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Habit in the Theatre: Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and  
Performance, with particular reference to the Physical  
Theatre of Yumi Umiuware and David Pledger

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## Abstract

In this thesis I demonstrate how a discussion of habit can broaden understandings of bodies and bodily changes in performance, performance theory, and the philosophic underpinnings of performance theory. A discussion of habit is beneficial because habit describes both the models on which people unwittingly base their behaviours, and the bodily means by which people mimic these models in the present. Both models and their bodily manifestations are cultural constructs. Habit requires a parallel between the two to be repeated accurately again and again, and thus to become part of a person's identity.

Theatrical and cultural paradigms both train people to confront habits, and the bodies that mimic habits. In Chapter One I outline two ways of confronting habits favoured by theatre practitioners and philosophers today. Both methods are based on the ability bodies have to do things differently when they mimic habits. One is mainly concerned with what bodies do when they mimic 'new' habits. The other is more concerned with the way bodies do things when they mimic 'normal' habits in 'new' ways. Comparison of these product- and process-oriented methods determines the particular theatre practices and philosophies I consider in this thesis, and the conclusions I come to.

In Chapter Two I begin with twentieth century theatre, particularly realist mimicry and subsequent rejections of realist mimicry. I argue that these theatre practices both present new or seemingly more natural habits, but become so rapt in these habits they simply assume that bodies will mechanically mimic them. The problem is, this mechanical mimicry can make even the cruellest habits seem natural to spectators. This shortcoming prompts theatre practitioners and philosophers today to seek more radical ways of mimicking habits, and though some still prioritise the end product, others prioritise the ephemeral physical processes that help performers present normal habits in new ways.

In Chapters Three and Four I compare two contemporary philosophical perspectives on this more radical mimicry of habits. In Chapter Three I argue that Irigaray's and Butler's performativity theories are reluctant to discuss the bodily processes on which radical

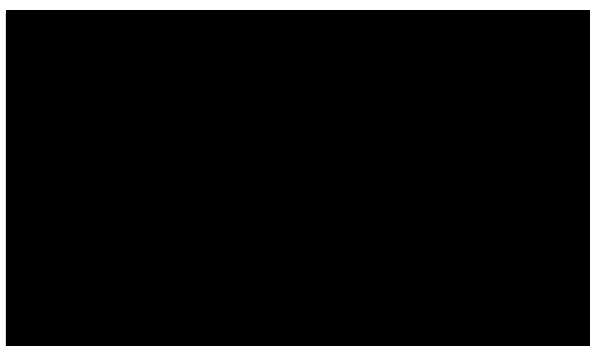


mimicry of habits depends, and are thus still product-oriented in their approach to habits. In Chapter Four I argue that Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalist theories are better able to articulate how radical mimicry of habits relies on bodily processes, and so significantly more process-driven in their approach to habits than performativity theories. These theorists claim that mind, matter, and the parallels between the two that mimic habits, are nothing more than convenient fictions cut from the flux of life. To generate a more radical mimicry human beings have but to go back to this chaotic, corporeal flux.

I conclude in Chapters Five and Six by connecting these vitalist theories with the physical theatre practices of Lecoq, Grotowski, Barba, Hijikata, and Ono internationally, and of Uniumare and Pledger in Australia. These practitioners all work with habits in processual ways, highlighting the bodies that mimic or counter-mimic habits in the present moment of performance, without necessarily naturalising these bodies. Consideration of their practices thus consolidates the claims about product- and process- driven approaches to habit change I make throughout the thesis.

## Statement

I affirm that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree at any university or other institution, and that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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<sup>1</sup> Including a paper titled "Theatrical Trans/formations: Performing Bodies, Bodies of Performance and the Violence of Habit" at the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies Postgraduate Colloquium, Monash University, July 1999; a paper titled "Creatures of Habit: Experimenting with the Relations between Synthesising Process and Synthetic Product in Theatrical Performance" at 'Synthetics: Making and Remaking Culture' the Cultural Studies Association of Australia Conference, University of Western Sydney, December 1999; a paper titled "Spectacle and Habit" at 'Performance and Spectacle' the Australasian Drama Studies Association Conference, University of Newcastle, July 2000; a paper titled "Theatrical Spectacles: Sights of Virtuosity, Sites of Habit" at the School of Literary, Visual, and Performance Studies Postgraduate Colloquium, Monash University, October 2000; and paper titled "Habit, Body, Performance" at the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies Postgraduate Colloquium, Monash University, November 2002.

## Introduction

Though it is current and in common usage, the term 'habit' remains a curious and nebulous one for performance theorists and philosophers. Habits are a significant part of people's lives, allowing them to walk, talk, work, play, and engage with others in expected ways, and so allowing their lives to run smoothly. Historically, almost all human habits have been mimicked in theatrical performance at some point, and have been mimicked in imitative, indicative, or abstract modes depending on the theatrical discipline. Human habits have also been considered by many different thinkers in many different theoretical disciplines, including in the ethics of Plato and Aristotle, the empiricism of David Hume, the sociology of Emile Durkheim, Samuel Weber, and Pierre Bourdieu, the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Although these thinkers rarely foregrounded habit as a topic or theme, they did treat it. However, the term habit has since fallen from favour, even in these disciplines. This, sociologist Charles Camic comments, is partly because twentieth century behaviourist psychology persuaded many theorists that the term habit applies only to biological mechanisms, not to meaningful behaviours. "[T]he concept of habit was a casualty," Camic says, "of sociology's revolt against behaviorism – a casualty whose effects are still to be seen" ("The Matter of Habit" 1040). The behaviourist tendency to reduce habit to reflex is a real problem for performance theorists, who are invariably interested in the meaningful behaviours of bodies. It is also a problem for philosophers. In the contemporary critical climate biologicistic descriptions of bodies have been discredited by structuralist, poststructuralist, and psychoanalytic discourses. To take bodies and bodily habits for granted in this climate is fraught with difficulty. With its behaviourist baggage, then, the term habit has been shunted off into a self-help domain that highlights drug habits, diet habits, nervous habits, and the like. Still, the term habit actually does have a broader scope than behaviourists allege. It has, in Camic's words, "been used in a variety of ways by different social thinkers from different ages" (1044). This common term can therefore contribute usefully to any investigation of the cultural constraints on bodies in performance, in performance theory, and in the philosophies that inform them.

A return to the etymological connotations of the term habit can clarify how it assists in any investigation of cultural practices, and of their attempts to control human bodies. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term habit is derived from the Latin 'habitus'<sup>2</sup>. Habitus, in turn, is derived from 'habere', meaning "to have" (VI 993), or more precisely "the way in which one holds or has oneself" (VI 993). Habit, in this respect, refers to socially approved schemas of being, behaving, or seeing built up by repetition. In this thesis I use the word 'model' to understand the schemas behind almost all bodily behaviours. Of course, model is a loaded word that means different things in different contexts. I take it to mean an ideal that bodies instantiate, manifest, or mimic. In this thesis, I make much of the fact that habit has to bring models and their bodily manifestations together to be repeated in the present moment – and a habit would be worthless were it not repeated again and again. Obviously, most people do not think of themselves as acting out a model, they think they simply do, say, or see things. Nevertheless, philosophers and performance theorists can use this notion of the model to broaden the dictionary definition of habit, and better articulate what is going on with the social and somatic aspects of bodily habits.

If habits are based on models built up "by repetition of the same act until it becomes almost or quite involuntary" (VI 993), then habits are more than biological mechanisms. As commentators like physical therapist Moshe Feldenkrais put it, habit does have a biological basis, which can be difficult to change and which can vary greatly between individuals (*Awareness Through Movement* 3, 42), but habit's biological basis is still dependent on cultural determinations. "The structure and tissues of this nerve system are inherited," Feldenkrais says, "but their function depends largely on individual experience" (43). Thus, as philosopher Elizabeth Grosz explains, "[w]hat are regarded as purely fixed and unchangeable elements of facticity, biologically given factors, are amenable to wide historical vicissitudes and transformations" (*Volatile Bodies* 190). This is actually crucial, because even if there is a biological basis for certain bodily behaviours, the range of tasks bodies take on in life is far broader than these 'hard-wired' tasks. "Man is born," James remarks, "with a tendency to do more things than he has ready-made arrangements for in his

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<sup>2</sup> In the latter half of the twentieth century Bourdieu has revived the term habitus, but for him habitus refers not simply to bodily habits, but to the broader belief systems that both shape and are shaped by bodily habits (*Outline of a Theory of Practice* 72) (Chapter Three).

nerve-centres" (*Principles of Psychology* 113). Accordingly, bodies need habits built up by thought, education, and training. In fact, Feldenkrais argues that habits based on education, or on cultural conditioning, are "in more frequent use socially than elements of biological origin" (*Awareness Through Movement* 3) because they override the individual differences people inherit. These habits "mold individuals who will not be social misfits" (4-5).

Though human beings are hardly aware of it, they take advantage of habit to store both simple behaviours and sophisticated social beliefs for future use, something that connects habit closely with the field of memory (cf. Philip Goodchild *Deleuze and Guattari* 25). Their habits have them repeating these past behaviours and beliefs in the present moment without really registering what they are doing. These habits are executed or experienced so repeatedly by the individual themselves, and observed so repeatedly by others, that they start to seem like a natural part of the individual's body. "When we look at living creatures from an outward point of view," James observes, "one of the first things that strikes us is that they are bundles of habits" (*Principles of Psychology* 104). What is more, Dewey clarifies, "[w]ere it not for the continued operation of all habits in every act no such thing as character could exist. There would simply be a bundle, an untied bundle at that, of isolated acts. Character is the interpenetration of habits" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 27). As these theorists assert, habits build the bodily identities by which human beings recognise themselves, and by which their fellows recognise them. Habits help identify each living being and each class or category of living being – including, in theatrical terms, each actor and each class of actor. Consequently, there is no truth to the comforting pop psychology claim that, in James Claiborn and Cherry Pedrick's terms, "you are not your habit" (*The Habit Change Workbook* 19). Habits are not something outside human beings with which they can struggle. Habits are not just a collection of characteristics cast over 'real' bodies. Habits create 'real' bodies. "Habits," as Dewey argues, "constitute the self" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 26).

As this basic account demonstrates, a discussion of habit does in fact help philosophers and performance theorists go beyond biologicistic descriptions of bodies. Habit highlights how bodies are built up by repetition, and by the meaningful cultural models that frame repetition. It thus helps theorists explain how bodies are shaped by the social world – by

experience, by encounters with specific people, events, and environments, and by the conventions common to a given culture.

In the twentieth century, a range of different theoretical disciplines have dealt with the complexities of the cultural construction of the body, including Claude Lévi-Strauss' anthropology, Peirce's and Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics, Roland Barthes' structuralism, Bourdieu's sociology, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Jacques Lacan's, Luce Irigaray's, and Julia Kristeva's psychoanalysis, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, Michel Foucault's and Judith Butler's theories of subjectivity, sexuality, and power, and Frederick Nietzsche's, Henri Bergson's, and Gilles Deleuze's theories of the dynamism of change. These constructivist theorists all analyse the ideologies that influence how bodies are understood and used. They typically argue that cultural practices, processes, ideals, and ideologies build bodily habits, and in turn build bodies themselves. They argue, according to the pragmatist philosopher Shannon Sullivan, that "[t]he constructs that prevail within the culture(s) in which I am anchored will inform the habits that I develop, that is, the person that I become" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 92-93). Further, these constructivist theorists examine how this construction and control of the body relates to the construction and control of the broader culture in which the body exists. "The complexity of the situation is," as Feldenkrais says, "brought about by the inherent interdependence between the growth and development of the individual and the culture" (*Awareness Through Movement* 15-16). Understandably, these constructivist theorists often critique the ways in which cultural practices build a coherent body, upon which a coherent cultural or aesthetic system can in turn be developed.

In recent years, performance theorists and practitioners have also been curious about how theatre as a cultural practice can construct and potentially reconstruct bodies. In question, as performance theorist Barbara Freedman says, is theatre's potential "to reflect and effect change – to insert a difference in our construction of the subject and so to make a difference" ("Frame-Up" 56). North American performance theorists, including Philip Auslander, Herbert Blau, Marvin Carlson, Sue-Ellen Case, Elin Diamond, Jill Dolan, Josette Féral, Jeanie Forte, Susan Leigh Foster, Freedman, Rebecca Schneider, Bert O. States, Peggy Phelan, and Janelle Reinelt, have been especially influential here. These

theorists all describe how performing bodies are framed by ideological discourses. They also discuss how performers navigate these discourses throughout their careers in order to establish or extend the skills they need to be successful in their specific genre.

With all these influences contributing to constructivist concepts of the body, the terrain remains rather varied. For example, while psychoanalytic theorists such as Irigaray see identity as a phantasmatic projection of the body, poststructuralist theorists such as Butler see identity as a set of signs a body performs, and poststructuralist theorists such as Foucault see identity as a product of the coercive cultural procedures that discipline the body. These theories have almost all been applied to performing bodies at one time or another too. The range of theories that address the cultural construction of the body only confirms how complicated this topic is. In this thesis I bring the notion that culturally condoned habits build human bodies together with a number of constructivist views in theory and in theatre. I thereby create a century long and contemporary context for the main issue I investigate in the Chapters to come – the way theatrical practices work with habits, the way they emphasise culturally condoned properties or corporeal processes in their work with habits, and the negative or positive effects this emphasis can have.

In Chapter One I begin by introducing the ideas about habit central to this thesis. As I have indicated, these ideas come out of my observation that habits cannot be explained by culturally condoned models alone. These models cannot be separated from their manifestations, from the bodily means by which they are performed. Consequently, habits have to link the models people want to repeat with the means required to repeat them. In Dewey's words, "habits must intervene between wish and execution" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 30). Merleau-Ponty agrees, arguing that human beings cultivate habits by cultivating a "harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 144). As these theorists make apparent, habits are based on a mechanical link between a model and its manifestation, between what bodies expect to do and what bodies eventually do. Habits are based on a mechanical bodily mimicry that takes place in the present, and that is always open to mistakes and



modifications. In Chapter One this observation causes me to argue that, when it comes to modifying habits, two approaches more relevant to theatre can be added to the accepted strategies of punishing people's problem habits, or putting people in contexts where they cannot perform these problem habits. Both approaches are premised on the ability bodies have to produce 'mistakes' when they mimic habits, mistakes cultural systems cannot completely stop through practice or punishment. The thing is, if a model of habit is deemed to be correct, and to be correctly mimicked, then this behaviour starts to seem natural. But if a model is deemed to be mistaken on the one hand, or to be mistakenly mimicked on the other hand, in both cases the naturalness of the behaviour is challenged. It is through these two types of 'mistake' that bodily mimicry can call culturally endorsed habits into question, and so establish the two methods of modifying habit I examine in Chapter One and throughout the thesis. The first method emerges when bodies replace 'normal' models of habit with 'new' or 'mistaken' models, as for instance when they replace cigarettes with chewing gum. Insofar as this method mimics new models of habit, it is premised mainly on the product, on which model of habit is mimicked. The second method emerges when bodies replay 'normal' models of habit in 'new' or 'mistaken' ways, as for instance when they smoke so many cigarettes that the habit starts to feel ridiculous and to change. Insofar as this method mimics normal models of habit in new ways, it is premised mainly on the process, on the ways in which a model of habit is mimicked. Whether these are seen as two separate sorts of variation or two separately oriented versions of one sort of variation, comparison of them, and of the way theatre practices and theories can use them to challenge habits, is central to this thesis.

In Chapter Two I introduce the first of my more targeted treatments of theatre practices and theories. I investigate how theatre practices use the mimicry that supports them to tackle socially sanctioned habits in product- or process- driven ways. Though they interpret it in different ways, the idea of mimicking habits is important in most sorts of theatre-making. They work with habits of gender, race, class, community, culture, or society on a number of different levels. The difficulty, though, is that these theatres also work with sometimes significant discrepancies between the artificial habits depicted, and the actual habits of the bodies that depict them. These discrepancies can call the naturalness of the habit depicted into doubt, in due course producing one, other, or both of the types of disruptions to habit I

discuss in Chapter One. Which, of course, is not the goal of conservative theatrical genres than of conservative cultural genres. In Chapter Two I consider the way different theatres deal with this difficulty, controlling or celebrating the disruptions, and the different results this can have. I note that many theatres use their training processes to develop the model-manifestation parallels that predictably mimic habits. They teach actors to control their own ordinary habits – that is, to magnify the ones that are clues to their characters, and to minimise or conceal the ones that are obstacles to their characters. “This,” Lea Logie notes in a paper on theatre training, “is not an easy task” (“Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor” 230). Nevertheless, if actors discipline their bodily habits this way, and so stop them being disruptive, they are in a better position to transform temporarily into a character and enduringly into a more powerful actor.

This tendency established, in the remainder of Chapter Two I examine three types of theatre-making prominent in the twentieth century – realist mimicry, rejections of mimicry in performance art, and radicalisations of mimicry in postmodern performance. Although these different theatrical disciplines have been analysed before by others, they become all the more interesting when interpreted in terms of the ideas about tradition, training, and habit I outline in this thesis. These ideas help determine how different theatrical disciplines mimic habits, and how they control the bodies that mimic these habits to make the habits appear more natural, or vice versa. They help demonstrate that realism’s ‘truthful’ mimicry of habits depends on a regular, referential, ‘truthful’ relation between the character and the actor that mimics the character. It thus takes a product-oriented approach, allowing the habits mimicked to direct the bodily means of mimicking them. The danger is that if habits are too truthfully mimicked, they seem natural to spectators, and are taken as blueprints for their own bodily behaviours. This said, the rejections of mimicry seen in performance art are not a solution to this naturalising problem. Performance art is often so obsessed with the actor’s body that it simply overturns the actor-artificial character relation seen in realism’s mimicry of human habits, instead of arresting the naturalising process it is part of. This shortcoming prompts theatre practitioners and theorists today to seek out more ‘Brechtian’ sorts of mimicry, which capture the performing body’s potential to mimic new characteristics, or to mimic normal characteristics in new ways, in the present moment of performance. It is these product- and process- driven types of radical mimicry, in theatre and in contemporary

theory, that are central to the rest of the thesis, including to my analysis of the body-based mimicry of physical theatre in the concluding Chapters.

Obviously, I am distinguishing the different theatrical treatments of habit I discuss in Chapter Two mainly for the purpose of analysing their advantages and disadvantages. In practice, many performers bring these treatments of habit together to differing degrees. In addition, other treatments of habit are always possible. After all, as Geraldine Harris observes in her feminist analysis of theatre and theatrical transformations, there is "no *one* theory, strategy or form that can ensure, provoke or even explicate how subversion may be achieved ...in any given situation in any given sphere" (*Staging Femininities* 80, original emphasis). This means the types of theatre-making I consider in Chapter Two are not universal or universally valid. They do not necessarily transcend their own time and culture. On the contrary, these techniques exist only ephemerally through each generation of actors in the genre, and are therefore always evolving.

Having indicated what is involved in habit, and investigated the way several sorts of theatre work with habit, in Chapters Three and Four I compare theories of habit. Psychology, phenomenology, pragmatism, sociology, and other theoretical paradigms have all considered habit, and thus contributed to contemporary ideas about the cultural construction of the human body. Nevertheless, since this is an interdisciplinary thesis, not one devoted to a single theoretical topic, school, or theorist, I do not have the space to offer a detailed comparison of all these historical and contemporary theories of habit, or of their applicability to theatre practices. After summary comments on some of these other theories, then, I concentrate on two theories of habit and habit change prominent today – performativity theories in Chapter Three, and vitalist theories in Chapter Four. These theories are relevant because they both use theatrical metaphors of mimicry to understand how habits change, and how mental properties and material processes can be implicated in this change. Accordingly, it is worth assessing the different degrees to which these theories treat the bodily processes behind mimicry, and then allowing this assessment to add weight to my discussion of product- and process- driven approaches to habit in the theatre.

Of the discourses that use theatrical metaphors of mimicry to describe bodily and broader cultural changes, performativity is the most plausible for many contemporary theorists, and thus warrants mention in any analysis of habit. Based on ideas of imitation, theories of 'performative', strategic, or subversive mimicry make theorists and theatre practitioners alike think about their own ideas on imitation, particularly its connection with the cultural contexts in which it occurs. In Chapter Three I consider how current conceptions of performativity are themselves confirmed or challenged by the ideas about habit I have presented here, taking the feminist philosophies of Butler and Irigaray as representative.

Though performativity theories accept that radicalising a repetition of a habit is the best way to remodel that habit, and thus parallel my ideas about habit in many ways, they are also problematised by these ideas. This is because they are so concerned to avoid biologism that they attend more to body images than to the living, breathing bodies that act out these images. Most performativity theorists believe that bodies are created by the cultural images inscribed on them. Bodies are only what living beings, with their geographical, social, and symbolic surrounds as a basis, imagine or interpret them to be. These performativity theorists think that cultural practices and performances can change these body images, though they cannot change the bodies themselves. This means cultural practices can 'replace' unwanted body images with wanted body images. These new body images will then spill over into new bodily experiences, as bodies begin to live up to these images. This is how new bodily habits eventually emerge. This 'replacement' theory has also permeated pop psychology. "[I]nstead of trying to just stop a habit," as Claiborn and Pedrick advise patients, "you will need to find a replacement behaviour" (*The Habit Change Workbook* 29). Pop psychologists suggest patients should replace one norm with another, rather than try other common types of habit change, like punishing unwanted habits, avoiding events or environments that provoke unwanted habits, or repeating unwanted habits to the point that they become unpleasant or ridiculous (cf. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 602-603). Again, the idea is that the wanted habits will eventually become a way of life. The difficulty is that many performativity and pop psychology theorists assume, albeit implicitly, that bodies exist mainly in ideas and ideals – that is, mainly in language. The bodies themselves are taken to be less influential than the body images they inspire or imitate. Accordingly, as Grosz argues, these theorists sometimes "see the body as a blank, passive page, a neutral

'medium' for the inscription of a text" (*Volatile Bodies* 156). "This is to deny a materiality or material specificity and determinateness to bodies" (190). In challenging habit, these performativity theorists treat the cultural norms changed more comprehensively than the corporeal means by which these norms are created or changed. They imply that the former counts and the latter does not. Or, more specifically, that the former dominates and the latter duplicates it. This means theirs is more a product-oriented than a process-oriented method of modifying habits.

This type of change, based on body images not on bodies themselves, is currently the most popular among psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theorists. It is not characteristic of the attitude of all performativity theorists, but it is common. These performativity theorists display what the performance theorist Rhonda Blair dubs "a mistrustful attitude toward feeling and the biological body" ("Reconsidering Stanislavsky" 177). They worry that any attention to the body, any acceptance that the body holds an actual or autonomous existence, will bring their theories too near to biologicistic theories of the 'natural' body. This is a legitimate concern. But it also creates limits, inconsistencies, and controversies in their theories of bodies and bodily change. Because performativity theorists want to avoid biologism, they treat potential new habits more thoroughly than the bodies that perform these habits. However, by dismissing the disruptive power of the bodies that physically, processually manifest these habits in the present, their theories avoid analysing the model-manifestation parallels that perpetuate habits. Their theories thus sometimes risk setting their new habits up as blueprints that will naturally be manifested by bodies – a difficulty not dissimilar to that I identify in treatments of habit in twentieth century theatre-making in Chapter Two. In effect, the methods these performativity theories propose can eliminate certain habits only to create others that are equally oppressive. Moreover, the fact that these theories struggle with the physical processes of the present makes it difficult to see how they might be adopted in performance and performance theory.

Clearly, the performativity theories mapped out over the closing decades of the twentieth century are still useful. But when analysing how bodily habits can be modified, it is also worth articulating the way mind and matter combine as a body mimics a habit in the present moment. Particularly when it comes to mimicking a habit in a theatrical performance.

Theatre theorists and practitioners always work with bodies, not just with body images. Deemed a defining feature of the performing arts, bodies were certainly among the most broadly treated features of twentieth century performance. This concern with bodies has only become more marked with the advent of new technologies in the twentieth century and in the first few years of the twenty-first century. This is why performativity theories can be problematic for many performance theorists and practitioners. As Blair says in her 2002 study, "I am thankful that we are past the simplistic essentializing about the body and feelings found in some forms of cultural feminism, but it is time to revisit this terrain – because, finally, we are bodies" ("Reconsidering Stanislavsky" 189). Blair's sentiment typifies the often ambiguous links between performance and poststructuralist theories. Performance theorists and practitioners need, as Stanton B. Garner says in his phenomenological analysis of performance, to "redress the current of anti-theatricality that runs through much post-structuralist criticism, an attitude symptomatic (like all anti-theatricality) of a deeper uneasiness with the body" (*Bodied Spaces* 26). They need new approaches to bodies and bodily changes, approaches such as my analysis of habit has the potential to provide. These new approaches should not be so scared of biologism that they simply mask or manage bodies, instead of investigating their capacity to corrupt cultural norms. These approaches should understand that to deal with bodies is not necessarily to declare them natural. From a performing arts perspective, the bodies that act out habits in training and in performance are always real. These bodies may or may not be culturally constructed, but they are nevertheless real. For, as Schneider argues, although "the 'real' may always be performative, or constructed" (*The Explicit Body in Performance* 22), people ought not dismiss or deny "the very real effects of identity construction" (21). Butler agrees, acknowledging that a "construction is, after all, not the same as an artifice" (*Bodies that Matter* 94).

When it comes to reconceiving what it means to radically repeat a habit, and what part physical processes play, it is worth considering the work of the vitalist philosophers Bergson and Deleuze – particularly the work of Bergson, which has recently been experiencing a resurgence among critical and cultural theorists. Accordingly, I devote Chapter Four to a discussion of their intriguing concepts of bodies, bodily habits, and the broader logics that contextualise them. Vitalism has been part of theatre practice and theory in the past. As

Joseph Roach has argued in *The Player's Passion*, in the nineteenth century vitalism informed a number of acting theories that were interested in bodily vitality, energy, or electricity, not in bodily mechanism (94-96)<sup>3</sup>. Vitalistic approaches were adopted by artists who wanted to broaden Western theories of acting, theories that had at times been dominated by the mind-matter parallels put forth in Western philosophical, psychological, and physiological theories of bodies (11). This said, vitalist ideas about how matter, mind, and mimicry anchor habit have not been prominent in contemporary performance theory to date. This, combined with the complexity of vitalist thought, means it is important to introduce the themes I find most provocative, themes I focus on in Chapter Four.

Vitalists study life. Vitalists believe that life, and bodily experiences of and in life, emerge from an incessant creative force. This concept of life force has been part of Western philosophy, science, and art at least since Heraclitus' concept of flux in classical times<sup>4</sup>. For vitalists, this changing force cannot be explained by mechanistic principles, or by traditional dualisms between matter and mind. It cannot be understood intellectually, only grasped intuitively. This, regrettably, means that this force can never be defined. Nevertheless, vitalists claim this diverse, dynamic force drives all human life. It is the permutations of this force that produce what Bergson dubs the "artificial" (*Matter and Memory* 259, original emphasis) bodies, bodily habits, and mind-matter binaries that are at the basis of human life.

Bergson and Deleuze are both vitalistic philosophers, studying the force of life in light of the metaphysical, scientific, philosophical, and psychological insights of their own time. They are both sociological in their own specific ways too, interrogating constraints on the human condition. This said, Bergson's and Deleuze's shared belief that cultural systems cut normative human natures from the flux of life does not disguise the differences between them. For instance, Deleuze does more than Bergson to distance the temporal flux he describes from a monism, and from a generalising, globalising teleology that might make this flux too deterministic. This underpins the difference between Deleuze's focus on the future and Bergson's focus on how the past flows into the present (cf. Keith Ansell Pearson *A Germinal Life* 78-79; cf. Constantin V. Boundas "Deleuze-Bergson" 98-99). Similarly,

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<sup>3</sup> Including, most notably, the playwright George Bernard Shaw.

<sup>4</sup> Although, of course, I cannot cover all the permutations of vitalism here.

though Bergson and Deleuze both think the flux of life can liberate human bodies from their current constraints, Bergson sees freedom as an individual's capacity to escape constraints, while Deleuze sees freedom as a broader becoming that exceeds the idea of the individual as well as the constraints on them. In this sense, Deleuze is not as attached to humanity as Bergson (cf. Paul Douglass "Bergson's Deleuze" 370).

Though there are undoubtedly differences between Bergson's and Deleuze's theories, they share a similar spirit. Both theorists are interested in how cultural practices cut bodies from the continuous flux. They evaluate the cuts that create and naturalise certain bodily configurations<sup>5</sup>. Certainly, Bergson and Deleuze are not the first to claim bodies are created by cultural practices. For them, though, this is not just a change in the cultural images attributed to bodies, it is a change in the bodies themselves. In this paradigm, Grosz explains, "[i]t is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same" (*Volatile Bodies* x), it is that "the body, as much as the psyche or the subject, can be regarded as a cultural and historical product" (187). Taking this as their point of departure, Bergson and Deleuze avoid referring bodies and bodily habits back to an originary essence. Instead, they examine the changing events from which these so-called essences emerge (cf. Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* 53). Bergson and Deleuze both believe bodies are defined, for themselves and for others, by the things they do, not by any eternal essence. "We know nothing about a body," Deleuze argues in a text with Félix Guattari, "until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 257). Because they are interested in events instead of essences, in the dynamic forces of becoming instead of in the static forms of being, Bergson and Deleuze both show a typically vitalistic interest in variability. Deleuze, for example, explains that "[e]verything I've written is vitalistic, at least I hope it is" (*Negotiations* 143). In a strong sense, Bergson and Deleuze are both philosophers of change. Their philosophical projects are concerned with the way living bodies can avoid mechanistic modes of being and adopt vitalistic modes of becoming.

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<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche and Foucault also adopt versions of this 'genealogical' approach, as Foucault notes in the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 139-164).



Because Bergson and Deleuze both focus on the creative flux of life, their theories offer unique insights into habits, and into the model-manifestation parallels that predictably mimic habits. Despite their different terminologies, Bergson and Deleuze both recognise that the flux of reality can be congealed into both fixed and fluid tendencies. Moreover, they recognise that a regular, mechanical relation between a fixed model and its fluid manifestation is required to regularly, mechanically repeat a habit. Yet, Bergson and Deleuze both argue that the model-manifestation relation that mimics a habit tends more to mutability than to mechanicity. Though cultural forces hide the fact that a habit is troubled by mutability as it is mimicked in the present moment, Bergson and Deleuze outline how humans can cultivate this mutability. They outline a physical, processual method of manipulating habit, one based not just on new habits but on new ways of working with habits. They are therefore helpful in further developing my argument about product- and process- driven approaches to radical repetition of habit, and their respective benefits.

Although 'Bergsonian' vitalism made a big splash around the turn of the twentieth century, it was not always well-received, not least because it was set against a backdrop of what Frederick Burwick, Douglass, and Roach all call a "naive vitalism" (cf. Burwick and Douglass *The Crisis in Modernism* 1; cf. Roach *The Player's Passion* 94). Vitalism had once been popular with religious scholars, who explained life in terms of a spiritual force that animates the sensory forms scientists investigate. Vitalism had also once been popular with scientists, who explained life in terms of a vital force or fluid that entwines and enlivens the fixed forms discussed by mechanistic medical discourses. It is problematic to locate the force of life in a sacred world beyond (which splits spirit and matter dualistically), or in sensory bodily mechanisms (which collapses spirit into matter monistically). Set against this backdrop, Bergsonian vitalism fell out of favour. Consequently, Ansell Pearson notes, "Bergson has been an unduly neglected figure within recent continental philosophy" (*A Germinal Life* 1). Obviously, Burwick and Douglass observe, "a naive vitalism is untenable" (*The Crisis in Modernism* 1). And yet, they argue, not all vitalisms are alike. Bergson and Deleuze do believe in an elementary life energy. But they do not locate it in a spiritual world or in sensory mechanisms. They do not link it to a teleological plan or purpose – to the supernatural forces of God driving evolution to a future point, or to the mechanical forces of DNA driving evolution from a past point. What is more, they extend

this unpredictable life force from the individual organism to the evolution of the entire organic world. As the twenty-first century starts, then, many philosophers have begun to suggest that this sort of vitalism warrants a "more careful assessment" (1). Ansell Pearson, Ronald Bogue, Burwick, Douglass, Grosz, Goodchild, John Marks, and Brian Massumi all recognise Deleuze as the driving force behind what they tout as a return to vitalism, and above all to Bergsonian vitalism. They suggest that it is primarily through Deleuze that vitalism has found validity in postmodern thought and among postmodern theorists. In Douglass' words "Deleuze has simply reminded us that the heritage of post-structuralism really is the [Bergsonian] philosophy of reality-as-mobility" ("Bergson's Deleuze" 385).

What interests me in this thesis is not the internal logic of vitalist philosophy, but its interpretation of habit, and the potential its interpretation of habit holds for performance and performance theory. This means much of my work in Chapter Four is about outlining the themes in vitalist philosophy that are applicable to the question at hand (Case has noted the need for this type of translation in performance studies in *Performing Feminisms* (2)). However, this also means I do not treat the complete range of philosophical concerns in Bergson's and Deleuze's work. I do not take their philosophies as unified wholes, or as universal truths. I do not treat the differences between Bergson and Deleuze, and between their types of vitalism and that of theorists like Nietzsche. Finally, I do not consider the criticisms that can be levelled at vitalist philosophy. As I have demonstrated in these introductory comments, vitalism has an unmistakeable agenda. It confronts cultural norms by valorising change over constancy, fluid processes over fixed properties, temporal deferral over spatial presence, etcetera. Nevertheless, vitalism is not always a consistent and coherent critical discourse. For example, Bergson sometimes focuses so heavily on temporal passages and transformations that he forgets the value of the spatial presence and stability with which they invariably retain some relation. After all, stable habits are both a help and a hindrance to bodies, including performing bodies. Moreover, the Bergsonian tendency to take space as a static ground that life sets beneath temporal transitions and transformations may prove problematic for many theatre practitioners, given the strong interest in exploring spatial energies in contemporary performance culture. These issues mean that vitalist philosophy can prove promising, provocative, and trying all at once, particularly when considered in light of equally complex and committed theatrical practices.

With my comments on theoretical treatments of habit in mind, in Chapters Five and Six I return to a detailed discussion of theatre practices. Obviously, bringing philosophies, performance theories, and descriptions of performances together in sophisticated ways is never easy. Theorisation of theatre practices is complicated by several factors. Theatre's ephemerality is prominent among them. Theatre's ephemerality means that it is difficult to stabilise and be specific about theatre as an object of study (cf. Colin Counsell *Signs of Performance* 2). Theatre's ephemerality also means that when practitioners talk about their work there is always question as to what they are actually talking about – what they do or what they want to do? performances or recollections of performances? These tensions between practice and theorisation of practice are further compounded by the fact that what practitioners are trying to do with their work and their comments about their work is different from what theorists are trying to do. The two do not share the same terms and conceptual terrains, even when their ideas are almost identical. As such, it is important not to take one too far into the terms of the other, and so render it unrecognisable. Similarly, it is important to understand that one can never completely exemplify, explain, or consume the other. "At one time," as Deleuze observes, "practice was considered an application of theory ...[A]t other times, it had an opposite sense, and it was thought to inspire theory ...The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary" (Deleuze, quoted in Foucault *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 205). Though it is never easy to compare theories and theatre practices, to bring out the shared resonances of such different things and turn them into a coherent set of insights, it is still important. It places theatre practices in a broader critical environment, and it allows them to parallel, partly explain, or problematise theories just as theories do practices. Since theorisation of theatre practices is so important, there are at least two research methods prominent in theatre studies today. One is based on a description of practitioners the researcher has worked with. The other is based on a description of practitioners the researcher has observed, interviewed, or otherwise researched and read about, or whose students the researcher has worked with. These 'performance-as-research' and 'performance-research' methods are obviously not the same, and they have their own respective potentials and problems. For example, the former may be so caught up in the subjective, interactive experience that it cannot be objective, while the latter may miss out on some of the subjective, interactive experience. Thus the

need for both methods in theatre research today. As I am about to suggest, several factors inform my decision to take the latter approach in as I discuss physical theatre in Chapter Five, and physical theatre in Australia in Chapter Six.

In Chapter Five I consider the trend toward physical theatre today. I consider some prominent physical theatre practitioners of the 1950s through 1990s. As a researcher working in Australia today, it is naturally not possible for me to have had firsthand experience with many of these practitioners, and so I have had to learn from their students, and from their legacy of exercises, films, and writings. It is for this reason, and to avoid repeating work on the way these techniques are disseminated in Australia already begun by people like Lynn Everett at the University of New England and Peter Snow at the University of Sydney, that I examine physical theatre practices from an external point of view. Taking this perspective, I argue that when physical theatre confronts audiences with recognisable racial, cultural, or other habits it in many ways mirrors the more physical, processual method of modifying habit I analyse here. Physical theatre draws on the performing bodies that desirably or undesirably mimic habits in the present moment of performance, the bodies that open this mimicry to accidents, chances, and changes, without necessarily naturalising these bodies. It thus differs fairly significantly from some of the theatrical disciplines I study in Chapter Two, and their often product-oriented concern with revealing, transcending, or replacing specific human habits. Clearly, I cannot adequately treat the myriad body-based training and theatrical practices that converge under the title 'physical theatre' in Chapter Five. After considering the general parameters of physical theatre in the twentieth century, then, I concentrate on five of the international practitioners that provide important precedents for physical theatre – Jacques Lecoq, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Tatsumi Hijikata, and Kazuo Ono. These practitioners warrant attention both because they can in some senses be read as exemplars of the processual approach to habit I analyse in this thesis, and because they influence the two Australian practitioners I address in Chapter Six. In considering the methods of these practitioners, I comment on the three rough 'phases' they proceed through when trying to do habits differently – two preparatory phases that expose and experiment with habits and a performance phase that estranges and effects changes in habits. My consideration of the training and theatrical principles common to this

cross-section of physical theatre practitioners provides a basis for my more detailed analysis of Australian physical theatre practitioners in Chapter Six.

In Chapter Six I bring the ideas about habit I have established to bear on an examination of the theatre techniques, traditions, and rhetoric of two Melbourne physical theatre practitioners, the dancer Yumi Umiuare and the director David Pledger. I investigate their work's illuminating rapport with the physical, processual method of modifying habit already analysed in theoretical and general theatrical terms in the thesis. These practitioners are working today, and this means it is possible to attend their workshops, even to try to join their ensembles, assuming one is athletic enough. Nevertheless, to be consistent with the previous Chapter, and to combat a concern that I might skew my perspective on habit by speaking about something I am too close to, I have chosen to consider these two practitioners from an external point of view too. Accordingly, when I consider Umiuare's and Pledger's work I draw on observations of their performances, on lectures, and on interviews, as well as on a variety of documentations of their performances like programs, reviews, tapes, and websites. This provides a comprehensive picture of Umiuare's and Pledger's practices, and of how their practices connect with the issues with habit I investigate in this thesis. As is often the case, these performance practices prove both receptive and resistant to theorisation. In spite of the ambiguities, though, there are benefits to bringing these performance practices into conversation with these theories. Because, as Pledger puts it,

a certain amount of theory can be quite helpful in terms of positioning yourself ...[T]heory can kind of inform how you think about things when you're making a performance ...[Y]ou have to be really careful as a director when you introduce those kinds of things into the making process ...Because if you present them it can alienate people ...[Yet] to have those things bouncing up against each other is really really good, and contributes ...not just [to] isolating a problem ...but actually to have a debate around the problem (*Pledger Interview 7-8*)

In Chapter Six my intention is to produce a fruitful interplay between the ideas of habit I consider in this thesis, and the creative treatments of cultural habits offered in Umiuare's and Pledger's performance practices. I find the tension between these theoretical and theatrical paradigms, along with their tendency to address aspects of habit that the other

does not discuss, and their tendency to take their treatments of habit in different directions, actually proves productive in advancing the whole debate about habit.

Through an analysis of habit, theatre, and theory in this thesis, I illustrate how the processual approach to habit I discuss, and the processual approach to habit I discover in Bergson's and Deleuze's theories, can broaden the horizons of the performative approaches to habit popular today, and give them greater applicability for the performing arts. "The combination of habit and performativity is felicitous" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 88), as Sullivan suggests, because habit can "shed light" (89) on the non-linguistic, lived aspects of human life that some performativity theories avoid<sup>6</sup>. Habit is an interesting addition to the theoretical terrain, and an interesting topic for analysis, because it can encompass bodily processes that take place in the present. An analysis of habit thus accounts not only for the meaningful cultural concepts that build bodies, but for the corporeal basis of bodies. Rather than opposing them, or collapsing one into the other, it accounts for the creative connections between them, the way changes in one can cause changes in the other. Contrary to contemporary performativity theories, then, an analysis of habit provides a picture of the complex ways in which cultural models and their corporeal manifestations come together in mimicking a habit in the present moment. It points to the ways in which change can be based not on developing new models, but on disrupting the model-manifestation connections behind habit, and thereby disrupting the habit. This type of change depends not only on what a habit is, but on the way a habit works – on bodily processes, performances, and means. It thus has the most potential when it comes to considering how body-based theatre practices can confront human habits.

My desire to treat the model-manifestation parallels involved in performing a habit in this thesis may draw criticism for its dependence on a kind of mind-matter dualism, or on a kind of mental approach-material approach dualism. Undoubtedly, many contemporary

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<sup>6</sup> Conversely, it can be argued that performativity sheds more light on the discursive dimensions of behaviour than some theories of habit, particularly the behaviourism developed before the advent of structuralist and poststructuralist theories in the twentieth century (Chapter One).

commentators are keen to challenge mind-matter dualisms, and the values attributed to them, and thereby to disrupt a whole series of related dichotomies. However, jettisoning the notion of 'neat' dualisms between definite things that Western metaphysics perpetuates is not necessarily the best way to deal with the problem. These dualisms are, after all, convenient fictions. Instead, it is possible to shift mind, matter, and the connections between them, so that they can be seen differently. Specifically, it is possible to see them streaming into each other, shaping and being shaped by each other, in a sort of figure-eight. Along with Bergson and Deleuze, contemporary theorists such as Grosz and Sullivan are amongst the most perceptive on this point. This sort of approach, Grosz argues, "has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another" (*Volatile Bodies* xii). It has the advantage of showing the creative fusions and conflicts between the two. Although taking my discussion in this direction is risky, risks can be worthwhile, as the people who put their bodies on the line in performance practice know. Moreover, I have to take my analysis of habit into this territory if I am to argue that the way a habit works, the way a body brings a habit together, is crucial to conserving or to challenging this habit. Which, as I have argued, is what gives my analysis more potential than performativity theories to consider how body-based theatrical practices can confront human habits.

Although my analysis of the practical and philosophical implications of habit provides insight into human behaviour, including human behaviour in performance, it by no means resolves all the issues raised by the problem of habit. For example, habits certainly help create gendered, racialised bodies, but because I am interested in theorising the broader basis of habit, I have had to postpone analysis of the political questions that specific gendered, racialised habits might pose. Moreover, because I am interested in theorising how the behavioural practices of performers mimic habits or counter-mimic habits, I have for the most part had to postpone analysis of the implications of this for spectators and societies. These sorts of issues will have to be taken up by other studies. Instead, my analysis provides a perspective on habits and habit changes which has particular application in the theatre. Again, my account of habit does not necessarily transcend the twentieth and twenty-first century contexts in which it was created. No account can confidently make this claim. At best, it can only argue its advantages over other theories around at the time. In future, as

approaches to habit evolve, further analyses will no doubt be required. What I establish in this thesis is the way such analyses will benefit by treating habit in terms of its basis in both models and bodily manifestations.



## Chapter One – Habit and Habit Change

As I have argued in my Introduction, habit refers to the models of bodily behaviour that are privileged, promoted, or disparaged in a given cultural or theatrical context, and also to the bodily means by which these models are mimicked in the present moment. "Some models appear frequently, even daily, and their contact is personal," Elinor Verville observes in her examination of habit. "Others emerge briefly, in casual contact. A few are known only through the media and literature" (*Habit* 91). Although most people are not aware of these models, they shape their awareness. Almost all a person's behaviours are based, albeit unconsciously, on approved models – on things that their body or other bodies have already done. "Each one of us speaks, moves, thinks, and feels in a different way," as Feldenkrais says, "each according to the image of himself that he has built up over the years" (*Awareness Through Movement* 10). Every time a person thinks, sees, says, or does something they move along these established tracks. In this sense, even if a person is suspicious of these models, it is still tough to avoid assuming them in bodily practice. Many discussions of habit describe only the socially damaging habits a body sometimes develops. For example, the plethora of self-help discussions published today emphasise drug, diet, and nervous habits. In truth, though, most habits help a body survive in the social world. They are at the basis of a body's behavioural, occupational, sexual, racial, communal, recreational, and other customs. Thus, Verville argues, "[a]lthough some habits weaken, most strengthen, comfort and define us" (*Habit* 3). These habits provide a clear, coherent framework for all a body's behaviours.

Though the models that ground habit are generally meaningful, different theories show different degrees of interest in the meanings, descriptions, or discursive characterisations of habit that are available in particular cultural contexts. For instance, in my Introduction I noted that behaviourist psychologists are more interested in the mechanical basis of behaviour than in meaning. Behaviourists employ scientific methods to explain human lives in terms of physiological models or mechanisms. They see human reason as simply an epiphenomenon, result, or reflection of these mechanisms. Behaviourists also explain habit in terms of the motor mechanisms of reflex, or of stimulus and response. James Drever's

*Dictionary of Psychology* takes this perspective, shunning colloquial concepts of habit when it suggests that habit is "strictly applicable only to motor responses" (114). As Camic articulates it, then, behaviourist psychologists believe habit is "a fixed, mechanical reaction to a particular stimuli and is, as such, devoid of meaning" ("The Matter of Habit" 1046). Behaviourists study the strength and success of such responses, the likelihood that they will be imprinted on the brain and body, and repeated by them in future<sup>7</sup>. In his sociological analysis of habit, Nick Crossley suggests that contemporary neurologists continue the brain science of behaviourism that "domina[ted] within the social scientific field for much of the first half of the twentieth century" (*The Social Body* 64). Neurologists also argue that a person's psyche, although perhaps better portrayed in philosophic or poetic terms, can ultimately be explained by 'brain chemistry' (13; cf. James *Principles of Psychology* 107). The scientific brain and body scanning technologies used by neurologists also contribute to the continuing appeal of mechanistic approaches to bodies in a culture most comfortable with medical conditions for which physical causes and cures can be found (*The Social Body* 24).

In spite of its one time popularity, Camic and Crossley both suggest that behaviourism's mechanistic notion of habit has "met with substantial opposition" ("The Matter of Habit" 1046-1047). For most contemporary theorists, Crossley says, "the way in which 'meanings' can have an effect upon our bodies challenges the simple model of physical causation often implied in these arguments" (*The Social Body* 13). Philosophers, sociologists, psychoanalysts, phenomenologists, and performance theorists have all protested the behaviourist tendency to treat habits only in terms of biophysical mechanisms. These theorists think habit always involves both mechanical repetition and recourse to meaning. This certainly complicates the question of habit in theatrical contexts. "In theatre," as Lecoq says, "making a movement is never a mechanical act but must always be a gesture that is justified" (*The Moving Body* 66, original emphasis). Accordingly, although actors have to be agile, expressiveness is just as important to effective theatre (cf. Ruth Foster *Knowing in My Bones* 10; cf. Logie "Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor" 140). Obviously, this expressiveness is important in everyday life too. This is why such a

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<sup>7</sup> The psychological term for processes that make repetition of a particular behaviour more likely is 'reinforcement' (cf. Claiborn and Pedrick *The Habit Change Workbook* 15).

wide variety of contemporary theatre and cultural theorists challenge the behaviourist tendency to separate habits from meaningful behaviours.

Although models of habit are meaningful, and guide almost all a body's movements, they are still artificial representations of reality rather than reality itself. "A man tends to regard his self-image as something bestowed upon him by nature," as Feldenkrais articulates it, "although it is, in fact, the result of his own experience" (*Awareness Through Movement* 20). In this respect, neither models, nor the meanings attributed to them, are natural. Nor are they consciously constructed in most cases. Instead, they are merely the models inherited<sup>8</sup> or learned from previous generations, particularly those models that have proven useful to social activities and agendas. "Nobody knows the purpose of life," Feldenkrais says, "and the education that each generation passes on to the succeeding one is no more than a continuation of the habits of thought of the prevailing generation" (16). The models a body relies on when repeating any movement are in fact a result of its social surroundings and education, even if they sometimes seem natural. To understand this helps commentators understand habits.

As I have already noted, the important thing about habit is that it refers to more than just the models of the body that are accepted in a given cultural or aesthetic context. It also refers to the practices, performances, or means by which these models are manifested in the present moment. This is perhaps why it is so difficult to talk about habit. To act out a habit, a body has to link the model it wants to repeat with the means required to repeat it. It has to bring the mental and the material together. "[T]he past," as Bergson puts it, "should be *acted* by matter, *imagined* by mind" (*Matter and Memory* 298, original emphasis). Accordingly, to act out a habit is to invoke both senses of the word act, both "*actus* a doing, and *actum* a thing done" (*Oxford English Dictionary* VI 123, original emphasis). Acting out a habit

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<sup>8</sup> I refer here to the idea that humans teach their habits to their successors, not to the more controversial idea that humans transmit their habits through DNA. As psychologist Conwy Lloyd Morgan's late nineteenth century treatise on *Habit and Instinct* notes, "[t]here is no conclusive evidence that ...habit is transmitted by heredity, so as to give rise to ...instinct" (325-326). Responding to questions raised by Darwin's theory of evolution (24-25), Morgan argues that parents cannot transmit a habit itself, even if they can transmit an aptitude for this habit. Bergson agrees, observing that "one can always ask whether it is really the habit that is transmitted, or whether it is not rather a natural aptitude" (*Creative Evolution* 79).

involves a model, an outline of a bodily behaviour, or a thing done. Acting out a habit also involves a manifestation, a means of filling out this outline, or a doing. It is the relation between the two that is important to how a habit holds together as it is repeated, to a habit's rhythms as it is repeated. This model-manifestation link is vital if a habit is to be acted out again and again in the present moment – and, as I said in my Introduction, a habit would be worthless if it was not.

Habits create a point of convergence between a model and its manifestation, between what a body wants to do and what a body actually does. They are almost always premised on the assumption that a model and its manifestation will match up perfectly and predictably. In this respect, habits rely on a faithfully replicative relation between a model and its manifestation, in which the former guides the latter. This might be described as copying or as mimicking a model of bodily identity or behaviour. "Indeed," Diamond says, "all identity claims are propped on the hierarchical structure of classical mimesis: identity is imagined to be the truthful origin or model that grounds the subject" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 106). "[I]dentity," she says, is imagined "as a stable model that the self enacts over time" (111). When they work, habits allow both what a body does, and the way a body does it, to become automatic. Through habit, Goodchild puts it, "a body will tend to repeat the modifications which have happened to it, whether painful or pleasurable" (*Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy* 56). Habits usually follow the path that produces the least physical or psychological pain, but not always. For example, a damaged body part tends to damage again, as most actors, acrobats, and athletes are well aware. Thus, as James says, "[a] sprained ankle, a dislocated arm, are in danger of being sprained or dislocated again" (*Principles of Psychology* 106). The same goes for socially painful habits. "[N]ot only is it the right thing that we thus involuntarily do, but the wrong thing also, if it be an habitual thing" (114-115). Verville agrees. "An individual deliberately practices a skill he values," she says. "He also practices, inadvertently, what harms him" (*Habit* 119). With habit the same things eventually occur again and again – involuntarily, or at least unconsciously. "[T]he same impulse," Ruth Foster says, "is recalled in the same pattern" (*Knowing in My Bones* 10-11, original emphasis). Habits, and the regular mind-matter relations behind habits, result in the same models being repeated in the same ways. Habits result in the return of the same. Accordingly, Goodchild argues, "habit is not merely an impartial expectation,

but a dynamism that attempts to determine the future through repetition" (Deleuze and Guattari 32).

Unfortunately, in describing habit, the English language encourages the use of imagistic terms – want, model, manifestation, mimicry – that seem to imply some conscious intent on the person's part. However, habit is not normally consciously directed. "[H]abit," James argues, actually "diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed" (*Principles of Psychology* 114). In most cases, people are not conscious of the model, or of the model-manifestation connections needed to repeat it. These connections are too complicated to be known consciously. So, Sullivan says, "[a]s long as habits are functioning smoothly they do not produce consciousness" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 31). People become conscious of the model, and of the model-manifestation connections needed to repeat it, only when a repetition of a habit goes wrong. When habits are wrongly repeated, people get what Crossley calls "the sense of shock we sometimes experience when our perceptual expectations are confounded" (*The Social Body* 130). This shock draws people's focus back to their body, and to the bodily sensations they forgot when things were going smoothly. "They are *sensations* to which we are *usually inattentive*," James says, "but which immediately call our attention if they go wrong" (*Principles of Psychology* 118, original emphasis). Of course, it is always the cultural or theatrical context that determines if the model is 'wrong' or not, and if the model-manifestation relation is 'wrong' or not.

In many cases, bodies do mimic habits correctly and unconsciously. It becomes difficult to distinguish between what habit leads bodies to anticipate and what is actually happening. Often, bodies just do what they were expecting to do, rather than register what is actually happening. The past overpowers the present. There would be little continuity in life if this were not the case. Because bodies unthinkingly mimic habits, it can be difficult to see how they might intervene in their mimicry of a habit, might do the habit differently. Nonetheless, habits cannot completely ossify what Sullivan calls the "once-malleable self" ("Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 24; *Living Across and Through Skins* 95). "The sedimentation of habits does not necessarily preclude the reconfiguration of them" (105). This is because habits are not just static bodily states. Habits have to be permanent enough to support a stable bodily identity. But habits also have to be plastic enough to allow a body

to adapt as it ages, acquires new skills, and encounters new environments (33). Put another way, habits have to support stereotyped bodily states, but habits also have to support what Massumi understands as a "stereotyped progression" (*A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 40) from one relatively settled state or stage of life to the next. In this sense, habits always hold onto a certain amount of plasticity or volatility (cf. Grosz *Volatile Bodies* xi). Unfortunately for conservative cultural systems, this plasticity means that habits are never totally sedimented, and that bodies can slip up when acting out a habit. As Sullivan says, "the self's store of plasticity [is not] somehow exhausted by its initial formation" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 95). "[O]ne's corporeal plasticity holds open the possibility of bodying and performing those habits differently" (98). Habit, as a bodily practice that takes place in the present, is open to mistakes and modifications. In Verville's words, its "silky-smooth machinery can break down" (*Habit* 4). In some cases, then, bodies can vary how they act out habits, albeit ignorantly or inadvertently. There would be little creativity or change in life if this were not the case.

Though habits are characteristically open to what conservative cultural systems see as 'mistakes', people have historically proposed several methods of making these mistakes and modifications happen – among them punishing habits, putting habits in unconventional contexts, replacing everyday habits with different habits, and replaying everyday habits in different ways so that they start to seem ridiculous. As I indicated in my Introduction, in this thesis I want to investigate the potential of the latter two ways in which bodies vary their habits, the product-oriented 'replacement' method and the process-oriented 'replay' method.

The first method of modifying habit appears when a body mimics a model of habit deemed undesirable by prevailing social paradigms. This method is all bound up with moral judgements about habits. "Moral behavior is conduct which is right, proper, ethical, and virtuous," Verville says. "Immoral behavior is conduct which is wrong, dishonest, and vicious" (*Habit* 28). Many philosophers believe that both moral and immoral behaviours are brought about by means of habit. For instance, Plato contends that virtues "can be produced by habituation" (*The Republic of Plato* VII.518 227). Aristotle agrees, claiming "moral virtue comes about as a result of habit" (*Ethica Nicomachea* II.1 23). Both these

philosophers think that a person has to mimic the right habits to reinforce the right moral disposition. In Plato's words,

if they act, they should, from childhood upward, impersonate only the appropriate types of character ...[as] the reproduction of another person's gestures or tones of voice or states of mind, if persisted in from youth up, grows into a habit which becomes second nature (*The Republic of Plato* III.395 81)

Again, Aristotle shares Plato's belief, insisting that "the instinct of imitation is implanted in men from childhood" (*Poetics* IV.1; *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* 15), and that they have to "act according to the right rules" (*Ethica Nicomachea* II.2 24) to reinforce the right habits. A reading of Plato's and Aristotle's theories thus introduces the idea that particular habits have particular moral implications (cf. James *Principles of Psychology* 120). Obviously, the moral implications of habit are of interest to contemporary political theorists too. Whereas philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle sometimes obscure culture's role in labelling specific habits as virtues or as vices, contemporary philosophers and political theorists make it more overt. For example, many feminist philosophers suggest people should deliberately mimic habits that would be seen as mistakes in some cultural contexts, as a way of drawing attention to the phallogocentric habits that pervade many cultures, and developing different, more desirable models of habit for bodies to mimic. For these philosophers, then, swapping ordinary habits for other habits is the most promising way to modify habits. "Copying a model is one way to lose habits," as Verville observes. "...Skills fill a void, replace unsatisfying and inadequate behavior, and provide new directions for living" (*Habit* 153-157).

Although this 'replacement' method of modifying habits permeated philosophy, psychoanalysis, and pop psychology in the late twentieth century, there are still some problems with it. When theorists suggest people should swap ordinary habits for other habits, they wittingly or unwittingly imply that such modifications depend more on what habit is mimicked than on the way the habit is mimicked, more on imagination than on implementation. This is something Dewey discusses. In his words, this method supposes that "all that is required to bring about the right act is will or wish on the part of the one who is to act" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 28). "[S]o deep-seated is this notion that even as 'scientific' a theory as modern psychoanalysis thinks that mental habits can be straightened

out by some kind of purely psychical manipulation" (33). From Dewey's perspective, it is absurd to think annoying habits can be "made good by an order of the will" (29). The problem with this method is that it neglects the bodily practices, processes, or "means" (28) by which habits can be changed. As the founder of the Alexander Technique F. Matthias Alexander puts it, this method works towards its own "ends on the 'trial and error' plan, without giving due consideration to the means whereby these ends should be gained" (*The Alexander Technique* 116). According to these commentators, it is not enough to establish new models of behaviour, albeit less oppressive ones, without exploring the bodies that (perhaps erratically) enact these models. In her analysis of pragmatist philosophy, Sullivan explains this in even stronger terms. She says it is a poor idea to simply swap a 'bad' set of habits

for a new-and-improved 'good' set that is free from all the problems of its predecessor. Such a move would change gender categories by switching out[r] old gender ideals for new ones, but would not displace the notion of gender as a seamless and coherent identity that rigidly fixes who one is (*Living Across and Through Skins* 110)

Whether behavioural models are normal or new, bad or good, when these models dominate and when bodily manifestations simply duplicate them, these models still start to seem natural. This is why it is worth considering other methods of modifying habits.

The second method of modifying habits appears when a body mimics a model of habit deemed desirable in a particular social paradigm, but mimics it in a different way. With this method, a body cultivates a discrepancy between an ideal model and its manifestation. It cultivates what Susan Leigh Foster calls a "discrepancy between what [it] want[s] to do and what [it] can do" ("Dancing Bodies" 237). This model-manifestation discrepancy results in a differential repetition, a transformation, of a habit. "There is a small angle of difference," as Lecoq articulates it, "and it is lucky that this angle exists. Error is not just acceptable, it is necessary for the continuation of life" (*The Moving Body* 20-21). After all, it is through such 'errors' that challenges to cultural habits come about. When a body makes this sort of mistake, Sullivan explains, it fails to "fully embody the normative ideals to which it aspires" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 98; "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 33). It fails to do what is expected or appropriate. "[S]uddenly, inexplicably," Susan Leigh Foster puts it, a body "...diverges from expectations, reveals new dimensions, and mutely declares



its unwillingness to execute commands" ("Dancing Bodies" 237). When a body makes this sort of mistake, it subverts the idea that a model of habit is a blueprint that bodies should unthinkingly mimic. It makes a model of habit seem constructed and contingent, only a small part of what is possible. Ultimately, then, this sort of mistake shows that, although bodies "often help secure existing habits and cultural customs," as Sullivan says, "...they are also capable of transforming them" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 40). In this respect, Grosz argues, bodies are "ambiguously positioned in the reproduction of social habits" (*Volatile Bodies* 180). This, according to Massumi, means "every body is a potential enemy ... a potential defector from habit" (*A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 115).

