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# Processes and/of performance: difference, memory, and experimentation

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PROCESSES AND/OF PERFORMANCE: DIFFERENCE, MEMORY, AND  
EXPERIMENTATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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By

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## Abstract

This study enacts performance analyses by combining experimental and avant-garde performance practices of artists or art movements such as John Cage, Jerzy Grotowski, Dadaism, and Eugenio Barba with the differential philosophies of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. By focusing on the ways that performance practice informs understandings of “the ghost” and *différance* in Derrida’s theories, and processes of production and experimentation in Deleuze’s, this study examines performance as a process of negotiating practice and theory that continues to produce rather than disappear.

To reinforce the productive capacity of performance, this study looks at three different sites and the processes at work in their development as performance products: the development of the performance *The Maidens*, the photography exhibit *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*, and Marina Abramović’s performance art series *Seven Easy Pieces*. Within each of these sites, the processes of experimentation at work in their creation are highlighted to focus performance practice and theory on the multiple variables at work before, during, and after the “event” of performance.

## **Chapter 1: Processes of Negotiation in Performance Practice and Theory**

I am a performance studies scholar interested in both performance practice and theory. For me, creating performance is an important means of engaging and experimenting with the theoretical and philosophical influences that shape my epistemological orientation toward performance. Similarly, different performance theories and philosophies inform and offer various methods by which I create performances. The processes of negotiation that occur for me between performance practice and theory are complex, contested, and challenging. Thus, I am interested in the ways that performers, audience members, theorists, and critics of performance navigate the relationship between how performance is theorized and how it is practiced. Such navigation requires a consideration of numerous variables constantly at work within both performance practice and theory. These variables include, but are not limited to: (1) history and methods of representation, (2) processes of production over time, (3) the function of identity and difference within contemporary philosophy and performance theory, (4) a critical orientation to subject/object distinctions within performance studies discourse, and (5) the process(es) of negotiation between practiced performance and critical response. In this study, I explore these variables by enacting a negotiation between my own performance practice and theorizing.

Put another way, this dissertation explores the tension between performance practice and theory by examining the relationship as a process of production. Rather than understanding performance as an object that disappears, as Peggy Phelan advocates in her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, I focus on how creating and theorizing performance continually produce systems, sites, and modes of critical inquiry. Rather than writing toward disappearance, as Phelan advocates, I write toward production, utilizing and extending upon the theoretical discourses offered by contemporary performance scholars and practitioners. Simply put, this

project focuses on how theories of difference, experimentation, and process support and (re)iterate performance theory and practice as a chain of constant productions via navigation.

Two main theorists inform my analysis of the relationship between performance practice and theory. Jacques Derrida's and Gilles Deleuze's writings about difference as a productive force for understanding and articulating experience demonstrates a relationship between the theorizing of experiencing life and the actual living of life itself. By applying these theories to performance specifically this study demonstrates and resituates select complexities at work in the relationship(s) between performance practice and theory. On the one hand, this study is an exploration in how the theories of Derrida and Deleuze have informed my understanding of performance practice. In particular, Derrida's writings on différance and haunting and Deleuze's writings on intensive processes of becoming and experimentation have changed my understanding and enactment of performance practice. On the other hand, performance practice has changed the way that I understand these two theorists and their writings on difference. I argue throughout this study that the relationship between performance practice and theory is not solely a product of practice changing theory or theory changing practice, but a reciprocal and constant process of becoming, intertwined and co-participatory.

The main question that this dissertation probes is whether or not performance practices exist that operate in ways complimentary to the theories of Derrida and Deleuze, specifically the way in which they combine the actual and theoretical in processes of production, experimentation, and difference? How do the performance practices inform my understanding of Deleuze and Derrida, and vice versa? And, ultimately, how do those understandings aid in the analysis of other performances? Before reviewing the theories of Derrida and Deleuze in Chapter Two, I examine the work of experimental and avant-garde performance practitioners and

theorists who have influenced my understanding of the theories of Deleuze and Derrida. I focus on experimental and avant-garde practices the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century not only because I am highly influenced and invested in that type of work, but because I see in them a way to learn about Derrida and Deleuze in terms of experimentation with formal variables of production, orientation of the self to others, and commitment to practice and theory as connected and co-constitutive.

### **Influences in Theory and Practice: A Literature Review**

Somewhat surprisingly, this study emerged out of my almost forgotten intrigue with a performance practitioner I find fascinating and troubling. Eugenio Barba is a performance theorist and practitioner who writes extensively on performance processes as “theatre anthropology.” According to Barba, theatre anthropology is “a study of the performer and for the performer” (*Paper Canoe* 13). In his many books and articles, Barba studies and engages a host of performance processes and techniques analyzing them to determine underlying principles flowing across performance practices of different cultures and time periods. In analyzing these transcultural or “recurring principles,” Theatre Anthropology “renders a service both to the performer who has a codified tradition and to the performer who suffers from the lack of the same; both to the performer who is caught by the degeneration of routine as well as to the performer who is menaced by the decay of a tradition” (*Paper Canoe* 15). Barba identifies certain foundational themes that he suggests run through the performance techniques of different cultures. Terming these themes the performer’s bios, Barba lists their essences as:

- 1 in the amplification and activation of the forces which are at work in balance;
- 2 in the oppositions which guide the dynamics of movement;
- 3 in the application of a consistent inconsistency;
- 4 in the breaking of automatisms by means of extra-daily equivalents. (*Paper Canoe* 34)

By studying the different performance and training techniques of different cultures, Barba cultivates a theory of performance process that draws upon transcultural traditions of performance while simultaneously constructing a performer training process for his own group of performers.

Although Barba clearly draws inspiration from the training techniques of multiple cultures and their theories of performance practice throughout his writings on theatre, he stops short of labeling his own work as theoretical, or being inspired by performance theory even if he most certainly is theorizing performance. He affords performance process a mystical quality that seemingly lies beyond traditional descriptions or understandings. The various “books of the rebels, the reformers, the visionaries of the theatre,” he claims, “can only be understood if we come to them with a full experience to which we have not yet been able to give a name. Their words shake up our opaque grammelot and give it the clarity of articulate consciousness” (*Paper Canoe* 38-39). He states further that “they are excellent books, capable of interesting their readers. But their secret effectiveness lies beneath the literary and technical surface, in the hidden net which can capture those of our experiences which still elude us. The legacy, like an occult science, catches its own heirs” (*Paper Canoe* 39). Viewed in such a way, the performance processes that Barba focuses on seem more like mystic arts or practices isolated from any sense of historical or political context. The performer is more like a holy man who practices a holy art seemingly derived from the inspiration of the practice itself, rather than an individual tapping into and extending upon traditions and techniques that developed through generations over specific times and histories. Barba continues this line of thought with his “floating island” metaphor.

Barba labels the theatre he practices as the “third theatre” in relationship to commercial and avant-garde theatre (Watson 18). Ian Watson identifies the sociological dimension of the third theatre as its most important aspect. Unlike commercial or avant-garde theatre concerned with producing or reflecting culture, the focus of the third theatre is placed solely on the relationships between who Barba identifies as like-minded theatre groups to his own and their audiences. This sociological dimension forms a network of relationships connected by an affinity for a certain performance processes (*Paper Canoe* 18-20). Barba describes these practicing groups as isolated either by the small towns in which they are located or the little amount of funding supporting their performances. Because of the isolation Barba identifies the groups as floating islands of an archipelago separated by huge expanses of the sea, but part of the same island chain (Barba, *The Floating Islands* 145-164).

Although I am directly influenced in this study by Barba’s commitment to studying and understanding the performance practices of multiple cultures in terms of their processes of production, I am reticent to theorize the performer’s processes outside of cultural or historical contexts as does Barba with his floating island metaphor. Rather than viewing these performance groups as isolated groups connected only by similar ideologies of performance, I am interested in understanding the connection between the production of the performance processes and the processes themselves in terms of history, culture, and time. Although Barba is invested heavily in identifying certain foundational techniques at work across cultures and labeling those processes as the beginning of the performer’s process, he stops short of theorizing the production of those techniques as its own process connected to performative contexts outside the performer’s body. While the performer is an important factor in the development and production of performances, the various other bodies at work in the performer’s training need to

be analyzed in more detail with an eye toward the complex system of historical, temporal, or socio-cultural variables at work. This study analyzes performance process in a manner informed by Barba's devotion to processes of performance while extending into the theoretical arenas that Barba resists.

While the relationship between performance theory and practice did not originate with Eugenio Barba, my intense passion for investigating performance training and technique as process stemmed from his books like *The Paper Canoe*. At the same time I was discovering the practice of Barba, I also was discovering an intense love of the avant-garde and performances of artists such as John Cage, Anne Bogart, The Wooster Group, and Jerzy Grotowski. These artists-theorists drew energy and inspiration from the avant-garde art movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while simultaneously driving their own work in complex and diverse ways. I read these artists and the theories that inspired them as a fecund site to argue a correlation between performance practice and theory as a process of production and experimentation.

The writings of Antonin Artaud were influential to the development of the avant-garde movement in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most conspicuous of his theories were his essays on the *Theatre of Cruelty*. In his essay "The Theatre and Cruelty," Artaud articulates a severe distaste for existing theatrical forms and practices. He argues,

an idea of the theatre has been lost. And as long as the theatre limits itself to showing us intimate scenes from the lives of a few puppets, transforming the public into Peeping Toms, it is no wonder the elite abandon it and the great public looks to movies, the music hall or the circus for violent satisfactions, whose intentions do not deceive them. (Artaud 397)

According to Artaud the "psychological" theatre of his day was too content to lull the audience into a false experience of "reality" by depicting characters and actions in terms of Aristotelian form as interpreted at the time. Like Bertolt Brecht, Artaud argued for a style of theatre that

diverged from Aristotelian informed theatre by waking up the audience to the psychological and emotional prison within which the theatre had trapped the audience. Unlike Brecht, Artaud argued for a much more extreme theatrical form. In “The Theatre and Cruelty” Artaud argues that his form of theatre “proposes to resort to a mass spectacle; to seek in the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds when, all too rarely nowadays, the people pour out into the streets” (398). Arnold Aronson argues that Artaud’s vision for the theatre stemmed from his desire for a theatre of mythic and spiritual proportions much like the Balinese drama that inspired most of his work on theatre. Quoting Artaud, Aronson states he “saw the possibility for replacing Western linear narrative structure with a relational model. ‘The Balinese drama does not develop as a conflict of feelings . . . but as a conflict of spiritual states, themselves ossified and transformed into gestures—diagrams. In a word, the Balinese have realized with the utmost rigor, the idea of pure theatre’” (29). Artaud describes the diagrams and symbolic gestures he argues for as forming “a spectacle unafraid of going as far as necessary in the exploration of our nervous sensibility, of which the rhythms, sounds, words, resonances, and twitterings, and their united quality surprising mixtures belong to a technique which must not be divulged” (398).

In the aforementioned passages Artaud seems to be arguing for a type of theatre that values shamanistic displays of actions and gestures in order to stimulate the audience in a visceral manner in order to wake them up from the coma induced by traditional linear drama. Although Artaud stops short of describing exactly what kind of performance practice he wants to see onstage, he does provide a theoretical call for artists to heed by advocating a fundamental change in the formal characteristics of performance practice. Artaud cites the import of Balinese drama in his theoretical writings on the theatre and argues for drama that “shows it can extract

the forces which struggle within them” (398). I argue that the forces Artaud wants to highlight are forces of theory and practice. The forces at work in both the performance techniques described by Artaud and the theory he espouses to those practices is a useful example for combining performance practice and theory that many experimental and avant-garde performers explored in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The productive value of Artaud’s challenge to rethink the power of experimenting with the formal characteristics in performance practice stems from the multiple performers and performances inspired by his writings.

At the same time Artaud wrote on the *Theatre of Cruelty*, the Surrealist and Dada art movements, the Bauhaus School, and Vsevolod Meyerhold were creating performances and art pieces stemming from an intense desire to rethink theories and practices of art and/as performance? RoseLee Goldberg writes that “despite the fact that most of what is written today about the work of the Futurists, Constructivists, Dadaists, and Surrealists continues to concentrate on the art objects produced by each period, it was more often than not the case that these movements found their roots and attempted to resolve problematic issues in performance” (*Performance Art* 7). Although often labeled as art movements, Goldberg asserts that both the Dadaists and Surrealists were movements heavily concerned with performance and performing bodies as a means to explore theoretical concerns and ideas. In addition, Oskar Schlemmer was one of the most influential artists in the Bauhaus School and continually combined theory and practice in performance to highly entertaining and intriguing ends. Goldberg offers that Schlemmer “obsessively” analyzed the problem of theory and practice central to an education program like the Bauhaus School and, although he viewed painting (more theoretical or intellectual) and theatre (more practice oriented) as specific phenomena in their own right, he continually sought ways to intertwine the two as complementary (102-103). Schlemmer admits,

“I struggle between two souls in my breast—one painting-oriented, or rather philosophical-artist; the other theatrical; or, to put it bluntly, an ethical soul and an aesthetic one” (quoted in Goldberg 103). In the same vein, Meyerhold also created performance designed to evoke the tension between practice and thought, a type of contradiction between what was seen by the audience and what was evoked by the images presented. Jonathan Pitches argues that Meyerhold’s was a “theatre based expressly on contradiction, a theatre which strove not to smooth out problems or to resolve paradoxes but to let them resonate within the minds of his performers and his audiences” (2-3). Like Brecht, Meyerhold did not want the audience to focus simply on the end result of a performance, but to engage the material of the production in a consciously engaging manner (3). The tension between the theory informing the performance and the performance itself was incredibly important to Meyerhold’s work and philosophy about actor training.

Throughout this study I draw upon specific practices of some of these practices and theories in my own formal play of performative analysis. The brief descriptions of each of these artists or movements are not intended to simplify or denigrate their importance or complexity; rather, I focus on how each one of these artists created work out of the tension between performance or art theory and the practice of performance itself. In their own distinctive ways each used performing *and* theoretical bodies as sites to work through the complex task of challenging, extending, or complimenting existing theories on the nature of performance art criticism and practice in increasingly experimental and/or productive manners. I also have not focused on the “experimental” status of each of these practices as producing weird or impenetrable types of performances (although some of them were), rather I consider the

experimental nature of these movements as precisely that—experimenting with potential forms for performance art practice and theory to take.

The middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced another convergence of theory and practice, specifically the avant-garde movements fueled by the political and cultural shift from the 1940s to the 1960s. With the emergence of performance artists and groups such as the Living Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski and his performance laboratory, the Performance Group, and the Black Mountain College, several experimental forms of performance practice intertwined and engaged with a slew of new theory and philosophy produced by writers such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. Although never explicitly referencing the other, both the philosophy and performances created were influenced by the resurgence of a “second” avant-garde. That is, both the performances being created and the theory being written experimented with different forms invested in provoking and producing different ways to understand or experience phenomena. In the following section, I focus on the noted performance practices while in Chapter Two I handle the theories of Deleuze and Derrida.

Founded in the early 1930s, the Black Mountain College was a progressive educational institution that consisted of many influential performance practitioners and theorists including John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, Josef and Anni Albers of the Bauhaus, and Buckminster Fuller to name a few. At the school students were exposed to a variety of approaches to experimenting with performance forms and theories through an interdisciplinary set of courses and exchanges. In addition to the mission of the college—namely, to experiment with many variables of performance such as “the blending of art forms, utilization of real-world and chance material, unconventional spaces and variable time (including simultaneity)” (Carlson, *Performance* 103)—I am particularly interested in the work of Cage as a useful example of an

artist negotiating the tension between performance theory and practice. In Chapter Four I focus on his rethinking the nature of sound in experimental music as an example of using multiple theoretical entry points into playing and producing a performance. In a lecture given in 1957 Cage summarizes a few methods he used to experiment with how he composed music:

Those involved with the composition of experimental music find ways and means to remove themselves from the activities of the sounds they make. Some employ chance operations, derived from sources as ancient as the Chinese *Book of Changes*, or as modern as the tables of random numbers used also by physicists in research. Or, analogous to the Rorschach tests of psychology, the interpretation of imperfections in the paper upon which one is writing may provide a music free from one's memory and imagination. Geometrical means employing spatial superimpositions at variance with the ultimate performance in time may be used. The total field of possibilities may be roughly divided and the actual sounds within these divisions may be indicated as to number but left to the performer or to the splicer to choose. In this latter case, the composer resembles the maker of a camera who allows someone else to take the picture. (Cage 4)

All of these variables—chance operations, geometry, psychology, imperfections of texture on paper—offer Cage differing ways to enter into or produce a piece of music. As a result the process of experimentation is paramount for Cage in his work. Experiencing his work also allows the audience to rethink the process of viewing a performance. Carlson writes that Cage's work often placed a “new emphasis on upon the phenomenal experience of the performer, performance event, and audience, and a fresh interest in their complex interrelationship” (*Performance* 103). By focusing upon the process of experimenting with different ways of constructing and experiencing performances, Cage provides a model for practicing and theorizing performance as a process of experimental production. By experimenting with multiple variables in the construction and experience of the performance, practice and theory converge to produce different ways modes of experience for both the audience and performer. These modes of experience are infused with cultural, historical, and temporal contexts that allow new types of meaning-making in/as performance to emerge.

Jerzy Grotowski was equally invested as Cage in rethinking the relationship between performer, audience, and performance. His company of actors working in Poland during the 1960s worked through the self-titled “Theatre of Productions” phase of creating performances and theatre pieces. Lisa Wolford summarizes Grotowski’s philosophy stating that he “rejected the notion of theatre as entertainment, seeking instead to revitalize the ritualistic function of performance as a site of communion (with others, with transcendent forces), a function he attributes to the ritual performance traditions of tribal cultures and to the archaic roots of Western theatre” (1). Wolford highlights the multiple influences on Grotowski’s process that drew upon “the sacred images of Catholicism, as well as on Jung’s theory of archetypes and Durkheim’s cross-cultural study of religious behaviors” (1). His productions challenged the audience by confronting centralizing myths in Polish culture provoking the spectators to reevaluate their deeply held cultural, political, and social beliefs (1-2). For Grotowski, the main route to affecting the audience and challenging the actor was through practice. Thomas Richards writes that “Grotowski knows that to learn something means to conquer it in practice. One must learn through ‘doing’ and not through memorization of ideas or theories” (3). Grotowski was heavily invested in developing a practice-based performance style centered on enhancing the performer’s abilities in order to affect the audience in dynamic ways.

During the “Theatre of Productions” phase of his work Grotowski concentrated on developing performance training techniques that enabled the performers to realize and express latent psychological forces by physical means. In *Towards a Poor Theatre* Grotowski writes that “if the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation, and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration” (34). The

casting off of the everyday mask is achieved through an “inductive technique (i.e. a technique of elimination)” or “*via negativa*” similar to where a “sculptor takes away what is concealing the form which, as it were, already exists within the block of stone, thus revealing it instead of building it up” (Grotowski 35-39). The process of *via negativa* could be seen as a process of removal that eliminates context from the life of the actor i.e., the civilizing effect of culture and history in order to achieve the “holy actor” state of complete self-revelation. However, although the process of revealing the self is a process of eliminating the excess psychological blockages of the performer, I argue this process is not only a process of removing distracting contexts necessarily. Rather, the process can be viewed as a way to highlight the body of the performer as the site where cultural, historical, and temporal variables work through rather than against. Grotowski states, “the performing of this act we are referring to—self-penetration, exposure—demands a mobilization of all the physical and spiritual forces of the actor who is in a state of idle readiness, a passive availability, which makes possible an active acting score” (37). He provides several techniques and exercises to strip the performer of the blockages including repeated physical exercises, various sounds and gestures, and facial mask work.

Rather than look at Grotowski’s exercises as techniques that get a performer to a particularly open place of revelation, stripped of blockages, I argue that his exercises are always already connected to the cultural or historical contexts from which they emerged. The techniques are connected to the very blockages they attempt to remove. However, the contexts from which the techniques of self-exposure are connected *do not necessarily have to be seen or witnessed in order to continually be at work in the body of the performer*. They function as excesses that are transparent yet important variables in the production of a performer’s body and that body’s performance. I argue that the process of *via negativa* can be viewed as a process that

links up with always already flowing historical or cultural processes to produce a performing body that does not necessarily need to highlight the fact that the body is a body of “excess” because that fact emerges in the performing body itself. The audience therefore does not necessarily commune with the performers because they (performers) are stripped bare and reveal their innermost spiritual state. Rather, the audience connects with and reveals themselves in the recognition of the similarity between the performers’ and their own bodies as sites of production. The bodies are not the same, but are linked together by processes of historical, cultural, and performative modes of production at work.

More recently, the work of certain practitioners and theorists in performance studies have affected my understanding of the relationship between performance practice and theory. For example, in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor argues for an understanding of performance that articulates a relationship between an “archive” and “repertoire” of performance. Generally speaking, Taylor differentiates between the archive and the repertoire in terms of practice. She constitutes the difference as the rift between “the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (19). According to Taylor the archive consists of items or written words that subsist through time and that deal with particular events, practices, histories, or experiences. Taylor places a certain emphasis on the archive’s staying power by highlighting Western society’s privileging of the written word over embodied practices. Taylor stresses that the archive is viewed typically as proof that a particular thing existed because of the West’s trust of archived things as enduring over great periods of time. She suggests that archival memory is assumed to exist as “documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones,

videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change” (19). But she stresses that the interpretation of the archive can and does change, claiming, “what changes over time is the value, relevance, or meaning of the archive, how the items it contains get interpreted, even embodied. Bones might remain the same, even though their story may change, depending on the paleontologist or forensic anthropologist who examines them” (19). Taylor contrasts archival memory with the *repertoire*. According to Taylor the repertoire “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (20). She suggests that “the repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same” (20).

Taylor concentrates on the repertoire and embodied action as valuable and usually in opposition to her reading of other people’s readings of the archive. She works to reclaim embodied practices as a successful form of transmitting and storing knowledge (26). Taylor continually suggests that the archive and repertoire are not binaries or at odds with each other in order to demonstrate that the power of the repertoire should be viewed on equal grounds with that of the archive. She notes that

the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization, or internalization, and transmission takes its place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge. (20-21)

Taylor continually works the Western privileging of the archive against the repertoire if only to make the argument that the repertoire has just as much power as that of the archive. In order to

restore power to the repertoire Taylor settles on the idea of the “scenario” as a useful way to focus on embodied behaviors or practices. However, she does so at the expense of “narratives” or “texts.”

Taylor argues that “instead of privileging texts and narratives [as in the archive], we could also look to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes” (28). In Taylor’s estimation scenarios include “features well theorized in literary analysis, such as narrative and plot, but demands that we also pay attention to *milieu* and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language” (28). This is the point where Taylor and I diverge. Although I strongly support Taylor’s focus on embodied practice as a vital way of transmitting knowledge worthy of the same rights afforded to the archive, Taylor fails to consider the multiple ways to recognize and express, in support or divergence, the bodies and bodily practices embedded in narrative and texts. I argue that looking to the experimental and avant-garde practices of artists such as the Surrealists or Dadaists, John Cage or Jerzy Grotowski, gives performance studies scholars useful models for formal play as variables in the production of performances as/in texts. These examples are useful not only because the texts produced could be performative, but also because the noted theorists and practitioners explicitly create performances from a convergence of practice and/as theory and vice versa. By experimenting with the formal elements of embodied practice(s) one can activate those practices in their representation of a text for the archive thereby highlighting the importance of the practice to the overall analysis, and satisfy the needs of the archive by producing a text that remains “behind.” That the texts left behind in the archive were not products of a whole history of embodied practices or that the understanding of texts and

narratives does not change what the texts themselves mean as historical objects (*not their interpretive meaning*) are two major points that I think Taylor misses in her analysis.

Although Taylor spends a great deal of her book arguing that the archive and repertoire should not be set up as binaries, her valuation of the repertoire of embodied practice sets up a tension between the archive and repertoire different than the tension between practice and theory I explore in this study. The tension between the archive and repertoire in Taylor's book is a tension of value and power. She spends a great deal of time arguing for the value of embodied practice in knowledge production as equal to that of the archive, subsequently setting them in opposition. In my estimation, she does not spend enough time discussing the ways that the archive and repertoire share tactics and methods in their production. What are the ways that embodied practice is enacted in the archival process itself? How can archival texts and narratives be produced as extensions of the processes of embodied practices? What happens when both the archive and repertoire are looked at in terms of a continuing process of experimentation through the tension between practice and theory? I will discuss briefly two examples of current performance studies scholarship that answers some of these questions and that work in, on, and through the tension between theory and practice I have discussed in this chapter.

In "Autoethnography's Family Values: Easy Access to Compulsory Experiences," Craig Gingrich-Philbrook outlines certain tactics or methods to enhance the value of autoethnography in performance studies. In order to support autoethnography's claim to artistic means of self presentation, Gingrich-Philbrook holds that most autoethnography actually fails at using artistic techniques in its production. He argues that "reading autoethnography's poetic claims, then, with any background in poetics, results in the dissonant conclusion that, however much one

applauds autoethnography's artistic and social intentions, those intentions do not in themselves secure artistic results" (308). Rather than valuing the transparency of self in the writing of an autoethnography, he argues for the use of literary practices in the production of autoethnographic work. He argues that autoethnographers "must embrace and experiment with different literary movements, particularly those more tolerant of, and constituted by, different orientations toward transparency. Autoethnography's devotion to transparency not only divorces it from literary history, it also compromises its commitment to retrieving subjugated knowledge" (312). By arguing for the use of literary practices in the production of autoethnography, one can produce writing that simultaneously highlights the importance of the writing as theory and theory as practice. Thereby, the writing achieves efficacy by experimenting with different ways of presenting the self rather than inducing uninspired responses from the reader through uninspired practices by the writer (308-309). Gingrich-Philbrook leans towards the use of poetic techniques for autoethnography in his argument, but the idea of using different means of experimental, avant-garde, or (gasp!) literary techniques in the creation of texts or narratives outside of autoethnography also may be applied.

Another example of experimenting with the tension between practice and theory in the creation of a text is Ruth Laurion Bowman and Michael S. Bowman's essay, "On the Bias: From Performance of Literature to Performance Composition." In their essay, the authors create a performance on the page by engaging, utilizing, and challenging the many different performance forms and theories analyzed by the essay itself. Bowman and Bowman use the metaphor of two different "classrooms" common to performance studies labeled "performance of literature" and "performance composition" to highlight a creative tension within the discipline (206, 208). They describe the classroom housing "performance of literature" as a place where literary texts are

read aloud, text and performance are maintained as separate, and improvisation, personality, or technique are held at bay. The second classroom of “performance composition is a place where the opposition between text and performance is blurry, onstage performances are attended to, and an odd liveliness occurs (206, 208). By framing the article with the example of the two classrooms of performance studies, the authors are able to challenge traditional narratives of the evolution of performance studies from interpretation to performance by combining both practices (interpretation of literature & performance composition) into a different type of text. The text they create draws upon multiple models of practice and theory in its construction. They use traces of performed scripts, definitions from dictionaries, theories of orality and literacy, “writerly” or “producerly” tactics of textual composition à la Roland Barthes and Gregory Ulmer. All of these tactics or methods combine to form a text that analyzes a particular question (the movement between performance of literature and performance composition) while experimenting formally with the mode of analysis. The result is a text whose formal elements metonymically reflect the arguments put forth in their analysis. The culmination of the essay is a seven point list of techniques and tactics to use in the construction of a performance composition that the authors themselves presumably used in their own essay. The usefulness of “On the Bias” cannot be understated for the purpose of this study. Throughout this study, I argue for a similar relationship between techniques of performance practice and theoretical influence that Bowman and Bowman enact in the production of their essay. They experiment with different variables of production in challenging and exciting ways by enacting their analysis in formal as well as substantive ways.

## Significance

Throughout this study I advocate a form of criticism forged primarily from the influence of certain experimental and avant-garde artists on performance theory and practice, and the theories of radical difference articulated by Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. Specifically, in Chapter Two, I focus on Derrida's rethinking of temporality and history through the phenomenon of the ghost, and the productivity of the play of *différance* in linguistic contexts. I also examine Deleuze's theories on processes of production in terms of experimentation and actualization. Both these practitioners and theorists give me the opportunity to adopt particular critical positions in each chapter based on my involvement with the creation and experience of the performances I analyze. Throughout the study, I argue that these experimental practices and theories of difference allow critics to look at performance as products of difference outside of traditional subject/object relationships and utilize an experimental and practice based perspective in and as their analysis of the products. In trying to gauge the effectiveness of the particular critical position(s) argued in this study, I ask three main questions: (1) Do the theories offered by Derrida and Deleuze used in this study do anything different than more "performance-friendly" theories?; (2) What discoveries and limitations are made by looking at performance as a continual process of experimentation and becoming?; (3) What is the significance of navigating the tension between theory and practice employed throughout this study?

In this study, connections are drawn between philosophical terms – such as the ghost, *différance*, intensive and extensive processes, multiplicities, and production – to performance terms and concepts. I do not believe that either Derrida or Deleuze intended for their theories to be applied so specifically to analyses of certain performances. However, I use their philosophies to expand the scope and utility of both their theories *and* performance theory and practice. A

multiplicity of complex and invigorating arguments made by a variety of performance studies scholars continually challenge me to think differently about performance. They articulate a process of recognizing certain habits of thought and experimenting with ways to break from those habits and form new critical perspectives. One of the most important aspects of the new perspective lies in the acknowledgement that the cycle of experimentation never ends.

A main factor in my choice to use theories of difference is the understanding that my analyses are necessarily incomplete and gapped. I purposely leave room for future connections to be made and inserted into my analysis in order to complicate any attempt at solidifying my own study into an object of performance. Instead of writing towards disappearance as Phelan advocates, I use the theories offered by Derrida and Deleuze to write toward or through reappearance(s). Put another way, I argue throughout this study in both implicit and explicit ways that we write towards production. I engage the productive potential of performance and sites of performance by focusing on elements that often fall outside of sensibility. I do not mean that I illuminate characteristics of performance in a genius-artist move, or that one does not have an experience of the performances through their senses. Rather, I focus on the connections and characteristics of the performances that resist attributing an identity or essence to them in the assumption that what one sees or hears is the end of the story. Simultaneously, I use certain formal elements of the performance sites I analyze as productive elements in the construction of my own analysis.

In Chapter Three, I analyze the specter of the ghost as it haunted the research and rehearsal of the performance of *The Maidens*. Looking at *The Maidens* through the lens of differential philosophy articulated by Derrida and Deleuze draws attention away from the performance as a finished product presented for an audience and moves critical response to a

different sense-making frame. Instead of looking at the performance as something that happens and then quietly disappears, I am intrigued by how haunting and intensive processes of experimentation afford the critic access to components of the performance process that exceed the presentation of a performance. In the case of *The Maidens*, my critical assessment of the rehearsal and composition phases of the performance through the lens of differential philosophy historicizes the process that the bodies of the performers produced. Instead of focusing my analysis on creating a performance about the Hiroshima Maidens, I examine the process we used to produce a performance about the bodies of the performers creating a performance about the Hiroshima Maidens. The actualized product of *The Maidens* was very different than the potential product we envisioned at the beginning of the research and rehearsal period.

Not only do I focus on the elements of haunting and intensive processes in the content of the performance, I also structure the formal elements of my criticism in the chapter as an extension of the processes analyzed. The staging of my criticism emerges from the gaps of the staged performance. Simultaneously, the gaps in my criticism open onto potential forms for a performance process to take in the future. In this way, I anticipate future performances, processes, and experiments by making my criticism differential and performative.

Chapter Four extends the concept of intensive processes of experimentation to understanding criticism and production of photography as a complex performance of technological, historical, social, and material variables. Featuring the exhibit *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* as the main site for analysis, I argue for a conception of photography, and consequently performance, that lies *outside the frame*. While haunting and the ghost take a more explicit role as the content of the exhibit, my analysis of haunting shifts from a zoom lens in Chapter Three to a wide angle lens using soft-focus in Chapter Four. As the image

of the ghost takes center stage in the content of the photos, how the ghost ended up as the subject matter for spirit photography haunts the chapter as a whole. Deleuze's theories on intensive processes of production influence my analysis heavily throughout the chapter. Specifically, I concentrate on the spirit photograph as a product that emerged from a set of processes outside the frame of the actual photograph. The combination of technological developments (telegraphy, photography, and chemistry) with historical events (the transition from "old" to "new" time periods) and social movements (the decline of the Second Great Awakening and the rise of Spiritualism) merged to produce the spirit photograph. The type of performance enacted by the spirit photographer stemmed from the combination of forces and produced a unique site to rethink criticism of performance and photography. In his theories of intensive and extensive processes of production, Deleuze offers useful means of analyzing spirit photographs by looking at the variables of experimentation utilized in their production. By arguing against the attribution of an essence to an object as its identity, Deleuze offers me an important set of theoretical tools for thinking outside the frame of the photograph. Just as I argue that the photograph is more than the contents of its frame, Deleuze argues that products are more than their identifying characteristics.

An important question to consider is how an investigation of the intensive processes of the spirit photograph is different than a genealogical study of spirit photography. While I do make substantial historical connections between different technological and bodily practices in my analysis of the spirit photograph, I am not as concerned with the way that these practices work in historicizing our understanding of spirit photography as much as I am in the way that these processes function as processes in a particular historical milieu. For example, while the chemical processes of developing photographs that emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century stemmed

from a set of historical and technological factors, I am more interested in the process of the chemical reaction itself as a factor in the creation of the spirit photograph. I understand genealogy to be a tool to travel back into the past in order to historicize an understanding of historical and material processes in the present, whereas an analysis of the intensive processes in the production of a product uncovers the historical and material process at work in the creation of an actual product. Put another way, the direction of the movement in intensive processes operates differently than in a genealogy. Instead of moving back into the past in order to make sense of my present understanding of history as in genealogy, my analyses of the intensive processes at work in the development of the spirit photograph focus on the processes at work in a particular time period, which actually produced spirit photographs. Although the spirit photograph becomes a potential site to use in a genealogy, I stop short of using that site in order to investigate a present relationship to history. Within the chapter, I do investigate a variety of variables in the production of spirit photography much like a genealogical account would; however, I understand genealogical and historicized practices (practices of inserting difference into dominant narratives of History) informing my epistemological orientation rather than my methodological approach. I focus on the intensive processes at work in the production of spirit photography to highlight the status of the spirit photograph as a product of a multiplicity of differential forces, rather than an easily identifiable object. Viewed as such, the conditioning elements of the spirit photograph exceed the frame of the photo thereby also exceeding our immediate senses. By adjusting the exposure of the spirit photograph as product, I argue that new paths for criticism reveal themselves from beyond the grave of the spirit photograph's frame.

Chapter Five analyzes the series of re-performances enacted by Marina Abramović in *Seven Easy Pieces*. Within the chapter, I read Abramović as haunted by past performances in her own re-performance of the past. By analyzing the documentary and creative processes used to construct her re-performances of other performance artists, I argue that Abramović produces a complex historical and performative network of bodies, documents, and images, forcing the critic to reorient himself to *Seven Easy Pieces* in an equally differential and performative fashion. I simultaneously construct a lens to read *Seven Easy Pieces* out of the practice of sampling in electronic and hip-hop music. Focusing on the practice of sampling as an active process of creation rather than simple replication allows me to read Abramović's re-performances as a form of sampling that stresses repetition with a difference, encourages active production of "new" material from "old," and rethinks the potential of the performance document as performative. The formal structure of Chapter Five follows certain elements of Abramović's performance and documentation processes I identify as productive, thereby establishing the processes as powerful tools for combining performance criticism and differential philosophy. Put another way, I write about the productive processes at work in *Seven Easy Pieces* and simultaneously enact those processes through the formal elements of the writing itself.

