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ERRATA

- p 34, 11th line: "under command" for "under commend"
p 69, 7th last line: "(Williams, R., 1985: 128-141)" for "(Williams, R., 1985b)"
p 72, 7th last line: "(Geertz, 1983: 24)" for "[Geertz, 1983 #386@24]"
p 76, para 2, 4th last line: "it is possible notionally" for "it is possible notionlly"
p 83, 1st line: "capacity to respond to" for "capacity to response to"
p 86, para 2, 7th line: "must be at least 18" for "must at least 18"
p 116, para 2, 2nd last line: "no-one" for "noone"
p 143, para 2, 5th last line: "no-one" for "noone"
p 146, 1st line: "Bourdieu" for "Borudieu"
p 146, 2nd line: "*ressentiment*" for "*rassentiment*"
p 147, 5th line: "*tangata whenua*" for "*tangagai whenua*"
p 147, para 2, 5th line: "cross-cultural contact" for "cross-cultural ontact"
p 214, 4th line: "as our earlier work" for "as out earlier work"
p 277, para 2, last line: "bodyways" for "bodways"
p 299, note 33, 6th last line: "although distinct" for "although a distinct"
p 307, note 24, 2nd last line: "required regular" for "required reguair"
p 308, note 33, 2nd last line: "what could be termed" for "what could be tremed"

ADDENDUM

p v, Acknowledgements: Add at the end of para 5: Particular thanks to Stephen Goddard for assistance with resources on video.

**BODIES OF MEANING:
ISSUES OF FIELD AND *HABITUS* IN CONTEMPORARY
AUSTRALASIAN THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE
PRACTICE**

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DECLARATION

In accordance with Doctorate Regulations 17 of Monash University the following declarations are made:

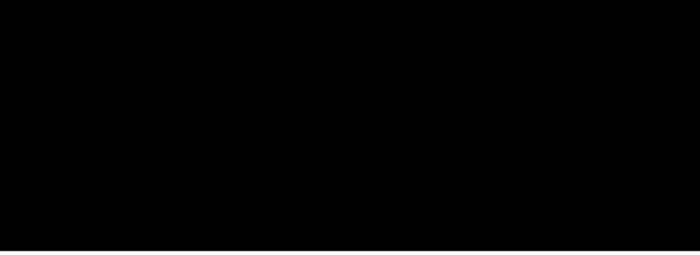
- 1 I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any University or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person,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

- 2 Chapter 5 is based on material gathered through a research project, *Actor-Director Interaction*, jointly conducted with Ms Yoni Prior of Deakin University. This project received Deakin University Arts Faculty Research Grant support in 1994. Ms Prior and I collaborated to: devise a schedule of interview questions; conduct interviews jointly and severally; and produce a number of co-authored seminar papers and journal articles, both published and unpublished. These are listed in Attachment B. The material in Chapter 5 based on this work is however solely authored by me. All quotations from the research material are acknowledged, and the chapter contains no jointly authored material ~~except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.~~

(Signed) 

..... 23/1/03

- 3 I have read the material included in Chapter 5, and agree that it represents a) an appropriate use of research material produced in collaboration with me, and that b) the chapter represents the solely authored work of Ms Alison Richards, except where due reference ~~is made in the text of the thesis.~~

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Synopsis

This thesis uses Bourdieu's concepts of field and *habitus* to investigate the dynamics of embodiment and enculturation in four selected sites of contemporary Australasian theatrical performance practice: The National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney, Australia; The New Zealand Drama School/Toi Whakaari in Wellington, New Zealand/Aotearoa; and two 'alternative' theatre companies, Gilgul Theatre and the Melbourne Women's Circus, based in Melbourne, Australia. It argues that there is a need to revise Bourdieu's treatment of the relationship between field and *habitus* on theoretical grounds. It attempts to show that generative dispositions are not necessarily all-encompassing, but are subject to processes of development and change: in contemporary culture, they are often experienced and expressed as multiple and partial. Conversely, an analysis of field is incomplete unless it takes the embodied status of agents into account. The research operates with a mixed qualitative methodology based on observation, interview and a review of relevant bodies of literature. It uses Bourdieu's terminology in association with Goffman's notions of frame and keying to explain how field position and *habitus* interact in the sites chosen for study. It demonstrates the importance of analysing theatrical performance practice as a component of the field of cultural production; as a key situated example of the performative; and as a useful way to gain information on interactive sociocultural processes otherwise difficult to access. It reinterrogates standard theatrical metaphors to show the intimate engagement of the field of cultural production with broader sociocultural issues through direct relations as well as through field-specific modelling and instantiation. There is however a need to acknowledge the messiness of locations and incorporations in practice. Although it is possible to construct ideal types of dominant/autonomous and subordinate/heteronomous poles within the field, in this case associated with ideals of pure and impure aesthetic performance, the autonomous or 'pure type' is by no means as dominant as the Performance Studies literature suggests. The case studies show that the response to issues of globalisation, culture and gender in the field is also more complex than is sometimes assumed. Theatrical performance practice in Australasia is subject to diverse internal and external influences but appears robust, idiosyncratic and locally inflected. The research endorses Bourdieu's emphasis on agency: it shows potentially culturally influential behaviours being generated, rehearsed and deployed performatively within the field. This study shows that the bodies of theatrical performers are indeed important sites of cultural contestation and that opportunities for cultural change and renewal are by no means exhausted, but it also reveals the need to challenge ruling assumptions about the sources and conditions of change, on the part of oppositional as much as dominant discourses and formations.

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A Note on Project Timing

The research for this project was carried out over a considerable period, both before and during the formal period of candidature.

Periods of field observation and other personal contact were as follows:

Women's Circus: first workshop and performance season, June-Dec 1991. Interviews conducted 1990-94, later follow-up conversation and attendance at performances.

Gilgul Theatre: rehearsal and performance season for The Wilderness Room Oct-Nov 1994. Interviews conducted 1995, later follow-up conversation, attendance at performances and interviews.

NIDA: skills classes and rehearsals August, October and audition callbacks November 1997. Interviews conducted during observation periods, later attendance at performances and institutional celebrations.

Toi Whakaari: skills classes and workshops July 1996 and July 1998. Interviews conducted during observation periods, later follow-up conversation.

Dedication

I had the effort and the pleasure of many encounters and conversations while conducting the research for this thesis. Some were face to face exchanges and others have been conducted in the space of theory – over time and distance, with no guarantee of reciprocity. Not all theorists issue an invitation to dialogue, and those who do, like Erving Goffman and Raymond Williams, are doubly inspirational. Pierre Bourdieu, teacher, anthropologist, sociologist, intellectual opponent of rigid thinking and organised oppressions, was such a theorist. Born the son of a postman in Pau, he lived and worked in Algeria, taught at the University of Paris and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and finished his career as the chairman of the sociology department at the Collège de France. His institutional eminence did not blunt his voice, his rigorous commitment to observation did not prevent his engagement with the struggles, the misery and the desires of others. An engagement with his ideas has been crucial in framing the theoretical perspectives adopted in this thesis. When I began work, I might have hoped for the opportunity to meet and talk with him, as I have been lucky enough to do with some of the other scholars whose work has informed my own. I very much regret that his death from cancer in January 2002 has made that impossible.

I would therefore like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of Pierre Bourdieu, 1.8.1930 – 23.1.2002

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Field and *Habitus*

This research project attempts an analysis of the field of cultural production in contemporary Australasia (Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand) through an investigation of theatrical performance practice. It analyses material derived from field studies of performer training and rehearsal interaction in four sites, selected as examples of institutions, organisations or formations occupying key positions within the subfield of state-subsidised theatre culture. The investigation focuses on the aesthetic dimension of the corporeal: it asks about the processes of embodiment through which discourses and practices operationalised in theatrical training, rehearsal and performance are deployed and instantiated, and treats performers' bodies as themselves sites of contestation over the forms of, and limits to, the (re)production and (re)presentation of social bodies and selves. This devolves, in turn, into three main research questions:

1. What degree of autonomy is exercised by the field of theatrical performance practice framed as a set of bodies and behaviours, in relation to established patterns of contemporaneous social performance?
2. What can an investigation of processes of embodiment operational within theatrical performance making and training reveal about the dynamic tensions active in broader reference cultures, including the (re)presentation of power relations?
3. To what degree do contemporary Australasian performer training and theatre making practices produce bodies which represent, and processes of embodiment which express, cultural difference and social change?

The four field study sites are: The National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney, Australia; The New Zealand Drama School/Toi Whakaari in

Wellington, New Zealand/Aotearoa; and two 'alternative' theatre companies, Gilgul Theatre and the Melbourne Women's Circus, both in Melbourne, Australia. They were selected from observations of theatrical performance practice undertaken between 1991 and 1998, and form part of an ongoing series of studies of Australasian theatrical performance practice, which began prior to the commencement of research candidature. They are paired to cover two actor training institutions and two more or less continuing companies. The research investigates the contexts in which they operate, and the ways in which their selection, induction, enculturation and realisation processes impact on the bodies and behaviours of those involved.

The four studies have also been selected to provide a sense of the horizon of what I have defined as theatrical performance practice in Australasia. It is important to recognise this framing device as itself rhetorical, a consequence of the perspective I have chosen to adopt, and the questions I have chosen to pursue. While three of the four studies are Australian, I wanted to include at least one example of practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand, in order to provide a comparative perspective on what have traditionally been very closely linked cultural landscapes. In the past half century, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand have both been subject to an unprecedented level of social and cultural change. Relations of production have altered, political allegiances have shifted, and both have undergone an uneasy transition from their earlier status as white settler monocultures, emerging as ambivalently diverse participants in the Asia-Pacific sector of the global politicocultural scene. Postwar cultural politics in both countries has been marked by continuing struggles over the definition and administration of, and entitlements to participation in, cultural activity (Novitz and Willmott, 1989; Goodall, 1995) also (Mohanram, 1999b). The patterns and traditions of their performance cultures, particularly at an elite level, are still so connected, both in

policy terms and in the exchange of personnel, as to make consideration of their differences particularly enlightening.

Theoretical perspective – frame, field and habitus

Performers and performance practices continue to occupy unstable positions within contemporary cultural formations. These depend on the establishment and defence of boundaries which are themselves counters in the struggles for dominance operating within the field, and in the relations of particular framings of the field with other, competing and in some cases overlapping, fields and field definitions. The work of Pierre Bourdieu provides a clear set of propositions by means of which the production and transmission of culture can be examined through the dynamics of its field-specific as well as extrinsic relations, taking account of the production of structures and meanings as well as objects. In my investigation, I have relied particularly on two of Bourdieu's most influential conceptual frameworks, the field of cultural production and the notion of *habitus*.

In the essays gathered together in English translation as *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu, 1993a), Bourdieu began to develop his analysis of cultural practice as a distinctly structured field of human endeavour producing its own power relations, material goods and symbolic capital. In this formulation, cultural capital is linked to other forms of capital through its legitimation of economic and political systems of domination. However, Bourdieu sees the cultural field functioning autonomously to an important extent, with its own structures, products, interests and means of distinction. His notion of practice attempts to overcome structuralist and idealist dualisms by addressing ideas and their active corporealisation relationally. In Bourdieu's argument the particularity of the cultural field derives from the ways in which it presents a mirror image, a reversal, of the economic order – the

field of art is one in which aesthetic values are consecrated, and quotidian concerns to a greater or lesser extent despised. This principle is itself the subject of struggle over what he terms 'principles of hierarchisation', divided into 'the *heteronomous* principle of hierarchisation, which would reign unchallenged if ... the literary and artistic field were to disappear as such' and 'the *autonomous* principle of hierarchisation, which would reign unchallenged if the field of production were to achieve total autonomy with respect to the laws of the market' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 38).

Cultural needs, he argues, are a product of cultivation and education, since only those who attribute a value to cultural goods will have a desire to appropriate them. This disposition can only come about with the possession of 'artistic competence', as a result of exposure to and mastery of the rules governing their production and evaluation. Bourdieu uses the metaphor of the 'spectacles of culture' to describe the situation of those unaware that their structure of preferences has been mediated; on the other hand, he compares those without such tools to ethnologists present 'at a ritual to which they do not hold the key' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 217)¹. Whether consciously or unconsciously acquired, mastery of the principles of production and organisation of a work of art allows the viewer both to apprehend its 'coherence and necessity' and to see and appreciate the originality of its particular execution. Thus, although Bourdieu had earlier insisted that an individual work of art must be understood as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole (Bourdieu, 1993a: 37), he acknowledges that it is through the specifics of the work that the viewer/receiver encounters the schemes of thought, perception and action which give rise to the questions to which it corresponds, as well as the creator's attempt to find what is presumably an unpredictable solution 'irreducible to schemes' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 229).

The symbolic and power relations present in the course of production of a work of art, and in the processes of its transmission, reception, and

appropriation (or otherwise) as a counter in the struggle for the 'dominant principle of domination' within the field of power, are therefore themselves of immense potential complexity. In his analysis, Bourdieu emphasises that the discourses and practices operating within the field of cultural production, and the activities of the networks of agents and institutions that support this production and further produce its value (museums, galleries, academies, critics and commentators and so on) are of equal if not greater importance to the artworks themselves and the social conditions experienced by their makers, patrons and consumers.

