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# Performing photographs: memory, history, and display

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PERFORMING PHOTOGRAPHS:  
MEMORY, HISTORY, AND DISPLAY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in

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By

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## ABSTRACT

In my study, I place concepts and practices of photography and performance in dialogue to enable our understanding of how photographs perform and how performance contains or can contain elements we attribute to photographs. The connection between photography and performance that most intrigues me is how they make memories and when collected or restored in some socially shared way make histories too. My specific aim is to understand how photographs and performance might benefit from each other in how they make and transmit memories and histories. To activate the study, I select and focus on five specific events in which photographs are or have been displayed. I analyze each event in terms of its “internal,” “original,” and “external” or display context (Barrett 96), pertinent concepts and practices of photography, and also those of performance that are similar. By means of a comparative approach, I look at what memories and histories appear to be remembered and forgotten, and how, in each photographic event and the performance practices I draw on. My study is significant because while scholars have discussed the conceptual links between photography and performance, they have not considered the practical links. This study emphasizes the latter and thereby offers methods for “doing” photography and/in performance that feature rather than minimize how memories and histories are made in both mediums.

CHAPTER ONE  
PERFORMING PHOTOGRAPHS

The photograph touches me if I withdraw it from its usual blah-blah:  
“Technique,” “Reality,” “Reportage,” “Art,” etc . . . to allow the detail to arise of  
its own accord into affective consciousness.

– Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (55)

The central irony of representation – its tendency to make absent the very thing it  
wishes to make present.

– Della Pollock, “Introduction: Making History Go” (27)

In this study, I place concepts and practices of photography and performance in  
dialogue to enable our understanding of how photographs perform and how performance  
contains or can contain elements we attribute to photographs. The connection between  
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<sup>1</sup> In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal distinguishes between memory and  
history, stating, “history differs from memory not only in how knowledge of the past is  
acquired and validated but also in how it is transmitted, preserved, and altered” (212).  
For Lowenthal, memory is experienced and validated as personal and singular to each  
individual whereas histories are viewed and validated as collective accounts assembled  
from memories and other restored remnants. While histories certainly affect individuals  
and their memories, their prime function is to benefit (or not) an institution, community,  
or group of people, such as a family (212-214).



because while scholars have discussed the conceptual links between photography and performance, they have not considered the practical links. This study emphasizes the latter and thereby offers methods for “doing” photography and/in performance that feature rather than minimize how memories and histories are made in both mediums.

Below, I elaborate on the subject, method, and significance of the study as summarized above. First, I review the diverse types, contexts, and usages of photography as discussed by Terry Barrett in *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images*. Then, I explore the relationship between the photographic medium and memory and history. Next, I summarize the photographic events I examine in my study and the performance practices I draw on to explore the relationship between photography and performance. Lastly, I justify the significance of my study.

Arguably, Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre was the first to imprint light reflected from an object on to light sensitive material, producing a permanent tangible photograph or daguerreotype.<sup>2</sup> Daguerre’s discovery “exhibit[ed] the potentials of a new graphic medium that was to revolutionize picture making” (Newhall 18). Since Daguerre’s invention in 1837, photography has been used to make images of diverse subjects in multiple styles for various reasons.

In *Criticizing Photographs*, Terry Barrett inventories the diverse ways practitioners, critics, and curators have categorized photographs, each system proving to highlight a particular way of viewing photographs and the components that constitute them. For instance, in 1970, Time-Life published a series of books on photography, one

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<sup>2</sup> Daguerre worked in collaboration with Nicephore Niepce who died before the pair revealed their invention. Some historical accounts make it seem as though Daguerre stole Niepce’s invention without giving him due credit.

of which emphasizes themes as based on subject matter. *The Great Themes* are “the human condition, still life, portrait, the nude, nature, war” (Barrett 55). In 1978, John Szarkowski divided photographs into two categories, basing his decisions on form as styled in the traditions of Romantic and Realistic art and literature (Barrett 54-55). In her 1989 exhibit, “Six Ideas in Photography,” Gretchen Garner crosscut subject matter, form, and function in the captions she used to identify each section of the exhibit. The sections were “Time Suspended,” “A Wider World,” “Famous Faces,” “Minute Detail,” “Private Theatre,” and “Pictorial Effect” (Barrett 55). In *Fabrications: Staged, Altered, and Appropriated Photographs*, Anne Hoy’s categories emphasize the interdependent yet shifting relationship between subject and form across time. Her divisions are “narrative tableaux, portraits and self-portraits, still-life constructions, appropriated images and words, and manipulated prints and photo-collages” (Barrett 55).

Barrett proposes his own categories based “on how photographs are made to function and how they are used to function” (56). According to Barrett, “all photographs, art and non-art, family snapshots and museum prints” serve one or more of the following functions (56). They are descriptive, explanatory, interpretive (i.e., for Barrett, they seek to explain things by means of personal or subjective impressions and expressions), ethically evaluative, aesthetically evaluative, and theoretical (56). While Barrett acknowledges that a photograph can fulfill many functions and that by naming function we impact the same, he also argues that by means of informed, thoughtful, and thorough analysis, we can determine the most prevalent function(s) of a photograph.

To undertake such an analysis, Barrett suggests we pursue the four paths of inquiry common to criticism, namely, description, interpretation, evaluation, and

theorization, and in terms of three contexts integral to photographs: internal, original, and external (96-101). The internal context refers to the image imprinted on the photograph and its “subject matter, medium, form, and the relations among the three” (Barrett 96). The original context directs attention to the event of making the photograph in a certain time and place. By studying the “social history, art history, and the history of the individual photograph and the photographer who made it,” we gain an understanding of the historical conditions that may have influenced the making of the internal image (Barrett 99). The external context refers to the “situation in which the photograph is presented or found,” such as a newspaper, family photograph album, or museum exhibit (Barrett 99). While Barrett tends to emphasize how the original and external contexts contribute to our understanding of the image, or internal context, I view the three contexts as equal channels of transmission, all of which are involved in making the photograph. As Annette Kuhn offers, “memories evoked by a photo do not simply spring out of the image itself, but are generated in an intertext of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image . . . cultural contexts [and] historical moments” (“Remembrance” 397).

Like Barrett, I am concerned with how the photograph functions although, as I inferred above, the function may vary given the context. Further, while I draw on Barrett and others to articulate functions given the particularities of context, generally I am concerned with how the photograph functions to restore or elide certain memories and histories. In other words, for me, all photographs, “art and non-art, family snapshots and museum prints” serve to remember the past in one way or another (Barrett 56).

The physical technology of photography demonstrates this point in that light rays of a specific moment in time and place are imprinted on light sensitive material. The photograph is a physical manifestation of a moment that has passed. Of course, the internal factors of subject matter or composition or the captions in a display context can highlight or undermine the function of the photograph as a document of memory and history. In my study, then, I am concerned with what constitutes each context, how they interrelate, and thereby “make history *go*” or “*go away*” (Pollock, “Introduction” 1; emphasis in original).

In the field of performance studies, a current and popular definition of performance is that of “restored behavior” or “twice-behaved behavior” (Schechner 36). The term “restored” implies how memory and history are embedded in the base concept and practice of performance. Della Pollock extends the definition by observing, “performance draws from history its practical, analytical, critical, and theoretical capacity” (“Introduction” 2). Thereby, performance makes history and, according to Pollock, “make[s] history exceed itself . . . become itself even as it rages past the present into the future” (“Introduction” 2). Pollock’s view of the relationship between history and performance is based in the concept of “historicity” where, by means of restored bodily practices, people not only show the imprint of history but also contest its claims. Historicity is “where history works itself out” (Pollock, “Introduction” 4). However, as with photographs, the components of and shifts between the various channels of transmission can highlight or undermine the historical consciousness and function of performance. The restoration, contestation, and consequences of performance as memory

and history can be forgotten in the (likewise historical) rush of present to future progress and the significance associated with the same.

In this study, then, I view photographs as creative sights/sites/cites of restored behavior, or performance, where memories and histories are recalled and made by people in various contexts for different reasons. In this way, photography and performance are understood and treated as both subjects of and a means for making histories.

Below, I identify and briefly discuss the five photographic events I cover in the study. In my selection, I aimed for breadth although I do not claim to cover all the diverse types and functions of photographs. I also discuss the performance practices I compare and use to analyze each photographic event.

In Chapter Two, I focus on Eadweard Muybridge's photographic documentation of fundamental human movement, particularly his series titled, *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*. An English photographer who worked largely in the United States in the mid to late 1800s, Muybridge developed a way to take sequential photographs that showed how humans and also animals moved. By means of his motion studies, Muybridge aimed to contribute a "standard work of reference" that both artists and scientists could use (Muybridge quoted in Haas 145).

For Barrett, Muybridge's motion studies are a prime example of what he calls explanatory photographs since they "provide visual explanations that are in principle verifiable on scientific grounds" (66). Barrett finds most but not all press photographs to be explanatory and, likewise, those used in the social sciences, such as visual sociology and visual anthropology (62-64). Walker Evans' photographs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* documents sharecroppers in rural Alabama and typifies the latter genre

although, as the title suggests, his visual “explanation” of the culture includes an evaluative bent. It might be fair to say then that explanatory photographs demonstrate the conventions *and* inventions of photography as a science and, hence, an art too.

Investigating the stories of science and art that Muybridge’s photographs restore is a key concern in the chapter. My investigation is prompted by Muybridge’s express aims, Barrett’s notion of explanatory photographs, and John Pultz’s view of Muybridge’s work. In *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1939 to the Present*, John Pultz contrasts the motion studies of Muybridge with those of the French scientist Etienne-Jules Marey, finding that Marey’s studies are more scientific than Muybridge’s, which are “ultimately artistic” (31). Rather than pursue an argument that opposes art and science as does Pultz, I pursue how Muybridge’s photographs inter-relate artistic and scientific inquiry as informed by discourses of science and art at the time. Entailed here is an investigation of how photography was viewed and used in light of the industrial revolution, technological advancements, the emergence of social scientific theories of class and culture, and the body as a mechanized tool – like the camera, a machine – in service to art as well as science and industry. My understanding of the historical context is informed and specified in terms of a performance practice that was influenced by similar factors, namely, Vsevolod Meyerhold’s biomechanics.

Biomechanics is a scientific training method for the performer’s body based on studying and refining fundamental movement so as to produce a more expressive physical instrument. Although Meyerhold experimented with aspects of the method prior to the Russian Revolution, it came to fruition afterwards when Meyerhold was appointed Director of the newly formed State Higher Theatre Workshop in Moscow and found

himself working with amateur and semi-professional workers' troupes. Lacking formal training, the actors' expressive repertoire was "clumsy and ineffectual," indicative of "provincial melodrama," which Meyerhold found ironic since the function of the new state theatre was "to educate and promote the socialist and scientific reconstruction of Russia" (Gordon 87). To address the limitations, Meyerhold developed biomechanics drawing on Frederick Winslow Taylor's time-motion studies of bodies in industry, objective psychology or reflexology, the practical utilitarianism of constructivist art, and aspects of *commedia dell' arte*. The noted influences help me view and articulate how both biomechanics and Muybridge's *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can* operate as artful sciences. They verify and explain the fundamentals of human movement while they also communicate excesses and incongruities that counter without denigrating the method and aims of scientific inquiry.

In Chapter Three, I concentrate on the family photograph album drawing on my own experiences as a collector and keeper of a family album, popular "how to" books, such as Michele Gerbrant's *Scrapbook Basics: The Complete Guide to Preserving Your Memories*, and scholarly studies, such as Julia Hirsch's *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning, and Effect*, "An Introduction to the History of Scrapbooks" by Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Buckler, and "Scrapbooks as Cultural Texts: An American Art of Memory" by Tamar Katriel and Thomas Farrell.

As practitioners and scholars confirm, family photograph albums are sites where a family member, most often a female, arranges and displays a collection of photographs that recall the important events in a family's life. The album stabilizes the family's identity by remembering and validating their past while it constantly remakes that

identity. The changing circumstances of family life as experienced by its members and as evidenced in the minutia of the displayed photographs influences what memories are restored and meanings made each time the album is viewed.

In the chapter, I place the photograph album in conversation with Constantin Stanislavski's actor training system understanding that both practices are based in collecting memories, which then contribute to making an identity or, in Stanislavski's terms, building a character. Developed by Stanislavski in the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, the system aims to "prepare the actor to present the externals of life and their inner repercussions with convincing psychological truthfulness" (Hapgood vii). To meet the noted aims, Stanislavski teaches his students to do concrete actions in terms of given circumstances rather than force "*a feeling for its own sake*" (*Actor Prepares* 43; emphasis in original). Thereby, sense and emotion memories, thoughts and feelings are stirred and expressed in ways that come naturally to the actor as a human being – or so the theory goes. As the student progresses in her training, she learns to adapt the noted process to the particular circumstances of a given text, character, and the character's implied subtext. For Stanislavski, these factors and human nature generally are governed by a logic and coherency of internal and external action, which the actor should strive to realize. In other words, while the system disclaims conventions of acting, it upholds conventions of dramatic action and its expression – i.e., as logical and coherent reflections of the "laws of nature" (Stanislavski, *Building a Character* 306).

In the chapter, Stanislavski's system helps me theorize how albums restore memories through imagery as action, validating not only the family's memories but the maker and her family as active agents of their lives. Further, the conventions of dramatic



action as logical, coherent, and truthful in verisimilitude terms are comparable to the conventions the maker calls on to select, arrange, and caption photographs, the aim being to make the album familiar and accessible in form. Based as it is on concepts of romanticism and spiritual realism, Stanislavski's system also provides perspectives that help me trouble scholarly claims that albums construct idealized views of family life, reducing family complexities to metonymic miniatures that ultimately result in the "social disease" of nostalgia (Stewart ix). While ideals, miniature realities, and nostalgia are at work in family photograph albums, I draw on the critical imperatives of romanticism and spiritual realism – e.g., as responses to the ill effects of modernity and visibility – to argue for a shifting, generative, and critical understanding and enactment of these ideas. Lucy Lippard's positive view of nostalgia as a desire to "return home" further informs my argument since it prompts me to "return" the making and functions of the album to the "home" and "home" maker, featuring rather than eliding her actions and purposes as fundamental to understanding the album in any comprehensive way (*On the Beaten Track* 164).

The photographic performance I discuss in Chapter Four is an albumen silver print portrait of the Countess de Castiglione titled, *Scherzo di Follia* or *Game of Madness*. Taken by the French photographer Pierre Louis Pierson between 1863 and 1866, *Scherzo di Follia* depicts the Countess in what appears to be a theatrical costume holding a small black matte with an oval opening to her right eye. With an expressionless and partially masked face, the Countess peers through the oval opening confronting the gaze of the viewer.

*Scherzo di Follia* is just one of some five hundred portraits the Countess and Pierson made together over a forty year period, from 1856 to 1895. While portrait photography was extremely popular during this time, the number of portraits the Countess made is exceptional, as is the active part she played in composing them. Further, while many sitters chose to reproduce and circulate their image publicly by means of *carte-de-visites*, the Countess did not. Rather, she displayed the portraits in her own private collection for a “restricted audience” or gave them to particular “friends, relatives, and lovers, all those by whom she wished to be reminded” (Apraxine and Demange 44).

Due to the sheer quantity of portraits and the Countess’ reputed history as an Italian spy and Napoleon III’s mistress, many scholars tend to analyze her portraits largely in terms of what they tell us about the Countess’ life and personality. Typically, the Countess emerges from the analysis as a scheming seductive narcissist, obsessed with her own beauty and clueless as regards the portraits she made. As Pierre Apraxine and Xavier Demange assert, the portraits demonstrate “playful improvisations” without purpose or message (12). Art critic Lyle Rexer disagrees, claiming that the Countess was a “revolutionary” artist of her time (1). I agree with Rexer and, in the chapter, call on Bertolt Brecht’s concepts and practices of epic theatre to show how the Countess composed her portrait(s) to comment on certain social-cultural events and issues of her day as well as to imply her personal relationship to them.

Influenced by Marxist theory, Brecht developed epic theatre to prompt his audiences to adopt a critical attitude toward their social-historical circumstances. The key tactics I entertain in the chapter are alienation, epic discourse, montage, social gestures,

the separation of elements, and the re-functioning of reproductive technologies. While all the noted tactics are at work in *Scherzo di Follia*, the Countess' use of the "quotable gesture" or social gest guides my analysis (Benjamin 151). Understood as a calculated pose that acknowledges its draw on a socially shared referent and conveys a "particular attitude" towards it (Brecht 104), the social gest is used constantly by the Countess in her portraits. Her use is informed by the conventions of the portrait studio where it was commonplace for sitters to wear costumes, strike poses, and hold props that recalled a historical, social, or artistic referent of some kind. It appears the typical reason subjects quoted the past was to garner the positive attributes of the referent as their own. Whether understood as truthful or feigned, this staging of the self indicates two contesting social trends of the time: the increasing awareness and acceptance or not of the theatricalization of public life and the attempt to counter the same by means of scientific practices that reveal the true personality of an individual regardless of his or her trickery.

Physiognomy and phrenology were two such sciences, and often photography was their servant of proof. In my analysis of *Scherzo di Follia* as epic theatre, I argue that the Countess quotes and re-functions the surveillance apparatus of photography so as to express her opinion toward it and these key trends.

In Chapter Five, I take a look at *FOUND Magazine*, an online archive of photographs and other items, each lost or forgotten by someone and found and displayed by another on the website. Developed by Davy Rothbart and Jason Bitner in 2001, *FOUND Magazine* encourages users to "check out all the strange, hilarious, and heartbreaking things" people find and decide to share ("ABOUT"). Users also are encouraged to submit contributions of their own, supplying them with captions that

include a title, the location and date of the find, and “any reactions or interpretations” they might have (“SUBMIT”). In turn, viewers can post responses to the find and its caption. In these ways, *FOUND Magazine* activates individuals in a collaborative process of making history and culture. Understanding that the remnant is without an original context in Barrett’s terms, the collaborators make (up) and reflect on stories about the remnant based on the few indicative facts of the internal and external contexts. In other words, they create and interact in a fictive real space, a space indicative of performance and, when allowed to retain their inherent “ambiguities,” history and photography too (Berger and Mohr 89).

The interactive process also bears democratic traits, a notion I discuss and support by comparing *FOUND Magazine* with Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) praxis. A Brazilian theatre practitioner, Boal drew on Paulo Freire’s democratic pedagogy, Stanislavski’s regard for introspection and the imaginative resources of each individual, and Brecht’s tactics for prompting social critique to develop a series of exercises and games that actors and non-actors alike can use to address personal and social issues that concern them. “At the heart of [Boal’s] work” is his insistence that anyone can and should have the opportunity to act, “to perform and to take action” (Jackson xix). To realize this aim, participants who attend a TO event are understood and treated as spect-actors. They actively make the event and reflect on what they have made. They are the experts, selecting and learning about the issues that concern them through an interactive process aimed toward parity, tolerance, and respect for individual choices as they contribute to the emerging collective. In these ways, TO events

democratize the making of culture and are rehearsals for taking similar action in everyday life.

In the chapter, I concentrate on two specific TO practices. The exercises and games that constitute Image Theatre offer direct links to how participants make and comment on visual imagery (i.e., photographs) in *FOUND Magazine*. Boal's Joker System provides a clear and flexible structure for creating performance events geared toward democratic interaction. While the structure is not unique to the Joker System or *FOUND Magazine* for that matter, the identification and implementation of its different parts contributes to an understanding of what might constitute a democratic assembly and how it might be achieved in practical terms.

Observing that both *FOUND Magazine* and TO contain practices that encourage spontaneous subjective action and reflective, sometimes reflexive, responses to those actions, I also entertain Roland Barthes's notion of the "co-presence" of a *punctum* and *studium* in a photograph (*Camera Lucida* 25). For Barthes, the *studium* refers to the social-historical meanings and functions we attribute to a photograph, aiming to understand it and also meet social expectations that we *should* understand it (*Camera Lucida* 26-28). The *punctum* affects us personally and differs from viewer to viewer. It is the "element" that "pierces" the viewer with "delight" or "pain" for some unexplained reason (*Camera Lucida* 26, 28). For Barthes, the relationship between the pair is that the *punctum* often disturbs or punctuates, counters or highlights aspects of the *studium*. In TO and the *FOUND Magazine* practices, I find that the diverse *punctums* excite participant investment in the image and often lead to their making of a *studium*.

In Chapter Six, I focus on *The Chromatic Diet* by Sophie Calle. Calle is a famous photographer known as “a world-class snoop” who makes art by “compulsively spying on people, including herself” (Glueck 1). *The Chromatic Diet* consists of seven photographs Calle made in response to the character of Maria in Paul Auster’s novel, *Leviathan*, who is based on Calle and, in the novel, constructs her own chromatic diet. Prompted by the fictional Maria, Calle composed seven still life photographs, each of which depicts a monochromatic meal she made and apparently ate during the week of December eighth through the fourteenth in 1997. For instance, the photograph for Monday shows an orange place setting with plates of orange foods, such as carrots, prawns, and cantaloupe, and a glass of orange juice.

While much of Calle’s work is composed to highlight the “slapdash . . . shot from the back” contingent practices indicative of spying (Bois 36), *The Chromatic Diet* is extremely well crafted in formal aesthetic terms. Given Calle’s back story, we might say the piece investigates the etiquette of formal aesthetics as manifested in content, a proper place setting with beautifully arranged food. The result is ironic and funny, as I see it, the photos demonstrating the merits and limitations of substantive and formal “etiquette.”

To further understand how the photographs perform, I compare *The Chromatic Diet* with the performance practices of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and Robert Wilson’s Theatre of Images. Founded in Germany in 1919, after World War I, the Bauhaus was a design school that concentrated on elemental forms as applied to architecture and other fine and applied arts, from sculpture and painting to carpentry and weaving. Stressing “a new and powerful working correlation” between diverse “processes of artistic creation” (Gropius and Wensinger 7), the school also included a stage workshop, developed and

directed by the sculptor Oskar Schlemmer. By means of simple abstract dances, Schlemmer and his students investigated the principles and properties of formal elements as they relate to bodies moving in three-dimensional space. While their discoveries were applied to the other arts, such as architecture, they also validated performance as a subject and means for artistic investigation, experimentation, and play. Schlemmer's recognition of how stage components contain and can teach us about formal elements is evident in a lecture he gave to the Circle of Friends of the Bauhaus in 1927. In his address of "how the curtain goes up," he asks:

But how? It can go up in any of a hundred different ways. Whether in the matter-of-fact tempo of "now-it's-open, now-it's-closed," or solemnly and sedately rising, or torn open with two or three violent tugs, the curtain has its special vocabulary. We can imagine a curtain-play which would evolve literally from its own "material" and reveal in an entertaining way the curtain's own secret nature. By adding an actor the possibilities of this sort of play are multiplied. (Schlemmer 92; emphases in original)

Schlemmer's comments also reveal how the investigation of and play with formal elements does not equate to a formalist disposition necessarily, that is, where elements are denied context and the ability to spark diverse associations.

As termed by Bonnie Marranca, Theatre of Images was an avant-garde movement of the 1960's and 1970's that replaced the theatrical emphasis on language "as a critique of reality" with "a multiplicity of images" (Marranca ix, x). Rather than chronological plots that feature coherent characters and action, Theatre of Images favors multi-sensory imagery that excites "alternative modes of perception" on the part of the audience (Marranca x). As regards visual imagery, the movement stresses that "how one sees is as important as what one sees" and, by means of visual tricks that defamiliarize seeing, it attempts to highlight this point (Marranca xii). In the chapter, I concentrate on the

spectacular surreal operas of Robert Wilson and his company, the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds. Wilson's work connects with Calle's in a number of helpful ways. While highly crafted in terms of visual form, his operas integrate abstraction and familiar cultural icons just as Calle abstracts the iconic table setting through a monochromatic use of color. So too, Wilson is adept at calling attention to the primacy and partiality of sight, which are issues at work in Calle's detection of her "undetected" viewing of others. Lastly, Wilson and Calle (as well as the Bauhaus Stage Workshop) craft their pieces so as to "elude fixed, given meanings" (Counsell on Wilson 180). Thereby, they encourage their viewers to co-create the piece by intermingling subjective and social shared associations and meanings.

As prompted by the practices of Calle, Wilson, and the Bauhaus Stage Workshop, I conclude the chapter with a written performance that expresses my understanding of how *The Chromatic Diet* performs in light of formal aesthetics and other issues that have arisen in my discussion of Calle's investigations and those of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds.

The significance of this study lies in its particulars. Save for the understanding that photography, performance, and history are practices of remembering and forgetting, of restoring the past in some way, no one theory or method prevails. Instead I select and focus on specific photographic events viewed through specific performance practices looking for the particular memories and histories they perform. While conceptual-theoretical issues inform my study throughout, often embedded in the events and practices I undertake, my intrigue (and performance politics) concerns particulars. I want to know how a motion study about a woman walking with a watering can, a family



album, the portrait *Scherzo di Follia*, the online *FOUND Magazine*, and *The Chromatic Diet* work to make histories go or, as the case may be, go away.

As a result of my emphasis, I do not cover all types and functions of photography or performance. My scope is limited although, within the limited scope, the events and methods are diverse. Also, I believe it is fair to say that the methods I call on have proven to prevail as important performance practices (or, at least, ideas) in either popular culture, the professional art world, or the academic fields of theatre and performance studies.

The merits of the study derive from its limitations. By focusing on particular events and practices, I am able to offer in-depth descriptions and analyses of the internal, original, and external contexts that inform the photographic event and/as performance practice. Also, by focusing on the particulars of practice, I enact (and offer a model for enacting) the understanding that performance and history as historicity are about and concerned with people doing things in particular spaces and times, in contrast to assuming that significance lies solely in broad overviews and statements. Lastly, by stressing how in each case people do performance, I hope to demonstrate how theatre and performance methods (of any kind) provide concrete examples that help us ground and test theory, support or contest it, and also apply it in how we teach, write about, and do performance in everyday life, on the stage via diverse media, and by means of material culture. Again, granting that performance is a practice of remembering and forgetting, it behooves us I think to practice the practice.

CHAPTER TWO  
BIOMECHANICAL WOMAN WALKS WITH A WATERING CAN

Every movement is a hieroglyph with its own particular meaning.  
– Vsevolod Meyerhold, *On Theatre* (200)

Not only great pictures by great photographers, but *photography* – the great undifferentiated, homogenous whole of it – has been teacher, library, and laboratory for those who have consciously used the camera as artists. An artist is a man who seeks new structures in which to order and simplify his sense of the reality of life.

– John Szarkowski, “Introduction to *The Photographer’s Eye*” (103)

In this chapter, I compare and contrast Eadweard Muybridge’s sequential photographs, *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*, with Vsevolod Meyerhold’s systematic training for the actor, biomechanics. I explore the scientific and aesthetic aspects of each practice investigating their relationship to time and history. Both Muybridge’s photographs and Meyerhold’s biomechanics tell stories about how bodies perform science and art. Biomechanics provide me with a language to explore how a woman captured walking with a watering can in thirty-three consecutive photographs performs an artful science.

To start, I describe the certainties or observable facts of *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*, keeping in mind Terry Barrett’s suggestion that the researcher consider the external and original as well as internal contexts of the photograph.

CERTAINTIES

I first viewed *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can* in Muybridge’s text, *The Human Figure in Motion*, which was published posthumously in 1955. The book contains over 4700 photographs in 196 plates. *Woman*

*Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can* is Plate 101. The plate consists of thirty-three black and white photographs divided into three series of eleven photographs that progress from left to right across two pages. While each series is taken from a different angle, all three series show the same woman walking from the viewer's left to right with a watering can in her hand, turning around, and walking back the way she came. The woman is naked, slender, and athletic looking, and her black hair is twisted up on top of her head. She holds a watering can in her right hand from which water sprinkles. With a slight smile she looks directly at the can, observing with pleasure, it seems, the task at hand. Her left arm is lifted slightly with fingers pursed and pointing in the can's direction. The setting for the scene consists of a wooden floor and a backdrop of a white grid with small black squares, like graph paper. The light in the photographs appears to be natural sunlight, as if the woman is in an outdoor studio. Angling in from above, the light shadows the upstage side of the woman's body and also casts a shadow of her body on the floor. In several photographs, it appears the woman is watering her shadow. The main focus of each photograph is the woman's body and her act of watering the floor (and sometimes her shadow). The scenic distance of each shot is fixed and consistent across all thirty-three photographs.

While each series shows the same woman, performing the same action, at the same time, each series is from a different angle. From the viewer's perspective, the first series is taken from a right angle to the line of motion, the grid background clearly in view behind the woman walking and watering. The second series is taken in line with the woman's movement, from the far right side of the grid, the front and back of her body fully visible as she walks toward and away from the camera. The third series is taken

from a left angle to the line of motion, depicting the back right side of her body, the turn, and then the front left side of her body.

To detail the woman's movement further, I will focus on the first series of eleven photographs, inferring the action and angles of the other two series. In the first series, the woman is shot from a right angle to the line of motion, documenting the lateral sides of her body. In the first four photographs, the camera records the woman's right side as she walks forward two paces. To start, the woman's right arm with watering can in hand is lowered, and as she walks she raises it and the can slowly. In the fifth photograph, the woman begins a clockwise turn and is facing the camera full front. Shots six, seven, and eight document the completion of the 180 degree turn, and in shots nine, ten, and eleven, the woman walks one and a half paces back to her starting position, left side facing the camera. As in shot one, in shot nine, she holds the watering can at her side and, in the following shots, lifts it as she walks back through the puddles of water on the ground. The photographs in series two and three were taken at the same time and depict the same movements, but from different angles.

#### NOT SO CERTAINTIES

Muybridge made the photographs in Plate 101 between the spring of 1884 and the fall of 1885, while he was doing research on human motion at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1887, the University of Pennsylvania published 781 of Muybridge's plates, each of which consisted of twelve to thirty-six photographs. About 100,000 negatives from the project were secured. The photographs show men, women, children, horses, mules, cats, camels, birds, and other animals "in all manner of activity," such as "walking, running, laying bricks, climbing stairs, fencing, jumping," boxing, pirouetting,

hopping on one foot, throwing a baseball, standing at a rifle drill, and walking with a watering can (Newhall 122; Muybridge, *The Human Figure* 57-62, 151, 141, 43-44, 93, 101).

The human models were somehow “connected with the university” and most of the women were “professional artists’ models” and dancers (Taft x). According to Haas, the models’ nudity “permitted the actions of the limbs to be seen” and was “justified at the time as being for the sake of science and art” (Haas 149). In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger discusses the differences between nakedness and nudity calling on Kenneth Clark’s distinction “that to be naked is simply to be without clothes, whereas the nude is a form of art,” on display and in disguise (Berger 53). A nude is naked and yet “not recognized” as him or herself (Berger 54). Muybridge’s models are nude, then, because their individual identities are masked by their nude costumes, which along with the setting mark their roles as those of subjects aiding in the scientific measurement of human movement.

The setting in which the photographs were taken was an outdoor studio “set up in the courtyard of Veterinary Hall and Hospital” at the University of Pennsylvania (Haas 146). The subjects performed their actions before a backdrop designed “like a huge sheet of graph paper” (MacDonnell 30). The grid was “marked horizontally and vertically into spaces five centimeters square” and enabled the artist and scientist to measure the proportions of the subjects’ bodies while in motion (Taft x). Opposite the backdrop were twenty-four cameras placed “parallel to the line of motion” and “two portable batteries of twelve cameras each” that “could be moved to take the rear and other angle views” (Taft x). Cameras at the different angles were wired to fire at the same time: “one set at right

angles to the line of motion, a second set . . . in the line of motion, and a third set . . . depicting the subject at a sixty degree angle” (Taft x). The result was three series of eleven or twelve photographs printed on gelatin dry plates. The recent invention of the gelatin dry plate allowed Muybridge “to secure well-detailed images at short exposure times” (Newhall 121).<sup>1</sup>

According to Muybridge, his aim in documenting human and animal locomotion was to “furnish a guide to the laws which control animal movements, and to show how those movements are effected” or brought about (*Animals in Motion* 7). He felt that “a series of photographic images made in rapid succession at properly regulated intervals of time, or of distance, would . . . set at rest the many existing theories and conflicting opinions upon animal movements generally” (*Animals in Motion* 2). The guide would benefit both the artist and the scientist in their investigations of bodies moving, and at this it was successful. Upon perusing the guide, the French painter Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier was said to have repainted some of his paintings because he discovered “his interpretations of horse movements had been wrong” (MacDonnell 28). According to Robert Hughes, the Futurists were influenced by Muybridge’s photographs since they showed “successive positions of a figure” and thereby “introduced time into space” (44). The Futurists were intrigued by the illusion of a body in flux and also by Muybridge’s technological innovations. Etienne-Jules Marey, a French scientist of animal anatomy

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Maddox invented the gelatin dry plate in 1871. It was the first durable process for developing photographs since the photographer could coat the plate with a gelatin emulsion, allow it to dry, and then make a photograph without the need for a portable darkroom. Prior to the invention of the dry plate, photographers used the wet plate collodion process invented by Scott Archer in 1851. The collodion process required the photographer to wet the plate with a silver emulsion, put the plate in the camera, and expose the plate while the plate was wet. The whole process had to be done within a ten minute period.

and locomotion, was taking photographs of animal movement at the same time as Muybridge, and the pair corresponded with each other sharing their ideas and practices.

### MUYBRIDGE'S CAREER

A native of Kingston upon Thames, England, Eadweard Muybridge came to New York to work in books and printing. He moved to California where he opened a bookstore and began to study photography. Under the supervision of Carleton E. Watson, Muybridge “became a master of the wet collodion process, invented by Scott Archer in England in 1851” (MacDonnell 12). In 1868, Muybridge was made Director of Photographic Surveys for the United States Government, tasked to make photographs of landscapes in “largely unmapped” areas, such as the Yosemite Valley, which Muybridge documented in 1868 (MacDonnell 13). At the time, taking photographs in the field was difficult since a photographer had to carry and mix all of the chemicals necessary to the development process, which had to be completed immediately after taking the photographs. Muybridge also traveled and worked outside the United States, documenting different cultural practices in countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, and Panama. While traveling in Antigua, for instance, he made a series of photographs that show indigenous Antiguans cultivating coffee.

In 1872, Muybridge caught the eye of a wealthy California politician and racehorse owner, Leland Stanford. Stanford admired Muybridge’s work and thought he would be the best man for the job of investigating the horse’s gait, specifically Stanford’s horse, Occident. While “there are several versions of the events that led up to Muybridge’s taking one of the most important action pictures in history,” Kevin MacDonnell asserts the following account is most accurate (15). Apparently, Stanford

and another wealthy friend were conversing about how a horse's legs move during gallop. The two men discussed a recent experiment by Marey in which he attached writing contraptions to a horse's hoofs in an attempt to record the horse's movement on paper. The experiment proved that during gallop "a horse's legs move . . . in a very unexpected way," namely, between strides all four legs are off the ground (MacDonnell 15). Stanford's friend suggested that Stanford hire Muybridge to investigate the question further. Other versions of the story claim that Stanford was involved in a bet with a friend who argued that a horse could not possibly have all four feet off the ground during gallop. Whatever the case, it appears Stanford was interested in not only proving that horses engage in "unsupported transit," but in "developing winners" for the race track (Haas 48, 46). In other words, Stanford thought that the photographic research of animal locomotion would aid in his training of horses for speed.

Muybridge worked for Stanford for quite some time. At the start, his photos were blurry, but eventually he perfected a process for taking photographs in rapid succession. He lined up and connected multiple cameras to wires that Occident tripped as he ran through them. After tinkering with the shutter speed of the cameras in relation to each other, he succeeded in taking clear sequential photos that proved that horses have all four legs off the ground when they gallop, and, so the story goes, Stanford won his bet.

After working for Stanford, Muybridge traveled the United States and abroad lecturing on animal locomotion. In May 1880, he included moving pictures of animals in his lectures, calling his projector a zoogyroscope or zoopraxiscope. Some credit his invention as the first motion picture instrument (Taft ix; Haas 120). The zoopraxiscope "combined a projecting lantern [of] rotating [glass] disks on which appeared a limited



number of silhouettes, hand-painted over Muybridge's sequential photographs; and a counterrotating slotted disk, geared to operate at equal speed" (Haas 117). The latter acted "as a kind of shutter" creating "the effect of intermittent movement" (Haas 117). Together, the lantern of glass disks and the slotted disk created the illusion of an animal in motion.

Shortly after his lecture tours, Muybridge wrote a prospectus in an effort to secure funding to investigate animal locomotion further. In the prospectus, Muybridge explains he wants to photograph "the story element in human action," capturing "'actors . . . performing their respective parts'" (quoted in Haas 145). Stories would include "'ladies playing at lawn tennis, dancing, and other exercises of muscular action and graceful movement'" (quoted in Haas 145). The resulting photographs would provide a "'standard work of reference'" for artists and scientists alike (quoted in Haas 145). The University of Pennsylvania found his prospectus attractive and, in 1884, granted Muybridge the necessary funds.

#### SCIENCE AND ART STORIES

In *The Body and The Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present*, John Pultz claims Muybridge's photographs are unsuccessful as a scientific tool for measuring movement "because the relationships of time and space from frame to frame are neither obvious nor specified" (31). They also are inconsistent, according to Pultz, because Muybridge was always experimenting with shutter speeds (30). Pultz finds Marey's photographs of human movement to be more accurate in terms of documenting movement in time and space because they were "made with various exposures on a single sheet of film . . . over set intervals of time" (30). Pultz concludes:

In contrast to Marey's project, which produced scientific knowledge by sacrificing the representation of a coherent body, Muybridge's project was ultimately artistic, concerned with the representation of the body within visual narratives that symbolize the overarching scientific discourse of the age. In style – not content – Muybridge's photographs reflect the degree to which the sciences of the later nineteenth century did indeed define the body in other photographs. (31)

Pultz is correct in his assertion that Muybridge's sequential photographs tell stories about science and art. However, representing a "coherent body" in "visual narratives that symbolize the overarching scientific discourse of the age" is not characteristic of art alone. Science does it too. Like art, science requires expressive means to communicate the knowledge it finds and produces, and, like art, its means is affected by the discourses of the time. Further, art as well as science has been known to represent an incoherent body, fragmented into body parts, as well as a coherent body. Lastly, what is understood as coherent and incoherent representations of the body in science and art alters in light of the context and culture. It seems then that the more important question to ask is *what* stories about the body in science and art are told in Muybridge's sequential photographs. While viewing the photographs through biomechanics will address this question in specific ways, a more general history concerning views of art, science, and the body is warranted.

In the last half of the nineteenth century in the United States and Europe, a number of factors contributed to a concerted effort to classify and discriminate between bodies in social systems and institutions. Such factors included: the immense growth of industry; the resulting wealth and prestige of those who profited from it and the need for skilled and unskilled labor to service it; technological advancements in industry and other fields; influenced by Darwin's theories of evolution, the emergence of social scientific

theories that claimed hierarchical differences in race, class, and gender; and, in the United States especially, the fear and prejudice of the white middle to upper classes toward newly freed African-Americans and the waves of immigrants entering the country. In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Lawrence Levine explains that by the end of the century such factors resulted in the white, wealthy, and largely Anglo elite making deliberate distinctions between their highbrow culture and that of lowbrow others. Emboldened by social scientific theories that (wrongly) asserted their superiority, the upper crust activated the distinction by patronizing and influencing the direction of educational and cultural institutions. For example, Levine tracks how prior to the Civil War Shakespeare was a popular art form shared and practiced by a broad segment of the population whereas by the turn of the century it had become as A. A. Lipscomb predicted in 1882, “the Shakespeare of the college and university, and even more the Shakespeare of private and select culture” (quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 73). Along with opera, painting, and sculpture, Shakespeare was claimed by and entombed in the classical academies and studied as a professional Art. Excised subjects included band music, popular performance forms such as vaudeville and burlesque, domestic arts and crafts, and the “industrial” or “commercial” arts of chromolithography and photography (Marzio quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 160). Likewise, the classical academies claimed the professional sciences, such as medicine, while non-professional subjects required by skilled labor in industry and other trades were delegated to the newly emerging polytechnic schools and colleges.

In 1901, the *Nation* asserted that “photography is not a fine art because it can invent nothing” (quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 162), tied as it is to an “external

machine” as compared to true art, which is composed by “a creative spirit who work[s] from *within*” (Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 162; emphasis in original). Like ““machine-made shirts and carpets,”” photographs were crass ““machine-made pictures”” that at best mimicked (pictorial) art rather than created it (Pennell quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 162). Such comments reveal an attempt to distance art, artists, and its arbiters from industrial culture and its people, seeming to ignore the part that industry and its patronage of the arts played in making such distinctions possible. Photography also threatened the ideals of art because as an expressive process that was “relatively simple” and “accessible to large numbers of untrained amateurs,” it gave “a wide spectrum of people the very means of *creating* art” as well as disseminating and owning it (Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 161; emphasis in original). Photography democratized art. Nonetheless, even practitioners who advanced photography as an art based their arguments on “sacred” concepts of the arts solidified at the turn of the century, such as an “emphasis upon the individual unique creator and the single image” (Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 163). They did not highlight the unique properties of photography, such as its ““ability to show detail and stop action”” (Rothstein quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* 163).

