiotics of ventriloquism C. B. Davis has suggested that it “is ideally situated for the aesthetics of postmodern performance” because of its potential to performatively engage the complexities of the “split-subject” (150). While the work of Dove and Brassard is by no means a traditional form of ventriloquism the tropes of possession and vocal presence surrounding ventriloquism are useful in thinking about the disjunction between voice and body that is experienced in their work. Davis writes:

ventriloquism is a unique form of performance because of its interlocking of the separate sign systems of human acting and puppetry. Ventriloquism with puppets or speaking figures occupies a curious position as a sign system somewhere between the absence and presence of the puppeteer. In this regard it resembles bunraku, the classical Japanese form of puppet theatre. The human operator is visibly present in both forms, but in bunraku the puppeteer does not represent a stage figure… In bunraku, the mechanism of puppet operation is not concealed or even suppressed. In ventriloquist puppetry, however, the mechanics of the dummy's operation are usually concealed. Although the illusion of the dummy's autonomy is rather transparent, the ventriloquist occupies a position both inside and outside the imitative, as operator and character. So, unlike the bunraku
operator, the ventriloquist is simultaneously effaced and revealed as the source of the dummy's voice and animation. (140)

23 The relation between the presence and the uncanny is also clear, though less explicit, in Nicholas Royle’s seminal study of the concept. In his book, The Uncanny, Royal argues, “The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one’s sense of oneself (of one’s so called ‘personality’ or ‘sexuality’, for example) seems strangely questionable” (1). We see here that the uncanny triggers a similar affective response as an experience of presence.

24 Citing Artaud, from Susan Sontag’s Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings (1976), Laura Cull notes that Artaud describes the purely vocal theatre of To Have Done With the Judgment of God as providing him with a scaled down version of what he wanted to do in his Theatre of Cruelty (Theatres of Immanence 71).

25 This is the title of Derrida’s chapter on auto-affection in Voice and Phenomenon.

26 For Blanchot on duality of death see The Space of Literature (1982).
In the Midst of it

Bodies are caught in endless permutations of isolated movements. These movements seem to be of no consequence, however, they simultaneously seem to carry more significance than we recognize. Something’s happening. The body cannot be escaped. Six bodies race the length of the stage. They run, alone, but in parallel. They run in an attempt to escape the relentless pattern that each body finds itself entrenched in. The bodies race, not against one another, but against themselves. They run in an attempt to outrun the self, to escape the body. Failure. They are forced to the ground at the far side of the stage by an invisible barrier that the body cannot cross. Something is happening. The bodies get up. They race again.

Something is happening. Our own body is still, seated in the dark. It races to escape. We remain seated, still in the dark. We are affected. Affected in the sense that, “we vicariously experience the embodied state of the performer, her movement giving visceral evidence of the attractions, repulsions, desires, and sensations that move her, our empathy is immediate and direct” (Bechtel 86). We experience the desire to make contact with another body. We experience the desire to escape the repetition that the bodies placed before us seem to be trapped within. We desire to escape the repetitions of our own bodies—bodies that are still sitting, sitting still, in the theatre. Our empathy for the bodies positioned before us does not arise from reasoned analogy: “she is behaving in such a way; I felt X when I behaved similarly in the past; therefore she must be feeling something similar to X now”; rather we come to experience and “embody the performer osmotically” (Bechtel 86). Something is happening. We try to sustain the “observer’s remove”, but we continually find ourselves in the midst of something.

Troika Ranch’s loopdiver (2009) places us immediately in the middle. The relentless repetitions, performed by each dancer’s body, make it difficult to gain purchase on meaning. Neither the impetus for the performer’s repetition nor the repetition’s point of conclusion is
clear. Despite any concrete recognition of meaning, sitting still in our seats, we are moved. The repetitions embodied before us draw us in—they hit a nerve, touch our own anxieties. They bring to the fore the repetitious patterns that we find ourselves caught within. Sitting still, still sitting, we are brought straight to the center of the movement. We are brought to the heart of the repetition. The dancers labor to master (overcome?) the antagonizing looped choreography. Simultaneously, in the audience, we deal with the disjunction between the dancer’s moving body and our body sitting still, still sitting. Moreover, we must deal with disjunction between the perfectly looped digital material (video, sound, light) and the imperfections of the performer’s live looped movements.

Failure seems to persist. The dancers move and we are moved, but no one seems to move anywhere. The dancers continue to labor and we contend with their effort. While it seems as though there is little alteration in each iteration of movement, if we pay attention, the middle that we have be thrust into, similar to Brassard’s “falling into emptiness”, is a site of happening. It is a site of movement and variation. Deleuze tells us: “[i]t is never the beginning or the end which are interesting; the beginning and the end are points. What is interesting is the middle […] One begins again through the middle” (Deleuze, Dialogues II 39). Here in the middle that we begin again. It is here, in the middle that we encounter and participate in events. It is here, in the middle that thinking may occur.

Events are commonly thought of as particular moments in time, unique occurrences that for whatever reason seem to be, or become, more crucial than others. For example: revolutions, wars, birth, or death. In their uniqueness events construct temporal boundaries that allow us to distinguish between what life was before, and what life is after. This understanding of event, as the production of linear temporal borders, is significant in providing a foundation and structure
for narrative interpretations of history. However, by demarcating time as “time before” and “time after”, events produce wounds—voids, gaps, clefts—in our experience of temporality. These wounds cut time and simultaneously hold time open. They create a space where multiple forces coalesce and signal that events are not necessarily singular, coherent, units, with distinct beginnings and endings. Events are much more complex sets of ontological situations. They are the happenings in the middle. Moreover, they are not what happens, but the experience that something *is* occurring within the happening.

The repetitions, that constitute the choreography for Troika Ranch’s *looppiver*, indicate the complexity of events. By thrusting the spectator into the middle they problematize understanding events as singular coherent units that demarcate “before” and “after”. The repetitious movement underscores the variations existing within the wound, or space that is produced by an unrecognizable though fully experienced event. In the repetition of movement the spectator comes to see and experience the various forces at work on and through the dancer’s bodies that are situated before them. The spectator also comes to feel the various forces at work on their own body. These forces construct encounters that establish a means of thinking and experiencing events as processes rather than as particular occurrences. These encounters allow the spectator to experience the “something happening”. And, significantly, this is possible even if the encounters do not provide a concrete understanding of what the “something happening” may be.

The experience of happening, or the experience of event, is intrinsically bound to our experience of the theatre. Patrice Pavis describes event as the realities of the artistic practice itself or the elements of theatrical performance not related to the fiction of the fabula (132). Moreover, he suggests that the theatre event encapsulates the effects that the realities of practice have on
exchanges, which occur between performer and spectator (132). Therefore, event references the context in which performance happens and the interplay between performer and spectator that is produced within this context. Event is the happening that exceeds the theatre’s representational systems. In exceeding the theatre’s representational systems events produce rifts between the signs used in performance and their meanings. These rifts open spaces for multiple and contradictory interpretations. They open a space for potential non-recognition, which allows for the production of difference and thought.