The title essay of the collection marks an important theoretical move in presenting Bourdieu's analysis of 'the field' through the positions taken up by the agents who operate within it. His notion of practice attempts to overcome structuralist and idealist dualisms by addressing ideas and their active manifestation relationally. Practice is ideology manifest; not only do positions tend to be taken up by agents from those already available within the field they occupy, but each position taken, whether or not it represents the entry of a new idea or a freshly articulated strategy, must be read in relation to all other positions currently occupied and operating within the field. A change in one position will affect the operations of all others *as long as* their existence is acknowledged by other agents whose relations of practice constitute the field. This acknowledgement may occur through acceptance, opposition or appropriation: 'When we speak of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus ... but the product and prize of a permanent conflict ... so that participation in the struggle – which may be indicated objectively by, for example, the attacks that are suffered – can be used as the criterion establishing that a work belongs to the field of position-takings and its author to the field of positions' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 34). An assessment of the importance of specific ideas and power relations within a particular field is, therefore, available to the

observer to the extent to which they are embodied and disseminated through those agents' activity: 'The task is that of constructing the space of positions and the space of position-takings [*prises de position*] in which they are expressed ... every position, even the dominant one, depends for its very existence, and for the determinations it imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field ... the meaning of a work ... changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 30-31).

Theatrical performance practice clearly constitutes an element, or a set of elements, operating within the general field of cultural production. In this thesis, I want to argue that an analysis of theatrical performance practice demonstrates a sufficiently autonomous level of interaction between positions and position-takings to qualify as a field in its own right. Performance practice is, I would argue, separable conceptually and operationally from the general field of cultural production and from the overlapping fields and subfields with which it is connected.

Depending on the perspective adopted, theatrical performance practice might be viewed as a field in its own right, or as a locus for the intersection of social, political, literary, technical, musical, art and design, entertainment, film, and other high art or popular cultural practices originating elsewhere within the general field of cultural production. In this latter view, performers represent one important craft or strand operating within that locus. Such a perspective leads the investigator towards a focus on relations of production; my interest is, however, in the networks of practices generated by, and structured around, the body of the performer. I would argue that the common perception of corporeally-mediated performance as dependent on the outcome of works produced and decisions made by others fails to take account of the extent to which the world of the performer operates as a field of its own². The positions and position-takings particular to

performance practice are not coterminous with those of 'drama', 'the theatre'³, newer modalities such as film, or other fields designated by terms such as 'the entertainment industry'. Performance practice is certainly affected by the struggles for legitimacy conducted within these and other fields, including non-aesthetic social performance, and changes in performance practice will occur in interaction with changes in aesthetic, style or mode of practice in intersecting fields. But it is a mistake to assume that performance practice is passive or of secondary importance - in fact, whether performers are situated as primary, secondary or tertiary producers of cultural product, they are always 'value-adding' and/or deploying cultural capital of one kind or another in significant ways. Many contemporary performance works are generated *ab initio* by creator/performers or by performers working in concert with other artists including directors, designers and playwrights (works by the two companies featured in this study are of this kind). Performances can be devised from original physical, vocal and visual material or derived from an assemblage of existing verbal, visual or corporeal texts. Productions of texts written or otherwise constructed specifically for the theatre may be approached with different intentions with regard to interpretation or reconfiguration - in the contemporary art theatre, considerable cachet attaches to productions which recontextualise, reorganise or modify existing texts to highlight intertextual or extratextual references (Rouse, 1992). Even where productions attempt to be faithful 'to the writer's intentions' or to the conventions of a particular tradition of performance practice, realisation processes are likely to produce quite different outcomes from one production to another⁴. The exigencies of performance will in turn produce variations of greater or lesser significance on each occasion of its presentation. On a global level, forms of performance presentation vary widely in their methods of transmission and/or notation and their relationship to other co-existing and contributing aesthetico-cultural means and modes of expression (Wiles, 1980).

Practice-based conventions operate semi-independently in preserving the distinctiveness of style or genre. As Rachel Fensham observes: 'Performers and dancers ... cannot produce an efficient gesture without rehearsal and practice regimes that transform the body from a state of everyday efficiency to a disciplined and co-ordinated aesthetic apparatus responsive to the demands of a particular aesthetic style' (Fensham, 1998). I would argue that changes in performance practice are just as likely to influence repertoire as the other way around. It should also be noted that, in contemporary culture, performers and their behaviour both on and offstage (as constructed and channelled through the mass media) have a palpable effect on expressive social behaviours in general (Carlson, 1996b). Performance practice maintains its own institutions, networks and traditions, with subfields organised according to genre, skill set, medium of storage and delivery, expressive modality or performance vocabulary, traditions of training, methods of rehearsal, dependence on stage image and *mise en scène*, relation to written text and/or other notational vehicles, target audience, historical, geographical and sociocultural location, source of patronage or income, division of labour, and perceived hierarchies of authority and taste⁵. In describing performance practice as a field, I rely on Bourdieu's criterion of the relations between positions and position-takings, and also on his statement with regard to fields or worlds of preferences and stylistic possibles, that they provide 'the small number of distinctive features which, functioning as a system of differences, differential deviations, allow the most fundamental social differences to be expressed' (Bourdieu, 1986: 226). Taken together, these criteria allow performance discourse and practice to be considered as markers of a field and its systems of differentiation.

Within this field, colloquially employed terminology is always/already loaded with cultural assumptions. Of particular moment are the

distinctions riding on the terms 'performance' and 'performer', as contrasted to 'theatre' and 'actor'. The spread of electronic media, and the proliferation of situations in which performance techniques find some application, continue to complicate what were once, at least on the surface, straightforward distinctions. Philip Auslander points out that even the basic difference between 'live' and mediated performance can no longer be drawn with any great confidence (Auslander, 1996). In contemporary Australasian usage, 'actor' is at least partly a term of distinction related to claims for high art status. 'Actors' tend to work in 'drama' with a base in written text, whereas 'performers' work in comedy, music and physical theatre, circus and other popular forms. However, both 'actors' and 'performers' work across film, radio, TV and advertising, and are found together in a variety of live performance situations. Individuals may, on different occasions, do work that could be described by either term; nevertheless, they will tend to locate themselves as one or the other in terms of their training and preferred network of references. It should also be noted that training has its own subfield dynamics. Not all individuals trained in performance techniques will work full time as performers, and not all performance-based training regimes will culminate in theatrical presentation⁶. In turn, 'the theatre' generally refers to live dramatic performance, but is colloquially used to cover work done in non-traditional spaces as well as in theatres, and includes realisation processes based on the traditional literary dramatic tradition as well as those depending on a more experimental deployment of performers' visual, vocal and physical resources. These horizons are, of course, the subject of considerable contestation⁷. Nevertheless, a range of contemporary aesthetic performance practices can be recognised as having a theatrical element in common, in that they are designed to culminate in eventual presentation before an onlooker in a defined envelope of space and time. I have chosen to adopt 'performance' and 'performer' as generic terms, and have avoided speaking of 'the theatre' or of 'actors' unless referring to discourses and framing processes active

within the particular site under review. However, given that the training institutions and companies selected for field study all organise themselves on the assumption that they are preparing for eventual public show, I have chosen to retain a reference to theatrical presentation in my description of the field, adopting Erving Goffman's definition of the theatre frame 'an arrangement which transforms an individual into ... an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked to for engaging behaviour by persons in an "audience" role' (Goffman, 1974: 124).

I would argue that the products of the field cannot adequately be understood without taking into account the practices that produce them. But since my focus here is on the practices themselves, I am interested in works of performance only as they relate to genres and traditions within the field, in order to establish the degree to which performance practices generate patterns of embodiment amongst their practitioners sufficiently consistent to qualify as what Bourdieu termed a *habitus*. The concept of *habitus* is of immediate relevance to a study of actors, whose training and professional interactions are above all carried out through body-to-body situated exchange and interaction, and for whom the production and reproduction of behaviours is an aesthetic *modus operandi*. Bourdieu's emphasis on practice and on the *sens pratique* as a mainstay of social action remains enormously suggestive. He argues for a homologous relationship between attitude, perception, behaviour, 'intentionality without intention', and the structure of social experience. He insists that practice is embodied, dispositions elaborated and transmitted, and the social world symbolised and negotiated through the minutiae of stance, posture, gesture, gaze and the orientation of bodies in and through space. Performance practice is mediated through the body and its distinguishing feature is the ostension of the body of the performer as/producing the work of art. Its principles are transmitted in situations where bodies are co-present to one another and expressed through a variety of body-based

sensory and perceptual channels including, crucially, the extra-linguistic. An investigation of performance practice therefore requires different tools to those employed in the investigation of the disembodied literary or visual products of cultural processes. An analysis of the specifics of the work of art in performance is also an investigation of the processes through which expression comes to be reliably physicalised, patterned, and available for the reception of others, as well as the ways in which it is creatively unpredictable.

It is axiomatic that actor-training institutions will attempt to instil distinctive vocal and physical habits and patterns of behaviour while undertaking the body-to-body transmission of specific approaches to performance. Insofar as this process is successful, drama school graduates instantiate the claims made by the institution and function as an iterated, ostended series defining the legitimated performance practitioner. But training within any one institution cannot be assumed to be unitary or unidirectional, as will be evident from the case study material, and in any case by no means all theatrical performance practitioners have attended such an institution or undergone a training process of equivalent duration or intensity. In attempting to evaluate the existence and persistence of a characteristic *habitus* amongst Australasian theatrical performance practitioners, it is therefore important to examine a range of locations of practice and to take into account the presence of directors, teachers/trainers, technicians, and performers of different age cohorts, skill bases and cultural origin and allegiance, all of whom help to form the contexts in which processes of embodiment are undertaken.

I want to open the idea of *habitus* to a more detailed engagement with the processes of adaptation, alteration and contestation suggested by Bourdieu's discussion of the field. An immediate difficulty is encountered in Bourdieu's own writings, which demonstrate an

instructive disjunction between the terms when treated as a pair. This in turn throws up questions for the current study. The concept of *habitus* was developed from his work as an anthropologist amongst the North African Kabyle peoples, as a tool with which to explain the matrix of customs, including patterns of bodily hexis, cosmology, kinship relations and agricultural procedures, which both ordered and generated the order of their traditional village life, an order in which 'each property ... is perceived in its relation to other properties, therefore in its positional, distinctive value, and it is through this distinctive distance, this difference, this distinction, which is perceived only by the seasoned observer, that the homologous position of the bearer of this property in the space of social positions shows itself' (Bourdieu, 1990: 113). The concept originally covered 'the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves almost completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same conditions of existence' (Bourdieu, 1977: 85).

Habitus operated as a powerful tool within his overall project to fashion a materialist social analysis, which would avoid the objectivist reductionism he found in the structuralist tradition and take account of the creative agency of 'representation and will' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 9), while refusing the overemphasis on individual consciousness adopted by phenomenology and other examples of what he called 'idealist intellectualism'. Bourdieu invoked Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* to reaffirm the importance of a 'theory of practice as practice', which sees that the objects of knowledge are constructed, and that 'the principle of this construction is practical activity oriented towards practical functions' (Bourdieu, 1977: 96). His concepts of practice and 'practical logic', as an explanation of the mixed unconscious/conscious character of

agents' social strategies, and *habitus*, as a means by which to understand the somatised (pre)dispositions affecting their values and choices of behaviour, acted to explain the generative links between habits, ideas, attitudes and the objective conditions which shape them.

Bourdieu continued to rely on the concept during his shift of focus from traditional, geographically specific village life to urban societies undergoing considerable social change. But despite an increasing emphasis on strategies of improvisation, as against the original stress on durability and the overdetermination of social reproduction, Bourdieu did not substantially rework the concept of *habitus*. The term was retained as a general reference to the embodied predispositions he saw as the basis for the 'intentionless invention of regulated improvisation' (Bourdieu, 1977: 79) characteristic of everyday social action. The idea of 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53) became a central tenet. He insisted on 'the *generative capacities* of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions' while also emphasising 'the agent's practice, his or her capacity for invention and improvisation' (Bourdieu, 1990: 13).

But the concept retained the impress of the context in which it was developed, as a metaphor for the in/fusion of ways of seeing and ways of being, in which belief and bodily orientation are inescapably bound in a cycle of seasons, locations and patterns of behaviour. In *Distinction*, for example, the chapter entitled 'The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles' proceeds as if the framework may be taken for granted, referring to *habitus* as 'necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions' (Bourdieu, 1986: 170). There is no attempt to establish the basis on which this disposition might be acquired and, more importantly given the thrust of his research, deployed or changed. Bourdieu treats each class

fraction as if its *habitus* were fixed and specific, despite devoting much space to documenting the changes of social meaning in, for example, tennis or golf, in the course of their adoption by successive generations and social classes.