Some philosophers and performance theorists are wary of the powerful, productive force bodies reveal when they diverge from their expected course. For example, in *The Republic* Plato points to the risks of erratic repetition and representation. Looking out at the world, Plato saw only change, and wondered how he might grasp timeless truths. *The Republic*, a work encompassing questions of truth, morality, and the merits of theatre, treats this problem through the Myth of the Cave and the theory of Forms. In Plato's dialogue<sup>9</sup>, Socrates asks his student Glaucon to imagine men chained in a cave from childhood, behind whom a fire burns, casting shadows of the people that pass on a low parapet between the fire and the cave (*The Republic of Plato* VII.514 222-223). The shadows signify the falsities of the sensory world. On release the men learn the truth. Their shadows are only feeble imitations of the world of Forms above. The Forms are the true reality, the timeless models of which things in the sensory world are only imperfect copies. Humans believe this sensory world is real, but it is like the shadows on the cave wall. This world is an imitation that debases the Forms, causing all decay, discrepancies, or changes. Throughout Plato's allegory, truth is measured by faithfulness to the Forms. "Without having a vision of this Form," Plato says, "no one can act with wisdom" (VII.517 226). For Plato, theatre demonstrates the dangers of a faithless repetition or representation of these Forms. Theatre imitates the appearances of the sensory world, already a second-order copy of reality. Theatre thus constitutes an appearance of an appearance, a third-order copy, even farther

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<sup>9</sup> A number of commentators have noted the irony of the fact that Plato's treatise against imitation takes the form of a dialogue in which he impersonates Socrates (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* xi; cf. John Russell Taylor *The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre* 212).

estranged from the timeless reality than the transitory world it imitates. It is, Plato laments, "a long way from reality" (X.598 321). This distance is dangerous. It means that the body behind theatrical mimicry may well make mistakes. The body, like the material support of the cave symbolising the body, may well damage the ready-made models it reflects. Moreover, if spectators see the body's role in reflecting these models, they may see that this body is making up the models it claims to mirror. Spectators may see that these models are changeable cultural constructs. According to Plato's allegory, then, the bodily mimicry behind habits, and behind drama, is metaphysically dubious or dangerous because it disrupts the ready-made models it mimics. The worry for Plato, as Diamond articulates it, is that "mimesis unmakes what it upholds" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 113).

This second method of modifying habit shows that change need not be based on new models. Instead, change can be based on new means of mimicking these models. Change need not be a result of the properties repeated, but rather of the physical processes of repetition. Change need not be a result of what a habit is, but rather of the way a habit works. This second method of modifying habit thus takes advantage of the physical processes that anchor habits to challenge and potentially change these habits.

Feldenkrais has noted the benefits of a physical, processual method such as this one. In his opinion, most body correction systems

are built on the assumption that man has innate propensities that can be changed -- that is, suppressed, controlled, or inhibited ...I believe th[is approach] is based on wrong assumptions ...Man's life is a continuous process, and the improvement is needed in the quality of the process, not in his properties or disposition (*Awareness Through Movement* 32-33)

For Feldenkrais, then, bodily changes ought to involve "improvement of processes, as opposed to improvement of properties" (33). This means that for him change is "not the mere replacing of one action by another" (10). "What is meant here," he says, "...is not the simple substitution of one activity by another, but a change in the way an act is performed, a change in its whole dynamics" (20). "Such a change involves not only a change in our self-image, but a change in the nature of our motivations, and the mobilization of all the parts of the body concerned" (10). Like the processual method of modifying habit I have looked at

here, then, Feldenkrais' program of change is based on his belief that bodies and bodily mimicry are "the hinges of habit" (8), and that if the balance of bodily mimicry is lost then "[h]abit has lost its chief support, that of the muscles, and has become more amenable to change" (39).

Obviously, it is not only physical therapists such as Feldenkrais who acknowledge the advantages of this more somatically-oriented approach to human habits. For example, James and Dewey have also explained the advantages of what they take to be a pragmatic approach to habits. "[N]o matter how good one's *sentiments* may be," James articulates it, "if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to *act*, one's character may remain entirely unaffected" (*Principles of Psychology* 125, original emphasis). Thus, Dewey says, without this sort of balance between imagination and implementation, "one wastes one's time in any effort at change of habits" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 35).

Needless to say, the more body-based sort of change these therapists and theorists speak of has particular benefits from a theatrical perspective, because of its stress on the potential bodily practices have to vary habits. Still, though this more processual method of modifying habits may be less likely to sediment the habits it mimics, there are still some difficulties with it. For instance, one of the issues with this method is that, while it certainly comes out of planned physical processes, its consequences are far less planable and predictable than the consequences of the first method. Another of the issues with this method is that it may rely so much on bodies and bodily processes that it starts to seem too biologicistic, taking bodies not just to be real but to be natural.

Of course, conservative cultural and aesthetic systems function far more smoothly if they flatten out both these types of 'mistakes', both these methods of modifying habits. Habits can be copied correctly only when the model dominates, and the manifestation disappears as an insignificant duplicate of this model. Only this circumvents the threat of change that torments philosophers like Plato. This means conservative systems have to try to regulate the variability in habit, and the variability in the model-manifestation relations that habit relies on. Training, and the system for understanding, describing, and doing bodily behaviours that training supplies, is useful here. Training is, Verville observes, "of prime

importance in the acquisition of most types of habits" (*Habit* 105). This is because training clarifies the correct type of model, and the correct type of model-manifestation connection, for bodies.

Initially, training offers an outline or a model of how a body ought to move. "Each discipline refers to it using select metaphors and other tropes that make it over" ("Dancing Bodies" 236), as Susan Leigh Foster says. Depending on the discipline, the emphasis may be on how a body looks from the outside, or on how a body feels from the inside. A body's success may depend on the scrutiny of others or on its own experiences – the latter is supposedly more personal, less prescriptive. In almost all cases, though, training asks that a body adopt the most appropriate models and abandon all others. "Training," Barba therefore argues, "...is actually a means of colonizing the body, of forcing it to accept a new form of culture which the brain has decided is the right one" (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 72).

In addition to providing a model, training also has to provide a body with an appropriate means of acting out this model. In Ian Watson's words, then, "training implies the physical, a learning process in which the body as much as the mind is involved" (*Performer Training* 1). Though different types of training undoubtedly develop different forms or feelings of success here too, there are common themes. Many types of training ask bodies to cultivate the regular model-manifestation relations that mark habit. Again, the model dominates and the manifestation disappears<sup>10</sup>. This psycho-physical parallelism is convenient, and it serves a theatrical and political purpose. By setting up this parallelism, training teaches bodies the skills they need to control themselves, and their manifestation of a model. It teaches bodies to circumvent the model-manifestation discrepancies that challenge this model. It thus teaches bodies to manifest a model accurately, automatically, and apparently spontaneously, to make correct choices quickly, and to do the right thing without thinking. Training strengthens the behaviours bodies currently and commonly call on. And it does so, Ruth Foster insists, "to the exclusion of other experience" (*Knowing in My Bones* 56). For better or for worse, it becomes more difficult for bodies to do things differently as life progresses.

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<sup>10</sup> This, I will suggest in Chapter Two, is in fact the very definition of success, of virtuosity, in some theatrical genres.

"Pinned, formulated, pushed up against the wall," as Zsuzanna Soboslay puts it, "our bodies are framed by statements of who we are, how we should move" ("Spaces of Resistance" 18). Training makes bodies manifest ready-made models so easily, and so similarly each time, that these models start to seem self-evident. It thus plays an important role in allowing the models condoned in given contexts to become part of bodies, to become natural, or nearly so, to them. "Drilling is necessary," as Susan Leigh Foster says, "because the aim is nothing less than *creating the body*. With repetition, the images used to describe the body and its actions *become the body*" ("Dancing Bodies" 239, original emphasis). By determining both what bodies repeat, and the way they repeat it, training helps build bodies. Training helps bodies master the conventions of a given genre or culture. It convinces them to repeat commonly held ideas without questioning them. Training can therefore help conservative aesthetical and cultural paradigms consolidate appropriate bodily habits, and keep chaos at bay.

Tradition, training, and habit undoubtedly have a whole range of consequences. On the one hand, habit is advantageous for personal bodies and for bodies politic. The main advantage of habit is that it obviates the need to consciously consider and correlate the myriad bodily movements needed to mimic a model in the present moment. "[A] person does not have to focus consciously on coordinating the use of her muscles," as Sullivan says, and this "...is precisely what makes possible the complex and delicate activities of life" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 31-32). Thinking along analogous lines, Bergson has offered the following example.

Let us consider a very simple act, like that of lifting the arm. Where should we be if we had to imagine beforehand all the elementary contractions and tensions this act involves, or even to perceive them, one by one, as they are accomplished? But the mind is carried immediately to the end, that is to say, to the schematic and simplified vision of the act supposed accomplished. Then, if no antagonistic idea neutralizes the effect of the first idea, the appropriate movements come of themselves to fill out the plan (*Creative Evolution* 299)

With habit, bodies only have to focus on what they will do, not on the way they will do it. Bodies only have to focus on a single goal (of which they are not even conscious), not on a series of movements. In this way, habit automatises a given task. It leaves the mind free to

focus on other things – to walk and talk at the same time, as one old actor-training adage goes. The main advantage of habit, then, is that it reduces the mental and muscular effort required to mimic a model. What is more, as part of this process habit also reduces the risk of error in mimicking a model. It reduces the risk of error in mimicking the behaviours that are part of an event, appropriate to an environment, or even part of a person's own personality. In *Principles of Psychology* James notes all these advantages of habit. "[H]abit," he says, "simplifies the movements required to achieve a given result, makes them more accurate and diminishes fatigue" (112, original emphasis; cf. Verville *Habit* 11). Joseph Pilates, founder of what is today called the Pilates Method, also comments on these benefits in his practical program of 'contrology'. He says "[c]ontrology begins with mind control over muscles" (*The Complete Writings of Joseph H. Pilates* 54).

Both must be coordinated, in order not only to accomplish the maximum results with the minimum expenditure of mental and physical energy, but also to live as long as possible in normal health and enjoy the benefits of a useful happy life (35)

Without the regularity that habit provides, a body's behaviour in life, its very identity, would be at risk. After all, as I indicated in my Introduction, bodies achieve the sort of wholeness to which Western philosophy has long aspired only when they stay within the parameters habit provides, because bodies are based on bundles of recognisable habits, not on any origin beyond these habits.

On the other hand, habit often proves problematic too. Habit can at once condition bodies for life and constrain their power and potential. This is mainly because habit makes people absentminded. As soon as a person's behaviour becomes habitual, Feldenkrais says, they find they "have no idea at all how it is done" (*Awareness Through Movement* 46). Habits make it difficult for people to describe many common tasks, and difficult for them to do these tasks differently. In this respect, habits leave people's bodies trapped in the past, unresponsive to the present, and unable to do things differently. Habits, in Tamsin Lorraine's philosophical terms, "entomb the body through a preference for the repetition of familiar sensations" (*Irigaray and Deleuze* 76). Again, Feldenkrais conveys this perspective in especially concise terms, explaining that

every pattern of action that has become fully assimilated will interfere with the patterns of subsequent actions ...[T]he difficulties involved lie less in the nature of the new habit

than in the changing of habits of body, feeling, and mind from their established patterns.

This holds true for almost any change of habit, whatever its origin (*Awareness Through Movement* 20)

Thus, as Soboslay suggests, "I preclude other experiences by my habits of knowing 'how' to move" ("Contemplating the Shape of an Egg" 21). If habits become too firmly entrenched, "if they become," as Alexander Lindsay says, "masters when they ought to be servants, they hinder the power of adaptability to new circumstances which is the essence of life" (*The Philosophy of Bergson* 213). Habits hinder progress, change, and growth. Moreover, as I have argued throughout this Chapter, when a body repeats the same things again and again, this makes these behaviours seem more natural. Habit is a conservative force that can naturalise culturally condoned behaviours. In this sense, James suggests, habit is "the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent" (*Principles of Psychology* 121). Habit functions to define and broaden, and yet also to limit, the range of behavioural possibilities for human beings.

In this Chapter I have offered a broadly based account of the concept and consequences of habit, and of how bodies can work to critically mimic habits. My purpose has been to provide a basis for my work in Chapter Two, in which I turn to twentieth century theatre-making, and study the ways in which several types of theatre stage common human habits for their spectators. This being the case, the themes I have raised here will reappear in Chapter Two, and in the remainder of the thesis.

## Chapter Two – Approaches to Habit in Twentieth Century Theatre-Making

The sort of mimicry that supports habit will be familiar to most theatre practitioners and theorists. This is because theatrical mimicry is also traditionally understood in terms of a model-manifestation parallel. This being the case, theories of habit offer an interesting point of comparison in considering the often vexed question of theatrical mimicry. They are useful in understanding how different types of theatre-making use mimicry to repeat, reveal, transcend, or transform ordinary human habits onstage. This is plainly well worth reflecting on, given that most theatrical performances are grounded in what Schechner calls “the startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become – for worse or better – what they ordinarily are not” (*The Future of Ritual* 1).

In contemporary theatre theory, the term ‘mimesis’ is highly contested, and never value neutral in its connotations. It typically refers to the actor’s process of representing recognisable characters and circumstances. Obviously, different types of mimicry stage different spiritual, social, or domestic habits for their spectators. Amongst the more familiar would be today’s realist techniques, along with Plato’s and Aristotle’s initial and influential theories – although, as Roach argues, most contemporary commentators cannot help reading the ancient mimetic theories in terms of those that seem “right and natural” (*The Player’s Passion* 15) to them today. In almost all cases, however, theatrical mimicry is not just about how actors imitate habits, it is about how actors imbue these habits with meaning. As such, it always has the potential to serve political purposes.

The most provocative thing about theatrical mimicry is not that it presents the habits that people are least willing to give up, it is that it does this physically. Theatre mimics bodily habits by means of bodily habits, as Aristotle long ago argued (*Poetics* VI.3-VI.4; *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* 23-25). Theatre mimics the artificial bodily habits of characters by means of the actual bodily habits of actors. This means human bodies are both the model copied onstage and the means of copying it onstage. This also means that theatrical mimicry is based, much as habit is based, on a multifaceted web of



model-manifestation connections. The two explore the same terrains of embodiment and live enactment – except, of course, that both the performer and the overall performance enact models in theatre. In both cases, a regular relation between an ideal and its physical instantiation is important. After all, as Roach argues, this relationship is critical to playing or performing a role. “The time-honoured philosophical and scientific issue of the relationship of mind and body – whether answered by interactive dualism, occasionalists, parallelists, or monists – underlies crucial questions of daily professional significance to the actor, among them movement, gesture, characterization” (*The Player’s Passion* 12-13). Different types of theatrical mimicry control or celebrate the body that mimics models, albeit unconsciously, and thus perpetuate or problematise the dualistic, parallelistic, or monistic philosophies of their day. Undoubtedly, in theatrical mimicry this dichotomy is less between matter and mind as such than between a doing and a thing done. “[M]imesis,” as Diamond argues, “denotes both the activity of representing and the result of it – both a doing and a thing done” (*Unmaking Mimesis* v). In many mimetic theories, though, this dichotomy can be restated as a conflict between mental order and material disorder, or even between masculine form and feminine fluidity. Numerous contemporary theorists describe this tension between these dual dimensions of theatre. They adopt diverse definitions, and propose different yet congruous accounts, of the tension in theatre between the performant and the referential (Jean Alter), the bios and the logos (Barba), the concrete and the abstract (Counsell), the doing and the thing done (Diamond), the vital and the mechanical (Roach), or the phenomenal and the semiotic (States). Most of these theorists agree that an oscillation between the two is an inevitable, even essential, ingredient of most theatrical genres. For example, Blau has rightly suggested that this “dynamic is a potential source of meaning-in-theatricality” (*Take Up the Bodies* 281). Counsell has clarified Blau’s point, observing that “[i]n privileging one [dimension] or the other a theatrical form determines how we address what it says” (*Signs of Performance* 20). Accordingly, although theatre theory is full of actor/character, actor/audience, theory/practice binaries, this model-manifestation dichotomy continues to define theoretical and practical terrains today.

The dual dimensions of theatrical mimicry present fascinating paradoxes for performers when they mimic specific spiritual, social, or domestic models. Many performers creatively manipulate the body behind mimicry when preparing their performances, but control the

body behind mimicry when performing. This control or mastery is necessary because there is no guarantee that bodies will desirably mimic specific models. Bodies sometimes make mistakes, as I suggested in Chapter One. And if a body mistakenly mimics a model, this may show spectators that the model is not strictly natural. This may challenge the spectators' belief in the authenticity of the models acted out onstage. This being the case, Counsell says, "[t]heatre is an 'uncomfortable' artform, because its symbolic register is continually threatened by another, one in which theatre's fictionality, its meaning-making, remains overt" (*Signs of Performance* 17). Any discrepancy between the dual registers or dimensions of theatre shows spectators that the world they see onstage is in the making in the moment, as are the spiritual, social, and domestic arrangements of this world. Theatre, spectators realise, is making up the world it claims to mirror. This reminds spectators of the fictionality, the habituality, of the recognisable human behaviours theatre routinely manifests. It reminds spectators that the human behaviours repeated onstage – and, even more insidiously, the human behaviours repeated in real life – are not natural. These behaviours are actually cultural constructs that have been mistaken for authentic and authoritative human natures. They are, in Barba's words, "gestures which we believe to be natural but which are in fact culturally determined" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 9). These human habits have been created, and they could be re-created differently. The threat of mimetic repetition, then, is the threat of denaturalisation, differentiation, and change. It is more threatening in theatre than in life, according to Plato, because it occurs before an audience, and can be taken as an example by that audience, effecting their growth (*The Republic of Plato* III.395-81). Spectators see that the habits mimicked onstage are not necessarily blueprints that all bodies should faithfully mimic. Spectators no longer (consciously or unconsciously) feel impelled to identify with and imitate these habits.

With these concerns in mind, a number of philosophers and theatre practitioners have tried to address the performing body's capacity to corrupt the habits it mimics<sup>11</sup>. A number have tried to denounce theatrical mimicry, or to denounce the bodies behind mimicry. Others, though, have tried to make theatrical mimicry more worthy, less worrisome. These philosophers and theatre practitioners generally maintain that if theatre mimics true-to-life

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<sup>11</sup> As I note in this Chapter, later artists like Antonin Artaud and Bertholt Brecht take advantage of this corruptibility as they try to question cultural norms through their theatre practices.

characters and circumstances, and if mimics them truly, it can dispel any sense of fictionality or cultural contingency in the perspectives it presents. Theatre can mimic these things truly only if it diffuses model-manifestation discrepancies. That is, only if it draws attention to the model, and disciplines the materiality of the body that manifests this model to the point of disappearance. In this paradigm, regardless of the fact that it is the main means of expression in the theatre, the body becomes redundant. The body becomes a necessary evil to be controlled, transformed, and transcended. Because, Diamond observes, "the body transforms into a sign of character only when its bodily markers are erased" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 85). In other words, the body transforms into a character only when it becomes an uncomplicated presence, capable of playing the mimetic game and producing appropriate pleasure or pity in spectators. In this paradigm, theatrical mimicry becomes worthy by means of verisimilitude, by means of the model-copy system of mimesis many contemporary commentators are suspicious of. "Tangled in iconicity," Diamond remarks, "...in the visual resemblance between an originary model and its representation, mimesis patterns difference into sameness" (iii). This sort of theatrical mimicry circumvents the threat felt by philosophers like Plato. It dutifully mimics a recognisable model of reality, and so obscures the fact that theatre is making up the models it claims to mirror. Spectators become more likely to see this model as a blueprint by which they might arrange their own bodily habits. In this way, theatrical mimicry becomes a politically effective means of imposing socially favoured habits on spectators, because it encourages them to identify with and imitate the habits staged.

In Chapter One, I discussed the difficulties Plato has with mimicry of a model. Plato is suspicious of theatrical mimicry in particular, and thinks it will never properly serve his philosophical and political purposes. Aristotle is one of the first to suggest that a 'true-to-life' mimicry of a model in theatre can actually serve social and political purposes, a fact of which feminists like Diamond make much (*Poetics* XV.3; *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* 53; cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* ii). Aristotle's approach to mimicry is based in a theory of Forms, as Plato's is. Aristotle also claims that reality consists of timeless Forms and their timebound manifestations. However, Aristotle thinks that humans only know of these Forms by the manifestations of them they see in the material world (*Ethica*

*Nicomachea* 1.6 8). Therefore, he argues, humans have to mimic the best examples of truth, morality, and justness they see in this material world.

According to Aristotle, theatre is worth cultivating because imitation, or the viewing of imitation, possesses a pedagogic benefit, albeit one that passes through pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge. "[I]n contemplating [an imitation people] may find themselves learning and inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is me'" (*Poetics* IV.5; *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* 15). Theatrical mimicry supplies spectators with a recognisable representation of a social reality. It inducts spectators into society by allowing them to identify with, and later imitate, the supposedly universal behaviours and belief systems of this society. "Mimetic activity," Diamond says, "becomes a coherent art that will, like philosophy, refer us to the universals" (*Unmaking Mimesis* x). Accordingly, while Plato rejects mimicry as a threat that risks ruining the timeless order of reality, Aristotle reclaims mimicry by compelling it to reveal the timeless order of reality. The material dimension of mimicry undoubtedly remains a concern, insofar as it introduces "room for error" (XV.9; 57) into mimicry. But Aristotle believes matter can be regulated. In *Poetics*, Aristotle introduces a set of dramaturgical conventions intended to control the disruptive materiality of mimicry. This dramaturgy creates a complex web of connections between the conceptual space of the drama, the corporeal space of the stage, and the cultural space that contextualises them. Aristotle claims that the dramatic message ('*muthos*', including theme, plot progression, and character) is more important than the medium ('*opsis*', including bodies, stage, and scenery). "For the power of Tragedy ...is felt even apart from the representation and actors. Besides, the production of Spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet" (VI.19; 29-31). In Aristotle's dramaturgy, then, the medium is a peripheral if necessary accessory to the drama (XXVI.4; 111). Theatrical mimicry has to foreground the dramatic models and messages, not the matter in which they are displayed, if it is to guide spectators in the recognition of timeless truths. To achieve this, Aristotle's dramaturgy stresses (among other things) the so-called classical 'unities' of space, time, and teleologically driven action – the idea that "[t]ragedy is an imitation of an action that [has a beginning, middle, and end and] is complete, whole, and of a certain magnitude" (VII.2-VII.3; 31). These dramaturgical rules allow actors to manifest the right model, by the right means, and thus ultimately allow actors to reduce the

risk of mistakes in their mimicry. As a result, in Aristotle's theory, and in the theatres influenced by it, the matter of theatre is not necessarily banished, but rather accepted as an unavoidable means to an end, and adopted into a dramaturgy that organises and ultimately obscures it.

Aristotle's mimetic theory shows that in the theatre there is often a strong correlation between aesthetic conservatism and the degree of control the actor has over their body, and over how their body acts out habits. Put a different way, there is a correlation between aesthetic conservatism and the actor's bodily technique or training. As Barba articulates it,

[t]he performance reflects the training. If you have a training which tames the body, this is seen in the performance ... If you have a muscular training, you have a muscular performance. If you have a soporific training, of the psychological type, the performance will show it (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 72)

Today, for example, many feminist theorists argue that patriarchal constructs are confirmed by certain acting techniques. This correlation between aesthetic conservatism and actorly control is responsible for a strong interest in the principles and processes of actor training in the twentieth century – both among practitioners who want this conservatism, and among practitioners who want to avoid it.

Prior to the twentieth century, Western actor training was usually individual, unsystematised, and unspecialised. It was typically based on an apprenticeship with another actor or an acting company. "[M]ost actors continued to learn their craft on the job," Watson says, "and by imitating their teachers who were the company's seasoned performers" (*Performer Training* 5). Once this apprenticeship was over, the actor's training was over too. "In traditional theatre there is a period of apprenticeship," Barba clarifies, "after which the actor enters the profession and his further development is limited to the different roles he is given" (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 70). In the twentieth century, though, many Western practitioners have rethought the focus and function of training<sup>12</sup>. As

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<sup>12</sup> Twentieth century theatre culture does value professional, commercial, and academic training programs to a greater degree, but it is worth noting that, in Australia at least, Government funding priorities still offer little time or incentive for training, and so there is often a tension between what practitioners want to do and what they are financially able to do (cf. Peter Snow *Imaging the In-between* 103).

Roach says, "[t]he search for a physical system of actor training, a process, a technique, a discipline whereby the body may be reliably mastered, characterizes the best thinking about the art of acting in the twentieth century" (*The Player's Passion* 194). Accordingly, over the course of the century, actor training has become more institutional, more systematised, and in many cases more diversified. "The twentieth-century has," Watson observes, "witnessed an explosion of opportunities for actors to train" (*Performer Training* 7). Many practical programs of actor training and texts about actor training have emerged. In Watson's words, then,

[i]n the United States [training] might well mean studying one of the many variations on the Stanislavski system taught at a prestigious university or in a private studio in New York; in France it could conjure up images of neophyte actors learning how to tackle the classical repertory at the Conservatoire or of young performers from many parts of the world studying mask and physical theatre at the Lecoq school; in Kerala, India, one could find young men undergoing body distorting massages coupled with exhausting physical exercises while they learn dances, roles, and the repertory of traditional Kathakali from master performers (1)

Over the course of the twentieth century, including in many of the commonly recognised theatre training methods Watson mentions, there has often been a marked difference or independence of preparation exercises and performances events. As Barba suggests,

[s]ome [groups] use training as a starting point for the rehearsal and therefore for the performance. Some groups keep their training separate. Others tend to use training as a 'mine', taking out of it results that are grafted onto the performance. Still others use training as a means of reaching a psycho-physical state which must be rediscovered in rehearsal (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 71)

These group-to-group differences aside, it is generally accurate to suggest that twentieth century actors have had common views about the links between training, rehearsal, and performance. From the actor's viewpoint, training has usually been about the craft of acting. "Regardless of differences," Watson remarks, "the ultimate goal of all actor training is to prepare students for performance" (*Performer Training* 1). Training gives the actor the discipline they need to reach the intensities in the intervals in-between the different aspects of their movements, intensities required to raise their daily movements to a dramatic level,

and to put liveliness into their performances. In this respect, training gives the actor the discipline, focus, and flexibility they need to work within a given dramatic vocabulary. Rehearsal has usually been about adapting or applying these acting methods to particular productions. Performance has usually been about communication with audiences. In late twentieth century theatre culture, of course, a number of disciplines have deliberately begun to blur the boundaries between training, rehearsal, and performance. Still, though the complex connections between the three are certainly interesting, I will not have time to theorise them at a general level in this thesis.

Obviously, Watson observes, "[t]raining is a generic term that means different things to different people" (*Performer Training* !). This means that different types of theatre-making have different opinions about the most viable methods of performer training. Each genre uses its training exercises to teach its performers a different set of desired habits and a different set of desired ways of working with or mimicking these habits. In actuality, most of these disciplines are deliberately trying to manipulate the bodily principles, parameters, and properties of mimesis in one way or another. This manipulation of mimesis has been a crucial part of many of the most prominent theories and types of theatre-making in the twentieth century, including those I discuss later in this Chapter.

Many types of theatre-making are concerned with establishing a controlled bodily mimicry that will anchor a controlled, conservative aesthetic. In fact, many insist so strongly that performers faithfully mimic the models that tradition, training, and habit provide that this becomes their very definition of success, or of virtuosity. In commonplace perception, the extraordinary element of virtuosity, and of bodies labelled *virtuoso*, is the degree of physical skill shown by the performer, acrobat, or athlete in question. Virtuosity is their ability to stand out for spectators in the ensemble or event. However, it is not simply their spectacular feats that make them stand out. It is their smooth, sophisticated execution of the ready-made models their discipline asks them to enact. Virtuosity occurs only when the idealised conventions of the discipline are copied correctly. In other words, moments of virtuosity, of mastery over the body, are experienced or observed only when what a body wants to do – a character, characteristic, or convention of embodiment – is correctly copied or replicated by what it really does. Only, Susan Leigh Foster argues, when "moments of 'mastery over the

body' or of 'feeling at one with the body' occur, producing a kind of ecstasy that motivates the dancer to continue" ("Dancing Bodies 237). In this sense, virtuosity is about more than just the performer's physical skills. It is about the performer's ability to masterfully mimic the bodily ideals of a given theatrical genre. It is about their ability, in Susan Leigh Foster's terms, "to meet the standards for the ideal body" (239). For instance, while 'natural' bodies are generally the ideal in realism, and 'novel' bodies are generally the ideal in circus, in both cases the performer has to mimic and meet the standards for these respective ideals. To bring about virtuosity, then, the performer has to train themselves to control their body, and their bodily mimicry of a model. Consequently, Elizabeth Dempster explains, "in the contemplation of distanced virtuosity [the performer's] present imperfect body is subsumed in the perfected body of the other" ("Women Writing the Body" 22). Soboslay concurs, noting that "technique is taught at the cost of exploration of the experience of his/her own body!" ("Spaces of Resistance" 19). As these commentators show, virtuosity venerates the bodily ideals of a given discipline, instead of the body itself. It consolidates these ideals by keeping the energetic, erratic body that mimics these ideals at bay. In this sense, virtuosity is characterised by the ability to execute the expected, rather than the excessive or extraordinary. Sights of virtuosity are, in fact, sites of habit. "By their very nature," Roach phrases it, "virtuosic displays tend toward the premeditated and the mechanical" (*The Player's Passion* 165). This being the case, bodies that live up to the norms set out by a given society or a given theatrical genre are seen not simply as obedient automata, but as outstanding virtuosos, masters at playing the game a society has set out for its players. They are what Foucault would call docile bodies, because they display an increased degree of utility, but a decreased degree of freedom (*The Foucault Reader* 179-187).

On the one hand, this notion of virtuosity can be helpful for theatre performers. For, as Ruth Foster says, "[t]he achievement of skill certainly contributes very strongly to satisfying experiences of oneself" (*Knowing in My Bones* 16). This, Verville suggests, is because "[w]hen the body operates well, it delivers pride and pleasure; when it does not, it inflicts distress" (*Habit* 121). Similarly, Feldenkrais says, "the individual feel[s] that he is debased whenever he fails to behave in accordance with society's values" (*Awareness Through Movement* 6). On the other hand, though, this notion of virtuosity can also be harmful. This, Dewey asserts, is because the belief that ideals should steer physical instantiations starts



"with false notions about the control of the body" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 28). It starts, Sullivan agrees, with "the myth of control over the body in which North Americans [and others] tend to believe" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 63). As a result, this conventional concept of virtuosity can lead performers to forget the body when things go well and to blame the body when things go wrong.

In the remainder of this Chapter I will consider how three types of twentieth-century theatre making treat human habits – the revelation of ordinary habits in realist mimicry, the rejection of ordinary habits in performance art, and the replacement of ordinary habits in postmodern performance and in the postmodern performance theory Richard Schechner calls its "scholarly adjunct" (*The Future of Ritual* 20). I will look at how these types of theatre mimic habits, particularly how they control the bodies that mimic habits to make these habits appear more natural, or otherwise. I will suggest these types of theatre all frequently emphasise what they see as worthier habits, and encourage bodies to unthinkingly mimic these habits, even though each has a different motivation for this. These types of theatre do not forget bodies, of course, but they do at times deny bodily processes the freedom to get in the way, and this means they do not have to wonder or worry about these bodily processes. Again, I will argue that if any type of theatre allows the habits performed to steer the bodily processes by which they are performed, it adopts a largely product-oriented approach to habit. Staged in this way, habits often start to seem more natural to spectators, and to be taken as blueprints for their own bodily behaviours.

In today's theatre culture, realist mimicry is the modern, mainstream heir to the mimetic theories and traditions I have considered thus far in this Chapter. It is what Diamond dubs "the modern theater's response to mimesis" ("Mimesis, Mimicry and the "True-Real"" 60). Certainly, it is still the most common sort of mimicry on contemporary stages and screens. The most significant thing about realist mimicry is that it insists on revealing recognisable human realities. It deals with the domain of human habits by revealing real, recognisable

habits in training (if any occurs<sup>13</sup>), in rehearsal, and in performance. This realist effort to reveal recognisable human habits is the first treatment of habit in twentieth century theatre-making I want to examine here.

Gaining momentum in the late nineteenth century, realism broke with the classical imperative to present life as it should be, and instead sought to present life as it really is. From its inception, realism's concern was with true characters, truly copied or played. It spurned stage tricks, stereotypes, and stylised, artificial, or distant acting. Stylistically and scenically, it tried to give the illusion that the emotions, activities, speeches, and settings it presented were real, and thus to disguise their artifice. In other words, realism tried to bring ordinary life into being onstage, and to obscure its own status as theatrical representation.

To this day, the Russian director Constantin Stanislavski is still the most prominent contributor to the methods of realism<sup>14</sup>. Naturally, many theatre practitioners were pursuing new acting methods at the close of the nineteenth century, when Stanislavski came to prominence. Nevertheless, as J. Ellen Gainor notes, "the techniques developed by Stanislavsky and those influenced by him have come to dominate" ("Rethinking Feminism, Stanislavsky and Performance" 163). Watson thinks so too. "Stanislavsky," he says, "...is all but synonymous with actor training in many parts of the world" (*Performer Training* 6). According to standard readings, Stanislavski's realist method asks that actors model their character's beliefs and behaviours on common human habits, and thus on the things they have done or have seen others do in similar situations. In Counsell's terms, Stanislavski's method asks actors to "model and judge their character's psyche's on their own – or rather, on what they *deem* their own to be" (*Signs of Performance* 30, original emphasis). In this

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<sup>13</sup> Again, as Barba argues, "in traditional theatre you have two phases, rehearsal and performance" (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 70). As such, actors do not necessarily have the benefit of training outside rehearsal and performance to produce an acting method appropriate to their aesthetic.

<sup>14</sup> Stanislavski is so dominant that his name has become a shorthand for a set of practices that all theatre practitioners are familiar with, even if a more thorough analysis might reveal discrepancies between the shorthand and the specifics of Stanislavski's work. In effect, the term 'Stanislavskian' has an 'author function' of the sort Foucault analyses. "It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 121). "In this sense, the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (124). This has happened with theatre theorists and practitioners such as Aristotle, William Shakespeare, Artaud, and Brecht too.

sense, Logie says, Stanislavski's actors "deliberately integrate their own characteristics with those of the character" ("Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor" 230). This is why identification techniques are important in Stanislavski's method. The 'magic if', for example, asks that actors engage the emotional life of the character 'as if' it were their own, imagining what they really would or would not do if they were in a similar situation. "The Magic If describes the ordinary human ability to place oneself in a fictional situation," Counsell explains, "and extrapolate the consequences" (*Signs of Performance* 28). Critically, this is also why there is little need for lifelong training in realism. Once actors have developed a capacity to create a character by distilling their own habits (a capacity they develop during their apprenticeship), they can adapt this to any rehearsal of any character in any play. In Stanislavski's realism, veteran actors get remarkably good at accessing the recognisable human habits that eventually become the models mimicked in the performance. The fact that these habits are drawn from life assures actors that they are revealing real, desired, motivated, meaningful habits, and repressing undesired habits. In this way, the emphasis on the actor's own experience in Stanislavski's realist theatre allows the actorly self to become the basis, the guarantor, of authenticity in theatrical performance. "[T]he presence of the actor's self as the basis of performance is," as Auslander says, "for him the source of truth in acting: he defines good acting as acting based on the performers own experience and emotions" (*From Acting to Performance* 30).

Even though recognisable human habits are important in realism, they are not by themselves enough. To be believed these habits have to be played truly, and played at a proper distance from spectators. Otherwise, some realists suspect that what is performed will be subverted rather than supported by the way it is performed. As my comments thus far in this Chapter have shown, this is not an unwarranted fear. In one respect, realist theatre works with what the phenomenologist Garner calls a "radically material conception of the stage" (*Bodied Spaces* 88). Realism reframes a small part of the world as symbolic of this world onstage. Its illusions rely on metonymy, in which everyday objects stand for a broader reality, and to a lesser degree on metaphor, in which everyday objects stand for something other than themselves. Yet, as Carlson rightly suggests, this metaphoric and metonymic reframing "does not completely remove the perceptual awareness of the object" (*Performance* 54). This is mainly because theatrical signs, including performers and stage properties,

inherently yet imperfectly resemble their referents. Confusion can therefore arise between the artificial world of the characters and the actual world of the actors. This means the illusions of realist mimicry, like those of Plato's myth, are pressured by what States calls the "phenomenal floor of the theatre illusion" (*Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* 34). States and Diamond both describe this phenomenal pressure or tension in remarkably similar terms. States says "the floor cracks open and we are struck – however pleasantly, by the upsurge of the real into the magic circle where the conventions of theatricality have assured us that the real has been subdued" (34). Diamond says "the illusionistic surface has cracked; the official time-bound body of the actor, not merely the character, has become accessible" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 87). Accordingly, although performing bodies are the substance from which all mimetic theatre emerges, they can sometimes subvert rather than support the illusions of the realist stage. As Garner argues, "[f]lushed faces, bulging eyes, wrists that register the pulse's rhythms – the human body threatens artistic control, breaks form into panic" (*Bodied Spaces* 59). What is more, when spectators are aware of the bodily basis of performance, they are aware of the artifice of performance. "When we are confronted with the real physical presence of the actor," as Counsell argues, "...we are reminded of the outside of the fiction. We are reminded of *artifice*" (*Signs of Performance* 17, original emphasis). This is precisely what realists want to avoid. For, States says, such awareness of artifice "relieves even the most naturalistic performance of a completely convincing realism" (*Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* 121). As a result of these issues, of course, many realists share Plato's suspicions about the potentials and problems of the bodies that mimic human realities in the theatre.

In order to strike spectators as an undistorted representation of reality, realist theatre has to play particular characters and circumstances as truly as it can. "[T]o play truly" is, according to Stanislavski, "...to think, strive, feel and act in unison with your role" (*An Actor Prepares* 14). To play their characters truly, realist actors have to suppress all the peculiarities that are part of their own body, but not part of their role. Thus, as Diamond suggests, "[t]hough an art constructed from (among other elements) human bodies theatre demands a certain distance in order for the truth of its illusions to be believed" (*Unmaking*

*Mimesis* 85)<sup>15</sup>. In realist theatre, actors are obliged to let the psychological model or score lead their physical personification of this score. In Stanislavski's words, "[a]n actor is under the obligation to live his part inwardly, and then to give his experience an external embodiment" (*An Actor Prepares* 15). "The score automatically stirs the actor to physical action" (*Creating a Role* 62; cf. Counsell *Signs of Performance* 29). As these quotes show, Stanislavski's method lets the imaginary properties motivate the physical process of mimicking them. In this sense, commentators such as Counsell and Roach argue, Stanislavski's acting system adopts a parallelist perspective on bodily behaviour, similar to that seen in the behaviourist psychology and science of Stanislavski's day<sup>16</sup>. In Stanislavski's method, the actor has to be the same as the character they create, has to be subsumed in the character they create. In Diamond's terms, this method leaves "[t]he actor/signifier laminated to her character/signified" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 4), and so creates "the wholeness of the mimetic body, in which the actor is subsumed in character" (28). This method controls disruptive discrepancies between the actor and the character. It allows actors to avoid the hypocrisy, the dangerous duplicity, of expressing one thing while experiencing another. It supports the fantasy of a complete, coherent self, a whole with which the performer, and later the spectator, can identify.

In addition to staging human habits accurately, realist actors have to stage these habits at the appropriate distance from spectators. To this end, realism envisages a fourth wall at the front of the proscenium stage that separates this stage from spectators. This distancing device protects spectators physically and psychically from the characters presented on the stage, allowing them to accept these artificial characters as real, to project their desires onto them, and to identify with them. The proscenium stage thus becomes a peephole through

<sup>15</sup> A number of non-realistic practitioners have taken this tendency to pass over the actor's actual body in pursuit of an ideal body to even greater extremes. As Roach argues, "adherents of mechanism threatened to abandon the human body as the material of theatrical expression, or, at least, to transform it so utterly as to eliminate its behavioral unpredictability" (*The Player's Passion* 161). Perhaps the best known example is Edward Gordon Craig, who wanted his Über-marionette as a stable mechanical substitute for human actors ("The Actor and The Über-Marionette" 142-151).

<sup>16</sup> For instance, in *Signs of Performance*, Counsell explicitly links Stanislavski's stress on psychological stimuli with the behaviourist idea that certain stimuli shape physical performances automatically (30). Roach also links Stanislavski with the science of his time in *The Player's Passion*, suggesting both disciplines believe the psychical shapes the physical automatically, because both believe that the two are the same, are parallel sides of the same coin (198, 205).

which spectators observe an uninterrupted realisation of the real lives of real people, happening now, oblivious to its invisible witnesses. Ultimately, realism's emphasis on real habits, realistically played, at a proper distance, means it engages at least some of the solutions Aristotle offered for staging recognisable human habits in the theatre.

When realist theatre successfully regulates the relationship between artificial characters and the actors that mimic these characters, the realities it represents start to seem far more natural to spectators. Obviously, realist dramatists such as Stanislavski and realist playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Anton Chekhov were often critical of the social realities they staged. It was not necessarily their intent that spectators take these realities as natural. However, a number of contemporary theorists think they confirm the social realities they set out to critique, because their 'true-to-life' mimicry makes these realities seem so recognisable, so real, that they start to seem more like undeniable fundamentals than contingent cultural fictions. For instance, Diamond takes this perspective when she suggests that "[b]ecause it naturalises the relation between character and actor, setting and world, realism operates in concert with ideology" (4). Though it may not always be a conscious strategy, realist mimicry stresses models and suppresses the bodies that manifest these models in order to conceal the historicity of its characters, world, and worldview. Moreover, it asks spectators to identify with the purportedly natural perspectives of the characters it presents. In this respect, Diamond notes, realism "ruthlessly maps out normative spectatorial positions by occluding its own means of production" (iii). Realists claim to reveal human realities, but they are often actually replacing the confused tangle of human habits with the ones they consider to be real, the ones they consider to be worth conserving or confronting, and then mimicking them in such a way that they start to seem natural to spectators. Accordingly, as Counsell argues, although realism is "seen as the style without a style, simulating what is real without altering it ... far from being neutral, [it] reproduce[s] constructions of the human subject and the world it inhabits" (*Signs of Performance* 24). As a result of realist theatre's tendency to conceal the way it operates in concert with cultural ideologies, Blair observes, it has

often been validly challenged by feminists over the last quarter-century ... They assert that it reifies a nonexistent 'self' at the expense of ignoring socially conditioned aspects

of identity ...that it is part of the humanist project of reductively universalizing about experience in order to erase difference ("Reconsidering Stanislavsky" 179)

Interestingly, many theorists have suggested that the conservatism identified in realist drama is more of a problem with interpretations of Stanislavski than with his own original ideas<sup>17</sup>. Some of Stanislavski's interpreters, such as the founders of the American Method, stress the psychological dimension of his work detailed in *An Actor Prepares*. As Gainor says,

in the United States in particular, through the work of his interpreters and students (most notably Lee Strasberg, originator of the Method), we developed over the course of the twentieth century an increasingly narrow understanding of his theory and how it can best be utilized by the actor ("Rethinking Feminism, Stanislavsky, and Performance" 165)

Blair too thinks Stanislavski's work is less conservative than the narrow Strasberg-inspired interpretation it is sometimes conflated with. Like a lot of theorists today, Blair thinks that "[o]ver his lifetime Stanislavsky's thought followed an increasingly concrete trajectory, ultimately focusing on physical means" ("Reconsidering Stanislavsky" 180). Read this way, Stanislavski's realist method does try to create what Logie calls "a wider repertoire of shapes and movements" ("Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor" 231) in actors' bodies before asking them to draw on their own bodily habits. However, the fact that Stanislavski's method still asks actors to engage their own experiences in creating their characters means the actors may nevertheless find it difficult to escape everyday habits. "While well aware of this resistance to changing habits of movement," Logie says, "Stanislavski must have found a solution very elusive, especially early in his career when he encouraged the actors to find movements by connecting with their own experiences" (231).

In the twentieth century, of course, many performance theorists and practitioners have grown tired of realist mimicry's tendency to make social habits seem more natural. From their perspective, Schechner says, "it's clear that orthodox dramaturgy – the theater of plays

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<sup>17</sup> Again, this is a symptom of the fact that the term 'Stanislavskian' functions in twentieth century theatre as a shorthand for a broad range of practices with common characteristics.

behind prosceniums, in fixed settings, for a settled audience, relating stories as if they were happening to others – is finished. At least it doesn't meet the needs of many people" (*Performance Theory* 146). With the influence of theatre theorists and practitioners who think this way, the twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of various modes of theatre that challenge the authority of conventional mimicry.

Of the modes of theatre that respond to the perceived errors of realist mimicry, the avant-garde and experimental performance practices of the early and mid twentieth century have been among the most prominent. The noteworthy thing about these practices is that they try to confront the restrictive bodily range of habits by transcending these habits, and by searching for an authentic body beyond these habits. This effort on the part of performance artists to transcend habits is the second approach to habit in twentieth century theatre-making that I want to examine here. Artaud is a leading exponent of this type of performance. Allan Kaprow's happenings in the 1950s, Vito Acconci's performance art in the 1970s, subsequent forms of body art, and of conceptual, environmental, and activist performance, are also critical in the evolution of this experimental type of performance (cf. Anne Marsh *Body and Self*). A similar spirit of rebellion is also seen in some of the radical Asian performance practices of the twentieth century, for example in the Japanese 'angura' or underground. The scope of this thesis plainly does not permit a detailed overview of all of these practices in their specificity<sup>18</sup>. Still, rehearsing some of their main tendencies will help locate this discussion in its historical contexts in performance theory and practice. Clearly, these performance practices do not necessarily share a unified approach, and it is difficult to classify any of them in a linear historical tradition under the rubric of the avant-garde (as Marsh believes Rose Lee Goldberg has done (68-69)). Nevertheless, these practices all appear to be concerned with theatre's capacity to intervene in contemporary cultural trajectories, and to alter the thinking of the individuals involved, through liberatory or life-changing experiences. In this respect, these practices react to perceived problems with realism's mimicry of recognisable human habits. In realist mimicry the actor is usually bound by what Diamond understands as the "referential task" ("Mimesis, Mimicry and the

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<sup>18</sup> This has been offered by numerous recent texts, including Amelia Jones' *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), Mariellen R. Sandford's *Happenings and Other Acts* (1995), and Marsh's *Body and Self* (1993).



'True-Real'" 3) of faithfully representing a human reality. The actor's actual physical work is just an accessory in acting out this reality. This work has to be regulated to make the artificial reality seem more natural. Most performance art practices reject the artificial-actual relations that are the basis and bias of realist mimicry. They claim to be more interested in the actor's actual work than in the models of reality the actor mimics.

Much as Stanislavski's practice is a major precursor to realism, Artaud's practice is a major precursor to performance art, mainly thanks to Artaud's will to explore the physical expressive resources unique to theatre in his work at the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, and in the essays collected in *The Theater and its Double* (1958). Artaud's theatre is based on his belief that conventional Western mimicry has lost contact with life, with the vital reality that shadows, doubles, and disrupts the models theatre mimics. In response, Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty strips theatre of the tyranny of mimetic referentiality. Theatre, Artaud insists, should be a "reconquest of the signs of what exists" (63). Theatre artists should liberate the essential signs or substance of theatre from their referential servitude. They should, Artaud says, "extirpate ...all idea of pretence, of cheap imitations of reality" (60) "to restore to the theater a passionate and convulsive conception of life" (122). To this end, Artaud dismisses the dominance of the writer, and of the referential and psychological dimensions of theatre. He declares that "the domain of the theatre is not psychological but plastic and physical" (71). Accordingly, he accentuates the role of the director, and the real physical dimension of theatre. He highlights how the director develops the performance by means of the "moving hieroglyphs" (61) of performing bodies, in space, through time. Artaud claims his efforts to liberate the presence, power, and vulnerability of the living performer can eliminate the barriers between stage, spectators, and social world. Performance can become like a plague, infecting spectators and societies.

Subsequent Artaud-inspired artists also distinguish themselves from theatre artists by freeing their actors from mimesis, referentiality, role-playing, and illusion. Like Artaud, these artists prefer the actual presence of human bodies in performance to the artificial representation of human bodies in theatre. That is, they prefer what actors do to what characters do (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* 38). This being the case, these artists often base their experimental performance practices on the authenticity of the untrained body,

assumed to be uncontaminated by cultural habits and conventions (Cf. Roger Copeland "The Presence of Mediation" 35). In Watson's words, they

reject the very notion of systematized training ... Their concerns are with the individual actor to explore his or her own creative potential and extend his or her own psycho-physical limitations as a performer rather than with developing a universal training model (*Performer Training* 7)

These performance artists naively assume that they can escape conventional mimicry's emphasis on make-believe, and on making cultural norms seem more believable and natural, by presenting an unmediated existential presence in their performances – what Chantal Pontbriand's famous essay calls "a here/now which has no referent except itself" ("The Eye Finds No Fixed Point on Which to Rest..." 157). These artists cast their work as what Diamond calls the "material other" (*Unmaking Mimesis* iii) of conventional mimicry, able to transgress the restrictive theatrical and cultural conventions it upholds. Through their stated rejection of mechanism and mechanical mimicry, Roach suggests performance artists become radically vitalistic<sup>19</sup>. "[I]nstead of worrying about how to cap the gusher" of the passions, he words it, "...modern actors wonder where to drill" (*The Player's Passion* 218).

The rejection of mimicry in experimental performance art practices results in a polarised approach to performance, including a practical opposition between theatre and performance, and a theoretical opposition between semiological and phenomenological approaches to performance. Insofar as experimental performance art practices emphasise bodies and bodily interactions, they display a clear phenomenological bias. Phenomenology considers the subject's existential experience of the world. "The world as it is lived," Garner says, "rather than the world as it is objectified, abstracted, and conceptualised" (*Bodied Spaces* 26). Phenomenologically-focused artists are critical of conventional mimicry's tendency to favour the representational function of theatre. Most conventional mimicry tends mainly to treat the sign-systems of theatre, and so to simplify or sediment the complex impressions theatre makes on spectators. With such an approach, Bergson says, "we do not see the actual things themselves ... we confine ourselves to reading the labels affixed to them" (*Laughter* 159). This is an intellectual approach to theatre that, according to Garner,

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<sup>19</sup> Though this is obviously vitalism read in its most colloquial sense.

"detache[s] its elements from their lived field and reconfigure[s] them as objective facts" (*Bodied Spaces* 26). On the contrary, Carlson notes, "[t]he traditional semiotic orientation of theatre g[i]ve[s] way in the new experimental work to a phenomenological orientation" (*Performance* 26). In their attempts to address the shortcomings of conservative, conventional mimicry, phenomenologically-oriented performance artists address the 'real' – that is, the actual realities of the stage, not the artificial realities of realism. They adopt a broader view of the performance, and of the moments experienced and the meanings made in the performance. They put intellectual perspectives aside, along the lines of the return to 'the things themselves' the phenomenologist Husserl advocates (*Bodied Spaces* 26). In effect, performance artists ground their performances in the events of lived experience that conventional theatre only takes as content. "The arts beg[i]n," as Stephen C. Foster says in his study of the avant-garde, "to present their content through the structure of outside, non-art events rather than to represent the world's events through traditional art genres" (*"Event" Art and Art Events* 5). "The idea," Marsh agrees, is "that artists c[an] draw from life to investigate living structures" (*Body and Self* 55). This emphasis on the events of lived experience means that the inhabited spaces of performance are distinctly different from the objectified spaces of conventional theatre. Experimental performance events are positioned as real, unrehearsed events with real effects on real people, rather than mere aesthetic objects. Offering all the immediacy and indeterminacy of real life, these performances respond to the cultural dynamics that conventional theatre only manages to represent. Their innovations shift the ideological and identificatory structures of theatre.

Poststructuralist performance theorists have debated the respective merits of mimetic theatre and non-mimetic performance in the 1980s and 1990s, paying particular attention to the role and regulation of the body in each. After all, Diamond argues, "the body, common to both performance and theater, marks a crucial point of division" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 84). Poststructuralist theorists have challenged certain assumptions about the subversive potential of non-mimetic performance. They are wary of the Artaud-inspired search for an essential theatrical language. Many Artaudian artists try to eliminate referentiality, representation, repetition, and theatricality from performance, in order to make room for the unpolluted existential presence of the performer they believe to be the essence of performance. Like some phenomenologists, these artists think the authentic precultural

presence of the human body can, as Sullivan says in her critique, "be reclaimed and perhaps used to change culture" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 2). On the surface, this seems a plausible response to realist theatre, and a plausible method of revitalising theatre practice. However, poststructuralist performance theorists have argued that mimetic theatre and non-mimetic performance both depend on a similar mind-matter/model-manifestation binary. Non-mimetic practices simply invert the values of the binary at the basis of traditional mimicry, and of today's realist mimicry. As I explained earlier in this Chapter, many realist dramatists and directors (albeit unconsciously) believe that if their performances are to be successful the performers' movements have to be subservient to the meaningful plot. However, many performance artists believe that if their performances are to be successful the performers' movements have to be the starting point for the meaningful plot. These artists are interested in what actors actually do. In their practice, the material body of the actor is the model that leads the performance, although meanings may be linked with this body as the performance progresses. In their practice, then, bodily models or mechanisms dominate and bodily meanings duplicate them. Instead of the cultural driving the corporeal, the corporeal drives the cultural. There are difficulties with this. By overlooking the fact that corporeal mechanisms and models are always already framed by cultural meanings, non-mimetic practices only get better at obscuring or naturalising the way the two come together in behaviour. These corporeal models seem to be natural, not to be framed by cultural norms. Accordingly, although performance artists say they are transcending cultural habits, they are replacing them with what they see as more fundamental habits, hiding the fact that these are still culturally-determined fictions, and then staging them in such a way that they seem natural. In the end, both mimicry and non-mimicry authenticate a unique, unified self – a character in mimicry, an actor in non-mimicry. They forget that what characters do and what actors do are both logical, linear, cultural constructs cut from the flux of life. Both indicate what happens, when it happens, and what it means, but do not indicate the way it happens. In other words, both prioritise meaningful or mechanical properties not processes. Therefore, to take either what artificial characters do or what actors do as an authentic model to be mimicked by bodies is equally problematic.

As this analysis suggests, the problem with non-mimicry for poststructuralist theorists is that it simply reverses the values of the mind-matter binary mimicry is based on<sup>20</sup>. It fails to show that the binary, the two terms, and the connections between the two terms, are culturally constructed. It thus treats the symptoms rather than the source of oppressive modes of mimicry. This means neither realist mimicry nor rejections of mimicry in performance art deal with the possibility that model-manifestation discrepancies might be able to disrupt habits. Neither can altogether avoid naturalising the habits they stage. Consequently, neither provides the politically effective means of challenging habits that the majority of poststructuralist theorists are after. "In general," Forte therefore puts it, "the mid 1980s has brought about a regrouping, perhaps in response to a reactionary political climate, perhaps in response to the perceived failure of 1970s strategies to achieve more measurable, visible effects" ("Women's Performance Art" 267). Contemporary performance theorists and practitioners have been forced to find new ways of working with prevalent cultural habits, to overcome the tendency both mimicry and non-mimicry have to validate the habits they stage.

In the 1980s and 1990s many performance theorists have returned to the role mimicry plays in mediating bodies and bodily habits. This return to mimicry, and the third treatment of socially sanctioned habits in the theatre it makes possible, is driven both by the supposed shortcomings of two types of theatre-making I have treated above, and by psychoanalytic, structuralist, and poststructuralist discourses. In contrast to the claims of many performance artists, these discourses suggest that when people mimic specific habits they actively produce their body, and their belief in the naturalness of their body. This means habits are not primarily negative, not primarily obstacles for the body. Instead, habits play a positive role in producing the body. This, in Foucault's terms, represents a shift from a repressive Reichian perspective on habit to a productive Nietzschean perspective on habit (*Power/Knowledge* 9; *The Foucault Reader* 310-329). This new theoretical terrain recognises that people cannot simply cast off their current bodily habits, because there is no

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<sup>20</sup> It is in a way comparable to theories that reverse male and female roles, only to find that they have retained the biologicistic and oppositional relations on which the male-female binary is based.

'I' independent of these habits to cast them off<sup>21</sup>. "There is no thinking of who we are," as Sullivan articulates it, "apart from the habits that we embody" ("Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 26). Taking this point of view, contemporary poststructuralist theorists confirm the longstanding pragmatist contention that people cannot just eliminate their habits. That we cannot, in Dewey's words, "eject the habit from the thought of ourselves and conceive it as an evil power which has somehow overcome us" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 25-26)<sup>22</sup>.

Dewey, Foucault, and theorists who study them like Sullivan, all suggest that bodies, including performing bodies, can never come before the social and representational systems that support them. Performing bodies cannot be taken for granted, and they cannot be cast as natural or originary. This means that performers can neither abandon their existing bodily habits, nor go back to an essential physiological presence that exists beyond the ephemeral world as a guarantor of truth (cf. Auslander *Presence and Resistance* 44). Performance can never be a terrain of uncorrupted bodily play. Even as they emerge, performing bodies and performances are mediated by the forces of representation, referentiality, and repetition. To see bodies as fixed, fully self-present, and free from mediation is to ignore their social production. Such is the charge poststructuralist philosophers and performance theorists level at non-mimetic performance practices. This charge leads theorists like Derrida, for example, to mount a critique of practitioners who aspire to an unmediated existential presence as the essence of performance, as in his critique of Artaud in "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" in *Writing and Difference* (1978).

For pragmatists like Dewey, and for poststructuralists like Foucault and Derrida, freedom cannot come from casting off current habits in favour of an originary presence or personality. "Because there is no self apart from the habits that structure it," Sullivan explains, "to eliminate old habits without creating new ones is to ensure that the old habits return" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 95; "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey"

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<sup>21</sup> I will investigate this notion again in Chapter Three, when I consider Butler's theory of performativity.

<sup>22</sup> In *Living Across and Through Skins* Sullivan compares Foucault's and Dewey's comments on the power habit has to produce the self, and the impossibility of simply eliminating the habits that produce the self (94; cf. "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 29)

30). This being the case, pragmatist and poststructuralist theorists "urge us not to seek freedom from the constraints of all gender habits, but to ask how we might transform them" (24). For many such theorists "changing how we are gendered means *replacing*, rather than attempting to jettison entirely, as if we could, our current gendered constructs and habits" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 96, original emphasis; "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 30). These theorists suggest people should try to replace habits, rather than just retain or reject these habits. Moreover, they suggest people should make use of mimicry to replace bad habits with better ones, making their theories especially relevant to performance theorists and practitioners. In this respect, these theorists point to the potential of radical mimicry, and the third 'replacement' treatment of habit in twentieth century theatre radical mimicry makes possible.