For the very reasons photography was dismissed by the elite art world, it was embraced by the scientific-technological world. Granting that it reproduced rather than created reality and that amateurs could learn how to use a camera relatively easily, photography became a tool for empirical observation, documentation, and claims of proof early on and throughout the nineteenth (and twentieth) century. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s critique of the relationship between panoptic surveillance, discipline, and

capital, John Tagg demonstrates how photography was bound up in the development of disciplinary apparatuses in criminology, phrenology, comparative anatomy, psychiatry, and social sciences such as anthropology – all of “which took the body and its environment as their field, their domain of expertise, redefining social as the object of their technical interventions” (Tagg 5). According to Tagg, photography contributed to the ideological disciplining of bodies, prompting self- and other surveillance, regulation, and bodily maintenance in the public sphere. Add in the importance of the machine to the industrial age – priming bodies to act in efficient, predictable, and reproducible ways – and there is little wonder why bodies were viewed and treated as machines during this time.

In the United States and abroad, the body as machine metaphor was epitomized by Frederick Winslow Taylor’s “scientific management” of bodies in industry. Taylor studied and sought to perfect the individual parts and movements of workers’ bodies so as to “increase the efficiency of [their] labor” and product output (Johnston 62). In other words, laborers were taught and rewarded for how well they disciplined their bodies to behave like (and likely with) a machine. The body as a machine that could be perfected also was enacted in the “nationwide health craze” of the period (Kimmel 25). Often attributed to a crisis of masculinity, thousands of men “sought to acquire manly physiques” and “masculine hardiness” by engaging in disciplinary regimes, such as that of Bernard MacFadden’s Physical Culture, which involved purifying the blood, “deep breathing exercises, vigorous workouts with barbells, and large doses of [MacFadden’s] breakfast cereal, Strengthro” (Kimmel 25-26). Another “manly concoction” of the period was C. W. Post’s Grape Nuts, which was “promoted as brain food for the burgeoning

white collar class because ‘brain workers must have different food than day laborers’” (quoted in Kimmel 26). Aimed at masculine virility through Christian purity, J. H. Kellogg claimed that his Corn Flakes reduced sexual ardor and thereby the desire to masturbate, which he and many others viewed as an unnatural vice that depleted one’s manhood (Kimmel 27). All three examples demonstrate the separation of the corporeal body into parts that when fine-tuned result in an improved physical machine. The Post and Kellogg examples extend the concept to the Cartesian claim of a mind/body split. By means of the superior mind, the profane object – the machine – of the body is disciplined and thereby transcended, whether the reason is to separate and classify social bodies or obtain spiritual purity. The body as machine metaphor, then, reflects both an embrace of the might of the machine, industry, and capital and, in these few examples, a distancing from it on the part of the white collar or Christian male.

In this historical context, the broad story that photography tells about itself is that of a profane lowbrow machine, a tool of reproduction in service to others, while for a few practitioners it also strives to obtain artistic transcendence. In *The Body and the Lens*, Pultz pursues his argument that Muybridge’s sequential photos are artistic whereas Marey’s are scientific by contrasting examples of their photographs. He shows Marey’s *Walk*, which in one frame compiles four exposures of a man walking. Each step is duplicated to show how the body shifts weight at the beginning and end of each stride. In this way, Marey “accurately *and visually* recorded movement within time and space” (Pultz 30; emphasis in original). Taken five years before Marey’s *Walk*, the Muybridge photographs show a man throwing a spear in twenty-four separate frames from two different angles. Because the man’s movement is separated in individual frames, its

exact timing is less evident than is the movement in Marey's photograph. Pultz attributes the separation to Muybridge's concern with representing a coherent body in a visual narrative and, hence, his photos are "ultimately artistic" (31). Given the historical context, however, we might make a different argument. Precisely because Muybridge separates the movement of the body into distinct frames viewed from different angles, the body and its movement are less coherent, the narrative less available to the viewer, than in Marey's photo, which shows a coherent body in a simple narrative about a man walking. Further, the photo demonstrates Marey as a "creative spirit" being "inventive" with his medium within a "single frame/image." In other words, *given the values of the period*, we might say Marey's work is more artistic than is Muybridge's. However, such contrasts are less useful than understanding that the photos of both Marey and Muybridge reflect social and/as scientific perspectives of the day, separating the body in time and space so as to study and perfect it as we might do with a machine. Further, both use the machine of the camera in explicitly artistic ways. While Marey uses multiple exposures that capture motion, as Pultz claims, Muybridge realizes the unique ability of photography to stop action so as to focus on the detail of movement and from multiple angles. In these ways, the pair anticipates the upcoming experiments of the futurists, cubists, constructivists, and also Meyerhold's biomechanics.

#### MEYERHOLD'S CAREER

Vsevolod Meyerhold was born in the Russian town of Penza in 1874. The eighth child of a German vodka distiller, he was more interested in the arts than in the family business. He was drawn to music as well as theatre and played the violin, a predilection that had a significant impact on his theatrical work. In 1895, Meyerhold traveled to

Moscow planning to attend law school, but instead chose to study acting under Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko at the Moscow Philharmonic Dramatic School. After graduating, he joined the newly established Moscow Art Theatre co-founded by Nemirovich-Danchenko and Constantin Stanislavski.

Although Meyerhold did not always agree with Stanislavski's theatre practices, he learned a lot from him. Jonathan Pitches describes the relationship as "the most influential" in Meyerhold's career "not because Meyerhold followed in his teacher's footsteps – he didn't – but because the two men shared a fundamental belief in the complete training of an actor and in the need to experiment continually" (6).

Stanislavski's actor training system, commonly known as "the system," encourages the actor to draw on sense and emotion memories equivalent to those of the character she is playing in an effort to impart the internal truth or subconscious life of the character. However, it is "action" that is at "the heart" of the system (Leach 36). To create "life on stage," the actor seeks and executes external actions that will spur the internal memories, thoughts, and feelings (Leach 25). For Meyerhold, Stanislavski's system resulted in productions that were too naturalistic since they aimed to create the illusion that the spectator was "watching real life unfold before him" (Leach 10). In 1902, Meyerhold left the Moscow Art Theatre to explore other methods of theatrical training.<sup>2</sup>

Meyerhold felt that Naturalism "reduced the expressivity of the performer" because it encouraged "a transformation of the actor *into* the character" (Pitches 48; emphasis in original). He also thought that Naturalism "denied the spectators their most

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<sup>2</sup> According to Leach, Stanislavski "always wished to escape what he regarded as the Naturalist straightjacket and avowed that his system was equally applicable to any drama" (10). See Chapter Three for a full discussion of Stanislavski's system.



significant right in the theatre – to imagine” (Pitches 49). He wanted to create theatre events in which the director and actors allowed the spectator to play an active role in the performance. To include his spectator, Meyerhold turned to stylization, a method aimed at expressing the “inner synthesis” of the source text, its particular “style . . . period or phenomenon” (Meyerhold 43). The method entailed distilling the text or some aspect of it to an essence (a potent metaphor or metonym), which then was extended or exaggerated in various ways in the staging of the piece (Pitches 52). For example, in his 1922 production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold*, Meyerhold distilled the foibles and follies of adult love to child’s play, which was reflected in the actions of the sweethearts.<sup>3</sup> Rather than embrace and kiss each other as they might do in a realistic treatment, one lover climbed to the top of a slide and slid down it with a rejoicing “whee!” At the bottom of the slide, he collided with his beloved and knocked her to the ground. This stylization of love required the audience to make associative links between fictive and everyday life expressions of child’s play, adult love, and the anticipated cuckold conflict. To further activate the audience’s associative interplay and highlight the selected style, Meyerhold often distilled the coherent (cause and effect) plot of the source text to a montage of scenes that juxtaposed each other, used minimalist settings and props, exaggerated masks, and accented the whole with marked rhythms or musicality.

Meyerhold was compelled by rhythm and used music to guide the movement of the actors and to underscore his productions. For Meyerhold, musicality referred to the selected rhythms of a performance, which included those of the actors’ voices, bodies, and interactions, the design and use of the set and props, and any actual music used in the

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<sup>3</sup> See page 45-46 for how the set design was stylized also.

production. Meyerhold taught his actors to “embody the concept of ‘musicality’” generally and, for each show, to “embody a very precisely prescribed physical score” (Pitches 56, 97). In Meyerhold’s production of *The Inspector General*, for instance, the actor playing Khlestakov used a frantic staccato score to enable his drunken leap “from sofa to chair and from wife to daughter” while telling “his ever more fanciful autobiography” (Pitches 97). Meanwhile, the town officials responded to Khlestakov’s antics with shrieks and trembling jerks while a waltz played quietly beneath. Khlestakov’s “erratic movements” juxtaposed against the trembling jerks of the town officials to the tune of a waltz marked “the absurdity of the officials’ plight” (Pitches 98). The different scores also illustrate how musicality played a part in Meyerhold’s stylization of the scene.

Meyerhold considered any physical element that disguised the traits of the performer or character to be a mask, which he appreciated for its ability to both “conceal and reveal” (Pitches 58). Whether a costume, movement, gesture, or facial covering, a mask allowed the actor/character to present certain parts of himself to the theatrical or fictive audience while concealing (though often inferring) other parts of himself. As with Khlestakov’s score in the above example, the exaggeration of the mask enabled the stylization of the character and scene while it also upheld Meyerhold’s general aesthetic of celebrating theatrical artifice.

Meyerhold’s acknowledged use of stylization and mask frequently resulted in what he called the grotesque – a “genre of surprise” based on contradiction in that it “mixes opposites” and “celebrates incongruities” (Pitches 61). Meyerhold specified the grotesque as “a humorous work which with no apparent logic combines the most

dissimilar elements by ignoring their details and relying on its own originality, borrowing from every source anything which satisfies its *joie de vivre* and its capricious, mocking attitude to life” (Meyerhold 137). Such traits are evident in Meyerhold’s description of a scene from his 1906 production of Alexander Blok’s *The Fairground Booth*:

In the first scene . . . there is a long table . . . [behind which] sit the “mystics,” the top halves of their bodies visible to the audience. Frightened by some rejoinder, they duck their heads, and suddenly all that remains at the table is a row of torsos minus heads and hands. It transpires that the figures are cut out of *cardboard* with frock-coats, shirt-fronts, collars and cuffs drawn on with soot and chalk. The actors’ hands are thrust through openings in the cardboard torsos, and their heads simply rest on the cardboard collars. (Meyerhold 141; emphases in original)

Notably, the scene surprises us by calling attention to its theatrical artifice, specifically the cardboard, soot, and chalk construction of the disembodied mystics. Anticipating Brecht’s concepts of *gest*, alienation, and contradiction, Meyerhold shows the front side of the mask (the *gest*) of the sacred mystics, which then he alienates (makes strange and grotesque) by showing the (opposite or contradictory) backside. Of course, the mockery of the theatrical construct is directed at the broader social construct too – i.e., at the mysticism of the mystics – and one of the agents of mockery is the social *opposite* of the mystic construct, that is, the profane actor. In this way, Meyerhold’s grotesque sustains a careful balance “between affirmation and denial, the celestial and the terrestrial, the beautiful and the ugly” (Meyerhold 138).

In the years prior to the Russian Revolution, Meyerhold was a familiar name in theatrical circles, directing and producing shows in well-known venues. After the 1917 Revolution, during Vladimir Lenin’s rule, Meyerhold continued to be a highly respected artist, adapting his work to the broader purpose of Soviet art, namely, “to educate and promote the socialist and scientific reconstruction of Russia” (Gordon 87). Once Stalin

assumed leadership in 1922, “the Soviet government moved from celebrating experimental work . . . to damning it” (Pitches 46). Preferring didactic statements in explicit support of the State, Stalin disapproved of Meyerhold’s suggestive incongruities and, in 1940, had Meyerhold executed. He also had Meyerhold’s name “erased from Russian theatre history and his face removed from theatre portraits” (Pitches 42). In part, it is due to Meyerhold’s erasure that Brecht’s theatrical innovations supersede those of Meyerhold in contemporary theatre and performance studies although (as I intended to demonstrate above) they carry marked similarities.

It was during the Leninist period in the early 1920s that Meyerhold developed biomechanics (Pitches 32). The worker-actors that Meyerhold trained at this time were largely inexperienced, and Meyerhold felt that along with other methods biomechanics might prove to be a good training solution. He wanted his students to be “well-rounded thinkers” and required them “to study technical drawing, mathematics, music, social science and the history of world theatres” as well as “fencing, boxing, Dalcroze *eurhythmics*, classical ballet, floor gymnastics, modern dance, ‘tripod positioning,’ cabaret dance, juggling, diction, speech, music,” and biomechanics (Pitches 43; Gordon 92).

## BIOMECHANICS

Biomechanics are a set of exercises that Meyerhold devised to develop an “actor’s underlying technical discipline . . . in order to master his art” (Pitches 67). They constitute a scientific, disciplinary training method for the actor’s body. Meyerhold developed thirteen to twenty biomechanical etudes, which he claimed are the basis for all movement. Some etudes, like “Throwing the Stone” and “Shooting the Bow,” are to be

performed by a single actor while others, such as “The Slap in the Face” and “Dropping the Weight,” require a pair of actors. A simple exercise called a dactyl precedes and completes each etude, and each etude consists of a series of precise movements composed in terms of three stages or a tri-part rhythm of action. The first stage is that of intention or preparation for the intended movement; the second stage is of realization or execution of the movement; and the final stage is of reaction (often a punctuating pause) or transition into the next movement.

The dactyl is the first movement series learned and practiced by an actor training in biomechanics. As Mel Gordon explains, the dactyl is a “signaling exercise that signifie[s] the precise moment of initiation . . . and completion of [a] biomechanical etude” (93). It establishes the actor’s timing for executing the etude and serves as a warm-up and cool-down period.

In Meyerhold’s practice, the etudes were adapted and transformed for stage productions. That is, they were not performed on stage for an audience, but rather were used to teach the actors the skills “fundamental to the craft of acting,” namely, “precision, balance, coordination, efficiency, rhythm, expressiveness, responsiveness, playfulness and discipline” (Pitches 112). Participating in biomechanical training prepared the actor for any movement she might execute on stage.

Below is a description of the dactyl and Slap etude that I adapted from Jonathan Pitches’ photographic and written instructions for performing both (127-142), Mel Gordon’s instructions for executing the “The Slap in the Face” (97-98), and my experience learning and practicing the dactyl and Slap in class and rehearsal. In the bulk of my description, I use italics to highlight how the tri-part rhythm operates.

At the start of the dactyl, two performers stand three feet apart facing one another in a neutral stance. Their bodies are relaxed with feet placed several inches apart and arms dangling at their sides. The neutral stance *prepares* the performers to *execute* the first movement of the dactyl, which they do by bending their knees while reaching their arms slightly behind them. The resulting pose is one of *transition* into and *preparation* for the next main movement. (If the dactyl is done slowly, the performers pause here; if done quickly, the transition-preparation stage is barely noticeable, but fundamental to gaining the momentum required for the next move.) The performers *execute* the next move by raising their arms above their heads, hands facing one another, and rising up onto the balls of their feet. The upward extended body marks a simultaneous *transition* into and *preparation* for the next main move, which is *executed* by the performers returning their heels to the ground and bending their knees while, with a forceful downward motion, they bring their elbows to their sides and clap their hands two times in front of their torsos. A brief pause of reaction to the force of the clap marks the *transition* stage, after which the performers return to a neutral stance. At this point, the performers can proceed to an etude or they can repeat the dactyl as many times as they wish.

To perform the Slap etude, the performers begin in a neutral stance, *preparing* to *execute* the first move, which is a leap to stance: By means of a swift jumping motion, they place their left foot about a foot in front of their right – toes pointing forward, knees slightly bent, weight evenly distributed, and arms hanging loosely at their sides. They are ready for action in this *transition* pose.

A slight movement forward of the right shoulder *prepares* them for the next move, which they *execute* by pivoting ninety degrees to their right on their right leg, which now bears their weight. Simultaneously, they raise their arms so that they are perpendicular to the body. The (back) right arm is bent with the flat of the hand in front of the neck, and the left arm is extended toward the other performer, palm facing down. The performers gaze at each other over the middle finger of their left hands: a punctuating pause of *reaction*.

To *prepare* for the next move, the performers shift their weight to their left legs, after which they *execute* the main move by extending their right arm forward to shake hands and, as counterpoint, moving their left arm back with elbow bent. They clasp hands and pause, holding the shake in the *reaction* stage.

The performers use a tri-part movement to return to the neutral stance that began the etude. With an altogether different rhythmic attitude, the performers tap dance a three step shuffle – right, left, right/left, right, left – or skip merrily in place while waving their arms in the air. Again, by means of a tri-part movement, the performers leap back to stance.

At this point, the performers split into (A) the aggressor and (B) the victim. Both *prepare* for the next move with a slight movement forward of the right shoulder. To *execute* the main move, (A) pivots ninety degrees to her right on her right leg, which now bears the weight, while she raises her right arm up and back as if preparing to slap (or wave at) someone. Her left arm is extended toward (B), palm facing down, and she gazes in *transition* at (B) over the middle finger of her left hand. Meanwhile, (B) pivots ninety degrees to his right on his right leg, which now bears the weight. With arms at his sides,

he tucks his chin into his left shoulder, cowering away from but also gazing at (A) in a pause of *reaction*.

To *prepare* for the next move, both performers turn toward one another, shifting their weight to their left legs. (A) *extends* her right arm forward to slap (B) and, as counterpoint, draws her left arm back with elbow bent. (B) *leans* in toward (A), bringing both hands up to just under his chin. (A) and (B) pause in *transition*.

(A) *prepares* to slap (B) by quickly drawing her right arm back while (B) *prepares* to be slapped by raising his hands slightly. (A) *executes* a fake slap with her right hand while (B) completes the illusion by clapping his hands downward. With his left palm pressed against his forehead, (B) rises quickly as if struck, shifts his weight to his right leg, and arches backwards. (A) is bent forward, resting her right elbow on her left knee and looking downward. They hold the poses in *transition*.

The performers use a tri-part movement to return to neutral. They tap dance or skip merrily again. They leap to stance and repeat the slap section of the etude, exchanging the aggressor and victim roles. They return to neutral and repeat the shaking hands section of the etude. Then, they each make a ninety degree turn so as to be standing next to each other. They connect arms and “parade” around the room, “walking briskly in a jaunty . . . waddle” or tap dance shuffle, waving their free arms in the air with a happy flourish (Pitches 142). To cool-down, the performers perform a dactyl side by side.

As I hope is evident in my description, performing the dactyl and Slap etude is not simply a matter of preparing for and executing or reacting to a slap. Rather, the exercises ask the performer to learn and fine-tune the fundamental mechanics of movement, such



as retaining a balanced center so as to execute shifts in weight and body extensions (e.g., an arch backwards) without falling down. Also at work is the principle of opposition – i.e., the balance and momentum of a movement is enabled by a counter movement, such as inclining the shoulder forward before drawing the arm back. The separation of a slap into discrete parts and each part into a tri-part rhythm implies that all movement can be composed similarly and thereby gain in precision, musicality, and expressiveness. The latter attributes can be realized, for instance, by varying the tempo and duration of each stage: one might *execute* a movement quickly and then follow it with a long pause of punctuation in the *reaction* stage, or vice versa.

Similar creative implications are at work in the overall design of the etude. For instance, the slap movement is an adaptation of the handshake movement and, hence, by learning the etude the performer learns the broader lesson of creative adaptation. The same movement might be adapted to opening a door, or beating dust from a rug, or reaching for a plate of cakes. Creative extensions of the principle of opposition also are at work, for example, in the simple aggressor/victim plot, in the performers switching aggressor and victim roles, and in the interruption of the prevailing attitude of the etude with the whimsical tap dance and parade sections. In these ways, the etude prepares the performer to implement mask, contradiction, and the grotesque in a production. The science of biomechanics, then, informs and is informed by its creative practice. Likewise, to develop biomechanics, Meyerhold drew on concepts and practices of science and art, understanding them as mutual partners rather than opposing binaries. Specifically, he synthesized the concepts and practices of reflexology, Taylorism, constructivism, and *commedia dell' arte*.

Around the turn of the century, several schools of objective as opposed to introspective psychology emerged to the fore in the United States and Russia (Gordon 89). In Russia, the leading figures were Vladimir Bekhterev and Ivan Pavlov, both of whom based their theories of reflexology on “the premise that we can only understand what we can objectively measure . . . physical processes” (Pitches 71). Pavlov’s well known experiment of measuring the salivation levels of dogs resulted in his claim that animals respond to external stimuli automatically “like machines,” and their behavior “is best understood in terms of reflexes” (Pitches 72). Similarly, Bekhterev found that “all human behavior” is based in “associated motor reflexes” (quoted in Gordon 90). He argued that environmental stimuli trigger certain responses in the nervous system, which we wrongly understand and term as subjective feelings or emotions. Therefore, human behavior might be better understood and, as needed, altered by attending to the laws of biology and sociology rather than subjective psychology.

In a lecture on biomechanics delivered in 1922, Meyerhold appears to agree with the theories of reflexology, stating, “all psychological states are determined by specific physiological processes” and “a theatre which relies on physical elements is at very least assured of clarity” (Meyerhold 199). Since Meyerhold also valued activating the audience’s *imagination* through such genres as the *grotesque*, it is unclear whether Meyerhold accepted reflexology fully or found it a useful way to explain some of his artistic inclinations (and also tow the party line of the time).<sup>4</sup> What is clear is that

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<sup>4</sup> Grounded in historical materialism, Soviet doctrine viewed the study of introspective psychology with suspicion and, as used in capitalist based societies, indicative of their individualist tendencies and decadence. Meyerhold’s apparent embrace of reflexology in the noted speech may well have been a tactic to evade suspicion and claims of decadence regarding his artistic practices.

throughout his career Meyerhold trained his actors to access and show emotion through external actions rather than explain them verbally, and biomechanics offered one way to train the body so as to realize these aims.

As I noted earlier, Frederick Winslow Taylor was an inventor who “pioneered the study of scientific management” of industry in the United States (Gordon 88). By means of his method of motion economy or Taylorism, workers learned to use the least amount of movement and strain to produce a high yield of quality products efficiently. To develop the method, Taylor observed factory workers and found that their movements were often “superfluous and awkward,” causing unnecessary strain to muscles and adding minutes to production time (Gordon 88). In addition to tailoring movement so that it flowed in efficient, curved (more so than angular) patterns, Taylor introduced timed work cycles that integrated pauses of rest and transition into the movement, very like the third stage in Meyerhold’s tri-part rhythm of movement – a point Meyerhold recognizes in his 1922 speech on biomechanics (Meyerhold 197-198).

Since one aim in post revolutionary Russia was to update industry for the good of the people, Taylorism was well received there. For Meyerhold, such stylized “work borders on art” since the “skilled worker . . . invariably reminds one of a dancer” (Meyerhold 198). Whether charged to produce material products or expressions, both the worker and the dancer require bodies that are stable, centered, rhythmically coordinated, and efficient – i.e., without “superfluous, unproductive movement” (Meyerhold 198). Taylorism also appealed to Meyerhold because like the distilling phase of stylization, “the Taylorization of the theatre will make it possible to perform in one hour that which requires four at present” (Meyerhold 199). A lengthy scene in which dialogue is used to

express the characters' thoughts or feelings might be condensed to a few dynamic movements.

An artistic and architectural movement that emerged to the fore in post revolutionary Russia, constructivism stressed utilitarian art geared toward social purposes, particularly that of supporting Russian industrialization. As Pitches offers, the constructivist “emphasis on products led to a celebration of the possibilities of the machine – that which produces things” (Pitches 34), resulting in art that highlighted the material properties of the object in three-dimensional space – i.e., that space where bodies, buildings, and machines exist. A constructivist view of theatre, then, highlights the material reality of the theatre space and the performer as a producer of cultural goods. The latter labors “with the aim of maximum productivity” rather than “fritter away 1½ - 2 hours in making up and putting on [their] costume” (Meyerhold 198). In fact, Meyerhold continues in his lecture on biomechanics, “the actor of the future will work without make-up and wear an overall, that is, a costume designed to serve as everyday clothing yet equally suited to . . . the stage” (198-199). Clearly, Meyerhold’s constructivist inclinations found fruition in biomechanics as well as in his vision of sartorial stage wear. Many of his stage sets were designed in terms of the aesthetic too. For instance, the set for *The Magnanimous Cuckold* consisted of simple platforms, ramps, slides, stairs, wheels, and revolving doors that called attention to their utility *as* platforms, ramps, slides, stairs, wheels, and revolving doors. However, in a photograph of the set, the very use of the constructivist *style* (the stylization of the style) infers a kind of optimism toward industrial utility and productivity, which in turn infers the representation of *another* site in addition to that of the theatre space. The set looks like a kid’s playground

where a viewer would not be surprised to find children in overalls sliding down slides, skipping merrily, and parading arm in arm. Recalling my earlier discussion, the stylization of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* in terms of child's play also quotes the constructivist style or, perhaps, the constructivist style quotes children's play. Whatever the case, given Meyerhold's embrace of masking and the grotesque, I can't help but wonder what lay behind the quotations, behind the front stage mask of childish love in (and of) the industrial playground. *Who* is the magnanimous cuckold in [this](#) site?

The potential of excessive, contradictory, or incongruous meanings in the application of biomechanics may arise from the fact that different viewers such as I bring different perceptual baggage to it. However, biomechanics is embedded with its own baggage that serves to counter without denigrating its mechanistic and constructivist inclinations. As Gordon points out, Meyerhold began to develop biomechanics as early as 1914, at the Meyerhold Studio in St. Petersburg. Apparently, Vladimir Soloviev and he were experimenting with *commedia dell' arte*, the popular Italian form of performance where traveling players improvised stock plots by means of stock characters, the latter indicated by iconic facial masks, costumes, and movement. The improvisatory element allowed the players to adapt the basic plots and characters to current issues and thereby poke fun at them, often in highly physical ways. Soloviev and Meyerhold wanted to apply *commedia dell' arte* in their work, but were unable to find any records on how the troupes trained, and so they invented sixteen etudes, drawing on and synthesizing various popular performance practices including *commedia dell' arte* (Gordon 85-86).

According to Pitches, Meyerhold was impressed with four aspects of the form in particular: the "emphasis on the physical craft of the actor"; the performer's creativity

through improvisation; the character types as “fictional . . . creations” who were not expected to be realistic; and “the spirit of surprise” (19). I believe I have demonstrated how the first three points were at work in the practice and application of biomechanics. Aligned with the grotesque, the “spirit of surprise” is evident in the titles of the early etudes, such as “Two Jongleurs, an Old Woman with a Snake, and the Bloody Climax Under the Canopy,” “The Loss of the Handbags,” and “Three Oranges, An Astrological Telescope, or What One’s Love for the Stage Masters May Lead To” (quoted in Gordon 86, 87). Unfortunately, it is not clear when and why such excessive titles were economized to “The Slap in the Face,” “Dropping the Weight,” or “The Leap from the Back” (Gordon 97, 103, 105). I suspect the titles went the way of “frittering away hours in putting on a costume” as bodies were re-tailored for more constructive purposes in post revolutionary Russia, which is not to say the spirit of surprise disappeared too. (It’s also not to say that some guy or gal didn’t fritter away their hours behind the scenes, preferring sartorial excess to utilitarian overalls.)

In the following section, I apply my discussion of Meyerhold’s practices, particularly biomechanics, to Muybridge’s study of a *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*, asking how the photographs perform in light of issues both practices seem to entertain. Just as biomechanics articulate “an objective system, focusing on the external apparatus of the actor” (Pitches 33), so too do Muybridge’s photographs. Also like biomechanics, the photographs are embedded with components that carry excessive, contradictory, or incongruous meanings that counter without denigrating the method of scientific inquiry. As Kevin MacDonnell anticipates:

It is a mistake for the photographic historian to take it all too seriously;  
Muybridge had a sense of the ridiculous and when he suggested that one nude girl

should throw a bucket of water over another, that a mother should spank her child or that a man should play cricket without even the suspicion of a pad, he probably thought it all pretty hilarious. (30)

#### A WOMAN WALKS IN AN ETUDE

Terry Barrett categorizes Muybridge's photographs as explanatory because they provide a "visual explanation" of how, in this case, humans move (62). For a photograph to be labeled explanatory it must "attempt neutral, objective reportings about persons, places, and events" that are "verifiable on scientific grounds" (64, 66). *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can* is explanatory in these terms, reporting through a series of photographs how a woman walks and turns with a watering can. The biomechanical etudes also are explanatory. By means of "a limited and precise system of exercises," they provide a material (visual and physical) explanation of "all the fundamental expressive situations" that an actor will encounter on stage (Gordon 86).

While explanatory, the means of explanation does not denote fixed meanings and values. Rather, the visual-physical languages of the practices are embedded with stories and issues about the body and movement, science and art that are restored and thereby re-storied through the practices. That is, they are performed. Guided by a scientific method of inquiry, the performance, to start, is one of distilling observed phenomena so as to reveal the fundamentals of the body in motion. And this very distillation infers an art. As Szarkowski observes, "an artist . . . seeks new structures in which *to order and simplify* his sense of the reality of life" (103; emphasis added). The distillation also recalls the first phase of Meyerhold's method of stylization – i.e., distilling a text or some aspect of it to an essence. In these terms, the science of motion studies and biomechanics is an art, an artful science.

Importantly, the distillation does not eradicate the excess of the distilled phenomenon. Drawing on Meyerhold's language, we might understand that such excess lurks behind the mask of the front stage expressions. In the second phase of stylization, Meyerhold reveals the excess by extending and exaggerating the fundamental essence in diverse ways, thereby creating oppositions and ambiguities that prompt multiple meanings. As I demonstrated in the prior section, biomechanics activates this second phase by means of how the etudes are composed and, as I discuss below, Muybridge's photographs do too. To start, however, I discuss what I see as the front stage mask or what is distilled and to what effect in Muybridge's study of a *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*.

Like biomechanics, Muybridge's motion studies distill everyday movement to its fundamentals so as to better understand them and enable their application in the arts and sciences. As with Taylor's scientific management of bodies in and for industry, the body is viewed and treated as a machine with parts that can be isolated and perfected so as to provide a useful product. In *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*, the woman's movements are separated into distinct frames of action that depict the most simple and efficient way to walk, turn, and pour water from a watering can.

While this bio-mechanical perspective on movement is concerned with fundamentals, it gives rise to multiple interpretations informed by the times. Linked as she is with the machine, the woman is objectified, viewed and treated as a non-inventive tool of mechanical reproduction. She reproduces walking, which is mechanically reproduced by the likewise non-inventive technology of photography, linked as it is with machines



too. The woman's movement and its photographic reproduction are predictable, efficient and, as Meyerhold claimed of biomechanics, yield "maximum productivity" (Meyerhold 198). Adding in notions of reflexology and ideology, we might say the woman's performance is a reflex in response to ideological stimuli. That is, she has been conditioned to collude with the disciplinary apparatus of industry and other likeminded institutions, surveying, regulating, and maintaining her body as a tool that produces a product from which she is estranged. The crass machine of the camera performs similarly, snapping pictures in response to the external stimuli of wires tripped by Muybridge or, as the case may be, a horse.

For similar reasons, the woman also can be viewed as a lowbrow object of industry, a working class laborer. Should we specify her labor as that of a *naked* model in photography, her lowbrow status is confirmed further since her profane corporeality places her in the same class of performers working in the lowbrow industries of vaudeville and burlesque, both popular entertainments of the time. However, should we give the naked model a bath, scrub her clean through the transcendent discourse of *nudity*, she gains a highbrow status. Yet without individual agency, she becomes a universal object that transcends its profane materiality so as to serve the humanist trajectory in the modern arts and sciences.

On the other hand, based on a similar distillation of the body to its mechanics, an alternative story and perspective arise. The constructivist aesthetics of the period urge us to consider and celebrate "the possibilities of the machine," in this case as they relate to the woman and her body and photographer and his camera(s). Constructivism restores

agency to the noted subjects, viewing them as conscious producers of cultural products, of art aimed toward a social purpose.

In constructivist terms, the woman performs her actions knowingly and willingly, asking what she has to offer the project. We notice the slight smile on the woman's face as she takes pleasure in the not so simple actions she performs and her ability to execute them in a precise, centered, rhythmically coordinated, and efficient way (Meyerhold 198). As with Meyerhold's constructivist costume, the overall, her nakedness is apparent as the "everyday clothing" of her materiality, while it is "equally suited to . . . the stage" of motion studies and its aims (Meyerhold 198-199). That is, the woman is nude as well as naked. Grounded as it is in materiality and/as universality, the constructivist costume constantly switches between naked and nude. From the woman's perspective, the naked side of the mask restores and assures her of her material body while the nude side of the mask allows her to withhold aspects of it. Enabled by nudity, her materiality resists total exposure.

A constructivist view also restores inventive thought and action to the photographer and the utility of art to his product, photography. In the photographs, Muybridge's inventive use of technology is demonstrated by the depiction of the same movement from multiple angles (which implies his coordination of multiple banks of cameras), and by the emphasis on the unique ability of photography to stop action so as to prompt focus on the details of the depicted subjects. Should we engage the prompt, we indeed discover the fundamentals of walking in this case; of how the woman coordinates her limbs so as to retain balance while shifting weight from foot to foot. Should we overlook or be confused by what we see, Muybridge developed a hieroglyphic language

that accompanies the photos and explains the physics of the movement. His code of hollow and solid triangles and circles articulate which limbs are engaged in supporting and propelling the body while walking. As a choreographic score, it is very similar to Meyerhold's precise instructions for executing an etude. The score as well as the photographs demonstrate the musicality of the woman's movement, particularly as regards how the tri-part rhythm operates.

As termed by Meyerhold, the tri-part rhythm of preparation, execution, and reaction/transition is discernable in each step we see the woman take in the photographs. In the first photograph of each series, the woman is shown *preparing* to *execute* a step with her left foot. Her left leg is raised and her left foot extended forward, while her right leg and foot bear her weight. With watering can in hand, the woman's torso and both arms incline back slightly (her right arm would probably be forward if she were not carrying a heavy watering can), demonstrating how the body retains its balance by counteracting (or opposing) the forward thrust of the leg and foot. In the second photo, the woman *executes* the step with her left leg, shifting her weight onto her left foot. At the same moment, she lifts the heel of her right foot off of the ground *reacting* to the step forward she has taken with her left foot and *transitioning* into her next step. Her arms are back at her sides and she continues to water the ground below.

While the woman's arms and watering can are involved in how she walks, her raising and lowering of the can bears a tri-part musicality of its own. To start, the woman holds the can at her right side, resting it against her leg with the spout facing downward. We might imagine that she is *preparing* to raise the can so as to water particular plants. As she walks, she bends her elbow and slowly lifts the can, gaining leverage so as to



hmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMzmmMz

walk. walk. walk. *walk. walk. walk. walk. walk. walk.* walk. walk.

sloshsloshsloshsplashsloshsloshslosh

click (dripdrip), click (dripdrip), click (dripdrip), click (dripdrip)

HMM

Above, I discussed how the photographic performance distills phenomena so as to reveal the fundamentals of the body and camera in motion. Participating in the performance are diverse discourses and practices of the period concerned with the body, art, and science. One result of their interplay is that divergent views regarding the meaning and value of the performance arise. The performance of fundamentals articulates a conflict between a view of the mechanized body as a passive tool of the arts and sciences and a view of the mechanized body as an active producer of art and science. The first is based in a separation of the mind from the corporeal body, the upper crust from the lower, the arbiters of art and science from the tools and labor of art and science. The second view strives to connect mind and body, upper and lower domains (and classes), arbitration and labor so as to advance a mechanized body that is connected with the products it makes, democratizing the practice of art and science. In other words, and as Meyerhold well knew, the principle of opposition is part of the fundamentals of movement. Without counters hence possibilities, the body cannot walk.

Meyerhold also knew that the performance of fundamentals is not solely a demonstration of external phenomena. Rather, the performance sparks and is sparked by internal associations as well, generated by the producers of the performance, such as himself, the performers, and the audience. In the second phase of stylization, Meyerhold activates this understanding by extending and elaborating on the distilled essence. The

result is a front stage display of the ambiguities and oppositions – the excess – that lie embedded in the distillation.

In addition to showing the fundamentals of movement, Muybridge also wanted to photograph “the story element in human action,” capturing “actors . . . performing their respective parts” (quoted in Haas 145). It appears then that Muybridge was intrigued by excess too or at least by extending the show of fundamental movement to how people enact it on stage and in daily life, which returns us to excess.

As with Meyerhold’s set for the *Magnanimous Cuckold*, Muybridge’s set articulates the distilled essence and aim of his project. It is a simple utilitarian set consisting of a wood platform, grid backdrop, and natural light that seem to denote nothing more or less than a wood platform, grid backdrop, and natural light. It is a constructivist set composed to yield maximum productivity in the study of human motion. Also like Meyerhold’s set, its sparse composition calls attention to itself as not only a construct but a construct designed in terms of a particular style – call it minimalism or constructivism or scientism. The set then is stylized, its denotations restoring and extending connotations (figurations) regarding a style of science, a style for doing science. This recognition lifts the front stage mask of neutrality and objectivity, querying from where the style derived and why it is used and how it functions and what other styles might benefit a study of human motion. Stylization restores ambiguity and possibility to the scenic elements, the photographs, and scientific and artistic inquiry, showing a backside to the mask of “explanation” in this case.

In Meyerhold’s practices, when the backside comes front (not so much displacing as interacting with the front side of the mask), the grotesque results. This humorous

“genre of surprise” that “mixes opposites” and “celebrates incongruities” (Pitches 61) is manifested in biomechanics through conventions of *commedia dell’ arte*, such as an emphasis on physical craft, improvisation, fictional possibilities, and surprise. In *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can*, the most evident examples of the grotesque – the backside coming front – concern the activity of watering.

Recalling that the woman’s focus is on the watering can, the viewer looks at it too and, then, at what the woman might be watering, which proves to be nothing at all save the wooden floor across which she walks. While the photos explain how a person holds and pours water from a watering can, the absence of foliage contradicts the utilitarian purpose of watering, rendering the activity artificial and funny looking. Further, little puddles of water accumulate on the floor, which the woman not only walks through but adds to as she continues to water the floor and, occasionally, her shadow too. Little wonder why the woman wears a slight smile on her face, likely finding the activity a little “ridiculous” and “pretty hilarious” (MacDonnell 30).

Similarly, while the woman’s path is distilled to a straight line in two directions in order to concentrate study on her movement, the path seems funny when viewed in terms of everyday watering. It seems funny to me anyway since when I water my garden I do not walk in a straight line, turn, and retrace my exact same steps. I also wait to pour water from my watering can until I reach the plants, and then I raise the can to water them. I also wear clothes.

Unlike Pultz, my point here is not that Muybridge’s photographs are more artistic than scientific, as if art always has a sense of humor (it does not) and science never does. Rather, just like Meyerhold, Muybridge restores the spirit of surprise, the foibles and

follies, accidents and incongruities to scientific inquiry by also restoring performance to it. That is, he acknowledges the staging of science by, for example, not including plants when in scientific rationalist terms he should. The absence calls attention to the staging, and, in lieu of seeing actual plants, we are asked to imagine them. Of course, like many artists, scientists perform this “illogic” all the time, and, also like many artists, they don’t always acknowledge it. Muybridge does, but to what extent he intends the viewer to take hold of the subjunctive prompt and imagine additional possibilities I cannot say.

Through the concepts and practices of biomechanics and stylization, Meyerhold teaches me what I might “see” should I activate the prompt in Muybridge’s photos. For instance, I might realize how the action of raising and extending the arm forward slightly so as to lift the watering can is a movement fundamental to opening a door, painting a fence, pouring tea, walking a dog and, as in the Slap etude, shaking hands.

The fundamental ambiguities of the other elements in the photographs also give rise to creative imaginings, associative excess, and adaptation possibilities. The woman might represent a housewife in dress and apron watering her kitchen garden, or a professional gardener in smock and cap tending to roses on an estate, or a farmer in overalls watering her peanut crop. She also represents an “actor” on a stage “performing [her] respective part” (Muybridge quoted in Haas 145), while other models, both male and female of all ages, sit and wait outside the field of vision to remove their robes, grab a prop, and create movement on the stage too. While they wait, the models talk quietly. Some stretch their muscles and others practice movement with a given prop, boulder, brick, basket, broom. A child pokes a mule with a javelin. A man swings a cricket mallet. The woman with the watering can enters, smiles devilishly, and



pours the remaining water over the head of her best friend. Laughter erupts. Muybridge sees and seizes the opportunity to stage the spontaneous bit of slapstick, replacing the watering can with a bucket. The result is Plate 160 titled, *Woman Emptying a Bucket of Water on Seated Companion*.