In his depiction of the struggle for autonomy within the field of cultural production, a key factor is the degree to which position-takers are able to maintain their independence from the political and economic forces dominant in the broader 'field of power'. This allows them to impose their own norms and sanctions on those forces insofar as they impinge on the operations of the cultural field. Bourdieu describes this in terms of the possession of 'specific capital', in this case cultural capital. In terms of the overall social hierarchy, he places the literary or artistic field towards the dominant pole of the field of class relations, but at the negative (dominated) pole of the field of power within which it is contained (Bourdieu, 1993a: 38, Fig. 1). This position in the matrix of fields is consequential, not only to the extent that those participating in struggles within the field of cultural production tend to emerge from the 'dominated fraction of the dominant class' but also because the field-specific capital they possess is of value to the fractions struggling within the dominant class 'to impose the dominant principle of domination (that is to say – ultimately – the definition of human accomplishment)' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 41).

He fails to follow this line of thought in considering the impact of such struggles on the bodies of those who participate in them, or the shifts in patterns of embodiment brought about by institutional or other change. The notion of *habitus* and the notion of the field are based in quite different analyses and discrete metaphors of social action. That is, the notion of *habitus* derives from observation of a rural, traditional, monoculture, the notion of the field from studies of complex, competitive and individualistic modernity. The difference is reminiscent of

Durkheim's distinction between societies based on mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1972: 141-54). The outcome, I would argue, is a picture of the field of cultural production as the outcome of positions taken up by encultured but effectively disembodied agents⁸. Bourdieu showed some awareness of the problem, but did not directly address it, preferring to emphasise the 'ontological complicity' of '*habitus* and the field to which it is objectively adjusted' (Bourdieu, 1990: 107-08). He argued rather lamely that 'most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their *habitus*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). This leads him by default to a position where the possibility of change in *habitus* appears almost voluntarist. He claimed that 'agents become something like "subjects" only to the extent that they consciously master the relation they entertain with their dispositions. They can deliberately let them "act" or they can on the contrary inhibit them by virtue of consciousness' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 137). Given the detail in his original construction of the concept of *habitus*, his emphasis on its persistence and the depth at which the interaction of learned perception and bodily habits takes place, this is clearly unsatisfactory. Michel de Certeau accuses Bourdieu of violently imposing the 'fetish of the *habitus*' over his scrupulous and subtle early examinations of Kabyle practices and their logic. De Certeau presents this move as evidence of Bourdieu's concern 'less to indicate ... reality than to show ... the advantages of his hypothesis for the theory' (de Certeau, 1984: 59). I do not share de Certeau's disdain for Bourdieu's theoretical operations *per se*, but rather want to investigate the possibilities of a more nuanced notion of *habitus* as it might apply to fields of practice in complex contemporary societies. Does consciousness automatically spell the end of *habitus*? How is 'consciousness' acquired, and how simple a matter is it to 'inhibit' the dispositions of *habitus* or 'let them "act"'? Is it only possible to inhibit *habitus* once it is established, or can it be altered? Does an individual or group always work from only one 'original' set of

dispositions, or could a new set of dispositions also come to qualify as a *habitus*? In that case, must such an acquisition be seen as single and sequential? Is it feasible to think of a matrix of overlapping, even competing, *habitus* without losing the force of the concept?

These questions raise issues about the degree of integration and durability a set of dispositions must display in order to constitute a *habitus*. Bourdieu's characterisation of the operations of *habitus* remains unspecific in its relation to location and to temporality, in contrast to the well-known definition of socialisation offered by Berger and Luckman: 'The individual ... is not born a member of society. He [sic] is born with a predisposition to sociality, and becomes a member of society. In the life of every individual, therefore, there is a temporal sequence, in the course of which he is inducted into participation in the societal dialectic' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 149). While Bourdieu did discuss the ways in which *habitus* and its predispositions are played out over time through 'cycles of reciprocity' (Bourdieu, 1990: 98-111), he does not appear to have examined the ways in which behaviours and dispositions might be subject to sequential acquisition and dispersal, let alone contemporaneous contestation and change.

I want to ask how *habitus* can be identified across a field defined by patterns of contestation over legitimacy. Is one general *habitus* dominant, is there evidence for what might be called a residual common *habitus* across different contexts of practice, or can the establishment of *habitus* be observed to vary in characteristic ways? If theatrical performance practice does give rise to enduring and generative dispositions, are these indicative of the relative autonomy of such practice, or of its overdetermination by other social processes? How is a theatrical performance *habitus* instituted and changed? What is its relation to issues of embodiment encountered by social actors in the surrounding culture?

To what extent can the rehearsal room be viewed as a site of struggle over social, as well as aesthetic, persistence and change?

Performance in the Field of Cultural Production

I would like to present the body of the actor as a third term, which will make it possible to see more clearly the interaction between the sediment of *habitus*, and the differentiation of the cultural field in operation. I am interested to see whether it is possible to identify a specific *habitus* in the training and rehearsal practices of Australasian performers. I am also concerned to note the tensions that might appear and the ways in which differences and distinctions are played out across the bodies of performers, as they move between and negotiate across the dispositions that characterise/are characterised by the professional and social frames they inhabit.

In contemporary Australasia, performers work within a matrix of professional and cultural expectations which affects who they are, where they work, and what/who they (re)present. Within the general envelope of 'the culture industry', itself an ideologically-framed description of structures within the field of cultural production, distinctions can be made between mass/popular and 'high' cultural formations, between production organisations dependent on commercial or private finance and those reliant on government subsidy, and between 'professional', semi-professional, 'community' and amateur spheres of practice. Further distinctions are based on medium and performance modality – 'live performance' formations within 'the industry' are functionally and economically distinct from those employing analogue or digital storage mechanisms, although performers can and do move between formations. Initial performance training is available in institutional contexts founded in artform-based distinctions between physical and vocal skill sets, to authorise the production of, for example, dancers, musicians, singers,

actors and so on. Many performers, however, take extra-institutional classes across these artform boundaries and/or acquire further skills on the job through exposure to the work of other performers or as a result of the specific requirements of a particular production or company. While there are a number of specialists in each area, there is also a broader multi-skilled or generalist pool of performers who, through choice or necessity, employ different skill sets in different contexts (Throsby and Thompson, 1994: 33-35).

None of these subfields and crossings is neutral in terms of distinctions of taste and status. Within 'the industry', distinctions between different types of performers are often made on the basis of the performance genre that locates their particular skill set (comedians, dramatic actors, physical performers and so on). These distinctions are actively produced and defended. In practice, genres do become blurred, and performers often cross between them, and between live and other media, in the search for employment. 'Professional' performers may use their skills in both amateur and paid contexts, in cabaret and light entertainment, advertising, film and TV, as well as in non-'entertainment industry' work such as corporate training, sales and promotion. But the true generalist is rare. In this study, I will argue that, despite the blurring of boundaries, pools of performers tend to coalesce around particular matrices of practice, which take on the characteristics of subfields, each with its relation to the 'polar' dynamics of the field taken as a whole.

I have chosen to use the term 'performer' as a generic, in order to focus on performance in relation to theatre as a framing device, by means of which to investigate the relations of contemporary performance practice to its reference cultures. I have also chosen to employ the distinction between state-subsidised and other performance artists and organisations as a defining variable. My selection of field studies is neither exhaustive

nor comprehensive, but I have attempted to identify practice locations that can operate as markers of the contemporary extent of the field.

The advent of state patronage and policy intervention from the 1950s on had a profound effect on the form, content and frequency of theatrical production, and on the availability of formal performance training (Alomes, 1993). A consequential shift occurred in the selection of performers, the range and kind of representation required of them, and the processes of embodiment to which they were exposed. Prior to the establishment of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in 1954, and the Queen Elizabeth II Trust in New Zealand in 1964, audiences for the various performance genres were relatively unstructured in class terms. Theatrical presentation was bifurcated between popular commercial drama and music theatre, dominated by the productions of the big trans-Tasman Tait and Williamson theatre organisations and the Fuller vaudeville circuit, on the one hand, and the sporadic efforts of the amateur 'little theatre' movement on the other (see relevant entries in Parsons, P. 1995). The introduction of official cultural sponsorship in both countries, although independently initiated by local advocates and 'cultural entrepreneurs', was accompanied by a parallel ideological seachange, which brought with it an attempt to replicate the institutions and repertoire of European, and especially British, elite culture (Rowse, 1985: 6-14). In the theatre, this approach to the institution of public art patronage was dependent on a twinning of aesthetic conviction with the core criterion that subsidy should be directed primarily to undertakings that could not survive without it, on the argument that art should not and could not be subject to market forces. National training institutes were established in Sydney and Wellington, and 'mainstage' drama companies in provincial or state capitals in both countries. A new class of performance professionals, often educated middle-class in origin, arose from the 'little theatre' (see for example Hutton 1975; Caldwell, 2001), while the previously dominant commercial theatre organisations, which

also faced competition from film and the new medium of television, suffered swift decline.

Despite comprehensive moves toward privatisation of other government instrumentalities in both Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand from the 1980s, the principle of state subsidy for the arts (including national, local and, in Australia, State government sources) has continued to operate almost unchallenged. There are now significant national differences in the administration of funding. In Australia, the relative largesse which accompanied the foundation of the 'arms-length' Australia Council by the Whitlam Labor government in 1975 has been eroded. A straightforward coupling of high culture and nation-building (Rowse, 2001) has been problematised by successful moves to include minority and indigenous cultural activity in the state funding remit, in recognition of the policy shift from management to celebration of the nation's increasingly cosmopolitan makeup (Jupp, 2001)¹⁰. Following debates over the tension between excellence and access during the 1980s, provision for diversity was enhanced by the establishment of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). The Australia Council structure already included a somewhat embattled Community Arts Board¹¹, but added a Multicultural Advisory Committee along with specific policies on disability access, youth arts and community cultural development intended to apply across all Council activities. Nonetheless, it would be mistaken to assume that the elite cultural infrastructure has been decommissioned. Consistent efforts have been made to preserve the notion of excellence across cultural and class boundaries (Castles and Kalantzis, 1994). 'National' status performance organisations such as The Australian Ballet have been quarantined from competition to a certain extent through the formation of the Major Organisations Fund of the Australia Council, or, in the case of Opera Australia and the major State symphony orchestras, funded directly by the Federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DOCITA).

Recent efforts at a hierarchical classification of companies have privileged these and other supposedly 'global' or 'internationally competitive' companies for special support (Nugent et al, 1999: 24).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the QEII Council was replaced by direct government administration of arts funding with the establishment of Creative New Zealand: Arts Council of New Zealand/Toi Aotearoa in 1994. This body is the product of an official endorsement of biculturalism as a core definition of nationhood¹². Comprising three constitutive boards, the governing Arts Council, the Arts Board, and Te Waka Toi, a dedicated Maori Arts Board, together with the Arts Board's Pacific Arts Committee, Creative New Zealand was founded with a broad mandate which charges it to 'encourage, promote and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders', and recognises the arts as comprising 'all forms of creative and interpretive expression' (Government of New Zealand, 2002a). In practice, the Arts Board administers the largest funding allocation, a large proportion of which is directed to established professional arts organisations. Te Waka Toi directs its funding specifically to *tangata whenua* 'for Maori by Maori' cultural activities: applicants for theatre grants are advised that projects involving Maori artists aimed at general audiences should apply through the Arts Board.

The majority of funding decisions in both countries are notionally subject to open competition and peer review. In practice, decisions are buttressed by policy and precedents, which have the effect of constructing a highly selective competition for the legitimacy derived from becoming part of the officially-sanctioned cultural landscape, as well as controlling access to scarce financial resources. In Australia, funding decisions are made on the basis of published criteria which, while skewed towards notions of nationalism and 'excellence' – criteria tending to favour dominant cultural groups and 'high culture' traditions¹³ – also acknowledge the

importance of innovation, audience development, cultural diversity and outreach¹⁴. Successive published strategic priorities and government discussion papers have endorsed the principle that officially-sponsored culture should represent a spread of cultural differences including age, gender, ethnic origin and regional location. However, policy priorities have not merely shifted along a continuum from elitism towards democratisation¹⁵. As Deborah Stevenson points out, the release of the *Creative Nation* policy document by the Keating Labor government in 1994 signalled another key discursive shift. It endorsed an intrinsically contradictory agenda, which combined assumptions of the government's key role in arts subsidy with an emphasis on an economic role for the arts: 'Of primary significance is the positioning of the arts as a sector of the cultural industries. As an industry sector, the arts are required to generate economic and symbolic wealth and contribute generally to national prosperity. Indeed, nation, excellence and industry development meld to be the primary organising frames of contemporary national arts policy' (Stevenson, 2000: 2). The tensions between notions of excellence and the representation of diversity, and the justification of subsidy through a mix of metaphysical, economic and nationalist arguments, have continued to characterise government intervention in the arts, despite changes in political administration.

In this study, the detail of subsidy decisions and shifts in policy will not be a major focus; my concern is with the internal dynamics of enculturation and embodiment evident in the selected sites. But all the institutions and companies studied have been the recipients of government subsidy to a greater or lesser extent, and have thus been marked as more-or-less successful players in the national cultural field. While I agree broadly with Stevenson's contention that government/public intervention establishes an implicit hierarchy 'which privileges a minority of cultural practices and products as "art", whilst the rest are classified by implication as inferior or less serious forms of

entertainment' (Stevenson, 2000: 180), I am also interested in the strategies by means of which otherwise marginalised groups, organisations and tendencies/issues achieve public recognition, or become established in the organisational dynamics of publicly-recognised institutions, and in the spread of difference thereby framed as part of the cultural imaginary. The field studies have been chosen to illustrate the 'spread' of the field: whereas the two training institutions are national schools, important organs in the reproduction of dominant values and practices, the two companies are located towards the margins of officially-recognised practice. Both have received official funding and recognition, but not consistently, and have responded in different ways to the problem of accommodation with the regulatory implications of that funding. Gilgul Theatre, billed as 'Australia's first professional Jewish theatre company', is included as an example of an independent theatre company based in a non-English speaking background culture; the Women's Circus as an example of community-based, feminist, physical performance.