Though this third treatment of habit comes from the postmodern philosophical contexts in which performance takes place, in recent times it has begun to penetrate performance theory and practice. In the 1980s the influence of Foucault, Derrida, and like-minded theorists has stimulated a marked shift in performance and performance theory from an essentialist approach that explores natural bodies to a constructivist approach that explicates the social production of bodies (cf. Peta Tait *Converging Realities* 9; Marsh *Body and Self* 5, 203, 226). With this shift, approaches to the performing body, and to its place in performance, change. Obviously, the presumed disruptive power of the body remains a powerful lure. But the mid-twentieth century tendency to stress the pre-social, pre-semiotic significance of the performing body, to oppose mimetic theatre and non-mimetic performance on this basis, and consequentially to reject mimicry, declines. "Whereas the earlier generation was concerned with the body's raw, physical presence," Auslander says, "the later generation is often more concerned with the word than the body" (*Presence and Resistance* 57). Many practitioners use mimicry as a method of deconstructing the essentialised expressions of the body that are discredited in postmodern thought, while developing new non-stereotypical body images. For example, Marsh argues that Australian artists like Lyndal Jones and Linda Sproul and American artists like Karen Finlay all try to escape essentialism in this way (*Body and Self* 183). This being the case, there is no doubt that contemporary critical theorists and contemporary theatre theorists both take an interest in the practice of repeating and

replacing habits I am looking at here. The theoretical strategies of the one have commonalities with the practical strategies of the other.

Contemporary theatre theorists maintain that it is by radicalising mimetic repetition, rather than by repudiating it, that theatre can problematise normal habits and perhaps replace them with new habits. These theorists attempt, as Deleuze argues, to build "a new (non-Aristotelian) interpretation of the theatre: a theatre of multiplicities opposed in every respect to the theatre of representation, which leaves intact neither the identity of the thing represented, nor author, nor spectator, nor character, nor representation" (*Difference and Repetition* 192). Certainly, these contemporary theorists recognise that phallogocentric systems can be perpetuated by conventional mimicry. But they also believe that conventional definitions of mimicry do not encompass all its possibilities. These interpretations say more about what the term has meant – a faithful manifestation of a model – than what it currently means or can mean (cf. States "Performance as Metaphor" 25). In Diamond's words, then, while "[t]he truth-model axis of mimesis" has had lasting influence, and provides a useful paradigm for postmodern theorists to challenge, it "is only one piece of classical mimesis" (*Unmaking Mimesis* iv). "Since Plato sought to cleanse his Republic of histrionic display mimesis has been a political practice, inseparable from interpretation and contestation" (viii).

Contemporary theatre theorists radicalise mimicry by emphasising its ephemerality. In theatrical mimicry, performers manifest a model onstage by means of their bodily practices. But the moment these bodily practices appear, they immediately disappear into the domain of memory. Performers, as Blau puts it, must "die there in front of your eyes" (*Take Up the Bodies* 83) to make the models they mimic onstage live. The bodily mechanisms of mimicry cannot exist outside the moment of their occurrence, except as memories that are already interpretations, narrativisations, or intellectualisations that differ in nature from the mimicry itself. Even as a performance is perceived, the present moment of its occurrence slips away, and so all people actually perceive is the past<sup>23</sup>. Performances are always in the making in the moment. They are never the same if reproduced in different moments, and so are

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<sup>23</sup> Bergson, whose work I will examine in Chapter Four, believes that this happens with all events, not just with theatrical events.



difficult to fix, repeat, or reproduce. As Phelan says, "[p]erformance cannot be saved, recorded, documented ...once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (*Unmarked* 146). For this reason, many theorists – most notably Blau and Phelan – propose that, as Phelan puts it, "[p]erformance's only life is in the present" (146; cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* 152). Here, performance is located in an opposition as old as Plato's between the ephemeral and the eternal (Chapter One). Phelan, like Plato, believes ephemerality to be the most obvious ontological characteristic of performance (*Unmarked* 146). Phelan, however, favours the transience and transformability Plato fears.

In contrast to conventional mimicry, which conceals the fact that it is making up the human habits it claims to mirror, radical mimicry reminds people that these habits are made up in the moment. It reminds people that the habits mimicked onstage – and, even more insidiously, the habits mimicked in life – are not natural, are rather cultural constructs. "[T]ruth and the sameness that supports it," as Diamond says, are "...no longer understood as a neutral, omnipotent, changeless essence, embedded in nature, revealed by mimesis" (*Unmaking Mimesis* iv). Moreover, contemporary theatre theorists claim that if radical mimicry makes up these habits in the moment, it can make up new habits in the moment, and so confront spectators with new cultural norms. The unrepeatability poststructuralists identify in mimetic practice thus makes it more open to replacing habits than other genres. "[T]heater is," Diamond puts it, "...the place of play, and unlike other media, in the theatre the same play can be played not only again, but differently" (iii; cf. *Performance and Cultural Politics* 1-2; "Re" 32). Contemporary theatre theorists such as Diamond suggest people should exploit the ephemerality of mimetic practice, "precisely what Plato feared, and what Aristotle sought to regulate" (*Unmaking Mimesis* xvi). This takes full advantage of theatrical mimicry's ability to replace not just repeat the habits it mimics. Theatrical concepts of presence, memory, and mimicry here take on a political agenda. "[T]heatre becomes highly seductive," Tait says, "because it promises ...the capacity to reshape futures around a performative present" (*Converging Realities* 245).

The philosophies and performance theories I have considered here can be translated into theatre-making when radical theatre practitioners replace day-to-day habits with different ones in their performances. Contemporary theorists have observed this radical mimicry in

many types of twentieth century theatre. Here I will speak briefly of two examples that represent extremes of this sort of practice, firstly the work of Brecht, and secondly the work that has in recent decades come under the rubric of contemporary circus<sup>24</sup>.

In recent years, Diamond, Reinelt, and other commentators have suggested this radical mimicry is a significant feature of Brecht's revolutionary theatre theories and techniques (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis*; cf. Reinelt "Rethinking Brecht"). As most theatre theorists and practitioners today know, Brecht grounds his theatre in the Marxist belief that human nature is both changing and changeable (*Brecht on Theatre* 46). This being the case, Brecht continually revolts against the 'Aristotelian' mimesis that controls the actor's mimicry of a character to make this character seem more natural to spectators. According to Brecht, this type of mimesis has its illusions "exempted from criticism by presenting them as an unavoidable ...natural law" (124). It thereby authenticates a bourgeois reality. Despite this revolt, Brecht does not believe in abandoning mimesis, or in abandoning himself to it. On the contrary, Brecht's theatre complicates the actor's mimicry of a character in order to question this character's naturalness. Brecht's theatre confronts audiences with the "socio-historically significant" (*Brecht on Theatre* 86-87) forces behind a character's beliefs and behaviours. It demonstrates that a character could do things differently, faced with a similar set of circumstances again, a fact conventional mimicry conceals. In Brecht's theatre, then, "[h]uman behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors and at the same time as capable of altering them" (*Brecht on Theatre* 86). As a result, Reinelt argues, it is fair to say that "[b]oth Brecht and feminism emphasize the possibility of change" ("Rethinking Brecht" 99), what Brecht calls the "possibility of remodelling society" (*Brecht on Theatre* 99).

The notion that theatre can swap normal bodily behaviours for novel ones is also the target and thrill of many contemporary circus, acrobatic, and aerial performances. Having analysed Australian circus throughout the 1990s, Tait has suggested that circus can show spectators a new body, specifically a new female body. In her terms, feminist physical

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<sup>24</sup> By contemporary circus most commentators mean highly skilled human performances of the sort developed most notably by Cirque du Soleil in Canada, and by Circus Oz and Rock and Roll Circus in Australia. They do not mean old-fashioned animal acts circuses.

theatre and circus typically "displays a different female body, one that is doing and performing actions which are outside gender defined hierarchies of social behaviours" (*Converging Realities* 120). The significant thing, Tait contends, is not just that circus performers have astounding bodily characteristics and capacities. It is that the performers' physical skills can be at odds with conventional images of femininity, even if these very same ideas and ideals are shown in the performers' stereotyped communicative gestures or in their skimpy costumes (cf. "Danger Delights" 48; cf. "Feminine Free Fall" 28; cf. *Converging Realities*). In this sense, Tait says, although "circus generates a mood of fun" (24), it also takes advantage of the performers' physical skills to present powerful new images of femininity. "Women performers reshape the socially 'docile body' identified by Foucault, but their 'improvement' does not mean conformity to feminine regimes" (106). What is more, Tait's writings indicate, this can actually be said of a number of the highly physical modes of performance that are today thought of as circus or physical theatre.

The radical mimicry promoted by the twentieth century philosophers, pop psychologists, and performance theorists I have considered here has much potential. It is well placed to substitute standard bodily habits with different habits. Further, it in some respects recognises that the physical, processual, ephemeral character of performance is involved in replacing cultural norms through theatre. This said, with this method there is always a chance that practitioners or philosophers will have a definite replacement in mind, and will assume that bodily processes will back it up. This means this method may inadvertently allow what habit is replaced to drive the way this habit is replaced. The cultural product again controls the corporeal processes. This turns a potentially process-oriented treatment of habit into a product-oriented one, with all the problems that this brings (Chapter One). This is not usually a risk with Brechtian theatre, because Brecht is not usually after an absolute correspondence between artificial characters and actors. This is sometimes a risk in circus, though, because in circus there actually has to be a correspondence between the novel bodily characteristics and the bodies that mimic them. After all, Tait maintains, "[t]he central component of the performance is a demonstration of the mastery of skills" (105-106). In circus, performers masterfully mimic specific skills or models. This is the very definition of virtuosity in the genre. However, this also means the skills can be sedimented into habits that appear proper and worth pursuing to spectators, even though they may be as oppressive

as the old cultural norms they replace. Tait has recognised this risk. "Paradoxically," she says, "circus generate[s] an ideal of freedom by extreme regulation of individual bodies" ("Feminine Free Fall" 32). "[W]hile the pleasure of transgressive experience might be derived from its sense of freedom, this sense is contained within discursive frameworks of social control. To this end, the actual physical freedoms of the aerialist serve the cultural Imaginary" (28). The physical capacities of circus performers still set up habits that restrict the human body, or offer it freedom only within strict frameworks, and so potentially thwart creativity and change. Though this need not happen with all circus performances, it is an issue that nevertheless needs to be noted.

For all the potential of radical mimicry in the theatre, then, if it becomes a 'replacement' method focused on properties not a 'replay' method focused on processes, it too is in danger of naturalising the habits it represents, imposing these habits on spectators, and thereby on societies. It is the same with all three of the theatrical disciplines I have discussed here. If these theatres collapse properties and processes, this can make the properties seem natural to spectators. And, as I have suggested throughout this Chapter, if spectators see habits as natural, there is a chance they will start to adopt them in their own lives in the future.

A number of noted feminist theorists have addressed this tendency in theatre in psychological terms. In their theories of classical and contemporary mimicry, theorists such as Elaine Aston, Case, and Diamond outline how the spectators's identification with the ideals they see onstage has the potential to positively or negatively influence their own identity. They frequently connect this mimetic identification with the identification seen in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. They argue that the spectator's identification with the images onstage can come dangerously close to the infant's identification with the images in the mirror in the Oedipal phase Lacan calls the 'mirror stage', and that both use similar procedures to produce and perpetuate phallogentric gender identities. "Conventional theater," Diamond claims, "...reactivates these psychic mechanisms" (151). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, identity is established through a series of visual identifications with images of oneself, or of others, during the mirror stage. "The infant," Diamond says, "glimpses

itself (or a caretaker) in a mirror as a unified body-image and promptly identifies itself with ...that seductively coherent image" (110). The infant will always, albeit imperfectly, aspire to this unity other bodies show (111). Identification, then, is a process of aspiring to or adopting the attributes of another – an image, a parent, a teacher, or even a character – on a more or less permanent basis. Identification is premised on likeness to another, and is integral in establishing the complex of habits that constitutes identity. "Drawing another into oneself, projecting oneself onto another, identification *creates* sameness not with the self but another," Diamond says. "You are (like) me, I am (like) you" (106, original emphasis). Identifying with a character or characteristic in theatre certainly requires recognition of similarities rather than recognition of differences (3). This, Diamond claims, is what makes it dangerous. "Identificatory fantasies elide the reality of the other's difference" ("Re" 39). Identification is alarming because spectators have to compare themselves to the character to validate the truth of their own identity. Captured in the mimetic mirror of identification, spectators (perhaps unconsciously or unsuccessfully) try to imitate the identities endorsed onstage. Mimetic identification thus constitutes a "coercive" (39) and constructive force that can influence the spectators' own habits, and so influence the spectators' own identities.

Today, most feminists are critical of the mimetic identification that shapes contact between stage and spectator in realist mimicry, and often in other types of theatrical mimicry too. They suggest that such identifications ultimately reinforce a specific reality. For example, Diamond explains, "[i]t is through such identifications that realism surreptitiously reinforces (even if it argues with) the social arrangements of the society it claims to mirror" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 4). From its inception realism has always represented women in conflict with the confines of their social or domestic surrounds. But the very recognisability of these crises confirms for spectators that an unbiased, undeniable, universal reality is represented – that life is like that. As a result, Diamond says, spectators sometimes fail to recognise that what they are seeing "is not a mere miming of a social relationship but a *reading* of it" (53, original emphasis). Further, Diamond maintains, when a recognisable model of reality is made natural by realist mimicry (a resemblance between character and actor), it is more likely to be mimicked by spectators (a resemblance between character and spectator), and so more likely to become part of society (104). Functioning in this fashion, "[r]ealism is more than an interpretation of reality passing as reality, it *produces* 'reality' by

positioning its spectators recognize and verify its truths" (4, original emphasis), and by disciplining its spectators to inhabit them.

Ultimately, the issues Diamond and other theorists identify mean the faithful reflection that characterises realist mimicry is in fact a deceptive ideological manoeuvre that helps theatre make and maintain cultural norms. Unfortunately, rejections and radicalisations of mimicry sometimes unintentionally have similar results. Wanting to criticise this manoeuvre, many feminist theatre theorists have gone beyond considering images of sexuality and subjectivity in theatre, and have begun considering theatrical form too. Following film theorists like Laura Mulvey, theatre theorists like Case, Diamond, Dolan, Freedman, and Reinelt have, in Diamond's words, "moved from an empirical concern with images of women in plays to a critique fuelled by deconstruction of the phallic economy that underlies representation" (85). In this sense, Tait says, "[r]ecent feminist criticism discusses how the use of theatrical form is implicitly political, either reinforcing the status quo or challenging it" (*Converging Realities* 26). These feminist theatre theorists consistently and convincingly argue that much theatrical mimicry is designed to perpetuate phallogocentric principles and habits both by what it represents and by the way it represents it. Consequently, this type of mimicry is capable of ordering both the characters depicted onstage and the connections between stage and spectators in a way that confirms current cultural habits. Obviously, feminist theorists feel compelled to canvass ways of challenging these mechanisms in mimicry. They consider the ways in which mimicry can be made to problematise habits both by what it represents and by the way it represents it – both by its properties and by its processes, to use terms I have been using in this thesis.

What I want to point out for the purposes of this thesis is that, whether conscious of it or not, when contemporary theorists return to mimicry, they do not simply canvass the potentials of radical repetition of habits in the theatre. They show that, while radical repetition of habits certainly can be conceived in the product-oriented terms of the 'replacement' method I outlined in Chapter One, it can also be conceived in the process-oriented terms of the 'replay' method. In effect, these theorists point to a less problematic version of the replacement method – the method that recognises the role theatre's ephemeral processes play in replacing habits, but has a definite replacement in mind regardless, and

assumes physical processes will back it up. This new method would challenge habits not just by the models it mimics but by its means of mimicking them. It would truly take advantage of the performing body's role in mimicry, without necessarily taking this body as natural, and without necessarily taking this body as mere backup to the model mimicked. In the end, it matters little whether replay is seen as an alternative to the replacement approach, or an alternative version of the approach. It either way encourages performers to be deliberate about their efforts to copy habits critically, without totally predetermining the effects this will have on the show or the spectators. Which is precisely what happens with the physical theatre practices I will examine toward the end of this thesis.

Interestingly, as my comments in the Introduction and in this Chapter have already indicated, theatre disciplines and theories are not the only ones to discuss habit, and not the only ones to suggest people should use subversive mimicry to modify habits. In the 1980s and 1990s poststructuralist critical and cultural theorists have started to move in similar directions. They have recognised that the stability of bodies, belief systems, and social systems relies on regular repetition of habits, and that regular repetition of habits in turn relies on parallels between models and their bodily manifestations. For these theorists, the fact that people's mimicry of cultural norms builds their bodies means that people cannot just cast off these norms in favour of a new, or more natural, body. Instead, these theorists suggest people should exploit the ephemeral processes of mimicry – the fact that (in spite of training) conservative cultural systems can never completely stop bodies slipping up when acting out culturally approved habits. This turns a regular mimicry into a radical mimicry, which remakes habits as it mimics them, replacing normal habits with new habits, or replaying normal habits in new ways.

Before I consider contemporary physical theatre in detail, then, in Chapters Three and Four I want to consider some of the theoretical insights that are relevant to my analysis of habit, and of the model-manifestation parallels that anchor any repetition of a habit in the present moment. I will start with a summary of psychological, phenomenological, pragmatist, and sociological theories of habit. I will then look at radical repetition of habits through the lens of two theories of habit that hold particular promise in the contemporary critical climate – performativity theories (Chapter Three) and vitalist theories (Chapter Four).

Having analysed these theories of radical repetition of habits, particularly the process-oriented vitalist theories, I will then be better placed to return to my analysis of habit in the theatre in Chapters Five and Six. In these concluding Chapters I will look at the physical theatre that has become so prominent in contemporary performance culture, and its attempts to draw on bodily processes without descending into biologism. This means that, while the types of theatre-making discussed here have provided a picture of common treatments of habit in the theatre, I will not have the opportunity to detail them further in this thesis, apart from the way they inform or differ from the theatres I discuss in Chapters Five and Six.



## Chapter Three – Irigaray, Butler, and their Performative Theories of Habit

Philosophers have frequently been interested in habit, and in the practical, philosophical, and political problems habit presents. This is because discussions of habit help philosophers explain how bodies, belief systems, and broader social systems are established, and also how they are challenged and changed. In this Chapter and the next, then, I want to note several significant philosophical treatments of habit, before turning my attention to two of today's most popular perspectives on radical repetition of habits – that of performativity theory (Chapter Three) and that of vitalist theory (Chapter Four).

As I have already argued in my Introduction and initial Chapter, philosophers have been interested in habits, as morally appropriate ways of being, behaving, and seeing significant to people and social paradigms, since Plato's and Aristotle's times. In the twentieth century, the psychological theories of habit I commented on in Chapters One and Two have come to dominate. Though psychological discourses continue to evolve, and though disjunctions between psychological theories and pop psychological tomes on 'how to kick a habit' certainly exist, it is safe to say these discourses all see habits as acquired, automatised schemas that actively predispose people to particular behaviours and beliefs. These discourses discuss how people learn, strengthen, synchronise, and hierarchise the habits that define them. This discussion can centre on the physiological – for example, behaviourist psychology employs concepts such as stimulus, response, reflex, reinforcement, memory, and mimicry to explain habitual attitudes and actions (Chapter One). Alternatively, this discussion can centre on the psychic images and ideas that frame human life – for example, psychoanalysis employs concepts such as body image to explain how an infant's identification with the images around it (in its mother, in a mirror, in any medium) inform its identity (Chapter Two). Though psychological discourses do not attribute a moral weight to habit the way many historical discourses did, they do sometimes attribute it a 'normal' or 'abnormal' status, if only in the tone of their arguments about typical human habits.

Many philosophers are troubled by any implication that habits are determined by God to be moral or immoral, or determined by nature to be normal or abnormal. As far back as David Hume, philosophers have argued that habits are constructed, made meaningful, by cultural principles and practices. Hume, for example, argued that though humans believe the 'nature of things' science and philosophy study to be originary, it is actually only a fiction based on the fact that humans habitually expect to see causal connections between certain things ("An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" V.I). Many of the most important schools of thought of the twentieth century can be seen as heirs to Hume's challenge to the supposedly constant 'nature of things', including phenomenology, pragmatism, and sociology.

There are two founding perspectives in phenomenology, both primarily concerned with consciousness, corporeality, and the way they work together in the human world. Husserl's pure phenomenology argues that consciousness, and the body in which it is incarnate, is always to, for, about, or tied to other things in the world. Husserl then brackets off conceptual and cultural assumptions to analyse these things in themselves. Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology is more popular today, because it puts more emphasis on the codetermination of consciousness, corporeality, and the environment they exist in. Merleau-Ponty claims that, because consciousness is incarnate, both directed to and indistinct from the world it exists in, it cannot pull back, cannot interpret things in the world as though they exist independently of it. This leads him into a detailed discussion of the embodied person, and the perceptual processes that let them experience their world. Despite their differences, both sorts of phenomenology stress the role of habit. They believe habits develop a body's potential to deal with things in the world, and therefore define that body. Merleau-Ponty's analysis, for instance, articulates how habits provide the proprioceptive maps that let bodies negotiate their world, and the things in their world, with little conscious control. Merleau-Ponty argues that habits continually clarify, reduce, broaden, or renew these images of what a person's body is, and of what a person's body can do. Therefore, he contends, to cultivate a new habit is in fact to bring new tasks or things into a person's body image. "The cultivation of habit [i]s a rearrangement and renewal of the body image" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 142). "To get used to a hat, a car, or a stick," for instance, is "...to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body" (143).

As pragmatists, philosophers such as Peirce, James, and Dewey are interested in the practicalities behind human beliefs and behaviours. They all examine how habits help human beings establish a system of expectations that guides their ensuing beliefs and behaviours (cf. Peirce *Collected Papers* V 255; James *Principles of Psychology* 104; Dewey *Human Nature and Conduct* 32). In their opinions, there is no validity to the notion that the human world is nothing but a depiction of an originary order of things beyond it. Bodies, events, environments, and the conceptual connections between them, come not from an originary order, but from an orderly sequence cut from the flux of life and sedimented into a habit. This means conceptual systems come from habit, and come to be meaningful, true, only if they work well for people in their practical experience of themselves and their world. These conceptual systems, and the habits that support them, are never so sedimented that they completely stop the dynamic development of life, but conservative cultural paradigms do often drive this development in their own preferred directions. Obviously, all of this ultimately means that conceptual systems are cultural constructs, and are dependent on their practical consequences and contexts for their continuing authority. Nevertheless, Peirce, James, and Dewey all consistently note how difficult it can be to overcome the human tendency to see these systems not as convenient habits but as reflections of constant realities<sup>25</sup>.

Since society depends on its players doing the same things over and over, it is not surprising that sociologists such as Durkheim, Weber, and Bourdieu also discuss the role of habit. Their discussions of habit show how social systems become sedimented, both in themselves and in people's bodies, and so limit people's behaviours. Bourdieu is the most significant sociological theorist of habitus and habit today. Bourdieu takes the term habitus to signify a "practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation" (*Practical Reason* 25). A habitus is a schema of beliefs and behaviours that permeates people's life, language, and institutions (though it operates below their awareness). A habitus, then, is broader based than a habit. In fact, a habitus is a social structure that is both shaped by and shapes bodily

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<sup>25</sup> Though performance theorists are probably less familiar with pragmatist theories of the body than with phenomenological or sociological theories, Teresa De Lauretis (*The Practice of Love* 1994) and Sullivan (*Living Across and Through Skins* 2001) have brought pragmatist ideas about habit into the feminist debates about gender that frame modern philosophy and performance theory.

habits. It is, Bourdieu says, a "system[s] of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (*Outline of a Theory of Practice* 72, original emphasis). Bourdieu's theory of the habitus positions the body in relation to social practices and paradigms. Further, it places particular emphasis on the exchange value, the 'cultural capital', that a body's current habits can have in a given cultural context.

There are themes common to phenomenology, pragmatism, sociology, and the other theories I discuss. They often point to the problem of mind-matter relations, and compare monistic, dualistic, and other perspectives on these relations. This means considering mind, matter, their determining characteristics, the degree to which they are independent or interdependent, and the way they come together to define any given act. These theories frequently recognise that mind-matter relations are but convenient fictions cut from the flux of life. Moreover, they move past the monist notion that particular 'cuts' are but temporary, transient forms of a true reality beyond (Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried von Leibniz), toward the pluralist notion all the 'cuts' are as real, rational, and true as anything can be (Bergson, Peirce, James, Deleuze). The theories I discuss also often point to the ongoing plasticity of human bodies and their habits. They suggest that, though bodies seek permanence in themselves and their interaction with their world, they are always subject to the plasticity that was needed to construct them initially.

These shared themes notwithstanding, phenomenology, pragmatism, and sociology still treat quite different elements of the habit-body-behaviour-belief equation. Accordingly, while Merleau-Ponty is interested in how habits build people's bodies, the perceptual territory he treats is generally taken for granted by Peirce, who pays more attention to the way habits help set up broader semiotic and social systems. Bourdieu then takes a different tack again, indicating how the body's habits and the broader social habitus interact.

Undoubtedly, all these different theories could be applied to an analysis of habit in the theatre. As I have already suggested, though, in this thesis I will mainly treat two alternate sets of theories – the performativity associated with theorists like Irigaray and Butler, and the vitalism associated with theorists like Bergson and Deleuze. These theories are the focus

of a considerable amount of attention today, particularly in critical, cultural, and performance theory, and particularly among theorists interested in playful, progressive mimicry of human habits. This, and a number of other factors, has informed my decision to favour these theories over phenomenological, pragmatist, and sociological theories.

The first set of factors relates to phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology does describe prereflexive perceptual processes thoroughly. The problem, theorists such as Sullivan have suggested, is that it is harder pressed to describe the relations between the prereflexive and reflexive parts of habit ("Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 39). This limits its applicability to my analysis of meaningful presentations of habits in the theatre. Beyond this problem, adopting Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on perceptual processes would likely have led me to emphasise bodies in space, something that has been looked at a lot in theatre studies over the last few years, and so for me is less provocative than the vitalist obsession with the time in which bodily transformations occur.

The second set of factors relates to pragmatism. Peirce's pragmatist theory of habit and habit change is also difficult to apply in this thesis, because its insights are based on his theory of semiosis<sup>26</sup>. Peirce's theory thus says more about how suddenly seeing an unanticipated sign can change a person's future behaviours, beliefs, and habits than about how suddenly performing an unanticipated sign can change a person's future behaviours, beliefs, and habits. It seems, at least on the surface, to illuminate the processes of spectators more readily than it illuminates the processes of performers. Though Peirce's theory

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<sup>26</sup> Peirce employs his theory of semiosis to explain how a confrontation with a thing that does not meet a person's expectations can change them. Peirce proposes a triadic theory of signs in which a first aspect, an object, is represented by a second aspect, a sign or representamen, that is in turn interpreted in a person's mind as a third aspect, an interpretant. The interpretant is the aspect a person responds to, the aspect that provokes an emotion, energy, or idea in their mind. Some interpretants are expected, and some come as a surprise. If the first-second-third series of semiosis is as expected, and the interpretant is as expected, the person's response to it is likely to be one of habit. If the interpretant is unexpected, though, the person's response to it is less likely to be one of habit. In this sense, Peirce suggests, shifts in the process of semiosis actually "modif[y] a person's tendencies toward action" (*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* V 327). Shifts in the process of semiosis modify a person's habits by creating new connections between the signs they see, the sensations they feel, and their response to these sensations – de Lauretis has described this as a conversation between external physical signs and structures of the sort Foucault considers and internal psychical sensations or structures of the sort Freud considers, in which each effects the construction of the other (*The Practice of Love* 299).

certainly could be adapted to sit better with my stress on performers, this is not something I could have accomplished in the limited scope of this thesis. This, along with the fact that vitalist theories are the focus of far more attention today, has lead me to look at habit, and at how mind, matter, and habit are drawn from the flux of life, more through the lens of vitalism than through that of pragmatism.

The final set of factors relates to sociology. Bourdieu's sociological theory undoubtedly puts habit on the agenda, acknowledges that it is a process, and that it passes between the mental and the material. The difficulty, though, is that Bourdieu's notion of habitus is broader based than his notion of habit, and, as Crossley claims, actually serves to distinguish the agent's meaningful habitus from their automatic habits (*The Social Body* 118-120).

Bourdieu's theory thus describes the institutional and individual habits that interweave with social systems more thoroughly than it describes the bodies that copy these habits, or the connections between the two. It describes how habits work within society more thoroughly than it describes how human bodies work within habits. Moreover, though Bourdieu is aware that bodies copy and simultaneously challenge cultural norms, he does little to clarify the way this can be used to radicalise cultural norms, at least compared to performativity theories and vitalist theories (112; cf. Sullivan "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 39).

It is for these reasons that I leave consideration of phenomenological, pragmatist, and sociological theories of habit to texts like Crossley's *The Social Body* and Sullivan's *Living Across and Through Skins*, instead calling on theorists like Irigaray, Butler, Bergson, and Deleuze to compare product- and process- oriented takes on progressive mimicry of habits in this thesis.

Of the theories that use theatrical metaphors of mimicry to conceptualise how bodily habits can change, the theory of 'performative', strategic, or subversive mimicry is the most plausible for many theorists in the current critical climate. According to performativity theorists, although people cannot change the biology of their bodies, they can change the

culturally condoned images by which they understand and use their bodies. This change can come through the performative process of mimicry, which swaps ordinary body images for others, then lets these images spill over into new and potentially less oppressive bodily behaviours. There is no doubt performativity theorists do realise that mimetic repetition is the best way to remake bodies and the cultures they belong to. The difficulty, however, is that they are sometimes reluctant to discuss the bodily processes behind repetition, and so suffer the problems seen with product-driven treatments of human habits.

Obviously, I cannot cover the complexities of all the permutations of performativity theories in the short space of this Chapter. Accordingly, I will be taking Irigaray's and Butler's feminist philosophical perspectives on performative mimicry as representative. As I noted in my Introduction, Irigaray's theory of feminine mimicry is motivated by the psychoanalytic argument that body images are simply phantasmatic projections of bodies which can be modified by mimetic processes. Butler's theory of performativity is motivated by the poststructuralist semiotic argument that body images are simply sets of social signs people perform, which can again be modified by mimetic processes. Together Irigaray, Butler, and the different popular discourses they inspire, give a good picture of the potentials and problems of performativity theories.

In Irigaray's work, a critical analysis of the mechanisms of patriarchy combines with a creative vision of another possibility, a subversive feminine sort of mimicry which would celebrate all that classical patriarchal mimicry circumvents. Irigaray suggests her subversive feminine mimicry would unveil the hidden features of the patriarchal symbolic system, and the interests at stake in retaining this system, by allowing its silent, maternal, material supports to speak (*This Sex Which is Not One* 75).

Irigaray's ideas about subversion start with her insistence that prevailing symbolic and social systems hold an isomorphic relation to the male body. This is particularly true of psychoanalytic systems, she suggests. Psychoanalytic theorists say the sexually differentiated subject positions found in Western symbolic systems emerge from a series of identifications during the Lacanian mirror phase (Chapter Two). However, Lacan's visual logic is premised on the signification of the genitals where the male has what the female

lacks – the phallus. It establishes a system of reflection and representation that mirrors masculine morphology. In psychoanalysis the male, the possessor of the phallus, readily reflects a unified self-image and so confirms his centrality in symbolic systems. The female is only an inversion or perversion of this identity. She represents a frightful lack of identity. In Irigaray's words, "[t]his incompleteness in her form, her morphology allows her continually to become something else" (*Speculum of the Other Woman* 229). Irigaray believes the phallogocentric bias of this system is based on the ongoing Western desire to distinguish forms of being from forces of becoming (cf. *This Sex Which is Not One* 106-118)<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, she links the reflective system of Lacanian psychoanalysis with that of Platonic and Aristotelian mimesis, arguing all three reject maternal, material forces and so allow their subjects or spectators the false impression that a true, timeless order of reality is mimicked (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* 59; cf. Grosz *Volatile Bodies* 14).

Irigaray insists that women's fluid bodily experiences do not accord with any of these prevailing symbolic systems – though for her the solidity of the masculine refers to oedipal not biological male sexuality, and the fluidity of the feminine refers to oedipal female sexuality. The fluidity of women's bodily pleasures constitutes an 'elsewhere' of female desire, excessive of masculine modes of mimicry, and so able to support or to surpass them. "[I]f women are such good mimics," Irigaray says, "it is because they are not simply resorbed into this function" (*This Sex Which is Not One* 76). Irigaray's feminine mimicry exploits this 'elsewhere', this silent support. It asks that women deliberately and paradoxically occupy this fluid, feminine, 'elsewhere', this role they are assigned, without allowing themselves to be subsumed by it. "To play with mimicry is thus, for a woman, to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (76). Irigaray says feminine fluidity can unravel conventional mimicry, as well as the mind-matter and masculine-feminine dichotomies it upholds. In attempting this unravelling, Irigaray's alternative mimicry connects with her alternative symbolic system. It tries to replace what she sees as the visual referentiality of the masculine phallus with what

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<sup>27</sup> Vitalists are also critical of this Western tendency to favour forms of being over forces of becoming, as I will argue in Chapter Four.



she sees as the tactile contiguity of the feminine two lips<sup>28</sup>. It tries to replace visual mind-matter/masculine-feminine resemblances with the tactile mind-matter/masculine-feminine relations that have long been repressed. The idea for Irigaray is that this will let mimicry exceed the ready-made models that motivate it, and establish new models of identity. In the deliberate challenge to the authority of conventional mimicry Irigaray advocates, the 'elsewhere' of women's bodily experience collides with and challenges the very fabric of mimicry, forcing it to make room for the repressed feminine. Rather than just rejecting current cultural paradigms, Irigaray's mimicry disrupts and redirects the representational systems she takes to be complicit in the subjugation of women. Irigaray believes that working with dominant symbolic systems this way is more effective than direct opposition in turning "a form of subordination into an affirmation" (76).

Significantly, when Irigaray speaks of a subversive feminine mimicry that makes room for repressed others, she has specific images of femininity in mind. Irigaray's feminine mimicry tries to replace the phallic symbolic system with the vulval image of the two lips in order to offer woman a more harmonious relation with her lived body. Irigaray thus challenges her predecessor Lacan's tendency to overlook the historicity and changeability of the gendered images inscribed on bodies when it suits him (Chapter Two). For Lacan, identity is positioned in the symbolic order, the pre-existing symbolic, linguistic, and social system that confines the infant's early proliferation of sensory experience in a fixed male-female hierarchy. Lacan admits that these gender identities are not biological certainties, but phantasmatic projections of the body that emerge at the nexus of physical, psychical, and social systems. However, the fact that he often overlooks the historicity of these systems leads theorists such as Diamond to suggest that identity "in Lacan's model is as fixed as the linguistic system in which it is inscribed" ("Refusing the Romanticism of Identity" 93). Harris agrees, arguing that these identities "appear as linguistic 'fictions' which are nevertheless sadly unalterable 'facts'" (*Staging Femininities* 66). Whereas Lacan's psychoanalysis establishes a static model of identity and identification, Irigaray insists that body images are changeable, and she offers the two lips as her vision of an alternative.

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<sup>28</sup> The morphological figure of the two lips is critical for Irigaray, as it is supposed to celebrate the fluidity of the female, the fact that female pleasure lies not in a concrete form, but in a constant breaching or transgression of the boundaries between two forms, between the touching and the touched, the one and the other, the subject and the object (*This Sex Which is Not One* 23-33).

Consequently, Lorraine contends, Irigaray "allows for more radical transformations of a culture's symbolic and imaginary structures than Lacanian psychoanalysis would permit" (Irigaray and Deleuze 117, original emphasis)

Irigaray's feminine mimicry uses the metaphor of the two lips to offer interesting new images of gender identity and interaction. However, Irigaray's physical metaphors are controversial in a theoretical climate that problematises essentialised identities, particularly when these metaphors are understood too physically. In spite of her claims to the contrary, Irigaray's feminine mimicry indeed appears to philosophers like Butler to rely on a largely unmediated reality that women have to return to – this reality being the fluidity of the feminine two lips. Irigaray's vocabulary certainly evokes the body and bodily experience in establishing a new symbolic. However, philosophers like Grosz, Lorraine, and Megan Morris insist that Irigaray's physical metaphors do not necessarily establish essentialised identities for women and men. As a psychoanalyst, these theorists say, Irigaray is more interested in the symbolic and the imaginary than in the real, and so she only addresses these symbolic and imaginary domains. These theorists therefore argue that Irigaray's alternative symbolic involves an imaginary image or projection of the body rather than a direct biological expression of the body (cf. Grosz *Volatile Bodies* 203-204). From this perspective, the majority of Irigaray's physical metaphors are really only replacement images a body might adopt, images that Irigaray believes are better ones for women.

Butler, another a leading theorist of sexual identity, is familiar with these sentiments, and yet she is still suspicious of the specific images of identity Irigaray offers. This being the case, Butler's theory of performativity investigates similar issues, but develops a different idea of strategic or subversive mimicry, one that is probably more plausible and popular than Irigaray's today. For many theorists, Sullivan asserts, Butler's "is perhaps *the* main account of the discursivity of bodies in feminist philosophy" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 43, original emphasis). At the same time, Jon McKenzie notes that, "[p]erhaps no theorist has had as wrenching an impact in this respect as Judith Butler" ("Genre Trouble: (The) Butler Did It" 218).

The idea of performativity was initially developed in the domain of philosophic linguistics by John L. Austin, and the concept has since been adapted into the broader terrain of philosophic enquiry by theorists as diverse as Butler, Deleuze, and Derrida. In *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), Austin addresses a tendency in linguistics he calls "the 'descriptive' fallacy" (3). This fallacy figures description – resemblance between a word and the world it describes – as the primary function of language. Austin counters this 'constative' language, in which a word truly or falsely describes an action, with 'performative' language, in which a word effectively or ineffectively performs an action (14). In the performative, productive, world-making language that Austin highlights, saying something is also doing something. "[T]he issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (6). For example, saying the words 'I do' at a wedding in fact performs or produces a marriage. Because performatives do not just pass on information, but rather produce particular realities and position bodies in these realities, Deleuze and Guattari describe them as 'order words'. "Language is made not to be believed," they say, "but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 76). This is why theorists concerned with the cultural construction of identity find Austin's performativity useful. Whilst Austin understood performatives as a distinct subset of language, subsequent theorists like Butler, Deleuze, and Derrida suggest the entire linguistic system operates performatively. Moreover, following Derrida's essay "Signature, Event, Context" (*Margins of Philosophy* 307-328), Austin's idea that the intentions of the speaker play a role in producing performatives has fallen away. For theorists such as Butler, Deleuze, and Derrida, performatives depend not on the intentions of an individual, but on a fabric of semiotic and social relations. "[A] performative statement," as Deleuze and Guattari say, "is nothing outside of the circumstances that make it performative" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 82). The slightest shift in context can revoke a performative's cultural authority, its coercive and constructive force.

Butler has these ideas in mind when she argues that performativity produces gender identities in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1990), and later in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). In these texts Butler draws on Austin's theory of performativity to explain that bodily identity is not simply an expression of biology but a set of social signs a body performs. Identity is, she says, "a reiteration of a

norm or a set of norms" (*Bodies that Matter* 12). When bodies perform the signs their culture categorises as male or female, they do not passively express an essential self but actively establish an identity. In this respect identity is "instituted through a *stylised repetition of acts*" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 270, original emphasis), a repetition without an authenticating original. In recent years, Butler says, some feminists have depended on a notion of 'woman' as a biologically given category that refers to a recognisable group of people with common attributes and agendas (274). For Butler, this only reinforces the ontologically fixed gender opposition operative in phallocentrism. Butler is critical of the psychoanalytic narrative in particular, in which identification with a particular sex shapes a gender identity for the infant. According to Butler, these gender identities are actually fictions feigning naturalness – they are habitual, even if she herself does not use this term<sup>29</sup>. So, as Butler says, "the *appearance* of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity" (271, original emphasis). Butler insists these constructed identities are only cast as true manifestations of a timeless model in order to uphold currently condoned identities as natural. "[G]ender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which ... serves a policy of gender regulation and control" (279). As I indicated in Chapter Two, theatrical mimicry sometimes also sets itself up as a true manifestation of a model to make this model seem more natural to spectators. "When spectators 'see' gender," for example, Diamond explains, "they are seeing (and reproducing) the cultural signs of gender, and by implication, the gender ideology of a culture" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 45-46). Spectators are encouraged to imitate this ideology, and incorporate it into their own identity, as I noted in Chapter Two. This is just the sort of performative coercion or construction that makes theatrical mimicry an ideologically expedient method of establishing identities.

Butler insists, particularly in *Bodies that Matter*, that bodies cannot intentionally abandon the identity assigned to them, because they have no 'I' before acting out this identity<sup>30</sup>. The identity assigned to bodies is, Butler says, "the matrix through which all willing first

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<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Sullivan contends, "[r]eading performativity as an instance of habit illuminates Butler's claim that performances constitute bodily selves in a thoroughgoing way" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 96; cf. "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 31).

<sup>30</sup> Here Butler connects with some of the ideas about habit developed by Dewey, Foucault, and Derrida, a connection I have noted in Chapter Two, and a connection that Sullivan has discussed both in "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" and in *Living Across and Through Skins*.

becomes possible" (*Bodies that Matter* 7). This being the case, deliberate disobedience is not the best way for bodies to begin to change. Instead, Butler insists, bodily change should be premised on the possibility of a different sort of mimicry, "the possibility of a different sort of repeating" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 271). According to Butler, if "[p]erformativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted" (*Bodies that Matter* 22), then performative change is a matter of repeating these norms to produce a different result – an incorrect, incomplete, or different result that can eventually become a different bodily behaviour or identity. Sullivan has summarised Butler's ideas succinctly, observing that "[b]y varying the stylization of one's performances and habits, one often subverts, many times unintentionally, the cultural norms that are materialized in them" (*Living across and Through Skins* 97; "Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey" 33). This, Butler insists, is the best way to redirect cultural norms, and to question what is nominally natural. Like Irigaray, then, Butler thinks people ought not just reject oppressive norms outright. Rather, people ought to use the mutations that occur when mimicking these norms to find replacements for these norms. This said, Butler distinguishes her work from Irigaray's when she warns against advocating definite replacements for these norms in advance the way Irigaray did with her vulval imagery, and when she warns that there is always a danger of falling back into oppressive norms when disrupting them from within.

Irigaray's and Butler's theories of subversive mimicry are both prominent today, and both problematise essentialised ideas of identity. This makes them useful for performance theorists and practitioners who want to subvert the habits that sometimes start to seem natural in conventional, conservative theatrical mimicry (Chapter Two). However, there are difficulties with Irigaray's and Butler's theories, and with the way their theories treat bodies and bodily processes, when they are investigated in terms of the theoretical and theatrical ideas about habit I have introduced in this thesis. Firstly, a number of performance theorists have voiced concerns with the way Butler's theory of performativity conceptualises the agency of the performer, and the serviceability of theatrical performance. Secondly, both Butler's and Irigaray's theories of performative mimicry to some degree put the body in a

problematic position when they theorise how people can replace old oppressive habits with other habits. Though they recognise that the bodily basis of mimicry is crucial to repeating and replacing a habit, Butler and Irigaray are both reluctant to examine the living, breathing bodies that repeat habits too closely. This is mainly because they, like most anti-essentialist feminists, believe that any emphasis on bodies risks returning their theories to biologicistic notions of the 'natural' body. They worry with good reason too, given that many previous theories and techniques have made this type of mistake. Still, as I suggested in Chapters One and Two, to completely subsume the corporeal in the conceptual can be equally worrisome, as it can easily unravel the whole concept of radical mimicry.

The first problem, seen most clearly in Butler's work, concerns certain assumptions about the agency of the actor. Like many contemporary critical theorists, Butler adopts theatrical metaphors. "[T]he acts by which gender is constituted," she says, "bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 272). Yet, at the same time, Butler says that theatrical mimesis should not be confused with or encompassed within performativity<sup>31</sup>. "Performance," as Diamond says, is "...shunned by Butler with a fastidiousness worthy of J.L. Austin himself" ("Re" 33). Some commentators find the basis of Butler's reluctance to consider theatre in Austin's theory itself, whilst others find it in the critique of Austin offered by Derrida in "Signature, Event, Context" (*Margins of Philosophy* 307-328). Austin contends that theatrical language is mimetic, is a parasitic perversion, of everyday language. It constitutes a use of language that is neither serious nor sincere in expressing a speaker's intentions (*How To Do Things With Words* 22; cf. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick *Performance and Performativity* 4). Consequently, in a move Reinelt attributes to an "anti-theatrical prejudice" ("Book Review: Staging Femininities; Performance and Performativity" 380), Austin excludes the actor's work onstage from his discussion of performativity. Obviously, it is not the idea that theatre is parasitic and potentially insurgent that prompts Derrida's critique of Austin, and by extension of theatrical mimesis. Rather, it is Austin's emphasis on the intentions of the speaker that Derrida finds difficult. Derrida believes that, in Austin's

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<sup>31</sup> Although, Harris argues, Butler's own tendency to use performances as examples of performativity is certainly a primary contributor to this confusion she claims to want to avoid (*Staging Femininities* 73).

theory as in theatre, this intentional agency is merely a fiction masquerading as a fact. To position the authentic authorly or actorly self as a point of reference against which performances are read, Derrida insists, is a logocentric gesture. It is Derrida's critique, Diamond rightly points out, that is the likely source of "Butler's animus towards theatre" ("Re" 33-34). Butler, like Derrida, is suspicious of the actorly agency that is part of theatre. She thinks theatrical mimicry cannot avoid prioritising the actor as an agent that precedes the performance. "In opposition to theatrical or phenomenological models which take the gendered self to be prior to its acts," Butler therefore maintains, "I will understand constituting acts not only as constituting the identity of the actor, but constituting that identity as a compelling illusion" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 271).

Butler's misgivings about the agency of the actor are not unfounded, and actually parallel the suspicions of many contemporary performance theorists and practitioners. But the agency of the actor does differ across fields of practice, and does go beyond the orthodox agency Butler identifies. The actor-character connection is mediated in many ways, and, as Diamond contends, "Butler's charge simplifies the complexity of practice" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 47). For example, Diamond's and Auslander's readings of Brecht demonstrate that Brechtian theatre both deploys and deconstructs this irrefutably evident agency. Obviously, Brechtian theatre depends on the presence of a politically aware performer. In Harris' words, "Brecht's theory implicitly places both the performer and the author (Brecht) 'outside' the fiction in a position of mastery" (*Staging Femininities* 78). Yet, according to Diamond and Auslander, Brecht's techniques ask that actors play omniscient commentators, not just play themselves. As Diamond phrases it, "[t]he historical subject *plays* an actor presumed to have superior knowledge" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 50, original emphasis). This commentator is just as fictional as the character they present. Brecht, Auslander therefore argues, is both "using language bound up in the metaphysics of presence and crossing it out" (*From Acting to Performance* 38). Like Butler, Brecht recognises that performers, characters, and spectators are constructed through historically contingent acts, and he questions what is nominally natural. Certainly, theorists like Harris are still suspicious of this reading of Brecht.

It is possible to construct a 'postmodern Brecht' and therefore bring him closer to Butler ...[but this] reinforce[s] the reification of Brechtian theory as the 'master' discourse for

political theatre ... To bring Brecht and Butler together in a useful fashion, it is, then, first necessary to take account of the ways in which they differ as well as repeat each other (*Staging Femininities* 79-80)

For instance, one such difference is that while some of the performativity theories Butler's work inspires parallelise artificial models and the actual processes of mimicking them, Brechtian theatre is less likely to do this (Chapters Two and Five). Nevertheless, whether this particular 'performative' reading of Brecht convinces or not, it does demonstrate that the issue of the actor's agency can be a lot more complex than Butler's comments would have people believe.

In addition to this issue of agency, a number of theorists, particularly performance theorists, have also questioned the position of the body in both Irigaray's and Butler's work. For instance, dance theorists Fensham and Susan Kozel have described the difficulties that Irigaray's physical models or metaphors present. According to Kozel, Irigaray's metaphors, "are at once a strength and a limitation" ("The Story is Told as a History of the Body" 107). However, the difficulties Fensham and Kozel identify in Irigaray's work differ from those theorists in other fields identify. "The limitation of Irigaray's thought which bothers me," Kozel explains, "is not the old essentialist claim that she reduces women to inarticulate and irrational versions of the eternal Feminine. Instead, I worry about the status of the body in her work" (107). In particular, Kozel worries that Irigaray's physical metaphors lack materiality. Fensham worries about this too, arguing that "[p]erhaps the problem of Irigaray is that she doesn't play enough or that the body is not material enough" ("Dancing In and Out of Language" 36). Clearly, Irigaray does not mean to abandon bodies in her work. She often criticises other philosophers for doing just this. Ironically, though, it is Irigaray's use of physical metaphors that leaves bodies in an awkward position in her work. The thing is, Irigaray's physical metaphors risk subsuming bodies in body images, and so portraying bodies as unrepresentable excesses in the system. As Kozel phrases it, "she seems less concerned with the actual physical body than she is with the expansion of linguistic and symbolic structures which the movement of the body inspires" ("The Story is Told as a History of the Body" 107-108). Irigaray often seems to assume that actual physical bodies will automatically fall in line when people swap one set of physical metaphors for another. This means Irigaray's mystical language of the morphology of the body is her most material



approach, and it remains an intervention in discourse. "As a psychoanalyst and a philosopher," Kozel explains, "she clearly considers it crucial to create a linguistic space for women, yet I worry that she remains trapped within language" (107-108).

Obviously, Butler does not wish to offer specific new symbolic systems the way Irigaray does. But she still has at least some tendency to position bodies in a purely linguistic paradigm. This tendency emerges most explicitly in Butler's analysis of abjectivity. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that some psychoanalysts cast the abject body as an unrepresentable real that escapes cultural norms, and then take this reality as the basis of a radical mimicry (101-119). Butler takes advantage of Kristeva's work on abjectivity in *Powers of Horror* to explain why this abject body is not really a radical excess. For Kristeva, following Mary Douglas, the abject is anything ejected from a body, or expelled from a symbolic or social system. But the abject body is a necessary 'other', established so that cultural norms can confirm their centrality, their originality, in comparison to this 'other'. Consequently, Butler claims, this is not a radical other, it is "a construction of the discourse itself" (*Gender Trouble* 113). Because this bodily reality is actually established in representation, its subversive potential is questionable. It cannot be the basis of radical mimicry. Although Butler's account is obviously insightful and useful, it seems to leave only two possibilities for bodies. Either there remains an unrepresentable real beyond the abject body. This, Butler implies, is the direction Irigaray moves in. Or else bodies never exceed or escape discourse. This is the direction Butler seems to move in, at least in the early stages of her work. As Sullivan says, then, "Butler has affirmed the discursiveness of bodies in a way that neglects the concrete aspects of bodily existence" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 8). Accordingly, there is "some basis for the criticism that she does not eliminate the dualism between culture and nature" (54), the criticism that she "priviledg[es] culture over nature and body and thus merely turn[s] on its head, but [does] not overcom[e], the dualistic hierarchy" (44). Instead of subverting the binary between the two terms, Butler simply inverts them, and so does not challenge standard conceptions of mind and matter, in which one is copied by the other<sup>32</sup>. Certainly, Sullivan says, Butler "claim[s] not to be a linguistic monist" (56). For instance, in *Bodies that Matter* Butler suggests bodies and language can

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<sup>32</sup> I will consider these standard conceptions of mind and matter further when I discuss Bergson and Deleuze in Chapter Four.

neither be conflated nor completely separated (69). She later expresses a similar sentiment in *Excitable Speech* (11). Still, Sullivan rightly says, "Butler's explanations of why she is not [a linguistic monist] can have the ironic effect of making her seem precisely what she denies being" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 56).

This reluctance to recognise living, breathing bodies results in a third limitation in Irigaray's and Butler's otherwise promising ideas about modifying bodily identities by means of radical mimicry. Irigaray's and Butler's philosophies, and the popular discourses they inspire, avoid discussing the bodies behind habits not to deny the differential mimicry bodies bring, but partly because there is a risk of biologism, and partly because they may not actually realise they are describing metaphors for materiality instead of materiality itself. Whatever the reasoning, this reluctance to recognise bodies results in a tendency to say more about potential new habits than about the bodies that mimic these habits – that is, to say more about the models that dominate than about the means that duplicate them. This, I have argued throughout the thesis, is precisely what happens with highly mechanised habits. Lacking in such theories, as Susan Leigh Foster suggests, "is a more meat-and-bones approach to the body" ("Dancing Bodies" 235). This is definitely a problem with some of the popular discourses Irigaray and Butler inspire, if not with their own work. Regardless, this problem has received comparatively little attention, and is not easily dealt with. It is worth discussing, though, because it is one of the principal bases of ongoing problems with performative or strategic mimicry, particularly from a performing arts perspective.

As my comments above make clear, the main issue with many theories of performative, strategic, or subversive mimicry is their basis in body images. As with their psychoanalytic and poststructuralist predecessors, theorists interested in subversive mimicry often attend more to body images than to living, breathing bodies. These theorists suggest that bodies live up to arbitrary body images, but that they could as easily live up to other images. Accordingly, these theorists argue that although human beings cannot change their bodies they can change the culturally condoned body images by which they understand their bodies. As Grosz articulates it, then, in the view of these theorists "[w]hat needs to be changed are the attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than the body itself" (*Volatile Bodies* 17). Starting with this point of view, theorists of subversive mimicry imagine that people can take

advantage of the 'theatrical' process of mimicry to (perhaps unintentionally) introduce replacement body images that bodies will then readily mimic. That is, to introduce new body images that will then somehow automatically spill over into new bodily experiences. With this as their starting point, these theorists imply that change depends mainly on the discursive dimensions of the body. Change comes more from the new habits performed than from the bodily process of performing them. In a sense, theorists of subversive mimicry have to interpret it this way, given their insistence that bodies do not exist without body images, do not do anything without body images, much less do anything deliberately. This means many theorists of subversive mimicry are product-oriented in their outlook, at least in their arguments to date. They deal with body images, but they seem to dismiss living, breathing bodies as dutiful duplicates of these images. The body becomes simply a blank slate, to be strategically co-opted in the service of particular cultural paradigms. It becomes, as Blair argues, a "tabula rasa" ("Reconsidering Stanislavsky" 178) of the type John Locke described in the seventeenth century<sup>33</sup>.

In the conference paper "Performing Remains" Schneider makes a similar point, criticising the way the mental dominates and the material disappears in many contemporary performativity theories. This disappearance or absence has, Schneider suggests, long been part of the Western worldview. In many Western theories the formless, feminine flesh slips away while the formly, fatherly soul stays. Since Plato's time, philosophers have suggested that the ephemeral body must disappear, in order to pave the way for the discovery of the eternal soul, the defining feature of humanity. In mimetic theory too, it has long been suggested that the theatrical medium must slip away if theatre's messages are to stay in the spectators mind, are to seem natural to them (Chapter Two). Schneider worries that some contemporary performativity theories, insofar as they share some of these ideas about the dominance of mind and the disappearance of matter, may implicitly make the (accepted or alternative) models they mimic seem natural.

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<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, Grosz sees a similar tendency in Foucault's theories. "For Foucault," she says, "...the body seems to be the passive raw data manipulated and utilized by various systems of social and self-constitution" (*Volatile Bodies* 122).

As Schneider's paper points out, to treat bodies and bodily changes only in this product-oriented way is not without its dangers. Grosz shares Schneider's opinion, suggesting any assumption that bodies and bodily changes are solely a social phenomenon is problematic. She says

the body itself [should not] be regarded as *purely* a social, cultural, and signifying effect lacking its own weighty materiality ... It is not adequate to simply dismiss the category of nature outright, to completely retranscribe it without residue into the cultural: this in itself is the monist, or logocentric, gesture par excellence (*Volatile Bodies* 21, original emphasis)

When theorists of subversive mimicry insist that bodies are created only through cultural ideals, and changed only through cultural ideals, they make such a gesture. Their interest lies, in Sullivan's terms, "solely [in] the society's ability to model the self" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 95). Moreover, they assume the connection between the social model and the somatic manifestation "to be unidirectional" (2). These theorists assume that the social determines and redetermines the somatic, while the body itself plays little or no role. They never really consider the inverse possibility. By accepting that body images are dominant and that bodies themselves are but duplicates of these images, theorists of subversive mimicry again make what Sullivan calls the "bad mistake of collapsing two separate things into one ontological whole" (14). They deny the difference, and thus the possibility of transition, between body images and bodies, representation and reality, representational change and real change. This, Jill Davis makes clear, is dangerous. "The emphasis on the body in feminist theory asserts a return from a construction of woman as only in representation," she says, "yet we seem here to be in danger of returning that, conflating change of representation with material change" ("Goodnight Ladies" 186-187). When subversive mimicry works in the logocentric way that Davis, Grosz, Schneider, and Sullivan all criticise, it suffers from the irony seen in Irigaray's texts, in that its attention to body images actually conceals its inattention to bodily intensities and processes. Because such theories of subversive mimicry are based on the assumption that body images and bodies are the same, it is all too easy for them to assume that new body images will be duplicated by bodies. As such, it is all too easy for these theories to return to the model-manifestation correspondences that characterise habit, that result in the same things being mimicked repeatedly, and that make these things seem more natural.

If the methods proposed by theorists of performative, strategic, or subversive mimicry are assessed according to the ideas I have introduced in my analysis of habit in this thesis, it becomes apparent that they still set up potentially restrictive models, and potentially restrictive model-manifestation resemblances. For whatever reason, performativity theorists dismiss the idea that model-manifestation discrepancies might be used to disrupt habit. Thus, in Sullivan's terms, these theorists fail to pursue the possibility of "a co-constitutive relationship" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 39), "a permeable, dynamic relationship in which culture does not just effect bodies, but bodies also effect culture" (3). Theorists taking subversive mimicry as a method speak of new models that undoubtedly do play a role in producing bodily and behavioural change, but because these models are mechanically mimicked by bodies they start to seem self-evident. Whether these new models are accepted phallic models such as Plato advocates or alternative non-phallic models such as Irigaray advocates matters little, because both may be naturalised. The major difficulty with the methods of many theorists of subversive mimicry, then, is that the new models they introduce may be naturalised, and thus that people (including theatre performers and spectators) may feel forced to identify with and imitate them. Their theories are therefore, in Davis' terms, "in serious danger of becoming a reverse and conservative discourse" ("Goodnight Ladies" 187).

Brief examples from Irigaray's and Butler's work are perhaps the best way to demonstrate the difficulties some theorists of performative, strategic, or subversive mimicry have in dealing with the bodies that bring habits and habit changes to life, and also to demonstrate the danger of naturalisation these difficulties in dealing with bodies can create.

It is relatively easy to exemplify these types of problems with Irigaray's physical models and metaphors. As Lorraine has argued, Irigaray is mainly interested in "how to stabilise a molar identity that will allow us to live more ethically" (*Irigaray and Deleuze* 163). Irigaray's work undeniably does introduce interesting new models of identity. It introduces the tactile contiguity of the feminine two lips as a replacement for the visual referentiality of the masculine phallus. However, according to Lorraine, who observes but does not criticise this tendency in Irigaray's theory, "Irigaray is intent on harmonising conceptual and

corporeal logics" (201). In other words, Irigaray is intent on producing a parallel between psychical models and the unrepresentable physical reality that mimics them. Yet the harmony Irigaray pursues is precisely the sort of mind-matter parallel seen in the monistic and dualistic theories of the body preferred by conservative cultural systems<sup>34</sup>. It is this type of model-manifestation parallel that can convince people that cultural models are natural. Accordingly, although Irigaray herself admits that her new models are not natural, the difficulty is that these models are still fairly easily naturalised in the 'harmonious' sort of subversive feminine mimicry she advocates.