Afterwards, the woman dresses herself. (I'm glad she cleared that up for me as I was about to make her a paper doll outfit or dress her in my own clothes). As she pins a bit of sartorial excess atop her head, she tells her friend about a houseplant at home that she has overwatered. The two smile at each other finding the coincidence funny. The woman goes home, tired after a long day of work, and makes herself dinner.

Above, my elaboration on the distilled elements I see in Muybridge's studies (my stylization of his stylized performance) does not displace the scientific function of the photographs. Rather, it imagines "the story element" in the "human action" (Haas 145) of doing science in this case at this time. Like Meyerhold and Muybridge, I attempt to restore human agency to biomechanics, understanding that human bodies discover the possibilities of the machine and not the reverse. By grounding the study of human motion in its material practice, Muybridge does not dismiss ideas regarding the essential human being, the fundamentals of movement, or the universality of the nude. Rather, just as human beings oppose one corporeal movement with another in order to retain their balance, Muybridge inserts material counters to balance the move toward transcendence: the unexpected cast of a shadow, a watering can in hand, puddles on the floor, a slight smile, a woman's nakedness. In these ways, Muybridge's photos like Meyerhold's biomechanics achieve "a miraculous balance . . . parad[ing] ugliness in order to prevent beauty from lapsing into sentimentality" (Meyerhold 138-139).

I flip the thick shiny pages of the book to Plate 101 marked by a turquoise post-it stuck to the upper corner of the page. At the bottom, a pen mark soils the white margin.

The woman is still there, naked, walking, watering, and smiling.

I close the book gently knowing she continues to move.

### MAKE YOUR OWN MOVEMENT

In July 2007, I visited the Kingston Museum in Muybridge's hometown of Kingston upon Thames. A small section of the museum is dedicated to Muybridge, displaying his zoopraxiscope, cameras and cases, a small model of his experiments with Occident, and several panoramic photographs he took of San Francisco. The gift shop sells everything "Muybridge," such as Muybridge kitchen towels, postcards, and zoopraxiscope kits. I bought a pamphlet called *Commemorating a Centenary* that outlines Muybridge's life in text and images. On the first page of the pamphlet are a line of stick figures that accompany directions for making an image move, what's called a Flick Book (1). First, you need a stack of small pieces of blank paper, like a post-it pad or something similar. If the papers are not already connected, staple them together. Then, consider what the minute stages of walking look like. Draw a stick figure on each piece of paper that shows each stage of walking, in progression. Continue drawing until you have used up all your paper. Flick the stack of paper with your thumb, and the stick figure will move. If you'd like, draw a figure doing another activity. Or try your hand at a pair of figures performing the Slap etude perhaps. Do the figures move even when you do not flick the pages?

CHAPTER THREE  
BUILDING A CHARACTER IN A PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

An art collection, perhaps especially a photography collection, documents the ongoing construction of the collector's self-portrait.

– Lucy Lippard, “Brought to Light” (131)

Every person who is really an artist desires to create inside of himself another, deeper, more interesting life than the one that actually surrounds him.

– Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* (47)

Photograph albums are sites where an individual collects photographs and often other artifacts to document people and events the individual deems important in her life. Typically, the collected photographs are related to family, showing the constancy of members and events over the years and also the alterations as the individual and her family change. On the one hand, then, the album stabilizes the individual and family identity by validating their past. It reaffirms memory and history in material form. However, as each new photograph is added, the album participates in the “never-ending process of making [and] remaking” the self and family (Kuhn, “Remembrance” 399). The process is similar to how personal memories become history, namely, by people adapting and integrating them into a collective account and, in this case, the constantly emerging collection of photographs.

In this chapter, I place the everyday photograph album in conversation with Constantin Stanislavski's actor training system understanding that both practices are based in collecting memories, which then contribute to making an identity or, in Stanislavski's terms, building a character. Further, both practices activate a system of conventions for collecting memories – standardized forms and expectations that predetermine identity and character to an extent – while they also inspire creative interplay. For instance, Stanislavski's system of exercises encourages students to call on

their sense and emotion memories, which they adapt to the given circumstances of a text, particularly their appointed characters and their subtexts. Likewise, for the performer of a photograph album, the stimulating affect of sense and emotion memories plays a significant part in the photographs she places and views in her album, while the traditions of album composition, such as chronology, determine what memories are saved and forgotten and how.

In addition to discussing the noted similarities, I also consider the practices in terms of the miniature realities they create and the limitations and possibilities of nostalgia such realities evoke. Understanding the miniature as a common effect of performance and nostalgia as an inevitable “part of . . . lived experience” (Lippard, *On the Beaten Track* 164), I argue for a generative more so than negative understanding and implementation of these ideas in the making and remaking of self and family.

You will note that throughout the chapter I insert short descriptive “photographs” and little exercises. My aims are to inform the various discussions I undertake by imitating and experimenting with how we make albums and build characters.

#### THE PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

Try this: walk through your living space and collect five visible items you treasure most. Ask a willing friend or partner to do the same in terms of what he or she treasures most about you or their relationship with you. Collect and arrange the items in a space that can accommodate all of the items aiming for an arrangement that pleases both of you. Depending on the day, make yourselves a cool or hot drink, sit back, and tell or invent stories about the items and why you think you arranged them as you did. Consider if the items and arrangement tell a different story about you than they did in their found location. Reverse roles and do the exercise again.

Photograph albums “give voice” to and document personal and family histories (Gerbrandt 11). Making an album is a creative and artistic hobby that some, such as

Michele Gerbrandt, refer to as “scrapping” or making a scrapbook. In *Scrapbook Basics*, Gerbrandt defines scrapping as an art of collecting and arranging photographs and other keepsakes in a photo-safe environment (7). While the origin of collecting and arranging keepsakes appears to be pre-historical (e.g., on the body to start), the placement of them in actual books dates back to the seventeenth century “commonplace book,” which was a bound text with blank pages that the educated elite carried and in which they recorded their memories and impressions (Tucker, Ott, and Buckler 6). By the nineteenth century, friendship albums and autograph albums were used to collect and display newspaper cuttings, drawings, notations, poems, “quotations, signatures, locks of hair, and pressed flowers” (Vosmeier 208). As the printing of commercial items increased over the same century, “ticket stubs, advertising cards, [and] candy wrappers” also were saved and displayed in albums (Tucker, Ott, and Buckler 7).

When photographs were invented, they “were treated as unique items” at first, “not as images to be reproduced and shared,” a treatment that altered with the invention of the negative in the 1850s (Vosmeier 207). One popular form of photographic reproduction was the *carte-de-visite*, a 2.5 by 4 inch portrait mounted on card stock, which was sold by the dozen for the purposes of sharing and exchange. Collecting photographs of family members, friends, and also celebrities became a common practice. However, people found that the pages in current albums were not thick enough to hold the heavy *carte-de-visites*, and so new albums were designed that included pockets in which the photographs could be inserted. The photograph album quickly became a “household necessity” and joined the bible for display and use in the home of many middle class families (Hughes 29; Vosmeier 210).

In “Picturing Love and Friendship,” Sarah Vosmeier explains that courtship was one of the many functions of the family album. When a man called on a woman, they would “break the ice” by looking through the album together. The activity enabled conversation and a close physical proximity (hands touching briefly as both reach to turn a page), while the home context and album content inferred that their activity was being watched by the family, members gazing back at the pair through the photographs displayed in the album.

Along the same lines of domestic traditions and practices, it is women typically who create photograph albums and scrapbooks, charged as they are with the maintenance of the home, child rearing, and sustaining family ties. In their study of scrapbooks, Katriel and Farrell interviewed many scrappers and discovered that the practice was passed down by a relative, usually a mother and almost always an influential female. When men do create scrapbooks, they tend to focus on a business or sport related topic, or they collect specific items, such as coins or stamps.

A young boy sits atop a small slide indoors. He wears red footed pajamas imprinted with a picture of Santa Claus. In one hand, he holds a red plastic hammer and a green thermos. He grips the edge of the slide with his other hand and, with a slight smile, looks down toward his anticipated destination.

Several people in motion and all smiles: the youth in the center wears sunglasses and a black cap and gown. He seems to be sweating and his lips are pursed as though he is saying something. To his left, a tan blonde grins in his direction. To his right, a woman laughs and “chatters” with her blurry right hand while holding a water bottle and program in the other hand.

In baggy beach garb, a middle-aged couple smiles, lovingly hugging one another. Behind them is a marsh cast in a sunset of blues, greens, and pinks.

In black and white, an old woman sits on a tweed couch and reaches for a plate of cheesecake. Three lit candles rise clumsily from a glob of whip cream. With a faint and wrinkled smile, she looks at the photographer and prepares to blow out the candles.

Although all photograph albums are unique in specific content, there is a system and set of conventions that inform how people make albums. According to Katriel and Farrell, the general steps entail collecting photographs and other memorabilia, selecting and then arranging them in an album for display, and contemplating or sharing the album with others (4-5).

Generally, in literature on photograph albums, scholars agree that the displayed content consists of happy more so than unhappy representations of people celebrating an event or activity of some kind. As Tucker, Ott, and Buckler claim, photograph albums “construct an idealized life” for memory preservation (2). It would seem however that culture and context (not to mention the idiosyncrasies of individuals and families) influence the content of albums and the construction of ideals. For instance, while taking photographs of a loved one on her deathbed is not appropriate in our current (United States) culture, in the nineteenth century portraits of the dying, particularly children, and the dead were common. As with the keepsake of a lock of hair, the photograph preserved and celebrated the memory of the deceased. For some, it also provided documentation and proof of genealogical traits (Davenport 79). We also might recognize that photograph memorials of deceased loved ones are not absent from our current culture since in many homes a portrait of the deceased is displayed prominently, on a mantel or table, along with other mementos that recall the person’s life. It follows that photographs of the same person are interspersed throughout the family’s albums, reminding viewers not only of the subject’s life but also his or her death. Further, viewers might recall the subject’s life and death differently depending on their relationship to him or her. In other words, while the material image remains unchanged (wear and tear aside), the memories

and histories it restores do not. In turn, ideals alter. The notion that albums construct an idealized life holds up, then, only if we view the album as a static object separate from those who make and view it. While this perspective helps us identify recurring content and form across albums, it does not address the agencies of the maker and viewer and, in turn, how their making of memories at the personal and family levels is fundamental to how albums function.

Nonetheless returning to the broad perspective, the ideal view of life constructed in albums typically consists of photographs that mark individual passage rites and also seasonal rituals of a secular and religious nature. Passage rites, where the social status of the individual changes irrevocably, include such events as one's birth and birthdays, first days of and graduation from primary school, secondary school, and college, christenings and first communions, Bar Mitzvahs and debutante balls, military service, weddings and commitment ceremonies, silver and golden anniversaries, the purchase of a first car and home, career related awards and advancements, and retirement. In the United States, seasonal rituals celebrated annually by cultural groups and documented in albums include the Judeo-Christian slate of holidays, New Year's, the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and spring, summer, fall, and winter holidays and vacations.

Many of the noted events are celebrated within a family unit and documented by family members, creating if not confirming a family identity of unity and camaraderie, which many scholars identify as the key theme of the quotidian album (Hirsch 32; Katriel and Farrell 6). As children pass into their teen and young adult years, they begin to create their own albums, aiming to build a distinct identity for themselves that



nonetheless draws on traditions of displaying photographs in a bound book or defined space of some sort. Currently, many young people create albums through websites such as Facebook and Myspace, not only downloading their own photos but collecting photographs and other imagery from public access sites. While youths may focus on themselves and peers for a period of time, many albums show an integration of friends and family members and the family changing as people marry or commit themselves to another person and their extended family and friends.

Within the prevailing theme of family, the “conquest of the material world” is a frequent subtheme in albums (Hirsch 21). According to Hirsch, family photographs document a family’s claim to status and territory by means of the material goods they collect and photograph. A child atop his slide, a teen on her bike, a couple in front of their home, an elderly woman and her cake are all signs of conspicuous consumption that validate the financial prosperity of the family and mark it as an entity of the corporate structure (Hirsch 32). While such an interpretation is valid, we might make a similar claim of most artistic practices throughout time. Whatever the means, the display of the material body or items in material space makes a claim on space and infers that it, the means, the body, and items have exchange value. Such a view helps us understand the economic imperative of human survival and the economic performative at work in our expressions. However, it does not tell us much about the child, teen, couple, or woman and their memories about the slide, bike, house, and birthday party. It does not tell us how in fact the album, as a unique homemade item, counters the signs of corporate structure embedded in the content of the photos. It overlooks the making and displaying of the album, preferring it seems, to study it as a fixed object.

In addition to content, the formal quality of photographs plays a part in the photographs we collect and select to put in our albums, or so many instructional books on albums recommend. Michele Gerbrandt, for instance, tells us to choose photographs “that truly speak to you and are of highest quality.” They have a “good color” and are “in focus” (56). High quality shots are recommended because albums are sites where we collect representations of people and places we deem important to our lives. A clearly focused, well exposed, vividly colored photograph of the subject – a verisimilitude rendering – is valued over those that make the subject look strange or unfamiliar. They defamiliarize the subject and her material claims to truth by rendering her as a blur for instance or as a red-eyed alien. Current photographic technologies help album makers act on the noted recommendation since most cameras are equipped with an auto-focus function, digital photos can be corrected easily, and, whether at the photo-mart or on the home computer, makers can opt to delete photos they do not want. Nonetheless, “low quality” shots are found in albums precisely because the content of photos and the memories they invoke are more important to us than the quality of the composition. A bad photo of grandpa becomes a good photo quickly when few photos of grandpa exist.

With disposable camera in hand the five year old niece of the groom documents the proceedings: a doorknob, the hem of Aunt Meg’s dress, the drape of a tablecloth, the floor in the bathroom, the nose of the family dog, a wastepaper basket, and beneath a table somebody’s feet, dress shoes shoved to the side.
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While, like content, the arrangement of photographs in an album is unique to the maker, certain conventions of arrangement prevail. According to Gerbrandt, there are two ways to organize an album, chronologically and by theme. Similarly, Alan Sekula observes that photograph albums and archives are arranged in a diachronic or taxonomic sequence. Of course, photographs in a taxonomic or theme centered album can be

sequenced chronologically, and in an album that is arranged chronologically themed sections are common too.

A chronology of photographs exacts a forward moving sequence or, as Sekula in his Marxist critique of diachronic patterns contends, a sequence “of production and acquisition” in that the movement forward is equated with progress as per the master narrative of capital (446). A chronological sequence also reflects how we tend to pattern action in other popular forms of expression, such as the anecdotes we tell each other daily, the stories we heard as children, the novels and auto/biographies we read as adults, and the dramas and comedies we see on television and in popular films. The form also imitates the progressive pattern of action that marks our rites of passage from birth through old age, which is documented explicitly in the content of photograph albums. Granting that for album makers content is more important than de/constructing form, it makes sense why they might privilege chronology. Because it is so familiar, they and their viewers can access and understand it easily and hence proceed to concentrate on content.

For Gerbrandt, a themed album is “limited to a single topic,” such as is the case with a baby, wedding, or vacation album (82). Sekula’s emphasis on professional photograph albums and archives is reflected in the kind of taxonomy he offers, which includes themes of “sponsorship, authorship, genre, technique, iconography, [and] subject matter” (446). A thematic stress articulates topics and values we deem important enough to emphasize in a separate album – a baby or wedding album celebrating the growth and continuance of the family through the passage rites of the key individuals. Within and across albums arranged chronologically, photos that depict recurring passage rites and

seasonal rituals also create themes, the through line of said events and actions reinforcing certain values through their repetition – e.g., Christmas 2000, Christmas 2001, Christmas 2002, and so on. However, since such events are documented fairly extensively in many cases, the quantity of photos operates to interrupt the forward thrust of time, prompting the viewer to slow down and view the event in depth. We might say the thematic interruption inserts descriptive time into the summary time of the album.

Try this: collect a bunch of photographs of subject matter you know well. Arrange the photos chronologically. What story do they tell? How does the story affect you? Then group and arrange the photos according to any themes of your choice. What is the affect of the new arrangement? Do the photographs tell a story or stories? If so, what kind of stories do they tell? Repeat the exercise with a bunch of photographs of subject matter you do not know well, drawing on diverse sources perhaps. Does the lack of personal knowledge about the photographs impact how you do the exercise?

In their study of “Scrapbooks as Cultural Texts: An American Art of Memory,” Katriel and Farrell observe additional forms of “aesthetic organization” besides those of chronology and taxonomy. In contrast to a “linear [chronological, cause and effect] form of narrative,” they find the “presentational arrangements of collage and metonymic assemblage” at work in scrapbooks and albums (2). A collage interweaves materials within a single frame, such as on an album page, or it creates the illusion of the same, as is the case with the recurrence of certain themes over the course of an album. A metonym (and, specifically, a synecdoche) is a figure of language, an action or image that bears a direct association to its referent, citing the whole in part or partially. It is an efficient, shorthand form of expression, well used in chronologies, lists, vitas, and captions. Most photographs are metonyms too as are albums since they refer directly to the subjects they depict, representing them in part. Katriel and Farrell work the two forms in tandem, observing that scrappers “‘patch’ together . . . a storied self . . .

metonymically constructed out of the materials of ‘life’” (9, 11). On the album page, scrappers interweave photographs, postcards, stickers, and captions (metonyms) that in their assembly create an invented and inventive self. While some metonymic operations revel in their creative efficiency, oblivious to what they have left out, others acknowledge their partiality. They use their partial form to craft an expression about partiality, omission, loss, absence, or forgetting. If albums are viewed as fixed objects, most appear oblivious to their metonymic partiality whereas if viewed as objects made by viewers through acts of remembering, they gain the potential to operate reflexively.

A lady I know has an album in her wallet, photographs and other scraps arranged in a tiny pile and tucked into a pocket behind her I.D. Faded and tattered around the edges: a fat cat with a pink toy, a skinny one stretching, a couple on their wedding day cutting a cake, a sticker for a museum, a tattoo of a panda, a fortune without a cookie.

Many album makers assign meaning to their photographs by captioning them with a title, date, comment, and/or story. Gerbrandt refers to captioning as “journaling” and suggests album makers include all “the basic facts” pertinent to the photograph, such as who or what is depicted, where they are, and when the photo was taken (102). In this way, album makers provide viewers with an original context in which to situate the subjects shown in the photo and, for those viewers who know the subjects, with a memory prompt that helps them recall relevant details. As captions accumulate in an album, they create a “verbal key or storyline” that for John Berger and Jean Mohr “impose a single verbal meaning upon appearances [photos] and thus . . . inhibit or deny their . . . language” (Berger and Mohr 133). In their work with photos and photo displays, the authors seek to retain the “ambiguous” nature of photographs rich with “multiple meanings” (Berger and Mohr 133). To do so, they introduce their photo

collections with oblique titles – e.g., “Marcel or the Right to Choose” (17) and “If each time . . .” (131) – and stories in which they recount or reflect on their experiences making the collection. Should they caption a photo within a collection, it runs along the same subjective lines. In metonymic terms, the captions Berger and Mohr write do not explain the photos, thereby inscribing the photos as explanatory too – i.e., as efficient truth claims that dismiss their partiality. Instead, they try to craft captions that activate “the photograph as a means of communication” *as* negotiation, imperfect and partial. Thereby, they also try to restore “the social function of subjectivity” and memory to how we perceive and make our collective histories (Berger and Mohr 100).

For as long as I can remember, my grandmother wore a gold charm bracelet on her arm. The charms were silhouettes of children’s heads, and each head was imprinted with the name and birth date of her children (my dad and his brother) and grandchildren (my cousins, my brother, and me). Mixed in with the golden heads were tiny locketts that held photographs of each of us. I loved to climb onto my grandmother’s lap and play with her charms while she told me stories about the children she wore on her arm.

According to Katriel and Farrell, the third stage in making an album concerns the contemplation and sharing of it. This stage implies that albums fulfill certain functions, that an album maker creates an album with an audience in mind, and that there are times when the album is brought out and asked to perform for an audience, whether it be for one’s self or others.

Many scholars agree that the main purpose of photograph albums is to preserve memories and histories for future viewers. While this view seems to indicate that the album is a completed product detached from the maker and viewer, scholars are quick to adjust the broad function so as to recognize the active part makers and viewers play. Gerbrandt, for instance, views the album as an heirloom that enables the maker to

understand herself by remembering her ancestors (10). Annette Kuhn strikes a similar note when she claims that an album “is a key moment in the making of ourselves” since it provides us with “roots in the past” that “reverberate . . . in the present” (*Family Secrets* 2). Oring stresses an autobiographical function too, terming albums as a “genre of the self” (quoted in Katriel and Farrell 1). Tucker, Ott, and Buckler agree and also observe that an album jogs and recombines “the coordinates of time, space, location, voice, and memory” resulting in a shifting storybook of the self (16). As collected and arranged in an album, the photographs tell a story about identity that is in flux and plural. While Tucker, Ott, and Buckler focus on the plural self within the “idealized” world of the text (2), the very coordinates they observe operate outside the text too, effecting changes in how viewers perceive the album and its ideals.

The understanding that an album alters due to changes in the audience and their perception over time is confirmed by Katriel and Farrell when they describe the album as “scaffolding” that the “provisional author” erects, thereby providing a basic framework that is detailed by future viewers and their “telling and re-tellings” (9). For Katriel and Farrell, the event of sharing the album and the different memories it excites is as important as the material item and the maker’s intent or aims.<sup>1</sup> In the public display of the album, the maker’s individual memories become history, adapted and integrated into a collective account of what the photographs recall to mind, and just as the initial maker is a provisional author so too is each subsequent maker of the album.

The little boy on the slide is my younger brother. When I see the photograph of him dressed in his Santa PJs, I am reminded of the Christmas when the Hershey’s Kisses I left out for Santa and his reindeer kept disappearing. Later, in a home video, I discovered my brother sneaking the chocolates and eating them himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Hirsch 5; and Kuhn, *Family Secrets* 5.

When my mom views this photo, she focuses on the red hammer her son holds in his hand, recalling that for months after Christmas he would not leave the house without it.

My brother remembers the footed pajamas and what a nightmare it was putting them on and taking them off.

A friend who does not know my family thought my brother was “cute” but focused quickly on the porcelain Snoopy resting on a mantel in the background. It reminded her of watching Charlie Brown’s Christmas Special when she was a kid: soft snow, gentle jazz, and the tinkling drop of an ornament from a spindly tree.

In a scholarly mood, a critic such as Julia Hirsch might see a boy conditioned to enact corporate capitalism, spreading the word of material consumption from atop his slide, hammer and thermos in hand. Another Marxist critic might read the same signifiers as evidence of labor’s *counter* claim to the world, hammer and thermos in hand.

According to Kuhn, a memory text such as a photograph or album can be used to do memory work, which she describes as a way “to explore connections between ‘public’ historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender, and ‘personal’ memory” (*Family Secrets* 4). Kuhn provides four steps for doing memory work. First, she suggests that you describe the photo from the perspective of the subject, whether person or object. Second, as with Barrett’s original context, the history of the photograph is to be considered, such as where and when it was made, by whom, for what purpose, and how. Third, you are to take into account the technological apparatus of photography and how it impacts your view of the photograph. Fourth, Kuhn asks you to entertain the intended and actual audience of the photograph and where it is kept currently (7), a perspective like that of Barrett’s external context. By doing memory work, we can activate the multiple and shared histories at work in a photograph or album that we might otherwise view as solely personal or unrelated to our lives.



Try this: select a photo you deem personal to your life and process it in light of Kuhn's four steps for doing memory work. However, rather than explain your responses in written form, express them through any visual images you would like, such as photographs, illustrations, cartoons, doodles you draw. Repeat the exercise with a photograph you do not know well; it is not personal to your life. Reflect on the similarities and differences between the two approaches and express your findings through a third collection of visual images.

## STANISLAVSKI'S SYSTEM

Constantin Sergeievich Alexeiev was born to a wealthy Russian family in Moscow in 1863. On the family estate was a working theatre, and from a young age Constantin directed and performed in plays there. In 1885, he began his formal study of acting at Moscow's Maly Theatre, and shortly thereafter he changed his last name to Stanislavski in an effort to forge a career without benefit of his family's high profile name. His studies were successful, and he became a popular director in Moscow, eventually joining forces with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko to cofound the Moscow Art Theatre in 1897. There, in classes and rehearsals, he developed and experimented with his system for training actors.

Stanislavski's system is a creative process for building a character that consists of "simple" exercises that all students of acting can learn and apply (Hapgood viii). Generally, the student selects and enacts certain actions, which then spark the imaginative subconscious – e.g., sense and emotion memories, thoughts and feelings – that she adjusts to the given circumstances of the text and specifically the character she has chosen or been assigned to play. The aim is to build the character's subtext, the "inner life of a human spirit," and express it externally in "artistic form" (Stanislavski, *Actor Prepares* 17). Unlike system derivations, such as Lee Strasberg's method, the actor's

first aim is not to feel emotions as much as believe in the “acts” of the “imaginary person” she has created (Stanislavski, *Actor Prepares* 53).<sup>2</sup>

Stanislavski articulated the system in three texts, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*. The sequencing of the texts corresponds to the three years of training a student underwent at the Moscow Art Theatre. *An Actor Prepares* covers the first year of training and teaches the actors how to stimulate their inner creative states using conscious techniques. The second year is documented in *Building a Character* and focuses on the external physical form without which “the inner pattern of your part” cannot be conveyed (*Building a Character* 1). In *Creating a Role*, the third year is covered, in which actors learn to analyze and integrate the given circumstances of the text with the emerging character and his or her subtext. The trilogy was preceded by Stanislavski’s 1924 publication of *My Life in Art* in which he provides an autobiographical account of his theatrical career up to the noted date. In the trilogy, the autobiographical approach is tempered by a semi-fictional form where a first person narrator, a student by the name of Kostya (short for Constantin), relates his actor training experience under the instruction of Tortsov who, to make a point, often refers to *My Life in Art*. Translated to English, Tortsov means creator; a related Russian word is *chustov*, which means emotion.

In light of my prior discussion regarding albums, we might understand that in his trilogy Stanislavski creates a plural identity, shifting between student and teacher in order

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this and the following section of the chapter are from Stanislavski texts. In his texts, Stanislavski speaks through his first person narrator, the student Kostya, who often quotes the direct discourse of others and, when in scene with others, uses it himself. In my text, double quotation marks indicate the narrator or other characters using direct discourse whereas single quotation marks indicate Kostya speaking directly to the reader.

to share what he has learned from his rite of passage from novice to expert as regards the art of acting. Along with content, the form implies a model that students can adapt to their training process, learning techniques to pass from novice to expert while also learning that the latter conjoins the characteristics of both. The model also highlights the importance of semi-fictionalizing personal experiences and memories so as to build a character who “creates emotion” in terms of external as well as internal factors, such as a given text, other characters or individuals, and their subtexts. As with the making of an album, the “provisional author” of the system, Stanislavski as Kostya-Torstov, provides an experiential “scaffolding” that is to be detailed by the reader in his or her application.

Near the end of *Building a Character*, in a chapter titled “Patterns of Accomplishment,” the stage manager Rakhmanov tells the students to “place on the shelves of your memory all that you have taken in during your time here and which is now floating around inside your heads in an unsorted mass” and organize it, as Tortsov describes later, in a “clear and pictorial” way (*Building a Character* 299, 303).<sup>3</sup> Rakhmanov provides the students with banners on which the different parts of the system are captioned, and the students arrange the banners on a wall to illustrate the relationship between the parts. Across the bottom is “*An Actor Prepares*” while up top is a blank banner that implies the aim of the system, which is to gain “the loftiest region of all art – the subconscious” (300, 315). The banners between the base material practice and the ephemeral goal represent the systematic process, which begins with three foundational premises: “*The Subconscious via the Conscious*” as stimulated by “*Action*” and, between the two the motto on which the “whole system is built,” a Pushkin quote that

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<sup>3</sup> All quotations in this paragraph are from *Building a Character*. The italicized words and phrases are italicized in the source text.

reads, “sincerity of emotions, verisimilitude of feelings in given circumstances, that is what our mind requires from the playwright” (300, 299). Above the three fundamentals are two banners that read, “*Psycho Techniques*” and “*External Techniques*” (300), and above these a motivational “triumvirate” that applies to both, namely, “*Mind, Will, Feelings*” (301). According to Tortsov, an actor should have the will or desire to use her mind or conscious intellect to stir and express her feelings. Above the triumvirate are banners that articulate the specific techniques. Aligned with Psycho Technique, also known as the “*Inner Creative State*,” are banners that read, “*Imagination . . . Sense of Truth, Emotion Memory . . . Units and Objectives*,” and “*Logic and Coherence of Feelings*” among others (301, 302). External techniques or the “*External Creative State*” include “*Relaxation of Muscles*” and “*Expressive Body Training*” as well as “*Plasticity . . . Voice . . . Speech . . . Logic and Coherence of Physical Action . . . Discipline . . . and Sense of Ensemble*” (301, 302). Above the specific techniques and beneath the topmost (blank) banner is a pennant that rejoins the Inner and External Creative States proclaiming as it does, “*Over-All Creative State*” (302).

Like the system, an album is a creative process that generates a creative state of mind. And, as I detail below, it is a process and state of mind very like the system in that the photographs are actions that excite the viewer’s imagination, including her sense and emotion memories. The actions are arranged in an album in terms of units and objectives that provide a logic and coherency of action and feeling as per the depicted subjects and themes of the album text. As in the system, while a viewer-performer of an album might concentrate on an individual character, due to the given circumstances of the text, the individual’s actions refer and relate to an ensemble of other individuals or characters and

the logic and coherency of their actions as well. The resulting performance can be understood in terms of Stanislavski's conceptual ideals regarding artistic expression. To discuss this point, I return to the Pushkin motto on which the "whole system is built" (*Building a Character* 299) and take a look at the concepts of romanticism, humanism, and realism. To conclude, I extend the noted discussion to how the practices create miniature worlds that can be viewed in terms of both the limitations and generative potential of nostalgia.

### THE ALBUM AS SYSTEM

Try this: make a list of five feelings or emotions, such as sadness, joy, and anger. Look through your albums and select photos that for you express each emotion. Ask yourself what it is in each photo that excites the emotion for you. Put the photographs aside and try another experiment. Randomly choose five photos from your collection. Identify an action in each photo, such as sitting, eating, smiling, walking, or whatever the case might be. *Do* the action until a thought, feeling, or memory of some sort comes to mind. Can you figure out the relationship between the two? If not, don't worry about it. Instead compare the two processes. Which do you prefer? Why?

While rousing the "subconscious to creative work" so as to match one's inner life with that of the character's is the ultimate aim of the system actor, realizing this goal is difficult because the "subconscious is inaccessible to our consciousness" (*Actor Prepares* 15, 14). We can't control it, and if we try, we undermine it. Hence, Tortsov recommends "an oblique . . . approach" where we "address . . . what is in our reach" (*Actor Prepares* 14, 15). We do actions, which "is the basis of the art" (*Actor Prepares* 38). The actions we enact may be actual or imagined, but they must be motivated by a concrete purpose relevant to the circumstances in which we find ourselves rather than motivated by "a feeling for its own sake. . . . When you are choosing some bit of action leave feeling and spiritual content alone," Tortsov directs with not a little bit of feeling

(*Actor Prepares* 43; emphasis in original). The idea here is that by doing conscious actions so as to meet conscious goals, subconscious memories and feelings will be aroused. I eat a biscuit because I am hungry, and the taste reminds me of making and eating my first biscuit in my grandmother's kitchen (red laminate countertop with chrome trim and cushy vinyl chairs with chrome legs), and I am filled with love and gratitude for my grandmother, for the luck of the draw I had a grandmother who was so amazingly nice, for the buttery taste of fresh biscuits and the quirky artistry of kitchen design, and for the amazing, surprising capacity of the body-mind to re/store these images to me without much effort on my part.

This foundational aspect of the system was influenced by the theories of the nineteenth century psychologist Theodule Ribot and, as Stanislavski continued to develop the system, those of Ivan Pavlov. Ribot theorized that individuals “retain a subconscious record of [their] emotional experiences,” which “are not stored in isolation” but rather are “associated with the physical and sensory circumstances that accompanied their first occurrence” (Counsell 28). I eat a biscuit. I envision my grandmother. I experience familial love and gratitude. As Tortsov confirms, “just as your visual memory can reconstruct an inner image of some forgotten thing, place or person, your emotion memory can bring back feelings you have already experienced” (*Actor Prepares* 182). At first, Stanislavski required that the stimuli the actor chose or discovered be (made) truthful to the circumstances of the fictional character. Over the course of experimenting with the system, he allowed false or trick stimuli to be used, drawing on Pavlov's theories of behavioral reflexology. Just as Pavlov's dogs were conditioned to salivate at the ring of a bell thereby expressing hunger, I as an actor might express familial love

unconsciously, without forcing it, by envisioning a biscuit regardless of whether my character would envision a biscuit given her circumstances.

Granting that we make and view albums to re/store memories, Stanislavski's technique for rousing the subconscious through action suggests how albums work. When we make or view an album, let's say an album for a newborn or a vacation to Hawaii, we are not motivated by feeling "*a feeling for its own sake,*" such as love or leisure. We make an album it seems to celebrate the acts of having a child and being birthed into the world or hiking a volcanic landscape and visiting a famed WWII site. We make an album of actions to confirm to ourselves as much as to others that we are and have been actors in the world.<sup>4</sup> As Tortsov contends, again with emphasis, "*all . . . feelings are the result of something that has gone before. Of the thing that goes before you should think as hard as you can. As for the result, it will produce itself*" (*Actor Prepares* 43; emphasis in original). Translated to the photograph album, the depiction of actors doing actions excites sense and emotion memories, thoughts and feelings in the maker and viewer without conscious effort on their part. The arousal of the subconscious to consciousness helps them craft an understanding of themselves and others at the time the photos were taken and as they make or view the album, and this understanding alters as they and their circumstances change over time. Put another way, albums restore, as in perform, actions that stimulate a reflective or, in the broadest sense of the term, a narrative disposition on the part of the maker and viewer. This "building of character" through recall highlights the psychological as historical too.

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<sup>4</sup> In this light, another reason for why women in large part make and maintain albums presents itself. Besides fulfilling gender expectations (e.g., nurturing family life), the making of the album confirms they (too) are actors in the world, in the past and in the making and viewing of an album that shows their acts and actions.

Try this: find a photograph of an interior setting. If there are people in the photograph, imagine they are not there. Take a careful look at the details of the setting and select one. What stories are embedded in the detail? What actions or other images does it suggest to you? Select a few more details and process them similarly. Then translate the stories, actions, and images you've collected to the making of a character. What sort of person emerges from the details?

Understanding that in theory if not actuality arousing one's inner life of memories is not difficult, "*it will produce itself*," the challenge for the system actor is to adapt their inner life to "given circumstances" and then express the results on stage (*Actor Prepares* 43, 54). According to Tortsov, given circumstances consist of:

. . . the story of the play, its facts, events, epoch, time and place of action, conditions of life, the actors' and regisseur's interpretation, the mise-en scene, the production, the sets, the costumes, properties, lighting and sound effects, – all the circumstances that are given to an actor to take into account as he creates his role. (*Actor Prepares* 54)

Just as one's own inner life is affected by multiple external contexts, so too should be that of the self-as-character. In this way, the character is historicized, inscribing and inscribed by the particularities of the situations in which she finds herself. Tortsov recommends then that the actor "direct all [her] attention to the given circumstances" since "they are always within reach" and infer if not state action possibilities (*Actor Prepares* 55). To enable the actor's engagement of the given circumstances, Tortsov introduces the technique of "if," which operates in tandem with the given circumstances. Rather than require the actor to believe she *is* character in situation, the subjunctive if allows the actor to ask what she would do if she were in a situation *like* that of the character. "*If* . . . does not use fear or force, or make the artist do anything. On the contrary, it reassures [the actor] . . . to have confidence in a supposed situation" (*Actor Prepares* 50; emphasis in original). Thereby, the resulting action and its arousal of feelings are generated and expressed "naturally" (*Actor Prepares* 50). In broader terms, "*if* acts as a lever to lift



us out of the world of actuality into the realm of imagination” (*Actor Prepares* 49; emphasis in original). It allows us to pretend.

Unlike the system actor, an album maker or viewer does not have to adapt her inner life to that of a material character she expresses on a physical stage. Nonetheless, she builds a character influenced by the given circumstances of the photographs and their embedded codes, their arrangement in the album text, and the viewing event; in other words, by multiple contexts as variously identified by Barrett, Kuhn through her memory work, and Katriel and Farrell.

Focusing specifically on the internal context and content of photographs demonstrates how they consist of visual signs or actions that quote their referents and back stories and also converge and interact with each other. As Berger and Mohr quoting Cézanne offer, the signs “interpenetrate each other” and “never cease to live” (113). Thereby, they create what Berger and Mohr call a “long quotation” (121) or Roland Barthes, via Lessing, a “pregnant moment” (*Image-Music-Text* 73).<sup>5</sup>

For instance, a photograph of a child eating a biscuit sitting in a red vinyl chair at a kitchen table laminated red with chrome trim in a 1950s style kitchen is loaded with actions that quote their referents and invisible back stories, which imply additional actions. The photograph remembers more than we can see. Should the photo be placed next to one that depicts an elderly woman feeding the birds outside a 1940s style home, the two photos garner yet more actions and stories from each other. Should we have personal knowledge of the child or elderly woman, the kitchen or home, the local birds or

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<sup>5</sup> My understanding and articulation of these points draw directly from Bowman, Kitchens, and Shkreli (280, 299).

red vinyl chairs (the buttery or doughy taste of biscuits), even more actions, stories, and memories are loaded into the moments we see.

In other words, while the given circumstances of the photo place limitations on how we construct the child and ourselves in relation to her (i.e., through the constructing act), within the limitations are multiple “what if?” possibilities. These possibilities may strike us or not, differently, each time we view the photo due to our current circumstances and their impact on us. For the same reasons, the system actor experiences a range of possibilities despite given limitations, as evidenced by the fact that no two Juliets or Romeos are rendered the same. Like photograph albums and those who make and view them, the play text and those who enact and audience them are filled with so many givens (as well as gaps) that ambiguities hence possibilities arise for building a character. And while these subjunctive possibilities may not “lift us out of the world of actuality,” they do insert “the realm of the imagination” into it (*Actor Prepares* 49).

Try this: select a family album in which you figure prominently. As you look through the album, write down any events, activities, actions, relationships, settings, clothing, objects, physical poses and traits pertinent to you that recur (at least three times) over the course of the album. Also note three or four anomalies you particularly like. In light of your current understanding of yourself, does the list of recurrences make sense to you? Do they define you accurately? How about the anomalies? Are they accurate or not? *Are* they anomalies in terms of your view of yourself? Regardless, do they make sense within the through line of recurrences or do they counter it somehow?

Informed by his understanding that nature is a logical and coherent structure fundamental to human nature, Stanislavski viewed human behavior as rendered in artistic texts as logical and coherent too. A given circumstance that system actors are asked to heed then is a “Logic and Coherence of Physical Action” and “Feelings” as determined by the play text, the particular character, and his or her subtext. To determine the logic

and coherence of action, Stanislavski via Tortsov advises the actor to divide the text into discrete units and objectives. The named objectives should address the fictive reality of the character, not the theatrical reality of the actor. They should be truthful to the actor, analogous to the role, and articulated in terms of active verbs (*Actor Prepares* 129-130). Further, the character-actor's objectives should establish a logical and coherent "through line" of feeling and action that coheres with the through lines of the other character-actors in the production, all of which must cohere with the "super-objective" or the "main theme" of the play at hand (*Actor Prepares* 296, 294).

In these terms and drawing on the observations of album scholars, the super-objective of the quotidian album is the preservation and celebration of family unity and camaraderie through which the maker ciphers her sense of self. This fundamental theme is upheld by the coherence of subthemes, such as the recurrence of passage rites and seasonal rituals, in terms of which the different characters (family members and friends) perform the actions we see. The subthemes are constituted by distinct units that lend variety to the unity, showing that the characters are neither "*idée fixes*" and hence "spiritually unbalanced" nor are they remnant "scraps and bits," evidence of a broken line of action (*Actor Prepares* 279, 277). We see grandma Alice celebrate her birthday, then brother Adam his graduation, after which the family takes a summer vacation, followed by sister Erin celebrating her birthday, and then the family gathered round the table for Thanksgiving, then Christmas, then New Year's. In most if not all the photographs, the subjects smile, implying a coherency of feeling as well as thematic action within and across the line of characters. While the recurrence of subthemes

creates a certain logic regarding family life, the chronological sequencing of action bolsters the logic further since chronology is so common to us that its logic is a given.