This investigation has been approached as a problem in Performance Studies, that is, with a focus on corporeally expressive interactions between participants in exchanges mediated through ostension. It is based on exchanges between participants in training and rehearsal interaction, an aspect of the performance process which has only recently received scholarly attention within Performance Studies, or from those working with notions of performance from the perspective of other human and/or cultural studies disciplines¹⁶. It also takes into account the discourses, practices and dispositions which inform those exchanges and the different 'keyings' (shifts of frame and attributions of significance) activated by the participants in their efforts to arrive at what Goffman termed a 'working consensus' of 'the definition of the situation' (Goffman, 1971::21). As different keyings and frames are operationalised, various available but otherwise latent elements within

the situation may be 'marked' or endowed with semiotic significance. As Peggy Phelan remarks, the politics of performance are indissolubly linked to ideologies of the visible (Phelan, 1993). The politics of performance processes are therefore inherently to do with semiotisation, the strategies whereby phenomena are privileged or suppressed as available to perception by directing attention, shaping the gaze.

The methodological approach I have employed is indebted to Bourdieu's notion of self-reflexive sociology, to Goffman's dramaturgical sociology and to research methods which acknowledge the subjects of enquiry as co-investigators. Two levels of 'site' therefore receive attention: the individual or organism (performer, teacher, director or trainer); and the more or less persistent group or institution. A mix of ethnography, field observation, semiotic analysis and interpretive analysis of interviews with subject/participants has been employed. I have also in each case identified key traditions of practice and discourse 'at play' in the observed sites, and provided an account of the pressures and expectations affecting the pattern of positions available/positions taken up. The aim has been to elucidate tacit as well as overt factors, discursive as well as physiologically-based processes affecting the production of the performance *habitus*. The mixed methodology chosen is unashamedly qualitative in bias: my interest lies in observing the interaction between practices, meanings, values and their contexts and consequences, rather than in arriving at a neat, discipline-based, theoretical 'fit'. I assume subjects and their social contexts are both dynamic and subject to change. Because actors are both theatre professionals and social persons, I assume there will be a continual interplay between the theatre context, the performers' context(s) of origin and their other acquired commitments and habits. I do not assume that the sites under observation can be treated as microcosms of 'society', but rather that, since it is the performer's job to embody meaning in a way that facilitates the attention and response of spectators, dynamic tensions tacit in other contexts are

here likely to be explicitly negotiated, or at least more evident to the observer. American theatre director Robert Wilson has said that 'what I try to set up in the theatre is a situation where I can hear, and where I can see' (Cole, 1992: 160). From this perspective the performer, seen and seeing, acting and acted upon, may be considered as a litmus test for the way processes of social change become visible: the cultural body *par excellence*.

Theatrical performance practices are complex, both as a matter of practical accomplishment and as a subject for theoretical speculation and analysis. It has, therefore, been my intention to select a level and direction of enquiry that will allow these theoretical frameworks to be tested in the light of evidence, and to select sites that are sufficiently circumscribed to allow for complexities to be addressed. In the field studies, the methodology has been broadly similar, but with some variation as a result of chronology and response to particular circumstances. Each case study attempts a survey and analysis of activity undertaken by one cohort of performers within a specified time frame, although involving more than one period of observation or interview. Each draws on background material from previous studies where available, but also relies extensively on: newspaper articles and government statistics; field material derived from direct observation of class work and rehearsal; and interviews (formal and informal) with actors, teachers/tutors/trainers and artistic directors. Each study also refers to bodies of literature relevant to the intermediate theoretical perspective adopted, so as to contextualise the cultural analysis undertaken. The location of each site within the broader field of cultural production, its relations with reference cultures and the sociocultural forces which, at the time of observation, appeared to exert the most significant effects on its productive and reproductive processes, are taken into account.

In each study, I have attempted to include consideration of key phases in the 'life cycle' of the performer, asking questions about processes of recruitment, selection, induction and enculturation, and seeking to establish the significant criteria in operation during each phase. I was unable to observe all these processes directly in every case: where not present I have sought to reconstruct them, supported by the participants' observations and opinions in retrospect. I have also sought to identify the internal dynamics of each institution or group treated as a field in miniature, in order to assess how differences of discourse and practice, different position-takings and different claims to power operated on the participants and their processes of embodiment. Finally, I have attempted to evaluate the factors which, at both an individual/organism and at a structural level, contributed to the persistence or dispersal of the institution or group and the level of durability of the *habitus* it engendered.

I have proceeded on the basis of certain assumptions about theatrical performance practice, some of which are undoubtedly coloured by my own enculturation as a performance practitioner. I have occupied a variety of roles during nearly forty years of involvement in performance practice and during the course of this study had the advantage, and the burden, of personal and professional connections in each of the studied sites. I received my training as a theatre director at NIDA. I have personal friends and professional colleagues among the staff at Toi Whakaari, the staff and participants of the Womens Circus, and the members of Gilgul Theatre. I was a member of the Melbourne Women's Theatre Group in the 1970s and for several years, including the period of my field observation, served on the Board of Management of Footscray Community Arts Centre, the Circus' host body. I therefore have an intimate understanding of some of the positions and perspectives under analysis, although of course by no means all. I am convinced that the perspective afforded me has allowed access to a richness of detail

otherwise practically inaccessible: I have also been aware of the problems such potential lack of distance can cause for the participant-observer (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). I have therefore attempted to put into practice Bourdieu's recommendations with regard to reflexive observation and to adopt an observational ethic derived from Goffman's dramaturgical approach. That is, I have endeavoured to combine Goffman's preference for both systematic and unsystematic observation with a strategic use of performance perspective and framing as a tool. Recognising that performances emanate from audience, observers and co-participants, as well as those nominated as 'performers', I have tried to ensure that I have sourced information from each key perspective identifiable in the interactions under observation, checking for patterns of confirmation and dissonance.

In addressing the links between the performance frame and training and rehearsal behaviours, I have assumed a primary role for perceptual pleasure and culturally-informed desire in shaping both the relation of the eventually present audience to the performance and the performer's body, and the relation of the performer to their work, which will always be tacitly undertaken in readiness for the act of exposure. These relations are complex: whereas film theory, and in particular feminist film theorists, have concentrated on deconstructing the problematic of visual pleasure in its imbrication with the dominance of the male gaze (de Lauretis, 1984; Mulvey, 1989), performance theorists have attempted to address the multiplicity of desiring relations active in the space/time of performance. Peta Tait argues that the staging of the self, even one that is 'becoming' or unfolding, implies flesh in motion, asking: 'What is resistant to reduction if it is not the body in action, its unfolding live fleshed physicality?' (Tait, 2000: 64). Others have emphasised the metaphorical status of the performer-as-fleshed-ideal. Whatever their corporeal actuality, the performer in the space of performance is a liminal entity, a (re)presentation of a fantasy, subject to both idealisation and

critical assessment of their worth as an approximation of culturally-inscribed values. These values may include overt attributes such as race, body shape and gender, and the tacitly positive or negative value ascribed to them, as well as those covert attributes naturalised into the *illusio* of taste, such as 'beauty', 'grace', 'talent' or 'truth'. They may be ascribed/inscribed or invoked by the performers and their 'in-frame' assessors as well as by audience members or critics. This scopic economy is not necessarily weighted one way: while a level of artifice, or in Goffman's terms 'impression management', is part of a performer's stock in trade, Philip Auslander also points to the dynamic potential inherent in the struggle of transgression and recuperation sparked by the interchange between women stand-up comedians and their audiences (Auslander, 1997: 108-25). Adrian Kiermander pairs Bakhtin's concept of the 'classical body' with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of bodies as components of desiring-machines, to arrive at a dynamic evocation of the exchange-patterns of desire in performance: 'this creates a way of seeing live performance as a complex of intertwined desiring-machines ... articulated reciprocally around scopophilia, empathy and libido, and the need for response in the forms of laughter, applause, silence, and adulation ... [feedback] further intensified by the uncertain and continuous two-way migrations of nomadic subjectivity between actor-machines and character-machines' (Kiermander, 2000: 131-32). Other scopic relations, and other interpersonal dynamics, come into play in the training workshop or rehearsal room, where the dialectic of gaze and desire is simultaneously deferred and redoubled in the scrutiny of the performer's body by teacher or director, and the exquisitely fine somatic awareness of their own bodies and emotions developed by performers who simultaneously engage in a nuanced surveillance of the bodies of co-present others. But the performer-audience 'contract' of desire is implicit as an overarching frame even when, as in the case of 'alternative' performers such as the members of Gilgul or the Womens Circus, it is explicitly denied as a motive for selecting bodies or material.

I have also assumed that performers are made, not born. Even where castes of entertainers exist, where race or gender distinctions approach the absolute, or where other circumstances make it likely that inheritance and not simply predilection will largely determine membership of the profession of player, there will be a process of selection to determine which members of the caste, category or family are most likely to make successful performers. This will be followed by a period of apprenticeship in which a battery of skills is acquired and aptitude further tested. Performance skills training generally selects from, builds on and refines attributes, dispositions and behaviours found more broadly in the societies from which performers originate. The particular selection/combination of desired attributes and acquired skill, their degree of variation from 'everyday' behaviours, the length of time the skills take to acquire, the length of a career (including age-specific role allocation and age at retirement) and the degree to which gender determines training practices and outcomes is, however, culturally specific, and displays a high level of variation between traditions and genres of performance, and cultures of origin and reference. The relations, processes and institutions by means of which performers are trained in their profession, and inducted into the skills, habits, and dispositions expected of them, also vary markedly depending on context and location. Across cultures, what distinguishes performers from other artists and craft workers is that their own bodies are both the medium for their practice and the object of its production. Insofar as the (re)presentational and (re)productive functions of theatre are concentrated through and by means of the bodies of performers, my assumption is that an investigation of the extent to which these bodies themselves constitute borders and contested fields of play, and the degrees of freedom they can exert in taking up positions within the various fields of practice they occupy, should provide crucial information as to the actual current configuration of the field of theatrical

performance practice in Australasia. I have therefore looked for situations where bodies, boundaries, values, beliefs and modes of practice are at issue in each of the case study locations, in order to identify the strategies employed by the agents operating within them, and evaluate the structural and dispositional factors operating to produce the behaviours I observe. I am sceptical of Bourdieu's characterisation of the field of consecrated culture as dominant and monolithic, and of his relegation of theatre as a peculiarly unsophisticated remnant of the heteronomous 'etc.' to which he consigns it. I argue, rather, that the establishment of *habitus* is itself an important and contested element within a contested field and that it is possible to identify several overlapping or competing *habitus* in the sites under investigation, reflecting the contemporary dynamics of the field of theatre practice as part of the broader field of cultural production and in its relations with the field of power.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework: Frames of Performance

The theoretical framework employed in this study has been drawn from a range of traditions of enquiry and bodies of literature. Nonetheless, the logic of the research process has resulted in an engagement that in many cases refracts rather than reflects the research trajectory followed by the authors discussed. The choice of methodology has been shaped by debates in Performance Studies and informed by developments in cultural and social theory. Bourdieu and Goffman have been particularly important in suggesting problems and in providing starting points for subsequent investigation. Feminist scholarship is also relevant, as are recent discussions of globalisation, nationalism and postcolonial cultural politics in the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout, theoretical choices have been made as a result of an engagement with the ways notions of performance and performativity have been taken up in recent theory. The potential and limitations of these approaches have been considered in the light of the evidence from the case study material.

I am interested in what performers do and in how they and those around them speak about what they are doing. I take into account the webs of practice (selection processes, physical exercises and other craft practices) that make up preparation for public performance and training for the business of being 'a performer' or 'an actor', that is, a person who acquires particular sets of skills in order to engage in the occupation of being looked at within the defined time and space of a formally constituted performance. I want to locate the deliberate and incidental changes induced in the bodies and behaviours of performers during training and by means of the exchanges taking place in the process of rehearsal. However, my interest extends beyond the workshop or rehearsal frames, to take account of the culture(s) and fields of practice within which they operate. I want to assess the ways performers' bodies,

and their performance vocabularies and vehicles, reflect and are affected by attitudes, assumptions, and economic and social relations at play in their reference cultures, that is, the institutional and cultural constituencies which directly impinge on their work and affect its chances of continuing. I am interested in how successfully or unsuccessfully-sustained attempts at shaping performers' bodies and subjectivities intersect with the way bodies and selves are presented, or prevented from presentation, in the surrounding culture(s) for which their performances are designed. Finally, I want to identify how performers' bodies operate as symbolic markers in the public sphere, vehiculating dominant, oppositional, marginal or transgressive images and narratives at issue in the representational economy in its relations with the contemporary field of power.