In their articulations of theatricality, Féral, Fischer-Lichte, and Weber each individually express how theatricality, like event, produces an experience of disruption from within which difference proliferates. I have argued that it is this characteristic of theatricality—it’s disruptive force—that unsettles recognition, pressing us to experience and deal with the world in new and different ways. Now, to this I add: in its disruption of experience theatricality, like event, may be understood as bringing us into the middle or into the happening. This chapter unpacks theatricality in relation to the concept of event and considers how the happening, which appears in the break created by events, may be understood as a site for the occurrence of the fundamental encounter that instigates thought. More specifically, this chapter examines Deleuze’s conceptualization of events as processes with no determined outcome, which gives rise to the new through their continuity and production of sensuous affect.

Drawing on Deleuze’s proposed double structure of the event, its actualization and counter-actualization, I consider how the movement between these two series underscores the disruptive nature of event through its displacement of the present and its creation of a ‘wound’. Moreover, I examine how Troika Ranch, Marie Brassard, and Toni Dove utilize theatricality as a force for the production of event, which opens the world to us through the creation of affect. I
argue that the double structure of the event frames the experience of theatricality, displacing the present and producing a wound in which the representational structures of performance are pushed aside, and a space is opened for a fundamental encounter to occur.

**Defining Event**

Event is a concept that, like thought, space, and presence, has been of primary interest to many twentieth century continental philosophers. Due to this, it has a complex genealogy. The philosophy of the Event (or events) is evident in the process philosophies of Henri Bergson, William James, and Alfred North Whitehead. It is also evident in the ontologies forwarded by Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard, Alain Badiou, and Gilles Deleuze.¹ In general, understandings of event can be placed in two categories: First, events are rare, singular, historically identifiable instances that alter the present state of affairs through discontinuity and rupture; Second, events are common, multiple, natural, imperceptible instances that alter the present state of affairs through continuity and emergence. In either categorization events are concerned with the production of the new. They are, therefore, related to how we understand the relationship between time and the processes of genesis within our world.

For those who align with the first position, events are understood to alter the present state of affairs through the creation of discontinuity and rupture. Events cut time by shattering the experience of the present and creating a distinct break with the past. The new originating from this action has little relation to what preceded it. Take for instance, revolution in the strictest sense of the term. On the other hand, for those aligned with the second position events are understood to alter the present state of affairs through processes of continuity and emergence. In this case events continue to produce cuts in time, but rather than shattering the present and breaking with the past, events come to mark a site where time is not only divided, but also
assembled and ordered. Therefore, events do not disrupt a continuous state of existence, but are the ubiquitous happenings that underlay and constitute existence (Stagoll in Parr 90).

These distinctions manifest themselves in the similarities and differences found in Badiou’s and Deleuze’s conceptualizations of event. Badiou and Deleuze, both, understand events to be central to the creation of the new and, therefore, they see events to be significant politically and ethically (Adkins 512). Badiou and Deleuze argue that events have ill-defined spatio-temporal locations. They are not causal. They arise from the confluence of particular sets of series or forces, and in this way, they point to the complexities of our experience of space and time (512). Furthermore, for both Badiou and Deleuze, events happen through, rather than to, things and people. Events are therefore never fully external to our experience of the world (512).

Despite these similarities there are striking differences between Badiou and Deleuze’s conceptualizations of event. These differences are first apparent in the way that the concept of event is situated within each of their work. Event functions as the central and defining concept of Badiou’s oeuvre. This is exemplified in his publication of Being and Event (1988). For Deleuze, however, the concept of event functions diffusely. It is woven into his oeuvre, often placed in relation to other concepts including: becoming, actual/virtual, multiplicity, difference, repetition, and the new (Adkins 508). Despite its lack of centrality, Deleuze has been cited as the primary thinker of the event. He also acknowledges that in each of his books he attempts, “to discover the nature of events” (Deleuze, Negotiations 141). The nature of events is significant to Deleuze because event is the only philosophical concept “capable of ousting the verb ‘to be’” (141). Event therefore becomes a key element in Deleuze’s ontology of becoming.
For Badiou, events signal what-will-come-to-be, therefore, they do not, and cannot, exist in the present. Events are only ever historical, and for this reason they are rare and easily missed. Events are neither temporal nor a-temporal. They are an unpredictable interruption to a certain situation, which alters the status quo of that particular circumstance. In opposition to this, Deleuze understands events to be numerous, natural, and imperceptible. They are not rare historical moments that suddenly change the current state of affairs. Rather, events are the mundane and routine occurrences that establish the world of the everyday. Even though events exist everywhere, every event does not carry equal weight or significance. Some events are major, while others are minor. For instance: the fall of the twin towers, the change from winter to spring, the birth of a child, falling in love, the reading of this thesis, the going to the theatre. All of these are events, but each carries a different significance. An event is, therefore, not simply an instantaneous life altering circumstance. To illustrate this Deleuze suggests that the Great Pyramid and its duration over an hour, thirty or five minutes, is an event (Deleuze, *The Fold* 76). Other events may include: a garden, a concert, and a tree’s changing of color in the spring.

These examples illustrate how Deleuze situates event as a process (Williams in Stivale 81). Take for example the tree’s changing color. The event is not the fact that, or even the moment when, the tree turns green. This change in color is simply a marker of what evidently occurs; it is a passing surface effect, or a sign of the event’s imperceptible processes—its actualization (Stagoll in Parr 90). As process events have no determinate outcome. The event is not the tree’s turning green, but the complex set of series, to which the tree is one element, that come together to produce the possibility of the tree’s greening. Events, therefore, bring together distinct and dynamic becomings that open spaces for new possibilities—the possibility to turn green, red, orange, yellow, brown. It is in the convergence and simultaneous divergence of
various series that the event produces a space where new forces are actualized or brought to bear (Stagoll in Parr 91).

Deleuze’s establishment of events as processes that carry no determinate outcome positions events as working in opposition to representational encounters with the world. Events are concerned with communicating something about our experience; however, they do not provide us with direct perceptions of objects, or engage us in the direct exchange of information (Williams in Stivale 81). Therefore, events do not provide us with recognition and semblance, which are the hallmarks of representation. Instead, they establish, and set in motion, particular senses, or affects, that move in divergent and unpredictable directions. Moreover, events may be understood as the confluence of multiplicities, or various becomings, that simultaneously come together and split apart, making it impossible to categorize or recognize the event in its totality. James Williams suggests that this powerful process of coming together and breaking apart may best be illustrated in Deleuze’s example of the concert:

The concert draws together numerous paths and lives led by artists and audience into the concert event. They come together in the event, but none of the paths disappear in the event or is completely accounted for by it. When participants go their own way, they will remember it and act on it differently. They were brought together differently too. Yet, “when there is a concert tonight”, an ephemeral event draws all of these different perspectives on the world together, not in a static set of facts, but in a shared process that cannot be reduced to such facts, yet underlies any one of them. (Williams in Stivale 84)

We can see in this example how the event brings together differing sets of multiplicities that exist independently from the force of the concert, which brings them together. In their meeting, these multiplicities produce both a physical and virtual alteration in the world around them. The changes that occur from the event are not necessarily a matter of the unique revelation of an essential truth, but point to the relations between elements that would normally appear to be impossibly related otherwise (Williams 154).
Of course, it is easy to draw similarities between the example of the concert and a performance or theatre event, however, beyond the obvious coming together of the people, experiences, and ideas, I am interested in how theatricality as a disruptive force may be better understood in relation to the concept of event. More specifically, I am interested in how may we come to better understand and articulate the forces of theatricality by thinking theatricality through the logic of event. What I believe will become clear is that the event’s paradoxical drawing together and simultaneous dispersal of forces produces an opening that, like the cleft of theatricality, pushes us to the threshold of the unrecognizable and forces us to think.