Incidentally, Lorraine insists that the fact that Irigaray's physical metaphors easily become models for the body to mimic is one of the main reasons for the difference between Irigaray's physical vocabulary and Deleuze's geographical vocabulary. "Deleuze, unlike Irigaray, avoids vocabulary that evokes the body in a personal sense" (*Irigaray and Deleuze* 135). It is easy for bodies to correspond too closely to physical images like Irigaray's, so that these images start to seem natural. On the contrary, it is difficult for bodies to correspond too closely and consistently to geographical images like Deleuze's, and to thus actually become geographical, mineral, animal, or imperceptible. This is why these geographical images are important to him. Further, for me, Deleuze's use of geographical images also allows his work to resonate with the vocabulary used by some of the physical theatre practitioners I will consider in Chapters Five and Six. For example, Lecoq deploys geographical, mineral, and animal vocabulary to describe bodily techniques and territories. "This language," Lecoq says, "...goes beyond a psychological approach" (*The Moving Body* 87).

It is not so easy to identify these sorts of difficulties in Butler's work, because although she is interested in performatively repeating a behaviour to produce a different result, a different behaviour, she does not want to specify what this result will be in advance. In this respect, Butler appears to recognise the role that mimetic processes of repetition, recitation, variation, and parody play in replacing bodily norms. The question, in her words, "is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat ...to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the

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<sup>34</sup> Again, I will consider these standard mind-matter connections further when I discuss Bergson and Deleuze in Chapter Four.

repetition" (*Gender Trouble* 148, original emphasis). Taking this perspective, Butler appears to overcome some of the criticism I have levelled at theories of subversive mimicry. However, in spite of these comments about repetition, and about not specifying the results of repetition in advance, Butler still at times shows more interest in the results of this repetition than in the repetition itself. Though she recognises that repetition is involved in replacing norms, she says little about the actual acts, processes, or procedures by which a body repeats a norm, for she has a quite reasonable fear that these will be taken as acts that escape or exceed cultural norms. In this sense, Butler also has to maintain that replacement norms are the main thing, not the physical acts or processes of repetition she mentions. She has to maintain that the main thing is "transforming hegemonic social conditions rather than the individual acts that are spawned by those conditions" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 276). Because Butler talks more about the norms replaced than about the process of replacing them, particularly in her early work, the connections between performativity and embodied performance can be unclear in her work (cf. Jon McKenzie "Genre Trouble: (The) Butler Did It" 226-227). This means that it is at times difficult to use Butler's work to treat the bodies that (perhaps critically) mimic habits, particularly the bodies that mimic these habits in theatrical performance.

The philosophies of performative, strategic, or subversive mimicry I have considered in this Chapter are premised on the incontrovertible idea that cultural practices control human identities. Their impact cannot be ignored. However, these performativity theories do sometimes struggle to deal with the bodily processes of the present. These theories are based on the justifiable fear that too much attention to bodies, or to the links between bodies and body images, makes any theory 'biologistic'. Because accounts of performativity are based on this fear, they frequently address potential new habits more convincingly than the bodies that perform these new habits. They provide new habits, and assume that bodies will mechanically mimic these habits. But by avoiding analysis of the bodies that copy habits in the present, performativity theories tend to avoid analysis of the model-manifestation connections needed to copy or to critique these habits. Their methods thus come dangerously

close to making their new habits seem self-evident, even if this is unintended. They get rid of old habits, only to risk generating others that are just as oppressive.

In an anti-essentialist theoretical environment, it is understandable that performativity theorists have suspicions about the bodies that perform habits. However, these suspicions also make many commentators wonder whether the work of performativity theorists can be uncritically adopted in performance theory and practice. Certainly, as the twentieth century has progressed into the twenty-first, most performance theorists and practitioners have become conscious of the fact that bodies and bodily behaviours are culturally constructed. Nevertheless, this does not negate the fact that they always need to work with bodies. Performance theorists and practitioners have to find a way of dealing with bodies without descending into essentialism. While many of them are wary of subsuming bodies in a semiotic domain, they are also wary of unjustifiably positing bodies as an ever-present essence that precedes signification. This dilemma creates what Case describes as an awkward impasse between constructivist and essentialist approaches to theatre theory and practice in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century (*Performing Feminisms* 7). On the surface, performativity theories seem to hold more promise than biologically based theories. However, more and more theorists today are starting to suggest that their use of theatrical metaphors only disguises the fact that they are discussing subversions of habit in other disciplines and discourses instead of in the theatre. For instance, Reinelt says this tendency "to drop performance out of the equation" ("Book Review: Staging Femininities; Performance and Performativity" 380) is a problem in a number of the theories introduced in Parker and Sedgwick's influential *Performance and Performativity*. Ultimately, theorists such as Reinelt suggest, many of the performativity theories developed to date do not have much to offer to performance. They simply put performers' visions of themselves and their practices in a difficult position, taking them as barely registered bodily accessories to theatrical presentations of habits. If performativity's cultural change is premised more on new norms than on the bodies that enact these new norms, why present these norms in-the-making in performance, instead of already-made in film or in literature? Especially if the performers' bodily processes can in fact corrupt these new norms? After all, as Diamond asserts, performance always "both affirms and denies this evacuation of substance" (*Performance and Cultural Politics* 5, original emphasis). For a number of contemporary



commentators, then, the theoretical terrain of performativity has to learn to address living, breathing bodies if it is to increase what Kozel sees as "the scope for participation in the project by the performing arts" ("The Story is Told as a History of the Body" 107-108). This theoretical terrain has to be drawn beyond its suspicions about bodies if performativity theories are to be translated into performance practices – that is, if these theories are to be translated from a theoretical domain directed to a future to a theatrical domain directed to an audience. Significantly, many performance theorists today seem to think that increasing performativity's scope to include a practical forum such as theatre would also likely increase performativity's success. For instance, Diamond notes that "the resignifying of performativity needs a performance, an embodiment" ("Re" 32). As such, she says, it is

[w]hen performativity materializes as performance, in that risky and dangerous negotiation between a doing (a reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions that frame our interpretations), between someone's body and the conventions of embodiment, [that] we have access to cultural meanings and critique.

Performativity, I would suggest, must be rooted in the materiality and historical density of performance (*Performance and Cultural Politics* 5)

For Diamond, as for many performance theorists and practitioners today, performative challenges to habits have to be rooted in the ephemeral physical processes of performers to be really effective in negotiating new possibilities for human bodies.

The difficulties with performativity theories I have discussed in this Chapter demonstrate that there is in fact a need to canvass the potentials of a move from a product- to a process-oriented method of modifying habits. This method would recognise the role both body images and bodies play in radically repeating a habit. Rather than concentrating on one or the other, opposing one or the other, or collapsing one into the other, it would accentuate the creative, corruptive, connections between them.

Interestingly, Butler, the most important performativity theorist of recent years, seems to move closer to this viewpoint as her career progresses. The sort of mind-matter parallelism that results in a regular repetition of a habit is sometimes a problem in Butler's early work

in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, and it is a problem with certain readings of her work that remain current. In *Excitable Speech* (1997), though, she articulates the possibility that bodily practices and discursive practices are not the same, that they are “incongruously interrelated” (11). The possibility, then, that the two terms can interact productively – ‘excitably’ – to disrupt old habits. This progress in Butler’s perspective has not, however, found its way into broader theoretical and theatrical discourses about performativity, and about subversive mimicry in general. This, of course, is the central problem with the popular concept of performativity – Butler may be careful in considering the complexities of bodily habits, but this is not necessarily the case in the broader cultural discourse her work inspires.

The transition in Butler’s work notwithstanding, then, the vitalist theories of Bergson and Deleuze remain the most dedicated to making room for ephemeral, physical, processes in radical mimicry. The time has thus come to recognise their place in the debate about habit – the way they can broaden the basic theory of habit, the way they can build a better relation between the processual orientation of this theory and the product orientation of performativity theories, and the way they can amplify the applicability of these theories to the performing arts.

## Chapter Four – Bergson, Deleuze, and their Vitalist Theories of Habit

As I argued in my Introduction, some of the twentieth century's most interesting philosophical investigations of habit are found in the vitalist theories Bergson and Deleuze formulate. These theorists both address a number of the philosophical issues I described in Chapter Three, and at the same time outline their own unique and useful approach to bodies, bodily habits, and the broader logics that contextualise them. This, combined with the fact that these theorists have become increasingly popular in recent decades (partly due to their concern with radicalising repetition of habits and partly due to other things) make it critical that they be considered as part of this thesis.

Bergson and Deleuze both argue that bodily habits come out of the durational reality of time, change, and transformation that characterises life, and are constantly in contact with this durational reality. For them, the term 'duration' describes experienced time, the creative flux of life encountered from the inside, in which past, present, and future intertwine. In this durational reality, every moment and every movement blends into another, changing and being changed by it. Bergson's ideas about the vital impulse and Deleuze's ideas about becoming are both designed to describe this durational force or flux of reality<sup>35</sup>. Both describe a movement that defies linear determinations of time and space, a drive towards energetic, spontaneous, and liberating activity that extends the influence of living beings. Through their theories, Bergson and Deleuze show how matter, mind, and habit are all generated by the exclusive reality of time and transformation. "Matter or mind," as Bergson articulates it, "reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming" (*Creative Evolution* 272). Despite the differences between them, then, Bergson's and Deleuze's comments about the chaos, becoming, change, and creativity from which all things come mean that they can both be considered 'vitalistic' philosophers. Both believe that life, and the mental and material states of living beings, are based in dynamic, temporal processes of becoming

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<sup>35</sup> Bergson and Deleuze both deploy a proliferation of terms to describe becoming, including vital impulse, creative evolution, line of flight, event, refrain, and body without organs. This variety may be due to the fact that, as Grosz explains, "trajectories of becoming do not lend themselves readily to representation, to handy models" (*Volatile Bodies* 210).

rather than static, spatial properties of being. Put another way, both favour bodily intensity over bodily integrity. Moreover, Bergson's and Deleuze's comments about matter, mind, memory, mimicry, and habit mean that they offer interesting insights into the bodily manifestation of a model behind habit. Their philosophical thinking therefore proves a particularly useful point of departure in advancing a process-driven approach to habits, and to the complex mind-matter connections that mark mimicry of habits. Their comments about habit are also particularly useful from a performance studies perspective, as I will start to show toward the end of this Chapter.

Vitalist philosophy is complex, and at times contradictory, confusing, and inconsistent. This, of course, is part of its character. To systematise vitalist thought too strongly would be to go against some of its most basic tenets. Nevertheless, in this thesis it is important that I indicate the main issues in Bergson's and Deleuze's thought, and the ways in which they inform my investigation of habit. Three aspects of their vitalist theory help in my analysis of habit, and of the bodily mimicry habit is based on. Firstly, their vitalist thought challenges the mind-matter parallels that dominate many of Western philosophy's monistic, dualistic, and mimetic theories of bodies. In Bergson's words, they want "to lessen greatly, if not to overcome, the theoretical difficulties that have always beset dualism" (*Matter and Memory* xi), and so in Deleuze's words, they "question the very notion of [a natural correspondence of] copy and model" (*The Logic of Sense* 256). They challenge the notion that mind, matter, and the model-copy relation between the two that characterises mimicry, is anything more than a convenient fiction cut from the flux of life. Secondly, Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalist thought is useful in creating and communicating a new theory of mind-matter relations. Rather than just criticise the mind-matter parallels described in monistic, dualistic, and mimetic theories of bodies, Bergson and Deleuze go further, claiming that mind and matter can in fact meet up unpredictably and productively in the physical processes of mimicry. This means the bodily mimicry behind habit is by nature malleable, or differential, not by nature mechanical, or deterministic. Bergson and Deleuze both maintain that cultural forces sometimes fail to control this malleable mimicry, and so fail to control the challenges to culturally-determined habits this malleable mimicry makes possible. Thirdly, then, their vitalist insights into the productive mind-matter relations involved in repeating any habit in the present can be helpful in describing how habits can change. For both these theorists,

change is based not only on offering new habits, but on offering new ways of working with habits. That is, on doing current habits differently. In this sense, Bergson and Deleuze both pursue physical, processual methods of modifying habit that are less likely to naturalise any new habits they produce. This is where the power of their philosophical thinking lies. In contrast to the performativity theories I treated in Chapter Three, Bergson's and Deleuze's theories help consider how cultural models and corporeal manifestations combine as a body mimics or counter-mimics a habit. Utilising the sorts of approaches they suggest can thus help consolidate the point I came to in Chapters One, Two, and Three, about the combined role mind and matter can play in mimicking and counter-mimicking habits.

In this Chapter, I will outline the aspects of Bergson's and Deleuze's thought that apply to my analysis of habit. Still, I will be using Bergson's and Deleuze's insights to talk about mimicry, about the mimicry behind habit, and, toward the close of the Chapter, about how performance practices manipulate the mimicry behind habit. In this way, I will be summarising their position as it applies to performance theories and practices. This means I will be compressing Bergson's and Deleuze's complex theories in a way that can never be completely representative of their own concerns.

As I have already noted, Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalist thought is initially useful in criticising the dualistic and monistic theories of mind-matter relations that dominate Western thought, and so this is where I will start my reading of their theories.

Dualism holds that life and living beings are composed of two different substances or substrates, of matter and of mind. Dualists are reluctant to accept that reality is in flux, and that matter and mind are merely two tendencies of this flux. Rather, dualists reduce these tendencies to two different things, and posit a radical distinction between them. "The mistake of ordinary dualism," Bergson says, "is that it starts from the spatial point of view" (*Matter and Memory* 294). It replaces a temporal interdependence with a spatial division (295). The standard dualist discourse, derived from René Descartes, holds that matter exists in space and is subject to the 'laws of nature', while mind exists outside space and as such

"Microphysical Indeterminacy and Freedom" 174). Accordingly, although not all dualists favour this model-copy concept of mind-matter interactions, Bergson and Deleuze do think it dominates the theoretical terrain.

Needless to say, Bergson and Deleuze are both wary of any of philosophic or scientific discourse that posits a polarity between internal mental and external material states, and then overcomes it by means of what Bergson calls "a parallelism or of a preestablished harmony" (*Matter and Memory* 295) between the two. "All the difficulties raised by this problem," Bergson declares, "either in dualism, or in materialism or idealism, come for considering ...the physical and the mental as duplicates the one of the other" (300). Obviously, vitalists are not the only ones to criticise the mind-matter correspondences offered in materialist and idealist discourses. Comparable criticisms can be found in the discourse of pragmatists like Dewey, James, and Peirce, and, as James M. Ostrow notes, in the discourse of phenomenologists like Husserl (*Social Sensitivity* 4). Moreover, the physical trainer Pilates has made this point too, when interpreting this issue from the practical perspective of his program of contrology.

Contrary to the belief that the mind is absolute master of the body, as expounded by Christian scientists and others, and contrary to the belief that the body is absolute master of the mind, as expounded by modern so-called expert physical culture directors and trainers ...it is contended that neither theory is the correct solution ...it is foolish to believe that one can perform effectively without working in concert with the other (*The Complete Writings of Joseph H. Pilates* 18)

For vitalists, as for all of these other observers, neither materialism, which derives representations from things, nor idealism, which derives things from representations, adequately explains the relations between mind and matter.

Of course, these now-customary criticisms of Cartesian-derived dualism were developed by monists like Spinoza and Leibniz well before they were developed by vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze, or by the other philosophers and physical trainers I have mentioned here. Many monistic theorists have taken dualism as a negative other against which they can develop their own theories. For vitalists, though, monistic theories do not necessarily overcome the difficulties with dualistic theories. Monism holds that life, and living beings,

are composed of only one substance or substrate. For monists, both mind and matter are part of this single, essential substance. On the surface, this seems more compatible with the vitalist viewpoint than dualism does. However, as vitalists Bergson and Deleuze also challenge monistic theories of mind-matter relations. For example, Bergson and Deleuze draw both constructively and critically on the monistic work of Spinoza. Spinoza suggests that a single absolute substance – God – forms the foundation of the universe, and that all living beings are the result of temporary and transient modifications in this substance. Vitalists take issue with Spinoza on two main counts. Firstly, Spinoza sees a constant essence not a changing energy as the basis of reality. Spinoza is opposed, Bergson remarks, “to the idea of a reality that creates itself gradually” (*Creative Evolution* 354). Spinoza’s eternal substance is an essence that grounds and guides all reality. It exists, has always existed, will always exist, and the modifications that occur in it will never change its nature. Unlike Spinoza, who believes the universe is born of a single being or substance, vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze believe the universe is born of myriad shifting movements of becoming (cf. Goodchild Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy 47). Secondly, Spinoza sees no possibility of productive interaction between mind and matter. His absolute substance contains both mind and matter, like two sides of a single sheet of paper, and so denies the interaction between the two that Bergson and Deleuze prize. In Bergson’s words, Spinoza sees the two terms as “two attributes of one and the same substance, which we must call God” (*Creative Evolution* 350). “A divine mechanism ma[k]e[s] the phenomena of thought correspond to those of extension, each to each, qualities to quantities, souls to bodies” (350). In this sense, Bergson says, Spinoza takes a parallelist perspective (350). In monist theories like Spinoza’s, the mental and the material again duplicate each other. Monistic theories therefore offer little real advantage over dualistic theories. Neither can fully articulate how mind and matter might relate to, rather than just resemble, each other. In *Volatile Bodies* Grosz makes an analogous argument. She says

monist models, which rely on a singular substance with the qualities and attributes of both mind and body, [do not] provide satisfactory representations of both the articulation and the disarticulation of mind and body ... [They do not show that b]odies and minds are not two distinct substances [n]or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives (xii)

An analysis of Bergson's and Deleuze's criticisms shows that they believe dualistic and monistic discourses both submit life, and the psycho-physical relations that are part of life, to a theory of likeness – that is, to what Bergson might call a view of reality based on parallelism (*Matter and Memory* 295), or to what Deleuze might call a view of reality based on representation, resemblance, or similitude (*The Logic of Sense* 259)<sup>36</sup>. In fact, these parallelist discourses describe the regular mind-matter relations habits rely on. These discourses do not admit that discrepancies between mind and matter can arise as a body mimics a habit, because this best serves their purposes. “[I]f science interprets connexion, which is a fact, as signifying parallelism, which is an hypothesis,” Bergson phrases it, “...it does so, consciously or unconsciously, for reasons of a philosophic order” (*Matter and Memory* xv-xvi). The theories Bergson and Deleuze examine find parallelism efficacious because it reduces mind-matter relations to relations of resemblance. One term is designated as an original model, the other as a “useless duplicate” (302) in Bergson's terms, or a “sterile double” (*Bergsonism* 98) in Deleuze's terms, of this model. The majority of parallelist theories take mind as the model, as the dominant side of the duality, because on balance the mental world does not seem as mutable as the material world. Plato is Deleuze's prime target in this regard. Plato takes spirit as a model, as this lets him turn to a stable spiritual world beyond when faced with the mutability of the sensory world. He then says the sensory world should duplicate this spiritual model (Chapter Two). In Deleuze's words, “Platonism thus founds the entire domain that philosophy will later recognise as its own” (*The Logic of Sense* 259). Like Platonism, later parallelist theories prize a mechanical model-manifestation relation. These theories disconnect mind and matter, dismiss the one as a duplicate of the other, and thereby deny opportunities for disruptive, differential transitions between the two<sup>37</sup>. This, again, is just the sort of thing that happens with habit. One term is set up, Bergson observes, as a “ready-made frame into which we are to step” (*Laughter* 70). This ready-made model becomes a habit. It starts to be repeated in the same ways again and again, and thus starts to seem natural (Chapter Two).

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<sup>36</sup> As I said in Chapter Two, theatre theorists Counsell and Roach suggest that this tendency to treat bodily behaviour in terms of a psycho-physical parallelism is seen both in philosophical, psychological, and physiological theories of the body, and in Stanislavskian theatrical systems.

<sup>37</sup> After all, it is impossible to image a transition between two things that are the same. Transition can only occur between things that are different, or exist on different ends of a continuum.



Bergson and Deleuze both criticise the mind-matter parallels that prevail in dualistic, monistic, parallelistic, and mimetic theories of life. It is not that the regularity of these mind-matter relations is not useful to life and to living beings. Rather, it is that it starts to seem like a natural order of things. Parallelist theories take this regular relation as a constant foundation of reality, not as a convenient fiction. As such, these theories show how habit works, but also sediment how habit works. They make it difficult to see how habits might be done differently. If theorists accept that this parallelist perspective is right, they risk returning to the essentialist viewpoint treated with hostility in the contemporary climate – the tendency to take established habits as original or essential human natures. Vitalists and their successors show that people's belief in the mind-matter resemblance behind mimicry, and thus behind habit, is only a helpful fiction. This belief does not necessarily mean that mind, matter, and the parallelism between them, is essential and everlasting. Though habit is characterised by such a mind-matter parallelism, to understand how habits might be changed philosophers have to challenge the regular mind-matter relation on which parallelist perspectives rely. "The task of a philosophy which does not wish to fall into the traps of consciousness and the cogito," Deleuze puts it, "is to purge the transcendental field of all resemblance" (*The Logic of Sense* 123). Put another way, the task is to purge the theoretical terrain of "the false Platonic duality of the essence and the example" (135). This, as I suggested in Chapter Three, is something some performativity theories cannot seem to do in their treatments of habit and habit change.

With these criticisms in mind, vitalists create a different concept of mind-matter relations, one that disrupts the human tendency to think in dualistic hierarchies, and demonstrates that the mimicry behind habit always holds a degree of unpredictability. It is this new concept of mind-matter relations I now need to discuss to present a comprehensive picture of the parameters of Bergson's and Deleuze's thought.

For vitalists such as Bergson and Deleuze, as I have said, reality at its most basic is a continuous flux of time, change, and transformation. To safeguard their sense of selfhood, people tend to think of their bodily identities as intrinsic, and as inherently independent of

outside the 'laws of nature'. This dualist discourse highlights the difference between them, as one thing opposed to another thing in space, and hides the connection between them, as two tendencies that pass into one another in time. The two terms, as Bergson argues, "are taken in the static condition, as *things* ...whereas we ought to consider the dynamic *progress* by which one passes into the other" (162, original emphasis).

Despite their differences, the majority of mind-matter dualisms in philosophy, psychology, and physiology tend to establish each of the two terms as a stable entity, and as independent of the other. These theories establish an apparently irreconcilable duality between mind and matter, Bergson maintains, as "two different worlds, incapable of communicating otherwise than by a miracle" (267). This thwarts any attempt to explain the interaction between the two that is experienced every day in practice. "The difficulties of ordinary dualism come," Bergson therefore claims, "not from the distinction between the two terms, but from the impossibility of seeing how one is grafted upon the other" (297).

Some dualists solve this mind-matter difficulty by proposing a psycho-physical parallelism, in which the two otherwise incompatible terms come together by means of correspondence. To accept this idea is to accept that mind and matter are still two independent things, but that they resemble, reproduce, or mimic each other. For every mental process there is an identical material process, or vice-versa. It is precisely because dualist theorists imagine a radical mind-matter distinction that they also have to imagine their interaction in terms of a resemblance, in which one is a passive copy or parallel of the other. "[I]t is for having cut all connections between the two terms," Bergson contends, "that philosophers have been led to establish between them a rigorous parallelism" (*Creative Evolution* 350). These dualist theorists establish an unassailable difference between mind and matter, and then collapse this difference by arguing that one duplicates the other. They explain mind-matter relations only by the 'miraculous' hypothesis that the mental and the material duplicate each other – that the mental mimics the material, or that the material mimics the mental. Obviously, the mental generally dominates in moralistic philosophies, and the material generally dominates in mechanistic sciences. But, despite this difference, both discourses tend to be based on the belief that parallelism is the most plausible theory, and that it is confirmed by contemporary neurophysiology when it locates the mind in the brain or in the body (cf. Milic Capek

their environment and of others. Vitalists, however, believe that living beings are initially indistinguishable from the continuous flux of life, the flux from which all identities eventually emerge. This mutable, material flux is "the living reality" (*Matter and Memory* 171) that precedes the separation of mind and matter, and the spatial systematisation of bodies, events, and environments. This perspective on life leads vitalists to a distinctive position on mind-matter relations. Vitalists believe mind and matter are merely two converse tendencies of the continuous flux of life. They are two tendencies that display differing degrees of tension, not two things that belong to a mind-matter binary – although they can indeed be reduced to this type of binary for practical reasons. Each current emerges from the flux of life, each plays a role in producing the other, and, furthermore, each can be positioned as a model for the other to manifest.

Bergson's theory explicates the way in which mind and matter are two converse currents of the continuous flux of life, and provides a point of departure for Deleuze's theory. In Bergson's opinion, matter emerges by means of a dilation or diminution of the flow of reality. At this moment duration is interrupted. Duration implies a certain tension – that is, a vitality or contraction of energies. Any interruption produces a momentary point of detension – that is, an inversion or dispersion of energies. This point, this dispersion of energies, is where matter emerges. At this point matter can be experienced as fixed, or relatively fixed, states of reality. This means that material states are merely the flux of reality dispersed, dilated, or sedimented by habit. Bergson calls these states matter and Deleuze calls them the actual. But both theorists believe they are corporeal, and consist of the corporeal interactions and incidents that occur in life (cf. Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* 4). Still, Bergson says, "matter, the reality which *descends*, endures only by its connection with that which *ascends*. Life and consciousness are this very ascension" (*Creative Evolution* 369, original emphasis). Mind emerges by means of a contraction or complication of the flow of reality. At this moment duration is contracted. This point, this contraction of energies, is where mental representations and meanings emerge. These mental states are what Bergson calls mind and Deleuze calls the virtual. They are incorporeal, and consist of the sense or meaning attributed to material bodies. "[S]ense," as Deleuze says, "...is an incorporeal, complex and irreducible entity, at the surface of things" (*The Logic of Sense* 19).

For Bergson as for Deleuze, matter and mind both partake of life's creative force. Between the two, Bergson says, there is "only a difference in rhythm of duration" (*Matter and Memory* 330). This means that matter and mind are only two contrasting currents of the flux of reality – a current that descends, and a current that ascends<sup>38</sup>. When mind descends into the materiality of the present, taking on a slower tension, matter emerges. When matter contracts into the immateriality of the past, taking on a higher tension, mind emerges. Thus, as Bergson argues, "[i]n reality, life is a movement, materiality is the inverse movement" (*Creative Evolution* 249). Deleuze and Guattari agree with Bergson, arguing that the distinction between matter and mind is actually "a distinction between matter and life, or rather, since there is only one matter, between two states, two tendencies of atomic matter" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 335).

By considering what Bergson calls "[t]he greater or lesser tension of their duration" (*Matter and Memory* 279), Bergson and Deleuze both invalidate any firm distinction between matter and mind. Their vitalistic concept of contracting or dilating tensions in the continuous flux of life lets them, in Deleuze's terms, "go beyond the duality" and "pass from one to the other" (*Bergsonism* 74). Deleuze's comments echo Bergson's. "Placed at the confluence of mind and matter," he articulates it, this type of vitalist analysis is "desirous chiefly of seeing the one flow into the other" (*Matter and Memory* 320-321). Bergson and Deleuze both show that, though matter is part of the present moment and mind is part of past memory, they are not separate substances, and they are not subordinate to one another. After all, Deleuze argues, "[w]hat is expanded (*détendu*) if not the contracted – and what is contracted if not the extended, the expanded (*détente*)?" (*Bergsonism* 87, original emphasis). Thus, as Bergson says, "[b]y developing this hypothesis under its manifold aspects, we appeared to divide body and soul by an impassable abyss. In truth, we were indicating the only possible means of bringing them together" (*Matter and Memory* 300; cf. *Creative Evolution* 186).

Bergson and Deleuze both maintain that matter and mind are two chicken-and-egg-like aspects of the same process – of life, and of the events in our lives. They are co-constituted.

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<sup>38</sup> The English language still encourages the use of spatial metaphors here, despite the vitalist wariness of them.

They complement, condition, and offer the conditions of possibility for each other. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari say, "the functional independence of the two terms is only the form of their reciprocal presupposition, and of the continual passage from one to the other" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 87). This ongoing passage of the two terms means that neither term, neither the substance nor the sense of what happens, can be said to ground or guide the other. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "[i]t cannot be said that the terms preexist their double articulation" (44). Therefore, Deleuze argues, "neither [of the two divergent series] can be assigned as the original, neither as the copy" (*The Logic of Sense* 262; cf. *Difference and Repetition* 105). The two terms exist in tandem, and thus in an infinite regress that can never reach a core opposition, essence, or origin. As a result, while mind and matter appear to form a dualism, two indivisible and independent terms, they are actually only two moments or poles of a continuum that continually produces other polarities. Mind descends into matter, which ascends into mind, which descends into matter, and so on. "This two-term regress," as Deleuze says, "is the minimal condition of indefinite proliferation" (*The Logic of Sense* 30). Ultimately, then, Bergson's and Deleuze's theories rest on a dualism or on a series of dualisms only in order to wrestle with these dualisms. Their differentiation of mind and matter may appear dualistic, but their emphasis on a vital impulse in which the two intermingle as the basis of all life is actually more monistic. "Dualism is therefore only a moment," Deleuze maintains, "which must lead to the re-formation of a monism" (*Bergsonism* 29). Yet, if this Bergson-inspired vitalism is monistic, it is an unconventional monism. This is because Bergson's and Deleuze's vital impulse is not a single substance, it is actually a pluralistic series or stream of states<sup>39</sup>. By insisting on a shifting reality, and on an interaction between matter and mind as the two tendencies of this reality, Bergson and Deleuze challenge both dualism and monism.

The complex relation between the mental and material currents of life is actually useful, according to Bergson and Deleuze, because it provides a balance between constancy and change that is useful to living beings. "Since they are not two separate things," Bergson

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<sup>39</sup> As I argued in Chapter Three, this pluralist philosophy of force also permeates the pragmatist tradition of Peirce and James. They too maintain that life is a stream from which consciousness comes, and that mental beliefs and material behaviours are co-determined in this stream, rather than related by correspondence or causality (cf. James *Principles of Psychology* 5; Peirce *Collected Papers* VI 42-43).

says, "...it is natural that the two functions should lend each other a mutual support" (*Matter and Memory* 197). Matter offers mind a link with the present moment, a means of asserting an influence on this moment. Mind offers matter a link with the past, a means of allowing the experiences of the past to guide the experiences of the present. The way mind and matter flow, and flow into each other, is therefore important to how a habit holds together as it is repeated, to a habit's rhythms as it is repeated. It is the variable relation between the two, rather than either on its own, that is essential to the efficacy of bodies in life, and to the expressiveness of bodies in theatre (197).

This is where Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalistic ideas of matter, mind, and mimicry intersect with my interest in habit, and support some of the suggestions about habit I made in Chapters One, Two, and Three. Most significantly, their theories support the suggestion that complex mind-matter connections are crucial to habits, living beings, and life. After all, these connections are crucial to mimicry, mimicry is in turn crucial to habit, and habit is in turn crucial to identity. According to Bergson and Deleuze, as a body acts out a habit, it always brings the ascending current of mind and the descending current of matter back to their connecting surface. In this respect, as a body repeats a habit in the present moment it produces a point of transition or passage between matter and mind. It combines the two into a bodily experience that is not just present, but active and affective. Of course, Bergson and Deleuze use their own terms to unpack the mind-matter passages required to repeat a habit. Bergson understands this as a realisation of a memory, in which mind connects with matter. He therefore maintains that "[m]emory is just the intersection of mind and matter" (xvi). Deleuze understands this as an actualisation of an event, in which the virtual connects with the actual. He draws on Bergson and on the Stoics to argue that these events – the most extensive features of human existence, by which all things happen – occur at the surface. "[B]y skirting the surface," he observes, "...one passes from bodies to the incorporeal" (*The Logic of Sense* 10, original emphasis).

Although any repetition of a habit forms a fragile frontier or boundary between mind and matter in just the way Bergson and Deleuze describe, these theorists both contend that it does not necessarily create a one-to-one correspondence between the two. Neither mind, nor matter, need necessarily duplicate the other. "[I]t is correct to represent a double series of

events," Deleuze explains, ideal events and real events, "...echoing without resembling each other" (*Difference and Repetition* 188-189). "This frontier does not mingle or reunite them (for there is no more monism here than dualism)" (*The Logic of Sense* 24). Mind is still an ascending current, a virtuality that may or may not pass into matter. Matter is still a descending current, a virtual that actually has passed into the actuality of matter. "The distinction," Deleuze says, "...is between the event, which is ideal in nature, and its spatio-temporal realisation in a state of affairs. The distinction is between *event* and *accident*" (53, original emphasis). Obviously, one can pass into the other, but only, Deleuze and Guattari note, by "changing in nature" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 483). Only by becoming something different. Bergson expresses this sentiment in different terms. He says memory or meaning "will no doubt beget sensations as it materializes, but at that very moment it will cease to be a memory and pass into the state of a present thing" (*Matter and Memory* 179). This means a realisation or repetition of a habit can combine mind and matter without necessarily denying their difference. In such a realisation, the two cannot be separated, and yet they still cannot be the same. Accordingly, Bergson says, such a realisation shows "that spirit can rest upon matter and consequently unite with it ...yet nevertheless be radically distinct from it" (*Matter and Memory* 294). Deleuze agrees, asserting that such an actualisation of a habit assures "the convergence of the two series, but precisely on the condition that it makes them endlessly diverge" (*The Logic of Sense* 40).

The significant thing about Bergson's and Deleuze's theories for a discussion of habit and habit change is that they provide strategies for liberating mimicry from the mechanical mind-matter connections promoted by parallelist theories, and so provide strategies for liberating a mimicry of a habit from these same mechanical mind-matter connections. Their theories show that mind and matter need not match up perfectly when a body mimics a habit. They introduce the possibility of a 'mistaken' mimicry of a habit. In effect, Bergson and Deleuze each swap the parallelist idea of mechanical mimicry for their own idea of productive mimicry. From a parallelist perspective mind-matter relations are typically referential. This referentiality means that bodies mimic predetermined models, be these dominant, major, molar models of identity or different, minor, molecular models of identity (*A Thousand Plateaus* 291). However, from a vitalist perspective mind-matter relations are typically differential. Following his reading of Bergson, Deleuze describes this not as a

realisation of the possible but as an actualisation of the virtual. "The possible and the real resemble one another," he argues, "but not the virtual and the actual" (*Difference and Repetition* 279). This differentiability means that bodies need not mimic predetermined possibilities. In Deleuze's terms, "[d]ifference inhabits repetition" (76; cf. *Matter and Memory* 322). And if it is possible to differentially mimic a model of habit, it is possible to challenge or change this habit. Vitalists plainly make the most of this possibility<sup>40</sup>.

Though Bergson and Deleuze both believe the mind-matter relations behind bodily behaviour to be differential rather than referential, they also both describe how the former is reduced to the latter long enough to be helpful to bodily behaviour in life. These theorists are both aware that cultural forces have to develop the mechanical habits that are part of life, and have to do this by drawing mechanical mind-matter relations out of once malleable mind-matter relations. Moreover, they are not necessarily totally against this. Because, although both these theorists believe reality is based on a "continuity of becoming" (171), they also acknowledge that some sense of self-identity is useful to survival. Without a system of self-identity, on which symbolic and social systems can in turn be established, people lack the images on which successful living depends. People's need to map out, master, and manipulate themselves and their world leads them to carve certain centres out of the flux of life, including their minds, their bodies, and other bodies (262). More importantly from my perspective in this thesis, this need leads them to carve out ready-made models, and a regular means of manifesting these models. It leads them, that is, to cut out the twin territories of bodily habit. Bergson and Deleuze both devote a good deal of attention to how life does this. It is their comments in this regard I will consider next.

To develop a habit human beings have to draw the differences out of a bodily repetition of a behaviour. "Habit *draws* something new from repetition – namely difference" (*Difference and Repetition* 73, original emphasis), in Deleuze's words. In developing habits, humans

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, as Ansell Pearson suggests, it is this possibility of a creative model-manifestation conversation that creates what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'becoming animal', a 'becoming woman', or a 'becoming minority' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (*A Germinal Life* 181).



have to test to determine if they can reduce the differences involved in repeating a behaviour, in order to identify an ideal that is easily copied (78). This means humans build habits by abstracting ideals from their bodily behaviours. Though instantiations are located in actual behaviours, ideals are not located in actual behaviours, and this means a contemplating mind has to extract these ideals from behaviours (75). Thus, Deleuze insists, it is "the mind" that "...draws something new from repetition ...draws difference from it" (76). This being the case, it is better to say humans develop habits not just by means of their corporeal activities, but by means of mental contractions and concepts that codify these activities in a helpful fashion (73-74; cf. *What is Philosophy?* 105).

For Bergson, the contemplative force responsible for cutting models and their meanings from the continuous flux of life is the 'intellect'. The intellect, a Bergsonian term for reason, is an adaptation living beings have developed because it is useful in reckoning with the realities around them. The intellect focuses only on what is of interest to people in the flow of life. "[W]e pluck out of duration those moments that interest us," Bergson puts it, and "...[t]hese alone we retain" (*Creative Evolution* 273). In doing this, the intellect arrests, divides, and diminishes the flow of life. "[T]he intellect, like the senses, is limited to taking, at intervals, views that are instantaneous and by that very fact immobile, of the becoming of matter" (272-273). In fact, the intellect is cutting the flow of life into a series of static points that represent shifts in position along a predetermined line. These static points represent the postures and positions of bodies as they proceed through specific behaviours. The intellect substitutes this series of static points for the shifting flux, thereby stabilising people's sense impressions and locating these impressions in a logical linear system. The intellect in this way establishes a set of orderly outlines not given in immediate experience, and then expects people to take these outlines as originary (cf. *Time and Free Will* 190). In effect, Bergson argues, the intellect establishes an order of being, of which disorderly becomings are then assumed to be only a degradation. It is based in a theory of forms that "resolve[s] becoming into its principle moments" (*Creative Evolution* 315) as Platonic and Aristotelian theories did, and then posits these fixed forms as the being behind all becoming (Chapters One and Two).

Bergson believes the intellect interprets bodies and bodily movements as Zeno did. Zeno understands movement in terms of the body that moves, and the line this body follows in space. Zeno argues that a movement, like a line, can be divided up into immobile points. These are stopping points at which the body moving – be it a human body or Zeno's arrow – rests for a brief moment along its journey. "Motionless in each point of its course," Bergson explains, the body "...is motionless during all the time that it is moving" (308). The body's temporal journey or transition is only a sequence of static points strung together<sup>41</sup>. Much like Zeno, the intellect imagines bodies and bodily movements in these 'punctual' terms, as a series of static points and structures. With the intellect, Bergson insists, "[w]e take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality" (306). We then take these snapshots to be the "constitutive elements" (317) of this passage. But, Bergson maintains, like Zeno the intellect has difficulty imagining how bodies might get through the intervals between these points, between these stable pictures of the states a body progresses through (*Matter and Memory* 250-253; cf. Deleuze and Guattari *What is Philosophy?* 157).

Bergson describes the false representation of reality the intellect offers as cinematographical – although it has dominated Western thought well before the advent of cinema. Cinema employs a series of immobile images which, as they replace or follow each other, offer an appearance of movement. "[T]he film of the cinematograph unrolls," Bergson says, "bringing in turn the different photographs of the scene to continue each other" (*Creative Evolution* 305). The intellect approaches bodies and bodily behaviours in this cinematographical way. Understood intellectually, life consists of stable bodies and bodily states dispersed in space. As they follow each other in space, they offer an appearance of movement. But people's attention is not on the movements of the bodies, it is on the various motionless points through which the bodies proceed. In this intellectual paradigm, bodies move through space, adopt successive states and statuses in space, and this process gives people a picture of progress, change, and growth – of time – as a series of snapshots strung together in space. These bodies shift in position, but supposedly stay the same in nature, and so supposedly stay independent of time. "[O]ur idea of this change," Bergson observes, "is

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<sup>41</sup> This image of a body travelling through a series of places at a series of specific clock or calendar points prompts the idea that to be on time is to be 'punctual', to be "at a point in time" (*Oxford English Dictionary* XII 840).

that of a displacement of parts which themselves do not change" (8). In *The Creative Mind*, Bergson says, the cinematographical habits of the intellect think the moving by means of the immobile (273). They offer an appearance of movement that actually denies all movement. "[T]his abstract motion, which becomes immobility when we alter our point of reference," cannot, Bergson contends, "be the basis of real changes, that is, of changes that are felt" (*Matter and Memory* 329). Nevertheless, Bergson notes, even bodily growth is assumed to conform to this artificial paradigm, and so to be at rest at a certain point, or in a certain state or stage of development, at any given moment. "We concentrate a period of this evolution in a stable view which we call a form, and, when the change has become considerable enough ... we say that the body has changed its form" (*Creative Evolution* 302). But Bergson obviously considers these concepts of the different stages of human life – "[i]nfancy, adolescence, maturity, older age" (312) – to be only convenient snapshots of our continuous change. These are labels provided to produce static states, and stereotyped progressions from state to state (Chapter One).

Ultimately, the intellect congeals life into a set of logical, linear models that life must then mimic. These models are fictional representations of reality, and of reality's continuous change. However, Bergson says, they are still useful to people's survival.

In order to think movement, a constantly renewed effort of the mind is necessary. Signs are made to dispense us with this effort by substituting, for the moving continuity of things, an artificial reconstruction which is its equivalent in practice and has the advantage of being easily handled (329)

The intellect establishes stagnant models of bodies, spaces, times, events, and environments that are easily handled, easily made into habits. These models stand in for people's shifting sense impressions. They help people map out, master, and manipulate themselves and their world. According to Bergson, this "kind of knowledge has the advantage of enabling us to foresee the future and of making us in some measure masters of events" (342-343). In Burwick and Douglass' words, the "[i]ntellect holds things still, so we may plan, learn – do something" (*The Crisis in Modernism* 4).

When the intellect sediments the living flow into models, it sediments the flow's material tendencies into the mechanics of the model (the mechanics of what bodies do), and sediments

the flow's mental tendencies into the meanings of the model (the meanings of what bodies do). The intellect thus locates both these material and mental tendencies in logical linear systems. It gives actual matter a consistency, and it gives virtual mind a consistency. Once the material and the mental are intellectualised they lose their intensity and their indeterminacy. Each becomes, Bergson explains, an "empty diagram as lifeless as the parts it holds together" (*Matter and Memory* 239). Each diagram belongs "to that which is already invented, to the dead, and no longer to creation and life" (*Creative Evolution* 341). In this respect, when the intellect transposes its sequential qualities onto the material and the mental tendencies of the flux of reality it creates the models and the meanings that are the conceptual part of habits. These models and meanings are significant to habit because they are static things, and this means they are more readily mimicked than the dynamic tendencies initially found in the flux of life.

The mechanical aspects of what bodies do are what Bergson describes as 'motor diagrams' (*Matter and Memory* 134). These motor diagrams draw on the type of memory that Bergson calls 'habit-memory' (89-99). This type of memory works along the lines of what theatre performers think of as muscle memory. It consists of motor models or mechanisms, not of images. For instance, if a behaviour is learned during a series of training sessions, then habit-memory does not store the details of these past situations as images. Instead, it preserves of these past situations only the "intelligently constructed mechanisms" (195) that support similar behaviours in the future. In Bergson's terms "[t]hese mechanisms, as they recur, contrive a mechanism for themselves, grow into a habit" (96). Functioning in this fashion, habit-memory produces motor diagrams for bodies to repeat whenever the need arises, mechanisms for activity in the present or in the future. Bergson says many theorists mistakenly understand these motor diagrams as 'true' memory, or as all of memory (92, 103, 195, 197). However, he says, they are not true memory, because they do not represent the details of past events and experiences to people. Again, a motor diagram is made up of bodily mechanisms and memories. Accordingly, Bergson maintains, a motor diagram is "always bent upon action, seated in the present" (93). It does not offer images or ideals that can be recalled outside the present moment. "In truth," Bergson says, "it no longer represents our past to us, it acts it; and if it still deserves the name of memory, it is not because it conserves bygone images, but because it prolongs their useful effect into the

present moment" (93, original emphasis). Because motor diagrams develop mechanisms, but do not develop true memories or meanings, Bergson believes they have to be understood in terms of the meanings attributed to them. Without access to such meanings bodies are limited in their ability to reflect on a given stimulus or situation before acting, and to make well-considered choices. Although a lot of bodily behaviours seem spontaneous, then, they require the regular intervention of memories and meanings (118; cf. Deleuze *Bergsonism* 26).

The meaningful aspects of what bodies do are more what Bergson might describe as 'mental diagrams'. They draw on another type of memory, developed alongside habit-memory, which Bergson calls 'pure-memory', 'representative-memory', or 'recollection-memory' (*Matter and Memory* 89-99). Bergson believes this pure-memory to be the "true memory" (195) unrecognised by many theorists. This type of memory stores and symbolises the details of past situations as images. For instance, if a behaviour is learned during a series of training sessions, then pure-memory will store impressions of this situation, and of the sequence of movements involved. Once generated, these impressions will be summoned back by the memory as images. In this respect, Bergson insists, pure-memory "records, in the form of memory-images, all the events of our daily life as they occur in time; it neglects no detail; it leaves to each fact, to each gesture, its place and date" (92). In more theoretical terms, pure-memory contracts the flow of reality, and combines several instants or incidents given in immediate experience into a mental structure that exists independently in consciousness. "[A]t the same time that our actual and so to speak instantaneous perception effects this vision of matter into independent objects," Bergson phrases it, "our memory solidifies into sensible qualities the continuous flow of things" (279). By carrying out this contraction, pure-memory produces a set of mental structures or meanings that can be attributed to people's behaviours. It produces the mental diagrams that people make use of in most of the activities of their lives. Bergson and Deleuze both believe these structures they variously term memory, meaning, or sense are always separate from matter, and from "the particular rhythm which governs the flow of this matter" (279). Mental diagrams are always distinct from motor diagrams, and always deal with the duration the two are drawn from in different ways. Because, Bergson contends, "[t]o call up the past in the form of an image, we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment" (94). Mental

diagrams assemble a series of present perceptions outside the moment of their occurrence. As such, they cannot themselves be part of the present moment. For both Bergson and Deleuze this means that mental diagrams, as the sense of what happens, can never be located in the body or in the brain.

Deleuze often cites the event of a death as an example. Death is an empirical event. It calls on the bodily mechanisms on which motor models or diagrams are based. "Death has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body and is grounded in me," Deleuze says, "but it also has no relation to me at all – it is incorporeal and infinitive, impersonal, grounded only in itself" (*The Logic of Sense* 152). Death, in this sense, is also what Deleuze dubs a 'pure event', equivalent in a way to Bergson's pure-memory. It is also a meaning given to bodily behaviours outside the moment of their occurrence, a mental diagram that escapes the constrictions of matter. Death, as the sense of what happens, is not simply a property located in a body, nor simply a referent interpreted from a body by a perceiving subject. "[S]ense exists," Deleuze says, "[n]either in things [n]or in the mind; it has neither physical nor mental existence" (20). Insofar as a memory, meaning, or sense is a mental diagram, it is an independent reality. "This," Deleuze says, "is why it is called *virtual*, inactive, and unconscious" (*Bergsonism* 55, original emphasis). It is, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, "virtual, in other words, real without being actual" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 94). Bergson has offered a similar opinion, suggesting that "[i]n this virtual state pure memory consists" (*Matter and Memory* 319).

Bergson argues that prevailing philosophies of the body are loath to entertain the possibility that meanings, or mental diagrams, might exist independently of motor models, or motor diagrams. "[W]e are so strongly obsessed by images drawn from space," he says, "that we cannot hinder ourselves from asking *where* memories are stored up" (191, original emphasis). Because a motor diagram has matter as its basis, and so is clearly stored somewhere, it interests theorists who would locate memory in the body or brain, as a material container. These theorists "have no objection to treating the brain as a storehouse of memories" (81-82) Bergson says. They suggest the brain somehow creates, collects, and collates memories. This thesis is disproved, Bergson argues, by the fact that many brain injuries destroy not the memories, but the mechanisms of the body and the brain required to

utilise these memories effectively. "[T]he brain," Bergson therefore argues, "is no more than a kind of central telephonic exchange: its office is to allow communication or to delay it. It adds nothing to what it receives" (19)<sup>42</sup>. On this basis Bergson contends that while mental diagrams or meanings make use of motor diagrams or models, they cannot be reduced to them. In other words, while pure-memory may be accessed by practical-memory, it is not identical with it. So, Bergson suggests, pure-memory or meaning "must be, in principle, a power absolutely independent of matter" (81). Taking this perspective, Bergson's ideas oppose the now-outdated neurophysical idea of imprinting. Obviously, Bergson's neurophysiology is also outdated now, but his reluctance to see the brain as a storehouse or a surface on which sense is imprinted is prophetic. Bergson's emphasis on energies and exchanges was at odds with the physics of his day, but it is closer in some senses to the Einstein-derived physics that exists today (cf. Burwick and Douglass *The Crisis in Modernism* 1).

Again, the models identified by the intellect are the static aspect of habit. They indicate what happens, when it happens, and what it means. In theatrical terms, these models might be incorporated in the blocking of a drama, the choreography of a dance, the score of a musical sequence, or the lyrics of a song. Obviously, these models are always diagrammatic. They offer an ordered and organised representation of bodily behaviour in space and through time. This, Bergson says, is because "the logic of the body admits of no tacit implications. It demands that all the constituent parts of the required movement shall be set forth one by one" (*Matter and Memory* 139). This logic also means that these models have to be diagrammed in "a definite time" (91) not in "the true duration, lived by consciousness" (275). They have to be laid out in the logical linear space-time Bergson calls chronology and Deleuze calls *chronos*. Often described as timely or everyday time, chronology consists of the series of points or pictures the intellect separates from the flux of life and strings together in sequence. To be of benefit, models of bodily behaviour have to be set out in the

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<sup>42</sup> Curiously, though he does not reference Bergson, Pilates draws a comparable analogy in his program of physical training. "The brain itself," he says, "is actually a sort of natural telephone switchboard exchange incorporated in our bodies as a means of communication through the sympathetic nervous system to all our muscles" (*The Complete Writings of Joseph H. Pilates* 54).

"spatialised time" (*Creative Evolution* 363) the intellect introduces. The more definitive the model, the more it depends on this definite chronological context.

As I have argued in Chapters One, Two, and Three, a repetition of a habit requires more than just the models condoned in a given context, more than just the models the intellect cuts from the flux of reality and credits with meaning. As Bergson articulates it, "[t]he imagined diagram, composed of a few nascent muscular sensations, is but a sketch. The muscular sensations, really and completely experienced, give it color and life" (*Matter and Memory* 139). As I have suggested throughout this thesis, then, a model means nothing if it cannot be mimicked by the body. "[I]t is one thing to understand a movement, another to be able to carry it out," as Bergson argues, because "...to be able to carry it out, we must have also brought our *body* to understand it" (139, original emphasis). "[M]emories need, for their actualization, a motor ally" (152). This being the case, to clarify how regular mind-matter relations come from the flux of life, Bergson and Deleuze have to consider both how models come from this flux and how manifestations come from this flux.

The bodily manifestations that support habit are the shifting aspects of habit. Whereas a model determines what movements will happen when, a manifestation determines the way these movements will happen. Significantly, in manifesting a model, a body has to return the material flux that first created this model. This is because in manifesting a model it is timing, tempo, and intensity that are important. For, as Lecoq has argued, "[m]ovement is more than just a matter of covering the distance between points A and B. The important thing is *how* the distance is covered" (*The Moving Body* 21, original emphasis). Whereas models occupy the past-present-future points of chronology, manifestations occur outside chronology. Manifestations occur in the intervals in-between one identifiable state and the next, in-between the series of snapshots that the intellect strings together in sequence. The way in which a repetition of a habit holds together depends on these dynamic intervals in which one bodily state blends or breaks into another (cf. Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 336). It is in these fleeting instants or intervals that a body accesses the mental-material flux, and thereby accesses normal or novel responses to the stimulus or situation at hand. Accordingly, vitalists argue that it is in these intervals, and not in linear time, that movement, chance, change, and creativity occur. While these intervals are difficult to



describe, and sometimes seem like the pure presence poststructuralists critique, they are indeed influenced by culture, and involved in mimicking or counter-mimicking bodily habits.

Deleuze's description of a death again exemplifies how change occurs in these intervals. Again, the event of a death oscillates between a change in the sense attributed to a body, and a change in the body itself. In both cases, 'alive' gives way to 'dead'. A death is a shifting point, in which a new sense is instantly attributed to a body. However, the change – the moment at which sense and substance converge, at which 'alive' shifts to 'dead' – can never be grasped. "The event is that no one ever dies," Deleuze says, "but has always just died or is always going to die" (*The Logic of Sense* 63). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe such shifts as instantaneous incorporeal transformations. "Bodies have an age, they mature and grow old [and die]; but majority, retirement, [death,] any given age category, are incorporeal transformations that are immediately attributed to bodies in particular societies" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 81). Such shifting points (as instants of intensity and instantaneous transformations) do not occur in the past-present-future progression that constitutes chronology. They occur in the interval that straddles one identifiable state and the next, in-between 'alive' and 'dead'. This interval, in which changes can occur, is the interval that theorists like Zeno could not account for in their spatialised theories of time and transformation. Vitalists account for this in-between by distinguishing chronology from duration<sup>43</sup>. In this interval, a creative zone beyond chronology or clock-time can be reached. Bergson calls this duration, and Deleuze calls it *aion*. Various described as untimely or mythic time, duration does not display the logical linearity that dominates Western definitions of time and transformation. Rather, duration is the creative reality that Bergson and Deleuze, as vitalists, believe to be the basis of life. The more the processes of bodily mimicry deviate from their model, the more they escape definite chronology and enter this creative, chaotic duration.

Whenever a body performs a habit in the present it oscillates between models and their bodily manifestations. Whenever a body performs a habit, then, the definite time of models and the durational time of manifestations ripple across each other. In Deleuze and Guattari's

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<sup>43</sup> Obviously, there have since been other resolutions to Zeno's paradox, for instance in Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* (1998).

words, "[t]he warp of instantaneous transformations is always inserted into the woof of continuous modifications" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 86). Yet, as I have already argued, a body is not usually aware of the model-manifestation relation needed to repeat a habit until things go wrong. Bergson makes this point too.

When we mechanically perform an habitual action ...the representation of the act is held in check by the performance of the act itself, which resembles the idea so perfectly ...that consciousness is unable to find room between them ...The proof of this is, that if the accomplishment of the act is arrested or thwarted by an obstacle, consciousness may reappear (*Creative Evolution* 144)

This being the case, people usually cannot consciously grasp the precise point at which models are manifested, the shifting point. Instead, Bergson observes, people take an intellectual outlook that only "grasp[s] the real moments of real duration after they are past" (200). In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "[w]hat History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as a concept, escapes History" (*What Is Philosophy?* 110). In life, and likewise in the theatre, people often find it is easiest to look back on an event intellectually, as images, outside the moment of its occurrence. The mind has had a moment to attribute an ordered set of significances, not just a disordered set of sensations, to the event. It is more difficult to grasp an event immediately, at the moment of its occurrence. This immediate grasping generally happens at a subconscious level, and by the time the sensations have been attributed a significance, if they are at all, the event is gone.

These comments notwithstanding, Bergson and Deleuze both think people can become more attentive to these intervals, and to how these intervals operate as the hidden joints of any habitual behaviour. That is, people can become more attentive to the dynamic indeterminacy that is hidden in defined behaviours. Bergson's and Deleuze's ideas in this regard both come out of Bergson's belief that people interpret themselves and their reality in one of two ways. The first is the intellectual or objective way I outlined earlier. Defined spatially, the intellect sees static modes or properties of being as the true reality. But Bergson believes life is broader than the images the intellect offers. The second way people interpret life is intuitive or subjective. Defined temporally, intuition sees dynamic modes or processes of becoming

as the true reality. "[W]e see in these two modes of psychical activity, above all else," Bergson says, "two different methods of action on inert matter" (*Creative Evolution* 136). The difference, he suggests, is that

[t]he [intellectual] duration *wherein we see ourselves acting*, and in which it is useful that we should see ourselves, is a duration whose elements are dissociated and juxtaposed. The [intuitive] duration *wherein we act* is a duration wherein our states melt into each other (243-244, original emphasis; cf. *Time and Free Will* 128)

The intellect focuses on things flown, while the intuition focuses on things flowing. They display two different standards of truth in addressing the material flux that marks reality. According to Bergson, neither mode "lends itself to rigid definition: they are tendencies, and not things" (*Creative Evolution* 136). These two types of apprehension coexist and combine to varying degrees in any creature. However, Bergson says, these two modes can rarely both be consummate at once in any creature. "It is hard for [life] to go too far in several directions at once: it must choose" (141-142). In human beings, of course, the intelligent mode often prevails. However, Bergson argues, "by developing another faculty, complementary to the intellect, we may open a perspective on the other half of the real" (343).

Intuition, which Bergson distinguishes from a naturalised notion of instinct, is an adaptation living beings develop to apprehend the realities in which they are immersed, the realities the intellect represses. Intuitive knowledge is different from intellectual knowledge. Intuition is an intimate, immediate response to life. It is, Bergson says, "*lived rather than represented*" (175, original emphasis). Intuition does not interpret life in terms of the labels the intellect attaches to it. It does not interpret life in terms of discrete bodies, or in terms of distinctions between mind and matter, representation and reality, past and present. Instead, Bergson says, the task of intuition is to "recover contact with the real" (*Matter and Memory* 241). According to Bergson, intuition recovers contact with the reality of the creative, chaotic flux of life, not with the reality of the linear images the intellect offers. Deleuze and Guattari express this opinion too, explaining that "[w]hat is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 237). As these quotes suggest, if people look at life in an intuitive way, they look not at the points that make up bodily movements but at the movements themselves.

They look not at the mechanistic properties of models but at the moving processes of manifestations. With intuition, Bergson therefore suggests,

[w]e should no longer be asking where a moving body will be, what shape a system will take, though what state a change will pass at a given moment: the moments of time, which are only arrests of our attention, would no longer exist; it is the flow of time, it is the very flux of the real that we should be trying to follow (*Creative Evolution* 342)

The flux of the real the intuition follows is, Bergson insists, "a continuity of which every one of us is conscious whenever he lifts an arm or advances a step" (310). Or, more accurately, it is a continuous flow a body accesses whenever it mimics the models the intellect provides, although a body may not actually be aware of this.

Importantly, Bergson and Deleuze do not necessarily think intuitive awareness of the flux of life, in which bodily states blend into each other, is natural. In fact, Bergson suggests that the intellect normally seems more natural to people than intuition. "[T]he first way of looking at things is comfortable to the processes of the human mind," he says, while "the second requires, on the contrary, that we reverse the bent of our intellectual habits" (314). This said, intuitive awareness does have its advantages. Intuition, Bergson explains, "will not extend our empire over nature, it will even go against certain natural aspirations of the intellect; but, if it succeeds, it is reality itself that it will hold in a firm and final embrace" (343). Intuition offers a more thorough insight into transitory realities than the intellect. In this sense, Deleuze says in his analysis of the issue in *Bergsonism*, intuition is "a fully developed method" (13) of dealing with duration that problematises, differentiates, and temporalises the stagnant models the intellect introduces.