I am persuaded by the argument of Henri Giroux that: 'As old borders and zones of cultural difference become more porous or eventually collapse, questions of culture increasingly become interlaced with the issues of power, representation and identity. Dominant cultural traditions ... are now interrogated as ideological battleheads used to police and contain subordinate groups, oppositional discourses and dissenting social movements ...' (Giroux cited in Threadgold, 1995: 172). I want to find out what an interrogation of theatrical performance practice will reveal in this regard.

As a scholar/practitioner/researcher, I would situate myself within the field of Performance Studies, but social and cultural theory informs this thesis in ways which place its perspective and concerns at a tangent to tendencies of scholarship currently dominant in this field. I have sought to use my professional as well as academic experience and interests to frame the approach taken. I have chosen to investigate relationships between the theatre and the world so as both to use and to query the distinctions set up by folk/craft notions and by traditional scholarship. I

want to discover how these relationships are constituted in practice through the bodies of performers, and in what dynamic ways they are made and unmade. I am particularly interested in the dispositions and conventions that constitute the boundaries between 'theatre' and 'the world' in the sites I have chosen to study. This makes it necessary to destabilise the status of formal aesthetic performance as the object of both the professional and the scholarly gaze. It has also been necessary to interrogate my own conduct as a researcher and to attempt a methodological approach that takes into account both the insights of the 'insider' and the distance of the 'outsider'. This investigation is therefore neither a standard documentation and analysis of preparations for a theatre performance, such as might be found in Theatre or Performance Studies, nor a dissertation on critical theory, a traditional sociological study, a participant-observer field study or a critical feminist reworking of existing investigative approaches, although I draw on elements from each of these.

This chapter will focus on three related epistemological and methodological problems: questions of embodiment (habit, *habitus* and the limits of performativity); the relations between performers and others; and the ubiquity of theatrical metaphor. It also touches on issues of gender, culture and the problem of globalisation.

Questions of Embodiment

As to the first, the theoretical lines of enquiry followed here may be traced to Marcel Mauss's classic essay 'Techniques of the Body' (Mauss, 1992), which poses the conundrum of the persistence of habit through a series of paradoxes. He asks: why are some habits so hard to alter while others appear to shift almost instantaneously? His discussion begins by noticing that apparently natural and fundamental modes of behaviour such as swimming, walking or even sleeping are in fact social phenomena, subject to a great deal of variation not just between

individuals but 'especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, types of prestige'. He uses the Latin term *habitus* to elucidate the study of what he insists is 'the work of collective and individual practical reason' (Mauss, 1992: 458). He surmises that the specificity of these behaviours are the result of a 'technical education', which tends to produce co-ordinated 'ensembles' of behaviour, not simply an *ad hoc* jumble or a template picked up by means of imitation. He notes that ensembles or 'symbolic assemblages' of behaviour, and particular behavioural variants, are organised by sex, age, status and social group, and that conventions govern their production and reception according to context: 'Everything in us all is under commend ... we have a set of permissible or impermissible, natural or unnatural attitudes. Thus, we should attribute different values to the act of staring fixedly [in different circumstances]' (Mauss, 1992: 462). Nevertheless, these ensembles have not necessarily been consciously acquired - 'technical action, physical action, and magicoreligious action are confused for the actor' (Mauss, 1992: 461) - and may be remarkably resistant to alteration through conscious intervention. Therefore, for Mauss, the study of body techniques is not simply a matter of assessing the technical efficiency of their transmission but of understanding the traditions that result in the making of a certain gesture and not a certain other gesture: 'There are grounds for studying all the modes of training, imitation and especially those fundamental fashions that can be called the "modes of life," the *modes*, the *tonus*, the matter, the manners, the way' (Mauss, 1992: 465). Among the examples Mauss gives of resistance to the acquisition of new habit is his own inability to change a clumsy way of swimming; and the difficulties he had trying to teach a young girl, who was the first person in her family to learn how to spit: 'I gave her four sous per spit. As she was saving up for a bicycle, she learned how to spit' (Mauss, 1992: 472). Conversely, he noticed that girls in post-World War I New York and Paris were simultaneously and spontaneously manifesting new modes of walking learned from American movies.

Bourdieu's formulation of the character and constitution of *habitus* owes much to Mauss, although Bourdieu shifts emphasis from the acquisition of technique to the concept of the generative disposition. Mauss' essay presents intriguing problems of immediate relevance to a study of theatrical performance practice. Performers undergo a corporeal education which is both directly technical and indirectly contextual. It is their business to be able to produce appropriate 'symbolic assemblages' or behavioural ensembles dependent on the context of performance, which may vary in significant ways from behaviours they produce as their ordinary social selves. On the other hand, performance conventions are themselves social, and very much subject to the variations of 'educations, proprieties and prestige' noted by Mauss. The essay was helpful in distinguishing between habit *per se* and its organisation in *habitus*. It allowed me to discount the relevance to this study of attempts at a general kinematic taxonomy (Birdwhistell, 1970) and provided a clearer approach to the contextualisation of organised behaviours than afforded, for example, by Michael Argyle's work in the social psychology of expressive communication (Argyle, 1988). Mauss' insistence on generalising from specific examples and his acknowledgement of the interdependence of conscious and other learning processes as produced by and productive of social action also provided much clearer support for a project based on field study than other recent approaches to embodiment, such as Foucault's 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988) or Guattari's suggestion of the social as consisting of 'collective apparatuses of subjectivation' (Guattari, 1992: 18).

The need to determine, not simply an appropriate theoretical frame but an appropriate methodological perspective, led me away from many of the approaches to actor training currently competing for adherents. Actor training and its constituent disciplines, including scene study, improvisation, voice, movement and characterisation, constitute a hotly

contested subfield in its own right, which operates semi-autonomously from other processes of production and reproduction. One currently important source of contestation is over allegiance to 'industry' or 'avant-garde' models of theatrical performance practice, broadly identified as distinguishing mimetic and non-mimetic modes of performance composition and presentation. With its emphasis on physical aptitude and non-verbal communicative modes, avant-garde practice produces, at least in theory, a quite different configuration of the performer, the content and style of performance, the set of performance skills required and the understanding the performer has of their own relationship to their audience from that promoted by the dominant industry model. Those attached to the avant-garde claim what amounts, in Foucault's terms, to an epistemic shift (Foucault, 1973) in the style, modes of realisation and sources of support of art theatre.

The attention given to non-mimetic or non-representational performance, particularly by North American commentators (Phelan, 1993; Auslander, 1997; Diamond, 1997; Phelan and Lane, 1998), might lead the casual reader of academic literature to conclude that its triumph has been complete in the late twentieth century. In reality, this is far from the case, particularly amongst institutions servicing 'mainstream' theatre, film and TV production, where the dominant narrative and performance modes remain resolutely representational¹. 'Industry' oriented training regimes for theatre, film and TV are commonly based on a market-driven discursive economy, in which stylistic criteria are overlaid with technical, organisational and economic considerations. It is tempting to read the contest between the two discursive and practice formations as generational. But I would argue that both present as strongly globalised modes of cultural production, each espousing a canon, the stakes being the preservation of an autonomous pole of elite cultural production within the field of theatrical performance. In practice, each is also

composed of an assemblage of positions that engage in more exchange and exert more mutual influence than the rhetoric would suggest.

Whereas the performance practices of the 'industry' mainstream depend on the reiteration of standardised narrative, language and character conventions and on established hierarchies and divisions of labour, the avant-garde provides performance makers with a far broader creative canvas. In Australasia, forms of practice derived from the Anglophone literary dramatic tradition are still sanctified at a national level through government subsidy, although this has been eroded to the point where mainstage companies are afforded little protection from economic forces (Stevenson, 2000: 16). The avant-garde offers the added attraction of a competitive edge for local work in an international arena. Physical and image-based theatre does not depend on linguistic translation for its reception. It can therefore be more easily exported and is more likely to be perceived as new, even exotic, than are the productions of the heretofore established mainstream, which may be seen by critics in the globalised metropolitan centres as provincial or derivative (Romeril, 1994). The rise of a locally based avant-garde, and the admission of these practices into pre-professional training in mainstream Australasian drama schools, has produced dynamic tensions in the overall field of theatrical performance practice which will be explored in the individual case studies.

Despite several decades of theatrical nationalism in both Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, recognisably local variants of performer training are not yet securely established. One interest of this study is the extent to which such variants are currently under development. The techniques and literatures in use in both countries are mainly drawn from sources in the Northern Hemisphere. Flagship drama schools such as NIDA are modelled on equivalent schools in the British tradition, which still occupy a position of prestige derived from the cachet accorded British

productions of spoken word drama in English, despite the decline of British influence in the general culture. In this tradition, the student's training in techniques of physical and vocal expression is contextualised with reference to the demands of the Anglophone literary and dramatic canon, with success in Shakespearean performance the key indicator marking both cultural and technical competence in the graduating actor. In regimes of vocal training linked to this tradition, a shift in sensibility has occurred over the past fifty years from an emphasis on the 'correct' enunciation of speech to an emphasis on release, spontaneity, expressivity and the 'organic' integration of vocal work with other body-based modes of expression. A similar shift has occurred in other areas of training, particularly those influenced by regimes linked to avant-garde practice, although it should be emphasised that the appeal to 'nature' is very much a cultural construction, and that learning release and improvisation involves the acquisition of specific clusters of learned performance skills, with their own situated conventions, strategies and procedures. Particularly in the movement area, a major problem has been the degree to which performer training has developed from an amalgam of techniques borrowed from other disciplines and traditions. This was noted by Stanislavski when formal actor training began in the Western theatre at the turn of the 20th century (Stanislavski, 1980: 80-90) and is still at issue in current practice. As Jean Sabatine remarks: 'mime, ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, T'ai Chi, karate, physical education, rolfing, fencing, stage combat, approaches like the Alexander technique and effort-shape, and so on ... almost all the pioneers and teachers of movement for actors began as students of these disciplines because there were no programs targeted for actors; they had to find elements of training they could adapt to the task ... but none of these disciplines is movement for actors' training in and of themselves' (Sabatine, 1995: 14). Efforts to develop dedicated techniques of physical training for performers proliferated from the 1920s onward, often associated with the practice of particular creator/innovators such as Meyerhold (Braun,

1998b; Braun, 1998a), Brecht (Willlett, 1964) and Grotowski (Grotowski, 1969; Kumiega, 1987).

Performance training linked to the avant-garde, including that carried out within academies associated with established traditions of tertiary education, is resolutely transcultural in tone. From the early 20th century, it was decisively affected in Europe and the United States by contact with 'the East' (Bharucha, 1996), in particular by the integrated approaches to physical and spiritual development evident in both theatrical and non-theatrical body regimes in the Indian subcontinent, China and Japan. Sabatine's list does not include yoga, but this was included from as early as Stanislavski's experiments. Yoga and other 'Eastern' body regimes have been prominent in training techniques from the 1970s onward, particularly in America (Brown, 1972; Brown, 1976) where a major impulse of the avant-garde has been the attempt to escape from the stranglehold of mimetic naturalism associated with 'The Method' promulgated by Lee Strasberg and other competing strands of Stanislavskian acting (see Auslander, 1997: 28-36), also (Blum, 1984; Strasberg, 1989). They also appear in the work of vocal teachers such as Kristin Linklater (Linklater, 1976). In recent years, the mutual influence of Western and Asian traditions has given birth to hybrid forms, such as *butoh*, and led to the inclusion of selected 'Asian' figures like Tadashi Suzuki amongst influential trainer/creators (Suzuki, 1986), as well as controversially affecting the approach to training and repertoire of theatre makers such as Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine (Carlson, 1996a; Kiernander and Mnouchkine, 1996). The 'physical turn' in Western actor training, particularly that associated with avant-garde and physical theatre in Europe and the United States, remains marked by an uncritical Orientalism (Bharucha, 1993), as well as by the appropriation and reinvention of European popular theatre traditions such as *commedia dell'arte* (Saint-Denis, 1982; Rudlin, 1994) and mime (Dennis, 1995), which feature the generation of performance material through

improvisation (Frost and Yarrow, 1990). One of its defining features is an emphasis on the corporeality of the performer, and on rigorous training practices which de-emphasise speech in favour of physical, vocal and emotional expressivity. But what Mauss termed *magico-religious* action, distinguished by appeals to 'holistic' notions of integration, spirituality and the organic, is as much a feature of physical training for performance as are rigorous regimes of technique acquisition (Richards, T., 1995; Callery, 2001). The flows and eddies of contest, intersection and interconnection between these practices and the ideologies of embodied expression that accompany them are remarkably complex. They deserve study in themselves, but a comprehensive critical history of Western actor training, and even an adequate account of its reception in Australasia, would be an immense undertaking outside the scope of the present study. It is possible to distinguish the more instrumental and less overtly ideological/rhetorical approaches to performer training practised in 'mainstream' drama academies (Mekler, 1989) from the schools and tendencies owing their existence to particular charismatic figures (O'Connor, 2001). But the particular emphases, and the actualities of practice, are likely to vary significantly from one teacher to another and from one context to another; it would be premature to make distinctions on this basis alone. In terms of this study, it seemed more appropriate to note the configurations and traditions of training present in the particular sites, and to evaluate the practices and interpretive frames deployed by site participants, than to attempt an encyclopaedic account of all the strands and traditions which might be encountered in the course of the research.