Linking the event to thought is not original. In fact, Deleuze understands thinking to be an event in itself. Cliff Stagoll states that, for Deleuze: “thinking and creating are constituted simultaneously. As such, his general theory of the event provides a means for theorizing the immanent creativity of thinking, challenging us to think differently and to consider things anew. This is not to say that he means to challenge us to think in terms of events, but rather to make thinking its own event by embracing the rich chaos of life and the uniqueness and potential of each moment” (88). This returns us to the original question posed in the introduction to this thesis: how might theatricality be a site for the constitution of thought as event, for the constitution of a fundamental encounter?

**Event, Performance, and the Production of Sense**
Event has a long history within theatre practice and scholarship. Part of its appeal to performance practitioners and theorists may be its quality of carrying no determinate outcome and thereby working in opposition to common representational engagements with the world. As already noted, Patrice Pavis describes event as functioning outside the fiction, fabula, or other representational schemes of the theatre. As such, it references the context in which performance happens, as well as, the interplay between performer and spectator produced within this context.
The theatres of Artaud, Grotowski, and Boal are possible examples of performance practices that strive to produce and/or incorporate the event. To illustrate Pavis cites Artaud: “The illusion that we will seek to create [on stage] will not have to do with the degree of verisimilitude of the action but with the communicative force and reality of that action. Each performance shall therefore become a kind of event” (Artaud qtd. in Pavis 132). Evident here is that, rather than attempting to maintain the magic of theatrical “illusion”, Artaud (though also, Grotowski and Boal) endeavors to produce awareness within the audience of the reality of the theatrical situation itself. In doing this performance sidesteps the clear demarcations of representation and becomes a site for the convergence of various series that produce sense rather than recognition. In other words, performance becomes event.

Understanding performance as event rather than as a representational model can be traced to the aesthetic practices of the modernist avant-garde. In “Event” Art and Art Events Stephen C. Foster argues that the event holds a central position in modernist art’s definition and presentation of itself (3). It provides a means for artists to sensorially confront their audiences in proactive ways by dismantling the established aesthetic conventions. This is evidenced in the practices of Dadaism, Surrealism, and Futurism. It is also apparent in the linage of performance practice that arose from these traditions including: Happenings, Fulxus, and performance art more generally. Within this paradigm of performance, event is frequently perceived of as “simultaneously provocative, shocking, and dangerous; promising, liberating, and exhilarating” (Foster 3-4). Moreover, event is positioned as means to, “reconstruct or reorganize social experience, critique that experience, and facilitate new experience” (Foster 5). To this end the avant-garde’s relationship to event may be conceived of as an effort to move beyond the limits of expression and representation in order to situate art within the framework of happening.
In his essay, “The Sublime and the Avant-garde”, Jean-François Lyotard argues that avant-garde experimentations are an attempt to discover the ‘event-character’ of the work of art. He claims that the avant-garde—which he does not necessarily limit to the historical avant-garde, but understands to include all works that create “disturbance through new desires and sensation, rather then merely through ‘new’ artistic forms”—does not strive to represent the world or to present any truth be it real, or ideal (Lyotard, Crome, and Williams 285). Instead, the avant-garde is interested in examining the occurrence of the world’s unfolding, its constitution (Lyotard, “Sublime” 103). Avant-garde aesthetics, “locates itself ‘before’ representation, signification, meaning, or truth” and preoccupies itself with, “the very ‘element’ in which representing and signifying become possible” (Ziarek 156). In this way, avant-garde art coincides with a desire for presenting the un-presentable, or the elusive moment when the work of art comes into being. Lyotard identifies the un-presentable, existing in avant-garde aesthetics, as the postmodern sublime.9

Attending to the space before representation, or to the ways that the world establishes itself, requires a shift in attention. This shift is one that moves away from the processes of recognition that condition representation and towards the processes of affect or event. By focusing on event, or the various forces at play within a particular circumstance, habitual thinking becomes displaced by non-recognition. The displacement of habitual thinking with non-recognition is evidenced in work of the Builders Association, Toni Dove, Troika Ranch, and Marie Brassard. In each of their productions, these artists demand a particular attunement to sense. Their work demands a grappling with the complexities and chaos that arises from positioning ones self in the middle. While to a certain degree their work may be described as narrative and representational, it also complicates its own representationally through its material
production. This challenges the spectator’s initial representational readings of the performance and forces them to contend with something else. The *something else*, which has been moving beneath the surface of this thesis, is *sense*. Sense is evident in the encounter with the outside brought forward by the screen, and it also manifests in relation to the multiplicity experienced by the destratified voice. Therefore, both the outside and multiplicity bring us to an encounter with sense. And it is in the experience of sense, that event occurs.

**Sense, Event, and the Technological**

Deleuze argues that events are sets of singularities (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 52).\(^{10}\) They are “turning points” or “points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion, condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety” (52). Events are the affective responses, or the “sensitive points”, that move us in multiple and often contradictory directions. These points of alternation do not necessarily produce an identifiable or perceptible transformation, but rather they indicate changes in intensity that occur when two sides of reality—the physical (actual) and the ideal (virtual)—come together. Deleuze identifies these changes in intensity as *sense*. In this way sense is the surface that joins the actual realm of bodies to the virtual realm of events (Paxton and Stivale, in Stivale 70). As the force moving between the material and virtual elements of the world, sense plays a key role in how we come to understand and experience of the theatre. It is what transpires between the material effects of the performance and the virtual components of the spectator’s experience.

I have argued throughout this thesis that theatricality exists as an affective force, produced in and arising from, the relations between the material spaces of performance, the immaterial spaces of our imagination, and the material and virtual realities of our everyday lives. I have, therefore, positioned theatricality as a force that, like Deleuze’s conceptualization of sense, shuttles us between the material effects of performance and the virtual components of our
experience as spectators. Furthermore, I have interrogated how various technological mediators such as screens, microphones, and computer software facilitate a movement into the middle, or into a space of non-recognition and sense. This affiliation between sense and the technological complicates Heidegger’s concern that the technological simply produces a reductive instrumentality. And, in fact, it may be the propensity within the technological to force us to see and engage the world differently that makes the technological a productive site of aesthetic experimentation. Therefore, within the context of the aesthetic practices under examination, the technological enables us to grapple with the space of the middle by producing a kind of productive sensuous mis-recognition.