To further clarify the action shown in each unit and thereby infer how it contributes to the through line of the text, album makers frequently use captions. As with Stanislavski's advice regarding naming objectives, the captions refer to the depicted characters in their space and time and are written with an eye toward truthfulness and accuracy. Date, place, event, and the names of the characters predominate in these written metonyms while identifying character objectives in terms of active verbs is not common. Of course, one might infer objectives based on the actions one sees.<sup>6</sup>

*Carlton's Birthday, March 2008, we ordered crawfish in Athens*

*Anna, Nancy, and Mel*

[A middle aged woman and a young woman show another young woman how to behead a crawfish. The latter looks surprised and slightly disgusted.]

[No longer disgusted looking, the young woman smiles and holds a headless crawfish to her mouth.]

*Carlton and Nancy suckin' the heads*

[In showy display, the middle aged woman and a young man suck the heads of their crawfish.]

*Michael and Dianne, she's a vegetarian*

[A young couple eats crawfish with the middle aged woman, the young man, and the once disgusted looking young woman around a table covered with newspaper and strewn with piles of crawfish remains.]

*Geoff and Jan*

[A young man and a middle aged woman clear the table and lay down fresh newspaper.]

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<sup>6</sup> Understanding that emotions are “incapable of being grasped” while “images are . . . firmly fixed in our visual memories and can be recalled at will,” Tortsov recommends that actors create and imagine “an unbroken series of images, something like a moving picture” that visually activates the through line of units and objectives we have developed (*Actor Prepares* 70, 69).

*Luke, Mike, and Mel*

[A middle aged man and a young woman use a two-by-four to lift a basket of steaming crawfish from a pot while a young man stands by wearing oven mitts.]

*Bill*

[With seeming awe and delight, a young man watches the middle aged man and young woman use the two-by-four to lift the basket of steaming crawfish from the pot while the other young man stands by wearing oven mitts.]

*Ansley*

[A girl pretends to kiss a crawfish.]

In the above list of metonymic captions and photo descriptions, the characters demonstrate diversity within a logic and coherency of action and feeling as termed by the given circumstances of a crawfish boil (a secular ritual that recurs three times in the same album), all of which support a main theme of familial unity and camaraderie. Such a tidy summary of the event and photographs is lacking of course. As users of metonyms, makers of albums, and Stanislavski would agree, there is something more to the point of representing individuals and families (their actions and, for Stanislavski, inferred feelings) through structures of logic and coherence. For Stanislavski, the point was spiritual realism, a notion inferred by the Pushkin motto on which the “whole system is built” (*Actor Prepares* 300). The motto reads, “sincerity of emotions, verisimilitude of feelings in given circumstances, that is what our mind requires from the playwright” (*Actor Prepares* 299), and it suggests that Stanislavski based his system on concepts of romanticism, humanism, and a trajectory of realism.

Alexander Pushkin was an early nineteenth century Russian romanticist and social liberal who opposed the unjust and oppressive aspects of modernity. Romanticism provided Pushkin with concepts and tools he could use to critique the destructive affects of industrialization and scientific rationalism as he saw them at work in his time. Rather

than site progress in the materiality of the machine and city, romanticists like Pushkin turned to the fundamental laws and processes of Nature to find Truth. Associating raw Nature with the intuitive imagination, they understood that artists who accessed and represented the same in their art might redeem society. Art of a romantic nature tended to place the individual against societal norms, raw nature in opposition to industrial culture, the imagination over materiality, and expressions of subjectivity or interiority as more important than external or surface display. Embedded in romanticism are the basic tenets of humanism, namely, that there is a transcendent human nature common to all individuals, which connects everyone. One function of romanticist art is to express “what is typically human,” the essence and universality of a shared humanity (Counsell 26).

The influence of romanticist and humanist thought is evident at the end of *An Actor Prepares* when Tortsov sums up the point and origin of system training:

*“Our type of creativeness is the conception and birth of a new being – the person in the part. It is a natural act similar to the birth of a human being. . . . In the creative process there is the father, the author of the play; the mother, the actor pregnant with the part; and the child, the role to be born. . . . If you analyse this process you will be convinced that laws regulate organic nature, whether . . . biologically or imaginatively. . . . You can go astray only if you do not understand that truth; if you do not have confidence in nature; if you try to think out ‘new principles,’ ‘new bases,’ ‘new art.’ Nature’s laws are binding on all, without exception, and woe to those who break them.” (336; emphasis in original)*

While Stanislavski envisions a new type of actor or creative artist, it is the actor’s draw on ancient organic laws and processes, “Nature’s laws,” that will make her new or, as the associations in the quotation imply, natural, creative, and truthful in her art. System specifics support this aim in that actors are to develop natural actions that stimulate their imaginative expression of the interior life of the character as compared to forcing

emotions, which results in “mechanical acting” indicative of modern life (*Actor Prepares* 25).

It is in light of romanticism and humanism that Stanislavski’s brand of realism or, given the period, naturalism needs to be discussed. For Stanislavski, realism represents the essence of humankind, which is the individual’s inner life, not his or her material surface or surroundings. The true art of realism is “spiritual realism,” as Stanislavski termed it (quoted in Counsell 25). However, in order to express a real inner life, external as well as internal training is required. Due to the affects of modern life, “people . . . do not know how to make use of the physical apparatus with which nature has endowed us.” While a “body with bulges,” spindly legs, and poor posture “do not matter in ordinary life . . . when we step on the stage many lesser physical shortcomings attract immediate attention” (*Building a Character* 36-37). Hence, actors “must educate [their] bodies according to the laws of nature. That means a lot of complicated work and perseverance” (*Building a Character* 306). In addition to vigorous vocal and physical training, the expression of emotions requires discipline too. Tortsov argues:

“A person in the midst of experiencing a poignant emotional drama is incapable of speaking of it coherently, for at such a time tears choke him, his voice breaks, the stress of his feelings confuses his thoughts, his pitiful aspect distracts those who see him and prevents their understanding the very cause of his grief. But time, the great healer, tempers a man’s inner agitation, makes it possible for him to bear himself calmly in relation to past events. He can speak of them coherently, slowly, intelligibly and as he relates the story he remains relatively calm while those who listen weep.

Our art seeks to achieve this very result and requires that an actor experience the agony of his role, and weep his heart out at home or in rehearsals, that he then calm himself, get rid of every sentiment alien or obstructive to his part. He then comes out on the stage to convey to the audience in clear, pregnant, deeply felt, intelligible and eloquent terms what he has been through. At this point the spectators will be more affected than the actor, and he will conserve all his forces in order to direct them where he needs them most of all: in reproducing the inner life of the character he is portraying.” (*Building a Character* 76-77)

According to Counsell, the result of such discipline is a “system-atic” style of acting “characterized by smoothness, an absence of discord and disjunction,” indicative of “a coherent self no matter what character is being portrayed” (32). Enabled further by a closed performance situation and techniques that tighten the actor’s focus (prompting a “close-up” view on the part of the audience), the actor’s communication of subtext is enhanced. In light of the politics of romanticism as it plays out in modernism, the noted style implies a critique of the modern world and its notion of progress. Rather than dismiss the past in spontaneous shows of emotion, the style proffers a human being who not only reflects on past events but does so in a slow, intelligible, and eloquent way. The style implies that this is how we would behave *if* we acted in accordance with Nature. Seeming to dismiss the critical imperative of the concepts that inform Stanislavski’s system, critics draw on the same stylistic evidence to argue that the system creates a “neutral, ‘natural’ and nonpartisan” view of the world, “aligning itself with the state’s desire for a discord-free society” (Counsell 45, 51).

The quotidian photograph album has and can be viewed similarly, as creating “an idealized life” of happy individuals by means of a chronology of verisimilitude photographs that naturalize the ideals and their expression as given truths. Due to the isolation of the little world, the maker and viewer is able to fashion a “self-portrait” (Lippard, *Brought to Light* 131), a self genre (Oring quoted in Katriel and Farrell 1), a self story (Tucker, Ott, and Buckler 16) that while in flux and plural enacts the base praxis of capital ideology, namely, that of the alienated individual assuming to make the world in her terms by consuming and producing imagery that supports the same.



This view of the photograph album bears scrutiny since it assumes that the maker is unaware of the “ideal” world she creates, that her “ideal” world is isolated and a-critical toward other realities, that her “ideal” world is static and discord free, and that her “ideal” world is indeed ideal to her. Instead, I posit that the album maker draws on trajectories of critical romanticism and spiritual realism to build a world that first and foremost is about what we cannot see. The album maker tries to express what it means to her to build a family and thereby an aspect of herself. In this way, she counters the forces that would destroy her expression by making it an object solely of and about materiality, whether through positivist or capitalist claims.

The manifestation of the expression in material form is somewhat ironic of course. However, if we grant that building and maintaining a family is an uncertain, unpredictable, and imperfect activity, it seems to me the maker creates an album to confirm her activities as well as to express her thoughts regarding them – e.g., by means of the photographs and the making and sharing of the album. While some makers might conflate the representation and reality, the day-to-day ups and downs of family life prompt us to credit the maker with the same degree of reflexivity we grant ourselves as critics. In light of absent partners, financial woes, teen rebellions, or simply kids who hate biscuits, makers know perfectly well the album is a partial representation of family and, in a sense, that’s the point. The differences between the “what if?” representation and everyday reality protect while they imply the invisible ideal – i.e., the certain goodness of trying to build a family – the exact memories and meanings of which differ and change with each maker and viewer over time.

Try this: whether in albums or boxes, take your collection of photographs, put it in a large plastic bag, and throw it away.
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## MINIATURE WORLDS AND NOSTALGIA

In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart identifies the miniature as an imitative item of reduced scale where “life” is fit “inside the body” of the miniature “rather than the body inside the expansive temporality of life” (40), very like a metonym. Despite its partiality and due to its reduced scale, “the details of a miniature” concentrate our attention and “magnify the importance of what we experience and express: . . . everything is made to ‘count’” (47). As a result, “the world of things can open itself up to reveal a secret life – indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence narrativity and history outside the given field of perception” (54). The miniature signals an other reality, a “daydream” reality as Stewart would have it, where we imagine “a stage on which we project, by means of association or intertextuality, a deliberately framed series of *actions*” (54: emphasis in original).

In light of Stewart’s thoughts, we might view stage performance as a miniature since life is made to fit inside the body of the stage, play, and actor, and thereby certain details are magnified so as to prompt the audience to take account of them. Stewart’s thoughts are especially relevant to Stanislavski’s aesthetic since, within a closed situation of a realistically rendered set, performers enact actions so as to stimulate and express the inner lives of their characters – i.e., the subtextual narratives outside the given field of perception. The resulting style of “clear . . . intelligible and eloquent” reflection serves to concentrate attention on the characters and magnify what they infer about their inner lives (*Building a Character* 77). The desired aim of the miniaturization and magnification is to lift the actor and audience “out of the world of actuality into the realm of imagination,” effecting spiritual realism (*Actor Prepares* 49).

While Stewart appreciates the subjunctive potential of some miniature realities, she expresses caution toward photographs, understanding them as miniaturizing reality so as to assert truth claims in the given field of perception. As Stewart sees it, photographs create the illusion that what we see is ““always there”” guaranteeing “the presence of [the] absent other” (126). In the miniaturized world of the photograph album, “the past is constructed from a set of presently existing pieces” or photographs that again operate to conflate representation and actuality (145). One result is that the viewer may fall victim to the “social disease” of nostalgia (ix), which “creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience” (23). Stewart continues:

Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as felt lack. . . . Longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience . . . nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a . . . past which has only ideological reality. (23)

Stewart’s view of the photographic miniature and/as nostalgic is reminiscent of Tucker, Ott, and Buckler’s view that photo albums “construct an idealized life” (2) and Julia Hirsch’s view that they perpetuate capital ideology (32). A similar summation is evident in Counsell’s view that Stanislavski’s system results in neutral, naturalized, and discord-free renderings of the world that support state aims (45, 51).

In *On the Beaten Track*, Lucy Lippard offers an alternative view of nostalgia, observing, “the word has acquired a veneer of duplicity, of sentimental inauthenticity, an evil ‘construction’ that seems distant from the original meaning,” that is, a desire to ““return home”” (153). Contrary to Stewart, Lippard understands that nostalgia is “part of . . . lived experience” and a “desire unremoved from the senses.” It is “a seamless and positive part of life, a reminder of breadth and depth, a confirmation of continuity” (164).

Rachel Hall also questions the view of nostalgia as an “enemy of progressive political action” (347), viewing it instead as a performative act of dialogue between one’s self and, specifically, the photographs one views (350). Nostalgia emerges in the interaction between the viewer and the photograph as the former “listens” to the stories the photograph recalls (and also forgets), stories embedded with beliefs that the viewer deems valuable or not depending on her circumstances. Unlike Stewart, both Lippard and Hall understand that remembering and telling stories is very much a part of lived experience and how we express it, that the beliefs a story or memory impart are never pure because they are never static, and that longing for the beliefs does not equate to a feeling of lack necessarily since one can activate the beliefs by adapting them to current circumstances.

Lippard’s reminder that nostalgia means “to return home” articulates a plural ideal I find particularly helpful in expressing how photograph albums perform in light of system aesthetics. Recalling that the practice of making and sharing a photograph album was developed in the domestic sphere of the nineteenth century and, since that time, has been sustained largely by women, the practice is aligned with women’s work in the home. For this reason, the critical function of the album has been under-estimated – the lived experiences of women trying to build and maintain their families abstracted to theories that construct the domestic sphere as an isolated actuality. In turn, women, particularly the middle class female, have been constructed as passive ideologues conditioned to service church and state by creating safe havens for rearing their children: photo album and bible on the parlor table; “returning home” in Stewart’s sense of nostalgia.

While in broad social-historical terms there is some truth to the noted constructs, they dismiss the agencies of diverse women trying to build and maintain diverse families in diverse circumstances, and, as I see it, acknowledging the diversity of agencies is fundamental to understanding how the photograph album works. The broadest statement I am willing to offer is that women make albums to confirm and express their attempts to build a family. Stanislavski's aesthetic helps me understand their performances as critical responses to those who would displace their particular given circumstances to broad "givens" concerning the substance, structure, and spirit of family. While Stanislavski's humanist rationale for his system does not apply to albums, his emphasis on the interplay of subjectivities does since it is by means of making and sharing memories that women confirm, express, and further generate their building of families. As Berger and Mohr might observe, by means of their photograph albums women restore "the social function of subjectivity," treating it as neither a "private" act nor the act of "the individual consumer's dream" (100). Rather they perform their subjective experience and understanding of "returning home," drawing on common forms to make their expression accessible and confirming their belief that building a family is a certain act of goodness.

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE EPIC IN A PORTRAIT

*Portrait*

She has no need to fear the fall  
Of harvest from the laddered reach  
Of orchards nor the tide gone ebbing  
From the steep beach.

Nor hold to pain's effrontery  
Her body's bulwark, stern and savage,  
Nor be a glass, where to foresee  
Another's ravage.

What she has gathered, and what lost,  
She will not find to lose again.  
She is possessed by time, who once  
Was loved by men

– Louise Bogan (17)

When we find a photograph meaningful, we are lending it a past and a future  
– John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling* (89)

I am not writing for the scum who want to have the cockles of their hearts  
warmed . . . [but rather] for the sort of people who just come for fun and don't  
hesitate to keep their hats on in the theatre

– Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre* (14)

In this chapter, I compare the circa 1860 portrait *Scherzo di Follia* of the Countess de Castiglione with Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. Using threads of epic theatre to analyze *Scherzo di Follia*, I explore the possibilities of performance in portraiture. Like Brecht, who developed epic theatre to provoke critical thought regarding social circumstances, the Countess composed her portrait to comment on certain social-cultural events and issues of her day. The portrait studio was a complex theatrical space where individual and collective desires and fears, beliefs and values were played out in artistic form. The Countess Castiglione understood this and used the studio format to defamiliarize the conventions of portraiture in order to express an opinion about the world in which she

lived. *Scherzo di Follia* tells an epic tale in ways illuminated by the concepts and practices of epic theatre. In this way, we learn not only how the photograph performs, but also how we might enhance our understanding of epic theatre by considering a broader back story.

I happened upon *Scherzo di Follia* in Naomi Rosenblum's *A World History of Photography* several years ago. On page sixty-one, the Countess de Castiglione's seven by nine inch portrait pervades the page. I think the page burned an imprint of her image on my retina because I see her everywhere. The Countess haunts me.

From the Countess' perspective, the upper left portion of the portrait draws my eye. In black, white, and varying shades of gray, the Countess peers at me through a small black velvet rectangular matte with an oval opening. The Countess' left eye is hidden by the matte while her right eye, framed by the oval opening, pierces the eye of the camera and viewer. Beneath the Cyclops eye, the Countess' face is expressionless. She holds the matte with her right hand, thumb in back and index finger pointing upward along the side of the matte. Due to how she holds it, the matte looks like a camera since with a slight shift of the wrist the Countess' index finger would be posed to click a photograph. The easel back of the matte, the part that holds a frame upright on a table, wraps around the right side of her head like a strap holding a mask to her face.

On her right index finger and wrist, the Countess wears spherical jewels. Her right elbow is bent and resting in the palm of her left hand, which peeks out from beneath the gray cape she wears. Around the Countess' neck are several strings of pearls, and two large ringlets of coarse and curly hair rest on either shoulder. The loose and frizzy hair above her forehead is white with powder while the rest of her hair is powdered

unevenly, in splotches. A soft gray cape drapes loosely around the Countess' left shoulder and across her torso to fasten on her right upper arm. Her body is tilted slightly to the left, exposing her bare right shoulder to the viewer. Beads and feathering strands of fur and rope hang down from where the cape fastens. From the left shoulder, the cape drapes gently to the bottom edge of the photograph. In some places, the cape is unfocused as is the dress material in the bottom right of the photograph, which suggests the Countess may have moved slightly when the photograph was taken. The dress fabric is textured with black squiggles, and one squiggle seems to sparkle with her movement. The Countess' skin is fair and soft with the whispers of feathers, pearls, and powder. The background is distant, gray, and blurry, validating my focus on her.

*Scherzo di Follia*, translated *Game of Madness*, is an albumen silver print portrait of the Countess de Castiglione taken sometime between 1863 and 1866 by the French photographer Pierre Louis Pierson. The title *Scherzo di Follia* was borrowed from a scene in Giuseppe Verdi's three act opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* or *A Masked Ball*. Verdi and his librettist Antonio Somma based their opera on *Gustave III*, an opera penned by Eugene Scribe in 1833. Scribe's libretto tells the tale of Gustavus III of Sweden who was assassinated in 1792, while attending a ball in a Stockholm opera house. Due to a number of high profile assassinations around the time Verdi and Somma composed their opera, Italian censors required the pair to change the historical references. They did so, moving the locale to colonial Boston where Riccardo, the Governor of Boston, presides. "Scherzo di Follia" is the title of a scene in Act I, in which a disguised Riccardo learns from the sorceress Ulrica that he will be murdered at the hand of a friend. Later in the



opera, Ulrica's prophesy proves true as Riccardo is murdered by his closest friend during a masked ball.

*Scherzo di Follia* is the most widely published and hence well-known photograph of the Countess de Castiglione. It is used often to exemplify portrait photography in its early years. In Rosenblum's text, for instance, the image serves as an example of the "props and poses" used in portrait photography to "offer clues to [a sitter's] personality" (59). Rosenblum summarizes the Countess' story in one additional sentence stating that the props suggest "the seductive personality of Napoleon III's mistress (who was rumored to be an Italian spy)" (60). Yet, despite the fame of the portrait, few people know the Countess' name. As Xavier Demange claims, her "name has disappeared" and "only the impact of [her] gaze remains" (53). The Countess was a person however with a name and a body and a predilection to use "props and poses" (or in Brecht's terms, *gests*) to perform something more than a "seductive personality." As imprinted on my eye and imagination, the Countess was a smart, savvy, and witty woman who staged her portraits so as to express social as well as personal ironies and criticism.

Below, I unpack Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre practices. Then, I summarize Parisian society in the mid-nineteenth century focusing on the significance of portrait photography. A historical account of the Countess de Castiglione follows, after which I discuss her portrait as a socially critical epic theatre performance.

#### A PORTRAIT OF EPIC THEATRE

Bertolt Brecht was born into a middle class family in Augsburg, Bavaria on February 10, 1898. As a young boy he wrote poetry in diaries and journals. After completing high school, he studied medicine in Munich and, in his spare time, attended

theatre seminars. Brecht wrote his first play, *Baal*, in 1918, while enduring a brief stint as a medical orderly in the military. Afterwards, he joined the Independent Social Democratic party and began to experiment with how theatre might educate people as to their social circumstances. He wrote and directed many plays, his epic theatre praxis influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and the theatrical work of Erwin Piscator and Vsevolod Meyerhold. In the 1930s, his plays and books were banned in Germany, and he took refuge in Denmark and Finland. In 1941, he moved to California for several unhappy yet productive years in which he wrote many of his best known plays, such as *Mother Courage* and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. In 1948, he returned to Germany after fifteen years in exile. The following year, Brecht and his second wife of twenty years, Helene Weigel, opened the Berliner Ensemble theatre in East Berlin. On August 14, 1956, Brecht died of a heart attack.

Influenced by Marxist theory, Brecht developed epic theatre in an attempt to educate and entertain his audiences by prompting them to think critically about their social-historical circumstances. For Marx, it is by means of alienation that capital controls labor, the worker separated from product and rewarded for her self-directed discipline in competition with other workers. In epic theatre, Brecht uses a different form of alienation, *Verfremdung*, to highlight and critique the social reality of capital alienation and other exploitive practices as he saw them. By making the naturalized conventions of social reality (and the theatrical reality in which it is staged) strange or unfamiliar, Brecht aims to demonstrate how the given conventions are social constructs made and enacted by people and frequently resulting in contradictory behavior – as is the case when laborers compete with each other rather than unionizing or when actors in a realistic

staging refuse to acknowledge the reality of the audience sitting right in front of them. By addressing the audience directly, using non-naturalistic sets, and popular song that interrupts the flow of the plot, epic theatre purges the stage “of all that is magical” (Brecht quoted in Wright 27), thereby implying that realism as the audience knows it is not real life at all but rather an illusion. Further, it is an illusion that in very real terms sustains state and capital ideology by dramatizing social problems as solely those of the individual. By “laying bare” the “causal network” of such contradictions and admitting to its own constructed politics (Brecht 109), epic theatre is both popular and realistic, Brecht claims. It is for and about a broad mass of “people . . . making history and altering the world . . . completely gripped by reality and completely gripping reality” (Brecht 108, 112).

To realize such aims, Brecht understands he had to nudge his audience from their “passive consumer” state to a more “active productive state” of critical inquiry (Wright 27). Since the dramatic theatre of his and our day panders to the consumer’s conditioned desires to experience catharsis, Brecht calls on alienation tactics to stimulate “astonishment rather than empathy” in the audience (Benjamin 150). According to Brecht:

The dramatic theatre’s spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too – Just like me – It’s only natural – It’ll never change – The sufferings of this man appall me, because they are inescapable – That’s great art; it all seems the most obvious thing in the world – I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatre’s spectator says: I’d never have thought it – That’s not the way – That’s extraordinary, hardly believable – It’s got to stop – The sufferings of this man appall me, because they are unnecessary – That’s great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh. (Brecht 71)

Rather than relate emotionally with the characters, the audience is encouraged to be “astonished at the circumstances under which [the characters] function,” producing

critical thought and opinions that are socially and historically situated (Benjamin 150). However, as indicated by the speaker's actions in the above quote (e.g., I laugh, I weep, I am appalled), Brecht does not jettison emotional affect from epic theatre. As he tells us, it is "quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre. It would be much the same thing as trying to deny emotion to modern science" (Brecht 23). Rather, he understands the communication of emotions as "one particular form (phase, consequence) of criticism" (Brecht 125), implying that emotions are part of critical action and are value-laden, that is, political.

To prompt a social-historical perspective on the part of the audience, Brecht conceived of, wrote, and staged his plays in terms of how epic more so than dramatic discourse operates. The former is historically conscious as it reflects and draws on the past so as to tell its story in the present, as compared to dramatic discourse, which situates character and action in a present to future relationship to time. By composing and staging his plays in terms of epic operations, Brecht aimed to highlight the social-historical circumstances of character, estrange the naturalized conventions of the drama of his day, and provide an on stage example for how the audience might process content. Below I discuss the alienation tactics Brecht developed to meet the noted aims.

Rather than compose action that progresses forward in a unified way to climax in a single point of character and audience catharsis, Brecht used montage. He divided the story into discrete episodes and loaded them against each other; or, as he explains, he took "a pair of scissors and cut [the story] into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life" (Brecht 70). The discrete pieces allow the composer to jump rather than unify action in time and space and thereby investigate the play's content and themes over

an historical expanse of time (Benjamin 149). The episodic form also allows the development of divergent characters and perspectives and, as a result, the contradictions and ambiguities in the depicted social reality are developed and expressed too.

Drawing on forms of narrative storytelling, especially reportage in everyday life, Brecht developed a “technique of acting” aimed at realizing “the alienation effect” (Brecht 136). The technique requires actors to both represent and present, transform into and step out of character so as to state or imply an opinion about their character’s behavior. According to Brecht, “this showing of other people’s behaviour happens time and again in ordinary life,” such as when “witnesses of an accident demonstrate . . . to newcomers how the victim behaved” (Brecht 136). Further, they do so “without . . . making the least effort to subject their spectators to an illusion” that they *are* the victim, although they may “feel their way into their characters’ skins with a view to acquiring their characteristics” (Brecht 137). The alienation effect, then, is due less to assuming a detached and unemotional style as to constantly interrupting the flow of a unified character or actor. Just as epic discourse interrupts the past with the present and vice versa, actors interrupt their detached reportage of character with “feeling their way into the character’s skin” and vice versa.

While in everyday life a witness may report a victim’s behavior in a spontaneous unrehearsed way, on stage “no attempt” is made to create “the illusion of watching an ordinary unrehearsed event” (Brecht 136). Rather, the representation-presentation of character is crafted artistically and reflexively. Three specific ways an actor can highlight the alienation of a character’s actions or remarks are by transposing first person references into “the third person”; transposing dialogue into “the past” tense; and by

“speaking the stage directions out loud” (Brecht 138). In these and other ways, the actor signals to the audience that she has given prior thought to the character and is choosing to “quote” the character in a particular way, thereby also signaling her opinions of the character (Brecht 138). The actor’s tactics serve as models for how the spectator might “adopt [a similar] attitude of inquiry and criticism,” in effect, situating the character in an historical relationship to him- or herself (Brecht 136).

As Walter Benjamin tells us, “the basis of quotation” in epic theatre is the “quotable gesture” or *gest* (151). *Gest* is “the calculated pose whereby the actor shows the character’s estrangement from the role assigned to him” (Wright 52), and its job is to convey the “particular attitude . . . adopted by the speaker” towards others (Brecht 104). Understanding that “not all *gests* are social *gests*,” Brecht aims to realize the latter. “The social *gest* is the *gest* relevant to society, the *gest* that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances.” Brecht continues, “it is only the social *gest*” that “breathes humanity” into a performance by inserting “criticism, craftiness, irony, propaganda” (Brecht 104-105). A general example of a social *gest* might be the *excessive* repetitive striking of a gavel by an actor playing a judge since the gesture is socially relevant and conveys the attitude of the judge toward those in the courtroom. Also, via the excess, the *gest* conveys the attitude of the actor toward the judge in the social circumstances of the theatre event. The flat mono-tonal delivery of the phrase, “I am starving,” by an actor playing a child might operate similarly. All the elements of the stage can be composed in terms of social *gests*. For instance, in the context of a play’s fictive reality, showing backstage machinery might imply a negative attitude toward the mechanization of social space while, in the context of the theatrical reality, the same

machinery might imply the director's attitude that like all social space the theatrical space is constructed, and hence it can be altered. We can change mechanized space if we so choose – e.g., by reconfiguring how human bodies and machines relate.

The composing of elements to communicate distinct attitudes toward the content of the play and the theatre event speaks to Brecht's belief that stage elements should be treated as independent entities. The idea is articulated in Brecht's well-known essay, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" or "Notes on the Opera," in which he offers his "first full statement . . . about 'epic theatre'" by also discussing his opera *Mahagonny* (Willett 42). Brecht was intrigued by the "culinary" character of opera, its potential to educate as well as be "fun" and pleasurable (Brecht 35). He also appreciated how opera like the popular cabaret often presents song *as* theatre rather than rationalizing it as part of the represented fiction. According to Brecht, *Mahagonny* retains the noted intrigues while it also is "an opera. – WITH INNOVATIONS!" (Brecht 37; emphasis in original). It is an epic opera rather than dramatic opera. In opposition to Wagner's "*Gesamtkunstwerk* (or 'integrated work of art')," an epic opera displays a "radical *separation of the elements*" by means of epic theatre tactics (Brecht 37; emphasis in original). One result is that the music consistently takes up its own position and attitude toward the text rather than serving the text by means of illustration or heightening (Brecht 38). Whereas the "process of fusion" in dramatic opera hypnotizes, intoxicates, and pacifies the spectator, the interruptive form of epic opera forces the spectator to "cast his vote" precisely because the various components have "'adopt[ed] attitudes'" toward the content too (Brecht 38, 39).

Brecht's epic theatre also calls for the integration of "new and complex processes" and technologies (Willett 17). The scientific age was to be brought into the theatre for experimentation and alienation. Understanding the enormous power of those who controlled the production and transmission of information through the reproductive arts of radio, photography, film, and (news) print, Brecht felt that by including and re-functioning the same, theatre might lead the way in democratizing art. By using and analyzing the reproductive arts in a theatre event, a model for the masses to do likewise might be activated. In his work, Brecht experimented with his ideas by using projected captions, producing staged radio plays that were "not intended to be of use to the present-day radio [industry] but to alter it" (Brecht 32), and including film as a "new gigantic actor" that helped to "bring the social complex of the events taking place to the forefront" (Brecht 78, 79). The latter was realized by treating film as a separate element able to hold and express an opinion about the depicted event.

Brecht's concepts and practices of epic theatre, including alienation, montage, social gesticulation, the separation of elements, and the inclusion of reproductive technologies operate to highlight the theatre event as a constructed site where opinions regarding the social reality of historically situated people are expressed in "fun" ways. The main aim is to make "contact with the public" and excite the same critical activity in them (Brecht 7).

#### A PORTRAIT OF MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY PARIS

While born and raised in Italy, the Countess de Castiglione spent much of her life in Paris, France. As a young beauty, she enjoyed the high life of mid-nineteenth century Paris. A favorite of Napoleon III, she attended costume balls and other festivities held at Court. Napoleon III was the Emperor of the Second French Empire and reigned from



1852 to 1870. Aware of the capabilities of industrialization, he strove to create a “new social climate” for Paris (Sutcliffe 200). He hired Georges-Eugene Haussmann to redesign the layout and look of the city and, as a result, it became a “leading centre for artistic creation” (Sutcliffe 197). The economy was good, and people flooded the streets enjoying café life on the broad boulevards, attending cultural events in newly built theatres, museums, and music halls, and strolling the arcades where a wealth of goods and services, including that of portrait photography, were offered.

Over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Paris became “the center” for opera “thanks to government centralization that allowed the Opera to be funded at an unparalleled level of luxury” and with “relative freedom from theatrical censorship” (Smart 10). An amateur enthusiast of Italian opera, Napoleon I was highly involved in encouraging and supporting opera and the arts generally (Barbier 6). For him, the opera was “a focal point for a new, rich, and elegant society” resembling the artistic character of the *Ancien Regime* of pre-revolutionary France (Barbier 11). His support of and attendance at opera assured its popularity with the Court if not also the general populace during his reign and throughout the nineteenth century.

Opera in the mid-nineteenth century typically paired tempo with action, fusing the tempo of the music with the language and the action of the performers. Opera was influenced by Wagner’s vision and realization of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Some composers and directors preferred for the music to imitate and enhance the dramatic action of the plot and characters, while others experimented with this relationship. Still others de-emphasized the dramatic action of the characters, preferring that action be subordinate to tempo. According to Mary Ann Smart, the latter was a major aesthetic shift in mid-

nineteenth century opera and marked “the operatic body” as an “idea or aura” rather than a “physical sequence of gestures” (5). The dramatic plot and character were to be “invisible to the music” (4). Verdi did not employ the latter in his work, developing a style that influenced and embraced dramatic action while avoiding explicit realism. He aimed less “to copy truth” and more “to invent Truth” (quoted in Gerhard 412; emphasis in original). He believed in the dramatic expression of the character by means of tempo, language, and most of all action.

Portrait photography was a popular practice and theatrical event in mid-nineteenth century Paris too. The practice fed the public’s appetite for images of themselves as “distinctive beings” (Davenport 76), which reflected their appetite for images of “the most celebrated and noteworthy individuals of the day,” such as actors, politicians, military giants, and members of nobility (Hamilton and Hargreaves 18). The popularity of the practice was enabled by Andre-Adolphe-Eugene Disderi’s development of the *carte-de-visite* in the mid 1850s. A 2.5 by 4 inch albumen print portrait mounted on card stock, the *carte-de-visite* made the reproduction and trading of portraits relatively easy, increasingly affordable, and immensely popular (Sobieszek 104). Consumers traded portraits of themselves, family members, and friends, and also purchased and traded portraits of celebrities, the latter propelled by Disderi’s *carte-de-visite* of Napoleon III. According to Hamilton and Hargreaves, “the appearance of this commercially available, Lilliputian-sized image of the Emperor caused a stir in Paris that ignited a city-wide explosion for cartomania” (44). One result was that celebrities of the day gained in popularity since the public could recognize them visually (place a face with a name) and also imitate or “quote” their costumes, props, and poses in their own portraits – thereby

further increasing the circulation and renown of the famous personages. Another result was an increase in demand for photographic portraits, portrait studios, and professional photographers.<sup>1</sup>

In large cities across Europe and the United States, portrait studios cropped up in large numbers. Typically, the studios guaranteed “a ‘quality’ product which could be bought by the dozen, ready for distribution” (Hirsch 70). Although many portrait photographers were not concerned with improving the general aesthetic of photographs, competition for patrons did influence a portrait aesthetic, photographers promising to “produce the likeness, the best possible character, and finest expression of which [a] face and figure could have ever been capable” (Southworth and Hawes quoted in Davenport 78).

Much like theatre and performance, the photography studio was “a chamber of fictions” where sitters might stage what they understood as true portraits of themselves or they might pretend to be someone else, thereby garnering a “temporary immunity from [the] reality” of their circumstances (Hirsch 70). As Hamilton and Hargreaves substantiate, the portrait studio was “a natural extension of the stage” (46). Elaborate sets and backdrops afforded people from all walks of life, laborer and socialite alike, the

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<sup>1</sup> Making and trading portraits is a popular practice to this day, especially among young people. Primary and secondary schools enable the practice by contracting photographers to make portraits of students for yearbooks. Students also can purchase reproductions in various sizes for sharing with friends and family. I have a small album full of *carte-de-visites* of myself and friends taken between the ages of four and sixteen. My father has a collection too, *carte-de-visites* traded with his friends when he was a boy. Digital forms of the practice, such as sharing portraits via Myspace and Facebook, operate similarly. The differences concern a paradoxical increase/decrease in the ownership of the image: due to digital capabilities, one gains in ownership of his portrait since he can reproduce it himself. However, once he sends it, his ownership decreases (more so than with a material portrait) since receivers can reproduce, alter, and circulate the portrait how and to whomever they would like.

choice of sitting at a fine writing desk, in a lush garden, amidst ancient ruins, or on rock gazing out to sea. Plain backdrops were popular too, directing focus to the subject's face and body and the character traits inscribed there. The concept and "repertoire of gestures and poses" used in theatre to signify a character's personality and status were called on too (Hamilton and Hargreaves 46). In fact, actors often taught photographers how sitters should pose, and in return photographers made portraits and *carte-de-visites* of the actors, which then they could circulate among the public. A common pose was that of the sitter "holding or reading a book," which offered "a practical solution to the problem of how to sit still and occupy [one's] hands" while it also signified an educated individual (Hamilton and Hargreaves 33). Other typical props were eyeglasses, fans, items for knitting and embroidery, and ornate picture frames. Columns, statues, and chaise lounges also were common, used for their figurative potential and to prop up sitters who, in the early years of portraiture, had to remain still for almost a minute in order for their image to be captured. In lieu of a set piece, many photographers used iron clamps to hold the sitter's head in place.

Whether the sitter staged an actual or fictive representation of herself, the making of a convincing portrait reflected tensions at work in daily life as well as in the theatre. Stimulated by industrialization and the resulting ploys for pitching products, people became increasingly aware and accepting or not of the theatricalization of public life. The idea that people could don different characters for whatever reasons threatened the perceived stability of social structures. While some embraced this threat, others attempted to challenge and control it by developing scientific means to decode the true

personality of an individual regardless of trickery. Physiognomy and phrenology were two such sciences, and often photography was their servant of proof.

Developed by Johann Casper Lavater, physiognomy was the study of facial features and expressions thought to indicate the true personality and even the soul of an individual. For instance, “a high brow and a prominent chin” were considered innate to people of “a higher intellect” than those with a low brow and less of a chin (Hamilton and Hargreaves 34). Similarly, by means of phrenology, the personality traits of an individual could be detected by reading the bumps and fissures of the cranium. Phrenologists believed that the brain consisted of twenty-seven areas, each representing a mental faculty proportionate in size to a person’s propensities. The cranial bone conformed to accommodate the different sizes of each area and, so, by feeling for enlargements or indentions or by literally measuring the different areas one could detect another’s traits, such as her pride, vanity, guile, wit, and propensity for affection, religion, and even murder. Recurring features among people of the same race or ethnicity led to broader evaluative classifications, the cranial traits of non-Europeans “indicating inferior attributes” to those of Europeans (Hamilton and Hargreaves 91).

As I discussed in Chapter Two, throughout the nineteenth century, photography was embraced by scientific communities due to its perceived ability to record the truth of material reality, such as the size and shape of skulls or facial features and expressions. Photography provided the proof required to classify, categorize, and thereby sustain human hierarchies of difference, marginalized “races, degenerate bodies and deviant individuals” bearing the brunt of the truth game (Hamilton and Hargreaves 63). A few of the many applications include that of Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond who took photographs of

female patients at Surrey County Asylum so as to show them “how ‘deviant’ their behavior had become” in hopes they would correct it (Hamilton and Hargreaves 81). In Paris, Jean-Martin Charcot took portraits of his patients too, “the controlling clinical gaze” of the camera resulting in patients striking “theatrical . . . poses” that ranged from “catatonic rigidity to violent seizures” to “pathetic supplication” (McPherson 64). In other words, the patients performed poses associated with both social conformity and deviance.

As “an apparatus of surveillance” in the social scientific fields, photography was tasked to “glance at life below” the physical surface it recorded, its users presuming to reveal “an unquestioned statement of identity” (Hamilton and Hargreaves 18, 54; Pultz 28). In the portrait studio, a similar aim guided the staging of subjects, sometimes without manipulation but more often it appears by manipulating science through its performance. Like Charcot’s patients, individuals attempted to trick sight by striking the “right” or, as the case may be, “wrong” pose. In many cases, such trickery was in direct response to scientific endeavors, Lavater’s classifications studied and applied deliberately in studios. Facial traits indicative of a desirable personality were enhanced while less desirable features were masked or manipulated through muscular control, hairstyles, costume pieces, the position and pose of the body, and in relation to the composition of light and shadow and the distance and angle of the camera. Another irony in the truth game was that scientists of physiognomy often called on literary characters, such as Lady Macbeth and St. Teresa, as examples of the traits they mapped and photographed (Hamilton and Hargreaves 65, 72). One result was that it became popular for portrait sitters to adopt the guise of literary characters too. In other words, the art of fiction

enabled the truth claims of science, which then were used by individuals to trick with those very claims through the art of disguise. The popularity of donning distinctive costumes for portraits also was influenced by actors who, in their own portraits, often wore costumes of the characters they played. To what extent such fictions were applied by photographers and subjects to sustain or mock the scientific classification of bodies returns us to a prior point. Namely, an individual's aims may well have been influenced by whether the theatricalization of public life was viewed as a benefit or threat to them and their social circumstances. As the Countess de Castiglione shows us, an embrace of theatricality in life is an embrace of practices that contest the control garnered through the stabilization of social structures and individuals.

#### A PORTRAIT OF THE COUNTESS

The Countess de Castiglione was born Virginia Oldoini on March 22, 1837, in Florence, Italy. She married the wealthy Count Francesco Verasis de Castiglione in 1854, at the age of sixteen. In 1855, the couple moved to Paris where the Countess had been asked by her cousin, Prime Minister Camillo Cavour, to assist in diplomatic affairs. The Crimean War had just ended, and the Congress of Paris was meeting to negotiate the conditions of peace. At the time, Italy was divided into separate states under the control of Austria, and, aware of Napoleon III's weakness for beautiful women, Cavour sent his cousin to aid in the fight for Italian unity and independence.