A similar logic dictated my decision to decline an extended engagement with the practices and theoretical literature of contemporary dance. Contemporary Performance Studies acknowledges art and other dance traditions as an important segment of the horizon of the performative. In many cultures the conventional boundaries between Western

performance disciplines are either unknown or differently configured; contemporary dance theorists and dance ethnologists have in many ways led the recent refiguration of thinking about relations between bodies and cultures. I am sympathetic to Susan Leigh Foster's call for an approach to theorising and talking about bodies that takes different ways of knowing into account: 'recent critical writing[s] about the body ... seldom address the body I know; instead, they move quickly past arms, legs, torso and head on their way to a theoretical agenda that requires something unknowable or unknown as an initial premise. The body remains mysterious and ephemeral, a convenient receptacle for their new theoretical positions' (Foster, 1992: 480). Dance theory has mounted an effective challenge to Western cultural and intellectual assumptions of the separation of mind and body. Its application of phenomenology to problems of the articulation of the lived experience of embodiment (Fraleigh, 1987), its insistence on the status of the body as simultaneously a political, cultural, aesthetic and physical entity (Foster, 1995) and its persistence in finding new ways to record and express non-verbal concepts and compositional principles (Todd, 1978; Tufnell and Crickmay, 1990) attest to its importance to the development of performance theory as a whole. There are certainly productive opportunities for dialogue between performance theorists with a focus on theatre, those with a focus on dance, and other social and cultural theorists, as well as with those tracking the concerns of performance artists and other artists of the body. In Australia, such a dialogue has been undertaken on various occasions in the journal *Writings on Dance* - see for example the exchange in issue 11/12 on movement, spectatorship, bodies and identities (Diprose, 1994/95; Gardner, 1994/95; Gibbs, 1994/95; Rothfield, 1994/95). Nevertheless, the specifics of dance theory and its concern with particular embodied histories and particular shifts in style and sensibility lead in other directions than those attempted here: I have found more immediately applicable material in other areas of enquiry referenced by both dance and theatrical performance theorists.

Working critically within the phenomenological tradition, feminist theorists such as Judith Butler (Butler, 1990a; Butler, 1990b; Butler, 1993) and Elizabeth Grosz (Gross, 1986; Grosz, 1994) have been influential in recognising previously naturalised behaviours, such as gender behaviours, as contingent and performative². Grosz in particular has queried the notion of embodied subjectivity as unitary or monolithic, suggesting the co-presence of zones of embodied image-based or narrative structuration and emphasising the volatility rather than the persistence of bodies and the shape of their performances. Butler suggests a radical use of the phenomenological doctrine of constitutive acts, which takes the social agent as object rather than subject of the constitutive process: 'in this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency ... rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity insituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*' (Butler, 1990b: 270). Her account of the performativity of gender as citational, iterative and defended by social sanction to the point of being compulsory has, however, been criticised by feminist theatre theorists as relying too heavily on the linguistic and on the social mask of 'camp' (Dolan, 1988). Feminist theorists with exposure to performance practice argue for a greater appreciation of the intransigence of the body and the ways images, discourses and experience interact at a deeply corporeal level. Elaine Aston (Aston, 1999b) has argued that Butler's account of gender results, on the one hand, in a sense of social performance as being about masks or surfaces that could simply be 'shed' and, on the other, in a discursive position which takes too little account of how actual performance practices might be used to explore the making and unmaking of performed bodies and selves. Jeanie Forte brings together French feminist theory, Spivak's analysis of material oppressions of the female body and Elaine Scarry's work on the body in pain to speculate about the potential of a feminist theatre praxis which acknowledges both pain and pleasure (Forte, 1992). Terry Threadgold echoes Mauss'

reminder of persistent corporeal resistance to changes in habit when she asks: 'Just how easy is it to perform the self differently?' (Threadgold, 1999: 174). The debate between Butler and her critics provides a series of suggestive points from which to ask questions about techniques of performance and the acquisition of *habitus*, in terms of the efficacy of embodied learning processes. Very little evidence is available on the mediation of changes in adult secondary socialisation. This research will attempt to recast the traditional binary of seeing the social as enduring, the actor as protean, by looking at the conditions under which performers alter aspects of their embodiment and subjectivity, during regimes of training and rehearsal, and the intersection of such processes with changes in the surrounding social context. Attention is paid to the difficulties encountered during these processes, both for the performers and for co-present others, and there is an attempt to assess the degree to which resulting changes might be expected to endure.

Performers and Others

Relations between performers and others in contemporary Western cultures are inevitably mediated not only by contexts of practice, but by the overdetermining effect of the images and discourses which constitute the theatre frame. This study seeks to analyse particular sites of theatrical performance practice in order to identify modes of embodiment at issue in the cultures within which the performers operate and to which they refer. As a consequence, the way in which terms such as 'performance', 'drama' and 'the theatre' are conceptualised and used assumes major importance. In each case, I would argue that *definition* is less important than clarification of the epistemological framework employed³. These terms are amenable to a wide variety of usages and are instantiated in multiple ways. I wish to acknowledge the range of practices that may be counted as *instances* and am certainly interested in identifying the overlap of practices that pertain between them. Throughout this study, I

will treat the terms as sharing a sufficient number of characteristics to allow them to be treated as part of the same conceptual set and the practices to which they refer to be classifiable as examples of the same kinds of behavioural phenomena.

I assume 'performance' to stand as the more general term, used in the abstract as descriptive of a class of phenomena, and will refer to '(a) performance/s' to mean actual instances of shaped performance behaviours or performance *events*. I wish to avoid excursions into the connotative fields occupied by notions that metaphorise achievement in one sense or another, and to concentrate on performance in its conative sense, that is, as purposeful embodied practice. I will use 'performance' to refer to sequences of enacted behaviours across a range of social and/or aesthetic contexts, which may occasion both expressive and effective outcomes. Such sequences are expressive to the extent that they are shaped for presentation before an audience by a 'performer' or 'performers' (even if, in the limit case, the position of audience is imagined and/or taken up by the performer in an act of self-reflection). They are meaningful to the extent that they are made available for acts of reception and interpretation by one or more observers (even where, in the limit case, the performer is unaware of scrutiny). They are effective to the extent that they impact on other frameworks of interpretation, other behaviours and the outcome of events both within and outside the immediate context of performance.

It is safe to say that the greatest proportion of human performance probably occurs in more or less consensual circumstances, that is, where performers are aware that there is or may be an audience for their activity, made up of spectators who are in turn aware that the performers' actions are being shaped for their benefit. Under these circumstances, the audience reception of and response to the performance becomes an integral and even constitutive element of the overall performance, as

action and response together determine the context, form, consistency and duration of the ensuing sequence. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman's initial picture of social interaction recognised performances as emanating both from particular participants and from 'audience, observers and co-participants' (Goffman, 1971: 27). He later distinguished 'three crucial roles on the basis of function: those who perform; those performed to; and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it' (Goffman, 1971: 144). The limits of performance, and the 'reach' of a performance, differentiating those who are either not involved or who do not consider themselves to be addressed, are clearly important considerations. Within the performance frame, this study is most concerned with distinctions between: audience - those addressed by and helping to sustain a performance, who generally abide by conventions limiting the extent to which their response contributes to the material presented; co-participants - those whose response will most directly affect the performance; and observers or bystanders - those whose perspective allows them to watch a performative action or interaction, without becoming directly involved in sustaining it. Within that framework are comprehended an enormous number of possible social and spatial configurations, made even more complex by the fact that these positions may be occupied by single persons or by groups, and may be adopted, dropped, swapped, or even occupied simultaneously by any or all participants in a performance sequence.

More-or-less consensual performative circumstances usually imply the co-presence of performers, audience and bystanders. The development and increasing adoption of visual and aural storage media, capable of preserving elements of performance behaviours over time and/or transmitting them over space, constitutes a new arena for performance, which has spurred a major reassessment of the extent to which co-presence can count as is its precondition. Co-presence must now stand as a marker of one particular kind or class of performance situation. Some

of the other ways in which kinds and genres of performance might be differentiated are discussed below.

In his article 'The Semiotics of Theatrical Performance' (Eco, 1977) Umberto Eco claimed *ostension* to be a sufficient condition for the performance moment. He used the example of a drunk exposed as a public warning by the Salvation Army to illustrate the point that a performance is created by means of the act of showing, even when the performer is not capable of a performative intention. I would argue that this example actually conflates two separate conditions or frames of performance. The unwitting drunk participates in both. Members of the public may notice the drunk's behaviour. As soon as one person stops to watch, their gaze and the spatial relation they establish to the drunk creates a performance frame⁴. This behaviour provides a cue which may attract others to do likewise: the more watchers, the more defined the performance situation in its proxemics and other spatial relations, in the functional separation between performer and spectators, and in communication between spectators as to the formation of a collective attitude toward the person being rendered into the performer. However, it is only with the intervention of the Salvation Army, who seize upon the drunk and show him to the audience *as an example of something*, that a particular performance genre is evoked, in this case, that of theatre. Ostension is therefore vitally important as a marker, but neither intention nor ostension is sufficient to shape a performance. Should the performance dynamics flow another way - should the drunk be recognised as the incarnation of a god by the crowd, or seized upon and taken away for trial or punishment - the situation might instead be marked as a ritual, and the ritual itself characterised as sacred or instrumental, effective or entertaining, according to the prevailing situational definition. In each case, the shape of the performance and its consequences will be very different, especially for the drunk. In the abstract, then, the particular shape a performance assumes should not be

treated as a given, but as a key framing device subject to interactive adjustment. The performer will also be a good deal more active than Eco's hapless drunk in most performance situations. In the context of performer training and rehearsal interaction, the influence of an idealised or implied spectator may influence the shaping of the work, but a 'nest' of audience positions will be assumed by immediate co-participants, other observers and institutional authorities. Their values and dispositions are important mediating factors in the production and presentation of the performer, with real effects on the shape and frame the eventual performance acquires.

Within the wide horizon of performance situations, the structural and processual shape of any one event or class of events is crucially dependent on the habituated behaviours of performers and observers/attendants/audience/spectators. Exposure to the conventions of a particular genre or tradition of performance will strongly colour the expectations, and therefore the interpretive framework, of those familiar with it. In certain circumstances, performance-framing conventions become formalised and even institutionalised (Burns, E., 1972). 'Theatre' is one such strongly informing tradition, associated with a variety of conventional and institutional formations subject to . . . historical, local and regional variation. In what follows, I use 'theatre' to refer to formal aesthetic performance forms, taking place within specified time/space boundaries and marked by conventions differentiating performers and spectators in role, behaviour and spatial relationships, and to the worlds of practice which accompany them. Theatre as we know it was a Greek invention, tied to the specific traditions of 'drama', and developed and sustained largely as a set of cultural objects particular to and defining of European (including Eastern European and later American) civilisation. In recent usage it has broadened to encompass both non-Western and non-dramatic aesthetic performance forms, but narrowed in order to distinguish between the processes and practices involved in the

performance event, as opposed to the formal and literary concerns of dramatic analysis. 'Drama' may then be situated as a subset of 'theatre', which is itself a subset of 'performance'.

The Ubiquity of Theatrical Metaphor

A major problem for academic analysis of performance is the extent to which the conventions of the European theatre persist as a template, both as informing image and as a powerful means by which the perspective of commentators is ordered. I will address this issue by discussing major instances where metaphors of theatre have influenced recent intellectual discourse, in the establishment of Performance Studies and in social and cultural theory. The approach taken here attempts to break free of the theatre frame, which dominates the conceptual landscape of Western thinking about performance to the extent that, according to Auslander 'it may not even be possible, within Western culture, to think "performance" without thinking "theatre" so deeply ingrained is the idea of theatre in both performance and discourse about performance' (Auslander, 1997: 3-4). Auslander argues that this narrows the distance between Theatre Studies and Performance Studies, undermining the latter's claims to the status of a new scholarly paradigm. Scholarly analysis of performance, both within and outside the discipline of Performance Studies, has certainly been marked by the unquestioned adoption of the position of the Western theatre spectator, rather than the other possible perspectives from which performance might be considered. Nevertheless, I would argue that the operation of theatrical performance practice within the broader field of cultural production cannot be effectively assessed unless an effort is made both to situate aesthetic performance in its relationship to the performative in general, and to employ an ethic of performative observation – that is, taking into account, and taking up, the constituent perspectives of the particular performance situation to the best of the analyst's ability. Such an

approach, while owing a debt to anthropological and sociological participant observation methodologies, operates on a more sophisticated and dynamic understanding of the dialectics of positionality in performance, and should produce a more reflexive as well as a better-rounded analysis of performance situations and performative interaction.