Marie Brassard’s theatre provides an example of this sensuous mis-recognition. Through vocal mediation Brassard reorganizes our experience of sense by transforming the physical performance space into an oral landscape where we see sound and hear space. This realignment of the senses is evident in the example from Jimmy detailed at the end of the last chapter. Here, Brassard’s transformation into a train by matching the pitch of her voice to the pitch of the train whistle resulted in a energy that reverberated throughout the theatre. In this moment, as Paul Halferty has noted, you could “feel sound” through the vibrations in the theatre’s seats (27). The feeling of sound illustrates the way that Brassard’s theatre, though its use of the technological, re-orientates the relationship between the body’s perceptive functions and the spaces being perceived.

Brassard’s reorganization of the senses is furthered in The Invisible (2009). In this production Brassard is less concerned with using sound as a means of constructing character and focuses instead on they way light and sound simultaneously make the world both apparent and obscure. The audience sits in darkness. The sound filling the space is deafening and resembles
something between pouring rain pounding on metal and the clamoring hum of a factory.

Glimmers of light bounce off a silver apparition floating center stage. One begins to wonder if this beautiful glistening specter is the source of the discordant sound that jars the nervous system. The lights slowly rise. The sound persists. There is a strong desire to cover the ears. Brassard stands center stage manipulating a large piece of silver Mylar with her hands. A mirror flanks the upstage wall allowing the audience to see the flipside of the theatre. The Mylar falls to the ground. Spectators watch it, and its reflection, as it drops. Silence. A blinding white light heats the stage and illuminates the theatre. In order to endure the light one must blink. Eyes close. Eyes open. Eyes close. Eyes open. The body cannot be escaped. The blinking makes the audience acutely aware of their own looking, their own sense of sight. The light is painful. Eyes are open, but can no longer see. Something is happening. It cannot be seen, but it is there. It is all around. It is present, but unseen—present, but unknown. Present nonetheless. Invisible.

Drawing on Whitehead’s conceptualization of event, Deleuze argues that events must be understood as prehension, or the perceiving of something in the world through sense (The Fold 78).¹¹ Brassard’s re-orientation of the senses demands that the audience prehend that which is placed in front of them. In other words, the spectator must perceive Brassard’s theatrical worlds though sense, rather than cognition. This is consistent with Deleuze’s reading of Whitehead for whom prehension is not to be understood as a sense perception according to a specific cognitive act of observation or a particular sensory-motor response, but is “a propensity to feel thought before sensing” (Parisi 85). In this way prehensions define the unity of the event by helping us to grasp the event as a form of sense through which we take in and understand the world, however, they also move us in multiple and often contradictory directions.
The only way to engage the world created by Brassard in *The Invisible* is haptically. Reinforcing the metaphor of invisibility running throughout the production the stage space is rendered tactile. Because of this the space is distributed throughout the bodies that are present in the theatre. The intense flashes of bright white light that heat the mise en scene are painful. The spectator’s eyes are open, they continue to look, but they can no longer see. The audience is forced to listen to the light. As the light moves a subtle hum is heard. It is the whirl of the electric motor changing the direction and focus of the light. There is a passing sense of warmth. The light is felt as it moves across the spectator’s skin. It is impossible to reason ones initial experience of *The Invisible’s* mise en scene. It is an “impossible geography”. It is a space that defies logic and attempts to break down established barriers in order to allow the audience to gaze upon the flipside of things. Similarly, it is impossible to reason the experience of Jimmy’s falling into emptiness. Brassard’s theatre, therefore, pushes sensuous boundaries moving the spectator between the potential of the virtual and materiality of the actual. It sets the audience on a path of becoming through an engagement with sense.

A similar argument can be made for Troika Ranch’s *looppdiver*. In this case there is no way to draw rational conclusions from the persistent repetitions. Spectators are required to surrender something to the happening and open themselves to sensuous flows, which connect their internal perceptions of the happening to its material reality. By requiring this kind of surrender, both *looppdiver* and Brassard’s work more generally, ask spectators to attend to both the bodies on stage and their own bodies. More specifically, they ask spectators to their own body’s processes of perception. In this, the audience becomes less concerned with the structure and representational elements of the work of art, and instead attunes themselves to the instability and heterogeneity that is at play on stage. This means that the audience attunes themselves to
both the contradictions of the signs placed on the stage and to the space between the stage and the self—the space in the middle, the space of world’s unfolding. Moreover, it means that the spectator attunes herself to sense, or to the force that shuttles her between inside and outside—to the experience of something’s happening. It is in the midst of the chaos of the something’s happening that sense proliferates and events are produced (Deleuze The Fold, 76).

The Void, or the Paradox of the Middle
As sites of change in intensity, or sites for the production of sense, events are often experienced as paradoxical. This is evident in Brassard’s use of bright flashing light to render the visible world invisible and Troika Ranch’s use of repetition to make everyday gestures obscure. Events are paradoxical. Even though I have argued that they bring us to the site where something’s happening, we are never able to fully apprehend what this happening is. Therefore, the productions of both Brassard and Troika Ranch, by challenging our sensuous responses make us aware that we are in the midst of something. They make s aware that there is an occurring immanent to our experience. However, what exactly this occurring is we cannot rationally or cognitively pinpoint.

Mark Franko expresses this same dilemma in the introduction to Ritual and Event (2007). Franko argues that the concept of “the event”, while familiar because of its central position in avant-garde performance practice, gained a new significance in the wake of World War II. For Franko, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the discovery of the concentration camps, made “what happens” in the world “historically aligned with what is socially impossible to process, culturally and psychologically unabsorbable, and highly resistant to linguistic, visual, and/or performative symbolization” (1). In effect, these literal and historic unfoldings of the world make us question both, “what is happening” and “is this happening”. They draw our attention to the fact that “something” is happening, but they do not necessarily provide direct
access to this happening. Therefore, these unfoldings of the world—these happenings, or events—produce sites of non-recognition that challenge performance practitioners to rethink their relationship to the representational elements of artistic practice. Moreover, the theatre, because of its reliance on theatricality, has the potential to produce a similar response. It may produce, as illustrated in the examples throughout this thesis, sites of non-recognition, spaces that are “socially impossible to process, culturally and psychologically unabsorbable, and highly resistant to linguistic, visual, and/or performative symbolization” (Franko 1). And in so doing the theatre enfolds the event.

For Deleuze the inability to pinpoint the happening of the event gestures to, “[t]he agonizing aspect of the pure event”, which is that, “it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening…[it is] always flying in both directions at once” (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 63). The elusiveness of the event is its disruptive quality. Its disruption is not necessarily its ability to be destructive, but rather its ability to continually alter the current state of affairs by moving us to a site of paradox and propelling us in two directions simultaneously.