Of course, the fact that bodies have to call on the material flux from which models of habit are first drawn when they mimic these models is not without consequences. The main one is that the constant ideals of the model remain open to the chaotic intervals of the manifestation. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "[t]he milieus are open to chaos" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 313). And, as Sullivan observes, "openness includes not just the opportunities to benefit . . . but also the danger of being vulnerable" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 130). If a body is open to these intervals, it is open to the difference or indeterminacy hidden in the intervals in any bodily mimicry of a habit. It is open to the

positive, productive power of variation Deleuze and Guattari call a line of flight. As a consequence of this openness, habits are always at risk of being corrupted by the bodily mimicry that anchors them. In Deleuze and Guattari's language, they are always at risk of "open[ing] onto something cosmic, instead of lapsing into a statistic heap" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 344). Though bodily mimicry usually strives for sameness, then, it is plagued by the variations of chance – the dice throws Deleuze describes in *The Logic of Sense*. This means any mimicry of a habit can become as dynamic and differential as the durational flux from which the habit mimicked was first drawn. As Bergson asserts, life

never halts, never repeats itself. It must be changing every moment, for to cease to change would be to cease to live. Then let gesture display like animation! Let it accept the fundamental law of life, which is the complete negation of repetition (*Laughter* 80)

The changes to habits Bergson and Deleuze canvass here do not have to be obvious, large, or even long-lasting (cf. James *Principles of Psychology* 105). Indeed, on the surface it may seem like nothing has changed. Nonetheless, Bergson says, even if a thing is "[m]otionless on the surface, in its very depth it lives and vibrates" (*Matter and Memory* 270). This means, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, that "[t]he territory is constantly traversed by movements of deterritorialization that are relative and may even occur in place" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 326). Lecoq has observed an equivalent phenomenon in theatrical performance, explaining that "[e]ven though it sometimes looks, from the outside, as if we keep on doing the same thing, in reality everything changes" (*The Moving Body* 13). Because of this flexibility, Anthony Uhlmann says, the subject begins "to quaver with instability, admitting the flux from which it has been fabricated" (*Beckett and Poststructuralism* 86). Like the accounts of habit I addressed in my Introduction and initial Chapter, then, this vitalist discussion of habit outlines how the bodily mimicry behind habit is always open to the flow or flux of life, and therefore always open to variation<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Though Bergson and Deleuze both believe that obtaining this outside, this flux of becoming or of desire, is the only possible track to transformation, theorists such as Foucault sometimes say they are not convinced that people can contrive to obtain this outside at all. They are thus sometimes even more explicit in suggesting that transformation has to start with current systems of being as well as connect with the shifting forces of becoming (*A Thousand Plateaus* 531; cf. Goodchild Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy 136).

Deleuze devotes a lot of time to the variation that he and Guattari describe in terms of lines of flight. Deleuze argues that the bodily mimicry that underpins habit is always unpredictable because it is always "problematic" (*The Logic of Sense* 54). First, a model is not always mimicked in a singular, specific way. It is a problem for which myriad solutions may emerge – responses, reactualisations, or rearticulations that have happened or have yet to happen. This means that one manifestation of a model, one solution, will not always work (54). After all, adaptability is crucial if habits are continually to be tailored to present life circumstances or conditions (Chapter One). Further, for Deleuze, a manifestation is not merely a single, specific mimicry of a model. Just as the problem affects the configurations of any solution, any solution can affect the configurations of the problem. This means that the manifestations that emerge from time to time may be able to escape or to modify the model. Obviously, some philosophers and performance theorists more readily recognise that the mental changes the material than that the material changes the mental. "That it goes both ways is something that we all experience," Ruth Foster explains, "but do not recognise. We admit that actions may emerge from feeling and from idea, but not that the inner impulse is in turn modified or reinforced by action" (*Knowing in My Bones* 30). Moreover, many philosophers and performance theorists overlook this possibility for the political purpose of making ready-made models seem universal and unchanging (Chapter Two)<sup>45</sup>. Deleuze's 'problematic' paradigm is different in that it highlights how a model can create a manifestation, which can in turn create a new model as it is repeated, which can in turn create a new manifestation, and so on ad infinitum. In Deleuze's words, it "contests *both* model *and* copy at once" (*The Logic of Sense* 2, original emphasis). Consequently, Deleuze's problematic paradigm contests the predictability of the mimicry that anchors habits. When a body's mimicry of a habit is unpredictable, this habit starts to seem less natural, more like a problem with particular and provisional determinations.

Obviously, conservative cultural systems often find the productive mimicry of a model that Bergson and Deleuze describe threatening. For example, in Deleuze's exemplary event of a death any discrepancy between the model and the manifestation produces horrific anomalies

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<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, as a consequence of their vitalism Bergson and Deleuze cherish this idea that models may actually be more variable than their manifestations. To emphasise this point, they often invert the mind-matter relations established in Platonism, positioning matter as the aspect that is already-made and mind as the aspect that is in-the-making.

– vampires, zombies, the living dead. To minimise this threat, cultural systems control the model-manifestation connections behind habit. They control a body's mimicry of a habit by creating a closed circuit of connections or correspondences between past models and present manifestations, between the virtual and the actual (cf. Massumi *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 100-101). In this paradigm, a repetition of a habit is subject to what Deleuze describes as "a rule of resemblance" (*Difference and Repetition* 104). Cultural systems collapse the potentially productive mind-matter connections that anchor habits back into a parallelism of the type dualists and monists describe. The model dominates, and the manifestation duplicates this model. In this way, a repetition of a habit becomes what Bergson calls a "ready-made response" (*Matter and Memory* 41) to a problem, a solution that precludes other possible solutions. Uhlmann has made this point in his analysis of Bergson and Deleuze too, suggesting that the ready-made responses of habit remove the need "to respond to the cacophony of questions ... constantly posed by pure sensory perception" (*Beckett and Poststructuralism* 65). By collapsing mind and matter, conservative cultural systems make the bodily mimicry behind habit more and more mechanical. They turn habits into "[s]omething mechanical encrusted on the living" (*Laughter* 84, original emphasis), as Bergson says, at odds with the creative flux that he and Deleuze believe to be the basis of life.

When they function in this fashion, conservative cultural forces bring bodily habits back to, and make bodily habits operate according to, the outlook Bergson calls intellectual. As I explained earlier, the intellect approaches bodily behaviours in static spatial rather than dynamic temporal terms. In Bergson's words, the intellect feels comfortable with "what is already made, and only confusedly feels the making" (*Creative Evolution* 273). Consequently, when bodies work in an intellectual way they attend more to past models than to present manifestations. They attend more to the signs or labels that stand in for reality than to the shifting reality itself. In this paradigm, Bergson says, a veil is interposed "[b]etween nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness" (*Laughter* 158). A set of past models becomes a veil that prevents bodies from appreciating and accounting for time, change, and transformation, and from fully experiencing the moments and movements phenomenologists might call the thing-in-itself. Bodies become trapped in the past and unresponsive to the present. It becomes difficult for them to

distinguish between what tradition and training lead them to anticipate and what is actually happening. "[M]emories supplant our actual perceptions," Bergson puts it, "of which we retain only a few hints, thus seeing them merely as 'signs' that recall us of former images" (*Matter and Memory* 24). Accordingly, he argues, "[p]ractically [w]e perceive only the past" (194, original emphasis). The constant, transcendent categories the intellect develops can undoubtedly be useful in life. Yet there is always a chance that they will retroactively be cast as foundational. When bodies work in an intellectual way, they allow the models the intellect develops to determine what they do, say, or see. This intellectual outlook obscures the fact that such models reflect transient forces, not timeless realities. It obscures the fact that these are only fictional models that have been abstracted from life, attributed a meaning, and then applied back into life. It thus obscures the fact that there was once the possibility of doing things differently. As a consequence, Bergson argues, when they work in a static, spatially-oriented, intellectual way bodies set up the "habits that will stifle [their freedom] if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort" (*Creative Evolution* 127).

Bergson's and Deleuze's comments about matter, mind, mimicry, and habit are useful to this thesis, mainly because they show how conservative cultural and aesthetic systems perpetuate the parallelistic philosophies of the West to help them perpetuate certain habits. These theorists both make much of the fact that the model-manifestation parallels behind habit are only a fiction, albeit a fiction human beings believe in. From Bergson's and Deleuze's perspectives, conservative cultural systems regulate the mimicry of a model behind habit to reduce the risk of mistakes. Nevertheless, these theorists show it is still possible to take advantage of the bodily mimicry behind habit to produce such mistakes or modifications in habits. Their comments confirm my suspicion that the difference between a conservative mimicry of a habit and a creative mimicry of a habit comes not just from what model of habit is mimicked but from the way this model is mimicked. The difference comes not just from the properties but from the processes. It thus depends on the different ways in which a model and its bodily manifestation can work, consist, or come together, and on the different degree of stress that can be put on one or on the other. In fact, in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari also claim this compositional consistency determines the



affect, and the artistry, of any mimicry of a behaviour. "Composition," they say, "is the sole definition of art" (*What is Philosophy?* 191). Although Bergson's and Deleuze's analyses of matter, mind, mimicry, and habit may appear to be only an abstract philosophy, then, they actually provide a useful way of looking at the bodily mimicry behind habit, and at how it conserves or corrupts that habit. This is where vitalism connects not only with the practice of habit, but with the practice of putting habit onstage in theatrical performance. As I come to the close of this Chapter, then, it is worth canvassing some of the ideas that surface when these terrains come together.

In connecting Bergsonian, Deleuzian, and theatrical treatments of habit, I want to take the rhythm of a habit as it is repeated as a central concern. Since different ways of repeating a habit depend on different bodily rhythms during the repetition, the concept of rhythm can help differentiate standard mimicry of a habit from subversive mimicry of a habit – especially given that rhythm is a critical concept for vitalists (Deleuze and Guattari discuss rhythm in terms of the refrain in *A Thousand Plateaus*) and for theatre theorists and practitioners (although spectators are rarely overtly interested in rhythm).

Rhythm refers to a complex set of concepts. According to Barba, "[t]he word rhythm comes from the Greek verb *rheo*, meaning to run, to flow. Rhythm literally means 'a particular way of flowing'" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 211, original emphasis). Rhythm refers to the way a repetition of a bodily behaviour flows, in space and through time. In theatre, rhythm is important to the habits of the performing body, of the performance, and even of the spectating body – each has a particular way of flowing. Significantly, rhythm is also responsible for setting up or for subverting regularity, metricity, and mechanicity in the flow of a series of movements. It is responsible for fluid processes and for fixed properties. Rhythm, and the shared sense of rhythm kinaesthesia supplies, helps people make meaning of fleeting moments and movements. A sense of rhythm is responsible for people's recognition of and response to the tensions they observe in the bodily movements of others. In this sense, Janet Goodridge says in her study, "rhythm effects human interaction in various ways" (*Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 31). In theatre it certainly guides communication amongst actors and between actors and audiences. For, Barba says, "[i]t helps the spectator follow, perceive and often even foresee the actor/dancer's

intentions" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 213), and this helps them make meaning. Clearly, the role that previous cultural experiences and expectations play in rhythm cannot be overlooked. As Barba argues "[r]hythm has its rules" (211). For example, there are different approaches to the behaviour of bodies in space and through time in the night-long Indian dance dramas, the classical 'unities' attributed to Aristotle, the Shakespearean subversion of these Aristotelian limits, the beats, scenes, and acts seen in Stanislavskian realism, and the experiments of modernist playwrights like Samuel Beckett. "Mutually understood by performers and audience in any given context," Goodridge says, "these conventions become established over time and are peculiar to a particular culture" (*Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 65). It really is difficult to read or interpret rhythm if it does not replicate cultural or theatrical norms, at least to a certain degree. Accordingly, Goodridge argues, "[a]ppropriate, that is to say culturally and contextually correct, use of rhythm and timing may be said to bring power to the event" (74-75). Nevertheless, even though rhythm relies on structure, expectation, regularity, and repetition, it also relies on spontaneity and surprise. As a result, a sense of rhythm helps people recognise movements, as well as any modifications in these movements – that is, it helps people recognise repetitions of movements, as well as differences in repetitions of movements. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari go so far as to suggest that "[i]t is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition, which nevertheless produces it" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 314). Though theatre practitioners do not necessarily speak in these terms, the concept of rhythm is helpful in considering theatrical performances, and in considering how they strike their own specific balance between standard behavioural flows and shifts in standard behavioural flows.

Undoubtedly, different types of theatrical mimicry display different degrees of openness to the intervals involved in the rhythm of any repetition of a habit, the intervals in which a model is manifested. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that these different tones or types of mimicry constitute two different treatments of the language of rhythm, one that denies the intervals, the other that develops the intervals. Or, in their terms, "one of which consists in extracting constants from it, the other in placing it in continuous variation" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 106-107). In his analysis of Bergson, Lindsay describes this as the difference between taking the notes of a tune and truly hearing it. "If we count the notes, each note of

the tune is taken," he says, "but by itself, separate from the rest; the tune has gone" (*The Philosophy of Bergson* 25). For vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze, the difference between these two languages is the difference between the 'tempo' of the static points and the 'true rhythm' of the shifting processes in-between these points. Unlike definite tempo or meter, Deleuze and Guattari say, rhythm "is located between two milieus" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 313). "[M]eter is dogmatic," they declare, "but rhythm is critical" (313). In the theatrical sphere Lecoq has offered a similar opinion, observing that "to enter into the rhythm is, precisely, to enter the great driving force of life itself" (*The Moving Body* 32). Again, he argues, "[t]he driving force is not *what* to play but *how* it should be played ... While a scenario is linear, proceeding from one point to another, the driving force is dynamic, introducing the ups and downs necessary for performance" (111, original emphasis). Insofar as he looks at rhythm as a dynamic force of life, then, Lecoq shares the theorists' belief that it is less definable than scenario, story, structure, or tempo. "Tempo can be defined," he says, "while rhythm is difficult to grasp" (32).

The more regular, regulated, conservative types of theatrical mimicry are frequently intellectual in their approach to rhythm. These types of mimicry adopt the dominant Western dictionary definitions of rhythm that, as Goodridge argues, "generally emphasise meter" (*Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 41). Their approach to rhythm focuses more on the static points of the model than on the spontaneous processes of the manifestation. This means these types of mimicry treat things that have a rhythm more than rhythm in itself. This is what makes theirs an intellectual approach to the rhythmic fabric of performance, grounded in objective, chronological, or clock time – Barba calls it the time "measured by clocks and calendars" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 211), Goodridge calls it the "time on which we have come to rely" (*Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 42-43). This product-oriented intellectual approach to rhythm actually supports mechanical mimicry, as it accentuates the models mimicked, and limits the lively intervals in which these models are mimicked to being mere copies of these models. It accentuates logical, linear models in order to suppress the lively force or flow of the manifestation. "What the artist confronts this way," Deleuze and Guattari argue, "...is chaos ... the forces of a raw untamed matter upon which forms must be imposed" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 338). Ultimately, because this approach to rhythm supports the

conservative mimicry of habits some theatres are after, it helps them make these habits seem more natural to spectators (Chapter Two).

Although dominant Western definitions of rhythm are useful, they do not encompass all the facets or potentials of rhythm. For this reason there have always been more radical types of theatrical mimicry that are at least potentially more intuitive in their approach to the rhythmic fabric of theatrical performance. These types of mimicry focus on the spontaneous processes of manifestation that lie in the intervals in-between the static points of the model. This means they treat the true rhythm in and of itself that Lecoq has dubbed "a *rhythm* rather than a *tempo*" (*The Moving Body* 32, original emphasis). Though the rhythmic forces of the interval are not always recognised in Western culture, they can emerge to productive ends when a body performs a behaviour in life or in the theatre. Because, as Bergson and Deleuze have argued, it is these forces that can challenge habits. Though conventional mimicry tames the rhythmic forces of the interval to create what Diamond characterises as an ordered theatrical time (*Unmaking Mimesis* 143, 144, 147) Diamond, Goodridge, and Ruth Foster all think radical performance practices can take advantage of these forces. "In performance," Goodridge phrases it, "...a state of being out of everyday or clock time may be achieved" (*Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 58-59). "[W]ithin the phases of measured time," Ruth Foster says, "there occur those crucial, personal experiences of unmeasured time in which the creative process takes place" (*Knowing in My Bones* 55). This process-oriented intuitive approach to rhythm actually supports radical mimicry, as it opens the models mimicked up to the living flow from which they are first drawn. It opens these logical, linear models up in order to engage and experiment with the lively force or flow of the manifestation. This puts the behaviour performed in the turbulent process Deleuze and Guattari call continuous variation, opening it to all the "variables that can affect it in the shortest moment of time" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 94). Deleuze also accounts for this in terms of the eternal return, "the affirmation of all chance in a single moment" (*The Logic of Sense* 180). Ultimately, because this approach to rhythm supports the radical mimicry of habits some theatres are after, it helps them repudiate the notion that these habits are originary realities that spectators should mimic.

Though criticisms have been levelled at Bergson's and Deleuze's concern with the dynamics of change, and at their dichotomisation of the constant and the changing, they are aware of the difficulties that arise either with an exclusive emphasis on conservative mimicry or with an exclusive emphasis on counter-mimicry. Both theorists spend at least some time explaining that intellectual approaches to the flow of a behaviour and intuitive approaches to the flow of a behaviour are incomplete without each other, and so never exist in complete opposition or in complete isolation (cf. *Creative Evolution* 151; cf. *Bergsonism* 88-89).

This incompleteness Bergson and Deleuze identify is certainly an issue in theatrical performance, and in its attempts to coordinate and communicate the rhythmic flow of behaviours in space, through time, and in relation to spectators. If theatrical mimicry works only with the orderly models the intellect grasps, it works only with the facets of the performance that can be objectified, dissected, and discussed. It breaks the movements of the performance up into a series of static points in space, in which a leg goes here or an arm goes there. The problem, as Dempster argues, is that this is "an image of dismemberment, of a corpse and not a living body" ("Re-visioning the Body" 16). "[T]he performer's anatomy" is, Barba agrees, "...a dissection. It is contrary to, the opposite of, spontaneity and creativity, one might even say of life in art" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 24). This intellectual approach can, at least temporarily, arrest a performance's life or animating force. The performance may seem lifeless to spectators. Yet, if theatrical mimicry works only with the disorderly manifestations the intuition grasps, it works only with the facets of the performance that cannot be described, dissected, or repeated. Rather than breaking the movements of the performance up, it restores dynamism to them. It opens them up to the dynamic, differential flux from which they were first drawn. This, according to Bergson, is to replace ourselves in pure duration, of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge (*Creative Evolution* 186)

The difficulty is that this intuitive approach has the potential to make the performance alive, intensely animated, but also largely illegible to spectators. This means Grotowski is on the right track when he observes that "[o]ne cannot be completely relaxed as is taught in many theatre schools, for he who is relaxed is nothing more than a wet rag" (*Toward a Poor*

*Theatre* 208). If the performers' gestures get too relaxed, ragged, frenetic, or unreadable they may get "fuzzy", and this as Lecoq declares is "...undesirable in the theatre" (*The Moving Body* 77).

As Bergson's and Deleuze's comments make clear, there are difficulties and disadvantages with both the intellectually grasped features and the intuitively grasped features of the rhythmic flow of human behaviour. This means neither on its own is totally conducive to liveliness and creativity in the theatre. The majority of theatre performers do not want to be trapped by systems of repetition in their work, but they do not want their work to descend into chaos either. To be truly lively in the way they mimic recognisable habits in life, or in front of spectators in theatrical performance, people have to link the two facets of mimicry. They have to link their static sense of the past and the future with their spontaneous sensations of the present, in the process developing the relation between the two on which lively rhythms depend. After all, as Grotowski remarks, "[l]iving is not being contracted, nor is it being relaxed: it is a *process*" (*Toward a Poor Theatre* 208, original emphasis). In theatre in particular this means performing bodies are at all times divided between these two factors involved in mimicking any habit. Bergson understands this in terms of the twin tendencies of the vital impulse. Deleuze understands this in terms of the paradoxical tendency of becoming to move in both territorializing and deterritorializing directions at once. "[A]ssemblages swing between a territorial closure that tends to re-stratify them," he and Guattari argue, "and a deterritorializing movement that on the contrary connects them with the Cosmos" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 337). This said, because the two factors involved in staging human habits are fused together in performances and in performing bodies, it is sometimes difficult for performers, let alone spectators, to distinguish between them. They can only be completely isolated and individuated in theory. They are experienced as one in the moment of performance, and together determine the rhythm, efficacy, and expressivity of this moment, as I noted earlier in this Chapter. In Barba's terms, these forces together determine "the fertility of the creative process" ("The Deep Order Called Turbulence" 58; cf. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 24). For theatre practitioners as for theorists, then, considering the tensions between the two factors involved in mimicking human habits – between the models the intellect grasps and the manifestations the intuition grasps – can be useful in considering if there is a conservative tone or a creative tone to this mimicry.

Throughout this Chapter I have discussed the value of Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalist theories, and their comments about product-driven intellectual and process-driven intuitive approaches to people's bodily habits. I have accentuated Bergson's and Deleuze's interest in creating the conditions of possibility for changing people's habits. I think Bergson and Deleuze are both ultimately concerned with how established cultural habits can change. Because, as Bergson asks, "what would be the use of repeating [a habit] if the result were always to reproduce the same thing?" (*Matter and Memory* 137). The main thing with Bergson and Deleuze, though, is not just that they are interested in change, it is that they canvass interesting ways of making change happen. Their criticism of conventional mind-matter relations, and their canvassing of possibilities for more productive mind-matter relations, consolidates the value of the more physical, processual method of modifying habit I investigate in this thesis. Their insights clarify how people can work with the model-manifestation interactions needed to mimic a habit in the present in order to mimic or counter-mimic this habit, including how performers can do this in the theatre.

In concluding this Chapter, then, I again want to make the point that Bergson and Deleuze do not share some performativity and performance theorists' conviction that the most plausible method of modifying habits is based on new images of the body not on new movements of the body (Introduction, Chapters One, Two, and Three). Bergson and Deleuze point out that it is dangerous for theorists or theatre practitioners to provide new behavioural models, and then assume that bodies will mimic these models. This, in their terms, is an intellectual approach that still sets a model of habit up as a problem with a single solution. To tackle problems with this method, Bergson and Deleuze encourage other methods of modifying habits, ones that engage the ever-changing empirical reality that habits have come from without becoming overly biologicistic<sup>46</sup>. Bergson's and Deleuze's concepts of habit change are not about fixing habits, or finding new habits, but about taking

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<sup>46</sup> As I have argued in the Introduction to this thesis, it is possible to consider mind, matter, and the complex connections between them needed to mimic a habit, without naturalising them, as these terrains can be culturally constructed but still be real.

advantage of the indeterminacy of all habits, as things that might be mimicked differently, as problems with myriad possible solutions. Their concepts show that change need not come from mimicking another habit. Instead, change can come from mimicking an ordinary habit in another way. In other words, change can come from a creative connection between a model and its bodily manifestation. In this respect Bergson and Deleuze have recognised, as Grosz has recognised, that "seeking resonances and parallels between mind and body (as dualists tend to do) may be less interesting than raising the question of their dissonances, cases of breakdown, failure, or disintegration" (*Volatile Bodies* 18). Bergson's and Deleuze's concepts of habit change both seem to be based on the benefits of replaying rather than just replacing habits, benefits I outlined in my comments on habit in Chapters One, Two, and Three. As such, they are closer to the process-oriented method of modifying habit I have proposed in this thesis than the product-oriented methods proposed in a number of other contemporary theories and theatre practices.

Because Bergson's and Deleuze's concepts of habit and habit change depend on what Deleuze would call a counter-mimicry (*The Logic of Sense* 18), they depend not just on which habits are mimicked but on the way these habits are mimicked. They consolidate the idea that change depends on the bodily processes behind mimicry, and thus on the ability of the person performing the habit to do it again, do it differently, in the present moment (whether this happens voluntarily or not). Certainly, changes of the sort described in this Chapter happen only while a person mimics a habit, not before or after a person mimics a habit. This prompts both Bergson and Deleuze to observe that changes to habit are easily imagined, but are truly effective only when they are put into the bodily practices of the present. Or, as Deleuze explains, "only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh" (*The Logic of Sense* 161).

Bergson's and Deleuze's concepts of habit and habit change both advocate becoming over being, temporal deferral over spatial presence, and this increases their relevance in a poststructuralist critical climate (cf. Douglass "Deleuze's Bergson" 386; cf. Marks *Gilles Deleuze* 70). However, their theories also foreground the fact that habits and habit changes are located in the material practices of mimicry – that is, located in real practices rather than just in representational practices. This is a perspective welcome to theatre practitioners and



theorists, particularly those who want to challenge common human habits through theatrical mimicry. In fact, as I noted toward the end of Chapter Three, theatre can provide an excellent practical forum for the more processual method of modifying habit implied in the broad theory of habit, as well as in Bergson's and Deleuze's theories of habit. Theatre always brings matter, mind, and meaning into conversation when it mimics human habits by means of human habits. This means theatre is well positioned to produce the variable manifestations of a model that make way for new habits.

Ultimately, the main value of the Bergsonian and Deleuzian accounts of habit I have considered in this Chapter is that they add to currently dominant theories of habit and habit change, particularly to performativity theories, by articulating the advantages of adopting a more processual approach, and of anchoring this approach in the human body. Their acceptance of the body's role in radically repeating habits means their theories can be helpful in discussing the types of theatrical mimicry that have the most potential to confront and counter favoured human habits, be these major or minor habits. In the final two Chapters of this thesis, then, I will bear their theories in mind as I return to my reflection on the question of habit, and on the question of habit in theatrical performance, in more practical terms. Although I will not have the opportunity to treat Bergson's and Deleuze's theories in detail again, I will make use of many of the themes I have introduced here as I look at physical theatre practices internationally in Chapter Five and in Australia in Chapter Six. These themes will help me analyse how many physical theatre practitioners work with the model-manifestation parallels that ground mimicry of habits, and thus also ground counter-mimicry of habits.

## Chapter Five – ‘Play’ with Habit in Contemporary Physical Theatre

Working with the ideas about habit, theatre, and theory I have introduced in this thesis, in Chapters Five and Six I want to identify practical examples of the way the physical, processual treatment of habit I have been examining might work. In particular, I want to look at how physical theatre, and the cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural practices that provide the precedents for physical theatre, get to the heart of the issue of habit, and of the psycho-physical links involved in performing habits. Though physical theatre practitioners do not necessarily use the term habit, they do deal with habits, and in fact provide some of the most interesting challenges to dominant human habits in twentieth century performance. Physical theatre practitioners work with habits in multifaceted ways, some of which are not so distant from the types of theatre-making I discussed in Chapter Two. In addition to acting on the most challenging aspects of these types of theatre, physical theatre practitioners develop another treatment of habit. While the theatres I discussed in Chapter Two mimicked habits in their own specific ways, they were sometimes in danger of having the habits mimicked drive the physical processes of mimicking them, and thus in danger of naturalising these habits. Importantly, this is less of a problem with many of the physical theatre practitioners I will discuss here, and with the influences they draw on. As I noted in my Introduction, physical theatre's treatment of habit differs from that found in many other genres mainly because it highlights the performing bodies that (predictably or productively) mimic habits in the present moment of performance. In my interpretation, physical theatre practitioners ‘play’ with the subversive potential of any habit as it is performed in the present. Instead of simply revealing or replacing socially sanctioned habits, they vary the habits they mimic from within this very mimicry. In this sense, their interests resonate with some of the issues with habit I have already raised in remarkable ways – particularly the physical, processual, ‘replay’ method of modifying habits.

Obviously, it is worth describing what I mean by physical theatre before I discuss what is involved in physical theatre's play with habit, and detail the way this play is pursued by international practitioners (Chapter Five) and Australian practitioners (Chapter Six).

The performance practices today known as 'physical theatre' are partly a response to the supposed shortcomings of Western theatrical traditions such as Platonism, Aristotelianism, and realism. In Chapter Two I suggested these sorts of theatrical mimicry concentrate on the models of habit they represent, and control or conceal the material processes of representing them. These sorts of theatrical mimicry thus tend to be satisfied, as Adrian Kiermander says, "with referential rather than performance values" ("Reading(.) Theatre (.) Techniques" 154). For these theatres, the important thing is the iconic referentiality or resemblance between a model and its bodily manifestation, between what is mimicked and the way it is mimicked. Spectators are supposed to ignore it if performers or stage properties deviate from this referentiality. In spite of the fact that bodies support mimicry, then, their role in meaning-making is obscured for the theatrical and political purpose of making the characters and circumstances mimicked seem more natural. As Senda Akihiko articulates it in an interview with Hijikata and Tadashi Suzuki, "the body, which is central to theatrical language, too often becomes neglected" ("Fragments of Glass" 67). Additionally, as I suggested in Chapter Two, twentieth century rejections and radicalisations of mimicry sometimes inadvertently parallelise models and their bodily manifestations in similar ways, with similar results.

Most physical theatre practitioners recognise that the referentiality of 'traditional' mimicry has never actually been the basis of all Western theatre, and that it need not be the basis of contemporary theatrical performance. They take their inspiration from the search for provocative new acting techniques in the twentieth century. Though this search did start with Stanislavski, it was also, as Kiermander argues, "a prominent factor in the work of Meyerhold, Craig, Copeau, Dullin, and in our own time Grotowski, Brook and others" ("Actor Training at the Centre National d'Art et d'Essai" 61). In contrast to common conceptions of the legacy of Stanislavski, these practitioners were concerned with the lively physicality of performing bodies, and with opposing conventional mimicry's tendency to control and conceal this liveliness. They pursued a more physical performance style, and

sometimes also a more patently theatrical performance style. The practices today called 'physical theatre' expand on these earlier practices, and the term is now commonly taken to refer to practices that recognise bodies and bodily movements as the basis of meaning-making in the theatre. These practices call on bodily movements to express modes of existence, emotional states, characteristics, characters, and stories. Their meaning is therefore based, as Pledger observes, on "physicalisation as opposed to verbalisation" (Pledger, quoted Peter Eckersall "On Physical Theatre" 16). Since practitioners are still developing the parameters of physical theatre, the term undoubtedly still lends itself to diverse definitions. It can encompass almost any theatre practice that draws on principles of physical acting – dance, mime, circus, cabaret, and street theatre, for example. In fact, there are tensions between those who define physical theatre as dance theatre, those who define it as acrobatic and aerial tricks of the sort seen in contemporary circus, and those who define it as a physicalisation of longstanding theatrical traditions that does not depend on dance per se or on spectacular tricks (15-26). Despite this diversity, though, the creative processes of physical theatre in all cases depend on bodies and on the training of bodies. They disrupt the Western mainstream dominance of text, and the Western mainstream differentiation between theatre, dance, and performance art on the basis of textuality. In this way, physical theatre works to transcend traditional theatrical agendas, and to explore new material and metaphorical terrains in which spectators can be viscerally, emotionally, and intellectually changed by the encounter.

Given that physical theatre reacts to the European realist tradition of the last century or so, and to its perceived suppression of physicality, it is in some senses what Tait calls a negative theatrical method (*Converging Realities* 33-34). Nevertheless, as part of its reaction to realism, physical theatre also adopts a variety of body-based techniques, something that Tait's and Kiernander's texts have both noted. As Kiernander puts it, at the very least physical theatre perpetuates the West's own "traditions of non-literary and popular theatre forms" ("Reading (,) Theatre (,) Techniques" 157). In addition, as Pledger argues, "[b]y the 1980s people were looking at Eastern European and Asian theatre practices" (Pledger, quoted Eckersall "On Physical Theatre" 19). This blending of influences means that physical theatre is not a purely negative method.

One of the positive influences on physical theatre's methods is the early twentieth century effort to isolate the essence of theatre and theatricality, and to thereby intensify the power of theatre. As I indicated in Chapter Two, many twentieth century practitioners found the essence of theatrical performance in performing bodies and their movements, and therefore took bodily realities rather than textual referentialities as their key expressive resources. For example, as an important precursor of this type of theatre, Artaud undoubtedly emphasised the primacy of physicality in his theatre. Ensuing experimental events of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, including happenings and performance art, all came up with related responses to the 'failings' of conservative mimicry. Influenced by Artaud's refusal of referentiality and representation, they too referred to little beyond their own bodily vocabulary. Insofar as physical theatre prolongs this legacy of physically-driven performance, it has commonalities with the practices of performance art I considered in Chapter Two.

Another of the positive factors in physical theatre's methods is the fact that they are often based on one or more of a number of practices themselves based on the human body, but based on a more trained, stylised, sophisticated human body than the one performance artists preferred (cf. Snow *Imaging the In-between* 103-104). Physical theatre's methods draw on, amongst other things, athletic, acrobatic, or gymnastic disciplines, classical or contemporary dance conventions, European traditions like Greek Tragedy or Commedia Dell'Arte, Asian traditions like Noh, Kabuki, or Kathakali, circus techniques, clowning techniques, the mask, mime, and movement techniques of Jacques Copeau, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Etienne Decroux, Marcel Marceau, Lecoq, Ariane Mnouchkine, Suzuki, Hijikata, Ono, or Min Tanaka, the intercultural techniques of Grotowski, Barba, Peter Brook, or Augusto Boal, the therapeutic and theosophic techniques of yoga or of the Alexander, Feldenkrais, or Pilates Methods, martial arts disciplines like Aikido or Tai Chi, or improvisational techniques (cf. Marc Bauman "Physical Theatre"; cf. Logie "Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor"; cf. Bari Rolfe "The Big French Four"). As this list indicates, a lot of physical theatre practitioners base their acting styles and aesthetics on the commitment to life-long training and to physical training they see in Asian genres, as well as in the more body-based European genres. According to Watson, "[t]he eclectic nature of these influences hints at another contemporary trend, the internationalisation of performer training ... Many of those seriously concerned with acting

have expanded their horizons beyond their national and immediate cultural borders (*Performer Training* 8)<sup>47</sup>. In particular, Edward Scheer says "[c]ontemporary Japanese performance genres have come to represent a performance horizon for many of Australia's [and the world's] most innovative physical performers" ("Liminality and Corporeality" 137). This is certainly the case for some of the international practitioners I discuss in Chapter Five, and for Umiumare and Pledger, the Australian practitioners I consider in Chapter Six. Additionally, although physical theatre practitioners are critical of realist theatre's tendency to confirm the realities it represents, today a number are plundering realist methods for valuable techniques and training exercises, and making room for these too amongst the various influences on their work.

Because physical theatre practitioners generally appraise a number of performance principles, practices, genres, and cultures in their work, they ask performers to strike a balance between becoming expert in specific styles and becoming experienced in many styles. This facet of physical theatre's performer training again positively distinguishes it from many of its predecessors, whose practices reflected what Barry O'Connor calls "single ideologies" ("Mapping Training / Mapping Performance" 47). These predecessors adopted a single, specific technique, a single style of embodiment, as a number of film and theatre training schools today still do. On the contrary, physical theatre practices operate in the tradition of the public theatre training schools that are, as O'Connor contends, "more eclectic and generalist in their programs" (47). These practices adopt a number of the techniques available at the time, and so adopt a shifting style of embodiment. In this sense, they build what Susan Leigh Foster would call a body-for-hire, "[u]ncommitted to any specific aesthetic vision" ("Dancing Bodies" 255; cf. Kiernander *Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil* 21).

With all these influences at play in its training and theatrical techniques, physical theatre undoubtedly does differ both from its realist predecessors and from its performance art predecessors. The most important point for this project is that physical theatre frequently

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<sup>47</sup> A number of texts have analysed this trend in recent years, including Watson's *Performer Training* (2001), Alison Hodge's *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2000), and Jane Milling and Graham Ley's *Modern Theories of Performance* (2000).

rejects the idea that a straightforward psycho-physical resemblance or referentiality is the most significant thing when performers put human habits onstage. As distinct from the realist methods I discussed in Chapter Two, which think that a performer's psyche steers their physicality, physical theatre practices also think that a performer's physicality steers their psyche. Yet, as also I mentioned in Chapter Two, it is risky for any sort of theatrical mimicry to take inspiration from performance art and simply invert these two terms. By doing this it can still become the sort of theatrical mimicry in which one dominant term is duplicated by its other, not the sort in which two interdependent terms interact to critique the cultural conventions mimicked. For example, this is potentially a problem with Lecoq when he declares that "[i]n my methods of teaching I have always given priority to the external world over inner experience" (*The Moving Body* 19), though this prioritisation is eventually mitigated by his desire for 'play' between the two. This problem is perhaps even more explicit in Schechner's analysis of Asian theatre training in *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Strangely enough, Schechner argues that for many Asian performers "[t]he inner and the outer are manifestations of a One, and therefore training either inner or outer is training both. Since the outer is more easily trained, it is the object of training" (225). Even if this were truly what many Asian performers think, Schechner does not discuss the drawbacks of this move from dualistic to monistic terms. Schechner's comments suggest that the physical is smoothly duplicated by the psychical, and so simply invert the terms of supposedly 'traditional' mimicry again, instead of interrupting them. These comments do not really recognise that the psycho-physical relationship required to repeat habits goes both ways. Many physical theatre practitioners today learn the lesson of these examples, and take a more progressive approach to the psycho-physical mimicry they use to present habits. Translating this progressive approach to their performances, they amplify the mutual impact the psychical and the physical have on each other as a body mimics a habit. They show spectators that it is not a prior model, but a psycho-physical process of mimicry, that builds the bodily habits they see, and thus builds the bodies themselves. This means their performances challenge the naturalness of the human habits they present. As Tait puts it, "live performances which parody cultural identities and/or destabilise sexual identity in their physical interactions stage performing bodies to seem unnatural" ("Unnatural Bodies from Violent and Queer Acts in Australian Physical Theatre" 3). In such practice, Pledger

suggests, the main thing is "the moment when a body starts to break down and implode. That's a physical theatre moment" (Pledger, quoted Eckersall "On Physical Theatre" 21).

Many physical theatre practitioners manage to adopt this more progressive approach to physicality, psyche, and mimicry. Though they do rely on bodies as their primary expressive resource, they do not necessarily deny the impact of mimicry, or of the texts, stories, scenes, or characters mimicked. Instead, their strategy is to master the principles and procedures of mimicry without letting them become master. Physical theatre practitioners control the bodies behind mimicry, but also celebrate the creative potential of these bodies. In this respect, physical theatre does not just develop a new genre of performance, it recalls the physicality of all genres of performance. It recalls the dual role of the human body in the theatre, as both the model mimicked and the means of mimicking it. "In a way," Pledger therefore suggests, "the idea of a categorisation of 'physical theatre' is tautological. It's all just theatre" (17). This stress on the bodily resources basic to all performance is perhaps why there is no single subject matter or style common to all physical theatre. Performances may have a personal, political, serious, satirical, comic, or tragic tone, or may combine a number of these tones. Performances may have a stripped-back style that stresses the interplay of bodies, may have a media-savvy style that stresses the body's social and digital surrounds, or may combine the two. Additionally, the more politically motivated performances may bring bodily movements into counterpoint with other media to create unpredictable, unconventional, and perhaps even uncomfortable fusions. The important thing is that physicality is central to the creative processes of all these types of physical theatre, and this gives the practitioners great potential to challenge and even change the habits they stage.

Given the characteristics of their genre, when physical theatre practitioners confront the listless, lifeless, restrictive range with which habit furnishes human bodies, they generally do it in ways different to other genres. Physical theatre practitioners do more than adopt a new-and-improved set of skills or habits (a technique seen in some circus performances (Chapter Two)). They 'play' with their existing habits, becoming aware of how these habits work,



and also, in some contemporary cases, aware of opportunities for minimising, maximising, manipulating, or changing how these habits work. In effect, these practitioners work with the mimetic processes habits depend on to do these habits differently. In a way, then, physical theatre's play with habit offers a practical example of the potentials of the physical, processual, 'replay' method of modifying habits (Chapters One, Two, and Three), the worth of which is so plainly outlined by the vitalist philosophers Bergson and Deleuze (Chapter Four). Theatre practitioners and theorists often describe this play with habit as a process of peeling, stripping, neutralising, detraining, or deconstructing a performer's habits, although the term 'deconstruction' is not used in its specifically Derridean sense here. For example, Dempster provides an interesting description of this process.

The development of what might be termed the post-modern body is in some sense a deconstructive process, involving a period of detraining of the dancer's habitual structures and patterns of movement ... Through this process the dancer reconstructs a physical articulation ("Women Writing the Body" 21)

This method, this stripping away of stifling habits in order to modify the body, is advocated by European theatre practitioners as diverse as Adolphe Appia, Barba, Copeau, Grotowski, Rudolf Laban, and Lecoq, by Asian theatre practitioners such as Hijikata, Ono, Suzuki, and Tanaka, by American theatre practitioners such as Boal, and by body therapists such as Alexander, Feldenkrais, and Pilates, as well as by many of the contemporary physical theatre practitioners they influence. After analysing the process of peeling back habit in this Chapter, then, I will draw on explanations and examples from five of these international practitioners – Lecoq, Grotowski, Barba, Hijikata, and Ono.

Clearly, this idea of peeling back habit has both potentials and problems. In particular, some philosophers and performance theorists have seen it as a process of finding and foregrounding the 'essential' properties of the person or of the performer. They have seen it as a process that stresses a natural body that exists beyond everyday habits. In this sense, this habit-stripping seems a lot like the now discredited attempts in performance art to access an originary mode of being beneath habit (Chapter Two). When explained in this way, the process of peeling back habit in physical theatre seems a somewhat essentialist project. It seems, therefore, to be at odds with the poststructuralist sentiment that dominates theoretical arenas today.

There is no doubt that many of the examples I discuss here have been described in these essentialistic terms, at least to some degree. Although in many ways useful, Barba's pseudo-scientific anatomy of theatre in *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* certainly exemplifies the essentialistic potential in ideas of habit-stripping. Barba argues that performers must give up their daily habits, "must give up their own automatic responses" (17), to access the elementary physiological energies that are responsible for their stage 'presence'<sup>48</sup>. Barba speaks of the physiological energies responsible for presence in performance in terms of preexpressivity. "The level which deals with how to render the actor's energy scenically alive," he says, "is the pre-expressive level" (88). Barba claims that preexpressivity generates a certain tension, energy, life, or presence in the performer's body. This energy is, he says, "characteristic of the performer's life even before anything is represented or expressed" (10). It is responsible for the performer's ability to immediately attract an audience's attention, prior to the intervention of the mediating forces of representation or meaning. According to Barba, it is only when a performer concentrates on what will be expressed rather than on the way it will be expressed that they are able to obscure the audience appeal of this preexpressive energy.

Barba believes the psychological orientation of realist theatre is symptomatic of a tendency to obscure the performers' elementary energy, a tendency that has overpowered Western theatre-making at least since the late nineteenth century. Barba laments the fact that many realist actors begin with the psyche rather than the physiology of the character – that is, with psychological identification rather than physical personification. Like the theorists I discussed in Chapter Two, Barba is critical of this accepted interpretation of Stanislavskian realism. He too believes that the psychological dimension of Stanislavski's work, detailed in *An Actor Prepares*, has received disproportionate attention, particularly from the founders of the American Method. Moreover, he too believes that the physiological dimensions of Stanislavski's method have been unduly neglected.

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<sup>48</sup> Although Barba's essential physiology is reminiscent of Grotowski's notion of the total act, in describing this aspect of performance he leaves his mentor Grotowski's spiritual domain in favour of a pseudo-scientific biophysical domain.

To address this problem with Western theatre-making, Barba develops an East/West dichotomy. For Barba, the mythic origins, religious significance, and social impact of Asian drama and dance mean it is an integral part of life in the East, and it merits lifelong training. Although Barba argues that his elemental energy is recurrent across performance traditions, he also argues that time-tested Asian movement and martial techniques access it better. They peel back habit better. According to Barba, then, Asian performers have the benefit of the conventional, codified, physiological frameworks on which free expression depends, and most twentieth century European performers do not. European performers are left, Barba implies, to learn from their Asian counterparts. They need to assimilate some of Asia's performance-making principles if they are to surmount this difference in accessing elemental energies between the two (cf. Ley *From Mimesis to Interculturalism* 230-231). In this sense, like some of his intercultural mentors, Barba actually strives to surpass cultural differences through intercultural exchange, to explain why these Asian principles must persist across all effective works<sup>49</sup>. Barba is ostensibly open to exceptional Western genres "such as classical ballet or mime" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 192). Yet, he persists with a polarity between the primacy of psychological 'logos' in European theatre and the primacy of physiological 'bios' in Asian theatre, a polarity between "psychological rather than physical bases for action" (192). He proposes few possibilities for interaction between the two. According to Ley, Barba in fact needs this pro-Asian polarity to sustain the transcendent third term he supplies, the transcultural principle of energy, preexpressivity or presence (*From Mimesis to Interculturalism* 235-237). Barba's polarity allows him to argue that both techniques are trying to access this preexpressive energy, even if Asian techniques are more effective than European techniques. It allows him to bolster preexpressive energy's presumed place as the basis of theatre practice. In Barba's work, then, the risk is that this elementary physiological energy (and the performance practices that search for it) will be essentialised in a problematic fashion. That it will become an

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<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, it is predominantly 'anthropological' theatre theorists like Barba and Schechner who use their international research not just to explore a multiplicity of theatre training methods, but to seek a set of basic theatrical principles that transcend time, genre, and culture. For instance, whereas Barba suggests all performer training searches for a performing body's physiological energy or presence, Schechner suggests all performer training teaches a performing body to present texts, characters, or characteristics to other people and to pass these techniques on to new generations of performers in the genre (*Between Theater and Anthropology* 229). I address the risks of this search for commonalities again in my analysis of NYID in Chapter Five.

essence that performers can always access by peeling back their habits, an essence that escapes theatre's ephemerality and ever-changing traditions. This is just the sort of essence that poststructuralists eye with suspicion.

Just because the process of peeling back habit in physical theatre has been understood in essentialist ways, though, does not mean it always has to be. This process can also be described in a different way, a way that is more appropriate to the poststructuralist position that dominates contemporary theoretical discourses. This process of peeling back habit need not be seen as accessing the body, person, or personality that lies beneath habit. Instead, this process can be seen as becoming aware of and altering the physical, psychical, representational, and social processes that have produced this body, person, or personality. Schneider describes a similar phenomenon in postmodern performance in different terms. "Peeling at signification," she phrases it, "...they are interested to expose not an originary, true, or redemptive body, but the sedimented layers of signification themselves" (*The Explicit Body in Performance* 2). This sort of habit-stripping does not expose the essential person beneath the habits. It exposes and experiments with some of the processes that have produced this person. Understood in these terms, physical theatre's process of peeling back habit plays with a given habit by identifying how this habit operates, and interrupting the usually unconscious model-manifestation interactions that underpin this habit. If this process involves a return to the real, it is a return to the reality of this reciprocal mind-matter relation from which habits emerge – a relation that can never reach an eternal origin or essence, as my analysis of Bergson's and Deleuze's vitalist theories in Chapter Four explained. In this sense, habit-stripping cracks the self open not to see what is beneath, but to see what this self can or cannot do. Insofar as this sort of habit-stripping transfers the prime emphasis from originary properties to ongoing processes, it is not necessarily essentialist. For example, Auslander observes just this sort of anti-essentialist shift in Boal's methods of stripping off social masks.

For Appia, Copeau, and Grotowski, the body must be divested of its social masks in order to access universal, archetypal, or subconscious images, which are seen as more authentic than the social. Boal clearly does not share in this desire to transcend the social in favor of the archetypal ...[The] neutrality he posits is a rhetorical figure

standing for the ability to move from one mask to another while retaining a critical distance from all masks (*From Acting to Performance* 105-106)

When understood in this way, physical theatre's process of peeling away and playing with habits has the potential to overcome some of the problems with theories of theatre-making that confront human habits by revealing, transcending, or replacing these habits (Chapter Two). It does not seek natural bodies, normal bodies, or new bodies. Instead, it stresses the malleability of bodily habits, as things that might be done differently.

In the remainder of this thesis, when I suggest there are benefits to physical theatre's play with habit, I will be referring to this less essentialist process of peeling back and playing with habit. I will emphasise the fact that this process takes the constraints of current cultural habits as a point of departure in producing habit change, a plus according to the theories I addressed in Chapters Three and Four. I will also emphasise the fact that, though performers enter this process with great deliberacy, they accept that the process often has effects that are unplanned, unpredicted, and not completely under their control, an attitude the vitalists I considered in Chapter Four would welcome. Given this unpredictability, physical theatre's play with habit is less like the sorts of habit change seen in some other performance and performance theory paradigms, and more like the sorts seen in ordinary life. When physical theatre practitioners adopt this approach, they offer a compelling case for taking mimicry as a means of challenging habits, and thus for the more processual method of challenging habit I have looked at in this thesis. Through the rest of this Chapter I will prioritise this as I consider physical theatre's process of playing with habits, and the three rough phases I discern to be part of this process – exposing, experimenting with, and finally estranging or changing habits. Although these phases are not always clearly individuated in theatre practices, I think they do indicate some of the key principles that inform these practices. My analysis of these phases will naturally be motivated both by the insights of the practitioners I discuss here and by the insights of the theatre practitioners and theorists I have already discussed in this thesis.

Curiously, the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit is the only part of the process that actually involves a peeling away of the physical, psychical, social, and representational structures that produce a body. This first phase exposes how the habits of a body hold together or work, what Deleuze and Guattari would call their "style" (*Anti-Oedipus* 133). It identifies, isolates, and interrupts the body's habits, and the model-manifestation parallels involved in predictably repeating these habits in the present. In a sense, this first phase brings a performer back to the basics of a given habit, to the flow of bodily energies involved in repeating the habit. It makes a performer open to these bodily energies, and open to experimenting with these bodily energies. Again, if this is a return to the real, it is a return to the reality of the fluid processes from which bodily behaviours were first drawn, not of the fixed properties behind bodily behaviour. This first phase of play with habit is important because practitioners have to expose how habits work before they can experiment with or escape them. Only after a performer has exposed enough of these habitual patterns of movement can they establish potential new patterns of movement.

The significant thing with the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit is that the performers do not need to avoid habits altogether as part of this play. This is something performance artists tried to do, something since criticised by contemporary theorists (Chapter Two). For example, although she actually had a high degree of muscular mastery, the dancer Yvonne Rainer wanted to adopt the authenticity of an untrained body in her work. She declared that "[t]he display of technical virtuosity and the display of the dancer's specialized body no longer make sense" ("A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, Or An Analysis of *Trio A*" 293). Though it may be tempting, the majority of physical theatre practitioners today are aware that they cannot avoid the masterful bodily mimicry that underpins habit altogether. They are aware that performers have to have mastery over their bodies, and over the way their bodies move, if they are to mimic specific models of habit with a view to stripping back the structures that have produced them. "Whichever method of training is adopted," as Logie articulates it, "...control over rhythms, tension, shapes and movements is needed" ("Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor" 230). In this respect, it remains essential that physical theatre employ exercises to increase the range, mobility,

flexibility, strength, concentration, control, power, coordination, balance, energy, spontaneity, and kinaesthetic awareness of performers.

There are two main reasons why physical theatre performers need mastery over their bodies when they mimic habits. The first reason, plainly, is that performers need discipline, stamina, and skill to perform specific tasks safely, and to deal with the physical and psychical risks they regularly undertake in physical theatre. As Lecoq laments, "[h]ow many mistakes, some of them very dangerous for the actor, are still perpetuated by teachers who know nothing of the human body!" (*The Moving Body* 68). This connects with a concern Deleuze and Guattari raise in their philosophy, when they insist that the hazards involved in any play with the human body mean that sobriety and caution are critical to such play (*A Thousand Plateaus* 150, 344, 345). The second reason performers need the mastery that supports mimicry of habits is that if they totally deny the habits that determine their identity, or their stage persona's identity, they are heading into an area that denies definite human identities altogether. Though vitalists sometimes seem interested in an end to identity, it is not altogether practical for performers. It introduces the risk of descending into a complete chaos that may be unrecognisable and unreadable to spectators, a practical and philosophical problem I have already remarked on in Chapter Four.

In the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit, the performers continue to work with common human habits, and with the masterful mimicry of these habits that characterises much Western theatre, just as contemporary theorists advocate (Chapters Three and Four). The performers slowly, soberly, simply, or mechanically mimic selected habits, in spite of suspicions they may have about this sort of mastery. Even so, Lecoq explains, they try to "avoid falling into pure technique, or virtuosity for its own sake" (*The Moving Body* 79). Describing this in a different way, Dempster suggests such artists are "engaged in a radical reassessment" ("Postmodern Dance" 47) of the terms of bodily mimicry, mastery, and habit. In effect, in the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit, the performers pursue what might be called an unconventional virtuosity. Though they do not suspend their habits altogether, they do not simply act out these habits. Instead, they get very good at soberly mimicking a habit, and at controlling its complexity, velocity, and variability. This helps them expose how the habit currently works, and how the habit could be reworked,

challenged, estranged, or changed, even in small or seemingly insignificant ways (cf. Feldenkrais *Awareness Through Movement* 59).

Working in this way, the sober mimicry seen in the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit has the performers mastering ordinary habits and making way for other habits at the same time, through the same techniques. It has performers capturing the potentials of a highly trained body without necessarily constraining this body in habit. This distinguishes physical theatre's training practices from a number of other theatre and body training techniques designed to limit a person's need to attend to what their body is doing (Chapters One and Two). Paradoxically, physical theatre training teaches performers to control and conceal the bodily basis of their performances when they need to, and also to expose the bodily basis of their performances when they need to (cf. Snow *Imaging the In-between* 39, 246-247). This means this training helps the performers attain the mastery they need to act out habits, and the liveliness and awareness they need to act out habits differently.

The sober mimicry seen in the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit echoes a concern many theatre-makers have with the connections between skill and spontaneity. The notion that the two go together has long been a part of Asian theatre traditions, as well as a number of Western theatre and dance traditions, particularly those that provide precedents for physical theatre. It has become critical for most contemporary physical theatre practitioners too. For instance, Lecoq has suggested that "[t]he body must be disciplined in the service of play, constrained in order to attain freedom" (*The Moving Body* 79). Similarly, Grotowski has said, "I believe there can be no true creative process within the actor if he lacks discipline" (*Towards a Poor Theatre* 209). Thus, Grotowski's student Barba has said, "[i]n our theatre, training has always consisted of an encounter between discipline – that is, the exercise's set form – and the surpassing of that set form" (*Beyond the Floating Islands* 50). Though it sounds paradoxical, for all these practitioners the performers' spontaneous play springs from their prior skills, their prior habits (cf. Roach *The Player's Passions* 16). Interestingly, the idea that control and creativity go together also finds support in the vitalist suggestion that the two operate in tandem as part of the paradoxical character of becoming, and thus that, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "there is no imagination outside technique" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 345) (Chapter Four).



The sober mimicry seen in the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit additionally, and more importantly, produces a bodily alertness, attentiveness, awareness, availability, or neutrality in the performer. This bodily awareness is a lot like what Bergson would call an "attention to life" (*Matter and Memory* xviii, original emphasis). Theatre practitioners who pursue this awareness think of it, in Lecoq's words, as a "physical awareness that will form an indispensable basis for acting" (*The Moving Body* 71). More specifically, practitioners think of it as an openness to the present moment, and to the processes by which people perform a movement in the present moment. In Barba's terms, for instance, this bodily awareness is an ability "to be present at the very moment of an action" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 197). This bodily awareness of the present is thus thought of as a 'performance in the now' that momentarily puts aside all thought of past or future. In Bergsonian terms, it puts aside all thought of chronology's past-present-future progression (Chapter Four). If performers are aware of and available to the processes of the present moment in this way, their past habits need not dominate over their present movements. Performers can actively attend to the instant at hand, to the intervals in which habits can be challenged or changed. Their bodily awareness thus becomes the antithesis of automatism and habit (cf. Feldenkrais *Awareness Through Movement* 46). Many theorists, theatre practitioners, and physical trainers have remarked on the value of this bodily awareness when it comes to creating the conditions of possibility for change. As Claiborn and Pedrick say, "a lack of awareness builds a habit. But awareness of our habit can help us escape it" (*The Habit Change Workbook* 13). Verville explains this in even clearer terms. "Habits persist because they are automatic," she argues. "Without awareness of what he does, the individual misses cues which could lead him to improve his ways ... Given attention, habits and attitudes yield" (*Habit* 132). In her pragmatist analysis, Sullivan also studies the sort of awareness that physical theatre performers build in the first phase of their play with habit. "One can become reflective about one's habits," she says, "bringing conscious thought to bear on them such that one is aware of and might change them" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 77). "By becoming reflectively aware of the way in which one usually (mis)comports one's body, a person can begin to inhibit the usual ways in which she does so, which opens up the possibility of doing so differently" (125). The bodily awareness these commentators describe is unquestionably crucial to many twentieth century theories and

techniques of habit change – it is adopted in therapeutic techniques like the Alexander, Feldenkrais, and Pilates Methods, as well as in the physical theatre techniques of practitioners like Lecoq, Grotowski, Barba, Hijikata, and Ono. This awareness of how habits function is a critical part of the skill set physical theatre performers carry into the second phase of play with habit, which goes beyond simply exposing how habits work and starts experimenting with how habits work.

In the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit performers reveal the usually unconscious model-manifestation relations that mark habit. Once exposed, these relations are potentially open to modifications. This first phase thus helps performers become open to, and open to modifying, the habits they are working with. However, exposing how a habit works is not an end in itself. Because, Bergson explains, though interrupting habits is "far from easy, [it] is but the negative part of the work to be done" (*Matter and Memory* 241). The second phase of physical theatre's play with habit goes beyond this exposition. While the first phase slows and shows up some of the processes involved in a given habit, the second phase starts to experiment with these processes. In this phase, performers start experimenting with the model-manifestation relations involved in repeating a habit in interesting and potentially insurgent ways. Repetitive movements are again a requisite part of this process, because, as Verville observes, they help people tease apart the strands of a behaviour (*Habit* 135). The performers still need to repeat a habit soberly, to test how that habit holds together as it is repeated, its rhythms as it is repeated. In this second phase, however, their purpose has shifted from exposition to experimentation. "This repetition is," as Barba puts it, "a point of departure which will permit the performer to make his or her own voyage" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 246). The performers now need to use their measurable repetitions of particular habits to reach the immeasurable differences in these repetitions, to make use of the immeasurable differences in these repetitions. For, as Deleuze and Guattari have said, "[i]t is through meticulous relations with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 161).

In a sense, it may be said that this second phase of play with habit has performers acting out a habit to experiment with the flow of energies involved in acting out this habit. Barba is one theatre practitioner who speaks in these terms, particularly when he explains how performers put their "energies to the test" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 246). "[T]hey have repeated the same actions over and over, they have trained rigorously," he says. "...On the visible level, it seems that they are expressing themselves, working on their body and voice. In fact, they are working on something invisible: energy" (81). The performers are experimenting with the energies that support their movements, energies that exist in the intervals in-between one identifiable state and the next, intervals in which creativity can occur (Chapter Four). When the performers experiment with the energies required to repeat a habit, they open the habit up to the flux from which it was first drawn, as I observed in Chapter Four. "[T]he performer can model, measure, explode and control their energies, let them go, and play with them," Barba says, "like something incandescent which is nevertheless controlled with cold precision" (246). As a result of this play, the performers redirect the flow of energies that characterise common human habits (54), eventually replaying these habits "in a fresh and astonishing way" (190).

In another sense, it may be said that this second phase of play with habit has performers acting out a habit to experiment with any distances, differences, or discrepancies between the model of habit and the bodily energies that manifest this model of habit. Lecoq is one theatre practitioner who speaks in these terms, insisting that his actors should work with any "distance between the actor's own ego and the character performed" (*The Moving Body* 19), or "between the face and the mask" (36), because "it is precisely this distance which makes it possible for the actor to play" (36). In this second phase of play with habit, then, performers play with the model-manifestation discrepancies that support a given habit or habits, in order to modify these habits from within. The aim again is to replay these habits in a 'fresh and astonishing' fashion.