Shortly after her arrival in Paris, the Countess became Napoleon's mistress, a position which afforded her access to many of France's most elite and powerful people. Her affair with the Emperor lasted a little over a year, during which time she attended many Court festivities. Late one night, however, Napoleon's life was threatened just

after he left the Countess' home. Suspected of collusion, the Countess was forced to leave France and return to Italy. In 1857, the Countess divorced her husband, but remained in correspondence with him until the end of his life, occasionally sending him portraits of herself. It was common knowledge that the Countess had multiple affairs with wealthy men, which contributed to her unsuccessful marriage while it also afforded her an extravagant lifestyle.

In 1861, the Countess returned to Paris with her six year old son Georgio. They resided in an elite part of town although the Countess was unable to regain her previous status at Court, rejected as she was by many of her prior friends and consorts. Although she sat for the photographer Pierre Pierson when she first came to Paris, it was during this time that her collaboration with Pierson was at its peak. After the deaths of her ex-husband in 1867, and her son in 1879, little was seen of the Countess. It is said she lived alone in a small apartment with black walls and no mirrors. Amidst the glitter of the Gilded Age, she died a lonely woman in Paris on November 28, 1899.

The Countess de Castiglione was the subject of some four to five hundred portraits taken by Pierson over a forty year period, from 1856 to 1895. With brothers Leopold and Louis Mayer, Pierson was part owner of the Mayer and Pierson studios, which were popular among the Parisian elite (Apraxine and Demange 24). A "prize attraction" offered by the studios were painted photographs, which were photographs colored with India ink, watercolor, and oils (Apraxine and Demange 25). The practice appealed to those with tastes for the high pictorial arts of watercolor and oil paintings, and it also allowed the photographer to touch up portraits so as to realize desired



personality traits. Apparently, as the Countess aged, she took advantage of the service so as to appear more youthful than she was (Apraxine and Demange 25).

The Countess' relationship with Pierson was unique to the time and conventions of portrait photography. According to Apraxine and Demange, it was "the longest collaboration of its kind in the history of portraiture" (28). While many women had multiple portraits taken in various guises and scenarios, the frequency and range of the Countess' portraits were exceptional. Further, the Countess "was the architect of her own representations," selecting the settings, props, costumes, expressions, gestures, and even the angles of the shots herself or in collaboration with Pierson (Solomon-Godeau 67). Since "historically, women have rarely been the authors of their own representations, either as makers or as models," the collaboration, intimacy, and trust between the Countess and Pierson were remarkable for the times (Solomon-Godeau 72). One example of their close relationship rests on the understanding that it was uncommon for photographers to make portraits in their clients' homes. However, Pierson did just that near the end of the Countess' life, photographing a pet dog that had died.

Within the context of cartomania, another significant difference arises. Unlike many celebrity portraits made by Mayer and Pierson for mass production and profit, the portraits of the Countess were "never made for monetary gain" (Apraxine and Demange 44). In fact, many of her portraits are not even recorded in the account books of Mayer and Pierson. Instead, the Countess commissioned the portraits for her own private collection and for sharing with a "restricted audience" of artists, lovers, family members, and friends (Apraxine and Demange 44). She sent portraits to those individuals (largely men) "by whom she wished to be reminded," and a few prized miniatures were circulated

among family members and friends (Apraxine and Demange 44). According to Apraxine and Demange, the Countess never commissioned a portrait in the *carte-de-visite* format, although several did circulate. Purportedly, they were unauthorized “copy prints made by the Disderi studio after originals by Pierson” (Apraxine and Demange 162).

Apraxine and Demange divide the Countess’ and Pierson’s collaboration into three periods. The first corresponds to her first sojourn in Paris from 1856 to 1858, when she experienced “the zenith of [her] dazzling social fame” (Apraxine and Demange 27). The second runs between 1861 and 1867, when the Countess returned to Paris a social outcast. *Scherzo di Follia* and many other photographs were made during this period. The last period consists of sporadic visits by the Countess to Pierson’s studio. Two visits occur in the 1870’s, and one in each in 1885, 1893, 1894, and 1895. During this period, the Countess aged. Some accounts claim she lost most of her hair and teeth and also was mentally ill (Apraxine and Demange 183). Her portraits indicate attempts to restore her youth by means of painterly touch ups and by wearing costumes she wore as a younger woman.

In most of her portraits, however, the Countess appears to be a woman of extraordinary beauty who also “enjoyed provoking curiosity and thrived on controversy” (Apraxine and Demange 24). The many photographs of her range from “conventional studio portraits” and “theatricalized or narrativized tableaux” to “stunning and formally unusual full figure portraits,” “odd, crudely hand-colored images,” and risky semi-nudes (Solomon-Godeau 72). Like other sitters of the day, the Countess is depicted often in theatrical tableaux – that is, in staged settings wearing costumes and striking poses indicative of well known personages or literary types and figures, such as the Queen of

Etruria, Lady Macbeth, Medea, the Queen of Hearts, a peasant, an invalid, a Madonna, a nun, and a corpse.

Taken in 1864, *The Queen of Etruria* shows the Countess in the draped gown and open-toed sandals of the early Etruscan people who settled the region in central Italy known as Etruria and were responsible for the importation of Greek culture to Italy and the Roman Republic. Apraxine and Demange explain that the portrait was made after the Countess attended a costume ball where “her costume caused a scandal and tongues began to wag, the gossip implying that she had appeared at the ball almost naked” (171). While this may have been the case, the portrait suggests additional reasons for the gossip. For one, there is the seeming audacity of the Countess importing Italian history and culture into the French Court through her own corporeal display. Also, the title of the portrait references Maria Luisa of Spain, daughter of Charles IV, who lived between 1782 and 1824, enduring a life of political struggle at the hands of Napoleon I. Her story runs as follows: in an effort to make Spain an ally against England, Napoleon I crowned Maria Luisa and her husband Louis as King and Queen of the contrived Kingdom of Etruria in Italy, which the French had conquered. The award required the couple to visit the French Court in Paris where they were received as foreigners before they proceeded to Etruria where the Italian people met them with hostility. Up to this point, it would appear that Maria Luisa’s history as a foreigner in Court society is not unlike that of the Countess’, and the rest of her life oddly anticipates some of the experiences the Countess will confront. Napoleon I retracts his favors, and Maria Luisa is exiled and then imprisoned for a time, after which she attempts to regain her position as Queen or (now with a son) Regent of the Kingdom of Etruria. Unsuccessful in her negotiations with

Napoleon I, she settles finally for the title and privileges of the Duchess of Lucca in Italy. Given the political and temporal currency of Maria Luisa's history to the Court of Napoleon III, it comes as no surprise that Court tongues might wag – the Countess aligning herself with Maria Luisa through her quotation (and historical conflation) of title and costume.

The portrait in which the Countess performs a corpse contains a similar web of intricate quotations. Making portraits of the terminally ill or deceased, especially children, was common in portraiture. The aims were to preserve and celebrate the memory of the subject and, for some, document genealogical traits. Typically, the deceased were dressed in their finest attire and posed in a peaceful, sleeping position. Less common were fictional portraits of death, except among actors who might depict the death of characters they had played. Taken sometime between 1861 and 1867, when we might say the Countess was “dead” to the world of the Court elite, *Virginie* portrays the Countess as the deceased heroine of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel, *Paul et Virginie*, published in 1787, on the eve of the French Revolution. The novel is written as a pastorate in the romantic tradition of condemning the corrupt lifestyle and influence of the upper classes by recalling the lost innocence or childhood of humankind. The story tells of Paul and Virginie who are raised by their mothers on the Eden like island of Mauritius. The mothers derive from opposite ends of the social-economic scale and, at puberty, Virginie is sent to live with her rich great aunt in Paris. She pines for Paul and, after some years, attempts a return to Mauritius only to suffer a shipwreck just off the coast. Virginie drowns, Paul and the mothers die of grief, and the great aunt lives on with remorse in Paris. While the Countess might have chosen to align herself with any

number of female heroines who die tragic deaths, her choice of Virginie from the romantic genre is telling in light of her own lost innocence as a sexual pawn in the political games of the Court. In turn, her choice implies a broader critique of social circumstances since, despite the aims of the French Revolution, the innocent and outcast continue to suffer at the hands of a corrupt aristocracy.

In addition to drawing on theatrical conventions and fictive sources generally, the Countess drew “inspiration from photographs of actresses and dancers from the variety theatre” intrigued apparently by the gestures of women with “loose morals” (Apraxine and Demange 36). She “was fascinated by . . . women exiled to the margins of society” since she felt she had been marginalized too, ignored for her political and artistic accomplishments (Apraxine and Demange 33). A gesture indicative of her fascination concerns a woman’s display of her legs and feet. In her essay, “The Legs of the Countess,” Solomon-Godeau explains that throughout much of the nineteenth century, proper women took care to show only their ankles in public. Less proper women, namely dancers, actresses, and prostitutes, were more likely to reveal their legs in public (e.g., in a performance), but even then their legs were covered with a thick stocking. There are a number of portraits in which the Countess bares her legs and feet, such as *Study of Legs I*, *Study of Legs II*, and *The Foot*. While certainly risqué for the period, the literal audience for whom the Countess performed such “loose” behavior was not a public audience. Rather, it consisted of herself, likely her lovers and artist friends, which is not to say it was a neutral or a-political expression.

In their “Introduction” to “*La Divine Comtesse*”: *Photographs of the Countess de Castiglione*, Apraxine and Demange question the Countess’ motives for making portraits.

In agreement with almost all the literature on the Countess, the authors claim she was a narcissist, infatuated with her own beauty. For support, they point to recurring content, the enormous number of portraits, and anecdotal evidence, such as that of General Fleury who recalled, “at [the Countess’s] request her husband would lead her to the quiet corner of a room where she would allow people to admire her as if she were a shrine” (quoted in Apraxine and Demange 23). While the Countess may well have been a narcissist, it appears she had plenty of company given the public mania for portraits and, unlike her, for *carte-de-visites* too. Re-functioning Apraxine and Demange’s argument, we might understand *carte-de-visites* as portable mementoes one could circulate in public no doubt expecting others to admire the image of the self enshrined in the card.

Apraxine and Demange also assert that the Countess’ portrait choices were not conscious, but rather “playful improvisation[s]” about which she had no clue, artistically or otherwise (13). The authors’ claim of clueless improvisation is anticipated by their understanding that the Countess “lived in a permanent state of rebellion, rebellion that was without purpose, had no message, but was fueled by her illusions” (Apraxine and Demange 12). Art critic Lyle Rexer disagrees with Apraxine and Demange, arguing that the Countess was a “revolutionary” artist, the “first to use the [photographic] medium to push conventions of form and content” (1). As my brief analyses of *The Queen of Etruria* and *Virginie* suggest, I agree with Rexer, and below I call on Brecht’s epic theatre to discuss how the Countess composes *Scherzo di Follia* so as to express her opinion regarding the impact of social-historical forces on her life and those she represents.

## THE PORTRAIT *SCHERZO DI FOLLIA* AS EPIC THEATRE

*Scherzo di Follia* is one of four to five hundred portraits the Countess and Pierson made over a forty year period, and in sheer size and scope the story the portraits tell is extraordinary, epic in the traditional sense of the word. Viewed as a montage of images, a story “cut . . . into individual pieces” each of which remains “fully capable of life” (Brecht 70), the portraits also tell an epic story in Brecht’s terms. On the one hand, this story is about the many different women the Countess quotes by means of costume, pose, prop, or title, such as the Madonna, the Queen of Etruria, Virginie, Medea, Cinderella, and a Normandy peasant at her knitting. Embedded in the quotation of each figure is the historical context that proved to imprint the figure as memorable and hence quotable, such as, in the case of *Virginie*, pre-revolutionary class conflict.

On the other hand, the portraits tell a story about the performer, the Countess, on the theatrical stage of the portrait studio rendering a perspective on the past by how she composes the portrait. In this way, the Countess situates herself in relationship to the past and to the theatrical apparatus she draws on. As Benjamin would have it, her act of quotation signifies at least two different historical contexts, that of the source context (e.g., the novel *Virginie et Paul* and its social history) and that of the new context in which the source is quoted and an opinion regarding it implied (e.g., the making of the portrait *Virginie*).

In broad terms, the epic story the portraits tell is about the recurring image of a woman known to us as “the Countess” re/presenting herself as quotable female types over and over and over again. The quotations imply substantive associations between the source and new contexts, while the constant quoting on the stage of the portrait studio

implies a plural and shifting rather than “unquestioned statement of identity” (Pultz 28). In this way, the composer-performer lays claim to, alienates, and mocks the “apparatus of surveillance” that is tasked to expose the truth below the physical surface it records (Hamilton and Hargreaves 18).

*Scherzo di Follia* is epic in these terms too. Like the montage of portraits, each major element in the image operates separately and contributes to the multistoried image as a whole. Each is a quotable gesture, a social gest that quotes a source(s), is socially relevant, and extends an opinion about itself and the content generally. The result is an epic theatre portrait consisting of divergent stories and perspectives that in their very assembly estrange naturalized conventions of self-expression in portraiture. Thereby, the Countess expresses opinions about the social realities she quotes, in which she lives, and by which means she constructs the portrait. The elements I discuss below are the title, costume, hairstyle, matte, and performer.

The title *Scherzo di Follia* quotes a scene and also a line in Verdi’s opera, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, which premiered in Italy in 1859, and in Paris shortly thereafter. Regardless of one’s knowledge of opera, a speaker of a romance language, such as French and Italian, would understand that the title hence portrait refers to a “game of madness.” Given the popularity of opera in mid-nineteenth century Paris, a good many more would know the source story and scene if not also the line.

In Act I, Scene Ten of the opera, the Governor of Boston, Riccardo, and his attendants pay a visit to the sorceress Ulrica who lives on the outskirts of the city. To test Ulrica’s clairvoyant abilities, Riccardo disguises himself as a fisherman. Upon examining Riccardo’s palm, Ulrica exposes his trickery and also foretells his “immanent



death” at the hands of the man who shakes his hand next (Tracey 20). In response, Riccardo says, “*e scherzo od e follia*” or “she may be mad or does she joke” (Tracey 51). Riccardo extends his hand to his attendants, all of whom refuse to shake it. Enter Renato, Riccardo’s most loyal confidant, who absent for the prophesy shakes Riccardo’s hand in greeting. Riccardo laughs, confident that Renato will never betray him although, again, Ulrica warns him of a conspiracy.

As it so happens, Renato’s wife Amelia and Riccardo are in love. Amelia, in disguise, and Riccardo attempt a secret meeting, during which Renato enters to warn Riccardo of a conspiracy as Ulrica foretold. Riccardo exits, leaving Renato to accompany the veiled woman back to the city. The pair encounters the conspirators who insist the woman lift her veil. Amelia is exposed, and the enraged Renato joins the conspirators in their plot to murder Riccardo. They draw lots to decide who will deliver the prophesied blow, and Renato’s name is drawn. At a masked ball in the last scene of the opera, Renato discovers Riccardo among the masked revelers and stabs him. Before he dies, Riccardo forgives Renato and tells him not to blame Amelia.

As a quotation, the title of the portrait places the many source contexts (e.g., the line, scene, story, opera, masked balls, love affairs, and political conspiracies) in conversation with the new contexts of quoting (e.g., the portrait, studio, and social climate of the time). At the very least, the social gest of the title imprints the depicted subject as a woman involved in a game of madness. Add in the title of the opera, and the mad game appears to refer to a masked ball where one conceals his or her identity by adopting the guise of someone or something else. Further, while all social classes of the time enjoyed masked events, the plot of the opera specifies class: the mad game of

masking is played to dangerous extremes by the upper classes. On the other hand, it appears the main characters are motivated by love more so than strict political gains, and hence their mad game is applicable to a broader audience too. Since the one non-masker, Renato, wins the day despite killing the Governor, the story proffers an opinion that one is better off expressing his true identity and aims than resorting to the trickery of the mask, thereby risking madness and even death.

In these terms, the subject of the portrait, her face partially concealed by the half mask of the matte, re/presents any one of the characters who mask their identity or aims, such as Ricardo, Amelia, and the conspirators. Given the universality of the love plot, she also re/presents the quotidian gest of concealing one's identity or aims in pursuit of love. Viewed in relation to Scene Two, the subject also bears the quotation of the sorceress Ulrica whose "game of madness" is different from that of the social elite who visit her. As a social outcast who lives in a "gloomy dwelling" outside the city (Gerhard 410), Ulrica is constructed along the lines of the romantic artist who gains insight regarding profane society precisely because she is estranged from it. Her mad game enables her to view the mad game of others from the reverse side of their masks, and thereby she sees through and past them.

Should we know the Countess' history, the relationship between the source and quoting contexts of the title gains in specificity. We might understand that the Countess equates her activities as spy, mistress, and conspirator to those of Riccardo, Amelia, and the conspirators, in effect, confessing to the mad games (or some of them anyway) that she played during her first sojourn in Paris. While this relationship collapses the distance between the performer and character, it also asserts that dangerous games of trickery are

not uncommon in Napoleon III's Court. Slightly different commentary arises in the Countess' quotation of Ulrica. Feeling her way into the skin of this character (Brecht 137), the Countess assumes the gest of the romantic artist and critic who, due to her estrangement as first foreigner and now explicit outcast, sees through and exposes the mad games exercised at Court. Notably, as a quotation of Ulrica, the Countess need neither admit nor deny she was a spy, mistress, or conspirator herself. Her secrets remain concealed behind the mask she views through so as to reveal the masks of others.

The title then is embedded with multiple characters, stories, and social gests. On the stage of the portrait studio, the multiplicity highlights the ambiguity rather than the clarity – i.e., the “unquestioned statement of identity” – purportedly realized through portraiture. At work in the opera and at Court, the mad game of masking also is at work in the portrait studio, articulating a contradiction in the operations and aims of portraiture. For reasons I pursue below, the Countess' reporting and estrangement of this point is evident while her opinion regarding it remains ambiguous or, perhaps, duplicitous. Is masking indicative of madness and/or does it joke with the very directive and assumption that we express a true identity?

The costume the Countess wears in the portrait reiterates some of the social gests discussed above and loads in a few more stories, themes, and perspectives. Like the title, the Countess' gray cape quotes opera, but in a more general way. At the time, it was a well-recognized piece of clothing that marked the wearer's attendance at the social event of opera or theatre and, arguably, his or her support of the “new, rich, elegant society” Napoleon III was shaping (Barbier 11). In the context of the portrait, the cape carries this social gesture, reinforcing associations between the source of the quoted title, the opera,

and the portrait. The cape is made strange however by the Countess' addition of the feathered fur and rope that dangles from it. Paired with the cape, the additions remind me of an equestrian hunt, the dynamics of hunter, horse, and prey compacted into the one costume piece. Whether the hunter on horse is the Countess wrapped in the prey she seeks or the reverse (i.e., others ride and seek her), the costume piece inserts an attitude of violence into the mad game of masking. In other words, that which propels the wealth signified by the opera cape is exposed; civilized elegance countered by its own raw violence. This social gest re-articulates the critical romanticism of Ulrica who from her position on the outskirts of society is able to see the perversions of nature as enacted by profane culture.

The jewels the Countess wears operate similarly. Around her neck are strands of pearls that accentuate the Countess' creamy white skin and, along with the white powder in her hair, create a color harmony that brightens the photograph (and demonstrates explicitly the care taken in its composition). Dangling from her right forearm is a double strand of dark shiny baubles that seem flashy and inexpensive in contrast to the elegant pearls. Placed against each other in the frame of the portrait, the jewels defamiliarize each other, highlighting the social position and attitude each expresses. The pearls are a gest of the refined upper crust while the baubles articulate the lowbrow cultures of the rustic Ulrica and the performers of variety theatre that so intrigued the Countess (Apraxine and Demange 36).

At first glance, the Countess appears to be naked beneath the cape, her bare right shoulder exposed to the viewer. The naked gest lends itself to the common inscription of the Countess as a narcissistic woman of loose morals. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the

portrait shows that the Countess wears a dress, the fabric peeking out from beneath the cape at the base of the photograph. The same dress appears in other portraits taken the same day, which show the cut of the neckline to be off-the-shoulder. The Countess, then, is fully clothed while, in the portrait, she composes a tricky message regarding the state of dress of those she re/presents. First, she creates the illusion of nakedness, titillating the viewer's eye and imagination, appealing to his or her desires and expectations, by alluding to the steamy affairs fraught with secretive intrigue in which Amelia, she, and other "loose" women engage. Having drawn the eye in to view closely, she refuses satisfaction by in fact wearing a dress. In a classic ploy of *voyeur-vu*, the Countess returns the gaze that would inscribe her as naked and inscribes the viewer as *voyeur* instead, caught in his or her attempt to "lift the veil" and see beneath the surface. In turn, an ironic attitude toward the apparatus of surveillance (e.g., eye, camera, studio stage, portraiture) is extended by the composer-performer since to trick sight, she must engage it. And, as with all jokes of misdirection, the viewer may refuse to "get" the joke.

The Countess' hairstyle also is a quotable gest, recalling with a difference the immense powdered wigs popular among the upper classes in pre-revolutionary France. For women, the noted wigs were fully powdered, rose high above the head in loose frizzy curls or intricate twists, and fell down the back in an abundance of ringlets. In the portrait, the Countess retains the silhouette of the style but powders her hair inconsistently, in patches that call attention to themselves as incomplete and partial. Like the cloak and jewels, then, the hairstyle gestures toward class dynamics, activating visual signs of the social elite and social outcast, the latter whom once circulated among the upper crust, but always partially and now not at all. The style also displays its difference

from the styles common in the mid-nineteenth century. While ringlets were still popular, powder was not; the hair around the face was tightly coiffed and the overall scale was far more modest. The Countess' choice to quote a pre-revolutionary style may have been made to reference the figure of Marie Antoinette who, like the Countess, was a foreigner to the French Court, basked in its extravagances, and paid dearly for it. Related, the extravagant scale of the pre-revolutionary "do" highlights the theatrics of masking on the theatrical stage, at Court, and in the portrait studio.

Should we be inclined to overlook the epic tale of historical quotation and critique at work in the elements of *Scherzo di Follia*, the small matte mask the Countess holds to her face prompts us to incline otherwise. It is an evident (I might say obvious) sign of alienation in Brecht's sense of the word. To start, it is a partial face mask that substantiates the more subtle quotations of Verdi's opera, its characters, and the dynamics and implications of masking. The matte mask also quotes and alienates the conventions of the quoting context, the theatrical stage of the portrait studio and portraiture.

Portrait sitters often posed with props that signified their personality, predilections, and position in life. A popular prop for female subjects was an ornate picture frame that the sitter held in front of herself so as to frame her face or face and upper torso. Thereby, the photographic portrait restored the familiar aesthetic of a painted portrait. The Countess quotes and alienates this convention by using a small matte that conceals the upper portion of her face save for her right eye, which is framed by the oval opening and pierces the eye of the viewer. The unfamiliar frame states that the Countess is concealing more so or as much as revealing her identity to the viewer. Or, we might say, she is revealing that she is concealing a part of herself. However you

cut it, the Countess subverts the social expectation that the portrait will supply an “unquestioned statement of identity” unless that statement is that her identity is in question.

As my prior analysis of the portrait elements support, I believe the latter point – i.e., an identity in question – articulates the social gest of the portrait as a whole. The proffered opinion is that one’s identity is constituted by diverse and divergent historical quotations that not only imprint the self, but that one manipulates so as to conceal and reveal, disclose and protect, aspects of the self in light of changing circumstances. In other words, the mad game of masking is necessary and inescapable, in Verdi’s opera, in everyday social life, and in the portrait studio. The broad target of the gest is indicated by the Countess’ framed eye that pierces the eye of the spectator, daring him (let’s say Pierson to start) to deny the fact that masking identity is not part of the portrait enterprise. This is the truth of identity and (in terms of) its surveillance.

The attitude of the matte, then, alienates and critiques the surveillance apparatus of the sciences of the time (e.g., physiognomy and phrenology) that would attempt to decode the true personality of an individual by dividing the body into parts that can be surveyed and classified as per identity traits. Thereby, identity is stabilized in terms of structures that would benefit from the stabilization. While the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology may seem farfetched to us today, contemporary scholars exercise a similar strategy of surveillance when they separate the Countess from the diverse historical quotations she embeds in her work so as to focus solely on her personality, proving to classify her as a seductress or clueless narcissist – without the benefit even of feeling the bumps and fissures on her head. In *Scherzo di Follia*, the Countess exposes

such structures of surveillance by appropriating and refashioning a key strategy. She performs a mock amputation of her eye. Thereby, she alienates and classifies it as the organ used to alienate and classify her, to frame her as a seductress, spy, and conspirator.

The camera is a part of the mad game of surveillance of course, and, with a little imagination and a shift of the wrist, the Countess' matte mask transforms into a camera focused on the camera that surveys her. While, in Brecht's terms, the Countess does not claim complete control of the technology, she does manipulate its signifiers, turning the mock camera into a "new gigantic actor" that helps her "bring the social complex of the events taking place to the forefront" (Brecht 78, 79) – e.g., in this case, the surveillance of the body-as-identity on the stages of the studio, Court, theatrical stage, and street.

By positioning herself as the user of the seeing instrument, the Countess assumes a role and attitude like that of the seer Ulrica in Verdi's opera and also Brecht's street scene reporter. From this angle, the Countess' job is not to see and expose her identity as much as see through and offer an opinion or, in Ulrica's terms, foresight regarding the tricky masks of others. She is to tell it as she views it and "without . . . making the least effort to subject [her] spectators to an illusion" that she *is* the person about whom she speaks (Brecht 137). The estrangement between the subject and the seer-reporter (the photographer Countess) is highlighted by the viewing instrument (the matte mask camera) that stands between them. In *Scherzo di Follia*, the distance also is indicated by the Countess' facial expression, which appears calm and aloof, expressionless. She does not warm the cockles of my heart (Brecht 14). Rather, she incites me to wonder why she holds the matte mask as she does and to astonishment as I discover my view and opinions regarding the circumstances she has quoted. We might say that as an epic theatre



performer, the Countess teaches me to claim control of the viewing instrument and use it in a critically reflexive way as she has done. The purpose is not to claim truth, but to investigate the truth claims that would detach the subject from the plural and shifting histories that imprint and are imprinted by her.

It is precisely for these reasons that the Countess embraces the theatricality of the portrait studio and everyday life. The understanding and use of masks allow her to destabilize the categories in which she was and has been placed. They also allow her to disclose and protect aspects of her life. While, to an extent, the embrace is pleasurable, it also is risky and potentially painful since it counters conventional notions of an autonomous true identity, rendering the self a performer, a deviant, and like Charcot's patients a little bit mad for striking theatrical poses – as if they should pretend (instead) that the camera is not there. “Are they joking?” the patients ask. “Or are they mad?”

*E scherzo od e follia?*

CHAPTER FIVE  
FOUND: MISSING MEMORIES AND HISTORIES

*Staring Contest*

**Found by Melanie in Charleston, South Carolina**

In the summer of 2005, I found this photograph propped up against a fire hydrant on Calhoun Street. It was as though someone wanted it to be found. In the darkness of a hot summer night, four men stand around staring. One stares at the camera eerily. Another stares at the other two men with amusement, who stare at each other intently. The men appear to be dressed up for some kind of formal event, such as a wedding or graduation.

Since I do not recognize any of the men, I find I invent a story about the moment the photograph depicts, lending it an unexpected history outside those of the men and the unseen photographer. I wonder who she is?

– Melanie Kitchens, *Staring Contest*<sup>1</sup>

An active archive is like a toolshed, a dormant archive is like an abandoned toolshed.

– Allan Sekula, “Reading an Archive” (445)

In this chapter, I compare *FOUND Magazine* with Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) praxis, particularly his Image Theatre and Joker System practices. The online magazine of found photographs and Boal’s interactive methods are based on similar principles. Both view and activate the making of culture and history as a democratic process coproduced by those who chose to assemble online or in a physical space of some kind. Therein, both practices encourage the participants to co-create artistic expressions and reflect or comment on what they have done. The participants are active viewers and performers or, in Boal’s terms, spect-actors. Also, in both cases, the participants’ creative investigation is constituted by exploring subjunctive “what if?” possibilities in response to indicative “what is” realities. The use of fiction to address facts (as well as show the blur in the binary) yields performances that generate and benefit the community while they also respect the contributions of each individual.

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<sup>1</sup> I submitted this photograph to the website in July 2008. It has yet to be published.

Below, I describe *FOUND Magazine* and explain how it functions, drawing on Roland Barthes's concepts of the *studium* and the *punctum*, which I also call on later to fund my discussion of how Boal's practices work. To start however I context TO in terms of Boal's professional history and aims, eventually focusing on his image based games and exercises. Discovering, creating, and speaking through visual imagery play an important part in Boal's processes as well as those of *FOUND Magazine*. In both cases, image is understood and treated as a flexible rather than static site of invention and interpretation, individuals prompted to create and then integrate their imag(e)inary into that of the emerging collective. A similar process is at play in Boal's Joker System, which provides the participants with a clear structure for making generative art of a democratic nature. The formal elements of the Joker System help me better understand and explain how *FOUND Magazine* performs.

#### FOUND MAGAZINE

*FOUND Magazine* is an online interactive archive of lost and found photographs, objects, and notes submitted by people from all over the world. Founded by Davy Rothbart and Jason Bitner in 2001, the site was and continues to be a popular hit for many web users. In response to the popularity of the site, Rothbart and Bitner have published several hard copy magazines and books, such as *FOUND*, *Dirty Found*, and *FOUND Polaroid's*. Davy and his brother Peter, a musician, also tour the United States collecting and performing finds contributed by the local audience of each city they visit.

Rothbart conceived of *FOUND Magazine* when he found a misplaced note on his car written by someone named Amber who apparently was "fucking" angry at Mario for sneaking off to another woman's house when he was supposed to be at work. In

Rothbart's introduction to *FOUND: the Best Lost, Tossed, and Forgotten Items from Around the World*, Rothbart explains that his "rescue project" is driven by his desire to give lost items "new life" (1). Through the activity of the website, participants remember and restore imagery that has been forgotten, piecing "together a narrative" for each remnant in an effort to "make sense" of what they see, understanding all along that the "riddle . . . will never truly be solved" (2). Nonetheless, the interaction forges a "connection" to someone "we've never met before and probably never will," a connection that for Rothbart extends "to all people and all things" (2). At the very least, the restoring-performing of an image broadens the participants' sense of the visual world, demonstrating that what they see is partial since it holds a past they can never know or own fully.

The *FOUND Magazine* website is user friendly and simple to navigate. The web address [www.foundmagazine.com](http://www.foundmagazine.com) directs the user to the site where a "Find of the Day" immediately pops up on the screen. Above the image are red arrows pointing to the left and right. If the viewer clicks on the right arrow, another "Find of the Day" appears. If she clicks on the left arrow, one of the two finds of the prior day appears along with the right and left arrows. By clicking the left arrow, the viewer can time travel into the past of featured finds.

In the right hand corner just below the image is an icon of a magnifying glass that allows the viewer to "MAGNIFY" and look closely at the details of the find. In the lower left hand corner, in bold red font, is the title of the find and below the title, in bold black font, is the finder's name and where and when the photo was found. A descriptive

caption written by the finder follows, and “Comments” in red direct the viewer to a space where she can read and make comments regarding the photograph, its title, and caption.

Beneath the “Find of the Day” display is a collection of three or four smaller images identified as “More Finds” that enlarge when clicked, providing additional access to the *FOUND Magazine* archive. Each image is accompanied by a title in red above and a date in black below. While seemingly stabilized by their visible presence, titles, and dates, the “More Finds” disappear and are replaced by different “More Finds” each time the viewer clicks on one of them. Granting reflexivity, this design aspect seems to reflect the lost-found paradox in two ways. First, it acknowledges that while the photograph has been found by those online, it is yet lost to or forgotten by someone somewhere else. Second, it shows how the viewer-participant is part of the historical paradox in that her act of remembering (clicking on the image) results in an act of forgetting too.

To the viewer’s left of the “Find of the Day” are several options for perusing the website. From top to bottom, the options are: “FINDS” (as shown on the current page); “ABOUT” (offers general information about the magazine); “EVENTS” (indicates upcoming tour dates); “MAGAZINES” (describes and provides information about how to purchase the hard copy magazines online); “BOOKS” (describes and provides information about how to purchase Rothbart and Bitner’s books online); “MERCH” (markets custom design t-shirts, buttons, CD’s, and other *FOUND* merchandise); “STORES” (lists the stores in states that sell *FOUND Magazines*); “CONTACT” (provides photos, descriptions, and email addresses of the *FOUND* staff); and “SUBMIT” (tells the user how to submit finds). Beneath and slightly to the left of the list is a “News of *FOUND*” link that directs the viewer to *FOUND Magazine*’s latest news,

which includes links to the blog, charities the site supports, a “Hey! That’s Me!” section, *FOUND Sound*, and other additions to the *FOUND* movement. Below the “News of *FOUND*” link is a search engine for roaming the archives of *FOUND*. The viewer can type in any word or phrase and corresponding finds pop up in the center of the screen. On the right side of the screen is a place to sign in or register as a “Friend of *FOUND*” and, below, a link to join the email list.

Since its introduction in 2001, the *FOUND Magazine* website has grown and changed. When I first accessed the site in 2004, it posted one find each week as compared to the current two finds a day. Each find was listed by title in chronological order, allowing the viewer to click on a specific year, month, and week to view the corresponding find. *FOUND* viewers no longer have the option to go to a chronological archive to peruse past finds. Instead, they use the search engine I mentioned above or move randomly through the archive via the “More Finds” area or the left arrow above the “Find of the Day(s).” The noted changes reflect the growth of the magazine, specifically the high volume of finds the *FOUND* staff receives and needs to catalogue and cross-reference. My favorite change is the addition of the “Comments” area where viewers interact with a find, its finder, and other viewers. The area encourages people not only to find and post lost items, but to read and reflect on how lost and found images tell a story. I am a little less impressed by the new “Friend of *FOUND*” option where users can create a personalized page with an “About Me” and “Best Websites Ever” sections and places to store their favorite *FOUND* finds and any comments they might have made. The option is largely consumer driven it seems, appealing to our desire to make the world’s imagery our own. Just as we scan a fashion catalog, selecting and excising imagery in terms of

how well it reflects our self image, so too the *FOUND* archive can be used. Similarly, one can remove his or her comments from the social context that generated them, creating the illusion of a self-made history and culture.

Anyone with access to a computer and scanning capabilities can send a find to *FOUND Magazine*, or they can use ground mail gambling on the 87% guarantee that the magazine will return the find to her. When contributors submit their finds, they are asked to include a title, their names or pseudonyms, where and when the item was found, and any comments they would like to offer. On June 23, 2006, Beau from Ellensburg, Washington found a photograph he titles *3<sup>rd</sup> Eye*. Beau's caption reads:

The day after I found your website I went looking desperately for a "find" and didn't come up with much. That night, as I was carrying out my custodial duties (collecting the trash at a Hay and Grain office) I caught a glimpse of this photo in a secretary's trash can. I am stunned that anyone would discard such a beautiful picture, but their loss is our gain. What fascinates me about the picture is the fact that the dog had to move its head very precisely during the exposure to have both eyes seem to meet in the middle. In other words, he clearly did it on purpose, and in the process was trying to communicate his "3<sup>rd</sup> eye" perception to his owners. I don't think they got it. (Eveslage)

Beau's comments suggest that for some reason the activities prompted by *FOUND Magazine* appealed to him to such an extent that he was "desperate" to join in. By retrieving and contributing the discarded image to the magazine, Beau appears to align himself with the *FOUND* community, reflecting that "their loss is our gain" and, while "they" don't get the dog's insight, the *FOUND* community does. Highlighted by the class codes embedded in the narrative (i.e., white collar secretary and blue collar custodian who labors invisibly at night), Beau's contribution allows him to claim visibility through the image. It also insists on his perceptual insight and ability to

communicate to an audience that gets him; that gets that the dog is “beautiful” and “precise” and “purposeful” and also very, very tricky.

In broad terms, then, *FOUND Magazine* designs and manages display events in which participants take the stage by restoring-performing images for an audience that then becomes a community with which they choose to identify. As with Boal’s practices, one condition of taking action – i.e., performing – is that audience members can take action in response. In the case of Beau’s 3<sup>rd</sup> *Eye* performance, viewers contributed a range of responses that include:

**Ninstar** February 9, 2007 at 2:40 p.m.  
I laugh every time I look at this picture . . . he looks like a cyclops! (Ninstar)

**The Fourth eye** April 22, 2007 at 1:12 p.m.  
Woah! That is such an amazing picture! Who would ever throw that away!?!  
(Fourth Eye)

**L in my chair** May 17, 2007 at 8:51 p.m.  
I don’t think he did it on purpose. Great picture though. (L in my chair)

**Baby basil in the herb garden** August 26, 2007 at 2:46 p.m.  
Dog meets alien . . . alien dog . . . coooool. (Baby basil in the herb garden)

**Puppy in quarantine** November 28, 2007 9:14 p.m.  
I think it’s creepy and I bet that’s why it was thrown out – I wouldn’t want to see one of my beloved pets with 3 eyes. (Puppy in quarantine)

Supportive and not, with attitudes of awe, humor, skepticism, and disgust, the diverse and divergent responses stand on their own and contribute to an ever shifting story about the image, the dog, Beau and, by means of their pseudonyms and comments, the respondents themselves. As Raphael Samuel might observe, the commentary demonstrates how history is a “social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands” and also paws in this case (8).



In Barrett's terms, the interactive event of displaying and responding to *3<sup>rd</sup> Eye* articulates one of many external contexts. The first is expressed by Beau when he tells us that he found the photograph in a secretary's trash can in a Hay and Grain office in Ellensburg, Washington. Another is the noted event of display and response in *FOUND Magazine*. Additional external contexts arise in the potential for viewers to copy and store the image on their "Friend of FOUND" personal pages, extracting the image for their own collections of favorite finds. The internal context of *3<sup>rd</sup> Eye* is articulate too: it concerns a black dog shot at close range who appeared to move his or her head when the photograph was taken, resulting in the illusion that the dog has three eyes. The original context of making the photograph is unknown however. This aspect of the story is made quite literally through questions and speculation: for instance, in his desperation to join the *FOUND* community, did Beau snap and submit a photo of his own beloved pet? Or did the secretary make the photo and, displeased by the results, toss it in the trash can? Or, perhaps, the secretary received the photo from her mother in Des Moines who thought her daughter would appreciate the funny picture of the family dog. And we can only speculate as to whether the dog *actually* moved his head when the photograph was taken; for all we know, she might have three eyes.

The lost "origin" of the photograph demonstrates, as Berger and Mohr assert, the "ambiguity" of all photographs, which "arises out of that discontinuity . . . between the moment recorded and the moment of looking" (89). While certain facts can be claimed, "meaning is not instantaneous. Meaning is discovered in what connects, and cannot exist without development. Without a story, without an unfolding, there is no meaning" (89). The photos displayed in *FOUND Magazine* highlight this aspect, encouraging

participants to make (up) stories and thereby meanings based on the few indicative facts of the internal and external contexts. In this way, the participants enact the fictive real of performance, history, and photography, which, as Michael Bruner points out, not only articulates the interplay of the fictive and real, but is enabled by a politic of balance, tolerance, and humor; in other words, traits of a democratic praxis (143).

In addition to inventing diverse stories and making meanings from them, the participants of a *FOUND* event also create characters as demonstrated by the pseudonyms many use, such as Farmer in the Dell, Baby Basil in the Herb Garden, Mona Lisa in the Louvre, Holly the Homemaker in Toronto, and Librarian in the Woodwork. As with other interactive internet sites such as Chat Rooms, the use of pseudonyms allows the participants to create a safe place for virtual strangers to interact. As a familiar language form, the pseudonyms also signal a performance contract between participants in that they agree to respect how each has chosen to represent themselves as compared to questioning the “truth” of the representation. In turn, the chosen names demonstrate individual choice and an inventive use of quotable social traits that both personalize and socialize the interaction. As with a stage performance, the fictive real creation and acceptance that you are a Farmer and I am a Gardener and they are an Art Lover, Homemaker, and Librarian require *and* generate tolerance, an equal playing field, and a healthy sense of humor as regards norms of self-disclosure, acceptance of each other’s characters, and language play.

The activation of individual agency in terms of what benefits and sustains the community is illustrated well by a regular visitor to *FOUND Magazine*, the above-noted Mona Lisa. While in her many responses to finds, she retains the quotation of Mona

Lisa, she varies the latter part of the pseudonym. For instance, she has signed on as Mona Lisa in the Elevator, in the Chili House, in Canada, in Wonderment, in Tryst Management, in the Office Supply Store, Getting a Sharpie Marker, and in the Car, well, soon, anyway, Traveling to Ohio. Her maintenance of the Mona Lisa moniker demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the community and its performance contract while the changes express an individual identity that alters in light of her particular circumstances outside *FOUND Magazine*.