Performance Studies, and performance theory as a general intellectual and practice formation, is linked historically and discursively to the shift from textual analysis to the interest in drama in performance that heralded the rise of Theatre Studies. This ever broadening trajectory may be traced to the eighteenth and nineteenth century debates on acting sparked by Diderot (Cole, T. and Chinoy, 1970, particularly pp. 161-201, 342-370). It was given scholarly shape in the early twentieth century by Brander Matthews at Columbia University (Matthews, 1958) and, later, through the impact of Eastern European semiotic analysis as applied to theatre, particularly the work of the Prague School of semioticians (Bakshy, 1916; Bakshy, 1969; Matejka and Titunik, 1976). Prior to the English language reception of semiotics (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980), argument for the autonomy of theatrical means was most evident in the idiosyncratic advocacy of theatre designer and visionary Edward Gordon Craig (Craig, 1957)⁵. But up to the late 1960s scholars such as Eric Bentley in the United States (Bentley, 1968) and Raymond Williams in the UK (Williams, R., 1972; Williams, R., 1973) continued to frame their discussion in terms of the relationship between theatre and drama as literature, rather than as an analysis of performance and the performative in its global sense. This emphasis on links to dramatic literature continues as a strong current in contemporary Theatre Studies, despite efforts to broaden its disciplinary horizon to include other traditions and modes of practice than the European. Performance Studies, which began as an effort to engineer a paradigm shift away from the limitations inherent in the drama/theatre frame of reference, owes its current form primarily to Richard Schechner and his colleagues at New York

University in the mid 1970s, whose interest in quotidian, experimental/environmental, ritual, paratheatrical and non-Western performance intersected with the contemporary 'performance turn' in anthropology, represented by figures such as Gregory Bateson (Bateson, 1987a), Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1980) and in particular Victor Turner (Turner, V., 1986), with whom Schechner's group developed close associations.

Recent theories of the performative emphasise the effective quality of certain expressions, through arguments sourced in Austin's exposition of the illocutionary 'words that do' (Austin, J. L., 1965). Anthropologically-based approaches, on the other hand, have identified performance as an arena in which everyday notions of responsibility may be evaded or suspended. Turner's theory of 'social dramas' (Turner, V., 1974) and Milton Singer's notion of 'cultural performance' (Singer, 1972) share an understanding of performance as liminal, 'belonging to culture's "subjunctive" mood', while also emphasising that cultures use performance reciprocally and reflexively to 'become conscious, through witnessing and often participating in ... performances, of the nature, texture, style, and given meanings of their own lives as members of a sociocultural community' (Turner, V., 1986: 22)⁶.

Schechner's efforts to reconceive performance as a pervasive cross-cultural phenomenon were disseminated through an extensive research and publication project, particularly in the journal *TDR* (originally the *Tulane Drama Review*) which was steered into an overtly Performance Studies orientation by the mid 1980s. The field has since expanded to include scholars from a number of countries and a variety of academic origins, gathered under the banner of Performance Studies international [sic], which held its seventh conference in 2001 (Performance Studies international, 2002)⁷. A key early text was the 1977 edition of Schechner's *Performance Theory*, where he laid out a number of

analytical and metaphorical approaches to the theorisation of performance, including the relationships between play, games, sports, ritual and theatre (Schechner, R., 1988: 6-9), the interweaving of what he called 'the efficacy-entertainment braid' (pp. 106-152), and the issue of the 'magnitudes' of performance, or the ways in which performance vocabularies develop as abstracted and heightened aesthetic forms (pp.251-288). The essays refer to performance forms in a wide range of traditions, from ritual in New Guinea to the classical Indian *Natyasastra*, and to a variety of academic disciplines including anthropology and ethology. Like Goffman, Schechner borrowed and adapted illustrative image and metaphor to coin a bewildering variety of terms and displayed an encyclopaedic enthusiasm for the description of performance forms in a range of cultural locations and by a multiplicity of means: 'Mathematical and transactional game analysis, model building, comparisons between theater and related performance activities – all will prove fruitful' (Schechner, R., 1988: 27).

Schechner insists that there is 'no reason to hunt for "origins" or "derivations"'. There are only variations in form, the intermixing among genres, and these show no long term evolution ... Sometimes [genres] are merged so that it is impossible to call the activity by any one limiting name. That English usage urges us to do so anyway is an ethnocentric bias, not an argument' (Schechner, R., 1988: 6). Nevertheless, his driving motivation is to identify the commonalities of formally constituted performance, the 'guild sense' in which performers from different cultures *share* understandings of and secrets about performance practice. Another impetus is a justification of European avant-garde practice in terms of its dynamic openness to aspects of performativity 'lost' in mainstream Western theatre, but rediscoverable in dialogue with practitioners in 'other' cultural locations. Given the imbalance of resources between First World and other practitioners and scholars, this 'dialogue' can veer dangerously close to appropriation, as Rustom

Bharucha has recently argued (Bharucha, 1993). Another problem is the degree to which the 'recognition' of performance in other cultures is carried out through frameworks depending on the ethnocentric or at least culturocentric bias Schechner himself decries. In a central chapter, 'Drama, Script, Theater and Performance', he treats 'drama' as a 'specialized kind of script' (Schechner, R., 1988: 71), the latter defined as 'something that pre-exists any enactment, which persists from enactment to enactment' (Schechner, R., 1988: 70). The term 'script' is preferred to 'text'. Schechner acknowledges differences in tradition by claiming that: 'Those cultures which emphasize the dyad drama-script de-emphasize theater-performance; and vice versa ... among the world's cultures an emphasis on drama-script has occurred only occasionally' (Schechner, R., 1988: 73). Nevertheless, he configures the 'four elements' of performance as a nesting relationship with drama at its core, in which 'generally speaking ... the larger disc contains all those smaller than itself' (Schechner, R., 1988: 71, see also Fig. 3.1 p. 72). This tendency towards universalisation and the tacit imposition of a culturally hegemonic gaze has been criticized by theorists such as Jill Dolan (Dolan, 1993). However, the tendency to 'compare' 'related performance activities' on the basis of 'theatre' remains as a strong feature of North American Performance Studies.

Normative images of Western theatre practice continue to influence research directions in the study of performance, despite the influence of anthropological and ethnographic methodologies and the attention to social performance, cultural performance and non-Western aesthetic performance they encourage. Conversely, owing to its taken-for-granted status, little research has so far been conducted into the specific processes and assumptions behind the practices of Western acting, as a particular instance of performance behaviour. In public interviews, actors tend to express themselves in very general terms (Trenrove 1991); and academic research and other commentary has tended to be written from a

spectator's perspective or from the standpoint of particular theories or training regimes. These studies suffer either from a lack of familiarity with the world of the actor, or, perversely, from the strength of the alliance between Northern Hemisphere performance scholarship and the European avant-garde. Two early issues of *TDR* (Schechner, R., ed., 1964a; Schechner, R., ed., 1964b), deserve honourable mention for their critical analysis of the American reception of Stanislavski. Since then, articles in *TDR* on actor training methods, particularly those promulgated by avant-garde figures such as Grotowski, have been almost hagiographic (Osiński, 1991; Zarrilli, 1995)⁸. The particular declension of research into international performance practice promulgated by Eugenio Barba and the organizations he has founded, such as Odin Teatret and ISTA (the International School of Theatre Anthropology) (Barba, 1979; Barba, 1986; Barba and Savarese, 1991; Barba, 1995), while strongly based in notions of exchange between cultures and between practitioners, do not feature rigorous field study or critical methodologies. Rather, they are founded in an overtly romantic and tacitly Eurocentric metaphysical universalism, and in 'laboratory' methods which rely on the 'meeting' of selected skilled performers in isolation from their ordinary contexts of production and reception, and subject to the heavy stage management of the 'research' frame. A similar problem attaches to other recent publications on contemporary performance practice, which reinforce rather than critically analyse the canonical position accorded to Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Barba and Brook (see for example Hodge, 2000; Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2001)⁹. The recent collection edited by Ian Watson (Watson, 2001) does attempt a more comprehensive account, although clearly still strongly organised within the same canonical frame. Jane Milling and Graham Ley (Milling and Ley, 2001) offer a useful critical and historical analysis of canonical figures, but by definition are confined within the framing of practice they represent. These studies offer interpretations of insufficient breadth and subtlety to answer Goffman's question 'what is going on

here?' in reference to the actualities of acting practice and its contexts and influences. They are therefore inadequate as models for this research project, which has attempted to enter, as far as possible, the worlds of practice and discourse occupied by particular groups of actors preparing for performance, while maintaining a critical distance and holding the theatre frame in suspension as an informing metaphor.

Another problem is the lack of a standard approach to the documentation and analysis of training and rehearsal processes within Theatre and/or Performance Studies. The situation is rendered especially complex by continuing debate as to the appropriate boundaries and degree of overlap between these disciplines (Zarrilli, 1986; Dolan, 1993; McAuley, 2001). I will attempt a brief chronology of the variety of methodologies used to analyse theatre performance and rehearsal practice. Early efforts to establish a semiotics of performance were based on 'the performance' as object/event, departing from previous traditions of scholarship, which had assumed performance to be an unproblematic or incidental representation of a literary playtext. Initial optimism that an exhaustive description of the signs present in performance would constitute the basis for a comprehensive analysis (Elam, 1980) ran into immediate problems of selectivity with regard to the simultaneous presence of multiple sign-systems (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980). Later work acknowledged both that the classification of such sign-systems must be approximate rather than taxonomic (Pavis, 1982) and that the various systems required relatively independent methods of observation and documentation (Aston and Savona, 1991).

Even so, analyses of theatre performance still tended to emerge from a focus on the interaction between the text and its realisation: Jiří Veltruský's pioneering attempt to devise a semiotics of the actor in performance (Veltruský, 1978) is grounded in a description of theatre practice which assumes just such a relationship. His account does have

the virtue of drawing on examples from non-European performance traditions and deftly evades the impossible distinction between 'actor' and 'character' by proposing the 'stage figure' as the object of analysis. But his efforts to classify the elements of the actor's expressive repertoire are conducted at some distance from the physical body, its efforts and engagements. He avoids the problematics suggested by the actor's *initiation* of the identified signs, except through a distinction between the signs attributed to the 'enacted event' and to the 'acting event', that is, the momentary theatrical 'real' occupied by actor and audience (Veltruský, 1978: 588). Veltruský's attention is deflected again and again from the stage figure to the complex of signs and sign-systems that surround it and which it vehiculates, maintaining that 'acting, like theater in its entirety, is a distinct semiotic system which uses signs originating from other semiotic systems' (Veltruský, 1978: 564). In the latter part of the paper, he focuses on the role of audience involvement as a response to what he terms the 'conative function' of the acting event. In these fascinating speculations, the body of the actor is well and truly obscured: Veltruský's language of textuality is inadequate to comprehend either the complexity of the actor's processes of embodiment or the constitutive force of interactions between the performance/performers and audience/spectators, who are much more than 'readers' of the performance (Bennett, S., 1990). Indeed, the decline of the semiotic approach to performance analysis may have been hastened by an increasing interest in the dialectic between the performance event and the dynamics of spectatorship, leading to acknowledgement of the audience's activity in a cultural sense, both in reception of and in response to the imaginary worlds activated through the performance process (Blau, 1990).

Feminist theatre criticism has made an important contribution here. 'Early' feminist commentary lagged significantly behind feminist theatre practice in the US and Europe as well as in Australasia, in its

appreciation of the heuristic and political potential of a more general approach to the theorisation of performance. Recent feminist criticism of performance has, however, been marked both by its interest in contemporary theatre practice and by the degree to which it has been informed by strategic alliances with developments in contemporary feminist theory in other disciplines. Feminist critics have worked closely with feminist practitioners. They have made mutual efforts to critique and dismantle the exclusion of women and women's experience from staged representation and/or its rationalisation under the guise of patriarchal humanist notions of the universal subject. Their efforts to replace this lack with female representations and to disrupt dominant forms of presentation and discourse have meant that, from the late 1980s, attention could no longer be paid simply to the results of representational processes in the theatre, as distinct from their organisation, constitution and reception (Dolan, 1988; Austin, G., 1990). Although initially concentrated on the dissemination of commentary and information about plays written by women (Keyssar, 1984), feminist theatre criticism has borrowed from critical and cultural theory, psychoanalysis and materialist traditions to highlight both the dynamics of desire and the relations of production present in processes of theatrical realisation.

A great deal of Anglocentric and/or Eurocentric feminist theatre criticism remains focused on the conventional 'dramatic object' of the playtext and its production, together with the authorial personae of the playwright and, to a lesser extent, the theatre director. But the plethora of feminist writing on theatre over the past twenty years has also produced a great deal of useful commentary on other methods and contexts of production. This work has begun to diffract the unquestioned universal 'woman' of first and second-wave feminisms, asking about the economic, political and representational relations between sexuality, class, race, location and kinds of performance practice. Broad tendencies may be identified as: the documentation of previous women's theatre work and its conditions

(Holledge, 1981; Natalie, 1985; Wandor, 1986; Davis, 1991; Tait, 1993); theorisation of differences between women's, feminist and lesbian/feminist artists, companies and production networks (Case, 1988; Hart, 1989; Case, 1990; Tait, 1994); and interviews with practising women artists operating in a wide variety of cultures and conditions of production (Goodman, Lizbeth, 1993; Tomkins and Holledge, 1997). The present study draws on this work and also on the ethics and approaches to research methodology articulated by feminist social researchers (Stanley, 1990; Reinharz, 1992), in an effort to construct the kind of collaborative dialogue between researcher and researched which would allow the latter's perspectives and practices to remain present within my 'objective' assessment of the generative structural relations pertaining to their experience.