Each of the sites and critical perspectives analyzed in this study offer interesting and difficult answers to equally complex and serious questions. Focusing on the usefulness of the theories of Derrida and Deleuze, a host of questions present themselves to me. What is so bad about looking at performance as an object? How does difference work with performance? If the nature of difference is to produce ways of looking at phenomena outside of identity or essence, then how can we tell what difference is or where it is at work? These questions are valid and

important; I have struggled to find the answers. I do not think that difference operates like the naïve perception that “everything is performance.” Difference is not everything and everything is not difference. The particularities of Derrida’s and Deleuze’s theories on difference necessitate that difference can never congeal into a transcendent sign. The production and play of difference— whether linguistically or as an intensive process of actualization—ensures that difference can never be afforded an essential quality or identity. The reason that I have trouble articulating what difference actually is, owes to the fact that as soon as a definition comes close to emerging, a new form or function of difference is produced by the movement of difference itself. I focus intently on the complexities of the differential philosophy of Derrida and Deleuze in Chapter Two in order to flesh out the intricacies of each theorist’s line of thought. If I had to focus on one aspect of these theories as crucial to this study it would be the impossibility of difference to stop producing. Hence difference, as articulated by Derrida and Deleuze, cannot ever reach a point where one could analyze something and say “*This* is difference because it’s doing *that*.” Processes of difference must be built into the way that difference is articulated. I argue that acknowledging the production of difference(s) at work in understanding processes of difference allows performance studies scholars a means of extending the life of performance and critique. Rather than looking at performance as ephemeral, disappearing, or strictly representational, I argue that the differential theories of Derrida and Deleuze rework and reorient performance to those perspectives, and vice versa.

This study enacts a (re)orientation to the theories of Derrida and Deleuze while simultaneously engaging those theories by discussing various performance practices. I am interested in understanding how the philosophical theories to which I am drawn are influenced by the performance practices I love, and vice versa. At their core, the following chapters look at

multiple performance sites as processes of performance experimentation and difference. Within the chapters I examine how looking at performance as a performative and continual process of becoming, allows performance practice and theory to be continually redefined as productive and intertwined.

## Chapter 2: Radical Difference in/and Philosophy

But performing *difference* must carry with it a willingness to perform *differently*. (Bowman 14)

As a performance scholar I grow increasingly interested in finding different ways of practicing, writing, and thinking about performance. Experimentation with performance and performance theory stands as one of my most steadfast ideologies. In fact, the *outcome* of a performance experiment is unimportant as long as the *process* of experimentation is a generative one. That is, I want to learn something “new” whether it is “right” or “wrong.” As a result I have branched out into fields other than performance studies to expand my own knowledge base and add certain components that, I argue, enhance my performance practice and scholarship. My commitment to finding and experimenting with different ways of treating performance has led me to continental French philosophy, specifically theories that deal with difference, such as those of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze.

One of the problems that plague my scholarship is finding ways to apply the theories of these individuals to performance studies scholarship in a clear and concise manner while still holding true to the spirit of their work, which at times is incredibly frustrating and dense. However vexed I get with loose interpretations and applications of these theories, I value the process of working through each theorist’s articulation of differential philosophy with an aim to continually deepen my own understanding and tighten my articulation of and application to performance.

This chapter outlines specific areas of each theorist’s understanding of difference within their respective writings and sets the stage for the critical perspective I use to analyze three different performance sites: my own production of *The Maidens*, the photography exhibit *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*, and Marina Abramovic’s series of performance

art “covers” *Seven Easy Pieces*. Throughout each analysis I employ different parts and perspectives of differential philosophy sometimes as a methodology and at other times as an epistemology cultivating a differential criticism—a criticism forged from the various ways each theorist treats difference—offering new and exciting ways of practicing and writing about performance. Generally speaking, I use a more Deleuzian analysis to talk about the process of producing a performance, and a more Derridan analysis in my orientation toward the language I use to describe the performance as a historical and social event. I do not advocate treating difference as an object of study and applying it as some sort of cookie cutter technique to performance sites. Rather I use techniques and aspects of differential philosophies to *think differently* about performance as an extension of thinking *about difference*. In some ways, the three analysis chapters of this study look and function differently than this chapter because they employ certain methods or modes of writing from within differential philosophy. Instead of writing about difference, I write through difference, or rather, difference writes through me as I critically expand upon areas often contested within performance studies such as performative writing, subject/object relationships, historicity and history, and the event of performance. Put another way, I use certain tenets and techniques of differential philosophy covered in this chapter as both the means and mode of analysis in the following chapters. Using the language of differential philosophy outlined in the following pages in each chapter of analysis, I write through gaps, repetitions, traces, omissions, spatiotemporal vortexes, processes of becoming, practices and singularities—I write through difference as it writes through me. Not so in this chapter.

This chapter reviews the literature I draw from for the analyses in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Comprised of almost exclusively primary sources of continental French philosophy

and the secondary sources I use to make sense of it all, I articulate a particular understanding of this material in this chapter before I use it in subsequent chapters. Therefore a more traditional means of writing in this chapter offers a thick exploration and description of each writer's philosophies about experiencing and understanding difference. First, I explore the writings of Jacques Derrida and how the concepts of *différance* and haunting play into his philosophy. Then I focus on Gilles Deleuze and his writings about processes of becoming, the virtual, actual, and intensive zones, and singularities. Difference flows throughout each of these concepts and I constantly point toward a cultivation of difference as the critical orientation I use later in this study.<sup>1</sup>

### **Derrida, *Différance*, and the Ghost**

Jacques Derrida is no doubt one of the more controversial figures of the last 50 years in philosophy as well as literary studies, the humanities, and cultural. His writings on *différance*, deconstruction, and ethics produced a host of followers and detractors in a vast array of disciplines. His impact on rethinking difference<sup>2</sup> in the experience of being cannot be overestimated and regardless of the massive amount of criticism his theories receive as being hopeless or postmodern noise, Derrida must be engaged as a serious thinker of great importance. Generally speaking, Derrida continually worked to rethink experience outside of essences or origins of being.<sup>3</sup> Focusing heavily on the works of Heidegger, Husserl, Saussure, and Hegel, Derrida constantly questioned essence and truth as the defining modes and origins in the ontology of being. Derrida sought to rearticulate and reinfuse difference back into understanding being outside of essential categories of truth as knowledge.

One of Derrida's most widely criticized and valued contributions to his field were the concepts and ideas surrounding his use of the term *différance*. *Différance* is a graphic

intervention because there is no audible difference between the “a” and “e” of *différance* and *différance* in the French language; it is a written and therefore graphic difference. The focus falls on the intensification of play between the silent lapse in spelling of the two forms.

*Différance* cannot be heard when spoken (Derrida, *Margins* 3). He uses the play of *différance* to “reassemble in a sheaf the different directions in which I have been able to utilize what I would call provisionally the word or concept of *différance*, or rather to let it impose itself upon me in its neographism, although as we shall see, *différance* is literally neither a word or concept” (3).

While *différance* is neither a concept nor a word, it is not prevented from producing “conceptual effects and verbal and nominal concretations” (Derrida, *Positions* 40). These concretations are moments when difference can be talked or written about and/or around. Rather than assemble these moments into a totalized or totalizable hierarchy of organization, Derrida uses the term “sheaf” as a mode of categorization of differences and *différance* that is ever expanding and changing. The sheaf is “a historic and systematic crossroads . . . the structural impossibility of limiting this network, of putting an edge on its weave, of tracing a margin that would not be a new mark” (40).

Christopher Norris explains Derrida’s employment of *différance* in several different contexts and senses as proof that *différance* constantly resists definition. Norris goes further in stating that *différance* problematizes the very act of definition (19). Why is this? Because the nature of Derrida’s use of *différance* demonstrates the play at work within language and language based concepts, the idea that an essential quality can be attributed to any form of language is impossible. The play of *différance* always forces difference to continually emerge and affect our senses and experience. *Différance* constantly produces new meanings and understandings for the potential of sense-making. *Différance* becomes enmeshed within work

and a mode of production that pulls it through a chain of other concepts, words, and textual configurations—contingency and repetitions. The sheaf of *différance* is the closest example of a “place” to locate *différance* although it has no identifiable edge or concrete border where difference ends and begins. The general system of the economy of *différance* consists of an assemblage with the “complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning—or of force—to go off again in different directions” (Derrida, *Margins* 3). As soon as a moment or point within the sheaf is highlighted a host of other differences take flight from that moment and produce a host of other differences in a continual chain of production. For example, in the performance of the repeated action of hopping on one leg, the rush to language of an audience member to make sense of the hopping performer can lead to articulation: “She is hopping on her right leg.” However, as the hopping continues to repeat and expand in time, a host of potential understandings for the audience member to articulate emerge out of the play of *différance*. New contexts arise as sense-making tools for the audience member. “Hopping” moves through “hopscotch” or “bouncing.” Pogo-sticks and children’s games, or an old dance sequence from the late 1700s become the lens through which the hopping actions are read and understanding is verbalized. *Différance* produces new ways of understanding and articulating the repeated movement of the performer. As a result, the hopping motion cannot only be read as “hopping” and the possibility of ascribing an essential quality to the movement through language, or criticism, is eliminated.

Derrida also focuses on the impossibility of phonetic writing in his articulation of *différance*. In order for phonetic writing to function it must allow for nonphonetic signs (punctuation, spelling, etc.). In speaking the sentence “I am a SO mad!” one cannot indicate by speech the capitalization of “SO” or the exclamation point. Although the speaker can create a

similar emphasis as the written sentence, the verbal signs are not visualized in the same way as written ones. Therefore *différance* cannot tolerate the concept of the sign itself. According to Saussure, difference is the condition for the possibility and functioning of every sign— a silent play (5). Put another way, according to Saussure signs are signs because they are different from one another. Because we cannot hear or see *différance*, it refers to an order which no longer solely belongs to sensibility. But *différance* also cannot belong to intelligibility because it defies the foundation of objectivity in understanding, thereby resisting the founding opposition of philosophy between the “sensible” and the “intelligible” (5). This insight leads Derrida to his first explicit articulation of *différance*. *Différance* resides in a place “between speech and writing, and beyond the tranquil familiarity which links us to one and the other, occasionally reassuring us in our illusion that they are two” (5). For Derrida, *différance* lies between the sensible and the intelligible in a sheaf of constant production of differences—some felt, some seen, some thought, some hidden, some forgotten.

*Différance* can refer simultaneously to the entire configuration of its meanings: a detour, delay, a relay, reserve, a representation. Derrida offers *différance* as a rethinking of temporization. He takes the verb “*differer*” in French and offers it as “to temporize,” to take recourse consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of desire or will. *Differer* also means to not be identical or to be other, discernible etc. Spacing therefore must be produced between the elements other and produced with a perseverance in repetition (8). *Différance* is both spacing between elements (I am not you, you are other) and temporization (I will never arrive as other) between the delay of difference(s). *Différance* is always productive; it produces space between differences and the delay of time to ensure a constant progression of difference<sup>4</sup>.

Derrida suggests how to join the temporization of *différance* with the spacing of *différance*. The sign stands in for the thing itself, represents the present in its absence, and when we signify we go through the detour of the sign. The sign

becomes deferred presence. Signification becomes the *différance* of temporization for this structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and moving toward the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate. According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both secondary and provisional; secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation” (9).

Because the sign cannot appropriate a full presence or essence of that which it signifies, a gap is created between the sign and the signified—the difference between saying “apple” and the apple itself. Temporally, the sign constantly moves toward a new (re)appropriation of the deferred presence of the signified but never reaches its goal. Difference always slips away from the movement of the sign in the form of the trace(s) of deferred presence.<sup>5</sup> *Différance* is always at work producing gaps and shifts of time that complicate the desire for a metaphysical account of being. Put another way, *différance* continually denies the ability of a sign to be fully understood as that which it signifies. Because language and meaning are constantly evolving and producing new contexts in which to be understood, no essential quality ascribed to the sign transcends all understanding or knowledge.

Derrida also provides a way for *différance* to operate within the framework Saussure posits as closed due to the cause and effects of language stemming from no subject or source, but the differences between them. Such a closed system would lead to speaking of an effect with no cause and then quickly to speaking of no effect at all (12). The trace is Derrida’s solution. The trace operates outside the closed framework of language—not finding its cause in any particular subject or substance, in a present being—while no more an effect than a cause, but, in and of

itself, outside of the text (12). The trace is the residue of the sign that allows for different contexts to connect to the sign as the play of *différance*. Niall Lucy writes that the trace forbids the sign to be present in and of itself, thereby referring only to itself (144). Some element of meaning always escapes the sign and attaches to a “new” sign, thereby demonstrating the continual chain of contexts created by the trace.

Through the concept of the trace, Derrida engages a simultaneous combination of spacing and temporization. The movement of signification is only possible through *différance* if each “present” element is also open to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element (13). For example, “text” means something very different to performance studies scholars in 2008 than it did in 1908. Hopefully however, when we speak of a “text” in the present, the understanding of the impact and contexts of past meanings of “text” emerges alongside our current use. In order for *différance* to manifest within the movement of signification there must be a “constitution of the present as an ‘originary’ and irreducibly nonsimple synthesis of marks . . . or traces of retentions and pretensions . . . that [Derrida proposes] to call *archi-writing*, *archi-trace*, or *différance*. Which (is) (simultaneously) spacing (and) movement” (13). Difference can be considered an origin, according to Derrida, only in so far as it complicates the concept and possibility of “origins.” The production and play of *différance* necessarily opens difference onto other contexts through the trace. *Différance* is therefore productive through its deferring and differing play.<sup>6</sup>

*Différance* is not an originary concept however. What is written as *différance* will be the “playing movement that ‘produces’—by means of something that is simply not an activity—these differences and these effects of difference . . . *différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences—thus origin no longer suits it” (11). Derrida

answers the critique about his so called conception of a “linear history of meaning.” He states that he attempts in all of his writings to “systematize a deconstructive critique precisely against the authority of meaning, as the transcendental signified or as telos, in other words history determined in the last analysis as the history of meaning, history in its logocentric, metaphysical, idealist, representation” (Derrida, *Positions* 50). Derrida wants to produce another concept or conceptual chain of history: “a monumental, stratified, contradictory, history; a history that also implies a new logic of repetition and the trace, for it is difficult to see how there could be history without it” (57). He claims that metaphysics reappropriates the historicity of history and we must be wary of it.<sup>7</sup> As soon as words like meaning and significance are used, metaphysics swoops in and tries to synthesize and elevate.

Jumping forward 25 years in Derrida’s writings, but always working within the framework of *différance* I outlined above, I move to his writings on haunting as a means of (re)articulating difference and the experience of being in terms of the ghost. Haunting is a complicated theoretical approach hard to describe, let alone operate within. Complications arise in any proposal for an epistemology because it makes various assumptions which call into question notions of value, content, form, knowledge, and truth. For people working with haunting, these issues become even more intensely contested because haunting calls these values into question before they arrive as questions. Put simply, if one adopts haunting they will be forced into a radical rethinking of how scholars and performers articulate experience(s). Haunting requires that concepts such as presence, ontology, performativity, and identity be rethought in a way that allows for difference to emerge. The idea of difference must be rethought as well to avoid conceiving of difference in terms of subjectivity or identity. Haunting is an epistemology concerned with the treatment of the other as an ethics of difference. Because

we cannot account for difference from a subjective perspective without risking alienation or (re)instating norms, we must change the manner in which we conceive of difference, using concepts like presence or performativity in a different way. I argue that such an ethics of radical difference can also be extended to performance studies practice and scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Some areas of performance studies that might be reinvestigated using haunting as an epistemology are the relationship between performer and audience, temporality, performativity, presence and absence, and the representation of history in performance. Haunting calls accepted notions underlying each of these areas into question and opens them up for new forms of critique to emerge. In order to understand what haunting is(not), I now examine more closely how Derrida employs haunting in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida himself recognizes the importance of performance in his reading of Marx via haunting which operates as a

performative interpretation, that is, of an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets . . . [this is] a definition of the performative as unorthodox with regard to speech act theory . . . ('The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it'). (Derrida, *Specters* 51).

From the beginning of his text on ghosts and Marx, Derrida constantly operates within such an unorthodox understanding of performativity<sup>9</sup> which continually transforms the texts and theories that he engages. I argue that such a transformation of performance theory is necessary to expand how we conceive and practice performance. We must use established concepts within performance theory against themselves in order to better highlight the contested nature of performance. That is, an understanding of performativity similar to Butler and Derrida's—through repeated usage, transformation occurs *in the usage itself*. This theory of performativity depends upon repetition and not reproduction. Similar to Butler's theories about performativity

and agency, Derrida shows the transformative potential of repetition via iterability and the trace through the performative interpretation at work within *Specters*. The trace is not a

presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site—erasure belongs to its structure . . . The paradox of such a structure, in the language of metaphysics, is an inversion of metaphysical concepts, which produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace. It is no longer what every reference refers to in the last analysis. It becomes a function in a structure of generalized reference. (Derrida *Margins*, 24)

The trace emerges in a process of iterability via repetition. Where presence is commonly misinterpreted as the result of reproduction, the trace functions as a (non)presence of repetition because it always already has erasure(s) contained within it. For example, during the run of a performance, the performance transforms itself through its repetition night to night. The performance has traces of previous iterations of itself from previous nights. As a performer, one may remember a certain bodily sensation on a certain night, a look from an audience member that moved the performance in a new direction, or even the way it felt as the lights went down. Traces can extend even further into the rehearsal period, historical research, and even certain selections of music that might have been playing while learning lines. Performativity and, more specifically, the trace, destabilizes the moment of performance and forces scholars and practitioners to (re)orient themselves to their work. Derrida extends these concepts by articulating an ethics of difference via haunting and the ghost.

For Derrida, justice comes in the form of responsibility to the other as difference. The other that Derrida writes of are both living others and others who have passed. He uses the ghost as a figure that calls attention to both. Individuals have a responsibility to live *with* the other and treat the other justly. In order to live responsibly then, one must be acutely aware of the socius, the *with* of the being-with Derrida writes about. The fact that we are among others calls us to be

mindful of how we treat each other. This is the first order of responsibility for an individual concerned with an ethics of difference. The *with* prevents Cartesian subjectivity, and all of its ontological traps to form, because a subject has at her foundation a concern for the other in the form of the *with*. Therefore subjectivity must be rethought not in terms of an individual, but as a community of different individuals. I argue that such an ethics of difference extends also to performance. In the now of performance there are individuals experiencing performance with each other. According to Derridian logic, the audience and performers call each other into an ethical relationship that transforms the notion of “responsibility to the audience” from understanding to experience. Instead of grounding ethical responsibility for the audience in the role of facilitator of understanding, I argue for a Derridian ethics which grounds itself in the *with* of co-experiencing each other as a multiplicity of difference. This idea is similar to what Susan Sontag argues in *Against Interpretation*. Hans Gumbrecht argues a similar point in his book *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Responsibility for the critic shifts from meaning through interpretation, toward experiencing art through an erotics or eroticization of art. In the moment of co-experiencing, the performer and audience engage each other not just in terms of what the other means, but how they excite each other’s senses. They redefine their roles according to flows of desire or sensoral engagements that they co-experience.

Within *Specters*, Derrida focuses primarily on his reading of Karl Marx as it relates to neo-liberalism and globalization. Derrida wants to maintain the “specters of Marx” without conjuring them away into vulgar (i.e. traditional) readings; he recoups Marx and Marxism through the lens of deconstruction. In *Specters*, Derrida continually attempts to describe the ghost and how it operates. This task ultimately fails because of the need for the ghost to be constantly reinvestigated and questioned. The ghost “*is* something that one does not know,

precisely, and one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists . . . One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge” (Derrida *Specters*, 6). The ghost, by its very nature, confounds what is accepted as knowledge. The ghost is not a static identity, rather it haunts as a “*non-sensuous sensuous* . . . the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone *other*. And of someone *other* that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth” (7). The ghost is a figure that defies traditional definitions of being. We cannot sense the ghost as a subject or an identity that resides in understanding as knowledge. According to Derrida, the ghost is the closest figure to that of the other because it is a body without flesh. We perceive the body of the ghost, but its flesh exceeds our senses and our understanding. Similarly, we perceive the other but cannot locate the other in stable identity for fear of eliminating possible forms for the other to take. This alterity is the injunction, or obligation, from which we inherit “law” as a moral imperative—the absolute law of hospitality as justice to the other.<sup>10</sup>

The ghost exists although we often do not see it. Invisible between its apparitions, it enacts a kind of invisible visibility. This asymmetry, or, *visor effect*, interrupts, de-synchronizes, and recalls us to anachrony (6-7). What we sense through our perception is that we cannot always sense the ghost. Our senses are recalled to the fact that we can only sense the ghost in its haunting as *past*. First and foremost the “the spirit comes by coming back [revenant], it figures both a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again” (10). The question of the ghost is a question of repetition because the specter is always a revenant and begins by coming back. We cannot control the ghost’s comings and goings (11).

According to Derrida, the ghost is always other and sets out the task for the living to constantly (re)orient themselves to experiencing the figure of the ghost *as* other. In performance, the ghost could take the form of a figure from history such as Orson Welles. If we were creating a performance about Orson Welles where he is represented onstage by a performer, the ghost of Orson Welles could repeatedly take on different forms *in* the body of the performer. At their simplest manifestation, these forms could be verbal or physical actions that evoke Orson Welles in some manner. In between possessions of the body of the performer by “Orson,” the ghost would remain hidden, but always looking out at both the performers and audience from the past, waiting to (re)materialize as a trace of history.

The ghost works, it produces, and therefore must be *allowed* to work. It works in the “mode of production of the phantom, itself a phantomatic mode of production” (97). This mode of production shows the work of mourning to be rethought as never-ending work. Mourning then, is “work itself, work in general, the trait by means of which one ought perhaps to reconsider the very concept of production” (97). According to this logic, mourning is not a process that ends after a set period of time. Performance is mourned in such a way. Experiencing a performance does not end once the lights come up and the audience leaves, the performance has not disappeared. We necessarily wrestle with our experience and allow it to produce new places to engage, create, and critique future performances. I argue for a mourning of performance in its spectrality, rather than an interpretation of performance in its finality like Phelan suggests. Derrida rethinks temporality according to the figure of the ghost. Temporality, he says, can be thought “only in a dis-located time of the present, at the joining of a radically dis-jointed time . . . Not a time whose joinings are negated, broken, mistreated, dysfunctional, disadjusted . . . a time without *certain* joining or determinable conjunction” (17-18). In other

words, temporality is not the progression of the “now” moving from the past to the future sequentially. Otherwise the “now” would be granted with a presence that Derrida says is impossible. Derrida explains that the “disjointure in the very presence of the present, this sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself (this radical untimeliness or this anachrony on the basis of which we are trying here to *think the ghost*)” (25) as the conditions for the impossibility of presence as such. He goes further to describe the presence of the present as a fallacy because

the present is what passes, the present comes to pass, it lingers in this transitory passage, in the coming-and-going, *between* what *goes* and what *comes*, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself . . . Presence is enjoined, ordered, distributed in the two directions of absence, at the articulation of what is no longer and what is not yet. To join and enjoin. (25)

The present, or, here-now, must be reconsidered in light of such an articulation of presence as singularities of experience. Singularity is a concept that comes out of deconstruction and *différance* specifically. From *différance*, “the here-now unfurls. Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity, singular because differing, precisely, and always other, binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and in urgency*: even if it moves toward what remains to come” (31). A singularity is a collection of difference held together by the here-now. Derrida uses the here-now to talk about moments of experience without resorting to the language of the present as presence.

The differences of a singularity are held together in the moment of the experience of the here-now and labeled as a “singularity.” A singularity could contain a host of traces “inside” itself. There could be a community of people that makes up a singularity, all differing, watching a performance. Let’s call them the audience. The moment that all eyes witness the first movement of a body onstage would be a singular moment of the here-now that Derrida and also Jean-Luc Nancy write about. The singularity is made up of different people, different histories,

and different perspectives all experiencing the performance in the here-now. For example, the term “audience” is too often accepted in performance studies discourse not as a singularity, but as an ontological category. Analyzing the audience ontologically limits potential for new forms of critique to emerge because the audience becomes homogenous. Difference is eliminated.

For Nancy it is the togetherness of different singulars that makes up singularity “itself.” Singularities are assembled insofar as they produce space between them; they are linked only as far as they are not unified (33). Derrida uses the here-now as a singularity of experience which illustrates the spacing as “the passage of this time of the present [which] comes from the future to go toward the past, toward the going of the gone” (Derrida *Specters*, 24). By using the here-now, Derrida connects the moment of lived experience to both the past and the future simultaneously, complicating any sense of an essence of the present. In a singularity of the here-now there is only difference that draws from traces of the past and future. The here-now draws from the past because it contains traces (marks and erasures) in its iterations. It also draws from the future, according to Derrida, because it is in the future that the behavior of individuals living in the here-now will come to be judged. In order to ethically treat the other, subjects must live for future generations. For Derrida, the heterogeneous nature of the “now” constantly opens things up and lets itself be opened by the very disjunction of that which remains to come, from the past and future, singularly from the other (33). Put another way, the temporal disjunction of the ghost becomes both repetition and first time, since the ghost always begins by coming back. As the ghost reappears, it appears to us for the first time but has already engaged in a repetition by coming back one more time. The repetition of the ghost is the repetition of performativity. Derrida goes further to describe the performativity of the ghost saying that “the experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into frequency: number (more than one), insistence, rhythm

(wave, cycles, and periods)” (107). For Derrida, the process of repetition and iteration are important when engaging the ghost. The importance lies in how the ghost is asking us to experience life, not in what it is saying itself.

Because the ghost always begins by coming back, the responsibility of the haunted subject to wait for the ghost. As stated before, the ghost is the closest manifestation to a figure of the other. Because we cannot control its comings and goings, we must not seek to appropriate the ghost, or the other, by conjuring it into existence. By trying to control the coming of the ghost, one assumes dominion over the ghost, and consequently the form that the ghost might take. According to Derrida, ethical treatment of the other depends on allowing the other to take whatever form they please in order to allow the possibility of difference(s) to manifest. The ethical thing to do is to allow the other, or ghost, to manifest by waiting for its arrival, openly and without expectation. In practical terms, then, we might stage multiple iterations of the other rather than offer a unified representation. In addition, we should be open to the myriad of unanticipated others who might make themselves manifest. Derrida positions this absolute law of hospitality as the law of justice and responsibility to the other. One must always remain open to “what is coming, that is, to the event that cannot be awaited *as such*, or recognized in advance therefore, to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or him for whom one must leave an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this is the very place of spectrality” (65). Of course, true hospitality is impossible. However, an individual concerned with living hospitably will attempt to do so. Ghosts are always out there waiting to (re)appear. The task then is to remain “open, waiting for the event as justice, this hospitality is absolute only if it keeps watch over its own universality” (168). Another way of looking at hospitality is by looking at the moment a performance starts. Derridian ethics demand that in order for justice to emerge, the audience and

performers must engage each other openly and without expectation, in the here-now of the performance. Experience of the other, as other, must happen if a performance is to be ethical, according to Derrida. In such a case, the audience would need to allow the performance to dictate their experience by remaining open, and not allowing interpretation or preconceived ontological ideas about performance stand in their way. Similarly, the performers must allow the audience to be other by not constructing the performance for any particular audience out of respect for the potential difference(s) of the audience as a singularity.

I have named the ghost, temporality, and an ethics of hospitality as the main characteristics of haunting. Taken together, they create a new mode of experiencing performance. They loosely form a hauntology rather than an ontology. Within this hauntological frame “each time it is the event itself, a first time and a last time. Altogether other” (10). Put simply, Derrida says that hauntology supplants ontology as a mode of experiencing life. Each event should be approached as a singular event, repeating again for the first time in its performativity. Concern for the other dictates that the event must also be experienced out of a concern for future generations of others. By using hauntology as an epistemology and even quasi-methodology of performance, a logic emerges that “points toward a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic . . . (63). I embrace the logic of the ghost in order to find a more productive, open-ended, and experiential mode of research and practice in performance and performance studies.

### **Deleuze, Process, and Experimentation**

The thinking of Gilles Deleuze also allows a cultivation of differential criticism for performance practice and theory. Alone and sometimes along with Felix Guattari, Deleuze has explored such varying themes as capitalism, schizophrenia, ontology, the experience of being,

politics, and art. His writings are experimental, libratory, complex, and invigorating. The most important aspects of his thought for the purpose of this study are his writings on the examination and explanation of difference as a process of becoming, rather than a representation of a being or object. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze provides a philosophy for thinking and experiencing difference outside of the structure of thought as a representation of truth. One of the more important factors in considering difference for Deleuze is by analyzing differential relations—relationships between sets of difference. He insists that one thinks difference through a consideration of the intensive properties of processes—the properties that are experimented with in the process of becoming something—and that those properties should be held in relation to other intensive properties which in turn form a differential relationship. For example, a piece of blown glass could be compared to a plastic water bottle in terms of its classification; this is a bottle, that is glass. However Deleuze warns that this is not a good conception of difference because one remains stuck at the level of the bottle or glass as a product with an essence—this is what a bottle looks like, this is what glass *should* look like. According to such a logic, the identity of the glass or bottle as a set of characteristics of what the glass *should* look like, creates an essential quality of “glassness” that all other forms of glass *must* adhere to. Deleuze contrasts representation (as a concept that eliminates difference) to the Idea (as a concept that cultivates difference) when articulating his philosophy of difference. He states:

with representation, concepts are like possibilities, but the subject of representation still determines the object as really conforming to the concept, as an essence. That is why representation as a whole is the element of knowledge which is realized by the recollection of the thought object and its recognition by a thinking subject. The Idea makes virtue of quite different characteristics. The virtuality of the Idea has nothing to do with possibility. (*Difference and Repetition* 191).

Put another way, Deleuze moves away from using representation in the form of thought-knowledge to determine the essence of an object or subject. Instead he uses the Idea as a way of articulating the structure of becomings. I understand Deleuze's articulation of the Idea to be a problem or concept one wishes to explore. The potential ways or methods to answer the question are inexhaustible. Deleuze terms the realm of the Idea as the virtual, which is different than the realm of representation in thought. In representation differences can only manifest as possibilities, but possibilities are conditioned within a limited field of concepts and essences—there are a set number of possible forms that a product can take according to its essence. He opposes representation to the Idea by naming the realm of the Idea the virtual—a multiplicity of multiplicities comprising a differential field of potential, not possibility. He states that the virtual and the possible are “further distinguished by the fact that one refers to the form of identity in the concept, whereas the other designates a pure multiplicity in the Idea which radically excludes the identical as a prior condition” (211). Put another way, Deleuze considers the possible a closed system of choices that ends with identity as the ultimate basis from which the choices are considered against. On the other hand, the virtual is a constantly flowing set of multiple and open-ended paths which do not use prior identities or expectations of the same as constitutive considerations.

Terms such as *the virtual*, *the actual*, *the Idea* and *multiplicity* are utilized in very specific ways by Deleuze and must be examined more closely in order to understand their specificity. An Idea is a problem to be solved, but Deleuze asserts that the problem is forever unsolvable; the task therefore is to *continually experiment* with difference in order to offer potential<sup>11</sup> solutions to the problem as Idea. Technically speaking, Deleuze defines<sup>12</sup> the idea as “an n-dimensional, continuous, defined multiplicity” (182). He goes on to define *dimensions* as the variables or

coordinates of upon which a phenomenon depends, *continuity* as the set of relations between changes in those variables, and *definition* as elements which cannot change unless the multiplicity changes its order and metric (182-183). Put another way, the multiplicity as Idea is a phenomenon that is immanent in nature, yet cannot be located or defined as/at a single point within it. The multiplicity continually shifts as the relations between sets of points contained within it shift and change. As the sets of relations change, the multiplicity also changes thereby reciprocally conditioning those relations toward further change. James Williams describes the three conditions of a continuous multiplicity:

- 1) it must not be possible to fix the sensible form, the conceptual signification, or the function of the elements of the multiplicity. In other words, the multiplicity is not one of identifiable forms, concepts, or functions.
- 2) However, the elements must be determined but only through their reciprocal relations . . .
- 3) A particular multiplicity or set of such reciprocal relations must become actual in diverse spatio-temporal relations.<sup>13</sup> The elements of that multiplicity must be actually incarnated in varying terms and forms. (146)

In the first condition Williams describes how the realm of the multiplicity rests outside the realm of sensible form. Specifically, one cannot use the identity of a particular form or its visible properties in order to sense or identify the form as an object with a discrete essence. There are always properties of the form or object that lie outside the realm of the sensible. For example, when one goes to see a performance the countless hours of rehearsal and work put into the performance are not explicitly sensible—the audience cannot actually see the work of the rehearsals in the product of the performance.

In the second condition Williams states that the elements conditioned by and simultaneously conditioning the multiplicity can only be determined through infinite sets of reciprocal relations. These differential relations are the relations between linked rates of change within the elements of the multiplicity. In mathematical terms such a linked rate of change

would look something like “as  $x$  increases in such a way,  $y$  decreases in such a way.” In performance terms, one example of such linked rates of change is stylized body movement. As a performer, if I wanted to walk in extreme slow motion across the stage, dropping to my knees every twenty steps, my body would enact a series of linked differential relations that continually produce the effect of walking in slow motion. The variables of balance, pressure of flexing musculature, and speed are experimented with in multiple configurations in order to produce the slow-motion walk. By continually adjusting certain aspects of how fast I walk, with the amount of pressure exerted by my leg muscles, I produce a certain way of walking in slow-motion. By changing any of the variables slightly, a new form of walking in slow motion emerges that might not look any different than the way I was walking before, but at its core is wholly different because of the difference in the variables constituting its production. The overall rate of change is the relationship between the increasing  $x$  and the decreasing  $y$ . One cannot only think of  $x$  or  $y$  alone; the relation is a linked rate of change between two or more elements.

In the third condition of the multiplicity Williams describes the necessity of the relations to become actualized in diverse spatio-temporal relations. As linked rates of change between elements vary depending on their conditions, they become actualized in the context of a specific spatio-temporal relationship. At certain times the conditions of the multiplicity come together in such a way as to institute a dynamic change within the state of the multiplicity in the actual—when the potential conditions of water as a multiplicity reach the singular point when the properties of the water move from a liquid to a solid as it freezes. As complex as these conditions are, Williams condenses them by saying that the multiplicity therefore is a structure of elements defined as “things in continuous variation resistant to identification; relations between those elements; relations between those relations and actual relations; and relations between the

elements and actual forms and terms” (146). According to such logic, one cannot judge a product based solely on the identifiable characteristics one sees. A discussion of the unseen elements at work in the construction of the product, the relationship between those elements, and the relationship between what those elemental relationships actually produce needs to take place as well. In terms of performance criticism, one cannot use only the identifiable properties of the performance that emerge in front of an audience as the sole critical factor; she should also discuss the relationship between what processes went into the performance (that the audience does not necessarily see) and what was actually performed. Such a discussion is difficult to accomplish because of the limits placed on an audience due to access; however, I offer up potential ways of exploring that criticism in the following three chapters.