There are three key points to articulate in regards to this quality of the event. First, the disruptive nature of the event is related to Deleuze’s proposal that the event is comprised of a double structure: an actualization and a counter-actualization. Second, the dual nature of the event, its movement between the actual and the virtual, establishes the event as a site of becoming. And finally, within the double structure of the event there is always an element of the event that can never be accessed in the immediate experience of the happening. Therefore, there is an element of the event that is always already a missed encounter. This missed encounter is significant for our thinking of theatricality because it is the missed encounter that establishes the
“wound” of the event, or the “cleft” in theatricality. The missed encounter, therefore, produces the cut that separates the materiality of the theatre and the virtuality of the spectator’s imagination. It is the cut that holds open a space for difference, a space for the spectator’s creativity, and a space for the potential for thought.

Actualization/Counter-Actualization, Becoming, and Event as Missed Encounter
Deleuze understands that events are not only singularities, or points of changes in intensity, but are comprised of two different sides: an actualization and a counter-actualization. He articulates this idea of the event’s double structure in The Logic of Sense arguing that every event includes a moment of actualization where, “the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, or a person, the moment we designate by saying ‘here, the moment has come’” (Logic of Sense 151, original emphasis). This is the moment when the event becomes realized in the material world as that which is. However, within the event, there is also a simultaneous force of counter-actualization, or the abstracting of the event from the current state of affairs, “there is the future and past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present, being free of the limitations of a state of affairs, impersonal, pre-individual, neutral, neither general nor particular” (151). Therefore, one side of the event refers to how the event is actualized in the material world, or how it becomes translated into the current “state of affairs”, while the other side of the event references the event’s singularity, or its existence in the realm of the virtual.

The theatre, in its production of a doubly articulated space, and in its placement of objects before subjects, may be conceived of as a site where these processes of actualization and counter-actualization can be observed and experienced. This is because the theatre’s production of sense moves us between these two sides of reality—the actual and the virtual. Furthermore, it is the movement between these two sides of reality that ultimately constructs the event. Therefore, in “One Less Manifesto” Deleuze argues that the theatre is most productive when it
works through the processes of subtraction. The process of subtraction may be thought of as a form of counter-actualization, which is an attempt to remove something from the actualized state of affairs and place it in relation to new potentialities existing in the virtual. The theatre actualizes the world by creating material spaces existing in time. The theatre also has the potential to simultaneously counter-actualize the world through its production of sense. Therefore, it is the production of sense that opens us to the processes of becoming—to difference in itself, to the fundamental encounter, to thought.

The success of Troika Ranch’s *loopdiver* may rest in its ability to engage the processes of counter-actualization. Even though, as an aesthetic artifact, the performance is actualized the material elements of the performance extract themselves form the actual world and propel themselves into spaces of virtual potential. This extraction and subsequent force into the virtual is evident in two instances. First, it is evident in the way that the dancers utilize the recorded base material. This material originated from the dancers, was extracted by the looping software, and was then re-graphed onto the dancers bodies in live performance. The base material is simultaneously present and absent. It is continually cited, but its repetition on the bodies of the live dancers produces an entirely new set of material. This new material exits in addition to and along side the original improvised movements. And in this way the actualized base material becomes counter actualized.

Second, the process of counter-actualization is apparent in the theme of trauma expressed throughout the production. Significantly, rather than actualizing the traumatic by reproducing a scene of violence in any clear identifiable way, *loopdiver* extracts the specifics of the traumatic event and relocates them in the repetition of the performers’ movement. In this way the trauma becomes pervasive and un-localizable. It is subtracted from its specific state of affairs and
allowed to move, and animate, the world in new ways. Troika Ranch’s dancers, therefore, embody Deleuze’s example for how the actor-dancer may engage the forces of counter-actualization:

Counter-actualizing each event, the actor-dancer extracts the pure event which communicates with all the others and returns to itself through all the others, and with all the others. She makes of the disjunction a synthesis which affirms the disjunct as such and makes each series resonate inside the other. Each series returns to itself as the other series return to it, and returns outside itself as the other series returns into itself: to explore all distances, but over a single line: to run very fast in order to remain in the same place. (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 178-179)

Counter actualization is a kind of “leaping in place” (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 149). It is a movement in which everything and nothing changes. This leaping in place is literally manifest in the repetitious patterns of loopdiver. The dancers continually find themselves starting again—“back to the beginning, always and again, always and again”14—with each repetition the trauma, and also the original base material, becomes dispersed and new assemblages may be created.

The creation of new assemblages highlights the ways that the process of becoming-other may also be thought of within the context of counter-actualization. To engage the process of becoming is to counter-actualize the self in relation to an event that exists beyond what is constituted by one’s body. In this way, counter actualization is an act of becoming-other. To enter into the process of becoming is to exceed oneself as an individual in favor of events that cannot be recognized, or represented, but can only be sensed (Roffe 123). We may read loopdiver’s engagement with trauma in this context. The dancer’s surrender themselves to the traumatic, or the unrecognizable, but fully sensed force, which propels their repetitious movements.

Ultimately, Deleuze describes the experience of the sense that structures event as being accompanied by a struggle with a kind of fundamental violence. This violence may be thought of as the result of the event’s disruptive forces. These forces—the becomings that move us in
multiple and contradictory directions—produce wounds. It is for this reason that Deleuze posits: every event is a kind of wound (Logic of Sense 151). Every event is the splitting of time and space. It is the allocation, and re-allocation, of the actual and the virtual. And, while these two forces of reality are connected they move to their own tempos and rhythms. And the event, as the site of sense that moves us between the forces of the actual and the virtual, may be understood as the caesura within our experience. This caesura, of whatever kind:

must be determined in the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole […] Such a symbol adequate to the totality of time may be expressed in many ways: to throw time out of joint, to make the sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God or the father. This symbolic image constitutes the totality of time to the extent that it draws together the caesura, the before and the after. (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 89)

The event—the throwing time out of joint, the making the sun explode, the throwing of one’s self into the volcano, the killing of God or the father, the coming to the theatre—enacts the caesura, or the drawing together of the before and after. Moreover, Deleuze argues, “the caesura, along with the before and after which it ordains […] constitutes the fracture in the I (the caesura is exactly the point a which the fracture appears)” (89). As the point of fracture, the caesura marks the wound. It marks the cut, the cleft, or crisis, existing at the center of experience—at the center of the event, at the center of theatricality. The mark of the wound is the scar, and according to Deleuze, “a scar is the sign not of a past wound but of a the present fact of having been wounded” (Difference and Repetition 77). Therefore, our contemplation of the wound, draws time together, it connects the before and the after, “it contracts all the instants which separate us from it into a living present” (77). The wound, or cut, of the event—of theatricality—reminds us of the precariousness of time. Similar to Rebecca Schneider’s arguments regarding the ways in which theatricality remains, we see that the wound, established by the event, is a reminder that the past is not simply behind us, but it is a force that pitches us
into the future. Theatricality in its “eventness” establishes the wound, secures the past in its relation to representation, articulates the present in its inherent immediateness, and ultimately propels us towards the future, towards the new.