The fictive real space I described above – where individuals agree to make social characters who make (up) stories and thereby meanings for lost items – is countered by *FOUND Magazine*'s marketing of products, the “Friend of *FOUND*” option, and the “Hey! That’s Me!” space. The latter is where users can claim a *FOUND* item that they lost. For instance, in May 2003, Denise from Mesa, Arizona posted *The Two Treasures*, a photograph of a young couple leaning against a car on their wedding day. Five years later, in March 2008, Jen from Seattle, Washington claimed the photo, writing, “This is a picture of my grandparents. They now live in Green Valley, Arizona. . . . He still has the car” (Jen). Jen’s post reminds us that most photographs “offer . . . irrefutable evidence” that the subjects “existed” (Berger and Mohr 86), and nothing we say about or do to the photograph can change that fact. However, as Berger and Mohr also observe, the evidence “tells us nothing of the significance of their existence” (86), which is made over time by viewers as they interact with the photograph. In this light, the “Hey! That’s Me!” space asks us to acknowledge the politics of finding and making meanings for subjects we don’t know – who, in a sense, resist our efforts to “find” them – without giving up on the venture altogether. As Denise’s post suggests, while always incomplete,

restoring the past counters the politics of forgetting the past: “I found this wedged in a book at a thrift store. The nice counter guy let me have it for free, as they usually pitch personal photos” (Grimes).

Whether one submits or comments on a photograph in *FOUND Magazine*, the interaction with the past holds the potential of an “adventure” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 19). For Barthes, a photograph “*advenes*” when “it animates me, and I animate it” (*Camera Lucida* 19, 20; emphasis in original). Each adventure is constituted by the “co-presence” of a *studium* and a *punctum* (*Camera Lucida* 25). The *studium* articulates the social-historical meanings and functions we attribute to a photograph in order to understand it, and also to reconcile it – i.e., its dangerous ambiguity – with society (*Camera Lucida* 26-28). The *punctum* disturbs or punctuates the *studium*. It is the “element that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces,” pricks, or wounds one with “delight” or “pain” (*Camera Lucida* 26, 28). The *punctum* is hard to understand and explain, and it is why we each fall in love with the photographs we do.

In my interaction with the photographs in *FOUND Magazine*, I have experienced many adventures, experiencing the prick of a *punctum* that leads to my investing the photograph with a *studium*. A few “sensitive points” (*Camera Lucida* 27) I find I love are:

A man on a beach, arms spread wide, perched on one leg: a soaring seagull amidst footprints in the sand. (based on photo submitted by Michelle Robinson)

In a photograph worn by time, an old man hides in the corner, a pale green, purple, and red kaleidoscope of color that gives hope to the little girl who sits at a table with a birthday cake in front of her. (based on photo submitted by Luis Mendo)

An old man with a long gray beard and lips slightly parted stares down at the violin he holds to his chest. Beside him, his shadow engulfs half the photograph.

It turns and swallows him. The light flickers dim and, then, darkness. (based on photo submitted by Ellen Sawyer)

Charlie found a bouffant wig in the attic, hand on his hip sassing the neighborhood bully “whe, whe, whe” all the way home. (based on photo submitted by Mitch O’Connell)

It is the spontaneous prick of such *punctums* that both resist the assumption that we must make meaning of the photograph and encourage me to create a story for it. That is to say, the “love” I feel for the photograph gives me a reason to “like” and study it (*Camera Lucida* 27). As Barthes reflects, the *punctum* both disturbs and punctuates the *studium*.

Below, I theorize that many of Boal’s processes operate similarly. Whether in response to a general theme or a specific issue, individuals are encouraged to discover (or rather allow) whatever it is that “pricks” them and, without rationalization, express it through imagery or some other creative form. By sharing their responses, the participants begin to study the theme or issue, finding recurrences and differences across the range of individuals and adjusting their response in light of those of others. The aim, generally, is a response that the participants make together and agree to find agreeable, which is not to say differences are expelled.

### THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

Augusto Boal was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1931, just a year after the 1930 revolution in which Getulio Vargas, a fascist dictator, emerged to power. Despite the political turmoil, Boal did what a young boy with theatrical inclinations might do: he wrote short plays in which his siblings performed, and he taught his pet goat how to perform tricks before an audience. In college, however, he studied chemical engineering, earning his doctorate from Columbia University in the early 1950s. Upon his return to Brazil, he rekindled his former aspirations, becoming the director of the Arena Theatre in

Sao Paulo. It was there he developed the Joker System. In 1964 through 1985, a military regime governed Brazil, suppressing unrest through censorship, violence, and torture. It was during this period that Boal began to develop and experiment with ideas associated with Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), greatly influenced by the teachings of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire calls on the oppressed rather than the oppressor:

to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. (44)

The understanding that the oppressed must learn to take action that is different from the fear of threat that motivates (and oppresses) oppressors is fundamental to TO. However, to empower people with this basic right requires an educative process where people can rehearse taking action in a safe place before they test it out in real life situations. In TO, the fictive real space of play, performance, and theatre provides a safe place for learning how to act.

Rightly perceived as political activism with a democratic bent, Boal's experiments landed him in jail for three months in 1971, after which he moved to Argentina where he continued to develop TO through projects such as the Integral Literacy Operation (ALFIN) in Peru. In 1976, he moved to Europe where he experimented further, adapting TO techniques to internalized as well as external forms of oppressions. In 1986, Boal returned to Brazil and a more democratic form of government. While he continued to teach and apply TO in countries across the world, he

concentrated his attention on addressing issues particular to the Brazilian people with whom he worked.

Boal's fundamental theatrical principle is that "anyone can act," and to act means not only to perform, but "to take action" against political injustice (Jackson xix). To realize this principle, participants who attend TO events are treated as equal individuals within an emerging collective they define. They are encouraged to respond to prompts spontaneously and also to reflect on what they and others have done. And, by means of physical exercises and games, they are taught to activate all of their senses in an effort to re-harmonize the body. In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal explains the reasons for retuning the body:

In the body's battle with the world, the senses suffer. And we start to feel very little of what we touch, to listen to very little of what we hear, and to see very little of what we look at. We feel, listen and see according to our specialty; the body adapts itself to the job it has to do. This adaptation is at one and the same time atrophy and hypertrophy. In order for the body to be able to send out and receive all possible messages, it has to be reharmonised. It is with this end in mind that we have chosen exercises and games which focus on de-specialisation. (61-62)

In TO, an exercise is "physical, muscular movement" or movement series that "helps the doer to a better knowledge . . . of his or her body, its muscles, its nerves, its relationship to other bodies" and to different physical forces such as gravity (*Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 60). Exercises are a physical reflection of the self as a body in space. Games typically require two or more people and focus on the "expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages," or as a tool for communication (*Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 60). Because TO games often include exercises and vice versa, Boal often terms the pair "gamesercises" and uses them in combination to warm-up and activate the spect-

actors before they engage the more formally structured practices of TO (*Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 60).

In addition to the gamesercises, TO consists of a number of flexible practices that practitioners can use in part or whole, separately or in combination. The practices are the Joker System, Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Forum Theatre, Rainbow of Desire, and Legislative Theatre. Below, I concentrate on Image Theatre and the Joker System as they pertain to the performances that arise in *FOUND Magazine*. As regards the other practices, Invisible Theatre is a “public theatre” in which actors prepare an everyday life scene that they can insert invisibly into public life (Jackson xx). The purpose is to spark acknowledgement, conversation, or debate regarding the scene’s content on the part of the unknowing audience, turning them into spect-actors in a sense. In Forum Theatre, spect-actors select a problem or oppression relevant to their audience, which they script and enact in the form of a short dramatic scene that ends without resolution. During the second performance of the scene, audience members can “stop” the scene at any time and take the place of the protagonist, attempting to rehearse possible solutions to the problem or said oppression. The Rainbow of Desire is a series of gamesercises that focus on the internalized oppressions of individuals within an assembled group, the group agreeing to work together to help the individuals experiment with productive ways to view and address their oppressions. Boal developed Legislative Theatre when he was a *Vereador* of Rio de Janeiro (a city council representative) between 1992 and 1996. In Legislative Theatre, practitioners use Forum Theatre techniques with constituents of a given area to identify issues that concern them and to garner suggestions for legislation from them. In



this way, the constituents' participation in the democratic process extends beyond the polling booth into the complexities of making legislation.

#### FOUND IN IMAGE THEATRE

Image Theatre is a series of gamesercises in which spect-actors use their physical bodies rather than spoken language to express themselves and communicate with each other. Often the gamesercises culminate in the group selecting and by means of imagery exploring the real, ideal, and transitional imagery indicative of a particular issue or oppression they share. To start, an individual sculpts the bodies of others into a still (or repeating) image she feels offers a "real image" of the oppression. Then, other spect-actors amend the image until the group agrees it represents their collective view of the problem. The same process is used to sculpt what the group agrees is an "ideal image" where the subjects are free from the given oppression. Lastly, the group sculpts "Image[s] of the Possible Transition," beginning with the real image and experimenting with what might be entailed in moving toward or realizing the ideal (Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 3).

The individual to collective process of imagining and sculpting imagery is in operation in the less formal gamesercises used in TO to warm-up and retune the bodies of the spect-actors. In February 2008, I participated in a Forum Theatre workshop at the University of Georgia led by Augusto Boal's son Julian and TO practitioner Doug Paterson from the University of Nebraska. Julian and Doug initiated the workshop with image based gamesercises, which offer additional illustrations of the noted process.

To start, Julian asked the spect-actors to simply walk through the stage space at a normal pace. Then, via a series of prompts, he provoked us to defamiliarize our "normal"

relationship to our body and the act of walking by having us walk slowly, then quickly, in stops and starts, in angles and curves, with jumps and cowers, and then by countering his command. If he asked us to “stop” or “jump,” for instance, we might run or cower instead. While the exercise encouraged spontaneous responses to start, it progressively required each individual to make conscious and deliberate choices regarding the actions she took.

In an exercise called “Complete the Image,” Doug asked a pair of spect-actors to stand center stage, shake hands, and freeze the image as if it were a photograph. Then Doug asked one of the spect-actors to step out of the image and another from the group to step in and alter it by positioning her body in a different relationship to the body on stage. Once done, the first spect-actor stepped out of the image and another from the group stepped in and so the game continued, the group generating a series of constantly shifting “photographs” together. Occasionally, Doug would ask the group what meanings they made of the image before them, thereby interrupting the spontaneous flow of the visual game with brief comments and oral discourse. After the group interchange, we played the same game in pairs, again creating shifting imagery in response to each other.

In both cases, we were urged to make the imagery quickly and spontaneously. Conscious reflection occurred afterwards in response to Doug’s questions, in the group discussion that followed the games, and as I reflect on them here. For me, the games highlighted how it is people, with bodies inscribed and inscribing, who make their culture. To do so, they restore and integrate internal (physical and cognitive) memories and external remnants so as to generate a story (image) in response to the given situation. As circumstances change, the telling and its content change too.

A similar process is at work in *FOUND Magazine* as each finder posts a photo remnant and others respond to it, the story shifting in light of the changing circumstances that arise from the different responses. Further, each response holds a network of individual-social memories, stories, and ways of knowing that act on and in response to the other networks at play. In both TO and *FOUND Magazine*, people participate in this process because it is fun, and it is fun because it activates a democratic assembly where participation is voluntary, largely accessible to all, geared toward tolerance and respect for individual choices while it enfolds the same into a collective performance or, in TO especially, a collaborative performance based soundly on teamwork.

The movement between spontaneous and collective or collaborative responses is indicative of Roland Barthes's understanding of the relationship between the *punctum* and the *studium* in a photograph. In the TO process, participants respond quickly to each other, without making meanings consciously to start. They are pricked by something they see or sense in the image before them, and they respond with "love" in so far as they do an action in which they quite literally place their bodies in a responsive and respectful relationship to another body and its action. In meta-terms, the *studium* emerges and is punctuated by the accumulation of these "sensitive [*punctum*] points," especially as the participants make sense of what they have done. Namely, they have learned to take action, risk their body in terms of another, which then enables their sense of self too. In the *FOUND Magazine* event, I cannot say with certainty whether the participants make sense of their collaborative *punctums* in the same way. However, I do believe they respond with "love" for something in the remnant and that they "like" the generative exchange of thoughts and feelings with other people.

Another issue the image games highlights concerns how well they operate to activate a collaborative relationship between people who do not know each other, as well as those who do. For the most part, the participants who attended the University of Georgia workshop were unknown to each other, deriving from different regions in the South, professions, and disciplines. The reverse was true in my studies at Louisiana State University where we processed TO practices in classes and rehearsals with groups of people we knew well. Due however to the use of the same performance form and contract, a similar working relationship emerged in both cases. In addition to spect-actors doing and discussing images and respecting individual choices within the collaborative venture, both situations were enabled by the creation of fictive real spaces where participants risk taking action because their everyday identities are not in question and not the point. Instead, participants understand they are not/not themselves and, as in *FOUND Magazine*, this agreement funds the generation of interactions that concentrate on the shared imagery and issues more so than individual self-disclosure, which is not to say the interaction expels the “sensitive points” people “love” to draw on to invest their play.

#### FOUND IN THE JOKER SYSTEM

The creation of fictive real spaces of a democratic bent does not just happen. It is made by people restoring conventions of democratic action in ways that speak to the particularities of their situation. My discussion of the image games suggests how the display and response to photographs in *FOUND Magazine* allow the co-presence of individual and collective action that is tolerant, balanced, and enjoyable. People want to

do it. Boal's Joker System provides a way to understand how the noted action is enabled by a more definitive structure of democratic fair play.

Boal developed the Joker System in the 1960s when he was the director of the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo. His main aim was to rewrite and restage (largely European) classic texts in ways his Sao Paulo audience would find relevant to their community, culture, and concerns. In broad terms, then, the Joker System asks that a performance be made relevant to the audience at hand or, more accurately, that the art of performance and culture generally be returned to the people who help make it. *FOUND Magazine* operates on a similar principle almost by default since the found photographs are without origins that pre-determine relevance. Instead, by means of their commentary and response, the spect-actors make relevance together.

*FOUND Magazine* and the Joker System also use comparable "basic techniques" (Bowman 140). In the Joker System, the four fundamental techniques are an alienated acting style that highlights the social gestures of character and performer, action and imagery; a team-telling as realized by the performers constantly exchanging the characters they play; "stylistic and genre eclecticism from scene to scene"; and "the use of music as an independent 'discourse'" (Bowman 140).

Boal recommends that two character types inhabit all Joker System events, a Protagonist and a Joker figure. Unlike the other characters, the Protagonist is to be played by a single performer throughout the production in the style of psychological realism. In this way, the character serves as the "slice of real life" that most audiences find familiar and accessible, and with whom they tend to empathize (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 181). The Protagonist may or may not be the protagonist of the source text

itself. Named for the polyvalent joker in a deck of cards, the Joker figure enables and acts in terms of the “magical reality” – the fictive real world of potential – generated by the Joker System as a whole (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 182). The Joker may derive from a character within or outside the source text or she may be an invention. She may be played by one or many performers. “She may retain her role as Joker throughout the performance, or she may insert herself into any scene and as any character” (Bowman 140). The Joker’s main job is to serve as host and provocateur to the audience. As host, she manages the structure discussed below. Thereby, she helps the audience understand the rules that govern the performance and attempts to place them on an equal footing with the performers. As provocateur, the Joker encourages the audience to become spect-actors, enjoying the flow of the production and reflecting on its themes and issues in active critical ways. As a result, the Joker implies if not states that the performance is co-created by the assembled participants, returning culture to the local community and holding them responsible for what they make.

The “permanent ‘structure of performance’” that the Joker manages consists of seven parts: a dedication, explanation, episodes, scenes, commentary, interview, and an exhortation (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 184). To start, the Joker offers a dedication that highlights the relevance of the play to the particular community. Rather than assume the piece is significant, the Joker makes significance with the local audience in mind. The explanation follows and is delivered by the Joker or other characters. While it may take any form, from anecdote to lecture, it should clarify the structure of the performance and acknowledge the perspective taken by those presenting it. Again, rather than assume an audience can access unfamiliar forms and process expressions *as* political rather than

neutral or factual, the Joker System asks that the performance contract be stated in clear, accessible, and ideally fun ways. Episodes and scenes refer to how the piece has been divided by the director and performers into distinct parts, each scene adapted or transformed in terms of a particular style or genre that highlights the group's perspective on the scene and the piece generally. In effect, the episodes and scenes operate like a montage in Meyerhold's and Brecht's practices. Between or within scenes, the Joker may offer commentary, or interview the characters, performers, audience members, or technicians, thereby encouraging them to comment on some aspect of the piece. The purposes of these sections are to interrupt the flow of the performance with reflexive activity, discuss and clarify any confusing aspects, acknowledge and question the politics of the performance, provoke critical thought on the part of all the participants, and actively include the audience in making the piece. An exhortation concludes the performance, typically by means of an open forum of question and answer, discussion and debate mediated by the Joker.

Aspects of the key characters, techniques, and structure that constitute the Joker System are at work in *FOUND Magazine*, resulting in a performance event with democratic tendencies. The role of the Joker host and provocateur in this case is shared across the range of participants. To start, the Joker is played by the backstage creators and managers of the magazine, Rothbart, Bitner, and the *FOUND Magazine* staff. By means of their website design, graphics, and written prompts, the group dedicates and explains the point of the performance in clear and accessible terms. Positioned in the center of the screen and scaled larger than the other components, the "Find of the Day" image and caption claims the main focus on the homepage. While the backstage Jokers

select and display the day's find, its prominence implies the importance of participant contributions. In other words, the site is dedicated to finds that are co-authored by the backstage Jokers and everyday contributors.

This purpose is substantiated by a written explanation housed in the upper right hand corner of the screen that tells the audience, "We collect FOUND stuff. . . . anything that gives a glimpse into someone else's life. Anything goes" (*FOUND Magazine*). The vague "we" operates like free indirect discourse as it could refer to the backstage Jokers or to the backstage Jokers and the audience since it is their contributions that constitute the collection. Further, the audience collects "FOUND stuff" by simply visiting the site, seeing and storing images in their memories. By means of their dedication and initial explanation, then, the backstage Jokers clarify that the performance is dependent on the contributions of the audience-become-spect-actors. Put another way, the *FOUND* performance could not occur without them.

Additional explanations confirm and expand on this point. On the "ABOUT" page, the backstage Jokers encourage the audience "to join forces and share their finds with everyone else" ("ABOUT"). As with the "anything goes" prompt on the homepage, this phrase operates to encourage audience participation and invoke a *FOUND* community of individuals joining forces to share finds. On the one hand, I find the noted language a little naive as regards what it takes to build and sustain a community and also appropriative of the past. The "anything goes" phrase implies a spontaneous ease of action, as if restoring lost remnants is without consequences (i.e., a-political) and pursued solely in terms of the present audience. In other words, it is a-historical too.



On the other hand, these same appeals are countered by the main intent of the site and the actual action needed to fulfill it. Individuals have to find, write a little story about, and share with others a lost remnant of the past. If by unconscious deed only, the participants are doing history and, perhaps over time, the accumulative affect of such action will alter how we view and relate to the past. Of course, if I am aware of the historical et al. import and consequences of such action, then I suspect others are too.

By means of selecting and displaying the “Find of the Day” and “More Finds,” the backstage Jokers establish the eclectic montage of episodes and, therein, scenes (i.e., discrete images) that constitute the main event. In turn, the contributors of and commentators on the scenes come front stage appearing in the roles of both Joker and Protagonist. As a Joker, the finder submits a caption that serves to comment on the scene he has contributed, which then prompts other Joker spect-actors to comment too. Often a response takes the form of an interview as questions and answers are stated or implied. For instance, in response to Beau’s comments on *3<sup>rd</sup> Eye*, Fourth Eye asked, “Who would ever throw that away!?!” (Fourth eye), which Puppy in quarantine answered, “it’s creepy and I bet that’s why it was thrown out” (Puppy in quarantine).

The various responses to *3<sup>rd</sup> Eye* demonstrate a number of points indicative of the Joker System and Joker role. First, it shows online spectators of imagery becoming active producers of it, spect-actors who by means of their commentary and questions interrupt the normative flow of image consumption by reflecting on what they see. Second, their talk demonstrates different modes of critical activity, Fourth Eye and Puppy in quarantine advancing an evaluation of the image while others tend toward interpretation, suggesting that the dog “looks like a cyclops” (Ninstar) or an “alien dog”

(Baby basil in the herb garden). Third, if viewed separately, the comments reflect the eclectic montage of scenes (images) used to arrange contributions to the magazine – the comments like the images loaded upon and against each other, creating a dialogue of support, contest, and query. Fourth, as viewed together, the comments create a “multi-languaged” and “openended” or unfinished story about the image, a kind of “novel” discourse in Bakhtin’s terms (11). Lastly, while I can’t say whether the spect-actors view their efforts as a team-telling, the collective display of their responses to an image constructs the same. That is, while each individual voices his or her own view, each voicing and view is determined by the subject they (now) share. As in a democratic forum, “anything goes” is qualified by the issue – the lost and found image – they have agreed to talk about.

The Joker spect-actors also are Protagonists in Boal’s broad sense of the term. Near the end of *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal reiterates that the “fundamental principle,” definition, and intent of TO is “to transform the spectator into the protagonist of the theatrical action and, by this transformation, to try to change society” (253). The performance staged in the “Comment” section of *FOUND Magazine* demonstrates this transformation: rather than consume online imagery for and as a reflection solely of one’s self, individuals talk about an image together. In this way, they change normative patterns of image production and consumption, treating image as a process rather than a product, a subject more so than an object they can call their own. Of course, this interaction is not unique to *FOUND Magazine* since many online sites, such as Chat Rooms, invite individuals to interact similarly. We might understand then that within the broad commercial objective and activity of internet exchange, people are rehearsing and

activating counter activities that restore and value communication as an enjoyable process of negotiating language through anecdotes, comments, questions, and debate.

Another Protagonist in the Joker System performance of *FOUND Magazine* is the lost and found photograph about which the spect-actors speak. Typically perceived as a “slice of real life,” the photographic representation or quotation of some moment in time is accessible to a broad range of people. Like popular television and film, the photo renders its content in the familiar terms of verisimilitude. Lacking an original context, the photo-Protagonist comes equipped with a conflict that prompts, if not empathy, at least intrigue: the character suffers from amnesia. It can’t remember its past. This mystery of identity articulates a conflict and direction for action for the other characters, the spect-actors. Namely, they are charged to discover through affective response and interactive discourse a past for the main character. As I discussed earlier, Barthes’s concepts concerning the adventure spurred by the *punctum* and *studium* come into play here as individuals are animated by and animate the photo in diverse ways, their different responses creating a novel *studium* when placed in interaction.

Based as it is on *punctum* pricks, speculations, and questions, the created story is a fiction, and a largely fragmented and incomplete one at that. It is not history as constituted by narratives of continuity and moral or factual truths. As such, some might disclaim the activity as just another manifestation of postmodern pastiche, the source referent abused through cavalier appropriations that illustrate a kind of amnesia of their own – the forgetfulness of one Protagonist begetting the forgetfulness of the others, resulting in “history as emptied out, exiled, vacuous, and absent” (Pollock, “Introduction”

16).<sup>2</sup> However, as Pollock proceeds to argue in her essay on “Making History Go,” such a disclaimer is funded by a view that opposes fact and fiction, past and present, official and unofficial knowledge and, I would add, forms of continuity and fragmentation, as if montage for instance is unique to our times. Granting instead that history like story is a representation alters our concern. Rather than ask “is it true?” we ask “what does it do?” Who makes it, how, and what are the consequences? Confronted by the appearance of a photograph that has forgotten its past, what do we do? Well, we could forget about it altogether; who cares finally about a fuzzy photograph of a dog? Or we might engage the ambiguity of the photograph, aiming not to solve it but rather ask why we are touched by it and what meanings we make of the wound. Including Trinh Minh-ha in the discussion, we might ask why we find truths in the ambiguities and the meanings we have made of them (see Pollock, “Introduction” 16-18).

*FOUND Magazine* encourages this kind of history making, prompting its spectators to story a past for a remnant and thereby activate the creative and generative potentials that lie at the heart of the historical imagination. The activity is enabled by a structure very like that of Boal’s Joker System, which is indicative of the democratic praxis of TO generally. This structure is “crude” in its clarity of purpose and rules for use, thereby appealing to and accessed by a broad public mass. Since taking action is demystified, participants interact on a relatively equal playing field where taking turns is expected and built into the structure. Tolerance of each participant’s voice and view as well as equal access to the playing field is articulated through the structure. While each individual contribution is respected, even celebrated, the structure directs them toward a

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<sup>2</sup> My discussion here is indebted to Pollock’s summary of Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulations* and modernist and postmodernist histories or representations (14-18).

shared subject and aim, namely, to talk about a photograph that has forgotten its past. As a result, the “anything goes” of postmodern pastiche and the master narratives of modernist history are countered by the spect-actors’ actions, which demonstrate they are quite capable of addressing a common subject and making a little history together by means of discursive forms and conventions that make sense to them. As Lawrence Levine argued in his defense of popular histories and historiographies in a 1988 address to the American Historical Society:

If we tell people continually that history is invariably narrative storytelling about those whose power, position, and influence are palpable, then that is precisely what they will expect from us. But this is only one form of history, and it is incumbent upon us to inform the public, by deed and word, that there is no exclusive preferred form for the writing of history and that no single group in history and no one aspect of the past – the social, the political, the cultural, the economic – is inherently more important, or more essential, or more relevant than the others. If we have respect for our audience, then we must realize that ambiguity and paradox and uncertainty are not strangers to them. They know these things are part of life, and they certainly can be taught to see them as part of history. (*The Unpredictable Past* 12-13)

The Joker System of *FOUND Magazine* provides a democratic space and structure for spect-actors to make histories that allow for the “ambiguity and paradox and uncertainty” in the remnant and, as Levine observes, their own lives too. Put another way, the making of stories for lost photographs is a making of stories about our selves too. Likewise full of ambiguity, the stories we perform indicate a counter to being lost in postmodernity without a past, our histories emptied out and absented by those disabling practices of progress that would just as soon we forget about the past and the in/sight of a three eyed dog.

CHAPTER SIX  
THE EXCESS OF ELEMENTS IN *THE CHROMATIC DIET*

**1 chromatic** . . . *adj* . . . **1 a:** of or relating to color phenomena or sensations **b:** highly colored **2:** of or relating to chroma **3 a:** of, relating to, or giving all the tones of a chromatic scale **b:** characterized by frequent use of nonharmonic tones or of harmonies based on nonharmonic tones . . .

**2 chromatic** *n:* ACCIDENTAL 2 . . .

**2 ACCIDENTAL. INCIDENTAL. ADVENTITIOUS** . . . : not part of the real or essential element of something . . .

– *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (197, 7)

Everything is connected to everything else, every story overlaps with every other story.

– Paul Auster, *Leviathan* (57)

In this chapter, I compare Sophie Calle’s *The Chromatic Diet* to the performance practices of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and the Theatre of Images, specifically the spectacular surreal operas of Robert Wilson. For the most part, I concentrate on how and to what effect formal aesthetics is used in each practice to compose imagery, understanding from the start that the application of the principles and properties of visual forms does not equate necessarily to an aesthetic of formalism, or the a-social, a-historical autonomy of the art object.

In *The Chromatic Diet*, Calle composes and displays seven photographs of monochromatic meals that correspond to each day of the week. In contrast to the bulk of Calle’s work, *The Chromatic Diet* makes explicit and reflexive use of formal aesthetics so as to investigate the limitations and possibilities, the discipline and creative excess of composing food and photography in terms of visual elements. In this way, *The Chromatic Diet* bears direct links to the conceptual and practical concerns of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and Theatre of Images. While the former is based solidly on the exploration of visual principles, the latter applies them implicitly. Highly crafted in

formal aesthetic terms, Wilson's imagery aims to spark the "interior screens" or the imaginations of his viewers (Wilson quoted in Counsell 180). *The Chromatic Diet* and the Bauhaus Stage Workshop operate in a similar manner, prompting the viewer to make (or stumble upon) social-cultural as well as personal connections and meanings as they interact with the imagery.

To investigate how *The Chromatic Diet* performs in the noted ways, I describe and then context the piece in light of Calle's career. Then, I summarize formal aesthetics and as used by the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and Wilson. In the final section of the chapter, I perform my version of *The Chromatic Diet*, expressing and analyzing the associative connections I make in my interaction with Calle's diet of "color phenomena and sensations" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* 197).

#### THE CHROMATIC DIET

Sophie Calle displays *The Chromatic Diet* in her book *Double Game*, which is the result of her collaboration with the writer Paul Auster. *Double Game* is a colorful scrapbook that consists of torn out pages from Auster's novel *Leviathan*, photographs, lists, written descriptions, and other observations by Calle. The collaboration was initiated when, in *Leviathan*, Auster modeled the character of Maria on the character of Calle. In the novel, Maria "plagiarizes seven works by . . . Calle (*Suite Venitienne*, *The Wardrobe*, *The Striptease*, *The Shadow*, *The Hotel*, *The Address Book* and *The Birthday Ceremony*)" and "adds two imaginary works," one of which becomes Calle's *The Chromatic Diet* (Macel 26).

On the first page of *Double Game*, Sophie Calle and Paul Auster thank each other for "permission to mingle fact with fiction" (i). Just as Auster used Calle as inspiration

for the fictive Maria, Calle uses Maria “to turn . . . Auster’s novel into a game” about herself and her work (001). In part I, Calle explores “the life of Maria and how it influenced the life of Sophie” (iv), displaying two new works based on the imaginary works by Maria, namely, *The Chromatic Diet* and *Days Under the Sign of B, C, & W*. In part II, Calle explores “the life of Sophie and how it influenced the life of Maria” (iv), reprinting all her pieces for which Maria took credit in *Leviathan*. In the same section, Sophie pastes in pages from Auster’s book in which Maria is described and writes on the pages in red ink as if she is a teacher correcting a student’s paper. Her editorial marks include comments, additions, deletions, and substitutions. On page sixty, for instance, she writes “hello Maria” and changes Auster’s phrase “since the age of fourteen” to “since the ages of 27,” inserting her own history into Maria’s history, which is based on Calle’s history. In part III, Calle lists a few rules Auster has suggested she live by for a year. Very like *Double Game* itself, the rules are “one of the many ways of mingling fact with fiction, or how to try to become a character out of a novel” (002-003). In general, then, *Double Game* is about how one’s character and art are invented from the restoration or citation, the performance, of prior practices and expressions rather than springing anew from some autonomous source.

On Maria:

Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called “the chromatic diet,” restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. (Auster 67)

In *The Chromatic Diet*, Calle documents seven monochromatic meals she made and apparently ate during the week of December eighth through the fourteenth in 1997. Six of the seven photographs are displayed on separate pages in four by four inch squares. Beneath each photograph is a caption that identifies the day, color, and food



items drawn from Auster's novel or added to the menu by Calle. The seventh photograph is a large rectangle of approximately nine by twelve inches that spreads across two pages and depicts a black tablecloth set with all six of the prior meals.

Like a photograph in a food magazine, each place setting and morsel of food appears to be precisely arranged, and all items in each photograph are of the same color with alterations in the hue, value, and intensity or saturation of the color. A monochromatic harmony rather than a harmony of complements is at play. Likewise, all the place settings are photographed from an aerial view and "seen flat, as pattern, from above" (Hughes 14). Each is set similarly on a solid colored background. At center and claiming the dominant focus is a dinner plate with the main dish. From the viewer's perspective, a fork rests to the left, a knife to the right, and a spoon above. A drinking vessel stands above the spoon. There is a napkin to the left of the knife, and a dessert plate with fruit, cheese, or sweets rests above the knife and napkin. While similar in general composition, the settings vary in the types of napkins, plates, cups, utensils, and foods Calle arranges. The orange setting consists of ceramic plates, thick plastic utensils, and a tall plastic cup. The red plates appear to be plastic with red plastic picnic utensils and a red plastic goblet. The white plates could be plastic or ceramic with picnic utensils and a small plastic cup. The green dinner plate is ceramic while the dessert plate is iridescent plastic with picnic utensils and a plastic goblet. The yellow place setting is identical to the green, as is the pink. Beneath each photograph is a caption that identifies the day, color, and food depicted, centered to look like a menu.

#### MONDAY : ORANGE

Menu imposed:

*Puree of carrots*  
*Boiled prawns*  
*Cantaloupe melon* (Calle, *Double Game* 014)

As imposed by Auster, on Monday, Maria-Sophie ate orange “carrots, cantaloupe, [and] boiled shrimp” (Auster 67). Displayed on Sophie’s dinner plate are six boiled prawns tenderly placed with tails facing outward atop a layer of pureed carrots. On the dessert plate, moon shaped slivers of cantaloupe line up one under the other like six delectable smiles. A glass of orange juice “completed [Auster’s] menu” and Calle’s meal (Calle, *Double Game* 014).

The menu for Tuesday was red and included “tomatoes, persimmons, [and] steak tartare” (Auster 67). In the center of Sophie’s dinner plate is the steak tartare, topped with half of a cherry tomato facing down. Around the tartare are eight cherry tomato halves equally spaced and separated by slivers of roasted red peppers. Every other cherry tomato half faces up, exposing its seeds, while the other halves face down. Rather than persimmons, Calle ate pomegranate seeds, which are on the dessert plate. She completed the menu with a glass of red wine.

On Wednesday, the white menu consisted of “flounder, potatoes, [and] cottage cheese,” but Sophie “was not satisfied with the yellow color of the potatoes,” substituting them with rice (Auster 67; Calle, *Double Game* 016). Lounging on a bed of white rice, the flounder filet fills the dinner plate. A flattened layer of cottage cheese or “*fromage blanc*” rests lazily on the dessert plate. To complete the meal, Calle added a glass of milk.

On Thursday, Maria-Sophie ate green “cucumbers, broccoli, [and] spinach” (Auster 67). On her dinner plate, Calle adds green basil pasta. The pasta is in the center

of the plate surrounded by the spinach, which is surrounded by the broccoli and slices of cucumbers. Every fourth cucumber slice is followed by a broccoli cluster, resulting in a total of twelve cucumber slices and three clusters of broccoli. Calle also added grapes and kiwi to the menu, which she displays on the dessert plate. The kiwi is sliced and layered in rows from the outside of the plate in, and in the center of each kiwi slice is a half of a grape, cut side facing down. To drink, Sophie had a mint cordial.

“Since no color was prescribed for Friday, [Calle] chose yellow” (Calle, *Double Game* 018). An “afghan omelette” rests on the dinner plate topped by six skinned and cooked potatoes, which are arranged in the shape of a flower. On the dessert plate is a “Young Girl’s Dream,” which consists of a banana and two small scoops of mango ice cream displayed to resemble a phallus (Calle, *Double Game* 018). Calle drank a pschitt fizzy lemon drink.

For Saturday, Calle chose pink. In the center of the dinner plate is taramasalata, a dip made from fish roe. The taramasalata is surrounded by several layers of pink ham cut in thick slices. For dessert are two large scoops of strawberry ice cream and to drink, a rose wine from Provence.

On Sunday, Sophie decided to have dinner guests and (re)serve all the prior meals of the week: orange, red, white, green, yellow, and pink. She assigned each guest a color and meal by having them draw lots. In her caption for this photograph, Sophie admits, “personally, I preferred not to eat; novels are all very well but not necessarily so very delectable if you live them to the letter” (*Double Game* 021). On the center of the black tablecloth is a circle of loose pink, white, and red carnations and yellow and red roses. Extending from the circle of flowers in the direction of the matching place settings are

the napkins. From the viewer's perspective, the orange place setting rests in the top left corner with the dessert plate of cantaloupe frowning at the camera. In clockwise order, the pink, yellow, red, white, and green place settings follow. The settings have shifted slightly in order to fit all the items on the table. The napkins have moved toward the center of the table, and the dessert plates sit next to the knives rather than above them.

The photograph for Sunday is shot at a closer distance than was the case in the prior photographs, or it has been enlarged so as to provide a closer view of the details. Further, it appears that Calle is shooting and serving the exact same meals she shot and ate (or not) during the week. The shrimp are the same size and shape, the ribbed texture of the fish filet is exactly the same, the broccoli clusters and cuts of the cucumbers are identical, the cut and hue of the ham match, and the ice creams have melted a bit in the Sunday photograph. Close inspection suggests then that Sophie did not eat the meals during the week, but simply reused them for the Sunday shot. Or did she? Since she had photographs of each meal, she might have copied their details meticulously, and the melted ice cream could be due to hot lights or late guests. Whatever the case, a mystery arises and many story possibilities ensue.

Yve-Alain Bois contends *The Chromatic Diet* photographs are “much too neat to be genuine Calle” (36). Bois describes “genuine Calle” as “people . . . shot from the back, the framing is slapdash, the scale inconsistent, etc: all the signs of an amateur's job are there. . . . She treat[s] . . . photographs as sheer vehicles for information,” a form of note taking (36). Further, Calle does not always make the photographs she displays, but delegates others to do so. For instance, for *Twenty Years Later*, she asked her mother to hire a private investigator to follow and make photographs of her. For this and other

reasons, such as the very details Bois criticizes, Christine Macel terms Calle's work an "investigative narrative" (20). Her slapdash, unfocused, note-taking style of photography is embedded with the persona of a private eye trailing and taking pictures of people and things undetected until the results of the investigation are displayed in a gallery or book. In other words, Calle's typical form and style of photography are intentional because they help her tell stories about the process of investigating unfamiliar subject matter and, more broadly, the poetics and politics of voyeuristic picture taking. Her art form is reflexive about not/knowing and always seeing partially.

On Maria:

Some people called her a photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. (Auster 66-67)

#### TRACKING CALLE

Sophie Calle was born in France in 1953. Her parents divorced when she was three, and she grew up in Paris raised by her mother and seeing her father on Sundays. After graduating from high school, Calle started college, but soon dropped out to travel the world. She left Paris and did not return for seven years. While traveling, Calle worked temporary jobs, making just enough money to support her bohemian lifestyle. In Ardeche, France, she sold jam and honey at a market and, in the United States and Canada, she worked and traveled with a circus. In an interview with Christine Macel, Calle recalls that most of her "movements were dictated by decisions to do with leaving . . . and being with men" (76). Her life followed that of another.

While living with a photographer in California, Calle was given a 35mm camera, and she began to make photographs. When she returned to Paris in 1979, at age twenty-six, the city was no longer familiar to her. She had no friends, no partner, and no work,

and so she moved in with her father. To reacquaint herself with Paris, she watched and followed people doing what they did and, as such, what was familiar to her, namely, following the lead of others. According to Calle in a lecture she gave at the European Graduate School in 2004, she allowed others to determine her movement and eventually used her “encounters . . . as pretexts for her works” (Pacquement 15). She “acquir[ed] a curious attachment to the people rather than to the places they took her,” photographing her “unknowing accomplices” and keeping a detailed journal of their time together (Irmus 7, 6).

On Maria:

That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her career as an artist. (Auster 69)

In one of her first projects, *The Sleepers*, Calle arranged to have twenty-four strangers sleep in her bed in shifts of eight hours a piece from Sunday April 1, 1979, at 5 p.m. to Monday April 9, at 10 a.m. Each hour, she made photographs of the sleeping strangers. The husband of one of the sleepers just happened to be an art critic who asked to see Sophie’s photographs. Impressed, he wrote about her work and helped to advance her career.

According to Macel, Calle “has been developing her somewhat autobiographical factual/fictional narratives in an ongoing way since 1978 . . . redefining the notion of author, and even fiction itself, by juggling with every possible kind of interweave and interference” (17-18). She plays “authorial game[s],” and “like all authors” is a “stealer of stories” (Macel 25, 27). In part, the stories she steals are based on her unpredictable investigation of others. According to Hoffman, Calle’s gumshoe practices “ignite within [the viewer] the hope and dream that we, as individuals, will allow for an element of risk

to permeate our lives, and that the element of risk will lead us into experiences which we would not otherwise have or know” (4). For Calle, such experiences affect a shifting sense of self, the factual fictions of other people’s lives influencing the identity she creates and expresses through her photographic projects. While her projects seem to celebrate the fluidity and plurality of the postmodern subject, they simultaneously demonstrate the part that surveillance plays in gaining or making knowledge about the self and others. When on display, the projects detect Calle’s undetected viewing, acknowledging both the primacy and partiality of sight in the production of knowledge.

On Maria:

Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present . . . an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a bloodstain on the collar of a shirt. (Auster 70)

In *Leviathan*, Auster’s summation of Maria’s practice as “an archeology of the present” cites details from Calle’s project, *The Hotel*. For this experiment, Calle secured a job as a chambermaid for three weeks in a hotel in Venice, Italy. While the guests were out exploring the city, Calle would enter their hotel rooms to tidy up and rummage through their personal belongings. She kept a detailed log of each guest’s belongings, where they were kept in the room, and where they were placed from night to night. She also photographed the belongings, sometimes rearranging items so as to realize certain composition and storytelling effects. The completed piece consists of photographs, notes, and invented stories regarding the guests’ personalities as based on the items Calle found.