Deleuze provides a three-fold structure of the modes of production between elemental relations—the virtual, the intensive, and the actual. The realm of the Idea or multiplicity is the realm that Deleuze terms the virtual. Deleuze begins by claiming that the virtual “is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*” (208). The virtual is a field of relations that are real, but not actualized; the virtual is not sensible to the subject whereas the actual is. The virtual is a differential field containing elements, differences between elements, relations, and singularities. It is a multiplicity of the aforementioned properties that have the potential to become actualized as sensible objects in the world. In order for something to become actualized it must move from the virtual through the intensive zone and into the actual. The intensive zone is a buffer between the virtual and the actual. Something happens in the virtual as patterns of change link up with each other and move toward the actual through the intensive zone. For example, the Idea could take the form of the problem “how might we drink water?” This Idea occupies the virtual realm of potential solutions comprised by an unlimited set

of differential relations. In beginning to consider potential solutions to the problem, I experiment with different factors in the intensive zone. I combine, subtract, alter, or change different intensive properties to produce a satisfactory drinking apparatus, in this case, until a singular point is reached when one potential solution moves from the intensive zone and is actualized. Intensive properties are those types of properties “which cannot be divided without a change in kind” (DeLanda 27) to the overall state of the system. When divided, these intensive properties such as temperature or pressure also induce a change to the state of the system that they comprise. For example, when you reduce the temperature of water it changes from water to ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In the example of the problem “how might we drink water?” one potential solution could be to produce a plastic bottle. There is a singular point at which pressure, temperature, and time combine in order for the elements comprising plastic to melt, for materials to fuse and be molded, thereby forming the plastic water bottle. The water bottle is actualized as a plastic water bottle with difference *the most important element of its structure*. Deleuze states that “the actualization of the virtual . . . always takes place by difference, divergence or differentiation” (212). Experimenting with different properties and differential relations between different properties causes a divergence at a point of singularity taking the unique form of a plastic water bottle in the actual. But if you were to move back into the intensive zone and experiment with the intensive properties differently, what Deleuze terms “vice-diction,” by reducing the amount of heat or increasing the pressure used during production, then you would have a radically different actualization in which there might not be a plastic water bottle at all; the product might be something resembling an ashtray made in the fourth grade for Mother’s Day. Deleuze goes to great lengths to remind his readers that while “it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders solutions . . . these do not resemble the

conditions of the problem” (212). The conditions do not resemble the conditioned. Each product is unique and an actualized multiplicity of *how one experiments* with the differential relations and intensive processes.

Applied to performance and critical processes, the movement from the actual back into the intensive through vice-diction is incredibly useful. I read the instruction and notes that a director gives her performers as a prime example of the process of vice-diction. As a performer, when I actualize my blocking through a host of unseen relationships (how I move my body, say my lines, or choose silence or stillness), a certain performance product is produced as “the performer executing his blocking.” When the director gives notes to me, I am required to identify the way I have been moving or speaking up until that point, experiment with changing certain variables of the performance, and then actualize or produce different movements or speech patterns. During this process I travel from the actual (the produced movements I am receiving the notes about), into the intensive (the place of experimenting with my movement producing changes or alterations), and back into the actual (performing new movements according to the method of experimentation). Of course, the director is usually looking for an identifiable result from her performers. However, the process through which the performers achieve the results is the focus of this study; oftentimes the director also changes what she is looking for with the performer as she adjusts her process of performing.

There are social products and processes as well as thermodynamic ones. The theory outlined above can be applied to an analysis of social relations and properties as well as physical ones. Take love for example. In a relationship between two different people, people who have different thoughts, feelings, desires, and emotions moving through them, there comes a singular point at which all of these elements combine to form love between the two individuals. In this

example the virtual realm would be the linked changes happening within the thoughts, feelings, desires, and emotions within the individuals. At a certain point, these changes link up and move into the intensive zone as the individuals experiment with and adjust different intensities of their feelings toward each other until their love becomes actualized as what they understand as “love.”<sup>14</sup> What love actually means for the two in the relationship will necessarily change and evolve into new understandings as the process continues throughout their relationship. Love never really settles into an easily identifiable essence.

The actual then is the realm of objects as sensible products in the world. By terming it the actual Deleuze links the importance of process to the object produced. This is the key for Deleuze. One cannot start at the level of the object without risking reducing the object to its essence and using that essence as its determining characteristic. This brings back the problems of identity and representation I outlined above. But by concentrating on the object in terms of the process of actualization moving from the virtual through the intensive, Deleuze offers a way of articulating difference as the most important element of the object. Similarly I argue in this study that when talking about or critiquing performance as an object we must move toward a discussion of that performance not in terms of its identity as the essence of the performance, but rather discuss the process of experimentation with the intensive properties of that performance that led to its production. Deleuze reminds us in *Difference and Repetition* to not designate products or objects in terms of an essence associated to those products. In such a case, we are only analyzing the object according to its identity and when one starts at the level of identity difference automatically is only examined in relation to the defining essence of the product. Difference can only go so far before butting up against the essence of the object or product. Above and beyond that essence there can be no difference, because the essence theoretically

would be the perfect form of that object. Rather than begin with the essence of the products themselves, Deleuze examines products in terms of the differential relations between variables in the mode of production of an object.

Deleuze concentrates on three main elements of the realm of Ideas as a field of difference and how products are formed from it—what he terms actualization: differential elements, relations, and singularities. First, there are differential elements of matter composing an inexhaustible set of potential matter for relationships to develop between elements. These elements are defined over and against each other insofar as each element conditions the other element while simultaneously relying on the other element for its own existence as such. He uses the term potential rather than possible as a demarcation of the unlimited scope of the field of difference, or the virtual. According to Deleuze, the possible is a way of thinking where the Real is projected back into the past before it is formed intimating that there is an essence to be achieved somewhere down the road of the possible. In the possible there is the goal of a perfected essence to be attained. Conversely the potential is undetermined and non-exhaustive indicating that you do not know where you are going to arrive until you get there. And even once you are there, it is only one of an infinite number of places you could have arrived based on the differential relations between the variables leading up to the moment of arrival. Put another way, if you cut the speed with which you travel in half, you would arrive in a whole different time and occupy a whole different space than if you doubled the speed of your walk.

The second element of the differential field is the differential relations between linked rates of change between intensive properties or variables. Deleuze cites Salomon Maimon in explaining that “a particular object is the result of the particular rule of its production or the mode of its differential, and the relations between different objects result from the relations

between their differentials” (174). Differential relations are linked relationships between groups of different properties. An example of this might be “as heat and time increase, pressure and velocity decrease.” These relationships constantly vary via experimentation with their variables; by applying more pressure all of the relationships and variables will alter. When experimenting with these variables it is important to remember that differential relations concern qualitative differences and not quantitative ones. You experiment with differences in how and what you do, rather than how many of one or the other. Put another way, if a performer is told to walk at half the speed they are currently walking, she has to adjust the quality of her tempo by adjusting a host of variables in the way she is walking. She cannot simply say that she will perform the half-speed walk; she needs to be able to experiment with the qualities of the way she is walking in order to enact an overall change in the walking itself.

The third element is the singularity. Deleuze terms a singularity as the turning point in the relationship between differentials which causes a distinctive shift in the properties or character of the structure. A good example of this would be the boiling or freezing point of water—the point at which variations in temperature cause the atomic structure of water to freeze or boil thereby causing a dramatic change of its state. The continual shift in the relationship between these three elements accounts for the production of objects or products to be understood as the result of a process fully saturated with difference(s), rather than on the level of the essence of the object. The object then is not understood in the more traditional ontological terms of *being*, but as a continual *becoming* that emerges out of a philosophy of difference.

To think in everyday terms about complex Deleuzian theory and to be able to apply the underlying themes behind such theory to performance practice, theory, and criticism is useful. Quite simply if we use the theory of the Idea as a multiplicity we can move beyond the explicit

properties of a performance that we sense as an object with our eyes or ears and engage the performance as a set of relations between a host of elements beyond the identity of the performance. Put another way, performance is more than a set of identifiable characteristics or subject/object relationships that we perceive in the act of performance itself. Instead performance practice and criticism becomes a continual process of “becoming performance” or “becoming critic” instead of practicing or critiquing performance as something that in its finality has already become. The fact that there is an infinite set of relations that necessarily extend beyond our sensible perception within performance treated as a multiplicity or an Idea, can be accounted for in a more satisfactory way in such a differential account as Deleuze’s without treating performance as simply ineffable or liminal. Treating performance as a multiplicity of differential relations allows for a critic interested in difference to cultivate a vocabulary for talking about and practicing performance using process(es) of/as experimentation rather than identity and representation as the basis for criticism. I argue that accounting for performance in Deleuzian terms is more satisfying because it restores process to performance without a set goal or identifiable essence for that process to achieve. By focusing on performance as a continual process of becoming, experimenting with differential relations between elements and conditions, and moving beyond that which we perceive through our senses, performance criticism and practice moves into exciting territory of simultaneously thinking about performance with a difference and using difference as a means of articulating performance criticism and practice.

Both Derrida and Deleuze offer vocabularies of differential philosophy and theory which may be applied to performance practice and criticism. As a Derridian, I focus on performance as a haunted and haunting phenomenon. Thus, as a critic I must allow the ghost in whatever form it takes to continually haunt me in the here-now via its repeated coming and going. Traces of the

past in the form of the ghost inform my understanding of being haunted in the here-now as I prepare and reorient myself to both the experience of the future and future experiences. I work to never be trapped solely in the present; I am constantly aware of movement away from and toward. Allowing for the performativity of performance to emerge and breathe in such a way forces me to constantly remain open to potential forms and experiences of performance because of difference—the difference in the repetition of the ghost or trace. Put simply, under such an epistemology I cannot ethically shut the door on potential forms or manifestations of performance. Again I am not advocating a stance that allows for all things to be considered performance or criticism, but I argue for performance practice and criticism that opens up onto the conditions of the experience of a particular and contextualized experience of performance. At the most general level, I believe it is unethical to judge a performance in the here-now based on a previous understanding or experience of what one thinks a performance should look like. I want to be surprised and challenged at the same time as being entertained. Similarly I believe that judging a performance based on certain “necessary criteria” or what the performance lacks, rather than engaging the elements that are presented via the performance is not a productive form of criticism in terms of increasing the productive capacity of criticism. This counter-productive criticism creates critics and practitioners who practice without truly being haunted by the ghosts of/in the experience of the performance in the here-now. As a result, weak criticism is offered uninterested in moving forward toward the future, but forever remaining stuck in the past.

As a Deleuzian, I argue for a performance practice and criticism that analyzes performance as a process of becoming rather than a product emanating an essence as the object or subject of performance. In order to focus on performance in such a way requires me to focus on performance as a series of experimentations with difference and differential relations in the

production process of the performance itself. How and what were the adjustments, decisions, and factors utilized as potentialities of the performance and actualized in such a way as to produce the particular form of the performance? Such a question produces an analysis that treats performance not as an object that is produced according to set rules of production, but as an experimental process of criticism concerned with performance as a process of experimentation. Within the exploration and articulation of treating performance process as experimentation there lie vast reservoirs of potential forms for the criticism to emerge from and as. As a scholar invested in difference as the engine driving the phenomenon of experience I argue for a differential criticism that treats performance not as an object of being, but as a continual process of becoming.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Oftentimes between the theorists, terms overlap but mean different things. Therefore I articulate the theorist to the concept as I employ the terms myself (for example Derrida's use of singularity, compared with Deleuze's).

<sup>2</sup> Derrida spent large amounts of time in his career comparing and contrasting the way he viewed difference against that of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Ferdinand de Saussure, Levi Strauss, GWF Hegel, and Edmund Husserl. Oftentimes he used the writings of these philosophers against themselves in order to demonstrate the production of difference at play even within the writings of the people who analyze difference differently than Derrida.

<sup>3</sup> I am speaking here of the notion that there is an essential truth or essence of all things that is the demarcation of the being of that thing. In such a model there lies not only the problem of God equating that essence in all things, but also that an object different from the perceived essence of that object somehow falls short in its being. In this line of thought, difference equals deficiency.

<sup>4</sup> I do not mean progress in terms of evolution or becoming better or more advanced. Progression here is literally a progression of difference. Difference progresses on and on, constantly moving into the next difference, constantly producing more difference.

<sup>5</sup> Derrida uses the concept of absence here as the foil to presence, but goes to great lengths to show that just as there is no wholly present essence of the sign, there is no wholly absence of them either. Traces continually slip away from absence in the form of that which we can perceive, sense, articulate, or trace.

<sup>6</sup> Another account of differ<sup>an</sup>ce that Derrida gives is "the name we might give to the 'active' moving discord of different forces, and of different forces, that Nietzsche sets up against the entire system of metaphysical grammar, wherever this system governs culture, philosophy and science" (Derrida, *Margins* 18). Derrida uses this account of differ<sup>an</sup>ce to battle against the privilege of presence within the texts and philosophies of Western metaphysical thought. He considers this privilege to have been forgotten by those who practice it and issues a call to constantly and consistently shake the foundation of Western thought in order to remind those within it. The ontological

difference, the forgotten of metaphysics, has disappeared into a trace of the trace. Erasure then belongs to the structure of the trace. This leads to an inversion of metaphysical concepts—the present becomes a sign of the sign, a trace of the trace functioning within a generalized system of reference. It is a trace and a trace of the erasure of the trace. It is through this play that the text of metaphysics may be comprehended (22-23).

<sup>7</sup> Derrida continually warns against the metaphysical conception of history. This is “the concept of history as the history of meaning . . . the history of meaning developing itself, fulfilling itself” (56). He goes on to say that the metaphysical character of the concept of history is “not only linked to linearity, but to an entire system of implications (teleology, eschatology, elevating, elevating and interiorizing accumulation of meaning, a certain type of traditionality, a certain concept of continuity, of truth, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> Some scholarship on the relationship of haunting and performance already exists. Marvin Carlson’s book *The Haunted Stage* delves into the ways in which the practice of theatre and sometimes the theatre (space) itself is haunted by previous productions, characters, props, etc. However he uses a more traditional view of haunting as a recycling of the past and ignores the productive capacity of the ghost. While we may be haunted by memories, memories are not always ghosts and memory is not necessarily haunting. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer and Joshua Gunn engaged haunting and performance via music in their essay “A Change is Gonna Come: On the Haunting of Music and Whiteness in Performance Studies.” While the essay engages haunting and performance by their use of multiple voices throughout the essay, the authors’ individual positions are not necessarily haunted. Gunn also authored a piece on haunting in his essay “Mourning Speech” in which he analyzes the haunting quality of the voice recordings of victims during the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. He notes that “as its own mournful practice, performance studies is haunted by dualism. Hence a central irony of subjectification is that it comprises a life-long mourning for an unmediated and impossible harmonization. As the work of mourning, then, performance is haunted . . .” (108) While certain aspects of this theory are sound, the event of the here-now of performance is where the work of mourning, the ghosts, and performance all intersect. In this intersection, harmony *as a singularity* emerges and affects experience as the performativity of performance. The work of mourning is productive and performance must be viewed as such, not in terms of melancholia. Care must also be taken to differentiate haunting from other operations in performance studies. There needs to be more of a critical discussion centered on the differences between haunting and the concepts of citationality, intertextuality, intersubjectivity, and the “archive and the repertoire” to qualify haunting as a method of engaging performance studies practice and discourse. While certain aspects of these elements are surely at work within haunting, they are not synonymous and the temptation to conflate them must be resisted.

<sup>9</sup> Derrida’s interpretation of performativity is unorthodox with regards to speech act theory because of his articulation of the difference(s) that accompany the performative as it is uttered. While J.L. Austin wrote that a performative operates such that “to *say* something is to *do* something; or in which *by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something,” (147) Derrida adds a dimension to the performative that through the repetition of the utterance, difference is necessarily contextually infused into the utterance. The act of speech required for an utterance necessitates that the possibility for difference emerges either in the form of the iterability of context (the possibility for minor differences in contexts—of a ritual for example—as they are repeated over time) or in the always already potential infelicity of the utterance itself. In *Limited INC*, Derrida writes that “given that structure of iteration, the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and to its content . . . Above all, essential absence of intending the actuality of utterance, this structural unconsciousness if you like, prohibits any saturation of the context” (18). He goes further to state that “in order for a context to be exhaustibly determinable, in the sense required by Austin, conscious intention would at the very least have to be totally totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others, since it is a determining center of context” (18).

<sup>10</sup> See the section on hospitality and justice.

<sup>11</sup> Solutions should not be confused as correct or perfected answers to the problem, rather they should be considered as one particular solution according to the conditions that the solution finds itself under. The potential solution is then actualized into the real through the movement from the virtual field of difference, the realm of the Idea, through the intensive zone, and into the actual.

<sup>12</sup> Although I claim that Deleuze defines the Idea, his definitions are never final. Much like Derrida, Deleuze uses his language extremely carefully so as not to totalize the potential meanings of a particular concept in one sweeping definition. He sets up difference within his definition to be able to continually adjust and reorient meaning(s) according to expanding or changing contexts of usage.

<sup>13</sup> Spatio-temporal relations, or dynamisms as Deleuze labels them, are basically things that turn into other things. These dynamisms are a massing of different elements and conditions within the virtual that reach a singular moment (usually a limit or a threshold) and then transform into something different through the intensive zone and out into the actual. The classic example is water moving from a liquid to a solid or gas.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that while as technically dense and complicated as this theory of Deleuze's is, and as much of it is based in mathematics and science, the theories are also equally as important and applicable to social relations and processes.

### **Chapter 3: Haunting, History, and the Hiroshima Maidens**

Let me begin by noting that, in saying “let me begin,” I have already misspoke and led you on a little. There is no beginning to this project and I do not foresee any possible end to it either. In some fashion or another it is always with me and not with me, and that, I think, *is* a place to begin. I am haunted. I am haunted by a series of rehearsals and performances that took place in the summer and early fall of 2005 at Louisiana State University. This haunting (or haunting) has, in some form or another, led to this moment in which I write these thoughts.

Here again, however, I have misspoke. The moment of me writing these words, and this moment of you reading them, is not, in any way, shape, or form, a crystallized manifestation of ghostly presence. Ghosts never manifest themselves as either present or a fully embodied presence. They are spirit bodies of a former life that can never become fully embodied in present time. Ghosts are apparitions, specters, silhouettes, demarcations, traces, and mists. Even reflecting on the aforementioned events as haunting me in my project, reinforces the impossibility of the manifestation of a ghost in the present time as wholly constituted and/or fully embodied presence. Even at the moment of the performances of which I speak, the ghosts anticipated this moment now in which I write. No moment of those experiences was fully present to me simply because of the fact that traces of those experiences shot forward in time to this present moment without my involvement at all. In turn, the ghosts do not fully manifest now either. It is an ongoing process. As the ghosts anticipated my future haunting, they could not have been fully present in the moment of haunting because then there would be no leftover, no remainder, no traces left to haunt. Put another way, I am interested in haunting as a “form of social figuration that treats as a major problem the reduction of individuals ‘to a mere sequence of instantaneous experiences which leave no trace, or rather whose trace is hated as irrational,

superfluous and overtaken”” (Gordon 20). And so it goes that Derrida, too, haunts me and this project incessantly. His understanding and working through the concept of hauntology supplants ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither absent nor present, dead or alive (Davis 373).

The ghost defies traditional definitions of being. We cannot sense the ghost as a subject or an identity that resides in understanding as knowledge. As I outlined in Chapter 2, the ghost is the closest figure to that of the other because it is a body without flesh. We perceive the body of the ghost, but its flesh exceeds our senses and our understanding. Similarly, we perceive the other but cannot locate the other in stable identity for fear of eliminating possible forms the other may take. This alterity is the place of responsibility from which we inherit the law, the absolute law of hospitality as justice to the other.

As stated before, the ghost is the closest manifestation to a figure of the other. Because we cannot control its comings and goings, we must not seek to appropriate the ghost, or the other, by conjuring it into existence. By trying to control the coming of the ghost, one assumes dominion over the ghost, and consequently the form that the ghost might take. Ethical treatment of the other allows the other to take whatever form they please in order to allow the possibility of difference(s) to manifest. The ethical thing to do is to allow the other, or ghost, to manifest by waiting for its arrival, openly and without expectation. And so it goes.

### **Historical Rehearsals: Researching an Idea**

In the summer of 2005 I led a performance process that culminated with a series of public performances in the HopKins Black Box theatre at LSU in the late fall entitled *The Maidens*. The performance took as its centralizing theme the various histories surrounding the Hiroshima Maidens, a group of women who had all suffered varying degrees of physical injury and trauma

from the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and were brought over to the United States in the early 1950's to receive radical plastic surgery in hopes of restoring "some sense of normalcy" to their lives.<sup>15</sup> The performance process began with this historical sketch, and during rehearsals the trajectory of the company took two paths: (1) individual research that took each performer on her own journey through a network of histories, coincidental connections, erasures, and excavations, and (2) physical training combining elements of Viewpoints, Suzuki training, and energy work a la Eugenio Barba. I focus first on the initial part of the research process which was led by the performers and, at least at first, unimpeded by my historical preconceptions.

*The Maidens* began as a means of exploring the subject of the Hiroshima Maidens using a genealogical method akin to the one used by Michel Foucault in his writings on discipline, power, sexuality, and the self. Fresh out of a seminar designed to give students alternative ways of thinking about history, historicity, and performance, I expressed my desire for a "genealogical account of the Hiroshima Maidens through research and performance" to the actors I cast for the production. As a result we spent a great deal of time talking about what "genealogical account" might mean, and everyone had diverse ideas and approaches that they were excited to put into experimental practice.

Starting a project concerned with such a demanding and rigorous methodology as genealogy is intimidating, liberating, and dangerous. I remember floating through those first few sentences describing the process I envisioned to my performers, words like sand pouring out of my mouth, caught in the undertow of the unknown and the future-to-come.<sup>16</sup> By framing the work this way, I had already shifted the course of events of our performance process from being primarily concerned with talking to the ghost(s) of the Hiroshima Maidens to an active

conversation with the ghost(s) of *The Maidens*. Of course I realized this shift much later. In turn, the current investigation into the process of *The Maidens* is actively producing singular lines of flight away from what I thought we were *doing* with our show, toward my own as-yet-unknown account of *how* our performance emerged.

I begin again with an essay read long before the production. Its pages are worn and scrawled upon; the spine of the book in which it is housed is broken and cracked. Someone has read this book before, but I bought it used so it might not have been me. I can't remember doing it. In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault writes that the genealogist "must be able to recognize the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats—the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities" (80). He outlines his overall project saying: "I don't try to universalize what I say; conversely, what I don't say isn't meant to be thereby disqualified as being of no importance. My work takes place between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots" (*Question of Method* 223). Thereby, Foucault provides a basis for his work to be apprehended, or at least for him to apprehend his own work, and avoids suggesting that he works according to any schema or pre-determinable methodology (237). As a result, Foucault articulates his projects with a great deal of qualification in order to make clear that while he may be the historian originating a certain historical or genealogical project, "origin" is a false term leading a great many down problematic and unproductive paths. Thus, I am not interested in the origin(s) of *The Maidens*. I am not interested in asking what *The Maidens* was. However, I am interested in what conditions allowed *The Maidens* to emerge, and to account for difference, change, and experimentation in both the process of *The Maidens* and my criticism of that process. Let me begin again, somewhere in the middle of things.

A historian concerned with operating genealogically or using genealogical methodologies of historical exploration courts madness. In a certain sense, genealogy is the maddening of History.<sup>17</sup> According to Foucault, genealogy must

record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek to them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they are engaged in different roles. (Nietzsche 76)

Foucault uses genealogy to find singular events within the social practices and technologies of systems that take the corporeal body as the site of their manifestation(s). Foucault reads these singular events as instituting change in the practices or technologies that alter the way in which society operates. He then analyzes the capture and subsequent use of that practice or technology by another system. The singular point is the point at which there is a radical change in the physical system whereby the practice is captured by another system. The point at which the practices of systems intensify and meet at specific periods in time and their histories, thereby radically changing each other within their encounter, are called singularities. For example, Foucault uses this genealogical form of historical investigation in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. By analyzing multiple historical conditions and events of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century European societies, he provides an argument for the movement of power from the sovereign model concerned with “punishment,” toward a more “disciplinary” oriented model of power. The web of histories and practices in *Discipline and Punish* are intricately woven together in an exhaustive historical excavation enacted by Foucault. More often than not, the historical events that Foucault focuses on in his genealogical research are events that confuse the conception of history as History—he uses lapses in memory, uniqueness, and dismissed moments as the basis of the connections he makes between discipline and punishment. For

example, the prison did not originate out of a desire on the part of society to punish prisoners. Foucault complicates that narrative by providing an account of the emergence of disciplinary practices and their effects on the development of prisons in lieu of prisons equaling punishment. As a result Foucault historicizes History which descends into the madness of non-origins. Initially, I was interested in finding singular points of historical transmission for our performance in order to explore other potential sites of history that allowed for an understanding of the Hiroshima Maidens to emerge and evolve. By looking at historical events and practices besides those *explicitly* concerning the Hiroshima Maidens, the company of performers opened up the potential for historicizing history through our performance of more *unseen* or *implicit* events.

The rehearsal process began from the same brief historical sketch I outlined earlier, that of the Hiroshima Maidens as an object of study. We then slowly spiraled out from that into areas as diverse as face transplants, the bible, 50's game-show culture, museums, and horticulture to name a few. Genealogically, the research progressed around an idea of the Hiroshima Maidens as historical object out onto a more dispersed and networked understanding of various historical traces which functioned to inform various events both leading up to the point at which the atomic bomb exploded in Hiroshima and spiraling out from that August day in 1945. The cast of six let their curiosities and the unknown inform their research and investigation and collected an immense amount of material over the course of a few months which I edited down into a performance script. I was challenged in terms of editing the information; making a conscious effort not to privilege any particular piece of research over another proved difficult and arduous.

Once all of these texts were assembled into a kind of collage or pastiche, quite a bit of breathing room existed between the texts, histories, and bodies represented via the performance. This room or space allowed for ghosts to haunt the performers, the audience, and history itself.

What I slowly came to realize was that the traces of the events that informed our understanding of the Hiroshima Maidens as a historical truth, and which continued to haunt the history of the Hiroshima Maidens through our performance, manifested themselves through bodies—the body of research that the cast members assembled, the bodies of the performers, and the bodies of the audience members watching the performance. As such, these bodies were haunted bodies. The ghost is a trace of the (1) *past* in its conjuring of historical texts and contexts, (2) *present* in its seething absence/presence, and (3) *future* in its anticipation of a space for critique. Each of these temporal traces are ultimately impossible to fully embody, but they continually haunt history through the very aporia of the ghost's ontology. It operates hauntologically; it haunts. I further explain through an argument for haunting in performance studies.

Haunting as an epistemology has much potential for performance studies as a discipline precisely because it centers around and complicates notions of embodiment for both the performer and critic. One would be ridiculous to assume that a particular history becomes fully embodied in the performer's body during a performance, or that we, as performers, have direct access to a fully embodied understanding of a history simply by performing. I do think that when we perform, history runs through us—performers and audience members—and us through it. Effectively, we produce history as history produces us and our performance of it. Similarly, haunting allows the critic to become a co-participant in the performance by engaging the ghosts of the performance and the ghosts of their own past, to create something new for the future. An ethics of performance viewed in this particular light demands that the performers and audience members open themselves up to the traces, the haunting, and the ghost. Not so some form of objective knowledge can be produced, but rather that a localized, contingent, contextualized, and situated knowledge may be produced not only about the various histories at work within our

production of the performance, but also our roles in the production of those histories. The ghosts and those who reckon with them come together to form what Avery Gordon calls a sensuous knowledge about the world in which we dwell.

We begin with 7 people: (1) Wendy Armington, (2) Laura Bergeron, (3) Roger Pippin Jr., (4) Benjamin Powell, (5) Danielle Sears, (6) Gretchen Rhodes Stein, and (7) Rebecca Walker. Casual conversations about doing something, some sort of collaborative project, turned into agreements between a group of people sharing the unique sense of excitement about an unwritten future performance. During our first meeting we talked about the project in a generalized manner—the possible subject matter of the performance, my philosophy about collaboration and physical training, the fact that I had no preconceptions or even ideas about what the final product would look like, and most importantly, that our project would first and foremost be an experiment—and decided to start rehearsals the following week. The first task I set down for the company was to do some preliminary research on the Hiroshima Maidens and discover something new, something they did not individually know, and to bring that something to our first rehearsal.

In her 2006 essay “Performing History: A Politics of Location,” Lisa Merrill gently reminds us that “history, like performance, is both a subject of study and the object or fruits of that study. The doing of history, inquiring into the past, then, is an act which results in ‘histories’ the narratives or stories or performances which are the objects and products of that study” (65). How best to (re)think the relationship between the subject and object of study in both “history” and performance? First and foremost, a complicated relationship exists between the historian and history. Dusty books left in piles in the back of a dark room haunt me and my future plans of making sense of them all. However, I know I will make sense only as far as the

books make incomplete sense or sense incompletely. The traces of history, like the ghost, stare out from the past in order to reappear again, at the most unforeseen times, and share a breath with us in the singular moment of the here-now. The traces do not give us breath and we do not give them life; the moisture of our exhalation mixes with the dust from the stacks of bodies of old books and leaves a residue on our lungs. In short, we are as dependant on the ghost as it is on us to manifest in the here-now.

Haunting is an active co-participation of experience for both the ghost and the subject. The force of the ghost arrives in flashes and unexpected moments of intensity. The power of the past and the future-to-come drives the ghost to call out and be heard and talked with. The past is necessarily incomplete, incomprehensible, and impossible for the subject to fully comprehend. The ghost forces me in the here-now to (re)orient myself to my understanding of history through my making sense of how I come to understand the past. A crucial aspect of this sense-making for the subject arrives in the form of narrative and narrativity in our articulation of historical research and writing. In his article “History, Hermeneutics, and Narrativity,” Thomas Postlewait argues that “the key issue is not whether narrative should be used in historical writing, but, rather, how it contributes—at several levels of articulation and in several modes of representation—to the interpretive process of research and writing” (356). The challenge for the historian using narrative in historical writing is to engage the writing of history not on the level of representation, but by moving from representation—the writing of history itself—back toward the differential field, investigating and experimenting with the multiplicity of differential forces and conditions that allowed for the particular representation to emerge. For the both the critic and the historian concerned with cultivating a philosophy of difference, the use of narrative

becomes a crucial way of investigating, writing, and performing history. Just like history however, the concept of “narrativity” must be unpacked and explored in multiple ways.

If we take “absent” to mean that which is unseen or beyond our perception or comprehension, then Postlewait’s assertion that in historical writing “what is absent is made textually present, but not without transformational consequences,” points toward the use of narrative in historical writing as a means of actualizing potential representations of history in a necessarily incomplete manner. What is absent in the past of the here-now, the events of the past wholly beyond our comprehension, is not made wholly present through our narration of history, rather potential understandings of the historical past, and history itself, emerge through our narration and writing of history. The way that we narrate history is a way of making history, albeit a history that is different from the actual events that took place somewhere in the past. Our narration of history, the story of history that we create in order to understand historical pasts, is contextually situated within the milieu of the historian’s body—historical, social, cultural, economic, temporal, personal, and political. The context in which the historian finds herself directly impact the way in which history gets narrated. These contexts shift from person to person, body to body, depending who is writing a particular history at a particular time. For example, the manner through which I create a narrative about the history of performance art forms in 2008 is very different than the narrative I would have created in 1950. Things have changed. Events have transpired, books written, ideas exchanged, lives have been lived, that changes the context of my understanding of history. Because my understanding of a particular history changes according to the historical context in which I find myself, the way that I write or narrate history also changes. According to Postlewait, historical explanations (narratives) must take up

the dynamic linkage between events—a correlation that explains the processes of historical change, processes that are understood in terms of the actions of human beings (represented variously as individuals, groups, classes, races, nations, or civilizations). The representation of these actions takes the form of some kind of narrative order because the actions are not simply chronological or sequential. They are joined. *In other words, the task of describing and explaining what happened also includes the need to interpret how and why human events occurred.* Narrative provides coherence, a process of emplotment which configures these actions into a meaningful, comprehensible interpretation. (361 emphasis mine)

The way in which we decide to explain how things happen, directly affects our understanding of the events themselves. Della Pollock offers another solution in the rethinking of the function of narrative and narrativity in and of history by “recalling it to historicity, by historicizing the narrative construction of history” (11). She notes that for historian Hayden White, “narrativity is not the same as the histories narrated. It refers to the simultaneous appeal and insufficiency of historical narrative. It describes the ways in which desire for form is expressed in formulation—or what might be called the performance of narrative longing” (12). In such a model, narrativity is the way in which historians sort out the multiple historical events for themselves, and arrange the histories according to their desire for “order” in historical discourse(s).

History writing and historical events slide into a co-participatory relationship under the form of narrativity that Postlewait and Pollock advocate, and defy the naïve desire on the part of some historians to act as if they occupy an objective position above the traces of history so that they can arrange events into a logical linear order of meaning. Simple subject/object binaries break down under scrutiny and provide a place for the writing of history to become “the ultimate historical performance, making events meaningful by talking about them, by investing them with the cultural and political assumptions carried in language itself. What we can or want to call the truth thus becomes problematic” (Pollock 13). History runs through us and our production of it via historical writing. When historical writing shifts to a performance frame, the flow of history

also shifts. By focusing on the bodies of the performer(s) in the performance, the flow of history may shift back to the materiality of the bodies and events of the past. The bodies of the performers carry not only the materiality of the various cultural and political codifications of the here-now, but also the trace(s) of history. These traces, which are both noticed and unnoticed, continually course through the bodies of the performers as they narrate history in the act of performing. If, as performers, we are to open ourselves up to the ghost and wait for its arrival, then we must also understand that in order to be open to the ghost, to the trace(s) of history, we always already exceed ourselves in the “present” in our dependence on history in our performance of it. There are things we do not know. There are parts of ourselves that we do not understand. This loss of comprehension breaks down the notion of history-as-object into an intersubjective relationship—a relationship that depends not on keeping the other separate from the self, but on the other to inform and constitute the self. When we perform, we are ghosting. Our bodies and the bodies of history weave together as the precipitation of “making history go” through the act of performance.

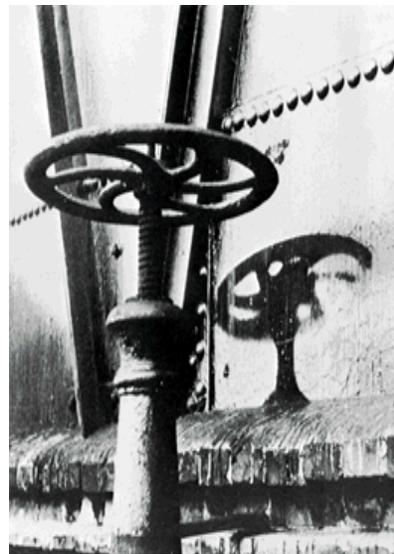
As alluded to above, simple subject/object distinctions do not hold up under the weight of the ghost and of history. No object of history may be represented as “real” or as “truth” in the present. Such a claim falls into the trap of what Pollock calls a “naïvely mimetic approach” (11). This naiveté is located in the compulsion to consider mimesis only in terms of reproducing a representational real<sup>18</sup> in the present from an object of the past. Making the past seem present in this mimetic sense “. . . could in fact secure the pastness, the otherness, of events crucial to understanding and acting in our historical present. It could encourage us to see the objectified events as pitifully and absolutely ‘not us’ rather than (as perhaps Bertold Brecht would recommend) critically ‘not not us’” (11). Securing the past as wholly and completely other,

thereby severing the dependence of the self on the other, reinforces the impossibility of the ghost to manifest with us. When it is put in a tidy box, history becomes all too easily misconstrued as Truth.