In the final scene of Marie Brassard’s Peepshow we are introduced to two women, “Beautiful” and “Teacher”. In this scene Beautiful and Teacher are in the midst of an intimate encounter and as their bodies connect Beautiful becomes aware of an open wound on the inside of Teacher’s leg. She pulls away, frightened. Teacher explains that a past lover produced the scar, and that she now continually reopens the wound in order to remind herself of the passage of the lover through her life. Teacher proceeds to ask Beautiful to mark her body, to provide her with a new wound. Scared, Beautiful refuses. However, Teacher continues:

[...] have you ever noticed how each time you meet someone you are being transformed. Every time you meet a person, a person you like, that person melts into you and part of that person becomes part of you. Each time you meet someone you are changed, you are not the same anymore. Sometimes you notice this through very small details. Suddenly the way you smile is different or the way you eat or a certain nuance when you laugh or something you might be doing with your hands. And at one point you realize you’re making one of these gestures or you’re smiling in a new way and that this didn’t used to belong to you but it belonged to this or that person [...] The moment I began to talk to you, when I sat next to you, and I started this conversation, I was transforming you. You can’t be the same anymore because I’ve talked to you. And this is something, even though maybe in a few days you’ll forget about me. I gave you something. Just by being close to you I’ve transformed something inside your flesh. (Brassard Peepshow 21)

Teacher’s monologue indicates the expression of event. Moreover, it illustrates the connection between event, wound, and becoming. The event, in its sensuous passage, leaves open an inaccessible space between the actual and the virtual. Here, in this space of the wound time coalesces, we are brought face to face with the other, and we are transformed. We are set on a path of becoming.
If we are to say that a primary characteristic of event is its production of a wound, and one of the primary characteristics of theatricality is its production of a cleft, void, or cut, then we must take seriously the space of the wound. I have already suggested that this wound may be understood as the middle, the space existing between what has happened and what will happen. And it is this space of the happening through which we must pass. However, this space of happening is, according to Deleuze, inaccessible, literally a void, or emptiness through which we must pass.

Closely reading *Difference and Repetition*, it is apparent that Deleuze posits emptiness as a condition of the event. Significantly, his discussion of emptiness hinges on making sense of, “the emptiness of [theatrical] space, and the manner in which it is filled and determined by the signs and masks through which the actor plays a role which plays other roles” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 10). For Deleuze, the emptiness of space, illustrated by the stage, is literally a space of potential. It is a space of placement and composition. It is, therefore, *in* emptiness that events take form and become actualized. Emptiness is also the “condition of movement”, the space or stage upon which all the parts of the event come together and are experienced as a whole assemblage (10). Significantly, the individual parts, or elements of the event, do not require a particular stage in order to assemble and reassemble themselves. They do, however, require a space. And more specifically, they require an empty space, or emptiness where singularities can come together and disperse in lines of becoming. Therefore, we may come to think of the material stage, not only as an empty space in Peter Brook’s sense of the term, but instead, as a simulacrum for the inherent emptiness existing in the world itself. It is the emptiness through which life’s events take the stage.
Reading the stage in this way allows us to understand how the actions occurring on stage do not mediate, represent, or stand in opposition to the world. The actions on stage are not simply representations, or sites of recognition. Instead, they repeat the operations that are fundamental to the world, but they repeat them with a difference. They repeat these operations in a way that makes the emptiness and potential of the world accessible. The experience of going to the theatre is not an experience where we observe complete, coherent, singular wholes. It is not an act of recognition. It is an encounter with the wondrous emptiness of the world, which is ultimately a space of creativity. Moreover, the encounter with emptiness that takes place in the theatre sets the stage for the event and the event’s sensuous movement between the actual and virtual elements of our experience. To go to the theatre is to engage with the unfinished, and interrelated, forces that compose existence. Furthermore, if we allow ourselves we may become caught up in these forces, we may begin to play with them. We may even find that they undo us. Although, we may become undone, we return to the theatre and find ourselves re-created, over, and over again. It is in this returning that we may enter into a fundamental encounter, one that alters the self through the production of thinking—through affect, rather than recognition.
Notes to Chapter Four

1 John Mullarkey has suggested that for the continental philosophers the key elements of debate in regards to the concept of event include:

whether or not events are ontologically dependent on substantial beings, or conversely, whether or not beings are dependent on events…whether events are objective or subjective, mental or non-mental; are they individuated by their causes, their effect or their spatio-temporal location (past, present, future, here or elsewhere); are they empirical or non-empirical, actual or virtual, singular or plural, historical or natural, perceptible or imperceptible, finite or infinite, pure or impure? Or are they all of these things at once? (143)

The answers to these questions varies greatly depending on the philosopher and a full examination of the different approaches to these questions is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note this context.

2 To understand how the event marks a site where time is not only divided, but also assembled and ordered it is important to consider Deleuze’s third synthesis of time, which he outlines in *Difference and Repetition*. In his critical introduction to *Difference and Repetition* James Williams, notes that the third synthesis divides the present from the past and opens us a radically different future. This synthesis is therefore built on an ordering of time that is non-circular and is connected to Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return. The separation or cut between the past and future opens space where nothing can be the same again because the all of the past is cut off from all of the future (Williams 103). Williams argues that it is because of this cut in time that the “third synthesis of time must be understood as the eternal return of difference. Identities, or the same, from the past and the present, pass away forever, transformed by the return of that which makes them differ—Deleuze’s pure difference or difference in itself” (103). We can see here the connection between the third synthesis and Deleuze’s interest in difference in itself. The third synthesis helps us to account for the ways that difference manifests. The same passes away, cut off from the future, by the third synthesis, and difference in itself eternally returns.


4 It is important to note that Badiou’s thinking of the event hinges on a pointed critique of Deleuze. For a good outline of the key similarities and differences between Badiou and Deleuze’s thinking on event see: Adkins “Deleuze and Badiou on the Nature of Events” (2012).

5 As noted in Chapter Two, Deleuzian concepts have a way of resisting clear definition because they continually overlap and fold into one another. This is particularly clear when we begin to consider Deleuze’s conceptualization of event. However, it is important to remember that while his concepts are closely related, they differ from one another in subtle, but significant ways. Therefore, while event is connected to the concepts of becoming, actual/virtual, multiplicity, difference, repetition and the new, it also is not equivalent to any of them. We must think of all
of these concepts functioning or playing off of one another in order to help explain and illustrate the complexities of the world around us.