As an “archeology of the present,” Calle’s and Maria’s method infers the postmodern irony I mentioned above; namely, the generative potential of constantly inventing subjects (including one’s own) based on chance finds of partial evidence. In

postmodern and post-structural terms, Maria-Sophie's method is not errant as much as it highlights the reality of how personal et al., stories and identities are made. That is, they are incomplete, shifting, and partial as their "factual" elements are perceived and expressed differently by different viewers or tellers. "A torn stocking" can mean many things as can a meal of all white food. In a similar vein, Sophie's gumshoe tactics recall and comment on the empirical tradition of investigating unknown territories (lands, cultures, resources) so as to capture observable reality and thereby lay claim to knowledge and power. In so far as Calle's enactment of this tradition – e.g., her archeology of the present – is slapdash, inconsistent, and amateurish, it follows that her aim is less one of appropriation and more one of commentary regarding the slapdash and inconsistent nature of all empirical truth claims, in her case, as made through the photographic I/eye of the camera.

Calle's investigative method finds a parallel in Norman Denzin's notion of the ethnographer as a private eye, a concept that helps me further understand Calle's practices as a type of performance research. In *Interpretive Ethnography*, Denzin argues for a reflexive ethnographer who uses her many senses to research and express her ethnographic findings in multiple voiced ways. Denzin proposes "an ethnographic epistemology that goes beyond vision and mimesis" to "an evocative epistemology that performs" (xvii). He provides the ethnographer with several models of "experiential texts," such as the detective novel, to help the ethnographer create performative ethnographies (xx). Denzin writes:

The postmodern detective story is about the death of the last frontier and what we do about this death: There is no there to go to anymore. We are left, then, with tiny moral tales. These tales work outward from the local to the global, entangling the global in the local dealings that produce the violence that surrounds



us everywhere. . . . Local violence is always personal and political, moral and social. . . . [It] is about memory and its loss, its destruction, and the attempts to erase the past and control the future. . . . Here, inside time, the postmodern detective writers attempt to restore this lost memory, showing that it can never be erased because its traces always leave a stained white radiance. (195)

Denzin's private eye treats the culture she is studying as though it is a puzzle she is attempting to solve. Rather than prefabricated pieces that fit together nicely, the puzzle pieces the private eye ethnographer discovers derive from several puzzles, inconsistent in subject matter, time, space, and scale. For the private eye, "nothing is absolute" (166). Rather, what she finds is a mixture of fact and fiction told from multiple perspectives in diverse periods. To evoke the cultural puzzle in the research text and involve the reader in the co-production of it, Denzin recommends that the private eye ethnographer allow the inevitable contradictions, ambiguities, inconsistencies, and gaps to be a part of the text, thereby prompting the reader to participate in piecing the puzzle together. In a similar manner, Calle works to discover the complexity of cultural puzzles, enlisting the viewer in her activities of tracking, discovering and, if not solving, speculating as to the meanings of the mystery she finds.

A "postmodern detective," the private eye ethnographer acknowledges her personal and/as political investment in the mystery she undertakes, locating "the 'other'" in herself, rather than assuming an objective "investigative gaze" (Denzin 165, 174, 193). In many cases, she becomes the central subject of the work, discovering the part she played in "stir[ring] up the world" and how it changed her (Denzin 165). Similarly, in her projects, Calle constantly highlights why she is interested in the investigation, calling attention to the part she and her camera play in detecting others. Thereby, she creates an auto-ethnography that encourages her reader and viewer to do the same.

My discussion of the relationship between Calle's performance of investigative narratives and that of a private eye ethnographer applies to the bulk of Calle's work from which *The Chromatic Diet* deviates in so far as the photographs are so well composed in standard photographic and visual terms. Neither slapdash, inconsistent, nor amateurish, the photographs heed general expectations regarding the professional art and craft of photography, which is not to say Calle's other works are not well crafted in terms of the point of the investigation. It also is not to say that *The Chromatic Diet* is not an investigation too, although in visual form and convention it is a different kind of investigation, one concerned explicitly with formal aesthetics.

#### FORMAL AESTHETICS

Formal aesthetics are a perspective, discourse, and practice based on the elements of composition, visual composition in this case. The basic elements of visual composition are point, line, shape, color, and texture, and general attributes include the realization of "harmony, balance, contrast, and unity in variety" (Broudy quoted in Campbell 78). Advocates of formal aesthetics claim that the noted elements are at work in all nature and culture based systems because they are the visual manifestation of the physical world. E.g., color is the result of light rays absorbed by or reflected off material objects. In *Picture This: How Pictures Work*, Molly Bang provides a delightful and helpful introduction to the basic concepts and practices of formal aesthetics.

According to Bang, humans respond to the elements in primary and secondary ways or what she calls "natural constants" and "secondary associations" (74). Our primary response is instinctual or survival based. For instance, we tread carefully or stay put, perhaps asleep, when light rays are absent and it is dark because we might stumble

and fall down otherwise. We respond to sharp objects (angular lines and shapes) with care or caution because we have learned they can hurt us. Secondary responses are determined by culture and context, such as associating the dark and the color black with evil in western cultures and rebirth in some eastern cultures, or viewing sharp objects as militaristic or phallic or simply “male.” Since secondary associations are not “essential” to the elements, formalist critics tend to ignore them in their analyses of visual works whereas other critics, viewers, and artists who are concerned with formal aesthetics too may well consider both primary and secondary responses.

A line begins at a point in space and can extend in any direction. Lines can be curved, straight, horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Lines also can return on themselves and make a shape, such as a circle or square. Lines and shapes also can be inferred by separate points in space, the viewer imagining the lines that connect the points, such as is the case with a constellation of stars. In contrast to angular lines and shapes, we tend to associate curved lines and shapes – such as the maternal womb, the curve of an embrace, a group gathered in a circle – with safety, protection, and comfort. Our primary response to horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines and shapes is based on the physical force of gravity and how it affects things, particularly our bodies. A body is most stable when it is horizontal because it has given into gravity and cannot fall down. Likewise, horizontal lines and shapes seem secure because they cannot fall on us. Hence, we tend to associate horizontal lines, shapes, and compositions with stability, calm, tranquility, passivity, or immobility (Bang 42). Because vertical bodies, lines, and shapes “rebel against the earth’s gravity,” requiring immense energy to remain erect, we associate them with strength, power, action, upward growth and mobility (Bang 44). We also view them as

dangerous or in danger since they can fall down too. Diagonal bodies, lines, and shapes imply motion or are in motion because they are somewhere between repelling and giving into gravity (Bang 46). They are active and exciting, as is the case with the questioning tilt of a head, a diagonal cross on stage, a toddler's walk, or the branches of a tree.

Color is constituted by light rays absorbed by and reflecting off the surface of an object, mixed in space, and interpreted in the retina of the eye. In subtractive or pigment color mixing, the primary colors or hues are red, blue, and yellow, and in additive light ray mixing, the primary hues are red, blue, and green. By mixing two of the primary hues, secondary hues result, such as purple, green, and orange in pigment color mixing, and yellow, magenta, and cyan in additive light ray mixing. Tertiary hues result from combining the primary and secondary hues further. In additive light ray mixing, white is considered a color created by the presence (or mixing of) the full spectrum of light rays while black is considered a non-color resulting from the absence of light. In pigment color mixing, white is a non-color that results from the absence of pigment in or on an object, and hence the full spectrum of light rays is reflected, producing white light. Black is a color that results from combining primary hues, which then neutralizes the capacity of each hue to reflect (pure) light rays. The mix absorbs more so than reflects light. It is for this reason that black clothing is warmer than white or pure colored clothing.

Two color properties in addition to hue are value and intensity. Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a hue or mix of hues. In pigment mixing, yellow is the lightest brightest value, reflecting more light rays (resulting in more white light) than purple, which is the darkest value. In visual compositions, a small bit of yellow can claim as much if not more focus than a large mass of purple because of its reflective

capabilities. Intensity refers to the purity or saturation of a hue, which can be neutralized or grayed by adding other hues. For instance, yellow can be neutralized by adding purple, which then affects its value also.

Color theorists, such as Bang and also those of the Bauhaus School, claim humans have primary responses to certain colors, such as red, blue, yellow, white, and black, again based on corporeal functions and survival. For instance, all bodies are constituted by white bones, red blood and organs, (blue) water, and black waste, which bodies must emit to survive. In addition to bones, blood, water, and the emitting of waste, bodies also require (white) semen and eggs to regenerate, (yellow or white) sunlight or a (red) fire for warmth, and (variously colored) food to survive, the latter necessity suggesting that the primal claim may be qualified by context and culture. Whatever the case, “color’s effect on us is very strong,” and we respond to it in secondary if not primary ways before we respond to other picture elements (Bang 74). Red lips seduce us, a green meadow calms us, and yellow lemonade refreshes us.

Texture refers to the surface quality or “feel” of an object, which we experience and express in multisensory terms. Whether we see, hear, or touch a texture, it may range from soft to hard, smooth to rough, slick to grainy, shiny to dull. Again, our primary responses run along survival lines: we are more likely to feel safe in calm rather than rough waters. Since we have no teeth as babies, we require soft smooth foods, such as pureed carrots. However, once we gain our pearly whites, we may find such foods not only unnecessary but unappealing, associating them with the soft and dependent bodies of babies.

In composing lines, shapes, colors, and textures on the page or stage, the element of space arises. Spatial considerations include the amount of space an element claims, its placement and recurrence or not within the spatial frame, and its relationship to other elements, for example in terms of distance. Such considerations result in fundamental principles and properties of composition. The key principle is contrast or the differences between things in space. “Contrast enables us to see” and respond to the world in ways that help us survive and, also, make sense of and express the world (Bang 80). In the space of a rocky riverbed, the contrast between a predominance of sharp rocks and a few smooth stones help us determine a safe passage across the river. This simple example illustrates additional composition principles and properties, such as those of harmony and unity and variety. In this case, an analogous harmony of recurring stones unifies the composition and also allows for variety – e.g., in the placement, color value and intensity, and texture of the rocks and stones. Notably, while the smooth stones claim less space than do the sharp rocks, they also draw our focus not only for survival reasons, but because they provide the main contrast in the composition. They are the anomaly that sticks out. Recalling that six of the seven photographs in Calle’s *The Chromatic Diet* are monochromatic (one hue) compositions, it will be compelling to see if and how harmony and contrast, unity and variety figure in the patterning of elements.

Formal aesthetics articulates a concern for the basic elements of visual composition and, as Molly Bang, the Bauhaus, and Wilson teach us, such a concern does not equate necessarily to a disposition of formalism where the elements are ripped from their contexts, stripped of their citation of prior genres and styles, and dismissive toward the associations we might make in response to them. In formalism, these perspectives are

considered “aesthetically irrelevant” in the analysis of the autonomous art object (Barrett 124). Given the currency of politically conscious and instrumental art in our times, there is little wonder why formalism has fallen on hard times. Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that while all art can be analyzed in terms of form, an emphasis on the basic elements does indeed abstract the work, removing it from the particularities of everyday life. In his “Foreword” to Molly Bang’s *Picture This*, Rudolf Arnheim helps us understand the limitations and possibilities of abstraction and, by means of his references, helps me introduce the Bauhaus School and its experiments with visual form:

. . . the word *abstract* has a double meaning. It repels because it deprives us of the subject matter we consider indispensable for entertainment and instruction. By the same token, however, abstraction also leads us beyond the daily distractions, the practical particulars, to the elements from which they all derive. It adopts an idiom that has shaped our industrial revolution, the sober patterns of our engines, the geometrical simplicity of our most comforting furniture. Therefore there was protest but also exhilaration when, around 1910, the painter Wassily Kandinsky [a Bauhaus teacher] reduced his pictures of human experience to pure shapes and colors. Ever since, many good artists have shown us that we can find our lives reflected with new immediacy in their “abstractions.” (Arnheim ix; emphases in original)

## THE BAUHAUS

The Bauhaus or “house of building” was a post World War I interdisciplinary art school founded in Weimer, Germany, in 1919, by the architect Walter Gropius.<sup>1</sup> The school was dedicated to the experimentation and application of visual elements with the express aim of crafting aesthetically pleasing, functional, and affordable objects and buildings (Smock 3). In this way, the school followed the democratic lead of “Weimer culture,” hoping to “address a broad audience, directly and with constructive, economical

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Bauhaus” has history in the German *Bauhutten* lodges where, in the Middle Ages, masons and designers lived and worked together building medieval cathedrals (Hughes 192).

means” (Hughes 80). Due to early fits of Expressionism on the part of both students and faculty, the school failed to produce the building designs promised the Weimar community and, in 1925, the Bauhaus was forced to move to Dessau.

There, housed in an “all steel, concrete and glass” building of a constructivist bent (Hughes 199), the Bauhaus began to meet its pedagogical and aesthetic aims more consistently than it had in Weimar. While emphasizing architectural design, the school offered a diverse curriculum with courses in print-making, color theory, drawing, painting, photography, wood and stone sculpture, textile and furniture design, weaving, book binding, wall painting, urban development, and theatre, the latter dedicated to the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. Rather than individual projects, the students and faculty collaborated on large practical projects that benefited the school and community. They also hosted elaborate parties and festivals, each based on a theme pertinent to Bauhaus concerns, such as white, kite, lantern, and metallic themes. In a diary entry from February 1929, Oskar Schlemmer offers a wondrous sense of the metallic party:

“A children’s slide covered in white sheet metal led one past innumerable gleaming silver balls, lined up and sparkling under spotlights, right into the heart of the party, but first one had to pass a tinsmith’s shop. Here the need for every sort of metal could be filled; there were wrenches, tin cutters, can openers! A stairway, of which every step gave out a different tone, a true ‘backstairs joke’ . . . led to the tombola; here one could not, to be sure, win folding metal houses and ‘living machines,’ but things almost as good: steel chairs, nickel bowls, aluminum lamps, lovely cakes with a bit of glitter, and natural and unnatural art. But then on to the realm of true metallic pleasure. Bent sheets of foil glittered and reflected the dancers distortion, walls of silvered masks and their grotesque shadows, ceilings studded with gleaming brass fruit bowls, everywhere coloured metallic paper and the ever-beautiful Christmas-tree balls, some of enormous size. The Bauhaus band had dressed festively in coquettish silver top hats, and it launched into the music with great élan, rhythm and verve. On the stage, bolts of foolishness dropped from leaden tongues; there was an amusing ‘ladies dance’ performed by men, and a sketch in which, to be sure, metal was represented only by the spike of a helmet; these two numbers satisfied everyone’s desire to laugh and look . . . [A]nd thus for one night this house of work was transformed into the



‘high academy for creative form.’” (quoted in Whitford 278; emphasis in original)

Concluding with a playful poke at high art, Schlemmer’s account demonstrates how the Bauhaus inter-mingled the study of formal aesthetics with play and performance. While clearly crafted in terms of design principles of harmonic unity and variety, the party also allowed the faculty and students to test “metallic pleasure” on and through their bodies in space, resulting in unpredictable surprises, such as “lovely cakes with a bit of glitter,” grotesque as well as beautiful imagery, and “bolts of foolishness.” Thereby, the group experienced a “collective feeling of kindred spirits” who countered “ingrained customs by means of their “creative” play with form (Bax 30).

Unfortunately, such play in the Germany of the time could not last long and, in 1932, the school was forced to move to Berlin, whereupon it was dissolved by Hitler in 1933. Several faculty immigrated to the United States where they established Bauhaus schools. Anni and Josef Albers opened Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1936, and the New Bauhaus in Chicago was established by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in 1937.

The Bauhaus Stage Workshop was developed by the sculptor Oskar Schlemmer, who joined the school in 1921. Concerned with physical forms in three-dimensional space, Schlemmer’s extension of sculpture to the stage made perfect sense. Schlemmer’s aim was “to approach all . . . material from a basic and elementary standpoint” – i.e., a formal aesthetic standpoint – and, as such, the human body was understood and treated as equal rather than superior to space and the other materials and media used, such as costumes, props, projections, and sound (Schlemmer 81).

The result was a number of experiments or dances, as they are called often, where “the logical-intellectual content . . . of a work of literature” (Moholy-Nagy 52) was

replaced by “plots’ [that] consist of nothing more than the pure movement of forms, color, and light” (Schlemmer 88). For instance, in a piece called *Slat Dance*, long white slats are attached to the hinge points (the waist, shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees) of a performer dressed in black. Placed in a black stage space, the three-dimensional mass of the performer’s body disappears while the body’s lines of motion are accentuated by the white linear extensions. “By freeing its physical mechanics . . . the body . . . demonstrate[s] its own mathematics.” Thereby, it “bring[s] space to life by expressing it as a frame consisting of lines” (Schlemmer quoted in Whitford 246). The plot of *Slat Dance* then tells a story about a performer using her body to investigate the linear and angular properties of space and the body. For Schlemmer, the experiment taught him about the felt volume or stereometry of space. He writes:

“Space, like all architecture, is a form consisting of dimensions and proportion. It is an abstraction in the sense of being in opposition to, if not actually protesting against nature. . . . By means of the verticals described by the moving, dancing figure a stereometry of space comes into being . . . out of basic geometry, out of the pursuit of the vertical, horizontal, diagonal, circle and curve. If we imagine space to be filled with a soft plastic mass which registers the dancer’s movements as a sequence of negative forms, we should see from this example the direct relationship of the geometry of the plane to the stereometry of space.” (quoted in Whitford 246)

While I appreciate Schlemmer’s specific discoveries regarding space, I also appreciate how the abstraction of the human body in space results in lively unpredictable results and that performance is the means for realizing the same. Performance shows me how visual elements, such as white lines in a black space, perform. Further, by means of the performed abstractions, I find my life “reflected with a new immediacy” as Arnheim predicted. Since reading about *Slat Dance*, I often imagine how my movements shape and are shaped by the negative space I move through, as if I am leaving angular and

curved traces in the air. In fact, I would like to stage the same experiment with curved extensions to see what the alteration might tell me about the body's movement in space.

As in *Slat Dance*, most of the Bauhaus dances cast the performer's body in an abstract form by means of props such as slats, costumes, full-face masks, and movement. Generally, the alterations integrate rather than segregate the human body and space, showing how they act with and upon each other. They also conceal the individual traits of each performer while they reveal a social character of earnest investigation, a duplicitous attitude toward mechanization, and a good bit of whimsy very like that found in Schlemmer's account of the metallic party.

In one of the many Space Dances Schlemmer and his students staged, the social character noted above is evident and specified in terms of the primary colors of yellow, red, and blue. In addition to the details Schlemmer offers, imagine the performers in unitards that are padded so as to accentuate the curves of the upper front torso and the hips and buttocks. Imagine round, somewhat puffy body shapes:

“. . . a white square, filling the whole stage, has been outlined on the black stage floor, in which a circle and diagonals have been inserted. A fellow in yellow tights comes tripping on stage and traverses it, hopping hurriedly along the white lines. His head is inserted into a globular mask made of colored sheet metal. A second fellow in red tights, also masked, steps on the white lines and paces along them with generous steps. Finally, a third one, in blue tights calmly strides across the lines. The individual movements of the three encounter each other, interpenetrate, and dissolve in the most diverse figures. Three gaits of the human body – three characteristics of color – three characteristics of form, all of them inextricably linked: yellow, pointed hopping – red, full paces – blue, calm strides.” (Schlemmer quoted in Wingler 157).

As Lisa Flanagan points out, the piece provides a “basic illustration of the dimensional tensions of the stage space” activated by the three bodies and their different types and patterns of movement (125). The differences are determined by the color worn by each

performer and secondary associations common to it. Like a canary, yellow is sunny and joyful, marking the space in staccato bursts of color. Red is bold and confident, fully inscribing his lines of red on the space. Blue is tranquil and peaceful, like the ongoing flow of a river.

In the most complex of the Space Dances, the *Gesture Dance*, the three figures wear the same basic costumes and masks noted above, adding wire rimmed glasses and handle bar moustaches to the masks and short vests atop the puffed out unitards. A chair, stool, and bench are added to the scene and the performers sit or lie on them, executing “‘geometric’ gestures” indicative of “‘everyday actions’” and sounds. Yellow is “‘pointed sneezing,’” red is “‘broad laughing,’” and blue is “‘soft listening’” (Schlemmer quoted in Goldberg 104). The piece recalls Schlemmer’s *Figural Cabinet I* and *Triadic Ballet* where he draws extensively on cabaret conventions and mechanical and human figurines. The typification of the characters (as intellects or upper crust elites) is reminiscent of the social types found in *Figural Cabinet I*, such as the “‘Better Class Citizen,’” the “‘Questionable One’” and “‘Miss Rosy Red’” (Schlemmer quoted in Goldberg 99), and they anticipate Robert Wilson’s use of cultural character types and icons. Further, the piece demonstrates the “‘balance of opposites,’ of abstract concepts and emotional impulses” Schlemmer attributed to *Triadic Ballet* (Schlemmer quoted in Goldberg 112), and, once again, we find at work in Wilson’s operas. In other words, the piece demonstrates that the most minimal of details (glasses, moustache, vest, gesture, sound) resonates with multiple citations and associations restored through the creative play with elementary forms.

## THE THEATRE OF IMAGES

As termed by Bonnie Marranca, Theatre of Images was an avant-garde movement of the 1960s and 1970s that favored a style of theatre where visual and acoustic imagery prevailed over a coherent dramatic plot (Marranca ix). Published in 1977, Marranca's study, *The Theatre of Images*, highlights the work of Lee Breuer, Richard Foreman, and Robert Wilson, mentions the contributions of such companies as The Living Theatre and The San Francisco Mime Troupe, and anticipates the continued popularity of the genre in experimental circles of theatre and performance today. Whether past or present, a theatre of images attempts to create stage pictures that highlight their highly crafted painterly or sculptural qualities as compared to creating a verisimilitude and largely supportive *mise-en-scene* common to popular realistic theatre (Marranca x; Goldberg 184). A montage or collage of diverse, seemingly arbitrary image fragments also is characteristic of the genre as is the treatment of performers as media, no more or less important than the other stage elements. Since the common causal relationship between images is absent or estranged by the composition, a theatre of images often creates fictive realities that are "dream-like" and "surreal" (Counsell 183, 185). As a result, the audience is prompted to draw on "alternative modes of perception" (Marranca x), becoming active co-producers of the experience and its meanings. Arguably, and recalling Calle's investigative narratives, the same prompt encourages viewers to realize, if not the primacy, the partiality of sight in how we relate to and make sense of the world.

A student of architecture and painting, Robert Wilson formed his theatre company, the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds, in New York City in 1968. The company gained international recognition and success fairly quickly, producing several plays on

main stages in New York and abroad. Wilson named the group in honor of a dance teacher with whom he had studied as a teen. Through the age of seventeen, Wilson had suffered from a debilitating speech impediment, which Byrd Hoffman helped him address through physical training and relaxation techniques.

Hoffman's influence on Wilson's work is evident in two related ways. First, Wilson often collaborates with individuals who are differently challenged as regards to their sensory and/or cognitive relationship to the world. For the 1970 piece titled *Deafman Glance*, for instance, Wilson worked with the painter Raymond Andrews who is deaf and without speech. In addition to his "extraordinary sense of colour and spatial composition," Andrews contributed "a network of images . . . unique to his imagination" (Counsell 182). Counsell describes the assembly of fairytale figures, "silver-painted nudes . . . a man swathed in bandages and walking on crutches," all weaving "slowly through a forest," the "tip of a pyramid" visible upstage and, in the foreground, Byrd in a frog costume presiding over a dinner table (182).

In several other projects, Wilson collaborated with Christopher Knowles, a teenager with autism. As with Andrews, Wilson felt that Knowles's particular relationship to the world offered "an alternative, positive mode" for expressing it, and he included Knowles and the poetry he wrote in many of his pieces (Marranca xii). As Counsell describes, Knowles "used words primarily as material phenomena – sounds or shapes on paper – arranging them to form audial and/or visual patterns" (191). In part, Wilson's rationale and the on stage effect of Knowles's poetry appear similar to how and why the Bauhaus Stage Workshop composed language and sound as they did. In addition to using percussive instruments to beat out basic rhythms, the Bauhaus performers often

transformed words into “phonetic sound relationships . . . fragmenting the word into . . . disjointed vowels and consonants” (Moholy-Nagy 52). While Knowles’s language patterns may be more complex than those of the Bauhaus, the point in estranging language for an audience seems similar, namely, to prompt “pleasure in shaping and producing” abstract language “without asking questions about use or uselessness, sense or nonsense, good or bad” (Schlemmer 82).

Byrd also influenced Wilson as regards to how art and creative processes can be therapeutic, an understanding Wilson enacts in ways that connect his work to concepts and practices of surrealism. Specifically, Wilson believes that we perceive and process the world through interdependent exterior and interior screens. Our exterior screen is a place of socially shared associations and meanings, and our interior screen is a site where our personal experiences, associations, and imagination reign (Counsell 180). Due to the bombardment of commercial imagery through the exterior screen, Wilson feels “more and more people are turning into themselves” as “a means of survival” (quoted in Counsell 180). Like the surrealists, then, Wilson attempts to reunite the exterior and interior screens, using the social space of the theatre to stage socially shared imagery in ways that “elude fixed, given meanings and public logics” (Counsell 180). As a result, the viewer is encouraged to call on her inner screen to experience or make sense of the imagery, associating the two screens without surrendering to the ideological intentions of exterior screen imagery.

In addition to the content choices I mentioned above, Wilson realizes his aims by using iconic figures, objects, and places. Space ships, dinosaurs, a train, cowboys and Indians, women with babies, an elderly couple, Stalin, Lincoln, Einstein, and Freud,

Hamlet, Pegasus, and Alice's white rabbit, a star studded sky, beach, cave, forest, drawing room, and housing project are but a few of the icons he has integrated in his pieces. Likewise, Wilson uses "linguistic fragments" drawn from commercials, films, literary works, overheard conversations, and remembered dreams (Counsell 192).

Informed by his training in the visual arts, his collaboration with diverse artists, and his aims of creating persuasive sur-realities, Wilson crafts formal elements with such meticulous and elaborate care that his work has been aligned with that of Richard Wagner and his all encompassing *Gesamtkunstwerk* or "total work" of art. Like Wagner, Wilson creates spectacular illusions. The result, according to Colin Counsell, is an unintentional message that perpetuates a national (fast becoming global) mythos. Calling on Debord's essay, "Society of the Spectacle," Counsell claims that Wilson's productions uphold the ideology of late consumer capitalism, alienating the subject from reality (i.e., from meaning, for Counsell) by turning all representations into commodities that constantly shift in meaning given the whims of the individual producer and consumer. In short, Wilson's theatre of images is no better than a mall where an accumulation of product imagery is made available for our personalized consumption of it (Counsell 204-205). However, in his draw on Debord, Counsell fails to mention Debord's notion that spectacle can answer spectacle, and I believe Wilson does just that by how he composes his imagery.

Just as Calle acknowledges and queries her voyeuristic practices or, more broadly, the primacy and partiality of sight, so too does Wilson by calling attention to the act of seeing and making it difficult. First, many of his pieces test his audience's endurance, running longer than the conventional two hour limit, sometimes twelve hours and even



days. Second, unlike the commercial pitch of imagery, Wilson does not display his imagery in clear, coherent packaging. The accumulation of diverse imagery in montage and collage frames requires viewers to choose what to focus on and when, understanding (or learning over the course of the performance) that they will not have the opportunity to rewind, select, and see again. Hence, the partiality of sight is experienced by the viewer. Further, once a viewer selects a focus, however temporary, deciphering the content is not immediate due to the surprising more so than relevant juxtaposition of imagery in the frame. Third, like Meyerhold, Wilson alters norms of visual perspective constantly, thereby activating our eyes and challenging how we see. In *The King of Spain*, for instance, the gigantic legs of a mechanical cat walked across the stage, minimizing for a moment the scale of the performers and theatrical space. In *Einstein on the Beach*, a large train crossed the stage in one scene and, in another, reappeared significantly smaller. While, in realistic terms, the alteration captured how a moving object appears smaller as it recedes in space over time, it also highlighted the fact that the object does not become smaller at all; it is an illusion, an accident of seeing in real life and in realistic terms. Fourth, comparable to the operations of a miniature, Wilson often isolates an object, body part or movement, creating the effect of a close up as focus is drawn to a single detail on stage, such as a moving finger or blinking eye. To a similar effect, frozen tableaux and slow motion movement encourage the audience to slow down too and concentrate on the details.

Like Schlemmer and also Calle, then, Wilson explores the relationship between bodies, objects, and/in space so as to experiment with and address contemporary issues of perception, sight, and seeing. While Wilson's aesthetic is one of accumulation rather

than elimination, as is the case with the Bauhaus, the elements of visual form discipline and also resonate with excess. In Wilson's case, it is an excess of visual imagery, visual trickery, and the unseen associations he encourages his audiences to create.

### FOOD DANCE: A SPECTACULAR OPERA IN SEVEN ACTS

Below, I pen a generative performance in response to Calle's *The Chromatic Diet*, drawing on my discussions of Calle's "investigative narratives" as Macel terms them, formal aesthetics, and the concepts and practices of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds. My aim is to imply more so than state how *The Chromatic Diet* performs and what sort of investigation it crafts and encourages in the viewer. Understanding that Calle generated *The Chromatic Diet* in response to Auster's novel, that Schlemmer encourages performance investigations, and that Wilson aims to spark the interior screen of his viewers, I believe such a response is warranted.

#### **ACT I** **MONDAY: ORANGE**

##### **Menus Imposed:**

<u>Auster</u>	<u>Calle</u>	<u>Kitchens</u>
<i>Carrots</i>	<i>A layer of pureed carrots</i>	<i>Formalism</i>
<i>Cantaloupe</i>	<i>Six cantaloupe crescents</i>	<i>Light</i>
<i>Boiled shrimp</i>	<i>Six prawns atop puree</i>	<i>Aerial view</i>
[Orange juice]	<i>Orange juice</i>	<i>Stuck in a pigeonhole</i>

##### **Characters:**

Figure  
Nude Figure

House lights fade to black. The audience stops talking. They sit still and fix their eyes on the proscenium stage in front of them.

Dvorák's *New World Symphony* fades in.

Cast from above, a white light rises slowly to define a 12x16' rectangle on the bare floor of the stage C.<sup>2</sup> Hold for 5 minutes.

Music fades out slowly. Hold for 2 minutes.

Lights fade to black slowly. Hold for 1 minute.

In black for a half minute: a loud, slow, continuous ripping sound.

Then silence for 1 minute.

Cast from above, an orange light rises slowly to define a 6x6' square on the bare floor of the stage C. Hold for 3 minutes.

**Figure**, dressed in neutralized orange overalls, enters UL. Figure carries a black box with both hands. Figure X on a horizontal line to UC, makes a sharp turn, and X on a vertical line to just above the orange C square where the Figure puts the box on the floor.

**Figure** uses angular movements to open the box and remove a stack of square orange papers, an orange mixing bowl, black scissors, and a role of white duct tape. Figure places the items in a horizontal line across the center of the orange C square. Figure removes a black boom box from the box and places it just UC of the orange C square.

**Figure** picks up the empty black box and X UC on a vertical line. Figure makes a sharp turn, and X UL on a horizontal line. Figure exits UL. Hold for a half minute.

**Figure** enters UL without the black box. Figure X UC on a horizontal line, makes a sharp turn, and X on a vertical line to just above the orange C square.

**Figure** bends from the waist and presses “play” on the boom box. Dvořák's *New World Symphony* fades in. The sound quality is faint and tinny.

Cast from above, a white light rises slowly to define the 12x16' rectangle on the floor of the stage C.

**Figure** X to the center of the orange C square and picks up the duct tape. Figure X on a vertical line to the UC edge of the white rectangle, makes a sharp turn, and X on a horizontal line to the UR corner of the white rectangle. Figure bends from the waist and

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<sup>2</sup> In “Food Dance,” I use blocking shorthand to indicate positions and movement on stage, which are determined by the performer’s perspective looking at the audience. UR refers to the up right part of the stage; UC to upstage center; UL to the up left part; CR to the center right part; C to center stage; CL to the center left part; DR to the down right part; DC to downstage center; and DL to the down left part of the stage. X indicates the performer should cross or move or is crossing or moving from one position on stage to another.

pulls the edge of the tape from the roll. The tape makes a ripping sound. Figure attaches the tape to the floor at the UR corner and, in clockwise motion, proceeds to outline all edges of the white rectangle with the white tape.

**Figure** turns full front at the UR corner of the white rectangle. Holding the duct tape in the right hand, Figure bends both elbows, thereby raising both arms slowly, as if holding a box. Figure pauses and then lowers both arms. Figure continues to repeat this movement.

**Nude Figure** enters CR walking at a moderate pace, in profile, and with a slight smile. Nude Figure X on a horizontal line to and through the orange C square, and exits CL. Nude Figure does not hold a watering can in her right hand.

**Figure** ceases the repetitive arm movements. Figure X to the UC point of the white rectangle, makes a sharp turn, and X to the center of the orange C square. During Figure's X, the white rectangle fades out.

**Figure** uses angular movements to divide the stack of square orange papers into six piles according to color and texture.

The first stack contains thick orange paper.

The second stack contains thin orange paper.

The third stack contains thin shiny paper in a gold amber tint.

The fourth stack contains thin handmade paper in a burnt orange shade.

The fifth stack contains thin paper of matte consistency in a burnt orange shade.

The sixth stack contains ribbed paper in a medium amber shade.

**Figure** uses angular movements to place the orange mixing bowl upside down on a piece of thick orange paper. Figure pulls an orange pencil (e.g., Ticonderoga) from the front pocket of the neutralized orange overalls and uses it to trace a line around the orange bowl. Figure cuts out the **large thick orange paper circle** with the black scissors.

**Figure** places the orange mixing bowl right side up on another piece of thick orange paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the orange bowl. Figure cuts out the **medium sized thick orange paper circle** with the black scissors.

**Figure** places the medium sized thick orange paper circle on a piece of thin orange paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the paper circle. Figure cuts inside the outline with the black scissors, making a **small thin orange paper circle**.

**Figure** places the small thin orange paper circle on a piece of thin shiny orange paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the paper circle. Figure cuts inside the outline with the black scissors, making a **thin shiny orange paper circle** that is one half inch smaller than the small thin orange paper circle.

**Figure** places the medium-sized thick orange paper circle on 6 pieces of thin shiny orange paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the paper circle.

Figure cuts out the 6 medium sized circles. Figure takes each circle and cuts through it on a curve, making **6 crescent shapes of thin shiny orange paper**.

**Figure** places the orange mixing bowl upside down on a piece of thin orange handmade paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the orange bowl. Figure cuts a curvy edge 1” inside the outline with the black scissors, making a **thin orange handmade paper circle that is not uniform**.

**Figure** folds a piece of **thin orange paper of matte consistency into a 4x8” rectangle**.

**Figure** cuts a piece of **ribbed orange paper into 3 6x1” rectangles**.

**Figure** places the small thin shiny orange paper circle on 6 pieces of ribbed orange paper. Figure uses the orange pencil to trace a line around the paper circle. Figure cuts out the circles. Figure takes each circle and cuts through it on a curve, making **6 crescent shapes of ribbed orange paper**.

Cast from above, a white light rises slowly to define the 12x16’ rectangle on the floor of the stage C.

**Figure** X UC on a vertical line, makes a sharp turn, and X UL on a horizontal line. Figure exits UL. Figure immediately reenters with the black box held in both hands. Figure X UC on a horizontal line, makes a sharp turn, and X on a vertical line to the center of the orange C square where the figure puts the box on the floor.

**Figure** uses angular movements to put the leftover scraps of orange paper, the orange mixing bowl, the black scissors, and the role of white duct tape into the black box.

**Figure** picks up the box with both hands and X UC on a vertical line, makes a sharp turn, and X UL on a horizontal line. Figure exits UL. Hold for a half minute.

**Figure** enters UL without the black box. Figure X UC on a horizontal line, makes a sharp turn, and X on a vertical line to the UC point of the white rectangle. Figure makes a sharp turn and X on a horizontal line to the UR corner of the white rectangle where Figure turns full front.

**Figure** bends both elbows, thereby raising both arms slowly, as if holding a box. Figure pauses and then lowers both arms. Figure continues to repeat this movement.

**Nude Figure** enters CL walking at a moderate pace, in profile, and with a slight smile. Nude Figure X on a horizontal line to and through the orange C square, and exits CR. Nude figure does not hold a watering can in her right hand.

**Figure** ceases the repetitive arm movements. Figure X to the UC point of the white rectangle, makes a sharp turn, and X to the center of the orange C square. During Figure’s X, the white rectangle fades out.

**Figure** uses angular movement to:

Place the **large thick orange paper circle DR** in the orange C square.

Place the **medium thick orange paper circle UL** of the large thick orange paper circle.

Place the **small thin orange paper circle UC** of the large thick orange paper circle.

Place the **small thin shiny paper circle of a gold amber tint** inside the small thin orange paper circle.

Place the **6 thin shiny paper crescents of a gold amber tint** in a row, tips facing upward, atop the medium thick orange paper circle.

Place the **thin handmade paper circle of burnt orange and imperfect curves** atop the large thick orange paper circle.

Place the **thin matte paper rectangle of burnt orange** to the far L of the large thick orange paper circle.

Place the **3 ribbed paper rectangles of a medium amber shade** directly to the R, to the L, and above the large thick orange paper circle, the first 2 rectangles standing vertically, the 3<sup>rd</sup> horizontally.

Place the **6 ribbed orange paper crescents of a medium amber shade** in a circle atop the thin handmade paper circle of burnt orange and imperfect curves.

**Figure** stands DC just in front of the orange C square, facing upstage.

Cast from above, a white light rises slowly to define the 12x16' rectangle that frames the orange C square that frames the orange colored circles, crescents, and rectangles contained within. Hold for a half minute.

**Figure** X to the boom box adhering to the edges of the orange C square. Figure bends from the waist and presses "stop" on the boom box. Figure picks up the boom box with both hands and X UC on a vertical line, makes a sharp turn, and X UL on a horizontal line. Figure exits UL.

Over the course of 2 minutes, the light that makes the orange C square intensifies, while the light that makes the white framing rectangle fades to black.

The orange C square glows in the dark.

Within it, the **small shiny circle of a gold amber tint** and the **6 shiny crescents of a gold amber tint** reflect the most light, the upward facing tips of the crescents seeming to smile.

The orange light bumps to black.

**ACT II**  
**TUESDAY: RED**

**Menu Imposed:**

Auster

*Steak tartare*

*Tomatoes*

*Persimmons*

Calle

*With cherry halves*

*And red pepper slivers*

*Pomegranate seeds*

*A glass of red wine*

Kitchens

*Formal aesthetics*

*Felt volume*

*Characters of form*

*Earnest investigation*

Characters:

Performer A & Performer B

Performer C & Performer D

Performer E & Performer F

Swarm of 20 Performers

Three Performers with Sticks

A Nude or Naked Woman

Bright lights rise.

**Performers A & B** enter CR. Performer A is dressed in a bold red padded unitard and leads with long proud paces. Performer B is dressed in a pink padded unitard and shadows Performer A, taking two short steps to every one of Performer A's long steps.

**Performer A** stops on the seventh step and turns with a large, swooping motion to watch

**Performer B** who taps out a three step shuffle (right, left, right/left, right, left) and then skips merrily in place waving her arms in the air.

**Performer A** laughs loudly and broadly: "HA HA HA HA HA HA"

**Performers A & B** X to C where they adjust their walk, stop, shuffle, and laugh to a clockwise pattern that indicates a large square. Each stop, shuffle, and laugh occurs at a corner of the square.

**Performer B** makes a loud slurping sound irregularly.

**Performers A & B** repeat the noted action until the end of the act.

**Performers C & D** enter CL. They are dressed in bold red padded unitards with upside down red mixing bowls on their heads. Performer C's mixing bowl is much larger than Performer D's.

**Performers C & D** X to C with long proud paces. They stand full front 2' apart in the center of the square made by Performers A & B.

**Performers C & D** chatter to no one in particular.

**Performers C & D** crouch *very* slowly to the floor in unison. They sit on the floor and extend their legs straight out in front of them. They take the bowls off their heads and place them in their laps. They lower their torsos to the floor *very* slowly, the bowls on their stomachs. They lie prone on the floor without moving for 2 minutes save for the bowls that rise up and down as the performers inhale and exhale.

**Performers C & D** raise their torsos *very* slowly, replace the bowls on their heads, and stand up facing the audience full front.

**Performers C & D** chatter to no one in particular. Then, they crouch *very* slowly to the floor in unison, repeating the noted action until the end of the act.

**Swarm of 20 Performers** enter from DL. They are dressed in dark red padded unitards and large red mouth-masks that are shaped like a crescent or a smile. In their right hands are sparkling red pom-poms, which they hold straight up in the air.

**The Swarm** swarms as a mob around the stage in a circular pattern. Occasionally, they stop abruptly and shake their pom-poms furiously. Then, just as abruptly, they stop shaking their pom-poms and swarm again. Occasionally, the swarm swarms offstage for a few beats and then re-enters, swarming, stopping, shaking their pom-poms furiously, and swarming again. They repeat the noted action until the end of the act.