During our first rehearsal, members of the company brought in various artifacts that they had discovered in the week or so since we had last spoke. In some form or another, the things that they brought in connected to the story of the Maidens: a photocopied picture of a steel-toned railing running along a cement walkway, scorched in shadows from the bomb blast;



(Figure 1: Research photo)



(Figure 2: Research photo)



(Figure 3: Research photo)

the valve of a factory in Hiroshima with its shadow burnt into the adjacent wall by the bomb blast, forever etched in the memory of space, forever etched on the skin of a building; an empty warehouse dimly lit by sunlight pouring in through various cracks and fissures in the walls, with a ghostly figure dancing in the play between light and dark; a broken timepiece, glass front cracked, hands frozen at the precise moment the bomb went off; the ingredients used to make women's lipstick—ruby red (see figures 1-3). We slowly examined each of these fragments and

others during our meeting to brainstorm and pique other images and associative ideas which, in turn, we would bring to our next meeting(s).

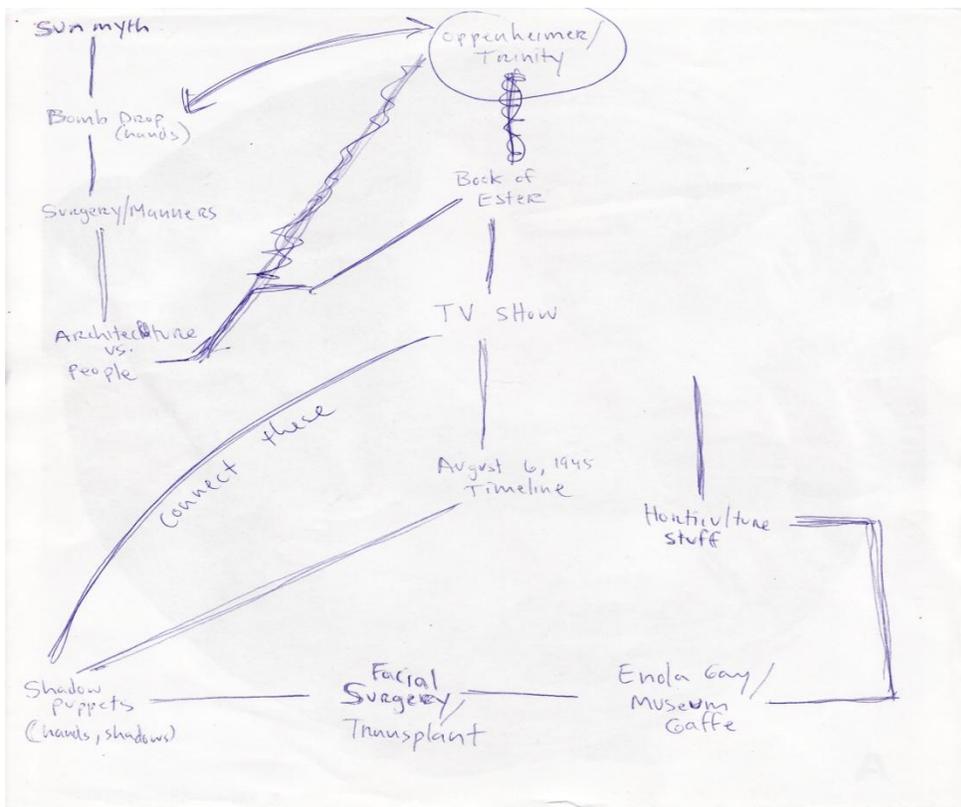
Over the course of a few weeks, a series of associative word-images emerged from the materials that we were gathering. We jotted them down on a chalkboard housed in our rehearsal space. We used it to note, inscribe, erase, and efface the growing list of words and images that resonated with the company as having something to do with the particular history of the Hiroshima Maidens that we had begun narrating. The chalkboard proved to be a provocatively effective means of understanding the historical trace visually—underneath our writing certain words dwelled partially visible as well as the always already erased remains of words written hours, weeks, or years before. No one knew for sure how old the chalkboard was, and no one could have known exactly what had been written there before.

light dark rain fire atom tear flight life sunshine energy face song  
tree memory thunder wind science knife blood river watch lipstick  
surgery Esther image disappear family language Japan ground-zero  
impact mass trinity split cleanse king maiden heal erasure birth tears  
smile museum Enola Gay fission drop August blue sky heat airplane

The list was not exhaustive or static by any means. It remained malleable and over the course of our rehearsal wrote and rewrote our process as much as we wrote and rewrote upon it.

As we wrote and rewrote upon our chalkboard impressions, understandings, and ideas emerged in ghostly script upon the slate of the board itself, and on our disposition of how and what to set down as the generalized<sup>19</sup> structure of our performance—our ideas conjured into ghostly-being, yet never fully formed or made present. Slowly, over the course of a month and a half, one particular solution to the problem of how to do a show about the Hiroshima Maidens emerged in the form of a working script on which we based our performance. During this emergent process of script formation, my role within the company began to shift. I took on the

role of both editor and mapmaker. Out of our research we developed ten sequences for the show. I assembled these ten sequences from the hundreds of different directions that the company felt itself pulled, editing the research into ten general sequences of the various histories we had excavated. I assigned them names based not so much on content, but as a simple means of identifying which sequence came next in the timeline of our performance. The names of the sequences were: The Sun Myth, Bomb Drop, Surgery/Manners, Architecture vs. People, Book of Esther, TV Show, Timeline, Facial Surgery/Transplant, Enola Gay/Smithsonian Museum, and Horticulture. In order to aid the performers in knowing which sequence was which, what the movements of each sequence were, and the overall order of the sequences as a whole, I utilized a diagramming process that resulted in a map of our performance (see figure 4).



(Figure 4: Rehearsal map)

The map not only helped us visualize an overall structure for the performance, but it also isolated particular types or zones of movement that we wanted to enact without saying precisely what these particular movements looked like or exactly how each of the movement phrases should happen. Put another way the map that I assembled allowed us to constantly experiment with the form of our performance without feeling the pressure to adhere to an a priori judgment of how the show should look. Different choices and variables tweaked within the overall structure of technique that we had developed over our training process resulted in different forms of performing and of the performance. The performance was repeatedly made manifest by experimenting with the intensive properties of our training technique—it was not replicated or traced.<sup>20</sup> Diagrams were drawn, maps were made, and on any given day the performance could look very different from the day before; we continually offered up different solutions to the problem of how to construct a show about the Hiroshima Maidens without any hopes of providing a definitive or complete answer.

As I have written elsewhere<sup>21</sup>, diagramming is a process. This process is active and always moves forward, not teleologically, but in a line of flight that is unexpected, diffuse, and beyond human control (Pippin 20). Diagramming allows for the *line of flight*, the *movement of intensities*, the *process* to emerge as both the means and object of analysis. One diagrams a map, not traces it.<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guatarri characterize the map as a rhizome and differentiate between tracing, with its attempt(s) at representation through replication, and the map, with its more open ended and constantly differing nature. They state that “the rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing . . . What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (12). Maps make contact with the real in so far as the multiple pathways in and out of the map lead to real forms in the world. Maps act as a

rhizome because from any middle point within the map a line of movement in and around the territory of the map (the rhizome) can lead to any other point. The map acts as a rhizome while simultaneously becoming part of it. The map is:

open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation . . . A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back “to the same.” (12)

Deleuze and Guattari go to great lengths to ensure that the map and the tracing are not just simply opposed as binary distinctions. According to them, the tracing should and can be placed back upon the map in the form of a massing or thickening of intersections that produce “unifications and totalizations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers and subjective attributions [which] take root” (13). There are places on a map where things are traced or directly copied. These places of tracing often take the form of habits that develop through a host of relations. However the map is not solely a tracing or a product of habit; it is a means of understanding and identifying places of habit and moving through these places in order to chart new territory.

By diagramming a map for the generalized structure of *The Maidens* we effectively engaged difference on both a literal and theoretical level. The literal map we used as a means of orienting ourselves in the midst of our performance process literally provided us with our bearings—what happened in the next sequence, which sequence was which, which movements emerged from/at which point on the map—without dictating the exact form the performance to should take (as in a script functioning as a tracing of the performance). The map also allowed for multiple potential pathways of performing to emerge during the performance process.

As a result, the object of our performance shifted from the set identity of “The Maidens” into an object of movement. The process of movement—bodies moving in space, sequences of movement following sequences of movement, and histories moving through both space and bodies—became the object highlighted. However the process of movement cannot be thought of in a strictly identity-based categorization of “The Maidens.”<sup>23</sup> Deleuze reminds us over and over about the dangers of a certain conception of the “Image of Thought.”<sup>24</sup> What happens to the role of the critic when the main focus of critique shifts from the language of “performance-as-object” to “performance process as movement?” This question becomes increasingly complicated in a critical philosophy of difference because objects and products do not disappear or are jettisoned, rather they are reworked and analyzed through a deliberate and incredibly provocative mode of investigation. In a critical philosophy of difference object(s) and subject(s) are not dismissed out of hand because they are necessary points of reference. However, the challenge of differential critique is to move from the object of performance back into the field of difference from which it emerged and question what processes of movements and intensities led to the creation of a *particular* performance under a *particular* set of circumstances. A genealogy of sorts, differential criticism is a constant (re)investigation into the singular points of capture of molecular processes at work in the performance. This capture of intensive points allows for the molar distinction of “The Maidens” to emerge.<sup>25</sup> Rather than treating “The Maidens” as a totalized and understandable object, a critic using a radical philosophy of difference has to account for the movement of difference and repetition rather than the production of products via replication. For example, each time a performer executes a physical action onstage, a multiplicity of bodily relations combine in order for the movement to be enacted. If, as a performer, I need to walk across the stage in slow motion, my body performs a series of

complex, and wholly undetectable series of actions: muscles contract, weight is shifted from the heel to the balls of the feet, tension is created in the form of balance between the upper body and lower, etc. The molecular elements of completing the action of walking across the stage are undetectable, but incredibly important in training and performing the molar<sup>26</sup> designation of “walking.” When the performer walks across the stage she is not simply replicating the walking action; her body engages a process of negotiating and repeating a multiplicity of differential relationships at work underneath the skin. Instead of analyzing what the walk of the performer looks like, I argue for an exploration into what elements allow for the walk to happen.

Thus far I have sketched a necessarily incomplete diagram of how our project began. As I have demonstrated, we began somewhere in the middle of things, not at the beginning. The performance did not originate with our first sun-soaked meeting on the porch over beers. There are no origins, only repetitions with a difference. I jump now into an exploration of the second variable of our performance process—the extended physical training that we engaged over a three month period leading up to our performance. Similarly my diagram of this process will be fissured and incomplete. The importance of my particular understanding and articulation of the training process is no more or less important than my articulation of the research phase of *The Maidens*. What is important is that the two main variables in the construction of *The Maidens*—research and training—are wholly dependant on and inform each other in my overall critique of our performance process. Lines blur and distinctions break down under the weight of movement as it slows and thickens in connection with the critic machine.

My training as an undergraduate theatre major at the University of Northern Iowa was predominantly focused on different means of using collaborative processes in the creation of performance. Specifically, I developed a particular interest in using different forms of physical

training techniques to generate texts and images for the stage. However, I never developed a strict philosophy of ownership over the techniques and training methods I learned so as to emulate an artist-genius persona in the form of the student attempting to replicate the techniques of the master. Rather I always picked and chose the forms and techniques that particularly resonated with my own aesthetic sensibilities and philosophies about performance. Thomas Richards reminds his readers that Jerzy Grotowski often repeated that “the true apprentice knows how to steal, how to be a ‘good thief’: this demands an active effort from the learner, because he should steal the knowledge trying to conquer the capacity to do” (3). Over the course of my graduate education those selected and/or stolen traces from various artists, theorists, and performers have woven together to form a generalized body of different potential training and staging techniques for me to draw upon from one performance to the next. Subsequently I knew when I started the training process of *The Maidens* that I wanted to draw upon a multiplicity of collaborative, physically engaging, and experimental performance practices in order for unique and challenging images, texts, and bodies to emerge as our performance. Our performance techniques and staging choices would then link up with the theories and techniques of others in diagramming a general map of *The Maidens*. I started in the middle of things and from this middle place we found a place to begin experimenting.

A core of performance practitioners and theorists usually influence my first steps in developing a performance. That core consists of Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, and Anne Bogart. I steal from each one of them every time that I work with performers or perform myself. I have never explicitly trained with any of them in the flesh, but I do feel that I have trained alongside them with my own flesh, my own ideas, and my own additions and subtractions to their techniques and writings on performance. I steal and I experiment. I experiment with

different variables and variations amongst these theories in hopes of approaching a generalized theory of performance for myself. However I do not ever want to remain still inside my philosophy. Even when one is still, there is always movement. The question for me at the beginning of the training phase of our rehearsal process, and for me right now as I write these words, is always how best to actualize the virtual field of differential theories into articulations of performance practice—how do I lead the training and how do I write about my process?

In *Towards a Poor Theatre* Grotowski portrays his early work as a series of experiments and techniques invested in an education of the actor which is “not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism’s resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent” (16). In the training process of *The Maidens*, I concentrated on this main tenant. I wanted to explore various ways of minimizing the time between the impulse in the performer’s bodies and the execution of bodily actions. Rather than having a performer think about what she wanted her body to perform, I pushed her to enact the thinking of her body through the execution of movements. Eugenio Barba also works with his performers to minimize the time between thought and action through his training techniques. Calling the connection between thought and action the “mind-body connection,” Barba aides his performers in harnessing the power of bodily expression as an expression of energy. For Barba, energy is the expression of the minimized time lapse between thought and action. He calls this energy “sats.” He writes that

[In] the instant which precedes the action, when all the necessary force is ready to be released into space but as though suspended and still under control, the performer perceives her/his energy in the form of *sats*, of dynamic preparation. The *sats* is the moment in which the action is thought/acted by the entire organism, which reacts with tensions, even in immobility. (Barba, *The Paper Canoe* 55)

Sats is a singular point of dynamic preparation in the performer's body which is a manifestation of potentiality. In sats movement of the body can shoot out in any direction and take any shape of form in space. Sats is preparation for movement and movement itself. Even when the body is still and engaged in sats there is still movement because energy is always flowing. In a Deleuzian sense, sats renders the body of the performer as virtual ready for a multiplicity of potential movements of the body to emerge in space and time. Barba asserts that "the law of movement of the living organism is amplified by the actor at the pre-expressive level and transformed into one of those stimuli, leaps of energy or micro-vortexes which hold and steer the attention of the spectator sensually and kinesthetically" (Barba, *Deep Order* 260). The audience can track the emergence of sats as the product of the performer's movement(s). The action(s) of the performer are only one actualized product of experimentation within a larger zone of experimentation that Deleuze calls the intensive zone. The audience then sees only one particular manifestation of the experimentation with the intensive properties of the performing bodies' movement(s) in the form of the performance taking place before them. However the unseen is as important as the seen in such a philosophy of radical difference.

In his training techniques, Eugenio Barba helps the performer (re)think their body in terms of the problem or Idea "how might we move?" By using sats and energy as concepts to consistently move from the actualized movements of the body back into the intensive zone of experimentation, Barba's training techniques provides fertile ground for utilizing difference in both practice and critique. In *The Maidens* we focused on these concepts explicitly by engaging repetition and difference in our training processes. Our exploration(s) led to a potential solution of the question "how might we create a performance about the Hiroshima Maidens?" We

engaged our bodies and movements experimentally, rather than as tools to achieve an idealized image of a correct performance or solution to the question as Idea. We experimented.

### **Experimenting With Movement: An Exercise<sup>27</sup>**

We begin by walking on an imaginary grid of lines on the stark black floor of the HopKins Black Box. Imagine a ghostly grid of lines placed the whole length of a large rectangular floor intersected with a perpendicular grid of lines running the width of the floor, hundreds of right angles of potential paths to travel formed by the imaginary lines of an imaginary grid. Stolen from Anne Bogart, the exercise begins by simply walking along the lines of the grid. As you walk along the lines, slowly falling into as natural a pace of traveling as possible, begin to focus on your breathing. Imagine that each breath you take flows from far beneath the earth and travels up into your body through the small portion of your feet that makes contact with the floor. Notice the sensation of your foot as it moves across the floor. Feel each centimeter of your foot as it makes contact with the floor and draw your breath through your feet as they move along the grid. Imagine that with each step your breathing deepens and your focus sharpens. As you walk concentrate on filling up your body with the breath that is pouring in through your feet. It fills up your feet, then your ankles. Imagine that your breath is a color, any color you choose, and as you breathe your body takes on the color of that liquid-breath. The color moves up past your ankles, into your calves, up into your knees. Imagine that each breath you take comes from deep inside the earth, from deep below your feet, and slowly fills up your body. Your breath moves up your thighs and spills into your hips and crotch. As you are walking, slowly fill yourself up until your liquid-breath shoots out of the top of your head like a water fountain. With each step, with each breath, draw breath-energy from the earth beneath your feet and shoot it high up into the sky out of the crown of your head. Remember to breathe.

As you walk, allow the focus of your eyes to soften so that you become aware of nothing in particular, and everything all at the same time. Imagine that you have a string attached at the top of your head and it is slowly pulling your spine up into the sky, and that your legs are the trunks of a tall tall tree with roots shooting deep into the earth. Feel the pull of your spine up into the sky and the push of your legs deep into the earth. Feel the opposition create a place of tension in the center of your body; imagine this oppositional pull is a ball of lead wrapped inside a case of feathers—soft and hard, push and pull, all at the same time. Your body reveals its life to me by means of a myriad of tensions and opposing forces (Barba, *Paper Canoe* 24). And breathe.

20 minutes. Begin to imagine that the same pull of oppositional energy shooting out your head and pulling you down into the earth is pulling your body forward out of your chest and pulling you backwards out of your sacrum. Feel the tension created by these forces in the center of your body, feel the soft and hard energy as a ball of lead wrapped in a case of feathers. Imagine that a tractor beam is pulling you forward along the grid, and at the same time, pulling against your movement forward from your back. Allow your center to become the central point of balance between all of the lines of oppositional tensions pushing and pulling against your bodies. All movements stems from this central place of energized tension. Each step that you take is a giving in to the pull of one oppositional force and a resistance to the opposing line of energy. Every action must begin from the direction opposite to that in which it will be carried out (24). Let your focus soften and deepen, so you become aware of nothing in particular and everything around you all at once. Adjust yourself as you move through space, deepen your breathing, feel the push and pull of your spine into the sky, and your legs deep into the earth—like a tulip reaching toward the sun, and the roots of a tall tall tree shooting deep into the earth. Imagine that as you move along the lines of the grid you are filling up a space with your body

that was empty a moment before. Sense the empty space, feel yourself pulled there by the pull of the tractor beam, fill the space, and then sense and move to the next empty space. If you feel your focus wandering, take a breath, let your eyes soften even more, and simply concentrate on filling up empty space on the grid with each step. Each action contains itself and its opposite. Practice running fast on the outside and slow on the inside. Then switch to slow on the outside and fast on the inside (Bogart & Landau 39). The tensions between forces that are divergent, opposed to one another can distract and you can lose focus. But if we succeed in keeping these forces at bay and discovering the kind of relationship that exists between them—in other words, if we can get them to coexist, interweaving and rearranging them—then we will attain density instead of catastrophe (Barba, *Deep Order* 255). Remember to breathe. Feel the floor beneath your feet. Soften your focus in order to develop awareness of the group and the surrounding space (Bogart & Landau 29).

There is something missing in all of this. Where are the bodies? I am writing a representation of a memory, but I am only remembering memory, a memory of memory itself—a memory of bodily memories as they glide across the imaginary grid on the floor. Time becomes complicated by my criticism. Time is synthesized in two ways—active and passive—through repetition in both my contemplation and critique of our training process. In the passive synthesis of time, repetition unfolds in my mind which is passively awaiting thought to present itself via contemplation. In order to contemplate through thought, I must be presented with something to think. To contemplate “is to draw something from. We must first contemplate something else—the water, or Diana, or the woods—in order to be filled with an image of ourselves” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 74-75). Repetition unfolds as my mind begins contemplating (again) and it quickly unravels as the something to be thought takes hold in my imagination. “There is

something missing in all of this.” In the active synthesis of time, I organize and construct memory as a representation of the present *of* the past—memory is a memory of memories. The past then is “no longer the immediate past of retention, but the reflexive past of representation, of reflected and reproduced particularity . . . In other words, the active synthesis of memory and understanding are superimposed upon and supported by the passive synthesis of the imagination” (71). Difference unfurls between these two syntheses of time. *Difference lies between two repetitions* (76). I contemplate and I remember. I remember and I respond. My body writes your movements as I remember the writing of your bodies. In other words I am not writing the training process of The Maidens as a representative of an object of performance practice, rather I am writing difference into our training process through the repetition of contemplation and memory. I am experimenting with how difference and repetition perform in my criticism, and how my criticism performs difference and repetition. Remember to breathe as you feel your feet come into contact with the floor.

30 minutes. Soft focus is the “physical state in which we allow the eyes to soften and relax so that, rather than looking at one or two things in sharp focus, they can now take in many. By taking pressure off the eyes to be the dominant and primary information gatherer, the whole body starts to listen and gather information in new and more sensitized ways” (Bogart & Landau 31). We’ve been working for about 30 minutes now, and as I speak to you, do not forget to breathe and deepen your soft focus. As you fill up space on the grid I want you to begin exploring different tempos in your movement through the grid. Begin to add switches of tempo at your own will. Simply move across the grid in varying patterns and at varying tempos—notice if there are various tempos that you resist or stay away from, and explore them (40). And just fill empty space. See if you can slow your movement down to almost complete stillness and

yet still be moving forward. “Movement stop, inside no stop” (Barba, *The Paper Canoe* 58).

Make any adjustments necessary to keep the balance between the opposing forces and tensions in your body. With each breath continually shift and deepen your awareness of the way that your bodies are moving through space. Continually shift the flow of your energies to allow yourself to balance out each movement with another oppositional movement. Feel the breath energy flow through you. If you find yourself moving at one particular tempo for an extended period of time, acknowledge it, and switch to a different tempo. Slow it down even more, or speed up until you cannot move any faster. How does this affect the way that you move through space? And breathe. Still exploring tempo, and still filling empty space on the grid, I want you to begin exploring the kinesthetic response to the other bodies on the grid. Kinesthetic response is your spontaneous physical reaction to movement outside yourself. Put your focus on other bodies in the space, and let your stops and starts be determined by them (Bogart & Landau 42). How does one person walking past you alter the way in which you are moving through space? Notice the push and pull of energy ribboning off of each person as they walk past you and integrate their energy into your own. How do your movements change? Remember to breathe. Slowly over the course of your walk along the grid, I want you to come to a point of stillness on the grid *as a group*. It can take ten minutes or ten seconds, but I want you all to find a moment of stillness on the grid together, fill space with your bodies for however long that moment lasts, and then as a group, begin walking along the grid again. Don't force the stillness to happen, rather notice each other's movements along the grid, feel the energy emanating from each other, and as a group, find a place of stillness. Remember that although you may be still, your energy is still moving forward. *Outside stop, inside no stop*. And let this moment of stillness occur at your own pace, and in your own time. See if you can just let it happen rather than making it happen. Good.

40 minutes. Once you have come to a point of stillness allow that moment to resonate and begin to move along the grid as a group. See if you can not only come to a point of stillness as a group, but also see if you can begin your walk again as a group. Still filling empty space, still exploring tempo and kinesthetic response, I want you to begin exploring spatial relationships with those around you. Can you find different levels of space to occupy with your bodies? How do you hold your arms and legs, head and shoulders, stomachs and backs, and how does the way in which you hold your body in space affect or become affected by the other bodies around you? What forms do your bodies take in space as you move along the lines of the grid? And breathe. Feel the floor come into contact with your feet with each step that you take along the lines of the grid. Imagine that your spine is shooting in to the sky like a tulip reaching for sunlight, and your legs are shooting down deep into the earth like the roots of a tall, tall tree. Feel the breath energy flow through you as the oppositional forces pull away from each other. Strong and soft. Imagine that the center of your body is a ball of lead encased in a pillowcase of feathers. Slowly, at your own pace, see if you can come to another point of stillness as a group. It can take five seconds or five hours, I do not care. But don't force it; allow the group to decide when it happens. When you reach that point, allow yourselves to be in that moment of stillness, fill the space, and begin moving again as a group. Do not *decide* to become still or to move again, but be *decided* by the energy of the group (Barba, *The Paper Canoe* 51). And breathe. Good. Slowly, at your own pace, I want you to let go of your exploration of kinesthetic response and spatial relationships, and just concentrate on filling empty space on the grid. Over time let tempo go as well and slowly start to bring your focus back to the space around you. Notice the color of the walls, the people walking around you, the sights and smells and sounds of the room in which we are rehearsing here and now. Bring your focus out of its softened state and begin to sharpen

your eyes on the black walls of the room, the bright glow of the fluorescent lights, and the sound of my voice. And at your own pace, let go of the grid on the floor and begin to walk around the room following any path you choose. Let yourself cool down and slowly let your body come back to its normal walk and rhythm. And breathe. Slowly and at your own pace, let your movement through space come to a stopping point and allow yourself to stretch and shake out any excess energy still floating around inside your limbs and trunk. Good. So, how was this for you? What did you notice about yourself and others as you moved through space? How did it go? 60 minutes.

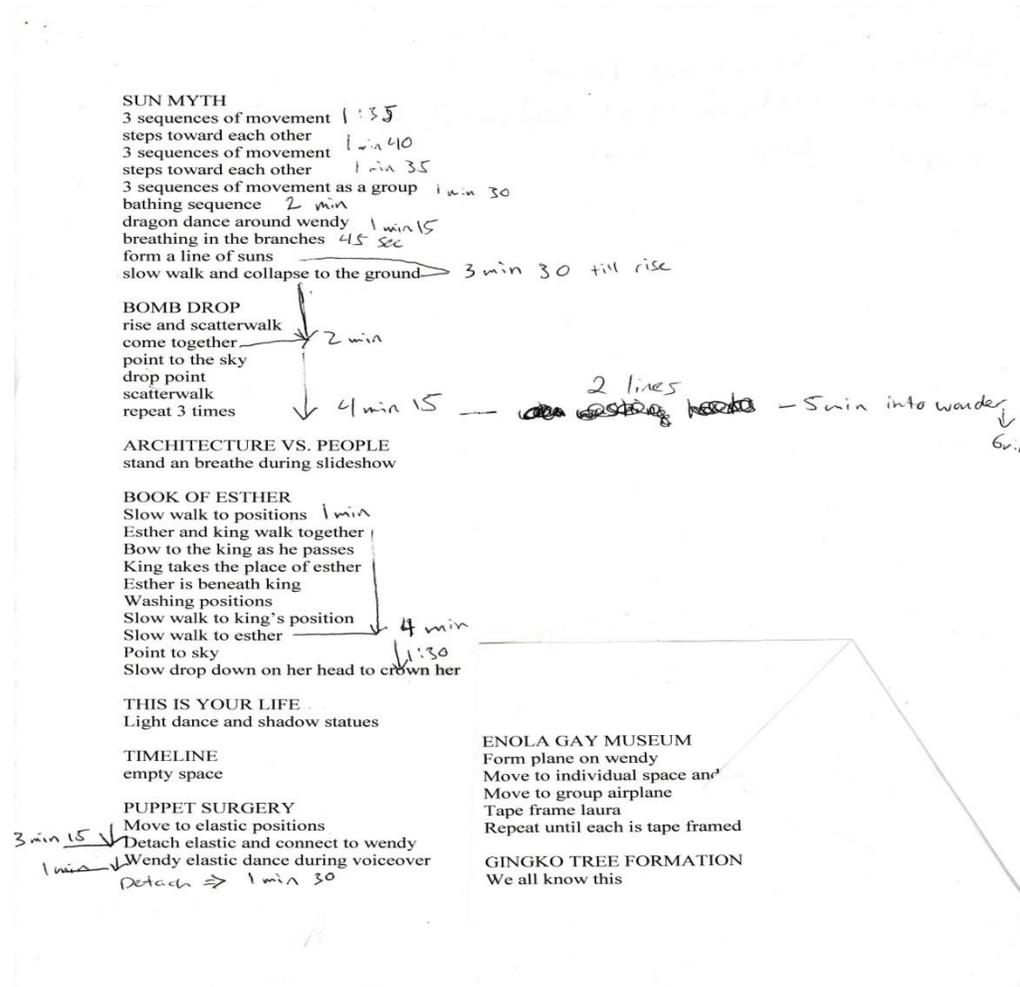
At what point does movement become a technique to free up potential movement? The diagram of our basic training technique sketched out over the last few pages illustrates the power of a collaborative, energy based, exploration of tension and balance in the body to be a major contributing factor in our own experimentation of our performance processes. Essentially, this exercise captures the body and continually moves it into the intensive zone of experimentation similar to the process of vice-diction that Deleuze articulates. If we take movement as the object produced at the nexus of multiple differential elements—repeated instructions, sense-memory exercises, different pressures and variations in the movement of the body, the differential elements of the body itself, environmental factors, etc.—this exercise can be used for the performers to continually take the movement(s) of their bodies back up into the intensive zone and experiment with different factors to produce different types of movements with their bodies. Let me be clear in saying that there was never a perfect form of movement that we were trying to achieve through the exercise. The exercise is designed to be different every time it is used, and in fact was radically different each time. However, there were generalized movements, energy flows, and rings of awareness that the group continually tapped into and operated with time and

time again. Our goal was never to perfect the technique as a means of producing an essence of the moving body according to the director's wishes, but rather to use the technique as a means of continually experimenting with the variables impacting our bodies in order to engage movement as the potential for movement. Barba takes great care to remind us that space is an energized place, and while motion may be stilled, preparedness that the potential for movement in any and all directions to emerge exists. The performer must heighten her awareness to the point at which she achieves dynamic preparedness in anticipation of the next sequence of movement(s), whatever/wherever they may be. The point of stillness in our training exercise is a perfect example of this preparedness. This moment comes later in the exercise and is a culmination of continual adjustments of the body's movements, softened focus, and awareness of energy flows in order for the group to recognize themselves as a group moving and finding a point of stillness both individually and in harmony. The moment happens, and then movement begins again in any direction or any space based on the energy flowing through both the group and individuals bodies. This moment of individual and group connectivity is quite difficult to achieve and feels different based on when it happens, how many times it has happened before, and where the performers are in space. The process of working toward a moment such as this is paramount to the exercise. Although the moment of stillness achieved on the grid is a product of multiple processes, the moment cannot be anticipated or reproduced in the same manner multiple times. The process of experimenting with different variables of movement—with the intensive properties of movement itself—is of most value to performers and critics interested in difference. The training exercise outlined above also helps performers break old habits of movement, open themselves up to new experiences and connections with each other, and develop new habits of moving differently and differentially.

Thus far I have demonstrated a call for both critics and practitioners of performance to engage difference on the level of the emergent processes in *connection with* performance rather than as discreet objects or products *stemming from* performance. I have also shown how the particular performance process of *The Maidens* and my understanding and critique of that process treats difference as a necessarily always already process of *becoming*, rather than operating at an ontological or representational level of *being*. The problem with performance criticism, such as that advocated by Peggy Phelan or Phillip Auslander, is that it relies on strict ontological determinations of both being and performance and the processes of both criticism and performance get flattened out and treated as a discreet object—performance is an object to analyze, and criticism of that object treats performance only on those terms thereby making it an object as well. How can we move past such rigid distinctions? Radical theories of difference such as those offered by Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault offer potential solutions to this problem by explicitly or implicitly engaging difference on every level of experience and meaning. While that sounds like an ideal solution, oftentimes this form of experiment proves to be extremely difficult to articulate or put into practice. For example, I have still not written about what *The Maidens* looked like, what was offered to the audience each night, or what meaning I cull from the actualized performance. However I could not have started anywhere but in the middle of things and parsed out how I read difference at work within both my performance and critical processes. Be that as it may, to draw conclusions and critically assess the actual production of *The Maidens* in some manner seems necessary. To begin, I read the actualized performance of *The Maidens* as a series of memories and connected processes of becoming. This reading is only one potential way of remembering and critiquing. My memory of the performance is not necessarily accurate. Still, I will recount the story in broad outline (Deleuze & Guattari 233).

## Memories of a Genealogist

Cracks and fissures of histories set to work through bodies and movements demonstrating a need for incomplete representability. There are missing parts. Laughter, lullabies, sweat, and flesh. There are 10 scenic sites of The Maidens (see figure 5).



(Figure 5: Breakdown of rehearsal sites)

*Sun Myth:* The question of the atomic bomb is a matter of harnessing the power of the atom—the power of the sun. One of the most widely known myths about the sun is connected to Yao, one of the five emperors, who was in danger of losing his throne. There were ten suns that lived in the valley of the light, and in times of danger or strife all ten suns appeared in the sky. During

his period of struggle, Yao gave a magic bow to Yi, the divine archer, who shot down all of the suns save one, which was left in the sky for posterity. With only one sun in the sky Yao regained control of his kingdom with the one sun serving as both reminder and protector, for all time.

*Bomb Drop:* Rise and scatterwalk. Come together. Point to the sky. Drop point. Scatterwalk.

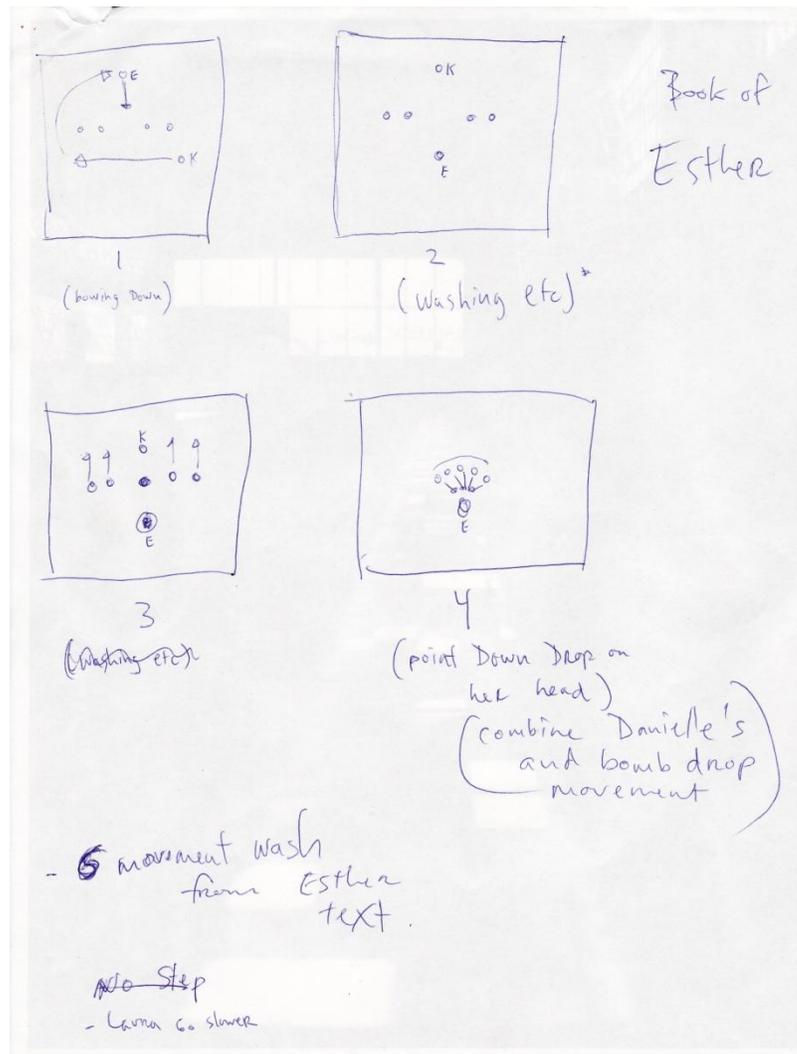
Repeat three times. They moved slowly, even dreamily. They held their hands out in front of their chests, like sleepwalkers (Barker 24). A huddled group of bodies moving around the space at random intervals and speeds, massing together like atoms. Looking up to the skies and pointing in frozen anticipation, tracking some thing falling from the sky with the tips of their fingers. *Surgery/Manners:* These were demanding and exhausting operations that required a great deal of patience and attention to the most minute detail, and which lasted anywhere from two to four hours at a time. It was a slow process, day by day, operation by operation, without any dramatic climaxes that represented turning points (102). *Architecture vs. People:* The scattered landscape of a photograph frozen in time and space. The landscape dotted with broken homes and buildings, emptied out by the flat-force destruction of the shockwave. Telephone lines and trees standing like statues of erased people dot the stark white landscape (see figure 6).