6 In response to Deleuze’s death Derrida claimed Deleuze to be the primary thinker of the event.

7 Deleuze is most explicit in his formulation of event in *The Logic of Sense* and a chapter in *The Fold* entitled “What Is An Event”. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze draws on the Stoics as a means of detailing a philosophy of event. In *The Fold* Deleuze’s chapter on event is a close reading of the concept of event in relation to the thought of Whitehead and Leibniz. Furthermore, in *The Logic of Sense* the event is presented as something aligned with the intrusion of the Lacanian Real into material reality (Smith 638). As Deleuze’s thinking develops, and in particular in his collaborations with Felix Guattari, the event is reshaped as production or becoming (Smith 638). For Deleuze’s key critics, Badiou and Žižek, this reshaping of event is a problematic because it positions Deleuze as a thinker of “the One” rather than of the multiplicity.

8 The relationship between performance and event is examined by Elena del Río in her book, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affectation*. Del Río argues:

   As an event, performance is cut off from any preconceived, anterior scenario or reality. In its fundamental ontological sense, performance gives rise to the real. While representation is mimetic, performance is creative and ontogenetic. In representation, repetition gives birth to the same; in performance, each repetition enacts its own unique event. Performance suspends all prefigurations and structured distinctions, to become the event wherein new flows of thought and sensation can emerge. (4)

9 Keith Crome and James Williams summarize:

   Lyotard’s sublime has two main functions. First, it is an explanation for the way events stand beyond representation. The occurrence of feelings of the sublime depends on a failure of our powers of grasping and understanding an event. This is because the sublime involves a combination of pleasure and pain, where the pain comes from frustration of our cognitive faculties. We are attracted to something (pleasure) but when we try to understand it, we fail (pain). The second function of the sublime is to accompany a clash of way of handling events (understanding and reason, for example). The feeling of the sublime shows how this clash is necessary and how different ways or regimes are incommensurable, that is, have no common measure and cannot justly be brought together in a wider narrative. Events do not only undo representation, they undo hopes to reconcile different narratives” (289-290).


10 Brent Adkins suggests that we may think about Deleuze’s conception of the event in relation to the mathematical difference between the singular and ordinary (508). In mathematics a singular point refers to the site where “something new happens”, whereas an ordinary point is where “nothing new happens”. Adkins provides the example of the square, where the four corners are singularities or sites where “something happens”, and the between the corners exists an infinity of ordinary points where “nothing happens” (Adkins 508). Deleuze posits that it is the singular point where something happens that is the event (*Difference and Repetition* 189, *Logic
of Sense 52). While it is simple enough to locate the event on the square Adkins aptly reminds us that locating the event is increasingly more complicated when we think about things more complex than squares. He provides an example of locating the event within the cinematic audience.

11 On prehension Deleuze writes:

Prehension is individual unity. Everything prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and, by degrees, prehends a world. The eye is a prehension of light. Living beings prehend water, soil, carbon, and salts. At a given moment the pyramid prehends Napoleon's soldiers (forty centuries are contemplating us), and inversely. [...] The vector of prehension moves from the world to the subject, from the prehended datum to the prehending one (a “superject”); thus the data of a prehension are public elements, while the subject is the intimate or private element that expresses immediacy, individuality, and novelty. But the prehended, the datum, is itself a preexisting or coexisting prehension, such that all prehension is a prehension of prehension, and the event thus a “nexus of prehensions”. Each new prehension becomes a datum. It becomes public, but for other prehensions that objectify it; the event is inseparably the objectification of one prehension and the subjectification of another; it is at once public and private, potential and real, participating in the becoming of another event and the subject of its own becoming. (The Fold 78)

12 In the production material for The Invisible Brassard describes the set as “an impossible geography”.

13 For a reading of trauma in relation to this production see: Bechtel “The Body of Trauma: Empathy, Mourning, and Media in Troika Ranch’s loopdiver” (2013).

14 This is a phrase spoken into the microphone several times throughout the production: “So I start again, back to the beginning, always and again, always and again”.

15 While it may seem odd to add “coming to the theatre” to Deleuze’s list of seemingly “more extreme” events, I think that it is actually in line with his thinking of the event. This is because, in the context of this quote, Deleuze also speaks of Hamlet and Oedipus. Therefore, I see a relation being established between the theatre and Deleuze’s thinking of the event in this instance.

16 My reading of this section of Difference and Repetition is indebted to the project: “‘slow reading’ Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition” on the blog “Sketching a Present”. Accessed 12 October 2013.
<http://sketchingapresent.com/2013/08/14/slow-reading-1-10-deleuzes-dr-pp-10-11/>
CONCLUSION

To Have Been Forced to Thought

The thingness or thisness of the theatre, the riddle of the ontology of theatre, has not been solved. Hopefully, it never will be resolved, for it is this impossible thought, this site of theater’s aporia, that seduces us to return continually to the event for to begin yet again, waiting for the occurrence of the same thing, only different. --Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture* 111

The child asks, ‘If I invent it, does it exist?’
And the narrator says, ‘If you invent it, it exists.’
And the child responds, ‘It exists.’ --Brassard, qtd. in Halferty, “Talking to Myself” 29

From Recognition to Affect: Theatre, Technology, Thought
Writing on the experience of modernity, Krysztof Ziarek suggests that, “contrary to common misperceptions, the avant-garde does not exhaust itself in its negative or self-destructive impulse but reaches toward a new understanding of experience and temporality” (5). I have made a similar argument for the processes of theatricality. While, Sarrazac’s paradox indicates a theatre embattled with itself, I have argued that the self-destructive forces of theatricality, like Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, do not ultimately eradicate the theatre. Rather, theatricality’s impulse to exhaust or destroy paradoxically establishes it as a productive force, which pushes us towards a new experience of the world. It is a force, that, rather than providing us with the recognizable, pushes us to the threshold of the unrecognizable and forces us to think.

Additionally, I have positioned technology as a troubling element within theatre performance. I have suggested that technology permits us to view theatricality not as the securer
of artifice, but rather, as the procurer of an affective experience that opens the spectator to the possibility of thinking and experiencing the new. Within this framework, technology is not understood as that which simply orders and makes sense of the world. Instead, I have attempted to situate technology as a fundamental element that assists, or partakes, in reconfiguring our relationship to the theatre. The screens, vocal devices, and mixing software that have been described throughout this thesis do not in themselves produce an experience of theatricality. However, they do play a significant role in establishing the relationships between the various forces that coalesce in the space of the theatre.

The second chapter of this thesis identified the screen as device shuttling us between the spaces of our interiority and exteriority. I proposed that this movement, which is made accessible via the screen, is capable of opening us to the outside. I argued that it is an encounter with the outside, or that which we do not know and cannot represent, that has the potential to move us to thought. The outside, encountered through the folding of the theatre’s doubled spatiality, is bound to a kind of chaotic potentiality that is mediated by the screen. The screen, as Deleuze suggests, “makes something issue from chaos” (Deleuze, *The Fold* 76). The folding of space brings something into existence. Thought emerges. It emerges through the chaos organized by the screen. It emerges in the movement across the screen or the movement between material and immaterial spaces of the theatre.