Whichever way it is seen, the point worth emphasising with the experimentation seen in this second phase of physical theatre's play with habit is that it still does not necessarily impose totally new patterns of movements on performers, something which distinguishes it from the approaches to habit I addressed in Chapter Two. This experimentation still asks that

performers develop the model-manifestation discrepancies of the habits exposed in the first phase, instead of developing specific new habits. The performers still work with known habits in new ways, instead of working with new habits. In this respect, the experimentation seen in this second phase is still generally grounded in the way habits work not in what habits are, and so grounded in the bodily processes by which performers mimic habits. Experimentation of this type is, as Deleuze and Guattari have asserted, "a question of technique, exclusively a question of technique" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 242). The performers still begin by slowly, mechanically mimicking the movements that are part of a given habit. They begin, Lecoq says, by carrying out a movement "mechanically, very simply, in order to see how it goes" (*The Moving Body* 67). The performers then experiment with the energies that support their movements, with more energies, less energies, different energies. In effect, they are revisiting, restricting, reducing, or enlarging these movements, to test their limits, and to rediscover and redirect these movements. Through these exhaustive, experimental repetitions, physical theatre performers eventually hope to be able to estrange or to effect change in their repetition of a given habit.

At this stage, a brief discussion of a number of noted theatre practitioners will clarify what happens in these first two phases of physical theatre's play with habit, the expository and experimental phases. I have already observed that practitioners like Lecoq, Grotowski, Barba, Hijikata, and Ono all train their performers to play with culturally condoned habits, and perform these habits differently. Accordingly, it is their practices I will comment on here. While a couple of examples may have been adequate, commenting on this range of practitioners provides a more comprehensive picture of the range of ways in which physical theatre's processes of play and replay are conceptualised internationally.

The first European practitioner I want to mention is the French theatre trainer Lecoq, who spent much of his career working with the sort of habit-stripping I have looked at here. According to Kiernander, Lecoq is surprisingly "less well known in France than in the English speaking world" (*Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil* 52). Nevertheless, theatre practitioners and theorists who do know Lecoq know that he devised a variety of

mask, mime, and movement exercises designed to peel back a performer's habits. In his practice,

we have to begin by stripping away learned behaviour patterns which do not belong to them, eliminating everything which might hinder them from rediscovering life at its most authentic. We have to divest the students of some of what they have learned, not in order to diminish their store of knowledge, but to create for them a blank page (*The Moving Body* 27)

To develop the bodily availability of the total performer, Lecoq's exercises have to expose and eliminate many of the personal habits in a performer's movement patterns – they have to eliminate those evidences of personality that cause unnecessary complications and uneconomical energy usages. For example, in one Lecoq-derived exercise performers are asked to don a neutral mask, enter the space, observe an imaginary ocean before them, pick up a stone and skim it across the waves, and then exit the space. "Beneath the neutral mask," Lecoq argues, "the actor's face disappears and his body becomes far more noticeable" (38). "[T]he nuances appear all the more forcefully. These are not nuances of character, since there is no character, but all the little differences which separate one performer from another (41). "The neutral mask, in the end, unmask!" (38). After the exercise, other members of the workshop advise the performer of any overt physical or personal peculiarities they have observed in them. In another exercise, performers work up through seven states of bodily tension, from a state of complete muscular relaxation to a state of complete muscular rigidity, in order to explore the neutral state that lies between these two extremes, a state in which the body is ready for yet does not anticipate anything that may occur. According to Lecoq, in these types of exercises "[t]he pedagogical task is to isolate digressive movement without ever indicating what should be done instead" (46)<sup>50</sup>. There is no correct way for bodies to perform these types of exercises, no correct new habit for bodies to take on. "Physical preparation does not aim to emulate a particular physical model," Lecoq puts it, and this means "...there should be no sense of the body 'getting in the way'" (67). Instead, Lecoq explains, the aim of these types of exercises is for a performer to achieve a 'neutral' state, in which they are physically and psychically available to the present moment, and free from the distractions of past recall and future anticipation.

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<sup>50</sup> Lecoq does not, however, discuss how any movement can be called digressive if his theatre training techniques do not introduce ideals for a body to digress from.

In his words, these sorts of exercises "should enable one to experience the *state of neutrality* prior to action, a state of receptiveness to everything around us" (36, original emphasis). Though most performers find it difficult to be devoid of personality, past, and future, Lecoq suggests that if they can achieve this neutral state it provides a good basis for their acting. This state better positions performers to repeat real-life movements in their training, and to represent these movements in their performances. It better positions performers for what Lecoq calls replay and play.

Replay involves reviving lived experience in the simplest possible way ...*Play* [acting] comes later, at the point when, aware of the theatrical dimension, the actor can shape an improvisation for spectators ...*Play* may be very close to *replay* or may distance itself through the most daring theatrical transpositions, but it must never lose sight of the root anchoring it to reality (29, original emphasis)

For Lecoq, if performers repeat a thing (a task, a behaviour, or a habit) as precisely as possible, and if they stay open to this experience, this provides the springboard for the creative mimicry he describes as "a way of discovering a thing with a renewed freshness" (21). It provides the springboard for the experimental expressiveness that is characteristic of his style of physical theatre.

Grotowski is another twentieth century European theatre practitioner well aware of the advantages of this sort of habit-stripping. Grotowski developed his demanding training systems around his belief that a stripping away of the actor's mental and muscular habits is crucial if the actor is to develop his or her own creativity. In Grotowski's words, in his theatre "it is not a matter of learning new things, but rather of ridding oneself of old habits" (*Towards a Poor Theatre* 128-129). This means Grotowski's is "a negative technique, not a positive one" (209). Grotowski's technique does not ask that actors accumulate a new set of skills, and as such it works not "by accumulation of signs" but "...by eliminating those elements of 'natural' behaviour which obscure pure impulse" (18). This sort of habit-stripping is essential to Grotowski's notion of the total act. In Grotowski's total act, an actor unveils various layers of consciousness, eventually revealing the essence of their being, the pure impulse, and so offering spectators the utmost stimulus. This total act is, again, a state in which the actor is totally available to the moment. "It is the act of laying oneself bare," Grotowski argues, "of tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorising oneself" (210).

According to Grotowski, skill and success with this sort of habit-stripping allows actors to escape the facades of everyday habits, and explore the bodily realities that exist beyond them, in the most striking fashion possible. At the extreme, it allows actors to produce work so powerful that it pulls spectators and societies into the actors' experimentation with human potentials.

Like his teacher Grotowski, Barba's theatre training methods negotiate and negate the body's normal habits. These methods are, Barba declares, "a means of stripping the body of daily habits, in order to prevent it from being no more than a human body condemned to resemble itself" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 16). As I have already noted, Barba believes "techniques which do not respect the habitual conditionings of the body" (9) produce "a performer's scenic *bios*, or life" (9, original emphasis). This means Barba's methods empty bodies of their everyday habits mainly to access the elementary physiological energies that are the essence of performance for him – that is, to access a physiologically available state akin to Grotowski's total act.

Though Barba mentions many traditions in *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, he speaks of habit-stripping mainly in terms of Noh theatre. He notes three compelling features of Noh theatre (features corresponding roughly to the three phases of physical theatre's play with habit). The first is that Noh performers move precisely, stripping everything superfluous from their movements. In Barba's terms, the performers use the energy needed to move through space, but they do not move through space. The energy they would have expended in space is instead kept in their body, or as Barba says in time. "I am executing an action," he articulates it, "not in space, but in time" (88). According to Barba, the Noh performers are actually restricting their movements to raise the forces in the intervals in-between the many parts of these movements. As Motokiyo Zeami noted in his fourteenth century treatise on Noh, these forces fascinate because they show the performers' refusal to relax their bodily tensions, a relaxation which would have happened with habitual behaviours in life (*On the Art of the Nô Drama* 96-97).

When Noh performers engage the energies behind their movements, this becomes the basis for the next feature of Noh theatre Barba mentions, in which the Noh performers amplify

rather than relax the oppositions, conflicts, contradictions, and convolutions in these energies (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 13). This amplification becomes a way of playing with the performers' bodily balance. According to Barba, the body's musculo-skeletal connections hold its bones in place, and determine its balance. These connections allow bodies to avoid falling, to adopt an upright stance, and to deport themselves in this position – that is, to maintain their habitual bodily balance. Yet, Barba argues, “[w]hen we are standing erect we are never immobile even when we appear to be so; we are in fact using many minute movements to displace our weight” (11). As bodies act out behaviours, they continually adjust their balance in this way, but mostly according to their habitual balance. There are not many surprises. But by isolating, intensifying, amplifying, or experimenting with these ongoing shifts in balance, Barba believes Noh performers swap a static bodily balance (determined by the passive work of the ligaments) for a dynamic bodily balance (determined by the active work of the muscles).

The final feature Barba notes with Noh theatre is the dual consequences of the performers' disciplined yet dynamic bodily movements. On the one hand, the Noh performers' disciplined dynamism estranges their movements, enabling them to break out of “schematic patterns and stereotypes” (212). On the other hand, the Noh performers' disciplined dynamism energises their movements, creating in them a “condition of total presence” (246)<sup>51</sup>. Zeami's text deals with these dual consequences through the principle of ‘hana’, the vital, fleeting, fascinating beauty of the flower. “The Flower represents a mastery of technique and thorough practice, achieved in order to create a feeling of novelty” (*On the Art of the Nô Drama* 52-53; cf. 6, 7, 67). According to Barba, the novel bodily state the Noh performers achieve by stripping back their behaviour has great potential for producing intense, insightful performances. This means other practitioners are well advised to translate the method to their own genres of practice. “How pregnant Barba's observations are,” Schechner exclaims. These observations explain how

[e]ach genre deforms and reforms the body by introducing disequilibrium, a problem to be solved by a new balancing specific to the genre ...[how] each form *needs to play*

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<sup>51</sup> I will look further at how these estrangements and these charismatic energies function in tandem when I look at the final phase of physical theatre's play with habit later in this Chapter.



*dangerously with the body*, to deconstruct and reconstruct it according to its own plan of action (*The Future of Ritual* 30, original emphasis)<sup>52</sup>

This sort of play with habit is not simply a Western phenomenon. For instance, it is also seen in the Japanese butoh dance of Hijikata and Ono. Butoh was given its name, meaning 'dance of darkness', by Hijikata in 1960. Butoh dancers were typically concerned with the artistic and cultural contexts of the complex Japanese society in which their work emerged, contexts I consider further in Chapter Six when I analyse the work of Umiumare. Butoh dancers sought to reinvigorate Japanese dance and drama, and to capture the potential of the Western influence, particularly that of artists who felt equally conflicted about conventional theatre. Thus, in the opinion of theorists like Schechner, butoh "now refers to an intense, physically extreme, and rebellious avant-garde performance art" (*The Future of Ritual* 15), an art influenced both by Japanese traditions and by the Western genres in which Hijikata and Ono trained.

Obviously, Hijikata's work has defined the terrain of butoh dance, past and present. Like some of the European practices I have examined here, Hijikata's butoh is designed to disrupt the superficial encrustations of habit and to disclose the physical, psychical, communal, and spiritual realities that exist beyond these superficialities. In this sense, Jean Viala and Nourit Masson-Sekine say, Hijikata's butoh is designed "to systematically shatter the habits which limit the way we move our bodies" (*Butoh* 17). With this as his aim, Hijikata thoroughly bases his butoh in the awkwardness and adaptability he believes to be fundamental to human bodies (cf. Eckersall "What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 150; cf. Schechner *The Future of Ritual* 15). While Western dancers begin with the belief that their bodies are stable and safe inside the rational order of society, Hijikata says the Japanese dancers he works with have to begin with the belief that their bodies are unbalanced, anarchic, and always being discovered anew. To this end, the emphasis in Hijikata's workshops is not on mastering an appealing aesthetic, but more on exploring the condition

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<sup>52</sup> In this comment on Barba, Schechner speaks of something comparable to physical theatre's 'play' with habit, but his stress on a 'plan' distinguishes his perspective from mine. Despite Schechner's terminology, I think a number of practitioners actually are aware of the problems with simply imposing new plans on performers.

and character of the dancers' bodies. "The condition of the body itself has to be changed" ("Hijikata Tatsumi" 16) as Nanako Kurihara says in her analysis of Hijikata's *butoh*. Significantly, Hijikata suggests these changes have to begin with a sort of habit-stripping. In his terms, it is "not about squeezing your body into a space but about its being stripped of things ... That way of stripping away is to strip something off as soon as it's laid down" (Hijikata, quoted Akihiko "Fragments of Glass" 63). In Hijikata's practice a variety of exercises help strip back the dancers' bodily habits. Especially important are exercises in which the dancers slow some of their bodily movements to investigate these movements more thoroughly, and to inhibit or intensify certain components of these movements. In one well-known *butoh* exercise, for example, a dancer takes an hour to walk a metre, and during this time their entire attention is devoted to their walk. In such sustained exercises, the dancers' movements have the potential to disrupt the organised hierarchy of their bodily habits, and to pave the way for different tensions, different habits. Hijikata describes this in terms of a dislocation of the dancers' bodily joints. "When I seriously consider the training of a *butoh* dancer," he says in an interview with Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, "I think what's important are the kinds of movements which come from the joints being displaced" (Hijikata, quoted Shibusawa "Hijikata Tatsumi" 52). When dancers disjoin their bodily movements, they break these movements open, testing the energies that engender these movements. The dancers' deliberate disarticulation of their movement habits is important to any changes that might follow. "By practicing the exercises repeatedly," Kurihara says, "dancers learn to manipulate their own bodies physiologically and psychologically. As a result, *butoh* dancers can change themselves into everything" ("Hijikata Tatsumi" 16). *Butoh* dancers can escape the predictable universe. With this sort of work, then, Hijikata's aim is not to squeeze his or his dancers' bodies into a technique they can master. He does not believe in squeezing bodies into stagnant models, because he is well aware of the risks involved in assuming a fixed roster of movement, as he believed Western genres as diverse as ballet and realist drama had done. Instead, Hijikata's desire is for he and his dancers to become open to, and open to challenging, their current bodily characteristics. As such, he says, when

I dance there is nowhere even near the 'butohification' of experience, much less the mastery of *butoh*. I want to become and be a body with its eyes just open wide, a body

tensed to the snapping point in response to the majestic landscape around it ("From Being Jealous of a Dog's Vein" 59)

In Ono's butoh dance, a slightly different approach to stripping away a dancer's bodily habits is apparent. Commentators like Viala and Masson-Sekine have explicitly linked Ono's elimination of bodily habits, and his emphasis on the body's essential inner life, with the work of Western practitioners like Grotowski. "This preoccupation is reminiscent of Jerzy Grotowski," they observe, "who believed that to attain the universal we must break all rigidity, the fixed patterns which our bodies have acquired over the years" (*Butoh* 22). Still, it is fair to say that Ono comes at this shared preoccupation from a somewhat different direction to Grotowski, and even to Hijikata. Ono's interests lie not only with investigating organised movements, but with imagining the energies that engender these movements. Accordingly, his butoh workshops tend to be about offering his dancers different images and ways of imagining what occurs in the intervals in-between organised bodily movements. For Ono, the organised physical and performance principles employed in a lot of dance training should only be a springboard for this more crucial work, in which the dancers pass through these superficial realities to penetrate the very essence or soul of their existence. Significantly, Ono understands the soul not in terms of a fixed, eternal essence, but in terms of ongoing waves or vibrations that animate human beings<sup>53</sup>. Ono believes that the habits of the living human body deflect these vibrations of the soul. He argues that if dance remains too firmly entrenched in these everyday habits, and in the imitation of these everyday habits, it will fail to penetrate and provide perspective on the essence of life. If dance is allowed by intellectualisation or abstraction to become disconnected from reality similar difficulties will arise. In either case, Ono insists, the dance and the dancer will fail to move audiences intensely. For this reason, Viala and Masson-Sekine say, Ono's work is based in "transubstantiation into a 'dead body'" (17). "He explains that for his dance we must not try to control the body, but to let the soul breathe life into the flesh" (55). Unlike the living body, the dead body allows the vibrations of the soul to pass through it, to possess or animate it. Therefore, in invoking this image of the dead body, Ono is in fact trying to liberate the

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<sup>53</sup> Ono's belief that bodies and bodily identities emerge from these waves, from shifting energies not from static essences, would obviously be welcome to vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze (Chapter Four).

dancer from the habits of everyday experience, habits that suffocate the soul, and to trying to encourage the dancer to become capable of freer expression.

The theatre practitioners I have discussed here all provide insight into the first two phases of physical theatre's play with habit. What is still at issue, though, is the way these principles and rough phases will turn out in specific performances. While the two preparatory phases of physical theatre's play with habit allow performing bodies to expose and to experiment with how habits work, the performers still have to take this further. The performers still have to create the conditions of possibility for the final phase of physical theatre's play with habit, for the final effort to estrange or to change how habits work in the fluid, fleeting moment of performance. If the first two phases of this process expose and experiment with how a given habit holds together, then it is the third phase that finally starts to shift how such a habit holds together. This third phase finally challenges the regular model-manifestation relation required to repeat a habit. It connects the habit with the flux from which it was first drawn to differentially repeat that habit. It thus takes advantage of the variability of any habit as a body mimics it in the present moment of performance, attempting, as I have said, to estrange or to change that habit. While the first two phases of play with habit provide a basis for this final moment, in which challenges to cultural norms become possible, in the theatre these challenges have to happen in front of an audience of some sort. They have to happen in the moment of performance, or in the moments in training that are closest to performance.

When physical theatre performers take their play with habit into the moment of performance, they are often trying to have one, other, or both of two effects on spectators. Firstly, performers are often trying to estrange human habits. They are trying to mimic a habit in a way that shows the habit might be done differently. Such estrangements show spectators that what they see onstage is a constructed version of reality, not a constant truth. Secondly, performers are also often trying to effect changes in human habits. They are trying to mimic a habit in such a way that the habit is done differently. Insofar as these changes access the chaotic flux habits were first drawn from, they can be accompanied by

energies that are sometimes experienced by spectators as presence in performance – at least this is what practitioners such as Barba assert. From a theoretical perspective, these two effects do not seem compatible on the surface. Estrangements are not generally experienced in the body. Estrangements are about legible signs, and about intellectually interpreting these signs after they are seen in a performance, and so ask that spectators step back from the performance. Changes are generally experienced in the body. Changes are about instant and illegible shifts in legible signs, and about intuitively experiencing these shifts as they are sensed in a performance, and so ask that spectators step forward into the performance. But these effects both depend on the bodily mimicry of the performers, and this means they are not necessarily opposed. Tensions between the two, and tendencies to foreground one or the other at different times in a performance, can actually impact on the meanings the spectators make in interesting ways. If physical theatre's play with habit can cultivate both these effects, in theatrical terms it can cultivate creative new combinations of the alienatory style associated with Brecht and the affective style associated with Artaud. In the twentieth century these two theatrical traits were often divorced from each other, and read in terms of what Copeland calls a "set of classic confrontations between Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht" ("The Presence of Mediation" 28). By working with both these traits, though, physical theatre avoids the sometimes over-simplified binary between Artaud and Brecht in twentieth century performance theory and practice.

Interestingly, in physical theatre's play with habit performers often manage to alienate the habits they depict but only occasionally manage to truly alter the habits they depict. This is because it is difficult to ensure the success of any challenge to habit. Certainly, performers create the conditions of possibility for challenges to dominant human habits. They deal with specific subjects and develop specific performance styles. They even set up scenes that will show habits as culturally constructed, and show how habits could be done differently. But there is no guarantee that performers will be able to bring all this together to actually do habits differently, to actually move into totally new domains, in the moment of performance. Physical theatre performers still always have to wait and see what their strategies will produce in the moment of performance, and the way they will be engaged by spectators. This being the case, performers cannot completely predetermine their changes to habit in advance. Physical theatre's play with habit is always experimental, and so it can fail at any

stage – it can fail to expose, to experiment with, or to escape a given habit. There is also always a risk that it will simply return to old habits, or establish new habits that are equally oppressive, a problem even more regularly seen with the ‘replacement’ method I considered in Chapters One, Two, and Three. And, finally, there is always a risk that it will simply run off into chaos. In this respect, any lasting change is a limit, an outcome of an ongoing process that is rarely reached, rarely retained.

Obviously, it is through the influence of vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze that I have been lead to look at change in these processual, unpredictable terms. These theorists think habit changes cannot be totally planned because they occur in the intervals in-between one bodily state and the next, and because there is no certainty about the new habits that come from these intervals (Chapter Four). Still, other commentators are actually often suspicious of this method of modifying habits, this controlled way of working up to an instant of change which is not totally controllable. For instance, Sullivan says that like habits themselves, changes to habits take time to develop. Accordingly, she argues,

it is likely that significant change will be effected by means of the gradual transformation of self and environment through transaction, rather than by a sudden, one-time revolution ...By itself, sudden revolution tends to be an ineffective shortcut that cannot make deep changes (*Living Across and Through Skins* 153)

However, if a subversive mimicry of a habit is to work slowly towards a specific goal, and so to generate the sort of changes Sullivan is after, it has to have such a goal in mind from the start. Vitalists like Bergson and Deleuze are wary of these gradual changes precisely because they chase predetermined goals that can themselves easily become oppressive habits (Chapter Four). This is why they avoid the teleological course or progression that guides gradual changes to their goals. Instead, they are interested in sudden, instant, unpredictable, significant changes. The sort of changes that happen suddenly, even if they have taken time and sober movements to set up. Vitalists think these changes in human habits cannot be comprehensively planned or predicted by DNA, by a deity, or by anyone or anything else, no matter how well-meaning they may be. “The evolution of organic life cannot be predetermined” (*Creative Evolution* 86) in Bergson’s words. Whether physical theatre practitioners frame their play with habit in terms of the slow changes Sullivan prefers or the sudden changes vitalists prefer, they generally realise they have to wait and see what their

play produces in the moment of performance, in the various sorts of 'showings' that bring the strands of their work together before fellow performers or spectators.

Undoubtedly, it is difficult to describe all that physical theatre practitioners do to translate their play with habit to the moment of performance in the abstract. It is difficult to describe their use of theatrical mimicry's capacity to challenge habits in the abstract. Particularly since practitioners approach this slightly differently for each show. For this reason, many physical theatre practitioners seem to prefer to talk about their challenges to culturally recognisable habits in terms of particular performances, instead of generally or analytically. Even if these practitioners offer generalised theories, examples, and training exercises for the initial preparatory phases of their play with habit (as Lecoq, Grotowski, Barba, Hijikata, and Ono all do to varying degrees), they do not offer equivalents for the final performance phase. In Chapter Six, I will use my discussion of performances by two Melbourne practitioners to offer an insight into the broader impact of this play with habit in theatrical performance. Before I do this, though, I briefly want to discuss the limited insights theatre practitioners like Brecht and Barba and philosophers like Bergson and Deleuze do offer, if not into the final phase of physical theatre's play with habit per se, then at least into the two effects it has on spectators – the estrangements, and the energies experienced as presence.

Many physical theatre performers hope to provoke estrangements of human habits, and hope this will have intellectual effects on spectators, encouraging them to evaluate and perhaps change their own habits. These estrangements constitute one of the performance consequences of physical theatre's play with habit. In twentieth century theatre theory and practice, insight into these estrangements is offered by the work of Brecht. The philosophers Bergson and Deleuze also provide insight into the effects such estrangements have on spectators, this time using explicitly theatrical terms.

As I argued in Chapter Two, although Brecht accepted that theatrical mimicry has a tendency to authenticate certain realities, he neither abandoned mimicry, nor abandoned himself to it. In Diamond's words, "Brecht wanted more mimesis not less" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 145). He wanted to take advantage of theatre's ability to mimic and counter-mimic accepted cultural habits. As a consequence, Brecht's theatre did not simply mimic better

images of self and society (a strategy seen in some types of subversive mimicry (Chapters Two and Three)). Instead, it complicated conventional theatre's mimicry of specific human beliefs and behaviours, alienating them, and thereby thwarting the spectators' tendency to identify too strongly with them.

Brecht's theatre worked through a number of now well-known techniques<sup>54</sup>, among them 'alienation', 'historicisation', the 'not...but', and the 'gestus'. In Brecht's alienation technique the actor has to retain some distance from his or her role. The actor, in Brecht's terms, "must not suppress the 'he did that, he said that' element in his performance. He must not go so far as to be wholly transformed into the person demonstrated" (*Brecht on Theatre* 125, original emphasis). This technique deliberately challenges the character-actor resemblance conservative theatrical mimicry relies on to authenticate characters. It shows spectators that theatre is making up the human characters and characteristics it claims to mirror, and thus stops spectators identifying with these characters (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* viii, 45, 48). Because Brecht's alienation technique foregrounds what is unfamiliar, unusual, or unnatural in the character's beliefs and behaviours, it shows spectators that they are "something striking, something that calls for explanation, [that] is not to be taken for granted, not just natural" (*Brecht on Theatre* 125). The technique Brecht calls historicisation is also designed to prevent spectators identifying with a character's beliefs and behaviours. This technique benefits from the fact that today's spectators find it difficult to identify with the beliefs and behavioural habits of other historical periods (140). It asks that the actor historicise all their character's habits, distancing them to demonstrate that they are contingent on certain historical contexts, contradictory in themselves and in relation to contemporary cultural conventions, and thus open to criticism from a contemporary perspective (cf. Diamond *Unmaking Mimesis* 49, 50, 145). The technique Brecht calls the not...but also shows that a character's beliefs and behaviours could well have been different. In Brecht's words, with this technique the actor will demonstrate what he or she is doing, but will also "at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is to say he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible"

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<sup>54</sup> Although, as Harris argues, it is incorrect to assume that the relation between Brecht's theories and his theatrical techniques is always clear and coherent (*Staging Femininities* 79), and the same could be said for the vast majority of theatre practitioners.



(*Brecht on Theatre* 137). This technique involves a clear collision between the character, who knows only one version of what happens, and the actor, who knows several versions of what happens. It thus broadens the range of behavioural possibilities of which spectators are aware. Like each of the Brechtian techniques I have examined here, it encourages spectators to see both what happens onstage and what might have happened onstage, both accepted scenarios and alternate scenarios. As Diamond acknowledges,

[t]he explosive (and elusive) synthesis of alienation, historicisation, and the 'not...but' is the Brechtian *gestus*, a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau, by which, separately or in a series, the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator (*Unmaking Mimesis* 52, original emphasis)

A device central to Brechtian theatre, the *gestus* is a gesture or a set of gestures designed to confront spectators with the cultural forces behind human behaviour, forces conservative mimicry tries to conceal. As with all of Brecht's theatre techniques the *gestus* shows spectators that the character's beliefs and behaviours are only historically- and culturally-determined habits. These characteristics start to seem like constructed versions of reality, which are strange, striking, and worthy of critical contemplation. In effect, then, the *gestus* joins the other techniques Brecht advocates to break theatre's emotionally absorbing effect. Together, Brecht's theatre techniques break down the illusion that the actor is doing anything more than demonstrating a character. "This should, theoretically," Harris says, "result in preventing the audience from an empathetic identification with that character" (*Staging Femininities* 78). Brecht's theatre techniques put spectators in a precarious position. Spectators are encouraged to see the characters' beliefs and behaviours as cultural constructs, and to question their cultural dominance. In the extreme, the stability of spectators' own identities can be called into question (49, 50, 53, 125). This is where these Brechtian estrangements truly start to have an effect on spectators.

Perhaps unexpectedly, another insight into these sorts of estrangements is provided by the philosophies of Bergson and Deleuze. They too think habits can be challenged in worthwhile ways when a person creates, or witnesses others creating, a collision between what might have happened and what happens. Moreover, though neither theorist has any connection with Brecht's theatre theories, they both turn to the broad area of theatre and theatrical metaphors in describing this type of collision. Bergson and Deleuze both believe theatre ha

the capacity to challenge habits by creating comic collisions between past models and present manifestations, because to repeat habits before an audience it always already relies on a more-or-less mechanical model-manifestation relation. So, in *Laughter*, Bergson uses his theory of comic theatre to exemplify and extend the philosophy of habit he developed in *Matter and Memory*. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze uses theatrical metaphors to describe how the actor, the dancer, and the mime artist are among the key conceptual personae that can counter-actualise habit.

From Bergson's perspective, comic theatre enacts and exposes the habits that people are loath to give up before an audience. Comedy makes spectators aware of these habits, makes them critical of these habits, and makes them laugh at these habits. At the basis of all laughter, Bergson argues, is a comic collision between what a person expects to do and what a person eventually does, between past memories and present predicaments. Deleuze's discussion of humour also depends on this collision, albeit in a slightly different sense. "Humour," he argues, "is the art of the surface" (*The Logic of Sense* 9). Humour, unlike irony (the art of high ideals) and satire (the art of deep bodies), draws ideals down and bodies up to the surface, to the event, to the point at which the two creatively and comically converge. Humour experiments with this surface, this fragile frontier where virtual memories and actual predicaments converge (Chapter Four).

Bergson's first example of this comic collision is a prat-fall. "A man, running along the street, stumbles and falls; the passers-by burst out laughing" (*Laughter* 66). The comic effect of this stumble is traditionally explained in terms of the person's loss of social standing or status. Yet, as Tait asks, is it likely that this alone is responsible for the comic effect?

Is this funny because it is a man who loses his social 'standing' and falls down? If this figure was recognisably a woman falling down would people laugh since a woman does not have the higher status of a man to lose? (*Converging Realities* 110)

Bergson's treatment of comedy takes a completely different tack. "Deep-rooted in the comic there is always a tendency," he argues, "...to take the line of least resistance, generally that of habit" (*Laughter* 187). In the prat-fall of physical comedy, for example, the person acts out of habit, fails to attend to an unforeseen obstacle, and this inattention to life leads to the

fall. "Habit has given the impulse: what was wanted to check the movement or deflect it. He did nothing of the sort, but continued like a machine in the same straight line" (66). What causes people's laughter, Bergson argues, is the absentminded, automatic, habitual, or mechanical quality of the behaviour. "That is the reason of the man's fall, and also of the people's laughter" (66). In almost all comic theatre, Bergson contends, a person continues to see what is no longer visible, to hear what is no longer audible, to say what is no longer to the point: in short, to adapt [themselves] to a past and therefore imaginary situation, when [they] ought to be shaping [their] conduct in accordance with the reality which is present (67)

In comic theatre, a person does this to such a degree that their conduct starts to seem ridiculous to spectators. The comic character's habits cause them to 'stuff up' something that should be simple and straightforward. This is something Lecoq has noted too. The comic character is like Lecoq's clown, in that this character "has to mess up something he knows how to do ...establishing a relationship between the exploit and the flop" (*The Moving Body* 146). In both Bergson's and Lecoq's theories, then, comedy relies on a relationship between the static models of the past and the spontaneous manifestations of the present, between what a body consciously wants to do and what a body unconsciously does. It is the conflict or confusion between the two that creates the comic effect for spectators. Both the prat-fall on which Bergson's theory of comic theatre is based, and comic theatre in general, strive to show spectators the negative side of habit, of a past solution that is absentmindedly applied to a present problem.

Deleuze describes this comic collision in broader theatrical terms. Whereas in Bergson's example a character represents a past-present collision, in Deleuze's example an actor actually realises a past-present collision. The crucial thing here is the confusion between the creative present of the actor and the constant past of the character. "The actor occupies the instant," Deleuze says, "while the character portrayed hopes or fears in the future and remembers or repents in the past" (*The Logic of Sense* 147; cf. Copeland "The Presence of Mediation" 34; cf. Lecoq *The Moving Body* 38). The actor works with the intense, immediate, immeasurable present of duration, the present moment people intuitively attend to when repeating a habit (*The Logic of Sense* 150). The character, on the contrary, works with the masterable, measurable, imaginary past of chronology, the past memories people

intellectually attend to when repeating a habit. As I have indicated throughout this thesis, in the theatre or in the course of life, the constancy in any repetition of a habit comes from the past overpowering the present. In almost any type of theatrical mimicry, though, actors can collide the past habits of the character and the present happenings of the actor in such a way as to show how the past overshadowing the present can become problematic, how habit can become problematic.

The comic past-present collisions Bergson and Deleuze describe make a number of things clear. They demonstrate that habit is an impelling force that is not necessarily altered in accordance with the demands of the present situation, and that this force can be represented or realised in theatrical performance in comic, confronting ways. In Bergson's words, a habit is "a ready-made frame" which frequently "lends to us its own rigidity instead of borrowing from us our flexibility" (*Laughter* 70). When comic theatre presents the petrified, predictable habits people have, it reveals how these habits render a living being little more than a thing, an automaton, machine, or marionette. This, Bergson insists, gives people "the impression of pure mechanism, of automatism, of movement without life" (117). "[T]he very liveness of bodies seems to stiffen as we gaze" (83). Of course, practitioners like Gordon Craig thought this uncomplicated corporeality might stabilise mimicry ("The Actor and The Über-Marionette" 142-151) (Chapter Two). But Bergson and Deleuze both believe the comic character's denial of life's complications can easily have the opposite effect. As Bergson puts it "[w]e laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing" (*Laughter* 97). For Bergson and Deleuze, the past-present collisions presented in comic theatre can show the ridiculous side of a person's habits, the ridiculous side of past models that deny present life, and so begin to mock or alienate these habits (in a way that has similarities with Brecht's theatre). This means comic theatre can question habit, and the hegemonic function that habit's denial of life can serve. In both the coarser and more cultivated forms of comedy, Bergson says, it is the fact that a habitual gesture, stereotyped phrase, or fixed idea has become rigid, and been naturalised, that makes it ridiculous (92). It is, he says, the "rigidity" of the habit "that society eyes with suspicion" (150). If spectators step back, see the character's behaviour in its broader context, they can see that the comic character is trapped in the past, in habit, and that this only creates problems for the character. The character's lack of adaptability has made their habits so automatic that they

have become personal and social defects (*Laughter* 174). Forfeiting the spectators' compassion, the comic figure becomes the object of their ridicule. Consequently, comic theatre confronts spectators with the fact that people's habits can be fixed, taken for granted, taken as natural, but also with the fact that people's habits need not be fixed this way. Events like the prat-fall create a comic collision between what happens to a person and what might have happened to a person, between ordinary possibilities and other possibilities. Deleuze calls this a "[c]ounter-actualisation [with] the value of *what could have happened* ...[C]ounter-actualisation liberates [an event] always for other times" (*The Logic of Sense* 161, original emphasis). By creating this counter-mimicry comic theatre can make the problem of habit seem problematic again, abolishing singular solutions to the problem that a particular behavioural situation presents. Comic theatre can show spectators that human behaviours can be done differently at different times. It can also show that this malleability may actually be more advantageous to humans than automatism. Comic theatre can thereby challenge the idea that a given human behaviour or habit is a natural, unchanging, unchangeable ideal.

Incidentally, although no connection between the two has been established, it is interesting to read Bergson's analysis of comic techniques in relation to Brecht's theatrical techniques. There are some provocative if superficial parallels between the two. Bergson canvasses a number of different comic techniques in *Laughter* (105-145). In the technique Bergson calls 'repetition', the comic characters stage recurrent behaviours so as to show up their shortcomings in relation to the shifting flux of life. In the technique Bergson calls 'inversion', the characters replay a recognisable scene, but they take on different roles or uncharacteristic sides in the situation. The techniques Bergson terms 'transposition' and 'reciprocal interference' both involve an interaction between two versions of an event too. In transposition, a repetition of an event transfers this event into different circumstances, into another setting or stage in history. In reciprocal interference, an event participates in two plots at once, according to which the characters can draw two distinct but "plausible" (123) readings, and this creates comic confusions. In each of these comic techniques, Bergson explains,

[y]ou take a set of actions ...and repeat it as it is, or turn it upside down, or transfer it bodily to another set with which it partially coincides – all of these being processes that consist in looking upon life as a repeating mechanism (126)

Clearly, the audience has a broader perspective on all these events than the characters, including all the mechanicity, errors, and misunderstandings, and this makes them laugh. At the same time, comic theatre also confronts the audience with the automatism that can creep into a character's behaviour, and with the problems this can cause. If comic theatre is to be effective in causing change in the end, though, Bergson explains that it depends on the emotional detachment of "a disinterested spectator" (63). "[T]he comic demands something like a momentary anaesthesia of the heart" (63-64) he says, because it is only when spectators look on comic characters critically that comedy can serve the sort of social function he has in mind. Bergson's belief that comedy "must have a social signification" (65) recalls Brecht's fascination with any theatrical technique that "allows conclusions to be drawn about social circumstances" (*Brecht on Theatre* 105). Nevertheless, Bergson knows that his strategy in *Laughter* can never guarantee challenges to cultural norms. "[I]t does not therefore follow that laughter always hits the mark" (*Laughter* 188) he maintains.

Bergson's and Deleuze's philosophies and Brecht's practice all address the potential of a subversive, comic sort of mimicry that counters the cultural habits it depicts. All three value a sort of mimicry that enacts the habits on which people's identities are established only in order to expose and endanger them. In Brecht's case, this has already been cast by Diamond (*Unmaking Mimesis* 47) and Fredric Jameson (*Brecht on Method* 172) as a type of performativity – by which they mean that Brecht's work prefigures some of Butler's sentiments when she draws on linguistic philosophy and phenomenology to describe how people's performances of particular behaviours help produce and reproduce their bodily identities (Chapter Three). Therefore, despite their differences, and despite the historically specific spirit of their theories, Brecht, Bergson, and Deleuze all value a performative or alienatory phenomenon in theatrical performance that questions the validity of the cultural identities and configurations presented. As I interpret them, they all provide insight into the estranging effect a number of physical theatre practitioners seem to be trying to achieve through their play with accepted artistic and social habits.

My comments here notwithstanding, it is interesting that while physical theatre performers often want their work with habit to have an intellectually estranging effect on spectators they also often want it to have a more experiential, ephemeral impact on spectators. This is why I earlier suggested that physical theatre's play with habit sometimes tries for one, other, or both of two performance consequences, tries to estrange and also to effect changes in the habits it stages for spectators, and potentially in the spectators' own habits. This second consequence can supplement or subvert the estrangements I have already spoken of, and it is equally if not more important for many physical theatre practitioners. In addition, insofar as the performers' efforts to change habits address the intervals in which they enact these habits, their efforts at times also engage the powerful interstitial energies experienced as 'presence' in performance. Almost as a side effect of the performers' work with habits, their work with these ever-changing intervals can actually amplify their presence. At least physical theatre practitioners like Barba tend to argue this position, as I explained earlier in this Chapter. In the end, then, to fully understand the performance consequences of physical theatre's play with habit is to understand firstly how the performers' work might produce energies experienced as presence, and secondly how these energies might affect spectators. The discussions of presence provided by Barba and other contemporary performance theorists can provide insight in the first case, and Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of affectivity and sensation can provide insight in the second case.

Even though different theatrical traditions use different terms to describe what Mine Kaylan understands as the "engaging quality" ("Performance Act" 48) of presence, this quality remains rather nebulous, especially for practitioners in the West. Commentators like Kaylan and Copeland suggest this is primarily because Western practitioners lack a common critical vocabulary to describe the phenomenon of presence. After all, Copeland says, "the word 'presence' means different things to different people" ("The Presence of Mediation" 31). At times presence refers to the fact that performance is live. The fact, as Copeland argues, that performance "puts us in the *presence* of other living, breathing human beings" (31, original emphasis). Taken this way, the phenomenon of presence is a function of the performer's

physical presence onstage, and of their physical proximity to spectators<sup>55</sup>. At other times, presence refers to the performer's aura or appeal as they present themselves or their character to the audience. In this sense, presence refers not simply to the live relationship between the stage and the spectators, but also, as Auslander says, "to the actor's psychophysical attractiveness to the audience, a concept related to that of charisma" (*Presence and Resistance* 37, original emphasis; cf. Copeland "The Presence of Mediation" 33). In this paradigm, Kaylan says, presence is "a mystifying and mystical quality of being, an essence ascribed to the person of the individual *actor* or *performer*" ("Performance Act" 48, original emphasis). When theatre practitioners take the phenomenon of presence this way, they ascribe it to the performer's ability to present their authentic self to spectators. Many performance artists take this point of view when they present their own authentic physicality or personality onstage, making it seem more natural to spectators (Chapter Two). For these artists, as Copeland argues, "authentic presence implies an absence of representation" (36). At other times again, presence refers neither to the actor's proximity to the audience, nor to the actor's aura, but to the actor's ability to make a character present in the moment of performance. When theatre practitioners take the phenomenon of presence this way, they ascribe it to the actor's ability to represent an artificial character to the audience. Realists take this point of view when they try to make their characters seem more believable by faithfully copying them (Chapter Two). For these artists authentic presence actually relies on representation (33). Ironically, in all these physical, presentational, and representational paradigms, presence is a function of what a performer is not of what a performer does, of a performer's qualities and properties not of a performer's processes. Accordingly, as Blau suggests, "presence is a function of what is no longer present, and the immediate present (what we see?) is subsumed" (*Take Up the Bodies* 13). The qualities

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<sup>55</sup> As I said in Chapter Two, when performance theorists such as Phelan use the term presence this way, their interest is in the new ideas performers can introduce in the present moment of performance. However, States thinks the present moment and its capacity for creativity is not as unique to performance as such theorists would have us believe ("Performance as Metaphor" 10). "[T]he present moment is not," Auslander agrees, "...an ontological quality of live performance" ("Ontology vs. History" n.pag). Instead, as States suggests, the present moment "is simply something that happens between an auditor/reader and a tangible 'work' when it is examined in any given 'present'" ("Performance as Metaphor" 11). For example, engagement with memories or records of a performance can become another present moment of performance, in which new meanings again emerge (10). Consequently, as Copeland says, the live presence of theatre is not "a source of automatic, unearned moral superiority to film" ("The Presence of Mediation" 42).



taken as 'presences' are actually impressions of stage images immediately past, and the present instant itself is subsumed to make these stage images appear more real, more authentic. In these paradigms, then, the phenomenon of presence is made to support meaning-making in performance.

Obviously, postmodern theorists are rightly suspicious of theatrical concepts of presence that position performers, or the characters they perform, as originary presences unveiled in performance. Thanks to their criticisms, the concept of presence has become problematic, contaminated by its connection with the philosophic concept of presence as an outdated remnant of Western metaphysics (cf. Pontbriand "The Eye Finds No Fixed Point on Which to Rest..." 155). Lamentably for theatre theorists, then, presence has become quite a loaded and questionable term. This said, presence is still important for many theatre theorists and practitioners. After all, as Copeland argues, "something called 'living presence' has always been sacred to the theatre" ("The Presence of Mediation" 33). Interestingly, instead of eliminating the long-standing idea of presence entirely, some contemporary performance theorists have started to translate the idea of presence into more postmodern terms. For instance, Kaylan tries to demystify the phenomenon of presence in performance by locating it in "the actor's ability or skill" ("Performance Act" 49), and specifically in "a difference in terms of the direction, intensity and object of attention" (56). In the new paradigm Kaylan points to, presence is not a noun but a verb, not something a performer is but something a performer does. Even with all his essentialising tendencies, Barba has articulated this idea too. Presence, he says, "is not something which *is*, which is *there* in front of us. It is a continuous mutation, growth taking place before our eyes" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 54, original emphasis). In this new paradigm, presence comes not from the innate properties of performers, but from the interactive processes of the performance, in which performers and spectators both participate<sup>56</sup>. This means the phenomenon of presence in performance can sometimes in fact further the estrangements I spoke of earlier. In Kaylan's words,

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<sup>56</sup> Clearly, this supports the suggestions of theorists such as Auslander, Copeland, and States, who all think presence is not an ontological property of performance, but rather relies on the relationship between a performance and its spectators in any given present.

[p]resence is an element in the language of live performance which participates in the production of meanings; it affects the reading process. It is a disruptive quality of the language, it does not work towards the resolution of meaning, but towards the subversion of meaning ("Performance Act" 52)

Moreover, given that this new notion of presence is grounded not in originary bodily essences but in ongoing bodily processes, it has potential both for performers and for poststructuralist analyses of performance.

The outstanding issue with this consequence of physical theatre's play with habit is the way the energies experienced as presence in performance are engaged by spectators at a sensory level, and have the potential to affect their bodies. I have already indicated how estrangements are thought to affect spectators, encouraging them to think about their own habits. I have also suggested that the effect of the energies experienced as presence is thought to be less conscious, explicit, and controllable. An engaging picture of the impact of these energies is provided by Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of affectivity and sensation. As they define it, affectivity has to do with energy transfers, and with the way these energetic forces eventually affect human experience. An affect is a force, as well as an ability to exert or experience a force. It can be conceived as exerting or experiencing an emotion, but only if the term 'emotion' is taken in its broadest sense, as setting things in motion. For, as Lecoq has noted, "[e]tymologically, the word emotion means 'setting in motion'" (*The Moving Body* 47). For Deleuze and Guattari a physical, emotional, or ideological identification between an affector and an affectee is at best a qualified version of an affect. Affectivity ought to be defined not in terms of resemblance, but rather in terms of response, of bodies that are moving and being moved. According to Deleuze and Guattari, an affect is not interpreted intellectually, it is experienced intensively and intuitively. It is only attributed a label later, outside the moment of its occurrence. When Deleuze and Guattari describe the way bodies actually move or are moved by an affect, they use the word sensation. Any response to an affect, any rendering sensible of an affect, is what they call sensation. This sensation reflects the fact that the habit-frustrating forces of becoming have been brought to bear directly on the body. It reflects the fact that, as Lorraine argues in her analysis of Deleuze, "[t]he flesh is never separate from a world of imperceptible forces, but changes with it, registering the effects of these forces" (*Irigaray and Deleuze* 214).

Sensation allows the forces that exist in the moment, even in the briefest moment, to change bodies and to be changed by bodies. "Even if the material lasts only for a few seconds," Deleuze and Guattari say, "it will give the sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that coexists with this short duration" (*What is Philosophy?* 166). Critically, Deleuze and Guattari insist that, "[w]hether through words, colours, sounds or stone art is the language of sensation" (176). A work of art passes through static forms only to link with the shifting forces in the intervals in-between them, forces that are reflected by sensations in the body. If the forces of the moment of performance are able to work in an 'affective' way they can be the basis of 'sensations' in the fleshly bodies of performers and spectators, and can both change and be changed by these bodies. Though, again, vitalists would argue that these changes measured in the flesh of performers and spectators could never be completely predictable in advance.

The final performance phase of physical theatre's play with habits is, as I have noted, difficult to describe in the abstract. Nevertheless, the performance theories and philosophies I have mentioned in closing this Chapter provide informative discussion of how translating this play to performance produces estrangements to be grasped intellectually and energies to be grasped intuitively. Clearly, efforts to estrange habits and to effect changes in habits do not always appear, and do not always appear together, in any one performance. Further, they do not always drive in the same direction when they do. Despite this, the tension between the two impacts on the meanings that spectators take from the performance, and also potentially on the spectators' own bodily behaviours from the moment of performance on into the future. With this notion in mind, in Chapter Six I will look at the ways in which the various principles and phases of physical theatre's play with habit are reflected in the work and working processes of two prominent Australian physical theatre practitioners.

## Chapter Six – The Physical Performance Practices of Yumi Umiuare and David Pledger

In this Chapter I present a more detailed discussion of two physical theatre practitioners and productions. Though there are many practitioners I might have considered here, I have deliberately limited my comments to two prominent Melbourne physical theatre practitioners – the dancer Umiuare and the director Pledger. I have done this partly for practical reasons, and partly because these practitioners provide fascinating local perspectives on the processual approach to habits I have investigated in largely analytical terms thus far in the thesis. In particular, Umiuare and Pledger both share the vitalist concern with radically repeating certain habits of being, and with locating this radical repetition in the bodily becomings that always already underpin being. As I said in my Introduction, my analysis of Umiuare's and Pledger's performance practices will be based mainly on observations of their practices, and on interviews with them, in 2001. On the one hand, my analysis will clarify how the vitalist theories considered in previous Chapters can help conceptualise Umiuare's and Pledger's performance practices, and Umiuare's and Pledger's rhetoric about their performance practices. On the other hand, my analysis will test these vitalist theories, showing areas in which Umiuare's and Pledger's practices see habits differently, subject habits to different standards, or give spectators a different sense of their grappling with habits. Connecting the two will thus further elucidate the benefits and drawbacks of the processual approach to habit I have been advocating in this thesis.

Umiuare is a butoh dancer, as well as a dance and body awareness teacher, who worked with well-known Japanese companies such as Dai Rakudakan before moving to Melbourne in 1993. While Umiuare's work is wide-ranging, butoh has always been always an important influence for her. She has developed and delivered her own distinct style of butoh through lectures, workshops, and performances – including her most renowned piece, the Greenroom Award winning *Fleeting Moments* (1998). Since she shifted to Melbourne, Umiuare has also had the opportunity to perform with noted Australian playwrights like John Romeril, and with noted Australian theatre companies like NYID, Chunky Move, Handspan Theatre, and Wulin Dance Theatre.

In her own choreography, Umiumare is particularly interested in the conflicting cultural habits and conventions that characterise Asia and Australia, and in the way these conventions impact on individuals. Umiumare talks about this in terms of an interest in the cultural imprinting that individual bodies carry. "[T]here's so much information we've got imprinted [on the body] already," she says. "Already we've got the mind imprinted in a way, as well as the body" (*Umiumare Interview 7*). According to Umiumare, the plethora of cultural information inscribed on people's bodies often clouds their perception of what their bodies are, and of what their bodies can do. These clouded perceptions then unconsciously guide people as they progress through their daily or their dramatic performances.

You try to be yourself, but that is hard. You say 'I'm me', but that is not really the case.

You are not just yourself. People are like that in life too. People often have surface expressions, but do not reveal too much of what is underneath (8)

Not surprisingly, Umiumare is speaking from her Asian-Australian perspective. She is especially interested in the experiences of those who exist outside dominant symbolic and social systems, and in how their otherness is inscribed on their bodies.

Many of the performances Umiumare has choreographed in Melbourne take perceptions of Asianness in Australia as their main concern. Significantly, though, she has used several different styles of performance to simultaneously represent and reply to the exoticised images of Asia that are sometimes stereotypical for Australians. For example, these styles of performance include the powerful, poignant works in the *How Could You Even Begin To Understand?* series (1997-Date). These performances have been characterised not just by cultural insights, but by abstractness, simplicity, and spontaneity, and by images of lively interaction between Umiumare and her collaborator Tony Yap. Umiumare says,

I still like that more simple, abstract work of dance, which we're doing in *Mixed Metaphor* (*How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12*, Mixed Metaphor, Dancehouse, 2001) with Tony Yap ... The process involves pure spontaneous physicalisation each day, but with focus on the present moment. It is very powerful, because we don't try to act at all (10)

I will discuss one of the performances in this series, *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12*, which was presented as part of the *Mixed Metaphor* program at

Melbourne's Dancehouse in 2001, in detail later in this Chapter. At the other end of the spectrum, Umiuare's styles of performance also encompass comic cabarets like *Tokyo Das SHOKU Girl*, a performance she presented as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 1999. Umiuare says this is "one of the works I have the most joy to work with" (9). Her interest in the sort of cabaret she develops in *Tokyo Das SHOKU Girl* is sparked mainly by the intimate connections and interactions it involves.

This interest in cabaret comes from connecting to others, from intimate relations with other people, which is much more real, and challenging, work. Because we have to really talk, rather than abstractly dancing ...It is an interesting process to confront myself more and more (10)

In *Tokyo Das SHOKU Girl* Umiuare deliberately combines her dancerly skill and discipline with comic, playful characteristics to confront herself and her spectators with some intensely personal identity issues. In her own words, this combination works

because of the context we used, my Japaneseness and my confusion living in Western society, which is daily level refreshing, you know. It is real too, not the sort of 'put it on a shelf' kind of a show ...Of course you have to work to get structure, it is often hard, but it is just a joy to make it (9)

Additionally, Umiuare's styles of performance incorporate works like *Kagome*, which she choreographed with Nadoya Music and Dance Company in 1993 and again in 1998, and which interweaves both the powerful physicality and the playfulness she is known for. *Kagome* is a butoh-based piece which brings a lilting soundscape of shakuhachi music together with moving images of a caged woman escaping from and to her childhood. "Through a magical interweaving of dance and live music," the program says, "...*Kagome* grapples with the universal human journey, the mysterious, the spirituality of childhood and childhood of old age" (*Kagome Program 1*). *Kagome* produces a lucid, lyrical, textured weave of impressions about childhood, memory, and spirit. Much of *Kagome's* depth is drawn from the diverse backgrounds of the dancers. As the program puts it,

[t]he performers are from Eastern, Western, traditional and contemporary backgrounds. This diversity is reflected in the range of instruments used and the breadth of movement and dance practice brought to the work by the dancers. They all carry within their bodies their own cultural backgrounds (1)

Critically, even though Umiumare explores a variety of performance styles, each of her performances is characterised by complex images of otherness, including cultural yet intensely personal images of memory, infancy, ethnicity, femininity, and fluidity. In Eckersall's words, Umiumare's "works play with cultural temporality and displacement, and there is an evident concern to contrast deeper notions of selfhood that might be uncovered by re-examining the past ... with the fleeting and superficial nature of contemporary existence" ("What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 146). For Umiumare, working through a range of abstract, poignant, playful, comic, confronting, painful, and political performance styles and subjects actually helps her subvert stereotypical images of Asia and Asianness. She says, "I often like to do both [abstract and structured works] ... Because if the work is stuck in one way, I can just shift it the other way" (*Umiumare Interview* 10). She also says this "scattered" (10) range of styles reflects her life, her lifestyle, and "philosophical things sometimes" (10). Even though it is difficult to know exactly what Umiumare means by 'philosophical things', Eckersall positions her work in a postcolonial domain. "[T]he fact that Asian-Australian bodies are rarely seen on the Australian stage and even more rarely in control of content situates these works within the rubric of postcolonial discourse" ("What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 146). "This draws our attention to questions of cultural and counterstrategic notions of identity within the postcolonial space of Australia and experiences of its/our continuing dislocation in the region" (149).

Pledger founded Not Yet It's Difficult (NYID) in Melbourne in 1995. Since that time he has devised a series of sometimes controversial performances by bringing his own directorial, theatrical, and political interests together with those of the NYID dramaturg Eckersall, and with those of the NYID performers. Pledger hopes to produce powerful socio-political commentaries through theatrical performance. In his work with NYID, he consistently brings bodily movement together with a range of theatrical and technological media to produce personally and politically confronting performances. What is more, Pledger uses the disciplined, direct, physical performance style he develops with the NYID performers to challenge conventional Western definitions of theatre, and conventional Western demarcations between drama, theatre, and dance. "I don't consider what we do is drama," Pledger says, "what we do is contemporary performance, or I sometimes call it experimental

theatre" (*Pledger Interview* 10). As this nomenclature makes apparent, Pledger and NYID are wary of the term physical theatre. They admit their work with bodies relates to physical theatre, but think the term has been co-opted by circus performers and cathartic dance theatre performers, becoming too restricted for their style of performance-making (cf. Eckersall "On Physical Theatre" 15, 16, 20, 21, 26) (Chapter Five).

When he is devising specific performances, Pledger says his point of departure is the "equation of time, space and body" (*NYID Workshop Program 2001* 1). Or, more specifically, it is this equation, brought together with questions as to the way bodies work as corporeal, cultural, digital, political, or performative signs in particular contexts. "[H]ow do you formulaise the equation of bodies in space over time and distance within a framework of content about contemporary culture, that's the sort of thing that I'm interested in" (*Pledger Interview* 3-4). Pledger's work with NYID dissects and dramatises the tensions between people's bodies and their spatial and social surroundings – particularly Australia's sporting culture, Australia's outback, suburban, and urban lifestyles, Australia's ecological, cultural, and political landscapes, Australia's multicultural heritage, and what Eckersall calls Australia's "continuing dislocation in the [Asia-Pacific] region" ("What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 149). Pledger asks that the NYID performers deliberately inscribe dominant Australian behavioural codes and conventions on their own bodies, and intensify the tensions between the two that become apparent. The vital, visceral vocabulary this creates is then coupled with multimedia, and with innovative and intellectually rigorous dramaturgy. This coupling supports the risky, reflexive, irreverent, alienatory representational strategy that NYID is today known for. It helps NYID explore images and ideas of 'who Australian's are', of 'who Australian's are supposed to be' – that is, images of oneness, not of otherness. In the end, this combination of media and ideas helps NYID confront spectators with the way people's bodies are trapped by Australian cultural conventions.

Pledger has used this performance style to devise a wide variety of performances with NYID. In the words of one of NYID's workshop programs, the company "has produced original performance works under its award-winning Performance Series, play productions, public space projects, television, and, in association with other performance companies, workshop, forum and development programs" (*NYID Workshop Program 2001* 1). As part



of NYID's 'award-winning Performance Series' Pledger has devised a number of mixed-media works that put the commanding physicality of the NYID performers in counterpoint with a array of audio, video, digital, and computer technology. One of the most celebrated of these performances is the Greenroom Award winning *The Austral/Asian Post-Cartoon: Sports Edition* (1997), in which, as Rachel Fensham argues, "the linguistic tactics as well as the corporeal attitudes that separate racially marked bodies were made visible" ("Anti-Asian Rhetoric in Performance" 179-180). Another is *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* (2001), a performance I will discuss in more detail later in this Chapter. Pledger has also worked on a series of 'play productions' with NYID, in which the physicality of the NYID performers is used to present, penetrate, and deconstruct the key perceptions of the texts. These highly physical interpretations of playtexts have ranged from Romeril's interrogation of the human condition, state surveillance, and the discipline of dissenters in *Chicago Chicago System 98* (1998), to a colourful critique of the position of Shakespeare in Australian theatre in *William Shakespeare: Hung, Drawn and Quartered* (1996), to Steven Sewell's stories of the politics of violence, power, and love in *Nil, Cat and Buried* (1995), to a playful probing of the thinly veiled propaganda of the Peking Opera in the Greenroom Award winning *Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy* (1995). These play productions show that, in Scheer's words, the "conflict between text dominated theatre and the performance of the body is a theme which animates NYID's approach to performance" ("Australia/Japan" n.pag). In addition to these performances and plays, Pledger has devised indoor and outdoor physical performances that he describes as 'public space projects', performances such as *Training Squad* (1996). Finally, Pledger has instigated a number of workshops, performance laboratories, performance research projects, international collaborations, and forums under the NYID banner. These workshops typically explore the influence of cross-cultural contact and globalisation on the performing arts. The most involved of these to date has been the *Journey to Con-fusion* (1999-2002) collaboration with the Tokyo-based theatre group Gekidan Kaitaisha<sup>57</sup>.