**Three Performers with Sticks** and dressed in pink padded unitards enter DR. With a mincing gait like that of Performer B, they X from DR to UL passing through the center of the square made by Performers A & B and over the bodies of Performers C & D.

**Three Performers with Sticks** climb atop a 6' platform UL and, in profile, conduct a round-robin competition of stick fighting.

For 10 minutes:

**Performers A & B** (in red and pink) walk, stop, shuffle, laugh, and slurp in a square pattern C.

**Performers C & D** (in red) slowly crouch, lay prone, breathe, and then rise to chatter C.

**The Swarm** (in dark red) swarms, stops, and shakes their pom-poms in a circular mob.

**Three Performers** (in pink) **with Sticks** stick fight mincingly on a raised platform UL.



**Performers E & F** in bold red padded unitards enter UR and X quickly to DC. They stand full front, pause, and then turn full back to face UC. They hold for 1 minute.

**Performers E & F** X slowly into the square made by Performers A & B. They sit cross legged, facing full front, Performer E in front of Performer C and Performer F in front of Performers D.

**Performer E** yells: “Red!”

**All performers** except **Performer E & F** freeze in place for 1 minute.

**Performer E** extends her forearms straight out, palms up, and elbows bent at her sides. She raises her hands to her shoulders quickly and then slowly returns them to their initial position. She repeats the noted actions until the end of the act.

**Performer F** extends her forearms straight out, palms up, and elbows bent at her sides. She raises her hands to her shoulders slowly and then quickly returns them to their initial position. She repeats the noted actions until the end of the act.

**A Nude or Naked Woman** enters CR. She wears red high heels and holds a large blue ball in her right hand. In profile and with a slight smile, the nude or naked woman X through the C square bouncing the blue ball. She exits CL.

**All performers** unfreeze and continue their respective actions.

Lights fade to black on a 10 count.

### **ACT III**

#### **WEDNESDAY: WHITE**

##### **Menu Imposed:**

<u>Auster</u>	<u>Calle</u>	<u>Kitchens</u>
<i>Flounder</i>	<i>Filet</i>	<i>Festival</i>
<i>Potatoes</i>	<i>Rice instead</i>	<i>White pleasure</i>
<i>Fromage blanc</i>	<i>A layer of cottage cheese</i>	<i>White diet</i>
	<i>Milk</i>	<i>Duplicity &amp; whimsy</i>

##### **Characters:**

- Hostesses in Black
- White Woman
- Performers C & D from Tuesday
- Two Nude and Naked Women
- Woman in White Layers
- Performers Knife, Fork & Spoon
- Five Rice Brothers
- Miss Flounder

The entire theatre is a white wonderland, all aspects covered in various textures of white paper and cloth. White lanterns and twinkle lights, snowflakes and icicles hang from the ceiling at various heights. Bodies and body parts sculpted from white rice rest in audience seats here and there, and white noise plays softly in the background.

**Hostesses in Black** puffy unitards greet the guests with white trays that hold shot glasses of Kahlua and milk and vanilla cupcakes decorated with edible glitter and images of bones, semen, and eggs. Inside each cupcake is a chocolate chip or two.

Inscribed in white on the Hostesses' black unitards are phrases such as:

Thin and Tight	Eager for Instruction	Ready and Willing
Bulimia Saved Me	Always on Display	I Ate Your Eating Disorder
In Proper Discipline	Cooking is Creative	Dis-favor Thinness
Striving for the Real in the World of the Artificial		

Upon reading the last phrase, the on stage lights intensify, revealing a sparkling white ladder placed C.

**White Woman** poses beneath the ladder. She is dressed in a black unitard and her face is powdered white. Her hair is piled high on her head and powdered inconsistently, with a few ringlets falling on either shoulder. Her body faces DL as she looks over her right shoulder at the audience through two rungs of the ladder.

Long silence. Snow falls. 10 minutes pass.

**Performers C & D from Tuesday** enter through the house, carrying their red bowls and sporting black mustaches and wire-rim glasses. They X on stage to C and proceed to smear cottage cheese along the limb and torso lines of the black clad White Woman who remains still beneath the ladder.

**Performers C & D** exit UL.

White lights fade as black lights rise. The latter illuminate the lines of the white ladder and the cottage cheesed body lines and powdered face and hair of the black clad White Woman.

**White Woman** performs a puppet dance of slow jerky movements. Snow falls. 5 minutes pass.

**Two Nude and Naked Women** enter UR with a long piece of crisp white material. One woman remains UR while the other X behind the ladder to CL, the material stretched between them. The women swoop the fabric up and down in the air. It makes a whipping, whirring sound.

**White Woman** continues to dance. Snow falls. 3 minutes pass. White lights intensify.

**Woman in White Layers** and layers of fabric enters UL. She holds a large blue ball in her right hand. At a moderate pace, in profile, and with a slight smile, she X on a horizontal line bouncing the blue ball until she exits UR.

**White Woman** continues to dance. Snow falls. 1 minute passes.

A huge cow udder descends slowly from the flies above the DS area. Strips of sparkling white fabric and paper streamers hang down from the teats onto the stage.

**Performers Knife, Fork & Spoon** garbed in white unitards enter from DL, CR, and UC respectively.

**Performer Knife** X DC with a stiff spine in a slow patient shuffle.

**Performer Fork** X DC with hitches and jerks in an angular pattern.

**Performer Spoon** X DC swiftly in swooping motions.

**Performers Knife, Fork & Spoon** meet and dance together, trading partners in the strips of fabric and paper streamers.

**Five Rice Brothers** rise from their seats in the house, (re)assemble their parts, and, grabbing the hands of guests, X on stage to join the dance.

**Miss Flounder**, a guest waylaid by toxicity on her way to the theatre, arrives. Although worn a bit thin by her trials, she flops on stage anyway, eager to join the dancing and merriment.

**White Woman** dances too, her “traces” leaving a “stained” black “radiance” (from Denzin 195).

Snow falls. Lights fade.

## ACT IV

### THURSDAY: GREEN

#### Menu Imposed:

Auster

*Cucumber*

*Broccoli*

*Spinach*

Calle

*Sliced and mixed with...*

*In clusters*

*Surrounding basil pasta*

*Grapes and kiwi*

*Mint cordial*

Kitchens

*Kitchen discipline*

*& excess*

*Performing an icon*

*or how to become a*

*character out of*

*(or is it in?) a novel*

#### Characters:

Holly Homemaker

Holly Homemaker Chorus

Frog

Sounds of chopping and blending fade in and continue throughout the act. A green wash rises slowly to reveal a bare stage.

**Holly Homemaker** enters UR and X C. She wears a green cocktail dress, sunglasses, and an apron imprinted with the image of the “We Can Do It!” woman. Over her shoulder she carries a large roll of green paper.

A voiceover fades in:

Etiquette texts generally use a “teacher/student model of instruction” in which the student is inscribed as “submissive” and “eager for instruction,” a malleable plastic “ready and willing” to learn discipline from the absent yet stern “female etiquette authority” (Foster-Dixon 80-1). Proper table settings for dinner parties are always covered in etiquette texts as is the reminder that “one is always on display” at such occasions. Nevertheless, the authority tells us, we should “always strive . . . for the real in the world of the artificial” (Foster-Dixon 86). Stabilize the plastic.

The voiceover repeats the message four times, increasing in pace and rising in pitch with each repetition.

**Holly Homemaker** mouths the message absently (she’s heard it before) as she allows the green paper to unroll from her position C to DS. Holly raises her edge of the paper so that the audience can see what is written on it. It appears to be a list scrawled in large black letters. The list reads:

TO DO:  
CUC  
BROC  
SPIN  
KI  
APRON  
BORN T’SHOP  
FORCED T’COOK  
FSH MINT  
BAS PAS  
GRN PLASTIC UT  
WHIS  
PIC IN HEAD  
RISK CITE  
AUTO EXPRESS

**Holly Homemaker** pulls the list toward her, tossing it bit by bit over her shoulder. At the end of the list, Holly finds herself buried in a large pile of green TO DO’s.

The stage is still for 2 minutes.





### **Frame One**

Bright light rises within a frame hung high just UL of C. Inside the frame is a bright yellow piñata shaped like a canary. Different colored streamers hang from the piñata, stirred by a gentle breeze. Birds chirp. After a half minute, the lights fade to black.

### **Frame Two**

Rosy warm lights rise within a frame placed DR on the floor. Inside the frame is an **Old Woman** wrapped in a worn yellow afghan sitting on a stump holding a plate of cheesecake. There is a lit birthday candle in the cheesecake, and the Old Woman is smiling.

Frame One fades in. The two frames hold for a half minute. Frame One fades out, followed slowly by Frame Two.

### **Frame Three**

Amber lights rise within a frame placed 5' above the stage in the UR area. The view is foggy although one can make out a **Hunter** standing on the upper rung of a ladder. The Hunter is reaching for and picking bananas located in the darkness outside the frame. The Hunter puts the bananas in a sack strapped to his back although he stops to eat a few too, dropping the peels to the floor in the darkness outside the frame.

From Frame One comes the sound of chirping birds. Then silence, save for the plop of a banana peel or two on the floor. Lights dim but do not go out completely in Frame Three as Frame Four takes focus.

### **Frame Four**

A crackly yellowed B&W film fades in to indicate Frame Four, which is positioned DL of C. The film shows the classic 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 countdown and bulls-eye before it cuts to an image of **Two Gumshoes** in trench coats standing in front of a chalkboard in an old worn office. The Gumshoes are smoking cigarettes and, so it appears, trying to figure out the mystery of a phrase written on the chalkboard. It reads, "Do not play with food." The phrase is surrounded by an entangled network of lines, photographs, and scrawled notes that the Gumshoes add to, delete, and switch around nervously. Occasionally, one of the Gumshoes erases "not" in the key phrase, stands back to look at the new phrase, and then re-instates the "not."

Frame Three lights rise to full to show the Hunter eating an entire banana *very* slowly. As the Hunter drops the peel to the floor, lights bump to black in Frame Three and dim to low in Frame Four.

### **Frame Five**

Rosy lights rise within a frame placed C-CR. The frame is filled with a cobbled-together yellow lemonade stand. Inside the stand is a **Young Girl** in a yellow tutu juggling potatoes and singing "You Are My Sunshine" a little off tune.

Once Frame Five is established, Frame Four rises to full and the two frames inter-play for a while, after which Frame One rises to full. Frame Four fades out and Frame Five dims. At this point, then, the canary piñata is featured and the girl in the lemonade stand claims a secondary focus.

Also AT THIS POINT, before the Archeologist of the Present appears, it is up to the reader to decide which frames should be featured in what sort of sequence. Once you have orchestrated the frames and sequence in your mind's eye or, if you prefer, on a scrap of paper, you may continue reading. . . .

Once the reader has decided the frames and sequence she or he would like to feature, the **Archeologist of the Present** has indeed shown up!

## ACT VI SATURDAY: PINK

### Menu Imposed:

<u>Auster</u>	<u>Calle</u>	<u>Kitchens</u>
<i>No color</i>	<i>Ham</i>	<i>Close up</i>
<i>prescribed</i>	<i>Taramasalata</i>	<i>Spectacle</i>
	<i>Strawberry ice cream</i>	<i>answers</i>
	<i>Rose wine from Provence</i>	<i>spectacle</i>

### Characters:

Archeologist of the Present  
Holly Homemaker Machine  
Young Girl in Yellow Tutu  
Ham Hock  
Hunter  
Woman in Overalls

A white spotlight rises on a pink piggy bank at C.

A distant-sounding voiceover fades in:

The first aerial photography was taken by Nadar (Gaspard-Felix Tournachonin) in 1856. He went up in a hot air balloon he called "The Giant" and took photographs of the landscape from above. The "birds-eye view of nature . . . was an extreme and rare curiosity" at this time in history (Hughes 14).

A few minutes pass. Then, one by one, pink spotlights bump up to dot the stage.

**Archeologist of the Present** enters UL. Attached to a string around her neck is a large red cardboard camera that she uses variously as a mask, spyglass, and camera. She moves from pink spot to pink spot, investigating each thoroughly.



**Holly Homemaker Machine** follows her, gumshoeing her every move from the shadows just outside the spots of light.

**Archeologist of the Present** reports her findings with a mysterious: “Fishy.”

**Young Girl in Yellow Tutu** enters UR and dances a series of moving pirouettes from UR to DL where she exits. She re-appears UR and repeats the action again and again until otherwise noted.

**Archeologist of the Present** and **Holly Homemaker Machine** eventually exit DL.

**Ham Hock**, a large pink . . . well . . . ham hock, enters UR and runs across the stage to exit UL.

**Archeologist of the Present** enters UR at a run and exits UL, apparently chasing Ham Hock.

**Holly Homemaker Machine** follows as best it can.

The chase continues, back and forth across the horizontal lines of the stage and progressively moving downstage.

**Ham Hock** stalls DR, out of breath and gasping: “Try this! Try this!”

Snow (tinted pink by the lights) begins to fall on Ham Hock.

**Archeologist of the Present** arrives and investigates the ham in the show, I mean snow, with her spyglass.

**Holly Homemaker Machine** pants in. She looks at the pair and then says to Ham Hock: “Is she mad, or does she joke?”

**Archeologist of the Present** turns from investigating the ham to training her spyglass on the Holly Homemaker Machine and her Cyclops eye. The two eyes (one red and one green) confront each other and are about to tangle when a loud “HAHA HAHA HAHA” interrupts them.

**Hunter** enters UC laughing and strides DC – Young Girl in Yellow Tutu barely rescuing the little piggy C from the crush of his willful stride. DC, Hunter removes the sack from his back and opens it, taking out five large glass jars. As he places the jars in a row across the DC line, he reads their labels out loud.

**Hunter:** “Ear. Mouth. Intestine. Heart. Toe.”

**Hunter** perches atop one of the jars, removes his right shoe, and plays the “This Little Piggy” game with his toes. Each time he completes the rhyme (“Whee whee whee all the way home”), he picks up and shakes one of the jars violently.

**Ham Hock, Holly Homemaker Machine, Archeologist of the Present, and Young Girl in Yellow Tutu** (piggy bank snuggled safely beneath her arm) watch Hunter dumbfounded.

[There is an eight year intermission.]

**Hunter** tires of his little game, puts on his shoe, stands up, shakes out a few errant banana peels from his sack, puts the jar with the toe in the sack, strides UC, and exits.

**Ham Hock, Holly Homemaker Machine, Archeologist of the Present, and Young Girl in Yellow Tutu** applaud for 2 minutes, facing full front and without emotion.

Afterwards, they look long and hard at the remaining jars, then at each other, and then back at the jars.

**Ham Hock** whispers: “It’s kind of like *The Wizard of Oz*, isn’t it? Who’s gonna get which part and all that?”

The others nod in agreement. Long thoughtful pause.

**Woman in Overalls** enters DL with a large orange watering can. She X to the jars and stands looking at them with the others. Then, she begins to water the jars.

Pause.

**Holly Homemaker Machine** removes her green mask with its Cyclops eye and fan and places it carefully among the jars.

**Young Girl in Yellow Tutu** slips off her yellow net skirt and rings it round one of the jars.

**Archeologist of the Present** gently places her red cardboard camera in the growing nest of items.

**Ham Hock** (being a ham hock) stands to the side a little ashamed she or he has nothing to add.

**Young Girl in Yellow Tutu** gives him or her the little pink piggy bank, which Ham Hock nestles safely in with the other bits and pieces.

**Woman in Overalls**, having completed her watering, sets her orange can amidst the items too.

A gentle snow begins to fall on the ear and the mouth and the intestine and the heart; a snow begins to fall on the green and the yellow, on the red, pink and orange remnants of the act. And as the snow falls, petals of carnations and roses fall too, and in his frame in the distance, the canary bird sings.

**ACT VII**  
**SUNDAY:**

**Menu Imposed:**

Auster  
*No color  
prescribed*

Calle  
*Orange, Red, White,  
Green, Yellow, Pink  
& Black*

Kitchens  
*Blue  
Accident*

**Characters:**

Melanie

A soft white light rises C to reveal the same remnants from the prior Act, enlarged and repositioned C. There are the jars with the ear and mouth and intestines and heart, the green Cyclops eye and fan, the yellow tutu and banana peels, the pink piggy bank and orange watering can, and my red mask, spyglass, and camera. It's a very pretty picture (if I do say so myself) and well composed. DR, in another soft light, stands a microphone on a stand.

There's some silence.

Then, from DL, a large blue ball rolls on stage, a soft wash of light picking up on its movement. The ball stops rolling just left of DC and waits.

**Melanie** enters DR and X to the ball. She picks it up, X C, and places it carefully among the other items. Then, she X to the microphone and speaks:

Sophie Calle's *The Chromatic Diet* is displayed on the walls of an art gallery. People attend the gallery anxious to view the week of monochromatic meals.

Meg laughs aloud when Thursday arrives, recalling her son who "likes white food best" and bolts at anything green.

Midge remembers cornfields, Joan her green pond, and Brian Joan's lips on Friday, Thursday, and Tuesday respectively.

Paul is confused by Wednesday while Hannah gives thanks for the black blanket of night.

Midge wanders and worries about her eating disorder while Joe recalls reading that the quickest way to lose a few pounds is to wear one color. He wonders if green might be better than red.

On Saturday, Marion rethinks the pink suit she thought she might buy and pregnant Diane daydreams of babies.

As early as Monday, Mardi confirms that orange is by far her most favorite color while, already bored beyond all repair, Todd tells Lucy a knock knock joke. (“Orange you glad I didn’t repeat it?”)

On Tuesday, Dorothy blushes and Matt pines.

Dee longs for grandma’s jell-o on Thursday and Bootsie a peach when Monday and Saturday merge in her mind.

Ruby thinks about work and Dan his dog and Sarah about very little at all.

Bob stands in front of Tuesday dreaming of football while Sandra does likewise in front of Thursday.

Luke groans, “Oh, brother, another phallus!” on Friday while little Luke (his hand in his dad’s) wonders just what a “young girl’s dream” might be.

Renato’s stomach grumbles, and Claire takes a sip from the fountain, while Fran cools her heels on the park bench outside.

All highly colored and not, so they say, part of the real or essential element of some thing.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
CONCLUSION

You know what I think is wonderful about our lives here? We have a chance to dream . . . looking at these pictures – they let the mind float. They make connections between things – daydreams, night dreams. We have space, time, no pressure – the most valuable things on earth.

– Oswald Bates in *Shooting the Past*

**1 shoot** . . . *vb* **shot** . . . **shooting** . . . **1 a** (1): to eject or impel or cause to be ejected or impelled by a sudden release of tension . . . (by a flick of a finger) . . . **b** (1): to utter (as words or sounds) rapidly or suddenly or with force . . . (2): to emit . . . suddenly and rapidly . . . **3** . . . **b**: to pass . . . through the warp threads in weaving **c**: to push or thrust forward: stick out . . . **d**: to put forth in growing . . . **7**: to variegate as if by sprinkling color in streaks, flecks, and patches . . . **12**: to take a picture or series of pictures . . . **13** . . . **d**: to dart in or as if in rays from a source of light . . .

**2 shoot** *n* **1**: a sending out of new growth . . .

– *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1063-4)

*Shooting the Past* is a BBC film directed by Stephen Poliakoff about a collection of some ten million photographs archived in thousands of boxes in the basement of a large eighteenth century home-become-library outside of London. The house is sold to Christopher Anderson, an entrepreneur from the United States who plans to replace the library with a business school. When Anderson arrives to begin renovations, the characters who mind the library seem unaware of his intentions. He tells Marilyn, the director of the library, that he sent letters to inform her of his plans and that one of the library's employees, "a Mr. Oswald Bates," confirmed receipt of the letters (*Shooting the Past*). Due to the misunderstanding, the characters are faced with the insurmountable task(s) of relocating the collection within a few days or persuading Anderson to change his mind.

Marilyn and her colleagues turn to the archive of photographs in hopes that their expanse of embedded stories will compel Anderson to save them and their home. With

the “dusty and uncomputerized” collection catalogued in his head (*Shooting the Past*), Oswald asks Anderson to select a subject. Anderson selects the city and street where he was born, and Oswald disappears into and then emerges from the collection with a handful of photographs that he interweaves into an impromptu story about Anderson’s birthplace. While Anderson is impressed, he remains unconvinced of the collection’s value. In another attempt, Marilyn shows Anderson a series of photographs that tell a story about a young Jewish girl named Lily who survived the Holocaust. Marilyn explains to Anderson that Oswald searched “every still” of Berlin to create the photographic trail of Lily’s life (*Shooting the Past*), positioning it within a complex of other stories represented by additional photographs. In one final attempt to change Anderson’s mind, Oswald searches for photographs of Anderson’s mother and grandmother Hedde, which include a photograph of Anderson as a boy meeting his grandmother for the first time.

The point of *Shooting the Past* is that photographs actively and always partially restore and re-story the past. They are and incite practices of remembering things we might forget otherwise; shoot dead, as it were, in the quotidian rush (and violence) of forward progress without contemplation, without re-conceiving the shot as that which impels, flicks, emits, weaves, variegates, and grows from the past – thereby teaching us about ourselves, our communities and cultures, and things like progress.

In my study, I have demonstrated how photographs move and move people to remember in the dynamic flux of diverse temporal and spatial realities. While photographs may appear to capture a frozen moment in time, the moment moves in its very resistance to the present tense, showing us that our claims to it are as partial and

incomplete as the claims it makes on the past. More frequently, I have demonstrated how photographs are embedded with visual signs that move constantly between temporal and spatial realities, restoring different memories and histories for different viewers as circumstances change over the course of forward moving time. My understanding that photographs move arises from my specific objective to understand how photographs perform, which I investigated by comparing different photographic events with different performance practices. My intent was not to develop a single theory applicable to all photographic performance, but rather to learn how photographs, like performances, remember differently in light of changing content, form, contexts, and circumstances.

In Chapter Two, I proposed a counter response to John Pultz's argument that Muybridge's photographs are "ultimately artistic" and hence unsuccessful as a scientific tool for measuring movement (Pultz 31). To do so, I placed Muybridge's motion study of *Woman Walking and Turning While Pouring Water from a Watering Can* in conversation with Meyerhold's biomechanics, finding that they perform stories of both science and art pertinent to their time. The stories they recall include those of industrialization, technological innovation, class inscription, and views of the body and camera as machines in service to industrial et al. progress. Further, biomechanics helped me see and study how conceptual and practical components of Taylorism, reflexology, Constructivism, and *commedia dell' arte* interact in Muybridge's photographs, revealing a broader scientific aesthetic of stylization.

As in many scientific methods, the first phase of stylization entails distilling phenomena, such as a text, photograph, or body, to its fundamental elements and essence so as to detect their principles and properties. In this case, the distilling process revealed

the Taylorization of the body into distinct frames of action that demonstrate the most simple and efficient way to walk and turn while pouring water from a watering can. At work in the demonstration are the fundamental mechanics of movement, such as balance, opposition, and a tri-part rhythm. In light of reflexology, the mechanics also are viewed as unconscious reflexes, the objectified body producing a product from which it is estranged. Equally motivated by scientific-technological progress as it relates to industry, the utilitarian aesthetics of constructivism amend the view and treatment of the body in motion studies, restoring creative agency not only to the woman walking but to the photographer devising ways to take sequential photos that will explain motion scientifically. In other words, the constructivist perspective helps us see the artistry in science and vice versa.

Such a perspective foreshadows the second phase of stylization where an element is extended so as to reveal the contradictions, ambiguities, and grotesque excesses that lie behind the mask of distillation. For Meyerhold, a key aim here was to spark the audience's imaginations, prompting them to make creative and critical meanings of the elaborations he staged. In Muybridge's study, the presence of the second phase is substantiated by Muybridge's intent to stage both the fundamentals of human movement and their "story element" (Haas 145), MacDonnell's suspicion that "Muybridge had a sense of the ridiculous" (30), and the incongruities and excesses that emerge in staging science by depicting a naked-nude woman walk across a stage while pouring water from a watering can. In this way, Muybridge like Meyerhold restores the spirit of surprise and play to scientific inquiry without disclaiming its aims.



Meyerhold's biomechanical method helped me realize the importance of opposition, counter movements and memories, in Muybridge's photographs and what they depict. Both studies demonstrate that in order for generative movement to occur there must be a counter movement that balances and enables its intimate opposite or alternative, its potential as action. In broad terms, the interdependent relationship urges us to relate concepts and practices of art and science, discipline and play, bodies and machines and, in scholarly explanations of performance studies, "theatrical entertainment" and social and cultural performances – the former often disparaged and sidelined by notable scholars as an embarrassment we must move "beyond" (see Madison and Hamera xi-xii; Pollock, "Introduction: Making History Go" 2). Encouraged by the efficacious and entertaining shows staged by Meyerhold and Muybridge, my study as a whole implies a counter to the anti-theatrical prejudice the discipline of performance studies often enacts, illustrating how methods aligned with theatre are loaded with memories and histories of social and cultural import, thereby refusing any inclination that would separate aesthetics and politics.

In Chapter Three, I argued that Stanislavski's system for building a character helps us understand how and perhaps why album makers build a representation of family life by pasting photographs in a book. Both systemic processes entail drawing on conventions of realism, which include what we have come to understand as a logical and coherent sequencing of action. The familiarity hence accessibility of the formal elements allow the content of the photos to claim focus. The content is perceived first as actions, a point I argue by drawing on Stanislavski's understanding that in everyday life we don't feel feelings for their own sake but rather, motivated by some purpose, we do actions that

then give rise to feelings, thoughts, sense and emotion memories and their expression. Like the systematic actor, the album maker rouses the subconscious through actions. Thereby, she celebrates the actions and activities of her family and confirms that she is an actor in the world too. The movement between viewing imagery as action and its sensory or emotional affect articulates the super-objective or symbolic value of the album, which many scholars claim is the representation and maintenance of family unity and camaraderie. The construction of “an idealized life” (Tucker, Ott, and Buckler 2) through its metonymic miniaturization in photographs leads some scholars to view the album as a disabling form of nostalgia in unknowing collusion with domesticity and capitalism. Stanislavski’s system is evaluated similarly, Counsell expressing the commonplace view that his process results in productions that collude with state aims as they render the world neutral, naturalized, and discord-free.

By recalling the conceptual foundations of Stanislavski’s system, I propose an alternative understanding of function, which then I apply to photograph albums. The critical imperatives of romanticism and spiritual realism provide a critique of the ill effects of post/modernity and advance the subconscious imagination as a potential remedy. In other words, the system values and aims to feature what we cannot see but can sense, the in/visible in everyday life and its material expression. By viewing the album in these terms, I believe I return the album to the “home” and “home” maker, crediting her attempt to stave off the intrusion of consumer capitalism as the arbiter of what makes for family and family life. This aim *is* idealistic and nostalgic as the homemade album has but a small chance against, say, telemarketers whose jarring phone calls interrupt the family – whether a woman and her dog, an elderly couple, gay parents

and their kids – just as they are about to sit down to eat their dinner. Informed by Lippard’s positive view of nostalgia as a desire to “return home” (153), I also intend to argue that any felicitous study of the photograph album must include the point of view of those who make it. While outside views of domestic culture(s) help us see broad patterns of influence, an inside view is paramount to understanding the doing act of performing family for an audience that is the family.

In Chapter Four, I drew on Brecht’s concepts and practices of epic theatre to argue that the Countess de Castiglione was a “revolutionary” artist (Rexer 1), who staged *Scherzo di Follia* to express social as well as personal ironies and criticisms, thereby prompting her audience to form opinions too. As in epic theatre, the Countess treats the components of her portrait performance – e.g., the title, costume, hairstyle, and matte mask – as separate elements, each of which is composed as a social gest that quotes and offers an attitude about a prior story, character(s), cultural expression(s), or social activity and issue. Loaded upon and against each other in the stage space of the portrait, the elements recount a complex story about masking and detection in mid nineteenth century Paris and specifically among the wealthy on the stages of opera and the portrait studio.

In broad terms, the story articulates the emerging acknowledgement and embrace, or not, of theatricality in social life. Aware that theatricality in the form of masking one’s character and motives threatens social structures based on visual truth claims, a number of social sciences attempted to address the threat by developing methods that would decipher the true personality of an individual regardless of his or her trickery. Photography was called on to enable such surveillance strategies in the portrait studio as well as on the stages of mental health and criminology.

In *Scherzo di Follia*, the Countess alienates and critiques the surveillance apparatus of the camera by means of the small matte mask she holds to her eye, ironically amputating her eye so as to return and refuse the gaze of detection cast her way. She tricks sight, suggesting instead that the viewer consider the diverse and divergent quotations she has assembled in her portrait as indicators of her character(s), perspectives, and politics. By estranging the naturalized conventions of detection and disclosure in portraiture, the Countess anticipates and counters current scholars and scholarship that focus solely on how her portraits reveal her stormy personality and life. Put another way, Brecht's epic theatre practice helps us unpack the complex network of social-historical forces and counter forces at work in any item of material culture, encouraging us not only to activate and analyze them but to realize and analyze the forces and counter forces at work in our own perceptual apparatus.

In Chapter Five, I came to understand how *FOUND Magazine* performs by viewing it through Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) praxis, specifically his Image Theatre games and exercises and the Joker System. TO is a series of practices in which spect-actors learn how to take action in response to an issue or oppression that concerns them. One result is that spect-actors learn how to co-create their culture and history in democratic ways. In a like manner, the display and response section in *FOUND Magazine* encourages a democratic process where spect-actors participate in a collaborative practice of making (up) stories about found photographs. Both practices are voluntary, accessible to those who attend the events, and geared toward tolerance and respect of the diverse views as they contribute to a performance about a local oppression or a found photograph.

In regards to Boal's practice of Image Theatre, I discovered that the individual to collective process of imagining and sculpting imagery is similar to the process at work in *FOUND Magazine* as each finder posts a lost and found photograph and others respond to it. In both Image Theatre and *FOUND Magazine* people work as a team to generate a story about imagery that arises from the different responses. The process is similar to Roland Barthes's understanding of the relationship between the *punctum* and the *studium* in a photograph. Namely, the *studium*, or the social-cultural meanings people attribute to the image, emerge and are punctuated by the accumulation of each participant's *punctum*.

Boal's Joker System provided me with a formal model to access and analyze the elements that constitute the characters, structure, and techniques used in *FOUND Magazine*. Designed by the backstage Jokers, Rothbart, Bitner, and staff, the *FOUND Magazine* website is an easily navigated and accessible space where diverse participants are encouraged to become Jokers too. As a Joker, the finder submits a found photograph and a caption that serves to comment on the image she has contributed, which then prompts other Joker spect-actors to comment too. By means of commentary and questions, the spect-actors become active producers of the image and its story.

The display and response section of *FOUND Magazine* excites everyday people to collaborate on little histories that are neither universal nor fragmented in so far as the participants agree to share their views on a mutual concern, the lost and found photograph. In these ways, *FOUND Magazine* and websites like it might be viewed as rehearsal spaces for producing more so than consuming imagery, for learning how to take action with or at least cognizant of others rather than in opposition to or ignorant of others. In this light, I would not be surprised to find components of the Joker System at

work in the website and other internet strategies of President-elect Barack Obama and his staff. While many have acknowledged the campaign's sophisticated use of the internet to unify and activate individuals to participate in the campaign, how the appeal was composed and expressed has not as yet been studied. I suspect techniques of accessibility and clarity of discourse, plurality and unity of views, questions and commentary, and an understanding of co-participation and responsibility play a part in the composition of strategies that resulted in Obama's success.

In Chapter Six, I viewed Sophie Calle's *The Chromatic Diet* in light of the visual aesthetic practices of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and Robert Wilson's Theatre of Images. The intersection of practices helped me understand how Calle's chromatic diet – i.e., her monochromatic compositions of food – is an investigation of abstract form that results in stimulating primary and secondary associations. Her formal diet exceeds itself, parodying the aims of formalism while demonstrating an adept and creative concentration on formal elements.

Calle's investigation of color and form is similar to the innovative play that guided the experimental dances of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. By means of their minimalist performances and exuberant festivals, Schlemmer and his students demonstrated how visual abstractions can be embraced and studied without draining them of a social character, attitude, and set of aims. As I hoped to imply in my opera, "Food Dance," the social imperatives of *The Chromatic Diet* are similar to those of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop in that the photographic event undertakes an earnest investigation that excites both duplicity and whimsy toward the various concerns that arise.

While Wilson's performances are embedded with similar traits, they are realized through an accumulation of iconic imagery more so than a minimalist approach. His practices helped me understand how Calle's iconic place settings of food operate individually and as they accumulate over the course of seven meals. In Wilson's terms, they function to excite and reunite the viewer's interior and exterior screens, encouraging the viewer to interact imaginatively and, as a result, view the familiar icons differently. Calle presents the viewer with quotidian food items displayed with meticulous care on table settings – they are “proper” compositions – which then she defamiliarizes visually, sensually, and cognitively by means of the monochromatic palette. She plays with her food (which I was always told not to do), composing and photographing it to investigate the politics and possibilities of formal aesthetics, visual appeals, and her role as a detecting photographer.

To express my understanding of how Calle's *The Chromatic Diet*, the Bauhaus' dances and festivals, and Wilson's spectacular operas intersect and inform each other, I wrote a seven act opera of my own. While in the chapter I argue that all three practices encourage such a response, current investigations in the field of Performance Studies regarding what might constitute academic research and writing support the effort too. Understood as writing that does what it says, performance or performative writing is a “discursive practice” where, like performance, language “becomes meaningful in the material, dis/continuous act” of “shaping, shifting, [and] testing” it (Pollock, “Performing Writing” 75). The sensual affect and meaningful effect of language emerge through performing it, restoring it with a difference.

Like Auster's and Calle's menus that impose content and color restrictions on the composition of each meal, I impose content and form restrictions too as detailed in the "Kitchens" menus I list prior to each act. My aims are similar to those of Auster and Calle who engage in a series of "double games" to investigate the art of character as based in the restoration and citation of prior practices and expressions. My restrictions double theirs and also double the different concepts and practices I discuss in the chapter. For instance, my restrictions for the Monday menu include formalism, aerial view, and stuck in a pigeonhole. As with a formalist view, the figure of "Figure" and the objectivist language I use to render "it" treat art as an autonomous object, able to be ripped from any context save its own and dismissive toward any associations the viewer might have in response to it, or so that is the aim and illusion. The Figure is stuck in a pigeonhole. In contrast, my Tuesday menu focuses on formal aesthetics as I understand Calle in *The Chromatic Diet* and the Bauhaus Stage Workshop apply them. Namely, they craft minimalist compositions that are delighted by the secondary as well as primary associations they discover and excite. Over the course of "Food Dance," I sequence the restrictions in an accumulative manner, a choice that results in my acknowledging the active role I play in investigating and creating the performance. Calle's investigative narrative (her photographic event) generates my own, encouraging me to embrace and reflect on my role as an Archeologist of the Present. It is my hope that "Food Dance" prompts the reader to do the same, leaving plenty of room for him or her to adjust the meanings of the noted role in light of his or her experiences.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, for me, the significance of the study lies in its particulars: I place specific photographic events in conversation with specific



performance practices to understand how they make and transmit memories and histories. I believe my findings in the prior chapters as summarized here demonstrate that I have fulfilled my goal. In light of Judith Hamera's understanding of how "artifacts perform" (56), each chapter seems to "create and stabilize small worlds of creativity and commerce replete with history and desire" (61). "In so doing," Hamera continues, such "performances remind us of what [Joan] Bennett has called 'the uncanny ability of nonhuman things to act upon us'" (61). I know that over the course of my research I have had many uncanny experiences, and in part my aim has been to find ways to express them. The photographs act on me, and I have tried to take discursive action that responds in kind. I understand however that focusing on particulars speaks to broader issues in performance, historiography, and visual material culture, and in the remainder of the chapter, I turn my attention to addressing some of these issues.

First, my aims require and resulted in a close reading of the internal, original, and external contexts of the photographic events and the conceptual, and practical back stories of the performance practices. The close reading I pursue in each chapter is similar to that that once gave oral interpretation its interpretive authority and lends anthropological and ethnographic practices their validity through "thick description" as termed by Clifford Geertz. It also is similar to that which differentiates critical historiography from other critical endeavors in current scholarship. While, like their colleagues in other fields, contemporary historians acknowledge and express their theoretical positions and partialities on a subject, they also are expected to continue the tradition of grounding their studies in elucidations of material evidence, which most understand as narratives of a particular person, perspective, and event in time and place

rather than a manifest fact or universal Truth. My study operates similarly as I begin chapters with close readings of material evidence pertinent to different subject trajectories, which I assemble together so as to write my analyses of the photographic events. In so doing, I position myself in the material archive, ground my study in the stories of people doing things in particular times and places, while in the analyses especially claim my partial position and perspectives.

The close reading of events articulates how one might study a performance in terms of its historicity, a research perspective and activity significant not only to historians and historians of performance, but to the study of performance generally since performance is concerned with people doing things in time and place. Put another way, my study serves as one of many models for what is entailed in doing research concerned with particular bodies in particular times and places inscribed by and inscribing the forces of history. For example, in Chapter Two, I provide descriptive instructions for doing the Slap etude. The description evokes material bodies learning the etude step by deliberate step, and thereby it implies how the forces of Taylorism, reflexology, constructivism, and *commedia dell'arte* are at work on the bodies while the bodies also learn the agential counter force of creative adaptation.

One result of my emphasis on close readings of historicity is a study that is eclectic in theoretical and practical terms. We might attribute the eclecticism to what we call postmodernity and a postmodern, post-structural disposition and, for some such as me, predilection. Of course, eclecticism is not new or unique to our age as the perusal of any archive of any age demonstrates, showing it to be an entangled web of diverse and disparate ideas, practices, and representative means. Further, as Raphael Samuel

articulates in his influential study, *Theatres of Memory*, we come to know our histories less through official sources and far more through an eclectic mix of unofficial sources. Samuel's notion spurred me to consider how my understanding of the history of Performance Studies is gleaned from lectures on diverse topics by diverse teachers, conversations in murky watering holes with my peers, panel listings in convention programs, rehearsal processes, fictional materials of all kinds, engravings, illustrations, and photographs, and a good bit of folklore, myth, and gossip. It is by an eclectic means we come to know our histories and, as Raphael and Levine both argue, acting on this understanding is a political act, and it is a responsibility of the historian. According to Levine, official narratives about those with explicit power offers just "one form of history," and hence we are to "inform the public, by deed and word, that there is no exclusive preferred form for the writing of history and that no single group in history and no one aspect of the past . . . is inherently more important, or more essential, or more relevant than the others" (*The Unpredictable Past* 12-13).

Della Pollock echoes these sentiments when she calls on Trinh Minh-ha to argue "for a history built on narrative truths, on truths that supercede fact," a historicity that is a mixture of both fact and fiction ("Introduction" 16). Minh-ha says, "if we rely on history to tell us what happened at a specific time and place, we can rely on the story to tell us not only what might have happened, but also what is happening at an unspecified time and place" (quoted in Pollock, "Introduction" 17). History as story, then, is alive and full of possibilities. It is the means by which family histories and photographs, fairytales and myths are recounted and passed down through time. In our oral tradition, an assembly of people gathered round a fire on a cold winter night tell stories of a past

that gain in complexity as they are passed from storyteller to storyteller, generation to generation. The “alternative worlds” created by stories “amuse, enchant, satirize, and criticize” us and our everyday reality, with which we are not always “content” (Hearn xxvii). The stories are told to entertain but also to teach – the lesson of each tale retained differently as different groups recount the story in light of their needs and desires.

Embedded with partial, shooting, and shifting stories, photographs enact histories as story and storytelling. Of course, the photographer has a hand in the stories her photographs tell. She chooses the subject and frames it a certain way. She displays and perhaps captions it. But the photograph is still a scaffolding – an event full of memories and histories, actions and adventures that can be enlivened and re-invented, appreciated and embellished based on the contexts, circumstances, and imagination of the viewer.

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## VITA

Melanie A. Kitchens developed an interest in performance at an early age. As a young girl, she spent many of her days writing plays and directing her younger brother and family friends in productions for their parents. When she was a little older, her dad gave her a camera and tried to get her interested in photography, but in an era of teen angst she ignored his prompt. Only later, once she left for college and then graduate school, did she learn to appreciate her dad's suggestion and develop an intrigue and love for photography.

In the spring of 2001, Melanie received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre from Georgia Southern University. Thanks to the suggestion of her mentor Dr. Patricia Pace, Melanie moved to Baton Rouge, where she attended Louisiana State University and received her Master of Arts degree in communication studies with an emphasis in performance studies in the fall of 2004. After receiving her master's, Melanie continued in the doctoral program at Louisiana State University. While living in Baton Rouge, Melanie was a graduate assistant and taught courses in small group communication, public speaking, interpersonal communication, and the performance of literature. In the summer of 2007, Melanie moved to Athens, Georgia, where she currently teaches as a part time instructor of speech communication at the University of Georgia. She will receive her Doctor of Philosophy in communication studies from Louisiana State University in December 2008.