(Figure 6: Photo of Hiroshima)

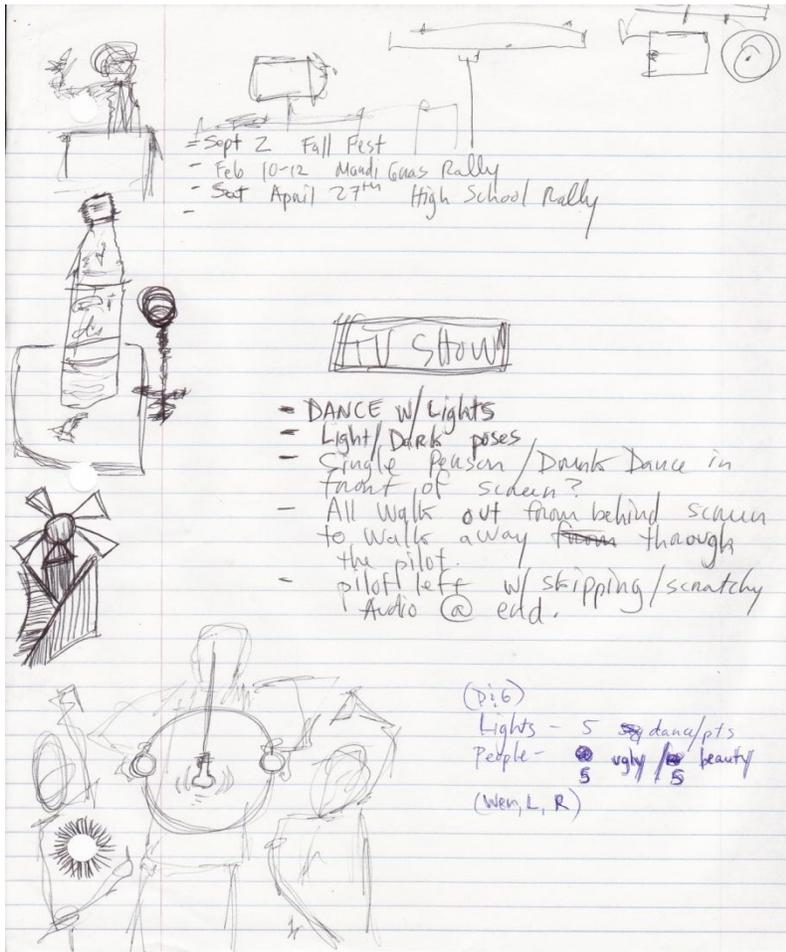
*Book of Esther:* Chapter 2 verses 8-17. So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace .

. . that Esther was brought also unto the king's house . . . And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meant to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women . . . And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head (see figure 7).



(Figure 7: “Book of Esther” movement patterns )

*This is Your Life*: It was orchestrated to appear like memories passing before the mind's eye (see figure 8) . . . ‘twenty five girls from Hiroshima arrived in New York City via US Army transport. They are being treated surgically at Mount Sinai Hospital at absolutely no cost. Tonight we would like you to meet two of these girls. Both have lived through the terror of an atomic bombing. Both are badly disfigured . . . To avoid causing them any embarrassment, we will not show their faces. May I present Miss Toyoko Minowa and Miss Tradako Emori’ (Barker 7-11).



(Figure 8: “This is Your Life” sketch of potential images)

*August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Timeline*: 8/6/45; 9:16:00- Little Boy exploded at an altitude of 1,890 feet above the target. Yield was equivalent to 12,500 tons of TNT. The first shock wave took about 1 minute to reach the planes which were now 9 miles away. Crew member Caron could see the

first shock wave coming toward the plane at 1,100 ft./sec. Soon after, a second shock wave (echo effect) hit the planes with less intensity. The instruments which were dropped radioed blast information back to The Great Artiste. A coded message was sent to General Farrell on Tinian advising him of the successful detonation. The atomic mushroom cloud remained visible for 90 minutes until the planes were more than 400 miles away (The Historic Timelines). *Facial Surgery*: The history of skin grafts has its beginnings in ancient India, where Sanskrit texts document skin transplants performed by Hindus in 3000-2500 BC. Potters and tilemakers of the Koomas caste were reconstructing noses which had been mutilated as punishment for crimes such as theft and adultery. Grafts were obtained from buttock skin, which was reportedly slapped with a wooden paddle until red and congested, and then cut with a leaf to the appropriate size (Herman). *Enola Gay Museum*: So Heyman declared that he was going to throw out the entire script, compromises and all, and personally put together a new exhibition, 'a much simpler one, essentially a display, permitting the Enola Gay and its crew to speak for themselves.' . . . Heyman promised that they would hold a symposia on the various controversies about the bomb, but would hold them elsewhere, away from the plane (Hunt). *Gingko Tree(s)*: A Gingko tree 1.1 km from the epicenter of the bomb blast in Hiroshima suffered no mutations or deformations and stands there still and swaying, ever growing, to this day...

### **Memories of a Ventriloquist**

Ventriloquism throws the voice away from the body, a hidden voice operating at a distance from the speaking subject . . . at least it could be. In *The Maidens* no speaking subjects existed per say. The bodies of the performers produced no live vocalizations in front of the audience. All of the spoken texts were pre-recorded by the performers and then played through a series of effects and digital manipulations using a laptop computer and the sound system of the

HopKins Black Box. The bodies of the performers produced no voice(s) live, but the voices of the bodies rang through the space separate *and* connected to the “original” speakers. The texts being “read” by the performers on the recording were select textual fragments of various historical artifacts surrounding our genealogical exploration of the Hiroshima Maidens. The voices were disembodied voices—disembodied from the performers, disembodied from the Histories that emerged from the texts, and disembodied from the vocal apparatus of the body itself. The voices haunted the performance in multiple ways. The traces of the voice carried the traces of history beyond the bodies of the Hiroshima Maidens while at the same time beyond the bodies of the performers of The Maidens. The ghost(s) reappear and call me into an exchange one more time. In his book *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, Steven Connor writes that “in a culture of writing, in which words come to take on the quality of objects, voices will tend increasingly to be modeled upon and to be assimilated to the condition of written words, which is to say as seemingly manipulable forms and quasi-spatial objects” (24). Voices and more importantly the sound of the voice move beyond an aura of simple intentionality or meaning into a realm where the voice is afforded temporal and spatial possibilities of being manipulated and impacting the listener outside of interpretation. The voices in The Maidens experimented with differing forms of impact and complicated interpretation in such a way. Our voices were thrown from our bodies; listen with your chest and your tongues to the sounds of our bodies’ silence. Similarly, this memory that I am writing through has been thrown to me from beyond my apprehension, away from the bodies and away from its source. Even as I use memory as a particular form of criticism, it must be treated as a necessarily incomplete form of becoming—always in process, always looking to link up with another.

Connor goes on to suggest that “because a voice is an event in time, something that happens to us, even happens on us, in a way that an object presented for sight is not, the experience of hearing something with one’s own ears is much more importunate and encroaching than seeing it with one’s own eyes” (23). When presented with the performance of *The Maidens* the audience was exposed to two main sites of movement and action—the bodies of the performers and the recorded sounds of their voices. The texts that the voices spoke were assembled around a thickening of content, loosely pasted together and played as each scene progressed. The sound operator played each snippet of text as he felt appropriate rather than at a particular time to convey a particular meaning associated with the action of the performers onstage. Much more of a feeling on his part, he decided when and where he should play the voices. The textual fragments usually did not link up in terms of content with what the bodies were doing. Put a different way, the bodies might have been exploring images and compositions that were not literal evocations of what texts were being presented to the audience. So not only did the bodies stand over and against the voices, but the associations created in the mind of the audience from the movements of the bodies onstage stood over and against and often competed with the associations created by the sounds of the voices. What types of meaning are transmitted in such a case of competing, conflating, and coexisting texts? I list a few that emerge in my understanding. First, the recorded voices reverberate through space and supply the voice itself “something of the solidarity and dimension given to a natural voice by the reverberation of its environment. The echoing voice is not a voice in space, it is a voice of space” (Connor 38). Similarly the bodies onstage occupy space, but also serve to represent space itself—the space of “making history GO” in Pollock’s terms—and the self-reflexive nature of mimesis used as a call to attention of the difference(s) in and of the body’s repetition and representation of history. A

gapped and gaping space of representation is created where meaning is filled in by the audience's eyes, ears, hearts and mind. Or not. The caption of the photograph serves to limit interpretation and experience of the photo only so much, before the eyes or in this case ears wander to another patch of light and dark, color or line. An arbitrary relationship between the narrative of the disembodied voices and the movements of the bodies exists. From this place of ambivalence new understandings of experience emerge.

### **Memories of a Physiologist**

Our bodies remember, but incompletely, with spasms and sweat, tremblings and tinglings. When our bodies remember they are repeating a lived experience in the form of (re)memory. They remember a memory sensorally or experientially and from this place of (re)memory, a place of remembering memory, our bodies repeat with a difference. *The Maidens* was built on the sweat of repeating bodies. Repetition of movement was built into every single scene and would often cut across scenes so that a movement repeated in the first scene would emerge again in the fifth or tenth. In addition to the repetition of movements we also experimented with the tempo and duration of the repeated movements so that a certain rhythm of movement would establish and then be broken by a different rhythm set against the first. From these juxtapositions sets of repetitions emerged over and against each other so that cycles of three or four movement sequences would repeat. These repetitions and patterns took as their main site the bodies of the performers. The bodies of the performers were strained bodies; as each wave of repetition washed over them like an ocean of time the constraint of the form of the repetitions emerged as a unique way to free up the agency of the overall performance. Our bodies glowed like fireflies signaling through the night, time and time again. The glow of

constraint served to draw in and distance the audience to/from contact with both the performing and representational bodies.

The bodies were never hidden. They were exposed and put on display for everyone to see. Rather than hide the strain of repetition on the bodies and efface it through polished technique *for* movement we showcased the bodies by using the repetition as a technique *of* movement. Wendy was tied up with white strips of elastic and controlled like a puppet, repeating a sequence of movements over and over as the other performers pulled on her strings like a marionette. Rebecca continually bent at the waist and extended her hand to shake with someone who wasn't there, slowly turning like a ballerina in a music box. Danielle and Roger sliced the figure of a body with successive movements of their fingertips and arms, circling the body like the eye of a hurricane. And over and over, time and time again, the strain and repetition of the movements of the performer's bodies became supra-evident during the course of the performance, and as such the bodies of the Hiroshima Maidens drew further and further away. Of course they were never there to begin with, but with each moment that passed the compulsion toward highlighting our bodies as a representational account of the Hiroshima Maidens slipped down the rabbit hole of history. *The Maidens* became a performance much more about the bodies of the performers rather than the bodies of the Hiroshima Maidens. However, traces of the Hiroshima Maidens emerged ever so slowly through the connections made between the spaces, times, movements, repetitions, histories, processes, bodies, voices, texts, gaps, and techniques that formed our performance of *The Maidens*. The performer's bodies in *The Maidens* were historical bodies. They were bodies engaged and wrapped up inside of that which necessarily exceeded them. They were bodies continually becoming through

experimentation with processes. Our bodies remembered memory itself, which is constantly on the tips of tongues and just out of reach.

## Endnotes

<sup>15</sup> See Barker.

<sup>16</sup> The future-to-come in this case indicates an anticipated future moment of the yet unknown performance product. Again, even when the performance gets “completed” and is presented to an audience, it contributes to the ongoing process of anticipating the future. The presentation of the performance is not the end of the process, but contributes to more future oriented events such as criticism, future performances, and memory.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout this document, History and history will be used, albeit in different ways. The use of a capital “H” in History signifies, in a generalized way, the notion or understanding of history as a linear set of events offered up in the form of a master narrative of understanding. Too often, comments are made using the phrase “capital H history,” and while I am somewhat participating in that frame of mind, I will explain the differences between the two forms of the word history used in this document as I use them.

<sup>18</sup> Such an understanding of mimesis has its foundations laid in Plato. Specifically in “The Ion.”

<sup>19</sup> My use of generalized or the general here does not mean unspecific. I am using generalized in a manner similar to those of Derrida or Deleuze in so far as rather than concentrating on the movement from text to text, or context to context, I am engaging movement itself through space and time. While there may and definitely are specific points in time where this movement slows down enough to thicken and be able to be analyzed, the subsequent “object” of analysis is not indicative of the whole nor can it even claim to be the “object” of analysis in a philosophy of criticism concerned with difference. Therefore, I am more concerned with the generalized economy of differences, their movement through space and time, and the processes that allow objects to manifest or thicken becoming available for investigation and critique.

<sup>20</sup> As I covered in Chapter 2, the intensive zone is an area where the variables of production—the place where different intensive properties can be experimented with and altered so as to see difference as the potential different forms of a product—are played with and changed. Intensive properties include any property that when changed alter the product in a qualitative manner, rather than a quantitative one. This includes properties such as temperature, pressure, speed, time as opposed to properties such as height, width, length, weight, etc.

<sup>21</sup> See Powell.

<sup>22</sup> Tracing is used here more to mean a replication or direct copy, rather than in relation to the ghost as trace. Deleuze and Guatarri use trace very differently than Derrida with regards to the trace.

<sup>23</sup> I am speaking here of the move to quantify an object as an essence or base the essence for an object in its totalized identity. See Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> In Deleuzian terminology, molecular and molar are distinctions used to differentiate between the components that make up a certain system, and the system that those components instantiates. The molecular is used to designate the components, while the molar is the identifiable system that the components become. Generally speaking, the molar and molecular are similar to micro and macro designations. Usually the molecular components of a system are undetectable to the senses while the molar designations of a system are recognizable.

<sup>26</sup> “Molar” is the designation Deleuze uses to speak about macro-level of phenomena and “molecular” designates the micro-level.

<sup>27</sup> Throughout this subsection I use the words and descriptions of one of the exercises we engaged during rehearsal. Embedded in the text of the exercise are references to certain theorists and/or practitioners from whom I stole or was inspired by. The use of this method of writing is intended to engage both a practitioner and a scholar of performance studies through performative writing. At certain points throughout this section there is a change of voice. Not only does the change in voice designate interconnectivity of my inner theorist and practitioner, but it also designates the approximate time in which my voice changes during the exercise. At a certain point during the exercise I begin to analyze the movements of the performers more than simply guiding them.

## Chapter 4: The Perfect Medium: The Seen and Unseen Processes of Photography and Spiritualism

At present these images are useful insofar as they give us information about the role of photography in the pursuit of knowledge, and about those who employed it . . . On the one hand, they tell us about a specific use of photography during a particular period, about the expectations and disappointments it generated, and its impact on attitudes. On the other hand, they tell us about human nature, its relationship to technology, and its valorizing strategies, and its hopes and beliefs. They reveal the work of imagination, or errors of judgment. (Apraxine & Schmit 14)

*The Chemical reaction can be an addition reaction  $[A+B=AB]$ , a displacement reaction  $[AB+C=AC+B]$ , or a double decomposition reaction  $[AB+CD=AD+SC]$ .<sup>28</sup>*

Photographs are almost always meant to be seen. They hang on walls in museums, sit on shelves in bedrooms, and hide behind doors in offices. Sometimes they even lay hidden in boxes in the backs of closets. But even then the photos wait in the darkness, ready to be discovered and brought forth into the light. Just as easy as photographs are to forget in the dusty boxes of an attic, they are even easier to forget hanging on the walls of museums smack dab in front of our eyes. For what are we really looking at when we see a photo on display? Almost immediately I respond with a traditional description: a framed image, captured on photographic paper by a camera of some kind, frozen in time, and reproduced for the gaze of the viewer. A photograph can certainly be considered all of these things and often is. But as someone who loves to look at and study and daydream with photos, such a traditional definition seems to be lacking. What exactly is being left out? What can we learn about photographs through the different processes of making, taking, and viewing photographs? How can we think outside the photographic frame that so neatly and deliberately wants to demarcate the border where the photograph as an object ends? What are the connections between performance and photography? And perhaps most importantly for the purpose of this study, how does the exploration of photography beyond the

frame inform performance criticism? In short, how can we think differently about both photography and performance using difference as an engine of inquiry?

In “Rhetoric of the Image” Roland Barthes asks “how does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there beyond? Such are the questions that I wish to raise by submitting the image to a spectral analysis of the messages it may contain” (135). For this study, I am particularly interested in what Barthes is speaking of when he raises the question of “the beyond” of meaning in an image. The play on words between “beyond” and “spectral” is of great importance for me and this study because of their similarity to the spectral realm of the ghost and hauntology. The beyond of the image could quite literally be the ghostly realm of the photo; what do the ghosts that haunt the photo—and photography for that matter—teach the viewer about different ways of (re)orienting to and engaging with photography? Also important to note is that when Barthes called for a “spectral analysis” he produced an interesting gap in his semiology. In scientific terms, spectral analyses measure the chemical composition of matter and gases by analyzing the waves of light produced in the optical spectrum—the light visible to the human eyes. However the optical spectrum is only a small part of the electromagnetic spectrum which analyzes the emission or reflection of light from an object in terms of the amount of radiation emitted by that object depending on its unique composition. So when Barthes advocated a spectral analysis of the image, he opened up a door for an analysis that moves beyond that only seen by the eyes, into the realm of emissions, reflections, and radiation generated from the image which we do not apprehend by sight—an analysis that moves from that which is visible or seen to that which is invisible or unseen. It is of the utmost importance to note that even though there are parts of the spectrum that are unseen, these parts still factor heavily into the composition of an object. Similarly there is a multiplicity of constitutive factors

and properties of photographs and photography that, while remaining hidden from our senses, affect the genesis of the photograph.

There are as many ways to look at a picture as there are pictures themselves. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes writes that the “realists” do not take the photograph to be a copy of reality, but consider it an emanation of a past reality. The photo becomes a form of magic, rather than an art (88). I agree with Barthes’ assertion that the photograph, rather than a direct copy of reality, is one representation of a past reality. I also read the photograph as a phenomenon that calls attention to the reality of the past or pastness of history and memory. Problems arise when confronting the photograph in such a way that the image of a photograph is read as representative of a past reality and not as a representation of the reality of the past.<sup>29</sup>

Barthes uses his idea of the punctum to engage the photograph beyond what is presented for the eye to see, and creates meaning that while subjective in nature, also calls attention to the impossibility of a final analysis of the photograph as an object. The punctum is an element, accident, or surprise contained in the photograph which pierces or pricks the interest of the viewer. The punctum disturbs the naturalized training of viewing a photograph, what Barthes calls the stadium, and unsettles the viewer in such a way that they are forced to enter alongside the picture with their own perspective (26-27). One of the most intriguing aspects of the notion of the punctum for the purpose of this study is the way that Barthes calls attention to the punctum’s power of expansion and metonymy. Referring to a photograph of a blind gypsy violinist led by a boy, Barthes notices that the punctum makes him see something else by recognizing “with my whole body, the straggling villages I passed through on my long-ago travels in Hungary and Romania” (45). It is precisely because the photograph moves Barthes in a particular way, that he remembers with his whole body a past event that remains wholly unseen

and outside the frame of the photograph. He cites the photograph as transcending semiotics to the point of annihilating itself as a medium for meaning, thereby becoming the thing itself (45). The “thing” for Barthes has to be his memory of the past. The punctum pierces him in such a way that the photograph and his past experience(s) merge via an analysis of photographs that moves beyond the frame. Because Barthes stresses the subjective aspect of the punctum so heavily throughout *Camera Lucida*, a danger emerges for conversations about photography to shift too far in one direction and become only about the viewer’s experience. While the experience of the viewer cannot be denied when viewing a photograph, Barthes makes a clear connection between his past experience and his complete inability to possess the past in the present. Memory assures Barthes that while the photograph becomes the thing itself, it is a thing of another time and place. The prick of Barthes’ subjectivity summons the past to the present but is recognized as the work of memory, of something that is not now. That which pricks Barthes also pricks history so that the past and present intertwine and fold in on each other, but never quite lose their distinctive qualities.

Barthes’ articulation of the functions of the punctum provides a place for performance studies scholars to rethink mimesis and representation as the work of memory in the act of criticism. A performative dimension in Barthes’ criticism of the photograph is opened by repeating an experience of the past differently—he remembers something that happened in his past as an understanding of the photograph in the present. Barthes’ criticism retains performativity. Instead of looking at Barthes’ description of the photograph becoming the thing itself as a type of representational logic that denies difference, I choose to focus on the ways that difference emerges as the catalyst and foundation of the particular representation that he constructs. Meaning shifts from the identity of the photograph as an independent object toward a

co-participatory relationship. Barthes reminds his reader that the punctum, whether or not it is triggered, “is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph, and *what is nonetheless already there*” (55).

Like Barthes, John Berger often wrote about photography by pushing the limit of photographic theory. In his essay “Uses of Photography,” Berger offers a taxonomy of potential alternative uses for both theories of photography and the photograph itself. One of the most radical assertions he makes in the essay deals with the connections of photography, memory, and the work of the viewer as historian. Berger states that “photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has happened” (*Uses* 57). He goes further to explain that if those living in the present embark to take those relics of the past upon themselves, and if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history, then photographs require a living context and continue to exist in time alongside those viewing them (57). The traces of the past represented by, and haunting the photograph, would coalesce as a form of historiography that incorporates photography into social and political memory, instead of allowing the photograph to be used as a representation of the past that atrophies memory (58). Put another way, Berger argues for photography to be actively incorporated into the development of social and political memory as a means of making memory, rather than as an image of the past which provides access to and represents an essential quality of the past. Berger affords photography a mystic quality with the potential to move society forward in productive political and social ways. As promising as the “prophecy of human memory” sounds to Berger, he leaves the formulae for achieving such a use of photography absent. However he lays the foundation for those interested in combining photography, history, and memory, by highlighting the way that photographs are traditionally used against memory. According to Berger, the task of the alternative use of photography must

be to “construct a context for the photograph, to construct it with words, to construct it with other photographs, to construct it by its place in an ongoing text of photographs and images” (60). Berger uses the photograph as a site of difference, dependent on a multiplicity of processes at work in the construction of context for the photo. The context of the photograph Berger advocates is unseen by the viewer looking at the photo; it haunts the viewer by residing outside sensibility. It is left to the viewer to construct the context by associations, memories, absent events, and narratives. Context becomes a historical and memorial weaving that never reaches its edge. Like the light of the stars that gave direction to ships at sea—a perception of the past heat of a star in the present roll of the sea—the context of the photograph becomes the guide *for* and *of* memory. In order to put a photograph back into the context of experience and memory, one must respect the laws of memory. The need arises for the photograph to be situated in such a way that it acquires something of the surprising conclusiveness of that which *was* and *is* (61). Put another way, in order to achieve the alternative use for photography that Berger advocates, the viewer must acknowledge the simultaneity of the past and present, the seen and unseen, and the difference(s) at work in the experience and production of the photograph. For example, what are the social and technological processes at work in a particular period of photographic practice? How do different experimentations with technology change the way photographs are taken and developed, thereby changing how those photographs are read? Unlike the power of a painting which relies on internal references, the photograph records what has been seen always referring to that which is not seen. It represents a moment taken from a continuum of events, both past and present (*Understanding a Photograph* 217). Sontag situates photography in a similar fashion stating that “photographic images are pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography

or history. And one photograph, unlike one painting, implies that there will be others” (*On Photography* 166).

### **Unframed Caption<sup>30</sup> #1**

I stand in front of a photograph hanging on the wall. It depicts a young woman sitting in a chair, face down, hands moving two curtains aside and revealing herself to an onlooker. She is dressed in black with some odd hat resting slightly tilted upon her head. Her eyes are closed and she seems to be wincing—her nose betrays with wrinkles, some foul stench or perhaps a sneeze just about to happen. In the lower corner a man is pictured, seemingly caught mid-movement, staring at the woman. I don’t know if his eyes are open or closed; he is facing away from the lens. His hands are perched on his knees in loose fists, half open and slightly blurred. He looks like I imagine Freud would have—a large bald spot on the back of his head, a pointy tuft of beard hanging on his face, gazing at a troubled woman. Between her two hands, simultaneously gripping and pulling back at the curtains that once hid her figure, there is a bolt of light streaming from one side to the other. It looks like lightning streaking between her hands. Or perhaps it is a fold in the negative of the photo—creased lightning floating midtorso across her body. Is she hiding her eyes from the glow of the light? Can she even see the light if her eyes are closed? Is that what he is looking at, or is it something else? The chair that she sits on is well behind the curtain even though her body leans forward beyond the edges that she pulls back. Apparently her name is Eva C. and she is a medium. I cannot tell whether the line of light between her hands is a photographic trick or something captured at the moment of exposure. I suppose that’s not the point. Whether or not Eva C. is producing the light herself or if it’s produced by other means, the fact remains that it is there, and she is there, and Freud is there, and I am here, silently watching. It doesn’t matter if the photo is real, because it’s real to me.

How many countless days did I run through my parent's neighborhood with my friends, shooting beams of light out of my hands like some sort of superhero? How many countless nights did I lie awake at night, pulling the covers on and off my face, keeping out the shadows of light and dark lurking in the corners of my bedroom? I stand in front of Eva C. pulling back the edges of my own memories, watching light dance across my mind as I remember something that happened a long time ago. And I can't help but wonder who else is behind that curtain in the photo? What other figures or forms lie beyond my perception? What other memories of my own am I forgetting as I stand two feet in front of the magical Eva C. and her mysterious bolt of light?

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On a chilly and rainsoaked day in late November 2005, I found myself waiting for a friend at the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As we finally stepped inside and out of the rain I randomly wandered into an exhibit entitled "The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult." On the walls of the Met hung a host of photographs dated mostly from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Inside the frames of these photographs were various depictions of mystics and mediums, specters and phantoms, illusions and manifestations. Enthralled by these photos, I moved gently through the exhibit studying photo after photo like a child tasting snow for the first time. Along with the subject matter of the photos, the look of the photos, the surprising range of color in black and white tones, the use of light and darkness, and the characters presented in each mesmerized me and set off a chain reaction of connections in my mind and loosened forgotten memories that I could feel somewhere in the muscles of my body. Most importantly these photos made a believer out of me. I believed in the power of the mediums pictured who resurrected the dead, I believed in the ectoplasm coming out of various orifices as ghostly manifestations, and I believed in the collection of photos as proof of the beyond. Over the course of the following

months, as my obsession turned into a full-on haunting, I realized that I had to write about the photos in some manner.

In this chapter I use “The Perfect Medium” as the main point of departure for my analysis and cultivation of a criticism for photography and performance which values and emerges from difference. A myriad of potential trajectories materialize when analyzing the exhibit. I travel along some of the trajectories and forget about others, for there are too many to count. And just as Barthes—intrigued by the question of what lies beyond the meaning of the image, what surplus of the image remains unseen or unheard—I too am concerned with the multiplicity of connections and relations roaming the photos in “The Perfect Medium” outside of sensibility, outside of perception. Still the photos remain, in one manner of speaking, as objects hung on a wall; photos are objects to be seen by subjects looking at them. However, I argue in this chapter and have argued throughout this study that a need exists for the critic to move beyond simple subject/object distinctions if she is interested in cultivating a criticism of difference. In the excess of the photo—that which lies beyond both the frame and our perception of it—we are able to begin the movement beyond simple subject/object distinctions and enter the spectral realm of difference. By exploring the spectral realm of these photographs and experimenting with different forms of criticism, I discover a place for new thoughts and opportunities to emerge, surprise, entice, and take hold in my body, if only for a time. Della Pollock writes in her introduction to *Exceptional Spaces* that “at the limits of sight are the excesses of the body. Not the body as a set of primordial impulses, but the body as the desublimated subject living in and through the active, fickle, sometimes grotesque but always historical life of its material form” (8). In this chapter, the photo treated as such a body—an exploration of the excess(es) of the photo that streak outside of the frame—moves performance criticism and practice away from

object/subject status and into the realm of difference as potential. Pollock notes that “these performances seemed in some small way to exceed sight and to generate something more: more agency, more pleasure, and possibility, more conflict and contention, and, above all, more room for the embodied subject to enlist the resources of historicity on her own behalf” (8). The performances she references are performances that generate difference. The photos that I analyze for the rest of this chapter are similar performances to the ones that Pollock outlines. The photographs in “The Perfect Medium” are performances of difference when viewed not simply as objects, but as bodies that bring along with them all the historical, temporal, cultural and political implications as our own bodies. Instead of skin the photo has a frame.

### **The Conjuring of a Movement**

*The chemical affinity of one substance for another is the ease with which the first reacts with the second. It is due to the tendency to form a stable electronic configuration by acquiring or donating electrons.*<sup>31</sup>

Let me begin again. Where do the ghosts of “The Perfect Medium” come from exactly? There is no way of knowing their precise origin of course, but these ghosts can be traced to a movement of spiritual, religious, and philosophical flows. Spiritualism was a movement that took the North American stage in the 1840s. The social movement emerged at a singular point in US history. During the same time, the first electrical telegram was sent through the airwaves by Samuel Morse. Technology was accelerating. Factories, railroads, and telegraph lines were springing up across the nation. The fervor of The Second Great Awakening was being replaced by a new and unknown materialism as the market economy revved its engines. More value was being placed on competitive wages and individual achievement rather than community and social hierarchy (Carroll 3). In 1848 John Quincy Adams died and could indeed be taken as a literal

sign that the “old” ways of life, the ways of life on which the country had been built, were dying off (4). While these are only a few of the events transpiring during the decade, I return to the cultural and political landscape of the 1840s-1860s frequently and spin out from these few events an intricate web of connections and relations.

There is also the case of the two sisters Kate and Margaret Fox. In the winter of 1848 Kate and Margaret Fox moved into a small cottage with their parents in Hydesville, New York. Of course the cottage had a small reputation for being haunted, but nothing was ever confirmed. Reportedly on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1848 strange sounds began to plague the sleeping family in the form of raps and knockings throughout the house (Brandon 1). Eventually the sisters began to “communicate” with the spirits by deciphering the rappings and tappings, acting as mediums for the dead to speak to the living. Many wonder whether the sisters were bored in the isolation of upstate New York in winter, or whether they possessed a cunning well beyond their years. Although the sisters’ mother suspected some sort of ploy by her daughters to fool the family into believing that they were communicating with the spirit world,

[she] engaged the invisible entity in dialogue. Eventually, by rapping its answers in response to questions . . . the spirit correctly counted to ten, identified the ages of the Fox children, and numbered how many of the Fox family were alive and how many were dead. Later the spirit replied to more complex questions by rapping once for “yes” and twice for “no.” (Sconce 22)

The Fox sisters became incredibly well known and attracted crowds of believers and skeptics who gathered to see the sisters astonish with their powers. They were hired by P.T. Barnum to give public demonstrations in New York City, then invited by Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune, to stay in the city. They continued to communicate with the dead spending the majority of their time discussing apocalyptic news in/of the dawning of a new era in America (Washington 10). Needless to say, word of the Fox sisters and their ability to communicate with

an unseen spiritual world began to spread throughout the rest of the country spilling over into other countries throughout the world. Séances became in vogue as word of the Fox sisters spread. The séance was viewed as the “new version of holy communion, in which faith [was] replaced by evidence, blood and wine by manifested spirits” (10). The sisters were thought to have opened a telegraph line to another world through their communicating via raps and knocks with the unseen spirits (Sconce 22). Viewing their abilities in terms of a telegraph line to another world is not unimportant when considering the advent of telegraphy only a few years prior to the Hydesville events. It was not simply that the sisters were communicating with the dead, but that their abilities were framed as powers mirroring that of Samuel B. Morse’s electromagnetic telegraph.

In May 1844 the ability to send messages across countries and continents in a timely fashion increased a thousand fold. Using electromagnetic pulses delivered via a series of interconnected cables, Morse sent the message of one Miss Ellsworth, not too coincidentally the daughter of the commissioner of patents, to Alfred Vail in Baltimore, Maryland. Her message was the first words transmitted via the new technology and were fittingly portentous: “What hath God wrought?” The electronic circuitry of the telegraph made the instantaneous exchange of messages without physical bodies possible (21). The religious implications and overtones continued to haunt the telegraph for many years with proponents describing the new technology in more and more biblical terms. For example, in “The Atlantic Telegraph: A Discourse Delivered in the First Church,” author Jeffrey Sconce quotes Ezra Gannett saying “the most remarkable effect . . . will be the approach to a practical unity of the human race; of which we have never yet had a foreshadowing, except in the gospel of Christ” (22). Arthur Conan Doyle went so far as to compare the powers of the Fox sisters directly to the power of the telegraph

commenting that it was not the high or low status of the message's content that mattered, rather that the communication between separate bodies or worlds must and does happen (Doyle 60). The connection between the absence of physical bodies in both the communication via electricity of the telegraph and communication via spirits is of great import when analyzing the fervor of spectral communication and how fast it spread during this time. At the heart of spectral communication is faith. One needed incredible faith to believe that the Fox sisters were communicating with ghosts because there were no physical bodies to prove that the sisters were doing nothing other than faking it. However one needed the same kind of faith in Morse's new technology because there was no real way to verify that the person you were sending the telegraph to was indeed the person writing you back. Proof in the form a physical body, a body you could see with your own eyes, to convince or prove the fact that the messages were real or really delivered did not exist. And so an individual was left with their faith, the unknown, and their penchant for *believing* in spite of the anxiety created from that which one *could not perceive with their senses*.

The Fox sisters ultimately disproved themselves as respectable and believable mediums. In differing manners both of the sisters "confessed" to producing the sound of the rappings and knockings by cracking joints in their toes and feet. The communication between the spirits and the sisters turned out to be a fantastic performance designed to entertain two bored little girls, to make money, or perhaps because the sisters themselves eventually believed in their own powers so much so that the cracking of toes and feet actually were a form of communication with the dead. Of course, the interpretation depends on who is telling the story and what manner of story is told. While whether or not the sisters were actually communicating with spirits is debatable, what is not debatable is that the events surrounding the Fox sisters in Hydesville and New York

City heavily impacted the formation of the spiritualist movement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whether or not the sisters were mediums was not as important as the fact that people believed in the sisters' powers of communicating with spirits. Spiritualism as a movement developed out of a specific cultural and historical epoch. The Fox sisters simply filled a particular hole that had heretofore prevented the movement from accelerating at a rapid pace. Once there was talk of the ability to communicate with spirits, the movement took off in various trajectories and in very real ways.

Spiritualism did not just happen. Although cast with its main figures and proponents, no one thing gave rise to spiritualism as a movement or religion. Like all phenomena, spiritualism was formed through a combination of intensive and extensive processes that combined at various singular moments in a particular set of circumstances. Forming in the late 1840s and peaking between 1850 and 1875, spiritualist practitioners grew to an estimated population of over one million, roughly five percent of the United States at the time (Brown 50). The shifting cultural and historical landscape of the US during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century combined with a host of scientific and technological innovations and inventions, formed a movement primarily concerned with the “communion with departed spirits [as] the basis for a distinct and thoroughly spirit-centered system of religious belief and practice—involving not simply spirit communication but also, in the words of one of its early publicists and historians, a belief in ‘the direct agency and immediate presence of bright ministering spirits’” (Carroll 1).