Umiumare's and Pledger's practices are both part of a broader movement in contemporary Australian performance. Obviously, Australia does not have an especially longstanding

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<sup>57</sup> According to the company, the term Gekidan Kaitaisha translates as 'Theatre of Deconstruction' (*Gekidan Kaitaisha Website*).

theatrical tradition to draw on. In almost all Australianised systems of theatre training there are significant debts to the theatrical techniques of the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, the United States, and to the international avant-garde. Barba has spoken of this cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural experimentation in a European context as an openness to "the experience of other theatres" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 9). In Australia, though, it is difficult to define an 'original' tradition that is open to 'other' traditions. Clearly, Australia's multicultural migrant community cannot lay claim to centuries old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions. Thus the postcolonial cultural and geographical contexts of Australian theatre mean it is inherently cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural. "The work being classified as 'contemporary' is similarly fluid," Catherine Taylor says, "and artists are happily moving across several different mediums without feeling a need to be defined by any of them" ("Tightrope Theatre" 16). In spite of this fluidity, Taylor observes, of late Australian theatre has developed a strong emphasis on the performing body, and on the potential of the performing body as an expressive source or resource. Physical theatre techniques have therefore become prominent among the training techniques taught in Australia in the 1990s. "In Australia," as Taylor argues, "the rise of physical theatre is a strong feature of our contemporary stagecraft" (18). Physical theatre is seen as a means of producing innovative, interactive, politically insightful performances that encourage spectators to intuit or to interpret problems with the politics staged. This is certainly the case in Melbourne, and not just with the work of Umiumare and Pledger. "The current state of Melbourne theatre is generally underfunded, self-subsidised," as circus performer Anni Davey says, "but some of the work going on is inspiring in its innovation and exemplary in its development of new and traditional audiences. Physical theatre and circus work is notable" ("Kennett's Wake" n.pag). A number of the most interesting physical theatre practitioners currently working in Australia are or have been based in Melbourne. Davey mentions Back-to-Back Theatre, The Business, Circus Oz, Dislocate, Five Angry Men, Keene/Taylor Theatre Project, Rock n' Roll Circus, Snafu, Snuff Puppets, Strange Fruit, and Zeal Theatre. There are also Al Wunder's Theatre of the Ordinary, Arena Theatre, Born in a Taxi, Chunky Move, Company in Space, Desoxy Theatre, Hunting Party, IRAA Theatre, The Men Who Knew Too Much, Mixed Company, Nadoya Music and Dance Company, State of Flux, Trotman and Morrish, Urban Dream Capsule, and the Women's Circus. Clearly, physical theatre companies like the De Quincey

Company, Legs on the Wall, and Zen Zen Zo do similarly significant work in other Australian states. The aesthetics and acting methods of these Australian practitioners are influenced by each other, and by the European and Asian precedents I have already mentioned in this thesis – most are wary of the psychological drama that dominates 'traditional' Western genres, and call instead on the physicality that dominates other genres.

Many of the Australian physical theatre practitioners I have mentioned here are interested in the issue of Australian identity. They are interested in the habits by which Australians define themselves, as diverse as they are. Umiumare and Pledger are no exception. However, even though the issue of human habits and identities is important in their performances, it is not easily incorporated into their theatrical and training techniques. This being the case, Umiumare's and Pledger's work reflects the concerns about approaches to habit in the theatre I raised in Chapters Two and Five in specific and sophisticated ways. Whether they use the term habit or not, these practitioners both wonder how bodily habits work, and how these workings are made meaningful. They both know that the meanings attributed to specific body types affect how these bodies are seen, and that making these meanings seem more natural may have adverse affects. Therefore, Umiumare and Pledger both use their physical performance practices to question the all too human tendency to naturalise the bodily norms of the current Australian cultural imaginary. Their interest in "identity politics" thus means their work with the body is also "...asking questions about the body" ("On Physical Theatre" 20), as Eckersall explains. Undoubtedly, there are interesting parallels and counterpoints between Umiumare and Pledger, in terms of their cross-cultural performance practices, and in terms of their treatment of the diverse cultural backgrounds that bodies carry into performance. For instance, one counterpoint is that Umiumare works more with dance theatre, while Pledger works more with the physicalisation of theatre (neither works much with the third trend in physical theatre, the acrobatic and aerial tricks found in contemporary circus (Chapter Five)). Another counterpoint is that Umiumare is more interested in personal images of otherness, minority, or molecularity, while Pledger is more interested in political images of oneness, majority, or molarity. This is perhaps why Umiumare favours affective techniques that foster the spectators' immediate intuitive sense of the bodies that mimic habits, while Pledger favours alienatory techniques that foster the spectators' measured intellectual interpretation of the models tested by the bodies that mimic

habits. This said, these practitioners both share the vitalist view that it is only by relating the two that they can finally produce a performance that is readable yet radical for spectators (Chapter Four). Accordingly, though Umiumare and Pledger come from slightly different cultural and theatrical traditions, and challenge slightly different facets of contemporary culture, they both offer an important local illustration of the more processual method of modifying habit in performance I considered in theoretical terms in Chapter Four and in international theatrical terms in Chapter Five. Rather than introducing wholly new habits, they both play with recognised habits in strategic, vital, visceral ways. They both take advantage of the variability that is part of any habit as it is mimicked in the present moment of performance – in vitalist parlance, they take advantage of the becomings behind modes of being. And, like vitalists, they locate these becomings in physical processes. In this respect, Umiumare and Pledger both rely on exhaustive physical processes of repetition to expose, experiment with, estrange, and eventually change particular cultural habits in their performance practices.

In this Chapter I will consider Umiumare, Pledger, and their play with human habits, in terms of the philosophies and performance theories I have already looked at in this thesis. I will allow their comments about their theatrical practices to illuminate some of the issues these theories avoid, and vice-versa. The connections between the two will thus contribute usefully to my analysis of approaches to human habits in the theatre. Again, though, it is worth remembering that while Umiumare's and Pledger's practices do reflect on habits in their own ways, they do not set out to address the issues with habit I have outlined here in exactly the same way that theorists would. As I have already noted, there can never be a complete identity between what practitioners try to do and what theorists try to do – they have different standards, different solutions, and so there always have to be points at which they move off in different directions. Additionally, Umiumare's and Pledger's strategies for subverting human habits should be taken as provisional. Their type of physical theatre provides intriguing possibilities, and it has a clear impact on contemporary performance culture, but it is not in itself a permanent solution to the question of bodily and broader cultural change. As I argued in my Introduction, I do not think any performance practice or theory can be. And if it could, this would nevertheless run counter to the ideas about the

benefits of body-driven accidents, chances, changes, and becomings I have identified both in vitalist theories and in physical performance practices in this thesis.

To initiate my analysis of Umiumare's and Pledger's theatre-making, I want to investigate their training practices. In previous Chapters I have analysed several different approaches to habit in theatre-making, with several different aesthetic outcomes – approaches that reveal, transcend, replace, and replay human habits. All these types of theatre-making rely to varying degrees on training and rehearsal regimes to determine the ways in which their performers mimic or counter-mimic habits. Umiumare's and Pledger's performance practices undoubtedly also depend on an exacting, experimental type of training. They both draw on their experience with classical and contemporary theatrical techniques to control their and their performers' bodily capacities, and to create a precise base for their performance aesthetics. Though, again, they do develop a different balance between affective and alienatory traditions. Their concern with theatrical traditions can be compared to the theorists' grounding in the classical canons they challenge – Deleuze in philosophy, or Irigaray in psychoanalysis, for instance. Having grappled with the integrity, limits, and potentials of performing bodies in their preparatory training, Umiumare and Pledger both go on to give spectators a sense of this grappling in their performances, something they are generally better able to do than abstract philosophies.

Umiumare's dance and theatre training influences have evolved along an interesting course as her career has progressed. In the beginning, Umiumare trained as a ballet dancer. "I started classical ballet when I was nine," she says, "and knew only a discipline-based dance originally" (*Umiumare Interview 3*). These classical Western dance conventions have helped Umiumare with her physical capacities and centring, and so to this day she still uses some of these conventions "for training, as a training" (5). However, following this initial training, her interests have become far broader. In this sense, Umiumare says, "I think it is hard to define myself in terms of the influences" (2). In addition to the importance of the classical influence, a number of contemporary dance and drama conventions contribute to this broadening of Umiumare's perspective. Principally, she has found herself fascinated by the

avant-garde or underground traditions that have surfaced in Japan and internationally in the twentieth century. "I'm quite attracted to that sort of radical, and not too conventional, theatre" (4). Umiumare uses a number of these 'radical' training and theatrical techniques to instil a physical imagination in herself and her students.

Undoubtedly, the radical technique that has most directly influenced Umiumare's performance style, especially early on, is the twentieth century Japanese dance movement *butoh*. In Umiumare's words, "I wasn't born in a traditional family, but I'm still a dancer, and traditionally trained, and from that sort of underground subculture, that's also a tradition, you know" (4). So "[w]hen I first came to see *butoh* it blew my mind a bit" (3).

Umiumare says that, beyond this 'mind-blowing' *butoh* influence, she has also been influenced by the improvisationality of styles as diverse as contact improvisation and cabaret. Umiumare's interest in contact improvisation is, she says, "again part of the modern dance training I did in the past" (5). Her interest is provoked by contact improvisation's concern with bodily consciousness, awareness, or attentiveness, and by its concern with tactile bodily collaborations. She believes these concerns in contact improvisation can "deepen the idea of 'how to use the body'" (*Umiumare Questionnaire 2*) in space, through time, and in relation to the touch of others. Curiously, Umiumare also insists that contact improvisation here develops a "common sense of spatiality with *butoh* dance, or a common sense of internal awareness, even when the movement is obviously part of a contemporary dance vocabulary, not an earthy *butoh* movement" (*Umiumare Interview 5*). As I have previously noted, Umiumare has long had an interest in cabaret too. This, she claims, is because cabaret can provide casual spatial set ups, and can promote intimate yet intellectually charged communication with spectators. In addition to contact improvisation and cabaret, Umiumare says that in developing this intimate contact with the audience she is also influenced by something less familiar to Western practitioners, by the Japanese *Taishu Gekijyo* (Japanese Public Theatre) (*Umiumare Questionnaire 2*). According to Umiumare, the Public Theatre is "theatre which has a strong hold on the public mind" (*Umiumare Interview 4*). "Basically," she says, "in the Public Theatre there is not much money, as well as not many sorts of sets. So you have to do everything, and in that sense you can learn everything" (4). This is critical for Umiumare.

That is why I am more interested in connecting with the Public Theatre style ...The style involves singing, talking, dancing, and everything ...And during the performance the audience can eat ...The atmosphere is more casual, and the audience are more relaxed. It is pure entertainment sometimes. But there is still some context and politics ...When people are relaxed, looser, the performer can access them easily (12)

Obviously, Umiumare's longstanding interest in butoh dance is still the lens through which she understands all of these other dance and theatre influences. As I indicated in Chapter Five, butoh was given its name meaning 'dance of darkness' by Hijikata in 1960, and was grounded in the complex artistic and cultural contexts of the Japanese society in which it was developed. As Kurihara argues, "Hijikata created the term 'ankoku butoh' to denote a cosmological dance which completely departed from existing dances and explored the darkest side of human nature" ("Hijikata Tatsumi" 12). Accordingly, although "American critics see butoh as a direct product of the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ...the origin of Hijikata's butoh is far more complex" (17). Viala and Masson-Sekine concur. In the twentieth century, they say, contact with the West had left the Japanese "torn between an obsession with 'progress' and refuge in nostalgia" (*Butoh* 11). An early twentieth century interest in Western philosophies of self and society, and in duplicating the style and subject matter of Western theatrical genres through the 'shingeki' or modern theatre, had begun to dissipate. Young artists of the 'angura' or underground were eager to reclaim the potential of traditional Japanese dance and drama in the modern climate, and at the same time to radicalise traditional style, subject matter, and student-master relations. "[I]n traditional Japanese dance and dance theatre," Umiumare observes, "there's often quite a hierarchy" (*Umiumare Interview* 4). In Japanese forms like Noh and Kabuki, as in much Asian theatre, training traditionally proceeds through heredity or generational inheritance. As Watson argues, "[t]he generational apprenticeship model of training has always been important in Eastern traditional performance because of the emphasis on a fixed repertory and the preference for the direct transmission of performance knowledge" (*Performer Training* 4). Techniques are typically passed from master to student, or father to son, just as they were mythically passed from God to man. Students frequently specialise in a single role, and prepare for this role by studying the style of their masters. It is just these structures that angura artists sought to subvert. As Carol Martin

suggests, then, "[a]ngura, as well as butoh, fashioned seemingly apolitical performance practices in which Japanese physicality was explored with the intention of reinventing an indigenous experimental Japanese theatre" ("Japanese Theatre" 84).

As I have said, in addition to intensifying Japanese dance and drama, butoh dancers sought to capture the potential of the Western influence, particularly that of artists who were equally disheartened with the Western forms that inspired the shingeki. "A legend has persisted," Snow says, "not least among practitioners in Australia, that butoh artists were largely untrained; though Tanaka studied ballet, and Ohno, Hijikata, Tanaka and others studied modern dance" (*Imaging the In-between* 282). As the originators of butoh, Hijikata and Ono both drew on their training in Western modern dance, especially its idea that performers can express their own creative spirit rather than enact established forms. Their desire to rupture traditional forms of aesthetic expression, combined with their taste for rebellion and revolution, infused their work with a conceptual and stylistic complexity designed to confound the boundaries of conventional theatre and dance. Their ultimate aim, as I said in Chapter Five, was to confront spectators with the presence, abjectivity, and disaffection of the human body. In this sense, their butoh invoked a spirit comparable to that which characterised Western experiments of the time, and was sometimes called a performance art. It was, in Martin's words, "in rapport with what was fast becoming an international avant-garde" (84).

Naturally, the acting methods and aesthetics of butoh have been diversified since the 1960s, and differences between Hijikata's style, Ono's style, and other styles have affected the development of butoh in Japan and internationally. Nowadays, Umiumare therefore notes, "[b]utoh has got so many different styles" (*Umiumare Interview 2*; cf. Snow *Imaging the In-between* 283).

Obviously, Hijikata's work established the dark, dramatic vision of Butoh, in which dancer, environment, society, myth, and life would converge and conflict. "Hijikata's guiding aesthetic throughout his life," as Kurihara argues, was "the ugly is beautiful, death is life" ("Hijikata Tatsumi" 18). His scandalous early performances were adapted from the work of



Yukio Mishima, Jean Genét, and the Marquis de Sade<sup>58</sup> – in fact, Hijikata's 1959 version of Mishima's *Kinjiki* (*Forbidden Colours*) has been seen as the first butoh performance (17-20). The thematically and theatrically experimental works of Hijikata and his collaborators were grounded in a disordered world of violence, revolt, perversity, grotesquery, eroticism, and mysticism. These works were a vehicle through which Hijikata and his counterparts could explore the human body, and the veiled layers of existence to which they were continually drawn.

These comments notwithstanding, Hijikata's concern with darkness, desire, and transmutation was never the only driving force behind butoh. Hijikata first worked with Ono on an adaptation of Genét's *Divine*. He held a great regard for Ono's work, in spite (or perhaps because) of the sometimes marked stylistic differences between the two dancers. As Umiuare herself frequently notes, Ono's butoh has been seen by most as an intense, imagistic, spiritual, and yet playful style of dance, with its basis in an internal landscape somewhat different to Hijikata's (*Umiuare Interview* 1-2). Ono's dance has thus provided a number interesting parallels and counterpoints to Hijikata's dance.

In the years since Hijikata's death, there have also been a number of more recent developments in butoh dance. Commentators Viala and Masson-Sekine claim that many of these newer butoh practices are constrained by their own rejection of the original stylistics and symbolism of butoh (*Butoh* 117). Abandoning the provocative qualities that once characterised butoh, these practices offer repetitive aesthetically-driven events without substance beyond their own imagery, and without social impact or meaning. "Originally an expression of revolt," Viala and Masson-Sekine say, "it has become the expression of a narcissistic need to please" (171). However, they do cite several practitioners who overcome this tendency toward nostalgia, aestheticisation, and impotence by exploring untapped thematic and theatrical possibilities in butoh itself, and by encouraging synergies with emergent dance theatre movements internationally. Viala and Masson-Sekine find the greatest potential in improvisational butoh, a trend towards liberty in expression "almost diametrically opposed" (147) to the formalised techniques that have emerged in Hijikata's

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<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, these are the same texts that influence theorists such as Deleuze.

wake. "It is in this type of dance that butoh's original vitality can still be felt. These dancers have avoided the trap of an established code of expression or of overly sophisticated productions" (147). Tanaka's *Body Weather* is perhaps the most notable example of improvisational butoh, especially in terms of influence in Australia<sup>59</sup>. As Snow says,

Body Weather practices investigate the intersections of bodies and their environments; where environment as 'weather' is not simply nature and its forces but rather the whole world, in all its dimensions ... Tanaka incites, albeit enigmatically, a way of thinking about bodies and their relation to the world which is startling and provocative, a way which also points to a radically unusual kind of training and performance practice (*Imaging the In-between* 66)

Since starting his work with *Body Weather* in the 1970s, Tanaka has established the *Mai Juku* and *Tokason* performance companies, and has conducted the majority of his workshops from a farm property in rural Japan. He has welcomed dancers from around the world, as well as other artists interested in exploring emotional states, dynamic processes of physical expression, and tense engagements between emotion, psyche, physicality, environment, society, and philosophy. In the words of Viala and Masson-Sekine, Tanaka's work with *Body Weather* has created a performance style that manages "to convey the pioneer spirit of butoh without falling back on imagery" (*Butoh* 158).

What makes *Umiuare*'s work appealing is the way it embraces almost all these stylistic trends. It engages the theatricality of Hijikata, the soulful intensity of Ono, the improvisationality of *Body Weather*, and more. In the theoretical terms I have been using, it engages alienatory techniques, affective techniques, improvisatory play between the two, and more. *Umiuare* herself understands these different stylistic traits in butoh in terms of the way the dancers emphasise external expressivity or internal intensity. That is, in terms of the way the dancers are "moved by external and internal sensations" (*Yumi Umiuare Website; Kagome Program* 1). At times *Umiuare*'s work has drawn heavily on the "very theatrical use of Butoh dance" (*Umiuare Questionnaire* 1) she first explored while working with *Dai Rakudakan*, a use of butoh dance that takes Hijikata's theatricality to even greater extremes. "Dai Rakudakan was quite theatrical, twenty people dancing on the

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<sup>59</sup> For example, Tanaka's influence has been important for the *Body Weather Laboratories* of the *Tess De Quincey Company*, work that has found much acclaim in Australia in recent years.

stage, lots of cues, and quite technically working on quite big external movement," Umiumare says. "Not copying kabuki or anything, but there are influences from that form" (*Umiumare Interview 2*). In addition to her history with Dai Rakudakan, Umiumare's work has also at times drawn on the influence of other styles of butoh dance, including styles that focus on intensity and internal drive. According to Umiumare, these styles in fact "do totally the opposite" to Dai Rakudakan. "More like in ninety minutes the only movement is a raising of the hands, or something like that" (2). While this sort of intensity is undoubtedly seen in Hijikata's work, Umiumare thinks it is more basic to Ono's style of butoh dance. In her words, Ono's work usually prioritises the "internal and spiritual side of butoh" (*Umiumare Questionnaire 1*), something she has found interesting from the time she first started workshoping with him.

He was there while I was in Tokyo, and I attended almost every single butoh workshop held around Tokyo ...He was a master, but in his workshops there was not a hierarchy where there was a master. Instead, he just kept doing his dance, he loved his dance, and he just talked about his dance. There was sort of a spiritual quality about dance as his expression, not sort of as an art expression, you know. He didn't have to be snobby about anything, he was just doing it, which was very humble, and which became very strong for me in my work too. To see that person old, and humble, doing it (*Umiumare Interview 1-2*)

Significantly, though Umiumare notes the differences between these styles of butoh dance, she still believes that certain traits are common to all these styles. Even in the more stylised sorts of butoh she sometimes draws on, Umiumare believes there is still always a sense of the dancers' bodies being driven by a sort of internal landscape.

There are still often universal elements there, including the use of the spatial elements, and the fact that the performers confront their own emotions, rather than adopt a superficially choreographed style or superficial acting. In butoh every single movement has to be initiated by the performers' own internal landscape ...Some companies work very externally, but the performers' emotion is still coming from their internal landscape. Which is quite the same method, I think (2)

From Umiumare's perspective, the role of this internal landscape in almost all styles of butoh has a remarkable impact on butoh's general aesthetics and acting methods, as

compared to other dance and theatre traditions. In butoh, she says, the dancers' success depends not on if their bodily techniques are right or wrong, but more on

if the dancers' being becomes themselves, or if the dancers are being themselves ...If they are acting something else which is not convincing deeply enough, it is that which is not right ...Apart from that there is not any right or wrong or anything. As long as they convince themselves, you know, and that is hard (8).

This stress on the dancers convincing themselves leads Umiumare to suggest that she understands butoh dance as "the ultimate expression of the body itself, as it becomes 'lost' in its own movements" (*Yumi Umiumare Website; Kagome Program 1*).

Since their initial 'mind-blowing' impact, the features of butoh I have mentioned here have become basic to Umiumare's work. In turn, Umiumare's choreography has become what Eckersall calls "the basis of one of the most sustained examples of butoh-related body performance in Melbourne over the last few years. I say butoh-related ...because it has become a contested, in some respects orientalist and overused terminology" ("What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 145-146). There is no doubt that Umiumare does sometimes describe her work with butoh in slightly essentialistic terms, and that she does engage some of the essentialistic performance practices that have been favoured in Europe, America, Asia, and Australia since the 1960s (Chapter Two). This certainly can raise an alarm from the perspective of poststructuralist theorists. However, Umiumare's use of this language and style is strategic, a way of interacting with spectators on the basis of what they are already familiar with, and does not necessarily imply that she is committed to an essentialistic idea of human beings. So, as Eckersall argues,

[t]his is also a form of strategic play with symbols and myths, histories and identities. [In Umiumare's work s]uch a poetics of displacement might perhaps rejuvenate butoh as an interesting and progressive site of performance, one that remains true to its historical moment but offers new directions for a corporeal politics of transgression (150)

While Umiumare's distinct performance style works with the dynamics central to butoh since its inception, and instrumental to butoh's success, it also takes the discipline in its own directions. Umiumare brings the physical transmutability of butoh together with other improvisational dance and drama techniques, and presents them with her own affecting and

at times amusing spin. What is more, Umiumare provides her work with a political context by bringing these innovative, improvisational methods together with "my influence from the Western society I'm living in" (*Umiumare Interview 2*). All these influences come together to make Umiumare's work, in her own words, "mesmerizing, bizarre, meditative or dramatic" (*Yumi Umiumare Website; Kagome Program 1*).

Pledger's theatrical training techniques have also had an intriguing evolution. He too explains that he is informed by "a reasonably eclectic set of influences" (*Pledger Interview 1*) in his work with NYID. Certainly, Pledger has had plenty of experience with so-called 'conventional' training and theatrical techniques early in his career, particularly text-based techniques. Overall, though, his experiences with conventional theatre have perhaps been less positive than Umiumare's. He describes these experiences as a series of

educational experiences with theatre that have developed, if you like, ways of *not* approaching work. I would say that was probably most of the conventional drama practices that I undertook when I was at drama school. They were pretty much all the things that I never use. I went to, I had the misfortune of going to NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Arts, Sydney) ...As a result of which I think I found a real disenchantment with psychological schools of acting ...[I found it] incredibly demoralising – artistically (*Pledger Interview 2*, original emphasis)

As a consequence of his disenchantment with psychological approaches to acting, Pledger began to suspect that such approaches held far less promise than physical approaches to acting, and so began to broaden his physical and performative vocabulary. Since this broadening of his perspective, Pledger says he has gone against the tendency of some mainstream drama schools to adopt a singular specific performance style (Chapter Five). Beyond the fact that this tendency limits performance possibilities, Pledger believes "you can't specialise when technology is just turning everything upside down so dramatically" (3). Instead of specialising, then, in his work with NYID Pledger draws on a broad range of physical acting possibilities, including European body-based techniques, contemporary Asian techniques such as the Suzuki Method he has studied, classical Asian techniques such as the Kyogen his NYID colleague Eckersall has studied, and Brechtian alienatory techniques that allow bodies to problematise what they present. As the company phrase it in one of their workshop programs, NYID's work "draws on a diverse set of performance

forms and disciplines such as dance-theatre, bio-mechanics, martial arts, new media practices, suzuki acting method and sport" (*NYID Workshop Program 2001 1*).

Pledger's training and theatrical techniques generally begin with the performing body. He increases his and his students' energy and expressive power by searching a variety of sources for innovative training and theatrical techniques. According to Pledger, many of the theatrical methods that influence him are thoroughly absorbed with the question of the body's operation and organisation. In Pledger's words, these influences

have just been ways of organising, you know, philosophies of organising the body. Things like biomechanics, how the body operates. I think that's been a big influence. I've always been fascinated with how a body can locomote through the space, how it can move, and then how you can play with that in a most detailed way (*Pledger Interview 3*)

In particular, Pledger has been impressed by theatrical methods that improve a performer's bodily technique, but at the same time improve their ability to go beyond technique into theatre. For instance, Pledger says he has been impressed by the detailed, dynamic dance theatre of Bausch, a choreographer with Germany's Wuppertal Dance Theatre (*Tanzteater Wuppertal Website*). Bausch's performances often forsake the abstract in favour of clearly human behaviours, and this distinguishes them from a number of Western dance traditions – including, for instance, many of the traditions Umiuare calls on. However, in addition to this 'humanness', Bausch is also known for bringing exacting techniques and expressive theatricality together in remarkable stage settings (cf. Bausch "Not How People Move But What Moves Them" 53-60). In this respect, Pledger says,

she made a major impression on the way that I actually understood the relationship between theatre and dance ...[A]part from being completely seduced by the theatre, the theatrical experience of her work, I was so aware of the dancers ...[T]hey were so classically trained, and the rigour and the discipline of the body enabled them to go to places that I hadn't seen other performers go to (*Pledger Interview 1*)

Like Bausch, Pledger presents highly human habits, then works hard (technically and theatrically) to alienate them – and, as I noted when comparing Irigaray's physical vocabulary and Deleuze's geographical vocabulary in Chapter Three, it certainly is harder work to alienate highly human habits than abstract habits.

As part of his performance agenda, Pledger also joins his initial interest in how bodies work with his longstanding interest in how bodies work to energise and be energised by their spatial, temporal, geographical, and social surrounds. Here too he makes use of a range of non-theatrical and theatrical influences.

Pledger says sport is one of his major non-theatrical interests or influences here. Sport itself, and the spatial and social dynamics of sport, have long been a seminal influence on Pledger's practice. "I played [Australian Rules] football when I was younger," he says, and "...I left that behind, but it was kind of a very seminal influence" (1). Sport is influential, Pledger says,

[b]ecause of the ways ...I think of space, in terms of placing bodies in space, as a director, but also as a performer. Understanding how the body has a set of faculties that operate instinctively in a sports environment – when you work in a sports team, for example – which, when applied to or understood in a performance environment are actually very similar. When you're working in a performance ensemble, especially when you've got a physical subtext as the main agency of the performance, those sort of things about working through where another performer is at any given time, and how you respond to them, and how you communicate your physical information to them ...you have to be aware of everything there is around you. So that's basically had quite a strong influence on the way I've made stuff, in a really, if you like, practical, and almost banal way. The banality of sport, it's got a lot of value in terms of how you approach physical performance when you work in an ensemble (1)

As I have already indicated, Pledger is also committed to cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural contact between theatre practitioners, directors, and researchers, and this contact also helps him conceptualise the connections between bodies, spaces, times, and societies. The Asian technique most influential for Pledger, and for Pledger's ideas about a body's sensibility to its spatial and social surrounds, is the Suzuki Method.

I studied a bit with a guy called Tadashi Suzuki, a Japanese theatre director ...I did a masterclass with him when he came out in Australia, and then I went over and did a

workshop with him for about a month, I think, or six weeks, and he invited me back the next year to become a teacher of his methodology (2)

Suzuki is the originator of the Suzuki Method, director of the Suzuki Company of Toga, organiser of the Toga International Arts Festival, and founder of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute (with Anne Bogart, herself the instigator of Viewpoints Improvisation). Suzuki is a major influence on cross-cultural performance practice in Japan and internationally. Like a lot of modern radical methods, and like Pledger's own methods, Suzuki's Method starts with the idea that Stanislavski-inspired Method Acting is an inadequate means of expressing human lives and hopes. Immediately setting himself against accepted interpretations of Stanislavski, Suzuki claims "[t]he art of stage performance cannot be judged by how closely the actors can imitate or recreate ordinary, everyday life on the stage" (*The Way of Acting* 5). Instead of working with the realist method Suzuki interprets so negatively, the Suzuki Method brings his ongoing interest in spirituality and shamanism together with the rigorous performance techniques of classical Japanese traditions like Noh and Kabuki, of classical European traditions like Greek Tragedy, and of contemporary experimental and cross-cultural work (cf. Schechner: *Between Theater and Anthropology* 25, 258). Obviously, the idea that exacting physical methods have more promise than psychological methods is part of what peaks Pledger's interest in the Suzuki Method. Pledger is especially interested in how the Suzuki Method teaches bodily sensibility, and bodily sensibility in space, starting from the feet up with the Suzuki stomp. Of course, Suzuki observes,

the idea that an actor can learn to control the apportionment of his energy, unifying it through his pelvic region, is hardly unique to my training exercises ... What I believe I have added, however, is the idea of stamping the foot – forcing the development of a special consciousness based on this striking of the ground. This concept arises from my conviction that an actor's basic sense of his physicality comes from his feet (*The Way of Acting* 9)

The way in which the feet are used is the basis of a stage performance. Even the movements of the arms and hands can only augment the feeling inherent in the body positions established by the feet. There are many cases in which the position of the feet determines even the strength and nuance of the actor's voice (6)



This demanding method not only cultivates a comprehensive somatic and spatial awareness in the performer, it cultivates the energies the performer needs to be powerfully expressive in the performance space. According to Pledger,

when I discovered Suzuki ...it was a bit like pre-season training at footy. I really loved the feeling that my body was responding to these exercises in such a strong and powerful way. I liked the way that he talked about theatre practice. I think the single thing that I've kept is the whole notion of the body being the agent of design in the space  
(*Pledger Interview 2*)

Pledger claims it was in this idea, and thus in his training with Suzuki, that his concerns with sporting bodies and with performing bodies merged into an intense, vital, visceral performance strategy or style. "It was a great revelation in a way, because it was the place where I think my sports background and performing, physical performance practices, actually met" (2).

The physical precision and power of Pledger's theatre, and the prioritisation of spatial interactions and group sequences in Pledger's theatre, speaks to the ongoing role of these sporting and Suzuki influences. As does the fact that Pledger's interest in group sequences is greater than a non-Suzuki artist such as Umiumare's, for example. Nonetheless, Pledger's work with NYID does not necessarily take the Suzuki influence in the same direction as some other Australian and international theatre companies. This is because, in Pledger's work, connections with the Suzuki Method are never actually direct and absolute.

Suzuki was a good influence in a way, but I was always incredibly suspicious of people who would take his methodology and then transplant it to Australia. I never got it ...Because you might as well just work with him ...I've always been more interested in my own cultural context ...I'm not a great fan of his theatre, so what interested me was the methodology not so much how it was put into the kind of theatre that he made (3)

Although Pledger is committed to cross-cultural contact, then, he, like Umiumare, is somewhat wary of it too. He is wary of transplanting theatre techniques without taking their new Australian contexts into account. Like most contemporary philosophers, he knows cultural norms cannot be challenged in the same fashion across all times, cultures, and forums. This being the case, Pledger makes it clear that he worries about currently popular concepts of interculturalism. He recognises that there is always the risk that other theatrical

cultures will be exoticised, fetishised, appropriated, or assimilated. If this happens, intercultural hybridity can actually sterilise cultural differences. This is why Pledger and NYID prefer the idea of 'cross-culturalism' to that of 'interculturalism'.

Pledger and NYID have explored these issues with cross-cultural contact in *Journey to Con-fusion*, a theatrical exchange with the Tokyo-based experimental theatre ensemble Gekidan Kaitaisha. Directed by Shinjin Shimizu, Gekidan Kaitaisha shares NYID's conviction that cross-cultural exchange can help artists, communities, and cultures establish productive connections, and can thus help artists produce challenging and politically engaging performances (cf. *Gekidan Kaitaisha Website*). The NYID/Gekidan Kaitaisha project started with a swapping of theatrical skills, ideas, and research interests through two intensive performance laboratories, *Con-fusion #1* in Melbourne (1999) and *Con-fusion #2* in Tokyo (2000), and then culminated in *Con-fusion #3*, a co-devised production in Melbourne and Tokyo (2002). The performance laboratories progressed through a workshop, a showing, and a symposium in which artists and academics discussed the performative and political agendas of the work-in-progress. As I suggested in Chapter Five, practitioners such as Barba frequently search for the essential features of Asian performance in their intercultural theatre, and then universalise these features above all else. In contrast to this common version of intercultural theatre, NYID's cross-cultural theatre starts with the interstices, incompatibilities, counterpoints, and differences between two different companies from two different cultural and aesthetic contexts. Certainly, the NYID/Gekidan Kaitaisha project took its lead from the conflicting methods and materials of the two groups, and tried to reflect juxtaposition and journey rather than harmonious resolution in the performers' relationships. "As a journey to con-fusion," Eckersall explains, "...the project was able to investigate creative, political and cross cultural moments and tensions without banishing one side or the others' viewpoint" ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag). As their collaboration progressed, the tensions in the two groups' perspectives in fact provided a challenging point of departure. "Although agreeing on the theme of 'media', differences between the companies became more pronounced in Tokyo. Both inevitable and strategic, this con-fusion snuck under the media theme and became a starting point for creative work" ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag).

According to Eckersall, the greatest difference between the two groups was in their thoughts about the body and the body's role in shaping self-identities and societies. Like NYID, "Gekidan Kaitaisha use the body as a sight for social investigation" (Eckersall, quoted Cockerill Brown "Performing Arts" n.pag). However, the *Journey to Con-Fusion* project highlighted potentially productive differences between NYID's stylised, theatrical techniques and Gekidan Kaitaisha's stripped down, detheatricalised techniques. Speaking with Scheer, Eckersall has noted that

'each NYID performance typically dissolves into a repetitious semiotic landscape' while Kaitaisha on the other hand stage a 'radical anti-theatricality' suffused with 'the semiotics of violence, aggression ...colonisation and regulation' which 'is not so much performed as it seeps through the moment and clings to the air' (Eckersall, quoted Scheer "Australia/Japan" n.pag)

Continuing this theme in an essay of his own, Eckersall has suggested that the *Journey to Con-fusion* project

highlighted contextual matters and historical conditions in theatre; the ideological tension between the representational forces of exterior form favoured by NYID and the motivational forces of interior work seen in Kaitaisha's process. Their reconciliation is made difficult by the imprint of these historical conditions and the way that such conditions have been experienced in Australian and Japanese theatre culture. (NYID's incipient Brechtianism in reaction to the personal-subjective modern; Kaitaisha's post-Grotowski forms as a reaction to Shingeki/modern theatre). These were not reconciled, only observed. Nonetheless it was fascinating to see different politics and histories associated with questions of representation debated in the workshop and displayed on bodies in performance ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag)

These differences in NYID's and Gekidan Kaitaisha's treatment of bodies and bodily habits meant that communication was sometimes difficult during their collaboration, especially when it came to the connotations of their respective training and theatrical exercises. To exemplify these difficulties, Eckersall has often discussed the Gekidan Kaitaisha exercise 'exile' ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag; "Cultural Fusion"). In this exercise the performers undress before beginning a series of violent bodily clashes and encounters extending through the workshop space.

For some of the participants and observers, however, the nudity raised obvious questions associated with gender and sexual politics. As intimated, such problems of representation were foregrounded in the project as a whole. The temporary solution to the debate saw NYID actors put on clothing at precisely the moment when Kaitaisha removed some ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag)

In effect, the whole point of *Journey to Con-fusion* was to explore the differences in the performative and political agendas of the two theatre groups, and the things the two groups offered to each other. Though conscious of the pitfalls associated with this type of cross-cultural contact, Pledger and the NYID performers hoped by consciously, openly, obviously beginning their exchange with contradictory performative constructs to provide a potent means of renewing and responding to difference. They hoped to frustrate the current climate of globalisation's tendency to exoticise and essentialise cultures, and to eradicate differences between and within cultures. Like a lot of NYID's cross-cultural experiments, *Journey to Con-fusion* positioned the human habits presented as timebound cultural norms not as timeless natures. Moreover, the project belied Barba's belief that one theatre group's openness to others represents a search for common performance-making principles, rather than a comparison of contrasting performance-making procedures. "When the project worked best," the two groups' approaches to performing bodies and performances were, in Eckersall's words, "...fused literally ...Such performance exercises, fragmented and intermingled, became representations of contested cultural terrains, language slippage and hybrid landscapes. One imagined new kinds of performing bodies and cultures" ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag). The uncomfortable cultural and theatrical collisions of *Journey to Con-fusion* denied spectators the chance to exoticise and essentialise the realities represented. The project highlighted the differences between the cross-cultural performance-making processes of Pledger and NYID, and the intercultural processes of certain other performance companies.

Insofar as Umiumare and Pledger confront prevailing human habits through their theatre training techniques, they make noteworthy connections with the physical, processesual

approach to habit I have been analysing in this thesis. In Chapter Five I looked at how several international theatre practitioners play with habit in their theatre-making, and thus become highly processual in their approach to these habits. I suggested their play with habits followed three rough phases – first exposing, then experimenting with, and then finally estranging or effecting changes in habits. I paralleled these phases with the vitalist suggestion that human beings should be ‘attentive’ to the habits they mimic, and to how their habitual modes of being are tested by the becomings that work in the intervals within them. They should then intensify these interstitial becomings as a way of experimenting with, estranging, or effecting changes in habits. Before I reflect on two of Umiumare’s and Pledger’s recent performance pieces, then, I want to review the ways in which they (each in their own way) exemplify and engage with physical theatre’s process of playing with habit, and the three phases it involves.

As I argued in Chapter Five, the first phase of physical theatre’s play with habit is the one in which performers peel away their habits. This phase has performers mimicking habits to expose how these habits work, and how they might be broadened, challenged, estranged, or changed by means of bodily mimicry. Again, there are two main ways of envisaging this process – either as an essentialist process of exposing the person (the being) that exists beneath the habits, or as a non-essentialist process of exposing and experimenting with the processes (the becomings) that have produced this person and their habits.

Umiumare sometimes speaks of the process of peeling away habit seen in the first phase of physical theatre’s play with habit in essentialistic terms, understanding it as an emotional process of revealing a performer’s “under layer” (*Umiumare Interview 8*). Still, even though Umiumare’s comments seem essentialistic on the surface, read more closely they show she understands this process as one of exposing the cultural information inscribed on people’s bodies, and emptying people’s bodies of as much of this information as practicable. As she says,

already there is so much information imprinted on the body. We add extra information, it may be full. So we try to neutralise, and then [later in the performance-making process] we can add colour, and tension ... Sometimes we even finish up with emptying

ourselves out, rather than adding colour, because we couldn't afford it yet ... We have to empty ourselves first ... It's an ongoing quest (7)

While Umiumare understands that peeling back these imprints is an ongoing process, she nonetheless believes it is "very worthwhile" (8) because it brings the dancers back to the broader potential of their "neutral body" (7). Put another way, this process helps Umiumare and her dancers become more open, available, or attentive to the dynamic bodily processes of the present moment of performance. It helps them open their past habits to the occurrences of the present, and thus helps them take advantage of dynamic indeterminacy that is part of any habit as a body mimics it in the present moment of performance.

Pledger's training involves the sort of habit-stripping seen in the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit too, insofar as several of his exercises are designed to train, detrain, and retrain the NYID performers, and to thereby develop their bodily abilities, and their bodily attentiveness to other performers and to the performance space (cf. *Pledger Interview 3; NYID Workshop Program 2001* 1). Throughout this series of exercises, Pledger's emphasis is on how performers apply their energies "over distance and time in relation to the dimension of space and the presence of other performers" (1). In this sense, intensification of the performers' sensibility to the present moments and movements of performance is a significant consequence of habit-stripping for Pledger, as for Umiumare. Though Pledger values this process of habit-stripping, he notes that it is sometimes difficult for performers, especially those with a lot of experiences and expectations, to break through and broaden their longstanding bodily habits. "Sometimes it's easier to train them", he says, than to detrain or retrain them, "but it depends on who they are and what they do, and what they want out of it" (*Pledger Interview 3*). As with Umiumare, then, Pledger admits that this work with bodies and bodily habits is provisional and unpredictable. This ongoing process is obviously difficult to describe, and, interestingly, this is why Pledger thinks some performance theory and philosophy can be helpful in developing a descriptive vocabulary (7).

While the first phase of physical theatre's play with habit exposes how habits are performed, the second phase experiments with how habits are performed. Though the performers still masterfully mimic bodily habits, their attention turns to shifting how these

habits work. In effect, to draw on Deleuze's vitalist terms from Chapter Four, the performers use their exacting repetitions to reach what is excessive, dynamic, and differential in these repetitions. Like a lot of the physical theatre practitioners I considered in Chapter Five, Umiumare and Pledger have exercises that help their performers eternally return to and experiment with the dynamism contained in human habits – the dynamism that makes them problems with myriad possible solutions. Their concept of play with habits is thus more concrete, explicit, and exhausting than the philosophers' concept.

The meditative, repetitive movements of the second phase of physical theatre's play with habit are an important part of Umiumare's performance-making. As she suggests when describing one particularly representative rehearsal process, these repetitive movements help she and her dancers experiment with their bodies and with the behavioural patterns imprinted on their bodies. This, she says, is why

we are using a lot of repetition, for example doing the same movement for ten minutes, and then emptying ourselves. Which is easy to say but hard to do. We just literally exhaust ourselves to do it, and then we stop it, and then we can't think anymore in our head [as much as in our body]. Because before doing this exercise we have got so much information, from our eyes, from our bodies, everywhere. So that's why the exercise slows the body down, and stops it, and then we can explore the body as if it is a part of the air, or something, rather than have the attitude that 'I am a body', 'I've got a body', as if we exist very against everything. It is more like being together with the space and the surroundings. So the body is not that significant, it just melts into the space

(*Umiumare Interview 6*)

Though the repetitive exercises Umiumare uses are not easy, they do free dancers from their current imprints and constraints, and expand their future potentials. When questioned about the specifics of these repetitive exercises, Umiumare says she often begins with a sitting meditation she calls 'zazen', and a slide walk meditation she calls 'suriashi', mixed with other butoh exercises, and then expands these repetitions into a broader range of bodily movements with the help of Michizo Noguchi's Noguchi Method (*Umiumare Questionnaire 2*). These exercises work with structured, exacting, exhausting, or soft movements of the body. In the walking meditation, for example, "the dancers slide walk very slowly, and they can get focused on the walk ... They are moving slowly, and they can in a way calm

themselves and breath into a natural rhythm ...rather than 'puff, puff, puff'" (7). In effect, in these exercises the dancers are working with rather than wasting the energy in their repetitions, which may prove exhausting, but which serves a purpose instead of just making the dancer 'puffed'. In addition to these meditations, Umiuare depends on the Noguchi Method to make the dancers less rigid in their movements, more open to their spatial surroundings, to others, and to their own softness. The Noguchi Method's movements are fluid and flexible, and also quite theatrical when used in the way that Umiuare uses them.

It is not specifically a performance technique, but [Noguchi] was exploring lots of softness in the body. He used water exercises. And he explored with Japanese language, like vowels and consonants – for example, using the Japanese characters to make a U word as a U movement, or a AH movement. In the Dai Rakudakan company we used to warm-up with the Noguchi Method. It was helpful as a technique to neutralise the dancer's body, rather than have the dancer be rigid, and say 'I'm going to move softly', but then they don't know how to ...Softness is the most important thing, then the dancer can get harder. But if the dancer is hard from the beginning they can't get harder or softer ...It also helps to have more balance between soft and hard, I mean this gap can be as big as possible. That expands the dancer's expression I think (6)

In the end, then, these sorts of exercises and experiments are a vital catalyst in establishing the exacting, ever-expanding, creative style of expression Umiuare values in her performance practice.

Pledger's performer training processes also rely on repetitive movements of the sort seen in the second phase of physical theatre's play with habit. Pledger himself makes this point when he speaks of workshop exercises he has developed in which the performers play with several modes of bodily motion and locomotion in their "most detailed way" (*Pledger Interview 3*). These sorts of exercises "examine modes of locomotion such as walking, running, spiralling and spinning," Pledger says, "and require the learning of a series of tableaux or statues in static positions" (*NYID Workshop Program 2001 1*). The exercises have performers explore these styles of locomotion singularly, and sometimes in small groups. As part of the explorative process, Pledger asks that the performers attend to elements in the "equation of motion" (1), such as space, strength, stability, stasis, acceleration, speed, balance, and flexibility. According to Pledger, these exercises and



experiments with bodily motion can eventually challenge "the performer's centre in vertical and horizontal planes" (1). This means these experiments can put a certain dynamism into the performers' bodies and bodily behaviours, and increase their ability to mimic and counter-mimic prevailing human habits. Accordingly, in Pledger's work with NYID these experiments become the basis of a confronting, compelling performance aesthetic.

In Chapter Five I suggested that the significant feature of these two preparatory phases of physical theatre's play with habit is that the practitioners do not simply forsake ordinary habits, and do not simply find other habits for themselves and their performers to adopt. This is because the practitioners seem, at some level, to accept that normal and new habits are both equally easily naturalised. Instead of creating new habits, then, they replay common habits in different, more dynamic ways. The practitioners work with the hidden joints of habits, the joints in which habits connect with the creative flux they first came from, and thus come nearest to changing, at least according to the vitalist theorists I considered in Chapter Four. And, like vitalists, physical theatre practitioners draw particularly on the physical aspects of this flux. Though practitioners like Umiuare and Pledger sometimes have preferred possibilities in terms of the habits they would like to see for people in future, the way performativity theorists do, in their play with habit they still usually say they are more interested in processes than in predetermined goals, the way vitalist theorists do (cf. *Umiuare Interview 2, 3*; cf. *Pledger Interview 2*).

The fact that physical theatre's improvisatory play with habit begins by challenging current bodily constraints lead me in Chapter Five to claim that this play has benefits over previous performance practices, particularly performance art practices. Instead of just jettisoning the habits they have mastered, physical theatre practitioners take the habits themselves as a foundation or framework for modifying these habits. In fact, because they have to stage habits safely, and because they have to show spectators these habits are real and readable before they show spectators these habits are fraught with tensions, they are slower than vitalist theorists to rid themselves of these habits. The fact that physical theatre practitioners masterfully mimic old habits while making room for others means they actually need a greater degree of skill than in some other theatre genres. In Chapter Five I called this virtuosity that characterises physical theatre's play with habit an unconventional virtuosity.

Once again, Umiumare describes the dancer's paradoxical proficiency or virtuosity in her own unique fashion. As a butoh dancer, Umiumare always hopes to allow the dancer's soul to speak through their body. This means she hopes not to master the body through her dance, but to magnify and perhaps modify the body's inner life and meaning. This said, Umiumare does see the purpose of technical proficiency. Firstly, Umiumare recognises that the dancer needs control over his or her own body, and over the stage properties and spaces that surround his or her body, for practical reasons. Otherwise, there is always a danger that these things will get in the dancer's way, and so get in the spectator's way too. In this sense, she says,

when I'm doing performance I'm often not only doing performance. I still have to be spatially aware what is happening around me – for example, what if the props are in the wrong place? I still have to work, act, for that. Rather than be single-minded for the dance (*Umiumare Interview 4-5*)

Secondly, Umiumare recognises that technical proficiency can reduce the dancer's risk of becoming stuck or stifled in their daily habits purely because they do not have the skill to do something different. Because, she says, "if a person has no background, no dance background, they can become a bit stuck, of course, because they end up with their habitual movement" (5). Again, this is just the sort of problem seen in some types of performance art. Without training, the dancer struggles to bring their bodily movements up from the level of intensity appropriate in daily life to the level of intensity appropriate in dance and in theatre – and despite what some of butoh's founders have said about an absence of training, Umiumare is aware that this is as true of butoh as of any genre.

Though Umiumare does see the point of technical prowess, she does not want to be so bound up in specific bodily techniques that her dance lacks soul, life, or becoming. She says

you have to get [a physical vocabulary] from technically discovering and workshopping and all that, but at the same time that technique is not a help with everything ... When you're creating a performance, it is an organic process to start with to create a certain story and structure – maybe that could apply as a sort of technical component,

technique and things – but as soon as you rely on it, it becomes stuck ...The life is gone, the organicity is gone (3)

In Umiumare's opinion, if a dancer depends too heavily on specific dance techniques and systems, they can all too easily get 'stuck'. The dancer can be trapped by their technical proficiency, by the very discipline they have used to escape their daily habits. Umiumare thinks this is an issue in much modern dance. To this end, though she is "not making a comment against 'modern dancers'" (3), Umiumare has noted the fact that in most modern dance training "you have to train in a certain way" (3). This means that modern dancers "can move very quickly, but with some of their movements they are moving only kinetically, they are not really moving from within" (3). According to Umiumare, this is a difference between modern dance and butoh.

[S]ometimes modern dance trained people are just a bit against butoh, because they don't want to explore too much the emotional side, they want to explore the kinetical elements ...Lots of people from a modern dance background, or a ballet background, have got techniques to move, [techniques focused on] how high you can raise your leg and things like that – I mean it's obviously amazing – but how long can you do that kind of dance? (5)

"[I]n butoh," Umiumare counters, "it's basically a focus on 'to exist' or 'to be' and 'to be yourself'" (3). This emphasis in butoh runs contrary to the codified training of much modern dance. Consequently, Umiumare argues, "in butoh dance they can dance until their nineties" (5).

In Umiumare's butoh, as in other types of butoh, the dancers continually contest the healthy, helpful habits of human life, and the technical proficiency in human movement that is part of many dance and theatre traditions. "Because we're able to move," she says, "but in butoh you shouldn't be 'able' to do it, 'able' to move. You should intentionally 'disable' your ability to do it, 'disable' your ability to move" (3). In fact, Umiumare is here following Hijikata's longstanding injunction that "only when, despite having a normal, healthy body, you come to wish that you were disabled or had been born disabled, do you take your first steps in butoh" (Hijikata, quoted Akihiko "Fragments of Glass" 56). Like Hijikata's comments, Umiumare's comments about butoh's balance between bodily ability and

disability show her concern with training for herself and her dancers, but also with "breaking through from the trained body" (*Umiumare Interview 5*). In her words,

I have to rely on some techniques of physical training ... But I try not to use physical expression technically ... Any techniques would be a great medium to explore my own expression, but I have to consider how I could 'translate' them to my own body rather than mould myself into a 'technical' body (*Umiumare Questionnaire 3*)

Accordingly, although Umiumare's choreographic practices benefit from bodily techniques, they do not subsume the body in such techniques (*Umiumare Interview 3, 4*). In Umiumare's practice, the dancers' conscious repetition of familiar human behaviours has the potential to reach the creativity concealed in any repetition of a behaviour, and to bring this creativity to the fore for a brief time. "Which involves a bit of a repetitive process," she says. "... So it reaches the point where conscious becomes unconscious, unconscious becomes conscious, kind of thing. So it is sort of an ongoing process of searching for conscious, and unconscious conscious (3). In Umiumare's opinion, it is only by doing this on an ongoing basis that she and her collaborators can expand their energy and expressivity, their ability to move beyond choreography into something more in the moment of performance. "[T]hat's an organic process also," she argues, "so you have to raise it up again later, to make it something more live again" (3). "[O]f course it's universal, you're never kind of finishing off researching on it, because its ongoing life work in that sense" (2).

Pledger also has a distinct way of describing the paradoxical proficiency or virtuosity on which his work with NYID depends. Pledger admits there is a virtuoso athleticism to the NYID actors' bodies in his occasional use of the term 'actor-athletes'. The NYID actors need this athleticism, because they need a certain amount of prowess to perform specific bodily behaviours, and to present these behaviours to spectators. The paradox is that, though Pledger and NYID need 'hard' bodies to do their type of work, they do not necessarily want these 'hard' bodies to seem natural. After all, Pledger and Eckersall are both cognisant of the problems that can arise when NYID presents only technically proficient bodies and body types onstage. These potentials and problems come from the fact that bodies operate as what Pledger calls 'performative signs', and so have the capacity to authenticate specific bodily habits for spectators. Eckersall believes the *Journey to Confusion* project provided an example of just this sort of problem. "One [Tokyo] critic's

comments about the 'AFL bodies' of the Australian cast made me wonder if we are aiding an unhelpful stereotype here" ("Tokyo Diary" n.pag). Pledger has commented on this sort of problem too, particularly in terms of his processes in directing *Training Squad* and *The Austral/Asian Post-Cartoon: Sports Edition*.

It's a really hard area actually, because ...in one way [training] locks you into a particular kind of body. For example when we did the *Training Squad* (1996) ...it's an outdoor show on sport, and corporatism, and it was a sort of prelude to the sports show (*The Austral/Asian Post-Cartoon: Sports Edition*, 1997) that we had at the Malthouse Theatre. At the beginning of rehearsal there were nine different bodies in the space, but by the end of that show there were nine very similar bodies. And they sort of metamorphosised into this kind of non-gendered athlete that has all the worst connotations in the proto-fascism that sport really is. And so, while it worked really well in that show, there are times we actually want different kinds of bodies to be operating. But you actually need them to be fit enough, sharp enough, to do a whole set or series of other kinds of work in the show ...[I]t's a difficult area because you know the body exists as a sign, a cultural sign, and therefore it exists as a performative sign. As a result of which, the reading of the performance through the body can become really prescriptive, when you have only certain kinds of bodies. What I think I kind of realised is that ...I couldn't do much about that. Because I needed them to do certain things, I needed the bodies to do certain things in order for us to be having the kind of argument that I wanted to be had (*Pledger Interview 6-7*)

For Pledger, the provisional solution to this set of problems with virtuosic behaviours is to move beyond a simple opposition between staging stereotypical behaviours in theatre and subverting stereotypical behaviours in theatre. In the performances he directs with NYID, Pledger hopes both to present and to problematise 'hard' bodies, and socially sanctioned habits. He hopes thereby to draw the NYID actors and their audiences into a debate about dominant Australian habits.

I felt that what I would do in performance, for example, was that I would position other kinds of elements in the discourse in counterpoint to that. And really draw attention to the problem of it ...[C]ertainly I think its one of the things that people often find a little controversial in the work. They sort of see that kind of body type, and they're inevitably

suspicious about it. In a way one of the things I try to do is unravel all the mechanics of that suspicion. And it's never going to be satisfactory, because it's always something that's so incredibly subjective ...[It] really made a set of problems in the way that the work was read. A good set of problems ...It was apparent within the company, as well as being dynamically apparent with the reading of the performance ...It's hard, you have to think it through ...I think that's why a certain amount of theory can be quite helpful in terms of positioning yourself (7)

As Pledger's comments here indicate, he and NYID are aware that their actors masterfully mimic culturally and artistically authoritative habits, and that they frequently present pretty, pleasing, appealing, idealised, or naturalised images of what bodies are meant to be.

However, Pledger and the NYID actors go against and beyond this too, trying to dissect, corrupt, cartoon, or unravel stereotyped habits as they mimic them. Pledger does not talk about the becomings that vibrate beneath human habits as Umiuare and the vitalists do, but he does locate his dissection of habits in affective physical processes, amplifying the power of his alienatory techniques through his affective sporting and Suzuki techniques.

Scheer is one contemporary commentator who has noticed this strategy in Pledger's work.

Pledger's style is inherently deconstructive in precisely this way. His inflected Suzuki method (the most original use of this system since The Sydney Front in the early 90s) provides an intriguing way of disrupting the integrity of this system while enhancing the effects of its discipline, staging it with humour and intelligence, quite contrary to the critics of the company who emphasise the 'totalitarian' nature of the 'hard-body sameness of NYID actors' ("Australia/Japan" n.pag)

Additionally, though NYID's critical, comical representations of Australian realities come out of their disciplined yet deconstructive theatre training techniques, Pledger notes that these representations remain open and provisional as they are put before an audience.

[B]ecause process is always more important than what I end up with. It's born out of a belief that without the process you don't actually end up with anything. It's only through process that you can get a result that everybody learns from. You, the people you work with, and the audience that you're challenging (*Pledger Interview 2-3*)

This open, ongoing process is one more thing that undermines prescriptive readings of the realities NYID present in their precise, disciplined performances.

Because Umiumare and Pledger develop these provisional, paradoxical types of virtuosity, they put themselves in a position to copy and counter prevailing human habits in tandem in their performances. They build a basis for a critical performance aesthetic, which repeats culturally recognisable habits in a way that makes them appear awkward, artificial, mechanical, absurd, or alien, and which is responsible for much of the impact of their work. This impact may be confronting, as in many of Umiumare's performances, or darkly comic, as in many of Pledger's performances.

Eventually, of course, Umiumare and Pledger transfer the styles of expression they have established in their preparatory training into their performances, and thus come into the final phase of physical theatre's play with habit I considered in Chapter Five, the phase in which sudden challenges and changes to habits in front of spectators become possible. For, as I noted in Chapter Five, if performers expose and experiment with how habits work in the first two preparatory phases of their play with habit, they finally have the capacity to shift how these habits work in the performance phase. In this phase Umiumare and Pledger link the discoveries they have made in their preparation to the dynamics of their performances. In Pledger's opinion, the "relationship between the training and the performance is as much about the quality of the discourse as it is physical motifs" (9). Consequently, he thinks performers have to bring to their performance both their physical, processual methods of modifying habits, and their own unique perspectives on these modifications.

Generally performers like the fact that their bodies change, they like their bodies to change when they do physical performance ...When you're an actor and you put on a costume you transform. And in the same way ...when the actors have put on the training costume if you like, the costume meaning the body that the training has made, they feel quite different ...And that changes them (7)

Yet, Pledger maintains,

when you're making those bodies in the training you get a lot of resistance sometimes. Well, sort of resistance is maybe not the right word, but a kind of an awareness that the body is changing for a purpose ...[H]opefully it's part of the subtext of the

performance. Their questioning, the actor's questioning, how they feel about their bodies changing (7)

If there is any ambivalence in the actors' attitudes to the sorts of bodily conventions and changes they stage, this can come out in the performance, and can be sensed by spectators, as for example in NYID's *Journey to Con-fusion*. This can be confronting for spectators. As I suggested in Chapter Five, the final performance phase of physical theatre's play with habits seems to have at least two significant effects on spectators, alienating habits and actually changing habits in front of them. Evidently, these effects depend both on the way performers depict habits in the moment of performance, and on the sensations and meanings spectators draw from these depictions. This means that the performance phase of physical theatre's play with habits is provisional and dependent on spectators, and thus that practitioners like Umiumare and Pledger cannot predict the success of their attempts to critique Australian cultural habits with any certainty. They have to wait and see what their play produces in the moment of performance. This means there is a real sense of suspense and room for error. Umiumare and Pledger both appear to recognise this. They know they need to wait until the moment of performance to witness breakthroughs, to truly witness something more, something new, happening. In Umiumare's words,

when you are training you are doing it in your own way, but when you perform obviously you get more confronted by the other energy of the audience, more than before ...With an audience, and with other people watching, you get beyond that. Which is often great, and interesting, and new things happen ...You have to experience a performance to break through something more (*Umiumare Interview 7*)

What is more, Pledger says, when such successes in performance do happen, they can in turn inform further breakthroughs in theatrical technique and training.

[N]ow as I think about it the performance informs the training as much as the training informs the performance ...So ...there are some critical crossovers between the two, and I think they've informed each other in a way, and I think that's probably really healthy ...I would not like to think that the performances are more exciting than the training or visa versa. I think it sort of sits in the same kind of interrogation of the material, it has the same vitality and mercurial nature (*Pledger Interview 9*)

As their comments indicate, Umiumare's and Pledger's attitudes to the moment of performance in many ways parallel vitalist attitudes, particularly their insistence on



provisionality, and their idea that successes create new connections, and so create the serial changes Deleuze typically describes as territorialisations, deterritorialisations, and reterritorialisations (Chapter Four).

With the perspectives I have put forward thus far in this Chapter in mind, I now want to consider two instances in which Umiumare and Pledger have translated their unique physical and performance practices into particular productions, and produced violent, heartwrenching, humorous images of bodies trying to shatter the stereotypes that frame them. I will consider Umiumare's *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* and Pledger's *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*. I have chosen these two performances not only because I saw them and spoke with Umiumare and Pledger about them while researching this thesis in 2001, and not only because they offer provocative treatments of features typical to Umiumare's and Pledger's practices, but because they both comment on human habits by bringing the performers' bodies into counterpoint with current Australian and Asian-Australian cultural conventions.