The outside, which is made accessible via the screen and which brings order to the chaos surrounding it, resonates with the emptiness, examined in Chapter Four, that is necessary for the event. Following Deleuze’s conceptualization of event, I have argued that one of the primary characteristics of the event is its production of the wound, or the site where the fracture within the self, and between the self and world is held open. The wound marks the boundary between
inside and outside, but it also provides entrance into a kind of emptiness. And this emptiness is required for the event to take form. In the emptiness of space—the emptiness of the stage—the forces of the actual and the virtual become manifest. This is illustrated by Marie Brassard when, in *Jimmy*, the microphone being used to bring the character into existence suddenly goes dead. The silence, held open in this moment, exposes the spectator, not only to the character’s fear of falling into emptiness, but to their own fear of the emptiness—the outside—that is suddenly evident, and is quickly beginning to surround them. The silence, held just a few moments too long, ushers in the outside, or that which resists representation.

While the event’s emptiness points to a particular violence, it also, like the concept of the outside, marks a site of potential. It is a site where the forces of the virtual become actualized and the actuality of our existence is put in dynamic contact with its virtual counterpart. It is space of variation and multiplicity that is evidenced, again, by Brassard’s production of sustained silence. In this moment, the audience is confronted with presence as multiplicity. That is, presence as a site of continual variation brought forth by the encounter between an “I” and the unrecognizable other. The variation experienced in this moment, “throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 240). The audience is unsettled, swept up. And it is here, not in a state of recognition, but an experience of affect, that we are potentially moved to thought.

**Inventing Existence**
Significant to this project has been an insistence on the creative potentiality existing at the center of the theatrical experience. I have found Deleuze’s philosophy useful in exploring this creative potentiality because his thought is not limited by attempting to understand only what we can see, hear, and comprehended. In fact, Deleuze is most interested in finding a means to account for the invisible, the inaudible, the incomprehensible. Moreover, Deleuze is driven by a desire to
articulate the productive forces at work in our experience of the world. To these forces, I add theatricality.

The productivity of theatricality is evident in its orientation towards the future. While theatricality secures the past in its relation to representation, it also articulates the present in its inherent immediateness, and it ultimately propels us towards the future. In propelling us towards the future theatricality demands creative action. For Erika Fischer-Lichte this means that the theatre, in its theatricality, “turns out to be a field of experimentation where we can test our capacity for and the possibilities of constructing reality” (Fischer-Lichte, “From Theatre” 104). For Toni Dove, theatricality’s orienting towards the future, means devising performances that open potential “streams of thought”, or provide people with place to explore an idea, or to think (Toni Dove, qtd. in Jennings np). For Marie Brassard it means suggesting something that, “will blossom in the mind of the audience after the play is over” (Marie Brassard, qtd. in Halferty, “Sound Cyborg” 25).

Theatricality’s orientation to the future, also connects it to the forces of the imagination. This connection between the imagination and the future is made clear by Gaston Bachelard’s assertion that, “by the swiftness of its actions, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future” (Bachelard xxxiv). Significant, is that Bachelard positions the imagination as a “major power of human nature” (xxxiv). In this, the poetic image, or the human process of imaging, gains an ontological status of its own and becomes a site of power and creation. The implications of this are explored in Marie Brassard’s Talking to Myself in the Future (2010):

> And the narrator says, “If you invent it, it exists.”
> And the child responds, “It exists.” (Halferty “Talking to Myself” 29)
Brassard has said that, this is exactly what her play is about: if she invents it, it exists (Halferty “Talking to Myself” 29). She continues:

[…] People are destroying the idea of art, for example, asking questions like, “Why does it exist? It is not based on anything real!” But nothing is based on anything real. I mean, if your definition of reality has only to do with things you can touch and feel in a physical way, you’re missing a big part of the experience of being alive. As much as this table that I am sitting at is real, my thoughts are real, and my imagination is reality as well. Love is a reality. It’s not anything concrete, but it exists. And maybe love exists because we invented it? Maybe we exist because we have been dreamed, or invented, or because we dream ourselves in this world? I mean everything is possible. (Brassard, qtd. in Halferty, “Talking to Myself” 29)

In bringing us to the threshold of the unrecognizable—by letting us explore that which we cannot touch or feel—theatricality reminds us of the potential that we have as spectators. This is the potential to dream and the potential to construct worlds. Theatricality opens us to the processes of invention. It asks us to make an existence—to construct a reality. In agreeing to participate we can begin to explore the creative potentiality existing at the center of the theatrical experience. This is the creative potentiality of spectatorship. Moreover, in harnessing this creativity, we as spectators may begin to reframe theatricality as a productive force that pushes us towards a new experience of the world.

**Beginning the Same, Again, Only Different**

I began this project with an observation. I noted that the theatre, in becoming theatre, troubles itself. It simultaneously moves towards its own destruction and dreams of its own creation. I came to this observation following Jean Pierre Sarrazac’s assertion that: the paradox of theatricality is found in our continual disavowal for the theatre, while we simultaneously dream of beginning the theatre all over again (70). Furthermore, I suggested that this project was my own performance of this very paradox. It was my own means of being done with the theatre, and, at the same time, my dream for beginning the theater all over again.
While I did not articulate it in words, perhaps because it is impossible to do, I also began this project with a sense. There was, and still is, something tugging at me. There is something that pulls me to and repels me from, the theatre. This something captures my attention and moves me. There is something, perhaps the same thing, that forces me to write. It touches me, and reminds me that I am alive. It touches me, and reminds me, that, in my aliveness I am not a complete, coherent, singular whole. I am not an object of recognition, but rather, I am an assemblage of forces, moving and becoming in the world. As an assemblage of forces, moving and becoming in the world, I must continue to return to the theatre, and also, to the computer screen that captures my words. I must return to these sites, not because they provide me with definitive answers—signs of recognition—but because in my continual return to them I am ushered into an encounter with sense. I am brought into an affective relationship where my becoming persists.

In line with Sarrazac’s paradox, Matthew Causey observes that the “riddle” existing at the heart of the theatre has not yet been solved (111). Because of this we continually return to the theatre. The unsolved riddle—the paradox, the force of theatricality—is what ultimately produces the theatre’s aporia—its cut, cleft, crisis. And, it is this opening that seduces me. That seduces us. It is the gap that screens for us the productive emptiness of both, the stage and our being. It is what calls us to return to the theatre. It calls us to return and to wait for the occurrence of the same thing, only different (Causey 111). Moreover, it is the occurrence of this same thing, only different, that marks the theatre and the forces of theatricality that produce it, as a site for difference in itself, a site for the fundamental encounter, a site for the production of thought.
There was, and *is still*, something, tugging at me. There is something in the world that forces me to think. This something calls me, calls us, to create—to engage the chaos existing just beneath, or beyond, our experience of reality. This something, as Deleuze reminds us, “is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (*Difference and Repetition* 139). This something is *sense*. In sense I began this project—with an inkling, a hunch—and it is in sense that I conclude, or perhaps more accurately, it is with sense that I must continue.
Bibliography


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