Aside from the invention of the telegraph by Morse, Michael Faraday experimented with chemical compounds and elemental structures to discover phase changes in elements which became critical components in motor fuels. He also designed a device called the dynamo and went on to design and experiment with the first forms of batteries and transformers (Blum 22-

23). Charles Darwin published “The Origin of Species” in 1859 putting forth his theory of evolution and simultaneously setting the stage for a battle between religion and science that still plays out in contemporary times. The Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869. In the 1870s Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone and Thomas Edison invented the phonograph and light bulb. These innovations in science and technology contributed to and stemmed from a culture on the verge of an industrial revolution the likes of which have never been repeated. These technological and scientific advances, combined with an overwhelming religious and spiritual crisis following the decline of the Second Great Awakening during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, created favorable conditions for the spiritualist movement to emerge.

According to Brett Carrol, the religious landscape of early 1840s was produced by the “successive impact first of Enlightenment religious thinking, which encouraged a rational and scientific approach to deity, and then of Romanticism, which called for greater attention to subjective religious insight and feeling” (2). Spiritualism incorporated both of these seemingly antagonistic forms of thought into itself and

generated transformations that included the increasing cultural authority of science and the corresponding growth of a scientific materialism that denied the existence, or at least the knowability, of spirit; a shift in emphasis from external and empirical to internal and intuitive sources of religious experience and epistemological authority; an uneasy coexistence of personal conceptions of God with abstract and impersonal ideas of a deity who operated through natural law; a transformation from an older religious (and social) order based on deference and hierarchy to a newer one which emphasized personal experience, spiritual equality, and self-reliant individualism. (2-3)

The historical combination of technology, philosophy, faith, and politics in which spiritualism emerged also enabled the movement to act as a type of magnet for many in the culture during the late 1800s. Thus, the Fox sisters’ powers as believable mediums were not ultimately what were

important for spiritualism to spread throughout the country. Recognizing this, B.W. Richmond in a letter to S.B. Brittan stated that the phenomenon of spiritualism be given much importance, for “it is taking deep hold of many minds, and the waves already in motion, will widen and spread, till the thing takes definite shape, in the form of a religious organization . . . [T]ruth does not always prevail; the mysteriousness of any statement gives it far greater power than truthfulness, especially when it pertains to the realms of belief” (Brittan 5). According to Richmond truth does not matter; rather what does matter is whether or not one believes. Whether or not mediums were in fact connecting and conversing with unseen spirits was not the point. Rather, the point was that people believed in the powers of the medium just as they believed in the power of new technology, or in the coming of a new age in the US. They believed to such an extent that a religious, social, and political movement took hold in the form of spiritualism. But with any deep belief comes deep anxiety. The anxiety emerging out of the political, cultural, and historical milieu of the late 1800s is one set of intensive processes which directly impact my reading and understanding of “The Perfect Medium.”

### **Unframed Caption #2**

I find myself caught by the figure of a woman dressed in all white. She is not looking at me but yet, somehow, I cannot take my eyes off her figure(s). The caption to the side of the photograph reads “The Ghost of Bernadette Soubirous, 1890. Artist Unknown.” I assume the woman in white is Bernadette’s ghost, but there’s really no way of knowing. She’s dressed like what I’d imagine a nun to be dressed like in the middle ages—white robe, long at the bottom and cut loosely around her body so as not to accent one part of her body over another. She has a pale white face peering out from a stark hanging headcloth that hides her hair. She glows in black and white, calm—and stares straight ahead (to my left) at repeated images of herself. I’ve seen

the effect used in photos a million times before, but for some reason its use here has me trapped. Perhaps it is the caption that frames the photo. Perhaps it's the exhibit itself that frames my reading of each photo. But perhaps it's something else, something beyond the framing devices and the frames of the photos themselves that holds me in sway. The photo is a scene of a path in front of the wall of a brick house or building. There are two doors, one on the right side of the photo and one on the left. Ivy and vines cover the walls and the sole pillar holding up an unseen roof or overhang above the top edge of the photo. A short path extends out from the door on the left which is shut, beyond the right side of the photo, and out into the unseen world of the picture. Bernadette's ghost seems to be walking this path. At the far right side of the photo, in front of one of the closed doors, the figure of the ghost is almost fully manifest; there is almost no transparent quality to her figure except her feet. Then as my eyes move from right to left along the photo her figure repeats four more times, each figure more transparent than its predecessor. The final figure on the left has almost completely disappeared; there is only the vague outline of traces of her white outfit hanging like mist in the air. She seems to be walking through the closed door of the house on the far left, but I can't really tell as she disappears before arriving at the door. The ivy and bricks peer through her slowly fading figure calling my attention to the persistence of time. How many times has she walked this path before? How long has this particular house remained situated in this particular place? Where has she come from walking so solemnly and where is she going? What lies beyond—beyond the path to the right from which she appears and through the door on the left she seems so deliberately to be walking toward? The status of the ghost of Bernadette as a stable subject within the picture is complicated by her repeated (re)appearance as she moves across the frame of the photo. As she moves toward the unknown future—the unseen future of moving through the closed door to the

left of the frame—she becomes less and less manifest, more and more spectral via the trace of her dematerialization. This particular example of what I read as time lapse photography is a visual example of the ghost as trace. Her image repeats as she continues walking to the left, yet each image inscribes difference upon itself as it becomes more and more transparent. Her facial expressions shift ever so slightly; her robe hangs just a little more to the side; her eyes dart upwards for a brief second. As she walks toward the door on the left, she continually (re)orients herself to the unseen future on the other side of the wall, of the beyond of the frame where history collides with politics, and the ghost of Bernadette Soubirous and I meet for a time, each of our minds as full as the other with no way of knowing what the other is thinking. We speak with our eyes in invisible dialects.

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### **Experiments in Optics, Elements, and Light<sup>32</sup>**

In addition to the surge in scientific innovations I outlined above, spiritualism was heavily informed by another technological advancement—photography. Although various inventors and scientists throughout history had been exploring the use of lenses, light, and instruments utilized in the creation of cameras and photography, the mid to late 1800s ushered in an explosion of photographic interest and amazement with the invention of the Daguerreotype camera. Stemming from experiments with various forms of the camera obscura, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce and Jacques Louis Mandé Daguerre teamed together to create the first example of a Daguerreotype camera. Niépce was a chemical experimenter working with various methods of combining chemicals and sunlight that would affix an image to a prepared surface. Daguerre was an artist and showman also exploring chemical processes to expose and develop images onto treated surfaces (Gilbert 1-2). These innovators worked together for several years

exchanging ideas and methods of combining chemicals until Niépce's death in 1833. Two years after his death Daguerre discovered that a few drops of leaked mercury had produced an image on an exposed plate overnight by accidentally breaking a thermometer next to his workstation. Through sheer luck Daguerre inadvertently discovered the principle used for development of latent images (2). In 1844 Hunt notes Niépce's comments in a letter to Daguerre that light

in its state of composition and decomposition, acts chemically upon bodies. It is absorbed, it combines with them, and communicates to them new properties. Thus it augments the natural consistency of some of these bodies; it solidifies them even, and renders them more or less insoluble, according to the duration of intensity of its action. (31)

Based on Niépce's articulation of how the process of light exposure combines with different mixtures of chemicals in order so as to change the properties of both the chemicals and the "bodies" which the chemicals are acting upon, Daguerre experimented with different surfaces and substances in order to produce his first photographs. Daguerre finally settled on the use of iodine to coat silver plates which then decomposed in natural light (33). It is important to note that both Niépce and Daguerre viewed their experiments with light and chemicals as scientific work upon bodies. I argue that such an articulation of the composition of bodies allows for a (re)reading of the processes at work in the genesis of photography. Specifically, the processes used in both the invention of technology to produce photographs and the taking of photographs themselves, become incredibly important sources of information for a critic interested in difference. By situating the relationship between the body and photography as a formal relationship between the photographer, camera, and photographed subject, but many important nuances of the processes at work within photography get lost or overlooked. By looking at the multiplicity of processes at work in the production of a single photograph, and how by

experimenting with difference as a set of variables and potential solutions to produce even one seemingly simple photograph, a whole field of the unseen in criticism emerges *beyond the frame*.

*The molecules of a chemical system are not always in a state when they will react. Some of them appear to have greater energy: these are the activated molecules. The energy necessary for this activation can be produced by the reaction itself or by an external medium such as heat or light.*<sup>33</sup>

At the same time that Daguerre and Niépce were working on their photographic process, an Englishman named William Henry Fox-Talbot was developing his own method of photography. Talbot also used a combination of chemicals in his experiments for capturing images, but unlike Daguerre, Talbot used paper sensitized with chemicals while simultaneously using Gallic acid and Silver Nitrate to develop the image on the paper. His use of these two agents, also an accident, was the first definite use of organic developing agents (Mallinckrodt 14). Talbot's use of treated paper as a negative allowed him, in theory, the ability to reproduce images from the original exposed paper. The use of Silver Nitrate in particular revolutionized the ability of photographers to speed up the exposure and development stages of photography.

Hunt describes the process of using Silver Nitrate on paper:

by soaking the paper previously to applying the wash of nitrate of silver, in isinglass, parchment size, a solution of gum-arabic, or by rubbing it over with the white of an egg, it darkens much more readily, and eventually acquires a much deeper colour. A pleasing variety of grounds for the pictures, may be produced by varying these organic combinations, and a still more interesting series, by precipitating organic liquids with solutions of lead, applying them in the state of cream on paper, and drying, before the nitrate was applied. (46)

While the above passage may read as a representation of the crude tactics implemented by the scientists of the times, I read it as a thoroughly ingenious method of experimenting with multiple variables in order to produce effects in the form of developed photographs. The preparation of the camera and chemically treated plates or paper used to take a simple photograph was an incredibly complex process of experimentation, alteration, discovery, and scientific magic. The fact that both heat and light produced similar effects upon the chemically treated plate or paper made the process of experimentation even more exhilarating and dubious. Improper mixing and/or heating of many of the chemicals used by photographers at the time resulted in countless deaths due to the chemical's poisonous nature. To put it another way, early photography was both an art and a technology coupled with extreme risks to the bodies of those who practiced it. Mixing technology and science in certain ways to produce the desired effects became an art but courted death from noxious chemicals. The art of making photography work came first; making photography art came later.

Unlike the wet-plate process outlined above where the chemicals must be applied to the plate and paper while still wet in order to attain correct exposure settings, the dry-plate process used a different methodology of preparation and execution. Sometimes called the silver gelatin process, the dry-plate process involves the creation of an emulsion of silver salts applied to the plate, film, and/or paper and allowed to dry before exposure to light. Besides producing a more sensitive exposure and development process, the silver gelatin process of photography allowed photographers to store coated plates in a travel kit and leave the darkroom behind. The silver gelatin process emerged in the late 1800s alongside the great western expansion and completion of the trans-continental railroad through no coincidence. As the technology of the railroad

permitted more and more people to settle the western areas of the US, the technology of photography allowed photographers to follow the settlers and document the expansion.

Generally speaking, a photographic emulsion such as silver gelatin is created by adding a neutral or ammoniacal solution of silver nitrate to a solution containing a soluble halogen compound, usually of ammonium or potassium, combined with parts of the gelatin (Greenleaf 8-9). The result of such a combination of chemicals is a reaction which results in the formation and precipitation of relatively insoluble silver halide crystals suspended in the gelatin. Instead of sinking to the bottom of the container as they would in a wet-plate process, the silver crystals remain contained in suspension within the gelatin emulsion (9). The gelatin acts as a sensitizing agent for the crystallized silver crystals, whereas water-based colloids decreases the sensitivity of the silver crystals thereby reducing the amount of time that the wet-plate can be effectively utilized. The bigger the grains of silver within the emulsion, and the faster (more sensitive) an emulsion can be created. This was an incredibly important factor for the photographer and developer. Not only did silver gelatin emulsion reduce the prep time for a photographer in the field, it also increased the sensitivity and quality of the exposure of the film to light. In order to create the most sensitive and largest grains of silver in the gelatin emulsion, a series of differential relationships need to be experimented with in order to produce a fast and sensitive emulsion for the taking and development of photographs. The conditions which favor the production of a fast emulsion with relatively large grains are: (1) low concentration of the gelatin relative to the concentration of the salts; (2) excess of bromide ions over the amount required to react with the silver ions; (3) mixing at a relatively high temperature; (4) slow mixing (Greenleaf 11).

In other words, in order to produce a fast and sensitive emulsion, a small amount of gelatin is combined in relation to a larger amount of silver salts. The small amount of gelatin contains a sensitizing agent in the form of mustard oil (10). Silver bromide is added to the mixture which causes the ions associated with the silver compound to attach to the bromide compound forming larger silver crystals. Although the majority of the smaller silver crystals all but disappear in the solution, the larger crystals produce better images because they retain more light when exposed. The speed of the emulsion is increased while the average size of the crystals is decreased. While the emulsion is left with fewer silver crystals, the remaining crystals are larger in size. The solution is then mixed slowly at a high temperature for a set amount of time. The emulsion is “ripened” through the exposure to heat and time increasing the sensitivity of the solution. Emulsion chemists believe that the ripening happens due to the production of a small amount of colloidal silver which attaches itself to the sensitizing nuclei. Care must be taken not to overripen the emulsion by too much exposure to heat or mixing for too long or else the crystals become developable with exposure to light; such emulsions contain a “chemical fog” (11). The gelatin is then cooled and cut into sheets or “noodles,” washed, and reheated at a temperature of 95-150 degrees. This process increases the speed of the emulsion but not the size of the grains. The silver gelatin emulsion is then coated on its “support” which may be plates, cellulose nitrate or acetate films, or paper (12-13).

In Deleuzian terms, the creation of the silver gelatin emulsion is a process of experimentation with differential relationships and properties of chemical compounds in order to produce a solution that has the potential for capturing light on both the plate and the print in the most desirable manner. In addition to the process of experimentation that leads to the creation of silver gelatin photographs, the photographer has to experiment with different ways of exposing

the film to light and developing the picture. How much light is necessary for the creation of a picture? How long must the exposure last? What types of chemicals are needed to develop the picture? How long does the development process take depending on which chemicals are used? In other words, how can the photographer experiment with intensive properties in the production of photography in order to create a particular photograph that has particular extensive properties? Similarly, how can the critic look at a particular photograph and move her critique beyond a quantitative analysis of the characteristics of the photograph contained by the frame (its identity as a true representation of its reality), into a qualitative analysis of the processes experimented within the photo's production outside the frame (its reality determined as/by differential processes). In such a differential criticism the critic moves outside of hermeneutics and interpretation into a consideration of the photograph as more than a simple object. Instead of looking at how one photo is different from another photo using its identity to determine the way(s) it is different from the other, I argue for an analysis of the photo as a process of difference that extends much further back into the photograph's genesis, so that difference is the main factor in the photo's production. Silver gelatin is not simply a different means for exposing and developing pictures because it works or looks differently than other developers or film. Silver gelatin emerged out of a process where chemists continually adjusted and experimented with difference—different temperatures, different chemicals, different materials, different lengths of time—producing one particular form of photographic technology. If pictures are almost always meant to be viewed in terms of the manifest image inside the frame, what happens when we look for the latent image beyond the picture itself? What begins to develop by repeatedly engaging the photograph as conditioning and being conditioned by its particular processes of production?

*For one molecule to react with another, it must absorb energy. This heat is taken from that released by the reaction in the form of “heat of reaction” resulting from the displacement of the electrons from one atom to another and the movement of the atoms themselves.*<sup>34</sup>

### **Unframed Caption # 3**

Two photos hang side by side on the wall. They appear to have been taken at the same moment from two different cameras, but who can tell? A bearded man is suspended midair above a chair. He is dressed in a dark suit and wears no shoes. The picture captures him at the precise moment he levitated out from his chair during a séance. The caption tells me that the man’s name is Colin Evans and that the séance was held in total darkness. At least a hundred people are seated in chairs surrounding the floating man, their faces painted with a host of different expressions—boredom, shock, fear, joy, bemusement, anticipation. The two photographs depict two different angles of the same moment—the man suspended above his chair. In the first photo the camera faces the medium; in the second photo the camera is on the medium’s left side giving a profile view of the action. A man in the corner of the room, sitting outside of the circle of onlookers, seemingly stares off in the opposite direction of the levitating body of Colin Evans. His eyes glow. “What’s that over there?” he calls out to me. He directs his gaze toward something outside the frame of the photograph. Perhaps he’s daydreaming. His gaze looks as if he is daydreaming about another world that he so clearly sees, and yet exceeds my own perception. My mind starts to wander back and forth between the two pictures and a dream I have every now and then. I remember different details every time I wake from my sleep. Sometimes I wake, and remember that in my dream I can fly, or perhaps float. Taking a deep breath, I can focus all my energy on the gentle nervousness I feel in my body. The tug of anticipation in my belly balloons me up into the sky like a giant step or the football in “Flubber.” If I take a deep enough breath, I

can float midair, caught between the earth and the sky. My mind races to believe the fantastic. I am floating. The moment lasts only a split second, before gravity pulls me back to earth, before I reach the apex of my float-step, where I feel like I've been here before. I know this place and this moment of suspended flight, but know not from where this feeling of familiarity originates. I am remembering memory itself—humid and porous, murky and electric. I can feel myself in control of my ascent while simultaneously being pulled down by some unseen force. My body is alive with sensation, but something beyond my senses affects my ability to float on forever. Just as quickly as I wake from dreams, the pictures snap back into focus in front of my eyes. The audience members of the séance mark a similar phenomenon. In a darkened room they stare in opposite directions. Their faces and bodies caught in the flash of the camera. In that moment of illumination I can see their anticipation for Colin Evans to float in front of them. And he does float, suspended above his chair, glimpsed only by those lucky enough to be looking somewhere particular and unannounced. Maybe two or three people were lucky enough to see him float in the split-second of the flash that lit up the room. The others seem to stare off in a million different directions, trying so desperately to sense something happening. Their bodies caught in anticipation of Colin Evans' possession, a possession I myself can feel floating here in front of these pictures.

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### **The Tekne of Spirit Photography and Memory**

One of the most important technological developments aiding the rise of spiritualism in the 1800s was photography. A multiplicity of cultural, political, and historical intensities intersected inside the frame of so-called “spirit photography.” Without the emergence of photography in the 1800s spiritualism would not have formed as such a singular phenomenon,

wrapped inside the intricacies of technology, faith, science, and politics. Specifically, photography became a crucial form for spiritualists to “prove” the existence of spirits and specters according to the cultural demands of the age. Arguably for the spiritualists, a belief in the “reality” of science outweighed beliefs stemming from religious doctrine, for the doctrine of spiritualism directly stemmed from the shifting cultural cache afforded to science and technology in the 1800s. Alongside the spiritualist’s belief in the reality of the dead to be able to communicate with the living via mediums, stood a similarly steadfast understanding of the culture’s view that science and technology had the power to depict the world in objective terms—empirical reality. Spiritualists leaned heavily upon science and new forms of technology to “prove” to the world that spiritualism was indeed as real as the communiqués sent via telegraphy or the pictures of dead soldiers from Civil War battlegrounds. Even though belief in the empirical reality of science saturated spiritualism and its practices, the belief on the part of the scientific community did not reciprocate the same affinity for spiritualism.

Building on my generalized sketch of different processes at work in the development of spiritualism and photography in the mid to late 1800s, I shift my attention to the intersection of photography and spiritualism proper—spirit photography. Paul Firenze notes that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there emerged a feeling that “photography could be used to stop time and allow people to reach back into the past, serving much the same function as memory had in the past. The images of those who had died could be preserved through the technology of photography” (1). While theories of the “reality” of photography and the photograph have no doubt shifted since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is not hard to see how the shock of seeing a photograph for the first time would be convincing proof of the power of photography to depict objective reality. It is also not surprising how scientific and technological affects, including photography, flowed through the spiritualist

doctrine and its practice. As I suggested above, spiritualism emerged out of a specific cultural and historical milieu that contained an overarching anxiety over the development of new manners of science and technology while simultaneously tapping into the disenfranchised sentiment stemming from the passing of the Second Great Awakening. Spiritualists believed in the power to communicate with the dead, but needed the culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's belief in science to prove the existence of ghosts beyond the word of the medium or the priest. In the séance the medium emerged as a figure that stood in for the scientist. Spiritualists viewed the medium as operating in a "scientific context and a technological framework" (1). The use of photography as a form of documentary proof for science captured by spiritualists as a method to also document the existence of spirits only seemed natural. Spirit photography provided a scientific means of resurrecting the dead (1).

The main preoccupation of spiritualism was to prove the existence of ghosts and their ability to communicate with the living. Darwin's "Origin of the Species" cast large doubts on the foundational beliefs of Christianity. Darwin's account brought suspicion upon the history of the Genesis account of creation, the age of the earth, the origin and nature of humankind, and by implication, the existence and necessity of God (Harvey 110). Ironically, in order to uphold their Christian orthodoxy and counter scientific revisionism, the spiritualists turned to scientific methods and science appealing to empirical phenomenon in the form of psychic (spirit) photographs. Whatever irreconcilable differences spiritualism and science had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both had an overlapping claim to be able to see and visualize invisible realms (110). As I outlined above, the invention of telegraphy made manifest communication between absent bodies. In addition to telegraphy, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the discovery of X-rays, radiographs, radio waves, telephony, radio broadcast, and wireless communication. All forms of "invisible"

technology, one could not sense these technologies with their senses. But science emerged as a field able to visually represent the invisible and unseen realm. Similarly, mediums claimed to be able to visually (if not corporeally) represent the unseen realm of the ghost via their ability to communicate with the dead. As I will demonstrate, the claim of science and spiritualism to empirical reality is not the most important fact in my analysis of spirit photography. Whether ghosts are real is beside the point. However the reality of how both science and spiritualism emerged as phenomena in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their interdependence on each other is of acute importance to this study.

*When a reaction is reversible, that is, when it can take place in either direction depending on the conditions, an equilibrium is established between the two opposite reactions.*<sup>35</sup>

Oddly enough, the deployment of physical science by spiritualists to aid the validity of spiritualism as a religious movement recalled photography to its origins as a type of occult science (Harvey 111). Photography was a science that combined an overtly religious belief in the power of light as deriving from the gods with the mystic status of those who experimented with chemicals and properties of matter. Societies had long worshipped light in varying religious manners from the nomadic tribes of the Caucassian valley with outfits of light-needing vegetation, to the Greeks with Zeus as the god of heaven and light and Apollo as the god of the sun (Hunt 2-3). The sun and light held great powers, and stories from many cultures throughout history dealt with efforts and attempts to capture, invoke, and worship light, from Icarus in Greece to the divine archer Yi in Chinese folklore. The desire to harness the power of light extends from the Bible's opening salvo, into Newton and Davinci's experiments with optics and

lenses, through Robert Boyle's writings on the heat and light of celestial bodies, to Daguerre and Fox-Talbot's tinkering with photography. Many of these tales and experiments with light involved the use of scientific techniques and analysis, but arose out of the magical and sacred power afforded to light throughout time. Similarly, the science of understanding the chemical composition of matter and elements retains a pseudo-occult status. John Harvey cites 15<sup>th</sup> century alchemists and their discovery of the ability to merge silver and marine salts in order to transmute the color off-white to black when exposed to light (111). The experiments of the alchemists sound more like a boiling stew in a witch's cauldron than the laboratory of a scientist, yet paved the way for more modern experiments with chemical compounds and elemental structures. In addition to the alchemists, Robert Hunt cites the ancient philosopher Democritus and his writings on the ability of sunlight to infuse the bodies of elements so as to increase their weight and worth (5-6). Harvey also notes that even Fox-Talbot conferred a supernatural status upon photography similar to that of the Turin Shroud or Veronica Veil by stating that the images were made not by human hands, but rather mysterious supernatural forces (111). Spirit photography emerged as an important site for representing the intertwining of both science and mysticism. In this light the photographs could be seen as a type of science-art utilized to demonstrate the reality of the belief of spiritualists and scientists in the unseen (spirits and chemical reactions), by affording power to that which can be seen (the visual object of/as matter).

If, as Paul Firenze questions, photographic images could "replace an object itself as an acceptable subject for scientific study," then why were spirit photographs so widely criticized as fakes or forgeries (4)? The controversy over spiritualism caused the Fox sisters to almost be lynched in 1849 (Jay 10). William H. Mumler, a prominent spirit photographer, was tried in

1869 for fraud by the mayor New York City.<sup>36</sup> William James, a prominent psychologist and philosopher at Harvard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was widely criticized and discredited for his writings and theories on mysticism and ghosts (Blum). Rather than discrediting the foundational beliefs of the spiritualists themselves, the majority of attempts at discrediting spiritualism focused on spirit photography. Essentially spirit photography emphasized the collaboration between two mediums—a light sensitive plate and a spiritualist sensitive medium. Psychic photographers claimed to portray an “extra” or supernatural form which, while invisible at the time that the photograph was taken, developed on the photographic plate alongside the image of the living subject (Harvey 112). These extras manifested in the form of almost invisible figures of dead relatives, odd figures of light or dark, ectoplasmic manifestations of ghosts, unexplained productions of light-energy, etc. The majority of the photographs in “The Perfect Medium” were of this nature. The controversy over the pictures stemmed from the presence of the extras in the photographs. That the spirit photographs of the time contained extras or representations of ghosts within their frames is undeniable. But as to whether they were real depictions of spirits cuts to the heart of the validity of spirit photography as a scientific technology.

During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the technology of photography was still a relatively new art. The fact that early photography was in essence a series of experiments with light and chemicals left a large amount of room for mistakes and accidents to occur. These mistakes oftentimes became reinscribed as successful practices for photographers. The reappropriation of “failed” photographic techniques are most evident in the practices of spirit photographers. For example, photographers who reused poorly cleaned plates, or plates still containing latent images from previous exposures, risked seeing unwanted “ghosts” appear in their images (Chéroux 45). This explanation for the appearance of extras or ghosts in the

photographs is an analog to the truly experimental nature of most of the scientific and technological practices of the age. The rush to “break through” into scientific advancement oftentimes led those who experimented with new forms of technology into a murky realm of discovery via an ingenuity of accidents. Most of the scientific advancements of the age were still in their infancy and must have truly mystified the public as to how they were employed. As the first pictures of spirit photography began to emerge, a popular sentiment attributed the appearance of extras to the “combined effects of chance and incompetence, seeing them as nothing more than accidents” (45). But as spiritualism took hold within the later 1800s, the reality of the photographs as proof of communication with the dead began to take hold among popular culture. As the fervor over spiritualism rose, many photographers leapt at the opportunity to produce more and more pictures of ghosts in order to satisfy the needs of the debate over the existence of spirits. Spirit photography began a long flirtation with entertainment, utilizing scientific technique as a means of making the ghosts perform in the frame. Thus, one potential method of analyzing spirit photography can be to examine the pictures as a performance that entertained and mystified viewers with its depiction of the undead. Photographers began to deliberately, rather than accidentally, use the techniques of photographic accidents in exposure and development to exploit the resemblance between photographic superimposition and the ghostly imagery inherent to the collective imagination of the late 1880s (46). The pictures of spirit photographers deployed as entertainment were quite literally frames of performative representation. These type of pictures combined processes of experimentation via chemicals and light, with the emerging development of spiritualism as a social process, in order to affect an iconic representation of the anxiety between science and spiritualism. This

anxiety literally developed into photographs that beg to be considered as performatively representational.

For example, in John Beattie's series of spirit photographs entitled "Spiritualist Séance," there are four men seated in a circle around a small table. Directly above the table there are two balls of light that look something like giant white teardrops floating in the air. Movement can be detected by the blurred edges of the men's faces and hands, as if their bodies were hard at work in order to conjure the light. The photos are a grainy black and white and whether or not the teardrops of light are actually part of the image captured in the room, or a chemical afterthought on the print produced, is hard to tell. To focus on the performance of the men in the circle as representative of the spiritualist need for belief in the power of mediums would be easy. That the photographer enacted a kind of performance by casting the men and chemical ghosts as actors, and the camera (and viewer) as audience, could also be said. I consider both of these analyses too much and not enough. Instead of focusing on what the photos mean as different types of performances, the need arises for the performativity of the photograph to be engaged as an extension of the process that led to the development of the photos themselves. Instead of solely looking to the contents inside the frame to guide the understanding and interpretation of the photograph, I argue for an opening up of the frame onto the performative dimension of historiography. The task at hand is to allow for the frame of the photograph to loosen its grip as the sole indicator of how to understand the content of the photo, and for the viewer to move into the frame alongside the men at the séance table. Such a move radically changes the ways that photographs (or performance, I argue in the broader project) can be understood. By moving in and out of the picture and allowing the frame to continually disappear and reappear, the stakes of how to view the photograph shift. The question of the photograph moves from what the photo

means, to how the experience of the photo gets narrated. My narration of how I experience a particular photograph will no doubt be different than another's. This is the point. I bring the baggage of my own body's history and excess to bear on my articulation and understanding of the photo. The question of the other, whether it is the subjects in the photo, the photographer, or the unseen audience present when the photo was taken, is raised when I step into the frame alongside those for whom I cannot account.

The compulsion to account for that which is beyond perception, the excess of the bodies of the past, the body of the frame, or even the past itself, drives memory and the work of the historian into a type of habit. Ricoeur notes that

in the case of habit what is acquired is incorporated into the living present, unmarked, and unremarked as past. In the other case, a reference is made to the anteriority of the prior acquisition. In both cases, then, it remains true that memory 'is of the past,' but according to two distinct modes—unmarked and marked—of reference to the place in time of the initial experience. (25)

Ricoeur ties the work of memory to historical investigation and warns that treating memory as a habit risks approaching the recollection of an historical event like a simple recitation of something memorized. The memory is then folded into the living present of the recalling subject effacing the historicity of both history and memory. Instead of treating memory like a habit, Ricoeur advocates a "truthful memory" that marks the impossibility of knowing the whole picture presented by history. Rather than reciting a lesson learned over and over, Ricoeur cites Bergson's argument for memory as a "particular reading, of a given phrase of memorization, [which] presents 'none of the marks of habit'" (25). If applied to the sketch of spirit photography I have outlined, the treatment of memory following the thoughts of Bergson and Ricoeur forces the viewing subject to repeatedly engage "looking at" a photograph as a performative exercise in acknowledging the successive moments at work in the (re)creation of

the photographic product. With each successive look at the photo, the frame of a simple understanding of the photo as an object meant to be seen in front of my eyes, expands and contracts to let in more light of history and memory. By looking a photograph in such a way, I become part of the picture through the metaphorical dis-appearance and re-appearance of the actual frame of the photograph, while simultaneously acknowledging the anteriority of the processes at work in the history and development of the actualized photographic product. Because there are a host of processes anterior (not sensed) in my perception of the spiritualist photograph means that I must recognize the presence of what Walter Benjamin calls “fermenters” and “organic substances.” He notes that fermenters are catalytic agents that provoke or accelerate the decomposition of organic substances. He treats organic substances as historically transmitted stylistic forms that react with the destructive power of the fermenters (672). Put another way, the organic substances of the spiritualist photograph—the photo itself, the frame, the content of the photo, my own perception—react with the destructive power of the fermentors of memory and history. The photograph and my understanding of it are altered by the fermenting power of the histories outside the frame at work upon our bodies (the photo, the bodies involved in the production of the photo, and my own).

#### **Unframed Caption #4**

Emil Schrapf, the bound medium, sits in the corner of a room, hands and feet tied up with string. Again, two curtains are pulled back to reveal his figure, eyes closed and bound to his chair. Tiny strings or ropes are attached to various parts of his body—eyes, ears, legs, feet, hands, elbows, mouth—and run throughout the space. As my eyes follow the paths of the strings from one end of the room to the other, I notice a stringed instrument, like a dulcimer, stashed behind one of the curtains. Many of the strings lead from Emil’s body to the instrument. The caption next to the

photo reveals that during certain séances the unseen spirits would manifest themselves by channeling their psychic energy through the medium and into musical instruments. The ghosts would then reveal their presence by playing a tune for a room of amazed onlookers. Emil seems to have been one of those mediums that could communicate with the spirits in such a way. But look at his socks! Bright white, with black stripes running horizontal to the ground, his toes are tucked neatly and warmly inside. They travel up inside his pants disappearing behind the black cloth hanging at his shins. Why am I drawn to his socks and where are his shoes? Do his socks help him find the right frequency, the right tune to send through his body, through the strings, into the dulcimer conspicuously stashed behind the drawn curtains? I wonder if there was music playing at the time the photo was taken. Of course, I cannot tell. The photo reveals only so much. I close my eyes and listen to the sound of the photograph, waiting for the strings attached to Emil's body to leave the frame and attach themselves to my elbows, ears, and socks. I want so desperately to hear the melody that the unseen ghost produced if only for a moment. I stand with my eyes closed, rigid and pinned down by the whirring of my body as it struggles to remember a memory never quite lived. I wait and watch with open ears for the spirit's song to emerge from the photo. Of course it never quite manifests in my mind's ear. Instead, I start humming a tune I do not recognize. No words to the song in my mouth exist, only broken tunes and overlapping harmonies. The song feels familiar, but just as quickly as I start to remember, the tune changes its key and moves on. It's as if Emil is trying to show me how to listen through his stillness. He seems to be calling out to me, "You never know when it will come, and you never know how it will come, just that if you believe it will eventually arrive. Listen to me with your eyes, and watch me with your ears; the ghost fools the senses, just out of reach and on the tips of tongues." The tune fades from my mind and I open my eyes. The photo is still hanging silently on the

wall, but I swear to myself that I can see it singing and hear it rustling as I slowly walk to the next picture in the exhibit.

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In the end I could say that pictures are framed by discrete edges which put limits to their status as objects. The frame is a limit of the photograph and continually forces the eyes inside to see its subject matter. The camera takes a picture and the film is exposed to the reality of the world it reflects. The camera represents the reality of the world it captures with the blink of its eye, literally fixing its status as an object through its development. However, I have argued throughout this chapter that there is another more productive way to view photographs—examining the processes at work in the development of the picture *outside the frame*. Frames are arbitrary in so far as they do not represent any real limit to the photograph. At a particular point inside the camera or in the darkroom, the exposed surface of the negative or paper stops. The picture gets framed by the absence of light. The image that gets produced on the negative is lifted from its surroundings and becomes framed by the light because we can see it. Everything outside the frame suffers the cruel associative fate of being cast into darkness because it is not present in the picture as object. Rather than think of the frame and excess of the photograph in such negative terms, I argue that both the gazing subject and the gazed upon object must move beyond the limits of traditional representational logic into a consideration of representation as a performative process. In the case of spirit photographs, the performativity afforded to the ghost by Derrida, and the process of actualization afforded to products by Deleuze, can be applied to the photographs of ghosts themselves. A spirit photograph is an object produced by a host of unseen processes and retains difference as its foundation. The photograph is the result of a particular experiment with differing intensities of scientific application, political flows, historical

orientations, and social movements which exceed the frame of the object. As difference works more and more in the process of producing the object, the frame of the object becomes clearer and clearer. However, the differences that exceed the frame and are not found inside the frame of the photo, are the most important factors in the creation of the photo as object. As a result, I view the produced photograph as a trace of difference that simultaneously calls our attention to its incomplete status as object. The spirit photograph is an object haunted by the processes of its genesis. Therefore I must continually open myself up to a consideration of the photograph's meaning by moving beyond the limits of interpretation, and into an experience of the repetition of the photograph as a performative process.