*How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* was presented as part of the Dancehouse *Mixed Metaphor* program in September 2001. The performance is part of a series posing this same question that Umiumare has produced with her longstanding collaborator Yap since the mid 1990s. In their own words, this series "explore[s] some common views and experiences of Asianness in contemporary Australia" (*Mixed Metaphor 2001 Program; How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12 Program 7*). Certainly, Umiumare has addressed common (mis)conceptions of Asianness in Australia before, and addressed them with more acuity and tenacity than many other contemporary practitioners. Although Umiumare's other performances have addressed perceptions of Asianness in other ways, the *How Could You Even Begin To Understand?* series represents a return to an abstract style of performance. "Thus far," the dancers put it, "performances have been simple in structure and tend to be focused solely on the body" (7). Using this simple, sober, affective performance structure, the series has investigated the ways in which the dancers' mainly Western audiences see Asians and Asianness. The dancers both carry

their Asian backgrounds in their bodies, and are well aware that these qualities are seen by Western standards as 'other'. In the *How Could You Even Begin To Understand?* series the dancers exploit and explore this political yet intensely personal idea of their own 'otherness'. At the core of the series, they say, is

[o]ur experience as contemporary and experiential artists in a society that often views Asians as 'other'. One of the restraining experiences for us is the misconceptions that non-Asians Australians have about Asian culture. Our work is often judged from a western perspective (7)

Undoubtedly, this discourse of 'otherness' is of interest to many Australian artists and academics at the moment. Many are trying to liberate the images and identities that dominant social systems find dangerous. This is definitely an aim for Umiumare and Yap, too. They say "*How Could You Even Begin To Understand?* seeks to redress these depictions of Asian[ne]ss and replace them with an exploration of contemporary Asia-Australia and points of view from other parts of Asian region" (7). The engrossing thing, however, is that this performance does not just develop new depictions of Asianness. Rather, it responds to and redirects current cultural stereotypes, albeit it in an abstract way. The performance both exploits and estranges the exotic images of Asia that are stereotypical for Westerners. As Umiumare articulates it, "I often use a sort of a traditional and exotic way intentionally. Then trick the audience, or change to be totally comic. In a way it is a shock for the audience" (*Umiumare Interview 10*). *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* presents stereotypes of Asianness in such a way as to make its largely white audiences uncomfortable with the preconceptions they hold. Spectators are personally challenged by the question 'how could you even begin to understand?'. Obviously, Umiumare is well aware that "[a]t the extreme edge our work as performers our performing bodies may be exoticised, orientalist and fetishised" (Umiumare, quoted in Eckersall "What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 148). At the other edge, though, Umiumare and Yap think their work may well prove to spectators that these stereotypical images of Asianness are just that, stereotypes, not truths.

The conceptual framework that Umiumare and Yap use to investigate images of Asianness in *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* is important. They say that "[t]hey have discovered a common association with the philosophical principles of yin and

yang, oppositional elements that are found in all manner of Asian experience and our performance experience" (*Mixed Metaphor 2001 Program; How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12 Program 7*, original emphasis). According to Umiumare and Yap, although "this philosophy is well known to the exten[t] that it might be a cliché of Asian culture, there is great creativity and depth to be found in reclaiming and revaluing such an essential concept through performance" (7). Without doubt, this concept has already been valuable for previous art practices, like John Cage's mid twentieth century musical experiments, which were also inspired in part by this Asian philosophy of life, chance, and change. In their own previous performances together, Umiumare and Yap have on other occasions personified the oppositional forces of yin and yang as animals – as the crane and the tortoise in *Kagome*, for example. Whether they are animalised or abstracted, though, these contrasting and complementary forces are always central to Asian cosmology, and to Asian notions of life, journey, time, change, and human nature. These concepts of yin and yang are perhaps most widely known in the West through the ancient Chinese *I Ching* or Book of Changes. The *I Ching* constructs the cosmology of yin and yang around the chi, the fundamental life force or breath. It claims the chi has both outbreath and inbreath – both the strong, creative, fiery, male, yang force, and the weak, destructive, earthy, female, yin force. This view of chi, yang, and yin the *I Ching* offers can obviously be linked with the vitalist claim that the flux of life is always caught between being and becoming, constant intellectual points and creative intuitive processes (Chapter Four).

In *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* Umiumare and Yap translate the twin temporal rhythms of yin and yang into their theatrical rhythms. They investigate how these twin tendencies of the temporal flow of life interact, and how this interaction affects life and living beings. "In resulting performances," the dancers explain, "Tony and Yumi work in a kind of spontaneous counterpoint seeking to embody the shifting sensibilities of a yin-yang formula. [This] investigates the 'superimposition' within the yin-yang" (7, original emphasis). Yin and yang appear not as two physical things but as two provisional tendencies in the Asian cosmology Umiumare and Yap incorporate into their performance. They exist in a binary, in which each force struggles to overcome the other, but in which each force at its extreme also becomes the other, creating a continual cycle. The forces blend, becoming two parts of the life-cycle that builds living beings, and that is

the basis of all change and growth in living beings. Interestingly, the interaction between the two in the life force or flux interrupts the logical linear space-time sequences that many Western philosophers like to see in life and in living beings – other than vitalists, obviously. It thus provides the basis for transitions and transformations that do not necessarily have a clear progression, a clear plot of beginning, middle, and end points. In this sense, the Asian concepts of yin, yang, and chi provide the basis for both constancy and change in life and living beings. This cosmology accepts and accounts for the changeability of bodies, events, environments, and societies in the course of life. This is perhaps why these cosmological themes are useful for Umiuare and Yap in considering contemporary bodily identities and interactions in their performance practices. As Eckersall argues in his examination of Umiuare and Yap's performances, "[p]erhaps their physicalised demonstration of *yin-yang* philosophy, where the countervailing forces in the space become a question of mutual respect, diversity and reappraisal in performative terms can become a model for reconciliation and negotiation of difference" ("What Can't Be Seen Can Be Seen" 149, original emphasis).

*How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12* begins with both dancers sitting face-to-face on the floor, between the two chairs they have placed at either end of a traverse stage. Umiuare wears a crumpled shiny silver dress; Yap wears black pants and heavy black shoes. Their clothes show up their striking, sticky, sweaty bodies. Although the space is silent and still, there is a blend of other sensory stimuli. The space smells of the incense the two dancers hold in their hands, for example. The atmosphere is almost meditative. A dim, warm light frames these first moments of the performance, although the more violent moments later will be framed by a more cool, spare, silhouetted lighting scheme, bringing a little of the show's yin-yang binary into its spatial setting. After a few moments of silence the music starts. The dancers open their eyes, they slowly lift and lower their incense sticks, and then they start to move to the chair at the far end of the traverse. The dancers plant their incense sticks on the floor in front of the chair. Umiuare sits on Yap's lap. She rises. She very slowly comes forward. She seems to be focusing on something at floor level for a long stretch of time. Though this may simply be a sign of an interior struggle, there is a temptation for the spectators to follow her gaze. Umiuare's feet are stepping over each other, shielding each other, in an almost childlike way. Even though "play is rarely

associated with the physical or cultural dynamics of *butoh*" (145), as Eckersall says, Umiumare's movements are at times marked by "extreme playfulness" (146), perhaps as a reflection of her early work with Dai Rakudakan. In spite of this sense of play, though, her left shoulder, her whole left side, seems torn. They drag behind her, drawn back towards Yap. Her right hand stays close to and clawed in towards her body. After a time, she starts to turn her gaze to the spectators at the side of the traverse stage, almost pleading with them. Yet still she has some of the childlike quality, which may or may not be meant to signify a more 'feminine' quality. A type of transference takes place, and the spectators have the sensation of being explored and evaluated by Umiumare's gaze. In the meantime, in the far chair Yap at first moves and makes slow poses. In time he rises, and he too starts to move forward into the space. Throughout this sequence, Yap's face appears as if he is attempting to speak. In other words, his facial gesticulation has a more verbal quality than Umiumare's, perhaps meant to signify a more 'masculine' quality. Moreover, his bodily movements tend to be more to-and-fro than Umiumare's, and more markedly repetitive. Again, in his comments about the series, Eckersall has clearly noted this contrast between Yap's taut, trancelike physicality and "Umiumare's physically expressive sense of ludic wonderment" (148). He says

[t]he central locus of this work is always Yap's high-energy Malay trance-dance ...[H]is body assumes the Malay-Indonesian dance form with such strength and concentration that it seems to explode – eyes popping, every tendon visibly pumped – even the act of standing motionless makes his body perspire profusely. There is an impression of something cybernetic about this performance ...I imagine a Deleuzian body without skin, the musculature an architecture of titanium rods and pistons ...[T]he body's mechanics in this work seem to extract pain and make it visible (148)

Throughout this starting sequence, there is a strong focus on the mask-like faces of the dancers. Both have a high degree of facial energy, pain, and fear, which differs between them, but which nevertheless has a palpable impact. This said, throughout this starting sequence, there is little sense of real interaction or dialogue between the two dancers. Their different pace, progression, and expression affects the performance's texture.

Suddenly, there is a moment in which the strange, striking movements of the two dancers shift gear, again grabbing the audience's attention. According to Umiumare,

[i]n my past work mostly I have started from quite serious and quiet movement, because most of the audience can afford that for the first twenty minutes. But from then they usually cannot afford it, because they get bored, they lose concentration, and they start moving (*Umiumare Interview 10*)

While the performance stays multifocal for the moment, this sudden shift sees the dancers' movements metamorphose from internally focused movements to externally frantic movements, for want of better words. In this heightened atmosphere, Umiumare climbs into the audience on one side of the traverse. She surveys the space, registering the way Yap's movements are becoming more and more scattered, with moments of trance, restraint, repetition, spontaneity, and convulsion. After a time, Umiumare literally falls back into the narrow traverse. The two dancers shove, stumble, fall, crawl, roll, rise, and reach, their bodily movements rapidly increasing in velocity and violence. Yap's movements are generally taut, trancelike, convulsive, and pain-ridden. Umiumare's movements generally flow smoothly, swiftly through the levels of the space. Umiumare and Yap only occasionally take on parallel movement patterns. In this respect, the two dancers seem to relate or respond to each other, rather than to resemble each other. The relation they develop recalls the vitalist insistence on the value of intensifying rather than resolving or reducing the differences, disconnections, and conflicts between two things – one and other, mind and matter, male and female, yin and yang (Chapter Four). The two dancers eventually meet in the middle of the space. Umiumare has her back to Yap, as though trying to escape him, and with their arms and legs intertwined the two dancers bump, push, and pull at each other. There is little chance of their yin and yang qualities collapsing into each other, or into mere opposites of each other. Instead, there is an intense interaction between the two that affects them both, and then sends each dancer off in their own new directions.

Eventually, a roar from Yap puts an end to this phase of energetic movements. There is a blackout during which the two dancers stop in the middle of the traverse about a metre and a half apart. They breathe together for a time. Umiumare claims dancers can shift the expressive energy of a space significantly by something as simple as breathing together, or "not breathing together anymore" (7).

When you perform, especially in a partnership with somebody else, you have to be sort of settled down together. Rather than one settled, but one is a bit hyped ... So when

anybody dances it is as if they breathe in together, and breathe out together, and create a natural rhythm, which is really coming from breathing and calming their energy and body out (6-7)

As the lights come up again, the dancers channel the dynamic rhythmic relation they have created into a movement sequence with more vocal and verbal components. There are a few exploratory sounds from the two of them, again accompanied by strong facial gesticulation. Yap sits in the chair at the far end of the traverse, and speaks in a language that means little to the mainly Western spectators. He speaks not necessarily to Umiumare, not necessarily to the spectators, but out into the space. Meanwhile, Umiumare stands behind him, using her body to make an image in which she seems to be whispering these words into his ears and thus into his mouth. Then it is her turn to sit and speak, and though her words are loaded with passion, they are sometimes lost under the soundscape. While Umiumare speaks, Yap takes one of the incense sticks that still burn by the chair, and starts moving backwards, with slow steps in which his two feet maintain toe-to-heel contact, heading towards the chair at the near end of the traverse. The two dancers appear to be losing their brief, fragile, fractured connection. Umiumare appears pained by this. Yap's pain seems less specific. The two dancers eventually take seats at opposite ends of the traverse, escaping their extreme proximity to each other and to their spectators more than they have at any other point during the performance. There is a sense of exhaustion, an affect felt by dancers and audience alike, in these final few moments. There is also an interesting lighting effect, in which a 'mask' of coloured light is juxtaposed or projected onto the dancers' faces, as their sweaty bodies sit still in the chairs. This lighting effect is powerful, even if it is ambiguous and ephemeral. There is a sense of a bloodied face, a shadowed face, an 'other' face, over the dancers' own fleshly faces. The projected faces and the fleshly faces do not match up perfectly. This makes the dancers appear even more obviously 'other' to the spectators. Moreover, this makes the spectators more aware of the 'othering' they project onto the dancers, and the distance or discrepancies between the projection of otherness and the dancers' own flesh. "As a performer, it is as if we are a mirror, as if our bodies are a mirror," Umiumare says, "and so the audience can project their feelings onto that. And if they achieve that sort of exchange, that's a great show" (11). Eventually, the lights blackout, and only the last two points from the incense sticks at either end of the traverse are left to light the space.

One of the provocative things in *How Could You Even Begin to Understand? Version 9-12* is the fact that the dancers do not just realistically copy cultural habits onstage. Instead, they develop a sense of these habits for spectators in another way. They develop significant moments and meanings for spectators by positioning their two bodies in particular sequences, structures, hierarchies, and settings. Working this way, the dancers rely on a range of movement possibilities – standing, lying, falling, lying, pushing, pulling, wading, etcetera – to mark transitions in the theme and tone of their performance, and to pose the question ‘how could you even begin to understand?’. They rely on these movement possibilities to give their performance a style and a storyline without resorting to normal narrative performance practices. Though the performance has structure, then, it also has leaps and loops in the linear progression of this structure. “I sometimes try to betray the audience’s expectations,” Umiumare puts it. “I make a natural and smooth progression, and then ‘boom’, change it. So it is not predictable. It intentionally makes them confused” (7). Throughout their performance Umiumare and Yap create tensions and contradictions not only between the twin forces of yin and yang, but between what has happened, what is happening, and what may yet happen. Their bodies are open to the present instants or intervals inside the linear sequence, to the split seconds, and to the shifts in movement or in meaning that occur in these split seconds.

Again, that depends on an openness to be able to do it, rather than be stuck and be carrying on the same story. In that sense, it is again an improvisational technique, opening up the possibility in each single present moment, rather than being stuck in a structure (7)

To put this vitalistic idea in the terms I have used throughout this thesis, the dancers are open to the changeability concealed in a stereotype or in a storyline, including that concealed in the Asian stereotypes they challenge in *How Could You Even Begin to Understand? Version 9-12*. The dancers use this openness to tackle the contradictions internalised in Asian-Australian consciousness, and to confront their spectators with these contradictions. This openness, combined with the fact that the performance presents abstract images of Asianness from the start, means that spectators are asked not simply to intuit but to interpret contradictions in Asian identities. The performance becomes alienatory, albeit in a confusing, uncomfortable way.



The inventive spatial structure seen in *How Could You Even Begin to Understand? Version 9-12* is also important to Umiumare and Yap's attempts to create meanings, and to challenge the spectators' comfort levels. Obviously, space influences meaning-making in the theatre because it influences the interaction between performers, characters, and spectators. In theatre, real spaces in neutral buildings or natural environments represent recognisable cultural places. In this sense, the stage arrangements and the stage's association with society are both important. The stage arrangements are concerned with size, shape, depth, width, rake, levels, colours, textures, entrances and exits, prosceniums, aprons, arenas, traverses, in-the-rounds, black-boxes, platforms, walkways, and other zones for performing and spectating – all zones configured according to convention, and according to practical concerns like sightlines and safety. The stage's association with society is concerned with the way the performance space presents or parodies natural, cultural, private, public, past, present, urban, rural, social, or technological places, and the position of bodies in them. As I have noted, *How Could You Even Begin to Understand? Version 9-12* uses a traverse stage, with just two rows of spectators on either side. The dancers work on this traverse, with limited lateral movement, and this sometimes seems to trap the dancers in a line. The spatial set-up thus signifies some of the social and symbolic restrictions treated in the work. Certainly, Umiumare has used space to 'trap' dancers before – lights created a cage on the floor in *Kagome*, for example. Additionally, this tight traverse space amplifies the tensions the audience experiences in engaging with this precise, yet highly personal and unpredictable work. The space is intimate, affective, and the spectators' proximity to the stage brings a palpable experience of the dancers' effort, their thuds, thumps, and sweat. Moreover, lack of the comfortable theatrical conventions that spectators are accustomed to in the West means that there is not enough distance, darkness, and anonymity to save them from uncomfortable, unsafe, unwanted engagements with and within the work. In the traverse stage, spectators see the work, and they also see other spectators watching this work. The intimacy of the space turns the spotlight on the spectators emotionally if not literally. It turns the spotlight on their own relationships and responses to the exoticised images of Asian identity that are explored and estranged in the show.

Presented in a public carpark in March 2001, NYID's *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* is a sophisticated and at times savage satire of the tensions between private selves, public stereotypes, and the landscape that surrounds the two in Australia. It mixes intense physical performance, imagery, and multimedia technology in an innovative performance space. A number of Pledger's previous performances with NYID have addressed the cultural ideals or conventions that are inscribed on bodies, and have done so in a way designed to interrupt this inscription. In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, NYID's focus is specifically on how Australia's natural, physical, domestic, civil, and digital landscapes impact on these conventions, and of course on the bodies inscribed by these conventions. The subject matter, style, and spatial dynamics of this work are all influenced by Pledger's longstanding interest in the communal and aesthetic resonances of Australian landscapes. As Pledger maintains,

the other really major thing that's impacted on me is Australian landscape ...I was really moved when I went out into the landscape, into the desert ...I realised it wasn't just scrub. And then you know you have the pleasure of encountering Indigenous people and you realise how they relate to the land, and then you realise what space means to them. And the fact that you're born in this country it's got to mean something similar to you, because of just the vast size of it. So that's where the kind of geographic and the cultural started to sit together with me (*Pledger Interview 4*)

The central desert has informed NYID's focus on Australian cultural identities and imaginaries in previous performance and research projects – for instance, in *The Desert Project* NYID relocated their physical exercises and explorations to the unique environment of outback Australia (cf. *NYID Website*)<sup>60</sup>. In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, though, Pledger places the bodies of the NYID performers in stereotypically Australian settings from the outback through to the suburban, urban, and city spaces.

In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* Pledger takes advantage of the flexible possibilities of the performance space to investigate Australian lifestyles and landscapes in a

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<sup>60</sup> The Australian desert has also influenced other physical theatre practitioners in the past decade or so, for instance in the Tess De Quincey Company's *Square of Infinity* workshops (1991, 1992) and in their *Triple Alice* workshops (1999, 2000, 2001).

them seem all the more ridiculous – it may be, as Bergson maintains, that confrontation with the characters' rigid habits incites the spectators' laughter (Chapter Five).

Eventually, the television is left on a loop of "Hi Scott", "Hi Charlene", and the lights are brought up in the space. The audience find they are witnesses to a neighbourhood party in the 'burbs with 'Husband', 'Wife', and a number of the other character's they have already met. The scene cuts between a couple of different conversations, all sheeling up Australian social stereotypes and habits. 'Husband' and 'Wife' work around a podium (downstage right), preparing for their party. 'Husband' adjusts the telly, while 'Wife' adjusts the peanuts and the crisps. They discuss their domestic existence in the 'burbs. 'Wife' suggests to 'Husband' that "Social intercourse was never your strong point". "Ah, but sexual intercourse ..." he says. "Why do you always do that?" she asks. "It's a habit". "A habit?". "I thought that's why we moved here, to develop our habits?" 'Husband' says. Still, it seems suburban life is not all it is cracked up to be. 'Wife' feels lonely as she waters her frangipani, feels she does not belong in her own backyard. Meanwhile, a couple of teenage boys kick a footy (downstage left), while with what Tait calls the "verbal football" ("NYID's High Octane Realism" n.pag) they consider whether politics should be put before fashion – one teen is white, the other is black, and the first has a lot of advice beginning with "Black men don't..." for his friend. A couple of teenage girls drive a panel van into the space (upstage left), and start a debate about boys, sex, life in suburbia, and what they should be doing. At one point all the players come to the podium, with their remote controls, to watch *Neighbours* with the spectators – this time, though, the *Neighbours* scene is all in Asian language. When the TV is done, the couple continue to plan their party, the boys play swing-ball tennis, the girls talk and dance, until eventually all the players come into the same conversation. What should they do?, they wonder. Should they do something? Nothing? Surely something is bound to happen, like last Saturday? What was last Saturday? they wonder. Then, a hood-wearing woman on roller-skates intrudes on the scene. She tells how she heads to her shopping strip each morning, how she sees the same faces on her tram to the city, how she asks a passenger how he knows he has to go into the city each morning, how he tells her it's "work-drive" and "home-drive" that determine his life, how she asks her passenger how he knows his house, and he tells her he has a curved gate. She then speaks about sameness in the suburbs, about how property developers feel justified in producing

this sameness because people buy what they want, about how she lacks a curved gate, and thus how she has come to crash this party. She is asking is this her house or is it ours? In a broader sense, it seems she is asking is this her story or is it ours? Or is it all the same?

Some interpreters of *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* have had trouble with this suburban scene. Though these dialogues do have insights about suburbia, conformity, stereotypes, and habits, "most of the spoken dialogues about life in suburbia" felt "...like workshop exercises from 1970s Australian drama without 1990s irony," and so failed to interest Tait, who felt compelled to ask "[w]hy were these scenes not delivered as bodily texts?" ("NYID's High Octane Realism" n.pag). The domestic dialogues of this scene eventually do develop into a movement sequence grounded in what Eckersall calls "choreographic gestural codes" ("On Physical Theatre" 25), and thus more in the style of the initial 'desert' sequence. As Scheer has said, such "exhaustingly repetitious gestural sequences" ("Australia/Japan" n.pag) are a signature feature of NYID's style. Habitual domestic movements such as sleeping, grooming, driving, and dog walking are prominent in this particular movement sequence. In this phase of the performance, the NYID performers appear to be commenting on how cultural experiences and expectations become the driving forces for human bodies. Read theoretically, this functions as a commentary on the fact that bodies enact cultural norms rather than express essential natures. This said, if they are not extreme enough, meticulous repetitions of this sort can make the movements repeated seem more normal, more natural, to spectators. In effect, these repetitive movements can turn into the prescriptive performative signs of which Pledger speaks (*Pledger Interview 6*). This means that in this sort of movement sequence the NYID performers have to tread a fine line between commenting on stereotypical behaviours and confirming stereotypical behaviours. As this particular sequence progresses, various combinations of players successively and simultaneously copy the domestic movement motifs. There comes a point at which a musical tone arrests all this movement, but the players soon travel to different positions to begin again. The players then pass into a line downstage (with the exception of the skater-girl who stays on the podium). They continue to copy the habitual movements individually, in pairs, and as a group. But their movements are becoming more frenetic and corrupted. Their movements gradually degenerate into a rhythmic rubber-kneed dancing in-place, punctuated by various arm-movements from the different players. Then, suddenly, the lights fade. Two

trainguards with flashing lights enter the space. An automated voice announces that the spectators are now on Platform Two, that they need to proceed to Platform Three, and that Citywatch, a city security company keeping them safe, brings them this message. This signals the transition to the third and final performance space.

In the closing sequence of *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, the performance's focus moves from the suburbs to the city. In this 'city' sequence, Pledger and NYID take advantage of the interactive space they have set up in the carpark, and of the spatial technologies of surveillance that control human bodies, to turn the spotlight on spectators. Pledger says

I've got this thing about surveillance which I've had for about four or five years ...[C]ity spaces are so intensely surveyed, and with technology as completely insecure as it is, it's easy to manipulate it to the disadvantage of the general population ...I think in the way that I organise the space that's always a premise for it (5)

The city sequence of *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* explicitly puts these surveillance technologies on show – as the subject of the performance, and as part of the performance. Pledger says this technology is influential because “the substance of the work is contemporary culture,” and in contemporary culture technology is “...inescapable” (5). Nevertheless, Pledger understands that using this current technology in the theatre can be tricky. “[I]t's always the thing with new technology,” he says. “When people use it just because they've got it, it always looks terrible ...It needs to be contextualised” (5). In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* Pledger tries to make sure technology is part of the multi-layered weave of the cityscape, to make sure technology participates in the meaning-making, instead of being merely an insignificant add-on. “[I]f you can use technology in that way, in the way that it's used in society, and in a way that reflects the way it's used in society,” Pledger says, “...it can be ...an incredibly valuable experience” (6).

In the city sequence spectators are taken full circle back to the space where the performance began, and split into two groups – or, as Pledger puts it, into “the audience in gold lounge and the audience in economy class” (5-6). In these two sections of the space, the spectators watch two screens showing the same footage. The screens show blurry, black-and-white, closed-circuit style images of corporate work, commuting, waiting. There are perhaps a

dozen images onscreen, swapping at a fairly rapid pace, and sometimes an image is drawn out onto the full screen. The spectators see these images from their two train platforms. Consequently, while Citywatch is watching the commuters/spectators, the commuters/spectators are watching Citywatch, which is watching the commuters/spectators, etcetera. Eventually seven 'Citywatch Workers' in black-and-white business suits enter the space. Five sit at a column of desks with computers showing the same footage as the screens, two supervise. Although the desks are between the two audiences, only the gold lounge audience actually faces them, and so only this audience actually sees the live action. The economy class audience has its back to the live action, seeing it only onscreen. "[T]hey have that kind of hierarchical dialogue," Pledger explains, "where ...the economy class are going 'what's going on up there, I want to be up there'" (6). The workers start doing different things, like supervising, working, typing, or reading. Eventually the workers all establish a unified tapping on their desks. The workers then engage the spectators. They start a pattern of waving to several cameras in specific locations, which is then played back to the spectators on the screens. This regular, repetitious pattern gets faster and faster in pace. The performance is again building up to a crescendo, and to a further increase in the performer-spectator interaction. The performers put signs around the necks of some of the spectators in the gold lounge. These signs have to do with surveillance, with how people are spotlighted and controlled in city spaces, with the idea that watching keeps people safe, with the want for instruction, with atonement, etcetera. For instance, "I once imagined I was thinking. I atone for my transgression". The performers take pictures of the spectators wearing the signs, and project these shots onto the screens that both sections of the audience are watching. The spectators are told to wear their signs and to smile. It is difficult for the spectators to see the signs on their own necks, so they end up watching the screen to see what has happened to them and to the others. The pace is still picking up, making this more and more difficult. As Pledger articulates it, the spectators

go through that ...process of 'this is weird, now why have I got this [sign], why have they asked me to start reading this slogan' ...[Y]ou start reading all the other slogans, and then you go 'oh, my world's ...starting to come closer and closer'. And then some of us get taken away (6)

The audience is split up yet again. Several of the spectators in the gold lounge are taken into a tiny chamber partitioned-off with corrugated plastic. The other spectators see this space

only when the footage from inside it is shown on the two screens. "And then somebody's yelling out in that room," Pledger says, "and you see the audiences faces, going 'what's going on in there?'" (6). In this chamber a kneeling man is being kicked in the head by two other men, as a woman supervisor paces behind them. Someone says "get your head up" again and again as the man is kicked. Such violence is, Eckersall says, "something that NYID is known for" ("On Physical Theatre" 22). The spectators in the small screened-off punishment area watch this violent scene live, while the rest of the spectators watch it on the screens. The performance is taken up to a fast, furious pace in which the spectators end up watching themselves watching a performance in which they are actually taking part in various ways. Pledger says

that's got such cultural capital ...having somebody looking at themselves in the screen watching a performance that they've now become an actor in. It sort of flips everything, and it makes people think differently about voyeurism, about surveillance, about the role of the actor and the role of the spectator in the performance, about the presence of media, and all those sorts of things ...That's the point ...where you go mmm, there's the potential for change, there's the potential to challenge the way that people think about it, because you sort of mind flip them in that way (*Pledger Interview 5-6*)

The performance builds to a climax and then blacks out. The players bow for each audience, as do some of the spectators from the screened-off space. They then exit, and the spectators are free to wander the carpark, back to the bar, or back to the city.

In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, Pledger and the NYID performers satirise stereotyped Australian habits with the help of numerous techniques, technological devices, and textual references. This variety is vital to Pledger's directorial strategy, and to his attempts to prevent prescriptive readings of the physical, psychological, geographical, cultural, and digital domains the show presents. Because, as I explained earlier in this Chapter, Pledger tries to thwart the spectators' tendency to read any of these domains prescriptively by

position[ing] other kinds of elements in the discourse in counterpoint to that. And really draw[ing] attention to the problem of it ...[T]hey're inevitably suspicious about it. In a way one of the things I try to do is unravel all the mechanics of that suspicion (7)

As this comment shows, Pledger hopes spectators will not be tempted to collapse the performance's broad range of reference points and perspectives together into a whole – to collapse a both/and into an either/or in Deleuzian terms (*The Logic of Sense* 105-106). In contrast to conventional theatre, Pledger prefers it if spectators do not resolve the performance's thematic tensions into a logical, linear plot, or into a normative narrative of the sort that supports memories, identities, and histories. Ironically, though, a few critics have been more comfortable with the show's conflicting theatrical conventions than with the show's conflicting themes and messages. Though it is not something Pledger and the NYID performers hope for, these critics (perhaps unknowingly) reconcile the show's contradictory somatic, domestic, social, digital, and political strands into a clear message. For example, Crampton tells potential spectators the performance

is not really experimental ...Pledger delivers an accomplished blending of various experimental trends from the past four decades resulting in an enjoyable evening in which we are provoked to laugh at our own complicity in the journey. There is a wry message, but no alienation, and the intrepid audience had a surprisingly jolly time ("Road Trip of Dreams" 4)

If spectators succeed in pulling all the countervailing perspectives presented in a show like *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* together into a superficial irony (Chapter Five), as Crampton apparently does, they avoid any experience of alienation, any temptation to criticise Australian cultural norms too strongly and seriously. In other words, they avoid something more than a 'jolly time' with a 'wry message'. As a director, Pledger admits that it is not easy to thwart an audience member's efforts to eliminate tensions in the many different parts of the performance (*Pledger Interview* 8). This is simply one more thing that makes theatrical performance provisional and open to many interpretations.

In this Chapter I have considered how Umiumare's and Pledger's practices address culturally significant habits, and the changeability concealed in these habits. Importantly, Umiumare and Pledger both seem to realise that it is risky to assume that spectators will automatically accept the challenges to cultural norms their performances present. Certainly, spectators' interpretations of a performance are strongly influenced both by the practices of



the performers, and by the physical, theatrical, cultural, and political contexts in which the performance takes place. Because, as Gay McAuley maintains, the practices of performers are "responsible for energizing the performance space and for activating all the theatre's signifying systems" (*Space in Performance* 278). Still, to say that what the performers do totally shapes the moment of performance and the meanings made is inherently risky. This reduces the provisionality physical theatre practitioners and vitalist theorists both prize. This also relegates spectators to a passive role. It fails to acknowledge the fact that the embodied presence of both performers and spectators is essential to communication, and to the creation of meaning, in theatrical performance. "[T]heatre," as McAuley articulates it, "is a mode of artistic expression that requires the live presence of both performers and spectators" (278). "[T]heater semiotics" in particular, Diamond says, "posits a spectator whose active reception constantly revises the spectacle's meanings" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 51). Because spectators play a role in meaning-making in theatrical performance, performers cannot predict how their commentaries on human habits will be received before they put them in front of spectators in the moment of performance. And, as Umiuare asserts, to look at a performance from outside, as spectators do, "is quite different" (*Umiuare Interview* 2). It gives a different sense of the performance, a sense that performers cannot consciously or totally control. In this respect, spectators are at least partly responsible for the commentaries on habit that emerge in the course of the performance (cf. Goodridge *Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance* 96).

When spectators engage a theatrical performance, their own habitual experiences and expectations come into play. Just as performers have their own habitual ways of behaving and being, spectators have their own habitual ways of seeing. This is a dimension of habit theorists like Crossley and Dewey have discussed. In Crossley's terms, "[h]abits do not merely regulate the way we act. They shape the ways in which we make sense of our environment too" (*The Social Body* 130-131). Accordingly, Dewey argues, "habit filters all the material that reaches our perception and thought" (*Human Nature and Conduct* 32). In the theatre, this means that the spectators' habits help shape or filter the sense they make of a performance. Which, in Lecoq's words, is why "[t]o train people's ability to look and see is as important as to train creative artists" (*The Moving Body* 52). Since habits filter people's perceptions of theatrical performances, my analysis of habit in this thesis is

way designed to dazzle, disturb, and even divide audience sympathies. In Australia, according to Pledger, "the proscenium arch, and the supposedly flexible space which is almost always locked down," is currently the most common or mainstream "because the market prescribes it, and the audience gets nervous when it's unfamiliar" (*Pledger Interview 4*)<sup>61</sup>. The proscenium plays a role in regulating the sorts of mimicry that occur onstage, in making the models of reality mimicked seem more real (Chapter 1). This can create a comforting sense of control and comprehension for spectators in the theatre space. In Pledger's words, "[t]he proscenium arch environment enables a certain veneer of security in which you can retreat" (Pledger, quoted Eckersall "On Physical Theatre" 22-23). In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, though, Pledger explores other spatial possibilities. The show is set in an old public carpark. It uses the stairs as a front office, and uses the bar of the architect's offices above as a foyer. Cigarette butts, oil stains, the odour of petrol, and the odour of the rain outside, all reinforce the reality of the space. Some of the spectators have actually parked their own cars in parts of the performance space. A safety talk about emergency wardens and exits at the start of the performance also reinforces the reality of the space for spectators. Pledger and NYID use artificial things like fake turf, seating, and multimedia technology like spotlights, screens, cameras, and computers in this dim, dark site to produce an interesting and interactive performance space. Tensions between the actual and the artificial in this setting amplify similar tensions in the performance itself. The carpark is constantly reframed to reflect itself in different ways, and to reflect different corporeal, geographical, cultural, and digital landscapes. Also, the audience moves through multiple playing spaces, and multiple proximities to the performers, and this challenges conventional stage-spectator connections. As Pledger says,

I started to develop this kind of notion of open space theatre, so that the audience moved with the performance, or the performers moved through the audience ... I'd known that there were other companies that had done it, but I also knew that it wasn't deliberately in relationship to kind of a view of Australian space. So since then all the work has really been about that ... [S]pace became something that was really like a phenomenon

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<sup>61</sup> The two 'mainstream' theatres in Melbourne, the Melbourne Theatre Company and the Playbox Theatre Company, do not use a full proscenium for all their shows, but by the same token the plays in their regular subscription seasons rarely take as flexible an approach to space as Pledger does in *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, and this may be what he means by these comments.

in the way that I thought about how I would make a theatre piece (*Pledger Interview 4-5*)

The audience is not allowed the luxury of sitting back and settling in for a work generated by others. In this sense, then, in directing *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* Pledger collapses "what I think are really fake realities between the actor and the audience" (6). Throughout the work, self-space-society tensions are acted out across the screen in the performance space, across the bodies of the performers, and at times across the bodies of the spectators, whether the spectators fully realise it or not.

As *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* begins, the silence of the dim, dark carpark is sporadically interrupted by sustained pinging sounds. A blank blue screen at the back of the deep 'stage' space begins to show images of an Australian desert. In this starting 'desert' sequence, the performers seem to be travelling down a reddish desert road. The timeframes of the scene are dictated by the bodies' journeys through the landscape (and are thus very different to those in Umiuare's *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12*, which were dictated by the flow of yin, yang, and chi through the dancers' bodies). Seven performers in fitted black tops and tights enter the space (Cazerine Barry, Paul Bongiovanni, Tony Briggs, Natalie Curzio, Tamara Saulwick, Louise Taube, and Greg Ulfan). These performers all assume variations of an open-legged squat at the back of the deep-set 'stage', their bodies in a rough triangle formation that will recur throughout the sequence. Their strong, sweaty bodies are silhouetted in front of the large screen and the desert images. After a time, they start moving and manipulating their squatted bodies, shifting their limbs, their torsos, their weight, and their levels, in ever-larger movements. Pledger says

in *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* the first part of the choreography was – and I've never done this before, so I've always wanted to try it ...– ...an exercise in the training which is called a standing statues exercise, and I had them start in that position ...[The] training thing has gone into the show as a sort of a blip, if you like, a sort of a seed that started the choreography (9)

From this choreographic seed, several different movement phrases or motifs come into focus, and these motifs are copied and carried by different combinations of performers as the scene progresses. In effect, the performers are working individually and in dialogue with

the whole ensemble, turning their attention and their audience's attention to the shifting energies in the performance space (cf. *NYID Workshop Program 2001 1*). In Pledger's opinion, this ensemble sensibility works in a way similar to a group of sportspeople shifting their positions and sensing each other's presence on a sporting field (*Pledger Interview 1*). In *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, this ensemble sensibility also interacts with what Tait calls the "soundsc(r)ape of cars parking, electronic pips, feet pounding" ("NYID's High Octane Realism" n.pag). The sound – including regular blips, semi-regular valve-release sounds, and sporadic dull tones – seems both to drive and to be driven by the performers' movement transitions.

In this initial phase of *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* the performers are working with their bodies more than they are working with the space around their bodies. Their stilted, mechanical movements introduce themes of control that will persist through the piece. As the images on the screen progress, however, so do the movements of the bodies in the space. The performers have left the desert roads for different ones, for rural roads, and then for a suburban landscape. There is more light in the performance space, and the pace of both the sounds and screen images picks up. The shift to suburbia on the screen is accompanied by a shift upward to standing postures in the performers' bodies. A parallel is implied between the degree to which the bodies are upright, the degree to which they are human, and the degree to which they are urbanised. The performers' journey is linked to the evolutionary journey Western European science describes. An upright stance, where bodies are balanced on two legs, is usually a defining element of the human – it is amongst the habits humans are most reluctant to abandon<sup>62</sup>. Throughout the shift from squatting to standing, the performers invoke this habit of uprightness on which human identity depends, and interpret it before their audience. Eventually, the performers quit the suburbs and start travelling down city roads. Another transition in pace accompanies this new place. The performers start to jog on the spot, and then in the space. They begin jogging downstage and back one at a time, in pairs, and then in groups, with their jogging taking on triangular and diagonal formations, and with the performance building up to an intensely physical crescendo. There are signs of gender difference in the performers' stiff, seized, languid,

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<sup>62</sup> This relationship between balance and human bodily habits is indicated in Barba's *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, as I said in Chapter Five.

and smooth movements too, with the women typically showing neater, more internalised motions, the men typically showing scrappier, more externalised motions. Again, the NYID performers seem to share the vitalist desire to avoid resolving or reducing the tensions in these identities and in the relations between these identities (Chapter Four). This notwithstanding, "NYID's bodies in motion are skilled, dynamic and captivating" ("NYID's High Octane Realism" n.pag), as Tait comments. The athletic prowess of the NYID 'actor-athletes' in these controlled combinations and formations recalls the drill-formations Pledger developed in *Training Squad* (1996).

I developed this shape travelling through the city, locomoting through the city, three by three, everyone's in a cube ...I just realised that as a kind of an exercise it was so brilliant in terms of getting people to communicate their physical sensibilities in a group, in an ensemble, that I started to build it in as an exercise and develop the exercise in the training (*Pledger Interview 9*)

Eventually the screen images stop at a panel van on a suburban street. The performers also stop, and there is a long pause in which spectators hear them breathing. This establishes a sense of the bodies beneath the work (as with the sense of exhaustion towards the end of Uniumare's show). The lights fade in this performing space, and the focus shifts to the side (stage right) where a panel van sits.

At this point in the piece, the performers help the audience shift themselves and their attention to a space alongside the first 'stage', a second 'stage' in which several cars are parked, and through which several characters will pass in the second 'suburban' sequence. This sequence works with the images, impressions, and themes of the first sequence in a totally stylistically different way. At times its depictions of suburban scenes, dress, and dialogues are nearly naturalistic, making them harder to dehumanise. However, the scene is designed to be comic, and so, Eckersall says, it "requires a heightened satirical style of acting" ("On Physical Theatre" 25). There are common Australian cultural references scattered throughout the sequence too. As Pledger puts it, there are "a whole set of references from ...Australian dramatic literature ...*Don's Party* (David Williamson) ...*Stretch of the Imagination* (Jack Hibberd), *Puberty Blues* (Kathy Lette)" (*Pledger Interview 10*). These references support NYID's commentary on suburban lifestyles, and on the controlled conformity that frequently characterises these lifestyles.

The suburban sequence begins by dramatising domestic scenes, and the values that drive them, around three common Australian cars. Firstly, a white panel van provides the backdrop for a teenage tryst. 'Girlfriend's' friends have left the party, and so she wants a lift home to super-suburban Doncaster with 'Boyfriend'. Although 'Girlfriend' has no licence, 'Boyfriend' agrees to let her drive – she will steer and clutch, he will work the gearstick – and so the two get into the van and go. Secondly, a typical 'Aussie Bloke' stands beside a green Torana that is his pride and joy. He tells the gathered audience about the technical specifics of the Torana. "This is a work of art," he says, "and sometimes works of art need explaining, so I'll explain this to you". His comments could also apply to the show itself. Again, after his chat with the audience, he hops in the Torana and pulls out of the space. Thirdly, a gold Renault provokes driver and domestic rage for a family. 'Husband' has forgotten to put petrol in the car, another of his failures, and 'Wife' is angry – she wants a life she can simply start up, and have it go smoothly. Many of the men in the audience appear to find 'Husband's' meaningful looks hilarious. Perhaps it is only that they are familiar with what Tait calls the specific "cultural fantasies" ("NYID's High Octane Realism" n.pag) these cars represent, and with the ways they are supposed to respond. Or perhaps it is truly unconscious participation in these cultural fantasies on their part. When 'Daughter' arrives to witness the argument 'Husband' and 'Wife' are having, and wants to know "what's wrong Dad?", she is told to go watch telly. The spectators are taken to another space in the carpark, behind the first 'stage', to do just this. They find themselves in a space where a few rough props represent a suburban home. They are watching the 1980s soap opera *Neighbours*, with references to Charlene Ramsey, Scott Robinson, Harold Bishop, Mrs Mangel, Lasseter's Hotel, the Coffee Shop, and the Mechanic's Workshop. The innovative aspect is that two Asian actors are playing Charlene and Scott (Umiumare and Kha Tran Viet). "We tune into that white Anglo-Saxon mainstay, *Neighbours*," as dance critic Hillary Crampton says, "but Shelley [*sic*] and Scott have morphed into Asians" ("Road Trip of Dreams" 4). This intensifies the domestic scene they play, in which 'Scott' declares his strong desire to leave Erinsborough, with its same old faces and same old lives, while 'Charlene' says she is uncertain about abandoning all this sameness. Again, in this scene, it may be the fact that these stereotyped habits are repeated so sincerely that makes

applicable not just to performers' ways of putting behaviours onstage, but to spectators' ways of seeing behaviours onstage. I have suggested that if performers mimic a habit mechanically, this makes the habit seem more natural. Similarly, if spectators interpret a habit to be mimicked mechanically, this makes the habit seem more natural. Or, more specifically, if spectators observe a mechanical link between what they expect to see and what they see (or overlook lack of such a link) they are likely to feel their expectations have been authenticated. In fact, much of the time their expectations dominate and all else disappears. In Blau's words "[w]hat you see is what you want to see" (*Take Up the Bodies* 13). Spectators unthinkingly interpret stage images according to their own habitual assumptions, overlooking the ambiguities the physical process of staging these images brings, and thus overlooking their artifice. As I have indicated throughout this thesis, the territorialising force of habit is at least partly responsible for difficulties performers have when trying to repeat foreign or unfamiliar movements. The same goes for difficulties spectators have when trying to read unfamiliar movements. Some spectators find that if a performance too far exceeds their own experiences and expectations, they have trouble reading this performance. This can cause discomfort, distress, and confusion for the spectator, and at the extreme this can even cause what Peirce's theory of semiosis calls a 'habit-change' for the spectator<sup>63</sup>.

Obviously, different performance styles depend on different signs systems, and are designed to meet different spectatorial expectations. In the West, mainstream audiences frequently assume they will be able to interpret performances according to a logical linear narrative of the sort they have seen in previous performances. In such interpretations, the spectators' recollection of past events and anticipation of future events overshadows their perception of the immediate instant. To use Bergson's vitalistic terms, this is an intellectual sort of spectating that stresses static properties of being. Spectators with such expectations may find they feel confused or confronted by more radical performance practices that consciously frustrate familiar theatrical conventions. By the same logic, spectators of these

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<sup>63</sup> As I noted in Chapter Three, Peirce uses his theory of semiosis to understand how a confrontation with a thing that does not meet a person's expectations can provoke a new response in them, and thus perhaps provoke a new behaviour, belief, or habit in them.

radical performance styles have their own expectations, their own intuitive sorts of spectating, and they may find more conventional types of theatre frustrating.

Umiumare and Pledger are familiar with these issues, and with the way they impact on the performer-spectator relationship. They are cognisant of the fact that spectators may not be open to their performances and their politics, and may therefore (unconsciously) refuse to collaborate in the communicative process. According to Umiumare,

[t]hat is still more of a taste thing too. Some people cannot abide by abstractness in form, and non-narrative dance. They hate it, you know, and they do not want to come to that sort of theatre any more, because it confuses them. They like structure, they want meaning, and they want a story (*Umiumare Interview 11*)

Pledger too has found some spectators wary of his performances, in which meanings often depend more on the form of the performance than on a fixed plot. For him, the frustrating thing is his sense that these spectators think form-driven performances are somehow more contrived, more constructed, more prescriptive, than conventional plot-driven performances. These spectators seem to him to prefer the 'acting without artifice' of realism (Chapter Two) -- though if spectators do feel such a preference, they do not speak of it in these terms. Putting it in his own words, Pledger says some spectators find

fear in form. And do[n't] understand that narrative is a form, and it's that terribly boring old argument about text-based theatre and contemporary performance ... The way th[ey talk] about narrative [is] so prescriptive, and yet that's what [they are] accusing the kind of formalism of contemporary performance of doing (*Pledger Interview 8*)

As I implied at the end of my analysis of *Scenes of the Beginning from the End* spectators sometimes respond to the frustrations of unfamiliar performances by trying to contract the images staged into their own comfortable interpretations, albeit unconsciously. They attempt to read the bodily behaviours in the performance the way they expect to, regardless of what the performers encourage. For instance, though Umiumare's and Pledger's performances rarely have a single, straightforward point of view, some spectators still try to impose such a perspective on their work. Evidently, it can be problematic if a spectator simply overlays their own entrenched habits or perspectives onto a performance, regardless of how conventional or unconventional the perspectives are. For, as Pledger argues,



if you are prescriptive in dealing with any kind of form then you end up ...just being didactic and propagandistic. And that's the real worry when you kind of go down that path of not seeing a multiplicity of performance media. It's sort of not appreciating the democracy of art, and arts practice (9)

Pledger and Umiumare have both suggested that some sectors of the Australian press can be a problem here<sup>64</sup>. For example, Umiumare thinks

critics create a bit of a sceptical kind of energy. They are not necessarily representative of the whole mass, you know. They are just one of them, but they have got all the power to write their opinion to the public, which is kind of unfair. But it is the reality sometimes (*Umiumare Interview 11*)

Pledger offers a comparable opinion, arguing that

I think it's changing in Australia, but the big problem is the press ...Well, we got under dance for our last show, it was unbelievable ...[The critics] have no framework to digest contemporary culture, and ...the media has sort of gone so mainstream it's like the rest of theatre production in Australia. So companies like ours ...we're right at the far end of what's called drama. I don't consider what we do is drama ...And I don't even like using the word theatre so much, because theatre is usually, you know in the big world theatre usually means drama ...So it's hard to kind of change the way that the general public perceives the work when you have a media that's ignorant and antagonistic to you (*Pledger Interview 10-11*)

The issues Umiumare and Pledger comment on here have no easy solutions. Certainly, both practitioners seem to know they cannot completely control the way that performances, performers, and spectators come together, and the things spectators take from performances. They say they do not necessarily want such control anyway. They say they do not necessarily want to transpose their own perspectives onto their spectators, preferring to stay open to a multiplicity of perspectives. The way vitalists prefer to stay open to a multiplicity of perspectives (Chapter Four). Umiumare puts this in highly figurative terms.

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<sup>64</sup> I think Umiumare's and Pledger's comments here are directed more towards commercial critics than towards the academic critics and the arts funding bodies that have generally been accepting of their performances and their genres of performance, particularly in recent years.

You know, we don't want to communicate from white to white, as a single colour communication, [because] people can tend to see the white, but they end up getting yellow, or off-yellow, off-white colour, kind of thing. So that's rich for performing, I think (*Umiumare Interview 11*)

Though Pledger does not speak in these figurative terms, he too suggests that a less prescriptive stage-spectator connection is rich for performance, because it is 'democratic' rather than 'didactic and propagandistic' (*Pledger Interview 9*). From the point of view of these two practitioners, then, it is important to try to work with the spectators' expectations, producing an experience that is worthwhile for the spectators and well as for the performers. In Umiumare's words,

I mean expectations are often there, but how do you use them in a good way, rather than overwhelm with them? ...The good thing about butoh [compared to conventional theatre and dance] is that an audience has the right to say anything, because they can interpret their own story ...But if they are stuck with one thing that happened, that is a problem ...I think that critical kind of audience can often be there, but even they can change their mind ...That is my challenge too, to accept every single perspective, and the audience can hopefully accept my kind of expression too. If that happens it is a great communication, and you can feel it each night, as a totally different performance each night (*Umiumare Interview 10-11*)

By examining the practices of Umiumare and Pledger in this Chapter, I have sought to exemplify the potentials of physical theatre's strategies for confronting human habits through performance. My object has been to outline the accomplishments of physical theatre's training and performance practices, as compared with conventional mimicry. Whether physical theatre practitioners are consciously concerned with them or not, they touch on theoretical perspectives comparable with those found in broad accounts of habit, and in Bergsonian and Deleuzian accounts of habit. Their practices have the ability to illuminate issues with conventional mimicry that theoretical accounts avoid. At the same time, physical theatre can draw prompts for creative performance from the challenges to conventional thought and practice provided by theoretical paradigms such as Bergson's and

Deleuze's (though contemporary vitalism's lack of interest in theatre means the inverse is less likely). The physical theatre practices and the theories I have discussed here thus have an interesting rapport, despite their differences, and despite the fact that they do finally take these issues in relation to human habits in their own unique directions.

One of the illuminating intersections between physical theatre and the processual treatments of habit I have discussed in this thesis is their respective interrogation of dominant cultural configurations. In contemporary Australia there is a strong cultural and critical discourse surrounding Australian identity – who Australians are, who Australians are supposed to be, and people's perceptions of this. This discourse is informed both by Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific, and by its colonial past. Umiumare's and Pledger's works intervene in this discourse. They keep Australia's past and its future in the frame, while providing their own unique personal and political perspectives on Australian bodies, spaces, times, geographies, social standards, and minor or major identity systems. They variously try to make the attitudes behind particular behaviours appear more forcefully, or be felt more forcefully, or both. This said, Umiumare and Pledger are well aware that it is not easy to tackle the ways in which the diverse Australian population defines itself, or to ever tackle this question once and for all. These practitioners do not want to offer the usual clichés about this ongoing debate in Australian performance culture. Instead, they want to investigate Australian identities in light of the intriguing new contexts and counterpoints they provide in their performances.

Another point of comparison between physical theatre and the processual approaches to habit I have considered is that both take mimetic repetition of culturally recognisable habits as their point of departure in promoting change. Both seem to suggest that it is too prescriptive simply to reveal normal habits, or simply to replace normal habits with superior new habits that might become norms. More significantly, though, this does not lead them to give up the masterful mimicry of habit that the practitioners in particular take to be one of theatre's greatest weapons. They simply avoid standard attitudes to mimicry. This means that Umiumare's and Pledger's physical theatre is characterised by a playful, productive mimicry that is best judged not just on how it copies habits but on how it broadens future physical, spatial, temporal, and social possibilities for bodies by peeling back, playing with,

and amplifying the unpredictability of their habits. To make this mimicry work, the practitioners both ask that performers copy normal habits and create room for new habits at the same time, through the same techniques.

These commonalities notwithstanding, the resemblances between Umiumare's and Pledger's practices do not outweigh the differences between them. Certainly, these practitioners both generate a controlled bodily base through Asian and European theatrical traditions, and generate a capacity to broaden bodily possibilities through contemporary cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, and improvisatory theatre techniques. However, comparable methods do not always mean wholly comparable results. Umiumare's striking physical performance style reveals some of the cultural expectations imposed on people's bodies, eventually making room for other realities. In *How Could You Even Begin To Understand? Version 9-12*, for instance, Umiumare intensifies the rhythm of her relation to the exoticised images of Asia that are widespread in the Western world, and to her collaborator Yap, through the concepts of yin, yang, and chi. As the performance progresses the dancers' slow internalised struggles develop into frenzied interactions, and then fade back again, finishing with strange images on their faces. It is these transitions, and the intimacy of the performance space, that support making-meaning. Pledger's rigorous style of theatre connects the bodily sensibilities of the NYID actor-athletes' with other media to produce artistically and politically compelling performances. *Scenes of the Beginning from the End*, for instance, situates the actors in Australia's desert, suburban, and urban landscapes. After a precise physical 'desert' sequence of the sort the NYID performers are known for, a 'suburban' sequence sees the performers get more characterised, human, conformist, and comic, and then a 'city' sequence sees the performers come back to punishing physical impressions of technocratic control. The show's message is ambivalent, even if some avoid engaging it that way. Like a lot of Umiumare's and Pledger's works, these two performance pieces differ in the degree to which they work with affective or alienatory styles, personal or political themes, different or dominant bodies, internal or external landscapes, single or group sequences, verbosity, and technology. In this respect, they demonstrate the diversity of the practices that come together under the term physical theatre, and that comment on cultural habits through the productive, playful mimicry of physical theatre. Yet these pieces have points of accord, particularly in that they are both part of Umiumare's and Pledger's attempts to produce an open,

opportunistic performance tradition of their own, and to position this in the broader trend to physical performance practice in Australia.

A third connection between physical theatre and the processual treatments of habit I have analysed in this thesis is their common concern with allowing the physical effort that supports a body's mimicry of a habit to estrange or to change this habit. They both draw on the indeterminacy involved in staging culturally-determined habits to challenge these habits. In theatrical performance this affects the way the habits are staged, as well as the way spectators engage and experience the habits staged. Umiuare and Pledger both have an interest in how spectators engage the culturally dominant habits staged in the theatre, because both believe constructive stage-spectator engagements have the potential to affect spectators' bodily habits positively or negatively. In many ways, I think they find processual treatments of habit such as I have considered helpful in making the meaning-making of theatrical performance more explicit, variable, and vital, and in making audiences more aware of how they project their sense of self onto a performance, imagining whether the habits staged would work in their own lives in the future.

Though physical theatre practitioners undoubtedly do investigate many of the issues I have introduced in my analysis of habit, and of Bergson's and Deleuze's beliefs about habits, it would be a mistake to take the rapport I interpret between them too far. Lest I have seemed to reduce one to the other, then, in concluding this Chapter I must again note that the theatre practices remain independent of the theoretical discourses, taking the issues to different places and subjecting them to different standards. For example, even though theorists like Deleuze do sometimes seem to suggest it is worthwhile, physical theatre performers rarely need to go all the way to the edge of subjectivity to be effective. In fact, to 'become imperceptible' as Deleuze and Guattari advocate in *A Thousand Plateaus* would likely be impractical for any performer hoping to impart something of significance to spectators (232-309). "[R]elease from all structures of habit," as Sullivan argues, "...would not free one then to be whatever one wants. It would dissolve one into a being with no capacity for or agency to effect transformations and change" (*Living Across and Through Skins* 94). Instead of relinquishing ideas of identity totally, then, physical theatre performers still sometimes use more essentialist language when it strategically works for them. Further,

these performers still sometimes aim for a strategically preferable set of bodily possibilities, at least in the short term, even though they stress processes over predetermined goals in the end. These sorts of differences between theatre practice and theory are, as I have already pointed out in this thesis, partly a result of the practicalities of performance, and partly a result of the old identity politics that remains popular with some performers. These differences mean the physical theatre practices I have analysed are able to query certain aspects of broad, Bergsonian, and Deleuzian accounts of habits – for instance, the avoidance of spatially present things, as opposed to the strategic adoption of these things, that is, as I said in my Introduction, sometimes an issue with Bergsonian thought. Actually, I think it is better if physical theatre practitioners are concerned with the sorts of challenges and changes indicated by theoretical concepts of habit, but not completely open to or convinced of them, because these ambiguities can then be played out in their performances. The practitioners' ambivalence about certain strategies of change can actually broaden the debate about the habits played out in the performance, and thwart the spectators' tendency to take a single performance perspective to be universally valid. As such, it can assist in creating the conditions of possibility for changes to current realities, for performers and also for spectators.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that an analysis of habit, theatre, and theory can help conceptualise challenges to bodily habits, particularly in the performing arts. From the start, my study of habit has prompted me to compare the merits of product- and process- oriented methods of modifying culturally-determined habits. It has made me suspicious of any discourse or discipline which assumes that, though cultural change can cause corporeal change, the opposite is not a possibility worth pursuing, or a combination of the two is not a possibility worth pursuing. My discussion of habit has consciously gone against this assumption that change cannot come from, or cannot encompass, the bodily process of performing a habit in the present. It has instead claimed that challenges to human habits can be based on interrupting the model-manifestation interaction on which a habit depends, and thereby interrupting the habit itself. This type of change is based not only on what habit is mimicked but on the way the habit is mimicked. It is based on the bodily practices of the person performing the habit – for instance, in theatrical terms it is based on the bodily practices of the performer. Though performativity theories have foreshadowed the possibility of this more processual method of modifying habits, they have not been able to pursue it fully to date, because they have been bound by their fear of biologism. This fact has compelled me to turn to Bergson's and Deleuze's comments on becoming, creativity, and change to find constructive insights into the subversive potentials of this more processual method of modifying habits. Drawing on broad, Bergsonian, and Deleuzian theories of habit has allowed me to go beyond performativity theories, and to give details of the part bodies play in mimicking or counter-mimicking common human habits, particularly in performance practices like physical theatre. What is more, it has allowed me to examine the role that living bodies and body images both play in producing change, without declaring either to be natural. Rather, I have insisted that both can be constructed, and yet at the same time be real, and have significant practical consequences.

In the end, my examination of habit in this thesis has shown why it is worth exploring all the cultural, psychical, and physical elements of human behaviour encompassed in the concept of habit. It has explained why future examinations of how habits can be changed –

especially examinations of how habits can be changed in theatrical performance – should consider the combined basis of this change in meanings, models, and the bodies that mimic them. My theorisation of habit has therefore proven useful from the point of view of the performing arts, providing a vocabulary by which performance theorists and practitioners can consider the complex prospect of challenging the way people act, the way people are, before an audience. Plainly, my investigation of the philosophical and practical implications of habit has in no way resolved all the issues raised by the problem of habit, and has in no way illuminated all the issues in relation to presentations of human habits in the theatre. However, my treatment of habit in the theatre in this thesis has taken the first steps towards investigating some intriguing possibilities for thinking about theatre practices in the future.



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