*Certain compounds called catalysts accelerate the reaction rate or even make them possible. The extent of their action is independent of their concentration, for traces of the catalyst are sometimes sufficient to bring about a reaction.*<sup>37</sup>

## **Endnotes**

<sup>28</sup> Glafkides 959. Throughout this chapter I use the quotes from Glafkides to enhance an awareness of different unseen processes at work in chemical reactions. The particular chemical reactions I highlight in this chapter are specific to chemical reactions in photographic development techniques, although the idea pertains to most chemical processes at work in physical and/or material processes.

<sup>29</sup> In the previous chapters I have gone to great length to note how both Derrida and Deleuze have decried representational logic as something to be wary of. Their projects, while different in many ways, find commonality by rethinking the ways in which difference works as a mode of production. Both Derrida and Deleuze utilize their respective theories of difference to rearticulate ontologies that operate outside the reliance of traditional Western philosophy on the language of representation and metaphysics.

<sup>30</sup> Throughout this chapter I analyze select photographs from the exhibit through performative writing. Titled as captions, I explore the photographs through a combination of the content inside the frame with content outside the frame.

<sup>31</sup> Glafkides 960

<sup>32</sup> In this section I explore a variety of photographic development processes used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the descriptions use various scientific terms and concepts. These scientific processes are important to a critic looking outside the frame of the photograph for events and elements that inform the production of the photograph itself. In

addition to the content of the image, the developmental process that the image goes through is also important and necessary to analyze.

<sup>33</sup> Glafkides 960

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Mumler was found innocent of all charges brought against him, ironically, in large part due to the testimony of PT Barnum who said at trial that he had witnessed Mumler's whole procedure of taking the photographs, and that no trickery had taken place (Jay 17).

<sup>37</sup> Glafkides 960

## Chapter 5: Sampling, *Seven Easy Pieces*, and Performance Document(ation)s

“After thirty years of performing, I feel like it is my duty to retell the story of performance art in a way that respects the past and also leaves room for reinterpretation” (Abramović, *Reenactment* 10).

“The keyboard style became more my style, because I started playing my samples like melodies. That really wasn’t being done by people back then. They would just push the key, drop the sample, and that’s it. They wouldn’t usually actually play the sample. But back then, I would start sampling one note and playing it on different notes of the keyboard. I started chopping things down to notes and chords, not knowing which chords they were but knowing them as sounds” (RZA 196-197).

*Day 1—Wednesday*  
(*First hour sucks—nothing*).<sup>38</sup>

In the fall of 2005, internationally acclaimed performance artist Marina Abramović presented a series of seven performance art pieces entitled *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Over the course of one week she performed five works first performed by other performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s and added two of her own. She selected five performances of her performance art colleagues from the 60s and 70s that were considered important or particularly resonated with her in some manner, and re-performed the pieces in front of a contemporary audience adding both a re-performance and original of her own work to round out the seven performances. Abramović had not been present to witness any of the original five performances that she “covered.” Similarly, I was not present to witness any of the performances of *Seven Easy Pieces*. However, like Abramović, I choose to engage *Seven Easy Pieces* by examining her performances of/from the past in my own performance of/in the present. A host of questions and complications invariably arise for both me and Abramović through our shared interest of experimenting with different forms of retelling and re-presenting performances of/from the past. What are the differences between the performances that she covers and her subsequent interpretations of them as “new” performance

art pieces? What type of knowledge is gained from a historical perspective by repeating or re-presenting performances which she did not author? How do her performances of a specific period in the history of performance art allow us to rethink that period and our own? How is ownership imagined in relation to performance and history? How does difference function in forming a different way to understand a performance in the present and in the past? And finally, how can we experiment with the relationships between technique, documentation, critique, and praxis in order to create compelling and productive conversations about performance and performance art? This list of questions is necessarily incomplete and I have no desire to produce a definitive set of questions, let alone answers. However, these questions and others guide the trajectory of this chapter as I examine *Seven Easy Pieces*, providing access points for an understanding of performance creation and critique to develop outside of static notions of representation, reproduction, and repetition.<sup>39</sup>

Paul Ricouer writes in *Memory, History, Forgetting* that if “historiography is first of all archived memory and if all the subsequent cognitive operations taken up by the epistemology of historical knowledge proceed from this initial gesture of archiving, the historian’s mutation of space and time can be taken as the formal condition of possibility for this gesture of archiving” (148). Every act of writing about performance is an act of memory and experimenting with different forms of narrating the experience of remembering. Ricouer makes it clear that the power of the historian to mutate space and time is precisely the power of memory and history themselves. When we write or talk about performance, we are remembering something we have seen and then attempt to organize our thoughts in a wish to paint a clear picture of what we remember and what we think or feel about it. In this way, when we critique a performance we are essentially taking some past event and reorganizing the event in the present in order to

communicate our criticism of the event to a reader. A whole host of methods used to document performance have emerged over the last hundred years or so, from verbatim transcription to performative writing. In my estimation, Ricouer's ideas about archived memory and history allude to a few major obstacles when writing about performance. Namely, what happens to the performance we are critiquing when it is treated as an event seemingly closed off from the multiplicity of relations that conditioned its very emergence as a performance event? What does performance become when we impart an essence to performance's ontology?

Peggy Phelan argues the value of performance's disappearance once performed. Phillip Auslander goes to equally great lengths to argue the essential nature of performance in terms of liveness, and how different forms of mediatization alter and affect not only live performance, but also theories of the ontology of performance as being different than the ontology of mediated events. As mentioned earlier, others have cited context, text, performer, and audience as the essential characteristics of performance and document these forms thoroughly. No doubt these are important. However, rather than call these components essential qualities of performance, I consider them as singular and material sites of a performance process that does not culminate with the completion of any given performance, but continues to produce, mutate, and breathe in its relationship to memory and history as something that happened in the past, and something that has bearing on both present and future performances. Throughout the whole of this project, I have stressed that it is not wrong to consider performance using terms like text, event, performer, audience, liveness, etc., but that problems arise when the terms are not continually operationalized and reconfigured every step of the way. Otherwise the critic employing such a terminology runs the risk of falling into a trap of essentializing performance into discrete categories to which it must adhere. I argue in this chapter that by approaching Performance as

performative in the Derridian sense, and process in the Deleuzian sense, Abramović opens up new territory for performers and critics alike to experiment with time and space in their work, so that the differences between the past, present, and future are allowed to be both different and productive.

Of all the performance sites I have examined in this project, *Seven Easy Pieces* is the site in which history, and its ramifications upon the present, is most explicit. The five performance pieces that Abramović chose to re-perform were pieces created by a specific group of artists all living in varying historical contexts and time periods, all creating performances out of very real material circumstances specific to their own histories. Johanna Burton notes that Abramović's interest in "exhuming [the] dematerialized material was geared toward a literal, physical, reinvestment in it—one aimed at problematizing the question of just when a piece of live art begins and ends, to say nothing of how to keep such 'liveness' alive" (55). According to Burton, the specter(s) of previous performers and their work loomed over each one of Abramović's performances, watching on high in the spiraling tiers of the museum (55). The fact that the performances Abramović chose to re-perform had actually happened some time ago in the past, raises serious questions about the nature of performance as an event, and representation as potentiality rather than essence.

In the program for *Seven Easy Pieces*, a generalized description of the impetus behind each of the seven performances is outlined:

. . . [W]ith *Seven Easy Pieces* Abramović reenacts seminal performance works by her peers dating from the 1960's and '70's, interpreting them as one would a musical score and documenting their realization. The project is premised on the fact that little documentation exists for most performances from this critical early period; one often has to rely upon testimonies from witnesses or photographs that show only portions of any given piece. *Seven Easy Pieces* examines the possibility of redoing and preserving an art form that is, by nature, ephemeral. (*Marina Abramović* 1)

The description could easily serve as a condensation of the myriad issues surrounding my analysis of *Seven Easy Pieces* in this current chapter. Abramović's performances are framed by the use of words like "musical score," "documentation," "witnesses," "redoing," and "ephemeral." These incredibly loaded terms emerging from *Seven Easy Pieces* force a reconsideration of their very meaning and function in criticism and performance practice. I have to admit, that these words fill me with more than a little bit of trepidation. On the one hand, I want to scream every time I hear the words ephemeral and performance used in the same sentence. While I understand the argument that performance is an event that disappears as soon as it is enacted, I have made clear throughout this project that I'm uncomfortable with looking at performance as an object whose identity ensures its disappearance. Similarly, the question of how best to document a performance that disappears (performative writing, digital video and sound, photographs, etc.) is a question I feel is often given up on because of the perceived impossibility to document the REALITY of the performance object. Obviously the method of documentation would fail at capturing the essence of the performance using the ephemeral model because in such we assume that performance begins and ends with the event of performing in front of an audience. I argue there are more productive means of doing and writing about performance which while openly admitting a performance event that ends, considers performance as a process untethered to a strict logic of representation and identity. In this way, the act of documentation and criticism shifts to engaging various means of representing through repetition and difference, rather than looking at different performances as representative of the success or failure of living up to an essential idea of performance. While words like "documentation" and "ephemerality" need to be utilized and examined in discussions about performance, how we use words, how we perform, how we do things—how we operationalize

our terms— and the consequences of choosing particular meanings for them is an important project that cannot be forgotten or ignored.

In some way, this chapter could as easily focus on the book *Seven Easy Pieces* by Marina Abramović, rather than the seven performances of *Seven Easy Pieces*. A document of the seven performances and the various influences on Abramović during the creation of the pieces, the book raises complex questions about the different kinds of processes at work in the planning, rehearsal, theorization, and execution of *Seven Easy Pieces*. A stunning work with over 230 pages filled with documents, pictures, overheard conversations, confessions, witness testimony, critical responses, and statements by the artist, the book as a document of *Seven Easy Pieces* functions as a site for Abramović to “open a discussion about how a performance can be preserved. What is the right way of documenting it? How can it be shown after the event? And in what kind of conditions can a performance be repeated?” (Abramović, *Reenactment* 10). And while it is clear that the book is not meant to stand in for the performance event, it is equally clear that Abramović had the question of documentation in mind when she was structuring *Seven Easy Pieces*. The power of the book lies in the fact that it formally addresses the performances and their thematic content, while simultaneously extending the performance in unique ways. The book acts as documentary proof that the performances that Abramović chose to re-perform did not disappear, in the same manner that her re-performances of them still linger and resist traditional notions of representation and ephemerality.

## **RE: PERFORMANCES**

1<sup>st</sup> Night:

**Bruce Nauman**

*Body Pressure*

Yellow Body, Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf

February 4-March 6, 1974 (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 58)

In their article “Performa/(Re)Performa,” T. Nikki Cesare and Jenn Joy ask a question that seems to inform the whole of their analysis writing that *Seven Easy Pieces* was “about remembering, though the question this time might be ‘Marina, *how do we remember?*’” (170). Indeed, all of the performances comprising *Seven Easy Pieces* seem to be Abramović’s take on answering the question of how one remembers. The answer gets increasingly complicated because of the introduction of Abramović’s body as a metonym for the performances that she re-performed, standing as a material marker of the interpretive act. How she remembers the performances covered in each segment of *Seven Easy Pieces* became marked by how she chose to stage each one. Cesare and Joy call this phenomenon “embodied documentation (a remembering, if you will)” (170). By reattaching a body to the memory of a past performance, Abramović forces the audience to simultaneously engage the past and present, subsequently increasing our awareness of the impact of memory upon the future.

Ricouer writes that remembering is “not only welcoming, receiving an image of the past, it is also searching for it, ‘doing something.’ The verb ‘to remember’ stands in for the substantive ‘memory.’ What the verb designates is the fact that memory is ‘exercised’” (56). If, as Ricouer argues, memory denotes active participation, the act of remembering is characterized by a method of experimentation enacted by she who remembers. There is, of course, a limit of the past that we cannot cross or apprehend with our senses. One cannot see into the past any more than one can see into someone else’s mind. However, one can always press themselves up against the limit of the past in order to see what kind of particles, scents, sounds, and dust gets left behind on their bodies. In *The Rings of Saturn*, W.G. Sebald writes about the “empty” scene of the formal battle of Waterloo:

[A]cross [the] horrific three dimensional scene, on which the cold dust of time has settled, one's gaze is drawn to the horizon, to the enormous mural, one hundred and ten yards by twelve, painted in 1912 . . . on the inner wall of the circus-like structure. This then, I thought, as I looked round about me, is the representation of history. It requires a falsification of perspective. We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was. (125)

Sebald continues by stating no clear picture of the battle ever emerged for him. Only until he closed his eyes did flashes of cannonballs smashing through poplars and trees emerge like a distant phantom pain in one's limbs (126). As I close my eyes and think about the first snow of winter, it's easy to feel like I am tasting the cold flecks on my tongue, and hearing the deafening silence of a snowy field. But it is not snowing when I open my eyes; the only sound I hear is the clakity clak of my keyboard and some random song playing in the background. But I lick my lips and strain my ears and press against the flickering image of that memory and write these things down and wonder what if?

Abramović's first re-performance was of Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974).

Originally in Nauman's piece a set of instructions were posted in the performance space for the audience to follow. The text on the wall "was an action to be performed by the audience," (Cesare & Joy 170) and read as follows:

Body Pressure  
Press as much of the front surface of  
your body (palms in or out, left or right cheek)  
against the wall as possible. Press very hard and concentrate.  
Form an image of yourself (suppose you  
had just stepped forward) on the  
opposite side of the wall pressing  
back against the wall very hard.  
Press very hard and concentrate on the image pressing very hard.  
(the image of pressing very hard)  
Press your front surface and back surface  
toward each other and begin ignore or  
Block the thickness of the wall. (remove  
the wall)

Think how various parts of your body  
press against the wall; which parts  
touch and which do not.  
Consider the parts of your back which  
press against the wall; press hard and  
feel how the front and back of your  
body press together.  
Concentrate on the tension in the muscles,  
pain where bones meet, fleshy deformations  
that occur under pressure; consider  
body hair, perspiration, odors (smells).  
This may become a very erotic exercise. (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 59)

These instructions were printed on pieces of paper and left in a stack in the middle of the performance hall. The audience could take a piece of paper and participate based on their interpretation of the instructions. According to Burton, there was no set duration for the action(s) and moreover no guarantee that anyone had ever performed them in the first place (55).

Abramović describes her fascination with the possibility of participation moving and transforming through space and time in an interview, stating that Nauman

made the score or instructions available to the audience members to perform the piece themselves. This gave permission to the public to re-perform the work or not. Mostly they don't because you can just put the piece of paper on the table at home or frame it on the wall. For me I was really free to make the piece, and without contradicting it in any way the concept because clear instructions were there. (Spector 23)

The poetic nature of Nauman's instructions allowed the audience to interpret how to perform the piece in an equally poetic fashion—extending the performance through prolonged pauses between words, moving back into their homes, or giving over fully to the words as they wash over their actions and understanding. That Abramović felt free to re-perform Nauman's piece based on the clear set of instructions, should also be considered in light of the fact that one could take the piece back to their bedroom and create a whole new performance from its "original" context.

00:54:22:00

*Man: [. . .] I don't know, in one sense . . . repeating a performance will be kind of, you know, being unfaithful to the original aim of the whole act as a unique . . . but nevertheless it's going to be great and I'm going to enjoy it. Thanks.*<sup>40</sup>

### **Sampling as Active Creation (Track 1)**

Over the last 20 years a particularly complex problem has arisen in the world of electronic music, namely the furor over the practice of sampling as a music making tool. Combining the use of new technologies and pre-existing musical forms, sampling is the practice of “copying” a selected section of music or sound and re-presenting that selection of sound within a new musical context. Put simply, sampling extracts a section of music or sound from its original context—a preexisting song or soundscape—and uses it as the basis for a new piece of music or sound. Think taking a 16 bar selection of David Bowie’s song *Let’s Dance* and creating a new song around its basic groove while simultaneously adding new elements to the original structure.<sup>41</sup> In such a context, the sampled song retains traces of the original while simultaneously creating a new context from which to understand and comprehend both the original and newly created piece of music. Sampling has often come under fire as a form of copyright infringement of the artists from whom the “new” song “stole” its “original” idea/sample. I do not believe that sampling necessarily operates as a form of mindless reproduction of an original source or context. In fact, I argue that sampling presents a unique opportunity for creative intervention and experimentation to occur which simultaneously respects the beyond of the past and the as-not-yet arrival of the future during its use.

Sampling necessarily emerged as an extension of analogue recording processes and has continued proliferating in the digital age. Sampling as a practice broke into the mainstream during the late 1970s and early 1980s as a method for hip hop artists to structure beats and music

sequences to rap over. The technology of the turntable no doubt helped with the ease and widespread availability of deejays and artists to construct songs from the old records of artists whose work inspired them in some manner. As deejaying techniques became more elaborate and refined intellectual focus shifted from whole songs to the “break.” Breaks are portions of the song which are isolated and highlighted as new “songs” of their own, whether drum fills, horn melodies, or funky guitar riffs. Joseph Schloss cites Tricia Rose saying that the break beats are “points of rupture in their former contexts, points at which the thematic elements of a musical piece are suspended and the underlying rhythms are brought center stage . . . [P]laying the turntables like instruments, these DJs extended the most rhythmically compelling elements in a song, creating a new line composed of only the most climactic point in the ‘original’” (32). Schloss stresses the creation of a “new” song from an “original” context noting that breaks “played in isolation—came to the fore. Songs, albums, groups, and even genres receded into the background as units of musical significance” (32). In the mid 1980s the introduction of digital sampling devices allowed a shift from DJs and producers using albums to mix and remix breaks live, to sampling the juicy bits and pieces onto a computer for unlimited and refined playback and digital manipulation. The earliest sampling devices only offered only a few seconds of sampling time, but allowed producers to not only sample live instrumentation happening in the studio, but also whole melodies and structures of music from their favorite record or musician, or a field recording made of their neighborhood (35). Of course as technological capabilities increased over the last twenty years with faster computers and more hard-drive disk space, the ability of the producer to utilize and expand digital and analog sampling has also increased exponentially.

## RE:PERFORMANCES

2<sup>nd</sup> Night

**Vito Acconci**

*Seedbed*

Sonnabend Gallery, New York

January 15-29, 1972

Original duration: 2 times a week, six hours each day (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 70)

Interestingly enough, Abramović's re-performance of Vito Acconci's piece *Seedbed* has generated the most response from scholars in terms of number of reviews and/or articles written about it. Honestly, I am somewhat frustrated by this phenomenon. While it makes sense that *Seedbed* is considered perhaps the most sensational performance of the seven Abramović performed because of its thematic content, I find that it also provides one of the more explicit examples of the resistance of scholars to let go of the perceived connection between essence and performance. Famously, *Seedbed* was performed by Acconci underneath a large platform in Sonnabend gallery over the course of two weeks. During the performance he masturbated under the platform and remained unseen by the spectators walking above him. He amplified his voice and body so that the noises he produced while masturbating were piped through the gallery space by means of an amplifier. The audience could only hear the sounds he produced while he similarly could only hear the reactions and/or movements of the audience above. Imagination became key for both the audience and Acconci during this performance. The instructions made available seem to reinforce the importance of imagination for both artist and audience:

Room A: Activated on Wednesday and Saturday.

The room is activated by my presence underground, underfoot—by my movement from point to point under the ramp. The goal of my activity is the production of seed—the scattering of seed throughout the underground area. (My aim is to concentrate on my goal, to be totally enclosed within my goal.)

The means to this goal is private sexual activity. (My attempt is to maintain the activity throughout the day, so that maximum seed is produced; my aim is to have constant contact with my body so that an effect from my body is carried outside.)

My aids are the visitors in the gallery—in my seclusion, I can have private images of them, talk to myself about them: my fantasies about them can excite me, enthuse me to sustain—to resume—my private sexual activity. The seed “planted” on the floor, then, is a joint result of my performance and theirs. (70)

On the surface the performance feels like an exercise that combines erotic fantasy with sexual reality, however I argue that such a reading of both Acconci and Abramović’s *Seedbed*, content remains mired in sexual content and avoids any question of the processes at work within the creation and documentation of the performances themselves. I do not wish to ignore the various socio-political, gender, and ethical issues surrounding either of the performances, rather I examine the processes of executing and documenting Abramović’s interpretation of Acconci’s work in order to flesh out qualities different than simply the identities of either the performers or the pieces.

*One by one. All together we can have that kind of imagination.*<sup>42</sup>

*Day 2--Thursday*  
*00:09:03:02*

*Woman: You know, it’s brilliant and then you kinda gotta get your head around the fact that she’s actually down there doing it. I’m you know, your whole mind kinda goes “What? What’s going on here?”*<sup>43</sup>

Great faith, or an active imagination, allows belief that what one hears, but cannot see, actually takes place. I imagine it’s the same way with distant memories or long-forgotten daydreams. “Did those things that I think I thought I heard or saw, really happen?” What would a place in between the senses look or feel like? Is there a way of articulating or knowing something that necessarily belies the senses insofar as one must believe in a certain kind of presence represented by the distant sound of a foghorn on the shores of Maine? I believe that the rocks are out there in the Atlantic, but I only really know because I hear the sound of the horn. Perhaps too much importance is afforded to truth by sight and if so, how can we ever speak of

the past or that which we never saw? A different type of reporting is required for the things we lost in the fire of the past and memory; a type of reporting is needed that allows the status of the past and of memory to remain necessarily different than the present, thereby exceeding any essence or identity of an ordinary artifact or event.

In the section of the book *Seven Easy Pieces* documenting Abramović's re-performance of *Seedbed*, pages and pages of recorded text spoken by Abramović detail the fantasies and imagery she used so that the "maximum seed is produced" exist. The passages are quite graphic at times, reflecting a certain link between fantasy and reality. However, at other times, Abramović clearly moves through the sexually explicit into a reflexive understanding of the seed producing process:

I need a rest. Just a little bit of rest. I'm so released and so quiet. So good here. There is water. Many water. I think I have to pee again. Now such body functions. It's very strange. Everytime I come I have to pee. Otherwise I don't. yesterday I didn't pee at all. But today is so different. Is that what I produce? I'm trying. I can't. I'm trying. I'm trying. Can't. I'm going to pee. I just had an orgasm. (78)

In addition to her attention to the production of the body, she continually reminds the audience of the production of the performance. At least five or six times she stops the erotic narrative to remind the audience exactly what she is producing: "One more. I will start all over again. I'm doing Vitto Acconci piece, the *Seedbed*, what he made in Sonnabend Gallery in '73, masturbating under the floor of the gallery, producing the sperm means producing the seed. I'm redoing this piece. The big question is what I am producing" (87). She raises an interesting point: what exactly is she producing by re-performing Acconci's piece? I argue that the "seed" she is producing is in actuality a space of tension and potential to rethink the place of documentation and citation in conjunction with live performance.

Philip Auslander writes in “The Performativity of Performance Documentation” that two major categories for the relationship between documentation and performance are the documentary and the theatrical. According to Auslander, the documentary form is the more traditional means of documenting performance in which the documentation provides both a record of the performance actually happening and a means by which the performance could possibly be restaged. The theatrical form of documenting performance suggests that the document itself is the only place where the performance happens (1-2). Auslander clearly prefers the theatrical form of documentation that treats such a document as a performative in Austin’s sense—that the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such. He goes further in suggesting that in the theatrical form of performance documentation the intended audience for the performance shifts from those that were present during the original, to those witnessing the performing document. Abramović certainly plays with the notion of an intended audience throughout her performances not only by “covering” performances that had their own audience and event, but also by going to great lengths to document her re-performance of the pieces ultimately taking the form of the document *Seven Easy Pieces*. By doing so, Abramović creates a place of performative documentary between the binary Auslander lays out. Subsequently neither the original performance event nor the performing/performed document settle into easy ontological distinctions. Neither contain the essence of the other or stand alone as a thing that can be easily identified as PERFORMANCE.

I do not agree with Auslander that in the case of *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović uses only eyewitness accounts to ascertain the characteristics of the performance and not the audience’s contribution (Auslander 6). Her form of documentation—both live and archived—does not fall

into the trap of the fine art tradition of the reproduction of works, rather than ethnographic tradition of capturing events (6). Theresa Smalec argues that

even as her aim to ‘re-perform the score’ hinges on the copy, and not on any ontological privileging of the live, she ultimately unsettles Auslander’s conclusion . . . [A]bramović dislodges the issues of presence, power, and authenticity from the static archive, and relocates them to the volatile site of her [performing] female body. (4)

Abramović particularly explodes the aforementioned issues in *Seedbed* by creating a space between the past and present, performed and documented, fantasy and reality. Abramović’s spoken fantasies of the unseen spectators above the platform, combined with audience reaction(s) to the piece produce a performance event that necessarily extends beyond the ontological distinction of either “live” and/or “documented.” Of course the process does not end with either the performance of *Seedbed* or the section documenting *Seedbed* in the book *Seven Easy Pieces*. Abramović uses both products as a means of continuing the production of more performance processes out into the unseen potential of the future-yet-to-come.

00:34:30:00

*Barba: Babette is making this movie and there’s other video and movie and still photography, ahh, since I was very close to that sort of situation, uhm, it was quite a dramatic change which came about in the late seventies and suddenly performers were suddenly conscious of recording and documenting.*

*Man: What we’re supposed to be seeing are essentially ephemeral events would that be true?*

*Barba: Not just ephemeral, but somewhat more ah, unregulated events, let’s put it that way. A certain amount of spontaneity I think is inevitably lost, uhm, the putting of all the performances on a stage which is removing it from the audience is another thing.<sup>44</sup>*

3<sup>rd</sup> Night:

**Valie Export**

Action Pants: Genital Panic

Augusta-Lichtspiele, Munich

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1969

Original Duration: approximately 10 minutes (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 118)

In her introduction to the book *Art and Feminism*, Peggy Phelan states that “writing about art has traditionally been concerned with that which is interior to the frame, whereas feminism has focused primarily on what lies outside the frame of patriarchal logic, representation, history, and justice—which is to say the lives of most women” (*Art and Feminism* 17). Interestingly enough when considering issues surrounding Abramović’s re-performance of *Action Pants*, there is not much left materially with regards to Valie Export’s original performance besides photos in frames. In fact Export’s initial performance of *Action Pants* calls into question the tension between what takes place “inside” the frame and what takes place “outside” of it. Not too coincidentally all that “remains” of Abramović’s re-performance of *Action Pants* is a series of photographs and fragments of conversations.

In the photo Valie Export sits on a chair with her legs spread wide. Her pants have a giant hole in the crotch, exposing her genitals. She is dressed in black jeans and a black leather jacket of some sort. Her hair is wild like a lion’s mane and she holds a machine gun. Clad in black high-heels, she rests one of her feet on another wooden chair to her left. The floor is dirty and the film is grainy. The picture is captioned: *Action Pants: Genital Panic*. However, it is not a picture of the performance *Action Pants*; the picture represents something that happened beyond and outside the frame of the photo. In a 2005 interview Export described the scene:

The performance took place in an art cinema in Munich, where I was invited with other filmmakers to show my films. I was dressed in a sweater and pants with the crotch completely cut away. I told the audience, ‘What you see now is reality; and it is not on the screen, and everybody sees you watching this now.’ I moved slowly up the aisle, walking towards the people; they had my exposed crotch in front of their faces. I had no idea what the audience would do. As I moved from row to row, people silently got up and left the theatre. Taken out of the film context, this was a totally different way for them to connect with a particular erotic symbol. (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 118)

No pictures of the actual doing of the performance in the theatre exist, only recreated pictures of Export in the outfit she wore, posing in a particular way so as to evoke a connection between the event in the theatre and the photographic document. A disconnect between the body moving from row to row in the theatre and the body in the picture is created. This tension between represented bodies finds an analog in the disconnect between the body in Export's film and her roaming body inside the theatre. In her documentation of the performance of *Action Pants*, Export utilizes the same formalistic characteristics of the performance itself to evoke similar questions in an albeit different manner. In doing so, Export extends the performance event of *Action Pants* beyond the performance itself; that which lies outside the frame of the photographic document is precisely what the inside of the frame both fails to capture, and necessarily needs to continue performing alongside.

For Abramović's re-performance of *Action Pants*, she used the photograph as the starting point for her performance rather than the actual event that took place in the theatre in Munich. In the photographs of her performance, Abramović dresses in a black leather jacket and carries a M16 machine gun. She wears full makeup and dons black pants with the crotch cut out. Her genitals are also exposed. She sits and stands among two wooden chairs placed on a small white circular stage staring out at the audience. Unlike Export's photo, Abramović's gaze does not settle on one particular vantage point; she is photographed looking in many directions that rest outside the frame. The intense gaze of Abramović throughout the photographs of the performance calls to mind a certain longing for contact in a space beyond the frame of the photograph. The people with whom she makes eye contact are often left out of the picture, yet are somehow a wholly necessary element of the both the performance and its document. The photographs of the performance combine with her live performance to create an open space of

play that redefines the idea of “original” and “copy.” Johanna Burton describes the re-performances having “cemented themselves in [her] mind as sophisticated holograms, both present and past, fact and fiction” (56). The document of Export’s *Action Pants* then defies Phelan’s proclamation of the otherness of performance documents by becoming an integral part of the re-performance of Abramović. According to Burton, Abramović answered the question of whether performance can be live again by actually rendering it live again. The documentary sources served as material for the creation of “new” performances, all the while retaining knowledge of the stagedness of the new performances as/in resemblance to the old (56). Abramović’s performances were repeated, but different. The performances were copies of copies, but based on the ways that Abramović experimented with the construction of each, they became reborn in their oddly familiar difference.

In the same way that Export was keenly aware of the power of the documentary photograph of *Action Pants* to both represent the past performance and evoke the process through which the past performance was constructed, Abramović’s strategic implementation of documentation during each of her performances in *Seven Easy Pieces* creates a new space to understand both the re-performances and their documents as reciprocal extensions of process, rather than static representations containing discrete essences. Burton asserts that the “filming of *Pieces* was itself a performance, with Babette Mangolte deftly choreographing a fleet of cameras and a crew” (56). She goes on to question both the performance and Phelan’s assertion that performance cannot be documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations without becoming something other than performance. Burton reads *Seven Easy Pieces* as a series of performances based on representations of performances and images that have already disappeared, but not so much that they are non-existent (56). Clearly, Burton considers the idea

of disappearance in a different manner than Phelan, and I agree that Phelan's articulation of the essence of performance leaves no room for considering performances that function outside of strict ontological boundaries. Instead of looking at the document as falling into the trap of representation as Phelan articulates, I advocate a critical stance that uses the photographs of Export's performance as representations that never reach a definitive end or status as "Document." The photograph of Export sitting in the chair lives on in Abramović's re-performance of *Action Pants* and focuses on the power of performance to continually repeat and differ as a process of performance rather than its end. A new space is opened up that relaunches the performance of archive, memory, and history as potentiality and living, rather than essentialized and disappearing. Abramović takes the original version of Export's performance and uses the context of the performance as generative material for her restaging of it. This sampling of an "original source" on the part of Abramović relaunches both performances into a future place of continued critique and construction simply and effectively. The question then becomes "What new things can we learn from these performances taken together?" rather than "How did one performance fail its attempt to repeat the other?"

*Time Unknown:*  
*Younger Woman: Wow.*

*Older Woman: The stuff that she was doing. . .*

*Younger Woman: So she didn't do it verbatim?*

*Older Woman: She did it verbatim and then, what she did, she expanded the, she'd take parts and expand them . . .*<sup>45</sup>

## **Sampling as Active Creation (Track 2)**

Sampling and its use by both hip-hop and experimental electronic musicians and producers is a process of musical recontextualization fraught with questions of origin and

replication. Philip Auslander argues in his book *Liveness* that in the age of digital reproduction in music, technology and consumerism have advanced to a place where the compact disc and all other forms of digital reproduction complicate the relationship between original source material in the recorded song, and listening to the song on the replicated recording (103-106). I am unwilling to go as far as Auslander does in his assertion that the live event of the band recording music to tape is the standard by which all subsequent recordings and/or concerts are held to. Although he is critical of the quick move of the record industry to replication through digital record formats, he is too quick in dismissing the unseen productive power of digitally reproduced music as sources of inspiration for deejays or sample-based musicians. In trying to complicate the relationship between digital reproduction and live event by enmeshing himself in concepts like “liveness” and “simulacrum,” Auslander closes the door on conversations about the process of digital sampling, repetition, and the art of covering songs by one artist as another. Certain forms of reproduction are not simply repetitions of the same, and digital sampling is one such area. Schloss reminds his readers that “sampling—the digital recording and manipulation of sound that forms the foundation of hip-hop production—requires source material. In order to sample, there must be something to sample from” (79). While there is, as Schloss argues, a fairly extensive set of ethics behind sampling in hip-hop communities, I am not interested in the ethical and or legal considerations for the practice of sampling. I am interested in the ways in which sampling as a practice alters an understanding of both the source material and the newly created piece of music. Sampling not only creates a new context from which both old and new can be reexamined, but a space for processes of production to emerge *as* context. The processes of creation are wrapped up in issues of deletion and loss, repetition, technique and technology, performativity, and experimentation.

When one considers a piece of music, namely a song, as a marker of a band's specific identity, something in the process of the creation of the song is lost. When I listen to the radio and I hear the first few bars of "Billie Jean," I automatically think "Oh, that's Michael Jackson." But the tune is not just Michael Jackson, it's also the producer Quincy Jones, the musicians programming drum loops and thick sweet bass-lines, it is the lone keyboard player hitting those iconic notes on a synthesizer. I do not subscribe to Auslander's claim that the digital format of the recorded music outlasts the creation of music on the recording. In my mind such a quick move to commodification erases any sense of the process at work in the performance of the musicians and engineers involved in creating the song. I turn to the work of a particular electronic musician named Girl Talk, illustrating the ways in which his work with sampling and collage are incredibly savvy methods that move musical composition beyond stable notions of identity and replication.

Pittsburg native Greg Gillis adopted the name Girl Talk for himself and his music. On his latest album entitled *Night Ripper*, he combines over 200 sample sources from various genres of music (hip-hop, classic rock, classical, R&B, and easy listening) and mashes them together into songs. For example, in his song "Smash Your Head," he combines the accapella vocal track from The Notorious BIG's "Juicy," the piano line and vocal chorus from Elton John's "Tiny Dancer," and a vocal hook from a Mariah Carey song that, honestly, I don't even recognize. The result is unsettling, mesmerizing, and hilarious. In the song "Summer Smoke" Gillis combines the Kanye West song "Gold Digger" with Pilot's "Magic." These two songs have elements that I recognize as being either a Notorious BIG song, or and Elton John song. However, some of his other songs are created through seven or eight samples from disparate sources that I cannot place or do not know. Whether I know the individual sample's origin or the artist's identity is not

important. Gillis' artistry in the collection and composition of the samples, forces me as a listener to let go of each song's former context and become caught up in the singular experience of the new space that different samples come together and create.

Girl Talk accomplishes the creation of the unique from the familiar through his savvy and skill at sampling. By experimenting with new means of musical production and technology, Gillis stages new performances of sampled songs that both highlight and obscure elements of the original. With complete ease he moves his music from one phrase to another, combining elements of songs that I might immediately recognize, but would never think to isolate and combine with one another. Gillis' commitment to laboriously arranging and forging his own songs from multiple sources, and simultaneously incorporating formal elements from those sources, shows an extreme care for both the original and new. When listening to the music it seems that for Gillis the perfect sample is one that he will be able to utilize in his production process as an electronic musician, but also one that moves and impacts him, and most importantly makes him dance. His songs make room for certain identities like Elton and Biggie to emerge, yet never are only about those particular artist's identities. Gillis simultaneously makes room for his own identity to emerge, but not by focusing only on himself. His identity emerges from the processes through which he puts the songs together, the contexts that the songs he samples emerge out of, and the audience's experience of listening to the songs.

## **RE:PERFORMANCES**

4<sup>th</sup> Night:

**Gina Pane**

The Conditioning, first action of Self-portrait(s)

1973

Original duration: 30 minutes (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 156).

*"In the moment when we realize that the spirit is in the material . . . the material becomes spirit."*<sup>46</sup>

To endure means to hold out against or sustain without yielding. It also means to continue to exist or last. Endurance is the ability or strength to continue to endure through the lasting quality or duration. For her fourth re-performance Abramović engaged endurance and endurance performance head on. In 1973 Gina Pane staged a performance where she laid on a metal cot of sorts, inches above a set of burning candles, for thirty minutes. Throughout her career, Pane, along with other artists such as Abramović, Chris Burden, and Valie Export, engaged in “acts of extraordinary endurance, insisting that their unnerving and frequently dangerous undertakings were learning experiences of a deeply cathartic nature. For them, pain and fear could be understood as the material of the work” (Goldberg 97). However, Pane did not consider herself a performance artist. Rather she viewed her work as a series of actions replete with extreme symbolic content, but not theatricality (Aliaga 77). Over the course of her career Pane moved through three general motifs in her work. The first centered on social pieces involving natural settings and land based installation art. The second period focused on action based work in which terror, risk, and danger became central themes to her experience. These performances took place in her studio in front of an audience. The motif of the wound became central to these performances. The third stage of her work moved into Christian iconicity and the sacred using symbolic actions and gestures (77). Pane’s work, sometimes described as “ordeal art,” often gets mentioned in the same breath as Abramović. Phelan quotes Pane commenting on her own art: “We live in continuous danger, always. So [my body-art investigates] a radical moment, the moment most loaded with tension and the least distant from one body to the other, the [moment] of the wound” (Phelan 44).

Abramović’s connection to Pane and the similarities in thematic content of their performances is important to note to better understand the historical contexts from which the two

artists arose, but most important to this study is Abramović's re-performance of *The Conditioning* specifically as a re-performance of someone else's pain. For her performance Abramović performed atop her metal cot for seven hours, not thirty minutes. She continually got off the cot to relight candles or replace ones that had burned down to their wicks. In examining photographs of both Pane and Abramović, the first thing I notice is that Abramović's hair is so much longer than Pane's. It dangles so close to the open flames of the candles. In each set of photographs, the candles evoke some sense of a ceremony in which I am not a participant, only an onlooker. Interestingly enough, for a performance centered on the prolonged endurance of pain, I feel no heat from any of the candles. I only recognize that they are actually on fire through various gestures of discomfort or indicators of pain on the part of Abramović. A curled fist. A small wince of the mouth. A look of desperate exhaustion. Yet I feel no heat from the flames, no sense of time elapsing at its tired pace. I do not feel Abramović's pain—I do not think I am supposed to—or really want to for that matter.

The corporeal disconnect between the bodies of the audience and the artists, is an interesting problem in both Abramović's re-performance and Pane's initial action piece. What is the limit of these performances? Is there a limit between what the bodies of the audience experience and what the bodies of the performers perform? Is there a limit between the two performances themselves? How can the concept of limit be recouped so that access beyond limits can be gained and the limits themselves understood as productive rather than *limiting*? When confronted with pictures of both Abramović's and/or Pane's performances, I almost always find myself questioning exactly how something feels or wondering the reasoning behind a particular series of actions. As soon as these types of questions come into my mind however, I acknowledge that I can never know exactly what the "herring feels."<sup>47</sup> Instead, I encounter a

new series of questions not based on what the performance means, but on what the performance is doing. What is Pane showing us about performance through the very means of its showing? How does Abramović's experimentation illuminate both process and performance? What are the formal elements utilized in the construction of each performance and how can we adapt/adopt those elements in our critique of the performance?

*Day Four—Saturday*

*00:14:23*

*Woman: No, but I think if we, if we could feel the heat, we'd have a different connection to it.*

*Man 1: Yeah, that is true.*

*Woman: I mean, the very slightest bit of heat being felt . . . I mean I definitely respond to the wind, I mean like every time the door opens, it's blowing the candles, and that, that's interesting to me. That reminds me that there are candles underneath her body and that might be relief for her, when it sort of blows in another direction or shifts. So that's the only way I can experience the heat, from the air.<sup>48</sup>*

5<sup>th</sup> Night:

**Joseph Beuys**

How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare

Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf

November 26-December 31, 1965 (performance on opening night)

Original duration: 3 hours (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 176)

Joseph Beuys' performance of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* took place in a museum as the performance dealt with issues of spectatorship and interpretation of art objects. Beuys, face covered with gold leaf, sat with a dead hare cradled in his arms, whispering, slowly and deliberately explaining the inspiration and meaning of his various artworks hanging up around them (Casey 78). Forty years later, Marina Abramović re-performed *Dead Hare* inside another museum. Another artist, performing another version of the piece, inside another version of the museum. What changed since Beuys first performed the piece in 1965? Does Abramović's re-performance in a similar but ultimately different context alter our understanding of the performance of both? How do these two performances situate Abramović's performances

in *Seven Easy Pieces*, all of which take place inside the museum? What is the nature of art and/or performance that stresses a pressing need to rethink interpretation and meaning-making for both the artist and viewer in a new/old space?

Beuys described his performance of *Dead Hare* as a “complex tableau about the problem of language, and about the problems of thought, of human consciousness, and of the consciousness of animals” (Goldberg 38). Did Beuys consider the hare as animal, or did the hare stand as a metaphor for Beuys’ view of the human audience inside the museum watching the performance? Valerie Casey quotes Beuys saying that “a hare comprehends more than many human beings with their stubborn rationalism . . . I told him that he needed only to scan the picture to understand what is really important about it” (78). The he referred to in the above quote is the dead hare, and the picture is the collection of photographs hanging around the space where he performed. The explanation of each one of the pictures to the hare was unheard by the audience because Beuys only whispered into its ears. He described the only other sound breaking the muted silence of the room as a giant metal shoe that he wore on one foot, clanking across the hard stone floor (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 176).

The irony of the struggle of the audience to simply hear Beuys during the performance, while simultaneously trying to make sense of the performance as a whole, highlights the tension between sensing something and locating meaning in the senses. To expect that one should be able to hear what a performer is saying during a performance is rational. To try and make meaning out of what one sees while walking through a museum is rational. To make the connection between the sensation of heat from the flame of a candle and the nature of the flame itself is also rational. However, Beuys was not interested in rational thought processes as the sole indicator of meaning in a creative work of art. In the program to her re-performance of

Beuys' piece, Abramović included an excerpt from an interview with Beuys which states his interest in a different type of meaning making with regard to the creative act:

The problem lies in the word "understanding" and its many levels which cannot be restricted to rational analysis. Imagination, inspiration, a longing all lead people to sense that these other levels also play a part in understanding. This must be the root of reactions to this action, and is why my technique has been to try and seek out the energy points in the human power field, rather than demanding specific knowledge or reactions on the part of the public. I try to bring a light to the complexity of creative areas. (176)

Beuys' inaudible whispers to the dead hare forced the audience to reorient themselves to how they were making meaning out of something that resided outside of rational sense-making. "I cannot hear what he is saying, therefore I do not understand what he is doing," becomes "I cannot hear what he is saying. What are other ways, imaginative or creative, for me to make sense of the fact that I cannot hear what he is saying during a *part* of the performance *and* the performance as *a whole*?" I am not saying that there were not people already "thinking outside the box" as Beuys advocates, but that Beuys explicitly constructed a performance about "thinking outside the box," simultaneously forcing the audience to "think outside the box" about a performance about "thinking outside the box." In Deleuzian terms the processes at work in Beuys performance were both conditioned by the performance, and the very conditions for the performance.

The type of meaning-making that Beuys advocates through his performance of *Dead Hare* reflects issues at work within Abramović's re-performances. Her choice to stage her performances in the Guggenheim museum conjures interesting questions about the nature of viewing "art" versus viewing "performance art." The museum naturally raises images of framed paintings or photographs hanging on the walls, sculpture(s) strategically placed throughout space, and solemn viewers walking from piece to piece, soaking it all in. In the case of *Dead*

*Hare*, Beuys implicated the role of the museum and its patrons in engaging creative works. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović implicates the museum and viewer in similar ways, yet still decides to re-perform iconic works in an iconic setting. What issues centered on the performances and the museum does she value through her re-performances? A better question for the purpose of this study is what can/do performance scholars discover about the nature of performances viewed as experiments in form and process? In the photographs of Abramović's re-performance of *Dead Hare*, she mimetically engages Beuys' performance. She too has a dead hare, a face covered with gold leaf, and a series of pictures to explain to the "animal." The photos depict her in various states of communication with the hare: the storyteller, the teacher, the confidante. Yet just like the audience in Beuys' piece, I cannot hear her speak. I have the "silence" of the photograph to help me make sense of the performance. But even if the photo does not actually talk, it is not silent. I recognize that much exceeds Abramović's re-performance of Beuys' piece. Rather than considering excess as something that Abramović's performance lacks, I view excess as necessarily connected with her performance, as a process that pulls performer and audience like a tractor beam into a future of imagination, inspiration, and longing.

### **Sampling as Active Creation (Track 3)**

Oftentimes I find myself sitting in my bedroom at a computer, tinkering with a music program that I don't fully understand, creating songs and noise. I spend hours pushing buttons and twisting knobs producing sounds and music that sound neither good nor bad, but intrigue me nonetheless. I use two primary methods to make music: I make original electronic music playing the instruments myself or I make hip-hop music almost wholly constructed from previous musical sources. In my own original electronic music I also use previous musical sources at

certain times; however, with the hip-hop music I create I actively utilize sampling technology and techniques to both mark my music as a process drawing from the past and simultaneously extend the form into the future. Put another way, I want listeners to be able to recognize that while the construction of the music draws from a certain source, the song I create is also a certain kind of performance created to draw attention to potential ways of understanding the “original” piece of music in a “new” context. Through my own sampling techniques, I actively create a piece of music through repetition, alteration, and imagination.

In my music creation I use a computer program called Ableton Live. The program allows users to organize and create individual tracks of music and combine them together in a live or studio environment to produce a finished product. The program is displayed on the screen in a way that enables the user to visually arrange instruments and effects thereby streamlining the creative process in a “drag and drop” digital fashion instead of the more time consuming “forward and backward” movement of analog processes. For example, with Ableton I have the ability to drag an mp3 file into a track slot and isolate a 16 bar sequence of music. I can then set the length of the track to play only that 16 bar sequence, repeating itself over and over as the foundation for a new track. The unlimited amount of digital effects combined with similarly unlimited degrees of user manipulation and experimentation have the potential to translate or alter the song into a thousand new contexts of musicality. The manner through which I experiment produces a unique performance of a song that acts as a foundation onto which I can layer other pieces of music. The result is one “new” song created from multiple pieces of other songs. By repeating and combining certain elements of songs that intrigue me in some manner, new contexts emerge from which to understand the old by producing the new.

One might argue that by sampling a drum track from Syl Johnson's "Is it Because I'm Black" and combining it with a bass line from Zapp's "More Bounce to the Ounce," I am only repeating the performance of the two groups in a stale and unoriginal way. Both groups created the songs I sample, and the context of their performances holds sway over my newly created song. In such a case, my song could be called unoriginal and derivative. However, I do not agree with such an analysis. I argue that my own re-performance of these two songs creates a new document in song form, combining elements of the original performances of the past with my own performance in the present. The new song offers listeners an opportunity to experience memories of the old songs, create new associations with the current song, and use the current song as a point of departure for listening and/or making songs in the future. In fact, elements of my newly created song may completely obscure any trace of the old songs, but they are there. The amount of recognition that a listener retains by listening to the new song depends on how much I experimented with difference in the process of my own musical performance and construction. Sometimes I create music that discretely highlights the presence of sampled music. Other times I bury the sampled music beneath layers of manipulation and effects creating something that does not resemble the original samples in any way. In both cases however, the "original" performances of the songs are present in some form or another, and serve as generative material for my own re-performance. The original songs are not passive elements in my own song-making processes; they are active elements that combine with my own experimentation to create something wholly original if analyzed in terms of the process of production.

The idea of covering songs by others has existed in both live and recorded music for generations. When a band covers a particular performance of another band, not only does the

audience identify elements of the original song, but they also are exposed to the cover band's particular take on an already established performance of a song. When a local band covers "Sweet Home Alabama" by Lynyrd Skynyrd, they are simultaneously combining the instrumentation of the classic song with their own style of playing, creating a new product to be analyzed and experienced by the audience. Any band will tell you that when covering a song, it is never about simply going through the process of repeating the notes and singing in the exact same style. When interpreting a song as a cover, a band should put their own spin on it to either shed light on how great the former song is or to demonstrate their interpretation of the song through their performance. The use of sampling is similar. The amount of care in song selection, the heightened stakes as the sampler selects a song that impacts and inspires in a strong way, and the personal touch put on the newly created song by the producer or musician are all similar to the process of a cover band playing material by other artists. The covered or sampled songs are also new creations and interpretations that emerge from the repetition and performativity of an "original" context. Even bands that create songs without the use of sampling or covering integrate traces of previous musician's work and recordings into their song-making process. I have listened to countless songs by a host of bands that sound like or seem inspired by other bands and songs that came before them. While a song by the metal-band Electric Wizard may not explicitly use parts of a particular Black Sabbath song, the way that Electric Wizard plays and creates songs retain multiple traces of the ways that Black Sabbath performed and created their music. When I listen to Electric Wizard the experience seems both fresh *and* familiar.

*Day 6- Monday*

*00:00:04:06*

*Man: Why do you think she's doing this?*

Woman: *She can see her reflection.*

Man: *Just looking in the mirror.*

Woman: *(laughs) I don't know, she becomes kind of aware of herself for a moment like seeing herself. For a moment like seeing herself.*<sup>49</sup>

## RE:PERFORMANCES

6<sup>th</sup> Night:

**Marina Abramović**

*Lips of Thomas*

Galerie Krizinger, Innsbruck

Monday, November 14, 1975

Original Duration: 2 hours

On night six of *Seven Easy Pieces* Abramović finally covered one of her own performances from the mid-seventies. Originally in *Lips of Thomas* Abramović performed a series of actions in front of an audience that provoked the viewers to halt the action during the performance. In the book *Seven Easy Pieces* she describes her performance:

I slowly eat 1 kilo of honey with a silver spoon.  
I slowly drink 1 liter of red wine out of a crystal glass.  
I break the glass with my right hand.  
I cut a five-pointed star on my stomach with a razor blade.  
I violently whip myself until I no longer feel any pain.  
I lay down on a cross made of ice blocks.  
The heat of a suspended heater pointed at my stomach causes the cut star to bleed.  
The rest of my body begins to freeze.  
I remain on the ice for thirty minutes until the audience interrupts the pieces by removing the ice blocks from underneath. (192)

Photos of her first performance of *Lips of Thomas* reveal an extremely messy body lying on the ice blocks, covered in blood seeping from the star cut into her stomach. The black and white tones of the photos enhance the messy quality through the lack of colors—the color of the blood mixes with her pubic hair, the shadows on her arms mixes with the hair on her head, and the darkened heater hangs above her body. The dark tones of the photograph stand in stark contrast to the white stage, Abramović's fair skin, and the blocks of ice.

The photographs of Abramović's re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* stand in stark contrast to those of the first performance. Saturated colors pour out from every inch of the photographs. The stage is still stark white, but the subtle changes in the tones of the bottle of wine, the burgundy of the whip, the dark brown of the hanging heater, and the warm peach hue of Abramović's body belie the resolute darkness of each in the photographs of the first performance. For me, the most notable difference is the way the cuts on her stomach changed in the re-performance. In the re-performance of *Lips of Thomas*, Abramović was reopening the scar of the star she originally cut into her stomach in 1975. In her first performance the amount of blood was noticeably different than in the second performance. Photographs show her lying on her back with a massive amount of blood covering her entire torso. It seemed to run down onto her legs, and off the sides of her body. In the re-performance at the Guggenheim, her reopened star scar only produced small amounts of blood, beading on top of the scar, slowly dripping in a single line down her lower abdomen.

The difference in Abramović's bodily production of blood is an important point of departure for my analysis of *Seven Easy Pieces*. The scars of her first performance still occupied her body even after the performance was over. However, when she re-performed the piece in 2005, the same scar was reopened during the performance, to dramatically different results. Looking more like a drawing of a star in red pen, Abramović slowly cut along the dotted line of her former performance, letting little traces of her first performance rise to the surface of her skin. In a performance charged with concrete material stakes, Abramović deftly provides a space that highlights the ways that repeating a performance, even one of her own making, changes those stakes by engaging the performance as a performative process. Much like the star scar, the difference of Abramović's body highlights the ways that the re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* is

different, but inextricably connected to the first. I know it is the same person and the same body as in the first performance. But in the photographs of the re-performance Abramović's body looks different, it feels different. Abramović looks older in her face and has much longer hair. Her breasts are fuller and her hips wider. Her knees are wrinkled and weathered. Her skin looks warmer. Her body demonstrates the passage of time and the process of the history of every day lived beyond the night of the first performance. Her body asks me to consider its difference through a process of re-presenting itself performatively. In order to consider her body and the re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* as performative, I absolutely need the first performance to carry traces of itself through history and into my present analysis. Much like the star scar on her stomach, the first performance does not disappear. Rather the "original" and re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* weave themselves together through the history of her living body, memory, and documentary archive. It seems unfair and foolish to cement the status of such a performance in terms of disappearance. The manner in which we understand and construct history is a performance. Rather than insisting that the acts of the performing bodies of the past have disappeared under the ocean of history, I argue that a more fruitful mode of analysis is needed that searches the horizon of the ocean for the rolling waves of history.

Abramović's re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* was different in other ways. In between the reopening of the scar on her stomach and whipping herself, she held a white cloth to her bloodied scar and then hoisted it as a type of flag. She also wore a military style hat and boots and included the text of a Slavic song of pride as she waved the flag stained with her blood, naked in front of the audience. Alongside the host of historical changes and alterations to her body, the history of the place where she was born also changed and altered from when she originally performed the piece. Although never explicitly referenced in the piece, the connection

between Abramović's progression over time as a performer and the progression of change in the former Yugoslavia denotes an absolute identity marked as constantly evolving over time. While a detailed explanation of the incredibly complex history and important political dimensions of Yugoslavia and the other countries in and around the Balkans is beyond the scope of this study, I point to the simple gesture of her performing a kind of soldiering body (albeit a body that forces a rethinking of what it means to soldier) which was not present in the first performance, as a reference point to which the audience might take note. A flag is waved, stained with the blood of a reopened scar. A Slavic song of faith is decreed. My mind races to a million different places when I think of what that part of the performance means in terms of her identity. However, just as quickly, I remember that like the photograph, just as much is happening outside the frame as inside. In a simple act of remembrance, Abramović demonstrates to the audience that just as important as what you see in a performance, or history for that matter, is what you don't see but is there nonetheless.

*Day Six—Monday*

*00:19:29:90*

*Man: But how, how's it connected to the main theme of everything? It doesn't go.*

*Woman: But you were telling me it's all political?*

*Man: Sometimes yeah, no it's not, it's more, it's more some (pause), it's so difficult. It's not more political, it's more human.*

*Woman: Hmmmm . . .*

*. . . Man: And reminiscent, reminiscent from her past, from her, that's what I see.*

*Woman: Oh yeah.*

*Man: But this gesture, I don't understand.<sup>50</sup>*

7<sup>th</sup> Night:

**Marina Abramović**

*Entering the Other Side*

Living Installation

2005 (Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* 220)

The final performance of *Seven Easy Pieces* was the only “original” performance of the seven in that it had never been performed before. In it Abramović stood upon a high ladder of some kind, wearing a gigantic blue dress that flowed down her body and over the ladder onto a large circular platform below her. Standing some forty to fifty feet in the air, she silently looked out at the audience around. She included the description: “The artist is present, here and now.” The irony of stating that “the artist is present” should not be forgotten in relation to the other six performances during the week. What type of presence exactly? Surely the artist’s body that made the performance is present, but the performativity of “presence,” how different iterations of the concept of “presence” were engaged, is also acutely on display during *Entering the Other Side*. The Guggenheim museum is laid out as a series of circles spiraling up several floors above the entry level. On each floor of the ascending spiral are places to stand and stare down, rooms containing other artworks, and works actually displayed on the walls of the spiraling stairs. During the performance, audience members were spread throughout multiple floors of the Guggenheim, watching Abramović silently stare back at them, turning and moving ever so slowly in her gigantic blue dress, the intense gaze emanating from Abramović a form of energy presence being highlighted in the performance. In an interview with Thomas McEvelley, Abramović describes her desire to create an intense connection with her audience: “the only thing that’s necessary is that you create the space and time field. You announce the performance for a certain place and time. Then the public will enter that field. Everything else has to be an energy dialogue with no object. This is the main thing: no object in between” (22).

The energy connection between Abramović and the audience during *Entering the Other Side* is displayed quite beautifully in the photographs of the performance. Scores of people line the spiraling staircase at multiple levels, looking out at Abramović's outstretched arms, meeting her intense gaze with a wide array of reactions. Abramović's various physical gestures and intense stares seem to unfurl from the deep blue of her dress like incandescent fish from the deep of the sea. What exactly is going on in those moments of connection between the performer and the audience is difficult to describe, let alone quantify. *Entering the Other Side* is a departure in some ways from the previous performances of *Seven Easy Pieces*, and in some ways it is the perfect end-piece. Billed as a "living installation," Abramović's final performance, while performed for the first time, directly ties into the overall theme of performance covers. Combining "living" with "installation" connects her performing body back to the performances and performing bodies of the other artists in *Seven Easy Pieces*. While not explicitly referenced, the other performances covered by Abramović in *Seven Easy Pieces* are impossible to forget because of Abramović herself. Although Abramović is the only performer during *Entering the Other Side*, her gaze and connection with the other audience members continually reminds the audience that in order for her to get to the point of contact with them, she had to travel through five other artists, six other performances, and seven nights of performing. The time and space created by the whole of the seven performances became encapsulated in the stark beauty of her towering figure, draped in blue, reaching out for contact.

The other performances may have disappeared from sight, but as I have argued throughout this chapter, I do not believe that that which has disappeared from view does not haunt the senses in other important ways. Rather than looking at each one of the performances in *Seven Easy Pieces* as discrete objects of performance, I have explored the multiplicity of

processes at work in Abramović's re-performances *as* a process of performance criticism and practice. Put another way, although each performance takes place in a particular time and space, those two factors do not solely define the performance. One must look at the wide array of processes at work in the production of performance with the understanding that sometimes the variables at work in an experiment remain unseen or unnoticed. That Abramović chose to end her series of performances with *Entering the Other Side* makes complete sense in terms of the web of issues surrounding her re-performance or covers of other artists' work. The important question for me throughout this chapter has been to look at how the re-performances were created in light of the implicit and explicit variables of production surrounding Abramović's selection and construction process in the pieces themselves. Just as the use of sampling by musicians has the libratory potential for understanding repetition and performativity, Abramović's re-performances in *Seven Easy Pieces* complicate the status of performance as an object with a concrete essence unto itself. By experimenting with different ways of playing the sample or performance, different ways of documenting and archiving the performance as part of the performance itself, and different forms of response to performance work that deals with these complex issues, I argue that performance is a process of continual negotiation and reorientation. I feel like I am repeating myself and moving in circles, but I think that might be the point. If writing about performance that happened is essentially writing about something we remember, is there a way to extend that which we write about *through the very manner* in which we write about it? Can we stave off the nagging concern that the ontology of performance dictates a disappearance? Is there a way to talk about memory or event that continues to produce long after it happens, long after we are gone?

*Day 7—Tuesday*  
*00:47:10:00*

Man: Well you know let's meet up in 40 years and go to the MoMA, you going to see her flag hanging there.

Man 2: Uh-Huh, uh-huh.

Man 1: That's going to be her blood, that's going to be her DNA or in 150 years when we are all not here that's still going to be hanging there.<sup>51</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>38</sup> Abramović. *Seven Easy Pieces* (2007): 68. This is the first in a series of quotes taken from various documentarian and audience reactions recorded over the week of *Seven Easy Pieces*. The inclusion of these quotes enacts my own performance on the page of select elements, experiences, and sources of inspiration/reflection for both Abramović's documentation of *Seven Easy Pieces*, and the audience's process of meaning-making viewing the performances. By including the quotes in a performative manner on the page, I engage some of the same processes of constructing and documenting my criticism that Abramović explored during *Seven Easy Pieces*. See endnote 2.

<sup>39</sup> The format of this chapter differs in various ways from the previous two chapters. In an attempt to performatively engage many of the processes of performance creation and documentation at work in *Seven Easy Pieces*, I utilize certain formal characteristics of the performances and their documents in the writing of this chapter. These performative passages are not necessarily framed explicitly throughout the chapter; rather, they are cited in the endnote section. I utilize select formal qualities I discover in my analysis of Abramović's performance processes in an ongoing and ever-changing manner. As new discoveries are made my use of performative critique also changes. Most important to my analysis is linking the process of experimentation Abramović undertakes with my own methodology of critiquing *Seven Easy Pieces*. The result is a document that challenges the reader in many of the same ways I read Abramović doing with her audience in *Seven Easy Pieces*.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> The hip hop artist and producer Puff Daddy did precisely this same thing to somewhat successful ends with the song "Been Around the World" featuring Mase and the Notorious B.I.G.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid 75.

<sup>43</sup> Abramović. *Seven Easy Pieces* (2007): 97.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 117.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid 136

<sup>46</sup> Ibid 156.

<sup>47</sup> See *Rings of Saturn*, WG Sebald.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 173-174.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid 218.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid 219.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid 229.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Throughout this study I have combined processes of experimentation in performance practice and theory with theories of difference in Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze's writings to enact a criticism that produces rather than disappears. Concentrating on three different sites of performance, I focused on aspects of each that enhanced my understanding of performance practice and the theories of Derrida and Deleuze. At the same time the ways in which I combined Derrida and Deleuze with experimental performance practice have changed the way I understand both their theories and performance in general. As such, I am left with a few closing questions and thoughts about the significance of combining theories of production and difference with experimental performance practice and theory.

In addition to setting the scope of the dissertation in Chapter One, I also identified a set of theories and practices as experimental from various theorists and art movements over the last century. Embedded within these practices and theories were commitments to experimenting with practice as performance in formal, symbolic, material, and theoretical manners. Some of the experiments produced word poems stretching language to its limits and some of them produced pieces of music that played with structure and ideas of "music." However, I argue that all of the theories I covered in the Chapter One were committed to rethinking the usefulness of combining practice and theory to create new, challenging, thoughtful, and dynamic modes of performing *as* theory. How then did these practices inform my understanding of the performance sites covered in Chapters Three, Four, and Five? How do these practices and theories link up with the theories of Derrida and Deleuze in my analyses? And finally, how does my understanding of the experimental practices and theories combined with the theories of

Derrida and Deleuze change and get changed by the performance sites analyzed in this dissertation?

In Chapter Two I analyzed certain elements of the theories of Derrida and Deleuze that connected with the types of performance practices and theory examined in Chapter One. Within the chapter I articulated key points of each theorist's writings on difference as a mode of analyzing and understanding experience. For example, in Derrida's writings on the ghost and *différance* I focused on the demands placed upon the self with regard to one's orientation to the other and history. The ghost haunts by means of exceeding the self in the present. Because the ghost never fully manifests in the present, an individual can never fully apprehend the whole of the ghost or the experience from which the ghost derives its power to haunt. The excess of the ghost simultaneously draws attention to the past and future by marking itself as a trace of the past that can continually reappear in the unseen future of future hauntings. The ghost therefore continually produces different modes of understanding the event as ongoing, rather than disappearing. The ghost never disappears because it is always there haunting whether we see it or not. In this regard the ghost became a figure for me to use in my analysis of performance as an event haunted by the means of its production. The productive power of *différance* at work in the haunting of the ghost necessitates that the event of performance is a process of repeated (re)orientation between the elements constituting the production of the performance, the performers, and audience.

Within the chapter I also engaged the theories of Deleuze with regards to the processes of production as a process of experimentation with variables of difference. Deleuze regards the production of a product as a process of experimenting with increases or decreases in the intensive properties of the system of relationships that cause something to actualize. Put another

way, Deleuze focuses on the process of experimentation as the way that products differentiate themselves from other products. Identity falls to the wayside as the defining characteristic of a product while the process of experimentation takes precedence as the most important factor in understanding an event or object. For Deleuze then in order to understand an event or object, one must examine the process the event went through rather than simply depending on what it looks like. For Deleuze the changes or alterations made in the intensive process of experimentation in the creation of a product are the best way to understand how the product was created out of specific relationships between time, matter, and material. Context becomes something very real and grounded in actual processes at work in the creation of a product. Deleuze's writings on processes of production were integral to this dissertation as a means of analyzing the processes at work in the production of the performance sites analyzed in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Instead of looking at what particular performances meant or did, I examined the processes through which they were created while simultaneously extending the processes of their creation to/in my analysis. Put another way, the process of experimentation in the production of the performances were continued as a result of my writing. Therefore the event or product of performance continued producing in new understandings and realities for the performance to take. As a result the performances do not disappear, they continue to produce.

Both Derrida and Deleuze are mindful to connect their theoretical accounts for understanding experience to the reality of the world—to practice. My understanding of their theories forced me to reexamine the theories of the performance theorists I outlined in Chapter One. Simultaneously my understanding of the performance practices and theory affected the ways I understood the theories of Derrida and Deleuze. I see a connection between the two sets of theories in the ways that both stress process, production, and experimentation. Whether it be

in the theoretical experimentation of the Dadaists or Surrealists, the formal experimentation of Steve Reich in musical composition, or the incorporation of literary forms into writing of/as performance in Philbrook or Ruth and Michael Bowman's work. The combination of practice and theory is central to both the work of Derrida and Deleuze and the performance practitioners covered in Chapter One. From this perspective of combining practice and theory through experimentation in the creation of products, I analyzed three sites of performance in Chapters Three, Four, and Five that I understood as invested in the same set of circumstances.

More specifically, in Chapter Three I analyzed the rehearsal and performance process of my production *The Maidens*. Within this chapter I highlighted the theory and practices that informed the creation of the performance in rehearsal and as an event of performance. Derrida's theory of haunting played a central role in the way that the cast oriented themselves in their relationship to the history of the Hiroshima Maidens and the formal choices in my construction of the action onstage. By allowing the concept of haunting to inform the relationship of researcher to historical subject matter, the research process and products of the company of performers opened onto a network of historical connections. I encouraged the performers doing the research to be haunting subjects, to adopt the epistemology of haunting that Derrida articulates in *Specters of Marx*. Although the research process resembled a genealogy in methodological terms, the process of each performer locating specific material and historical sites swirling around the Hiroshima Maidens was haunted. Rather than explicitly identifying connections between the sites by following the threads and knots of history, I assembled the research in a way that arguably produced more ghosts than connections. When our project started, we set out to conduct a genealogical account of the Hiroshima Maidens, however as more time progressed, I made a decision to explore a haunted history of the Hiroshima Maidens.

I did not connect the sites uncovered during the research process as much as I could have thereby altering the actualized product of *The Maidens* from the initial process we started. I also made the decision to use only recorded voices of the performers reading selected texts from the research phase of the process so that the bodies of the performers themselves were haunted as well. I also analyze the physical training process of the company as an intensive process of experimentation. During the training we worked with different variables of movement in and of our bodies to discover different forms and techniques of moving through the texts we collected.

Chapter Four analyzed the emergence of spirit photography in the 1800s by combining variables such as photographic techniques, chemical composition, the rise of Spiritualism, technological processes of the era, and photographic theory. At its core the chapter concentrates on the different ways these variables combined to produce the photographic exhibit *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*. In order to demonstrate that the creation and viewing of the photographs is not simply a singular act on the part of the photographer or the viewer, I traced the various historical, material, and social flows at work in both the production of spirit photography at large and particular pictures from the exhibit. By focusing on the excess of the photographic frame I carved out a trajectory for rethinking the relationship of the photographer to her work and the viewer to the photo. The bodies involved in the production of the spirit photographs were of great importance to my analysis and provided a place of intersection between the theories of Deleuze and experimental performance practitioners. The bodies at stake included the bodies of the ghosts inside the frame as a manifestation of specific cultural and historical concerns over the shifting social and technological climate of the 1800s. There were also the bodies of the photographers and chemists who worked through dangerous and creative methods of developing the types of predominant photographs of the time. The bodies of the

photograph's viewer were also implicated in my analysis as a means of continuing the production of understanding and evaluating the spirit photograph. All of these performing bodies were represented in my analysis by drawing upon various performance practices in the writing of the analysis and applying those practices to the theories of Deleuze.

Chapter Five engaged the series of (re)performances enacted by Marina Abramović in her performance art piece *Seven Easy Pieces*. By using several performative writing techniques that stressed formal play in the composition, I analyzed Abramović's performances through the content and form of my writing. Utilizing the theories of performativity at work in Derrida's theories and processes of experimentation and production at work in Deleuze's, I constructed an analysis that highlighted the multiple variables at work in both the construction of the performance and the production of my own performance as/in writing. In this way I enacted a practice of writing vested in both the theories of Derrida and Deleuze and the practice of Abramović's performances. Using techniques of formal play, citation, and repetition, I constructed an analysis that engaged *Seven Easy Pieces* as a product to be analyzed and pathway to extend upon. The result is a chapter that issues a call to critics to simultaneously engage the event or product of performance in a way that extends the life of the performance into the future rather than concentrating on how the performance has disappeared from view. At the same time I wove another analysis of sampling techniques in music into the overall analysis of *Seven Easy Pieces*. By exploring sampling as a different performance process than Abramović's, yet working with similar theoretical and practical variables in its construction, I constructed an additional way of reading *Seven Easy Pieces* outside the explicit context of the event of performance. By concentrating on sampling as a practice in music the forces listeners to rethink their understanding of the life of a musical composition, I drew connections to

Abramović's use of sampling other performance art pieces in her (re)performance of *Seven Easy Pieces*.

Looking back on this study I am left with a few questions about the significance of the performance sites I chose, the theories used, and practices highlighted throughout. Each of the sites I examined involved the creation of performances where the relationship of the performer to her work, the performer to her audience, and the performance to its mode of production were at stake. Each of these relationships and their statuses were contested on multiple levels. Is there a right way to view a performance? Who or what is performing at a given time during the viewing of creation of a performance? How are the processes at work in the construction and reception of a performance sorted out by critics and performers alike? The theories of Derrida and Deleuze combined with the perspectives offered by experimental and avant-garde performance practitioners of the 20<sup>th</sup> century offer useful models for not only experimenting with different forms of analyzing performance, but the nature of experimentation in general. To experiment means to try something out, to play, to challenge existing ideas for answers, to ask questions. It also means setting up rules of engagement and potential means of doing something. In a way, practice is a form of experimenting with theory. If I read a piece of theory that explains experiencing phenomena in a certain way, a performance is a valuable and exciting way to test out that theory *in practice*. Practice then becomes an extension of theory as the performing body. Although one could view the performing body in broad terms, I am specifically referring to the performing body in the production of aesthetic performances. The bodies that make, stage, and enact artistic choices in the actualization of performance theory as performance are experimental bodies. The theories and practices used in this study allow a host of choices for the experimental bodies at work in the process of performance to create and understand one another.

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## **Vita**

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