In 'mainstream' Performance Studies, it has also been acknowledged that the performance event, whether singular or part of a never-quite-identical series of repetitions, should not be treated as emerging in isolation, but as itself one of a series of stages in what Schechner dubbed 'the whole performance sequence' (Schechner, R., 1985 pp. 16-21). The methodological tools developed for analysis of staged performance are insufficient to deal with the compositional and interpersonal interactions found in a complete rehearsal process. Nevertheless, the complexity of such processes has spawned an equally wide range of approaches to their documentation. Stage managers have traditionally employed one species or another of (often idiosyncratic) diagrammatic representations to record stage movements and other directorial or performance decisions. But the multimodality and polysemy of theatrical rehearsal has meant that there has been no concerted attempt to develop notational systems such as the Benesh and Laban systems of choreology used in certain strands of dance practice. In any event, such systems support a particular instrumental relationship between rehearsal preparation and the 'finished product' in performance: not all investigations or even all modes of rehearsal can be

encompassed by notations which log positions and relations of the body in space or concentrate on the segmentation of narrative or other compositional structures over time.

Published accounts of contemporary or recent rehearsal processes have either borrowed heavily from existing directors' notes, prompt books and anecdotal accounts (see for example Williams, D., 1988; Mitter, 1992) or present as highly personal, journalistic or confessional accounts of the work of a particular director, director/guru or group (Heilpern, 1972; Selbourne, 1982; Richards, T., 1995). Books on workshop methodology present as another genre, often lists of exercise sets, or a mix of exercise descriptions and personal accounts of the development of a particular method such as improvisation, (see for example Spolin, 1963; Barker, 1977; Gordon, M., 1983; Johnstone, 1989; Frost and Yarrow, 1990; Johnstone, 1999). While some include scholarly or at least disinterested assessments of the traditions concerned and useful primary material on vocabulary and pedagogical or skill development goals, others contain more than a whiff of self-promotion: they are generally undertheorised and provide little assistance in contextualising the approach described or suggesting methods for analysing its application in performance-making or as a tool of performance diagnosis. In this regard, recent literature on research into the use of drama processes as investigative research tools in the field of Drama in Education displays a great deal more theoretical sophistication (see O'Toole, 1992; Taylor, 1996).

Rehearsal documentation and analysis clearly awaits development as a differentiated field of enquiry. An honourable initial effort has come from Susan Letzler Cole (Cole, 1992), whose account of the working methods of ten US directors incorporates a self-reflexive and insightful commentary on her own efforts to develop an observational methodology. But research that takes as its object something in some ways even more complex than the bounded event of a single performance

demands both focus and selection. The question of what the observer chooses to look at is as much at issue as the choice of notation, methodological categories, and so on. Cole's overall approach tends toward the impressionistic rather than the analytic. Since it is functionally impossible to record *everything* that goes on in a workshop or rehearsal process, the field awaits the implementation of rigorously selected analytic frames, which could be accompanied by the testing of variously mixed methodologies of observation and/or recording, including the 'thick description' introduced by Gilbert Ryle (Ryle, 1971) and recommended to anthropologists by Geertz (Geertz, 1983). As James Clifford reminds us, "the field" is 'both a methodological ideal and a concrete *place* of professional activity' (Clifford, 1992: 97). The dilemma is simply knowing where to look and what to make of it - if the researcher is to get past the Scylla of their own perceptual habits and the Charybdis of trying on 'the native point of view' (a time-consuming process which, as Mead found out, is still liable to leave the newcomer looking faintly ridiculous) then it might be more useful to think first about *how* to look. The definition afforded by a clear choice of frame would at least provide questions that speak to what Goffman describes as 'a small, manageable problem having to do with the camera and not what it is the camera takes pictures of' (Goffman, 1974: 2).

The Centre for Performance Studies at the University of Sydney, until the end of 2001 under the direction of Gay McAuley, has led Australian efforts in the analysis of rehearsal and workshop processes, with the development of multifaceted 'laboratory' rehearsal observation methodologies borrowing from semiotic, phenomenological, anthropological and sociological theory (McAuley, 1999). This work is largely focused on 'the possible relationships between a play-text, as canonical literary text, and the uses to which that text may be put ... by differently trained readers and writers in constructing a performance text as theatre' (Threadgold, 1995: 174). It relies on a functional separation

between invited professional theatre-makers, who generate the material on the basis of selected texts, and scholar/observers, who analyse and interpret their behaviours according to the methodologies and theoretical frameworks selected. Despite rich theoretical discussion, this approach is limited in its application to performance developed by other means and in other contexts. In a very practical sense, the Centre is also in danger of instituting a self-fulfilling circularity between its goals and outcomes. It effectively generates the work it then studies, with both texts and theatre professionals preselected for their compatibility with the intellectual and aesthetic preferences of academic staff.

The current study is primarily focused on practices rather than texts. While my own politico-aesthetic preferences and professional experience have clearly influenced the sites selected, I wish to observe performers in their 'natural' setting and to allow their own 'definitions of the situation' to affect the theoretical conclusions drawn about the presented behaviours, their organisation and imbrication with or autonomy from relations of power in the surrounding cultures. Methodologies of workshop and rehearsal observation developed within the fields of Theatre and Performance Studies and, most importantly, theorisations of the multiple perspectival and behavioural frames present in the rehearsal room, including those activated by the observer, provide suggestive starting points, but do not yet provide a sufficient fit with these research aims.

Moving outside the literature specific to Theatre/Performance Studies, a further problem related to the dominance of the theatre frame is the prevalence of metaphors of theatre within social and cultural commentary, paradoxically unaccompanied by sustained attention to what goes on inside the theatre or amongst its practitioners (Dolan, 1993). Theatrical metaphor has long exerted a strong attraction for commentators in the Western intellectual tradition. Tom Burns points out

that Shakespeare could make such extensive use of imagery related to the notion of the *theatrum mundi* and draw such memorable parallels between the quotidian world and the world of the stage, not because he was the first to think of it, but because his audience was already familiar with the ideas involved (Burns, T., 1992: 107-08). Four hundred years later, everyday language, social scientific concepts and the study of performance alike contain layers of reference to the interconnections perceived to exist between life on and off the stage, but on any sustained sociological investigation, the metaphor behaves like a marsh light, an idea of seductive but amorphous suggestivity. Sheldon Messinger traces many of the ultimately unsuccessful attempts to invoke 'theatrical' or 'dramaturgical' metaphors in the service of serious social scientific enquiry, concluding somewhat regretfully that the approach appears to promise much without producing reliable examples of how everyday life and theatre may in fact be related (Messinger et al, 1976). Other commentators resist the destabilisation of social reality produced by too close an association with theatrical fiction. Bruce Wilshire cautions that the *value* accorded to social reality will inevitably be diminished when regarded through the lens of the theatrical or paratheatrical (Wilshire, 1991). Jonas Barish, while acknowledging that 'the theatrical analogy would seem an inescapable figure for our relations with the rest of the world' (Barish, 1981: 476), concludes by endorsing the 'anti-theatrical prejudice' he identifies in European thought and literature from the Greeks through to the mid twentieth century, as indicative of the need to maintain human authenticity (what he calls 'role-making') against 'role-taking', which imposes a protean relativity on the forms of human experience. The question is, of course, whether performers actually behave in the ways the theatrical analogy suggests.

Despite the prominence in role theory of a vocabulary drawn from the theatre, and the centrality of a set of dramaturgical and/or dramaturgical metaphors evident in the American tradition of interactionism, recent

sociology and social theory have paid very little attention to theatrical performance or to performers as a social group. While the latter may no longer be considered social outcasts (Kohansky, 1984) now that their images and life events form the staple of popular 'celebrity' culture, their contexts of practice, and their practices themselves, are still largely excluded from the menu of appropriate sociological research topics. The overtly condescending tone adopted by the classical sociologist Georg Simmel in his brief study 'Zur Philosophie des Schauspielers' (Simmel, 1973) has been succeeded by the dismissal of silence across contemporary sociological commentary.

I have found it extremely difficult to locate relevant studies with recent publication dates, apart from Lizbeth Goodman's compilation on the politics of performance (Goodman, Lizbeth with de Gay, 2000). Georges Gurvitch and Jean Duvignaud both paid sustained attention to the sociology of the theatre. Each based their analysis on the meetings and differences between the theatre and social life through a focus on ceremonial and spectacle. Duvignaud drew on contemporary anthropology, in particular the work of Marcel Mauss, to reach his conclusion that: 'Social ceremonies accomplish action which is postponed and sublimated in the theatre' (Duvignaud, 1973: 99). In his work on the sociology of the actor, he paid attention to the life and career cycle of the performer, drawing attention to the structural relations between the actor as a social personage and the structure represented by the characters in the world of the stage fiction (Duvignaud, 1965). Gurvitch built on Saint-Simon's contention that 'every society ... *est en acte*' (Gurvitch, 1973: 73) to suggest a more nuanced set of problems by means of which 'the striking affinity between society and theatre' (Gurvitch, 1973: 71) might be explored. His efforts to indicate possible directions for such a sociology stretched to six categories: research into theatre audiences, their constitution and their status as 'social groups proper' (Gurvitch, 1973: 76); study of the 'social framework of a

theatrical production' and its conflicts with the 'real social framework' within which it operates (Gurvitch, 1973: 77); the study of actors as a social group; the study of 'the functional relationship between the *content* ... of plays and the actual social system' (Gurvitch, 1973: 77); the study of '*the social functions of the theatre* in different kinds of society' (Gurvitch, 1973: 78); and 'the use of the theatre as a means of sociological investigation and experiment' (Gurvitch, 1973: 80).

Of the categories Gurvitch suggested, only the first, fourth and fifth have received anything like sustained attention from scholars with an interest in the sociology of theatre, although this study makes some attempt to suggest ways into the sixth. The essay from which these examples are drawn forms part of Elizabeth and Tom Burns' collection of readings *The Sociology of Literature and Drama* (Burns, E. and Burns, T., 1973). This collection broke ground by including European as well as Anglophone theorists, but the way readings are grouped suggests a similar approach to both literature and drama, assuming a homology between aesthetic output, moral values and social structure, an assumption which also powered Goodlad's strongly functionalist study of popular television drama (Goodlad, 1971). Elizabeth Burns also produced a study into the links between theatrical and social convention, providing an account which stressed the existence of 'a grammar of theatrical presentation' and the doubling of social conventions in the staging of a play: 'drama is not a mirror of action. It is a composition ... dramatists and performers operate within the constraints of both kinds of convention. Together the constraints amount to a code of rules for the transmission of specific beliefs, attitudes and feelings in terms of organized social behaviour' (Burns, E., 1972: 35). Her account proceeded in very general terms, failing to address differences in social context, changes in theatrical production practices or slippage between the two. North American sociology showed some interest in the social organisation of artistic work, particularly when framed in terms of research into identity (Hearn,

1968), occupation (Kamerman et al, 1983) or socialisation (Peters, 1974). Such studies contained little detail on contemporary composition and production practices and in any case these lines of enquiry appear to have fallen into disuse. Maria Shevtsova's papers constitute a comprehensive attempt to cover the range of relations between theatre production and its audiences through studies of particular companies (Shevtsova, 1989a; Shevtsova, 1989c; Shevtsova, 1989b) (Shevtsova, 1993), although her questionnaire methodology does not produce conclusions of any great theoretical depth. In other respects, Gurvitch's suggestions still await elaboration. Socially approved performance behaviours, naturalised as 'real', have therefore until very recently been rendered invisible to analysis, except through the application of metaphors able to be dismissed as having any forensic force, as instanced by the outraged response to Goffman's suggestion that *all* self-presentation in a social context may be viewed as performance (MacIntyre, 1981; Hollis, 1985). It may also be the case that sociology has until recently lacked a perspective and a set of conceptual tools that would allow performance as a complex phenomenon, and aesthetic performers as behavioural specialists, to be studied as anything other than a fairly marginalised occupational group.

One of the few extended sociological studies directly relevant to the work undertaken here, Sharon Mast's study of dramatic actors in a training school, a small company rehearsal and a television studio, focuses on 'the differences between interaction in theatre and in everyday life' (Mast, 1986: 1). She employs sources from both the interactionist tradition and what she dubs the dramaturgical perspective (primarily Goffman) to provide her theoretical framework. She also discusses at length the methodological issues surrounding qualitative research carried out by means of participant observation. Her mixed methodology of observation, formal and informal interview parallels my own in many ways and I have found her comments and those of her interlocutors

insightful and instructive. But despite her acknowledgement that 'sociological treatment of [the dramaturgical analogy] has often suffered from a lack of familiarity with the business of acting' (Mast, 1986: 5), it is clear that her own understanding of 'the business' is slight. Her concern as a sociologist is to fix the phenomena she observes in terms of their application to general sociological frameworks such as 'the examination of organisations' (Mast, 1986: 5) 'the total institution' (Mast, 1986: 131-32) or the formation of professional identity (Mast, 1986: 120-24)¹⁰. She assumes that the foundation of the dramaturgical analogy lies in the consistency of differences between theatre and everyday life. She also places great emphasis on clear definitions of acting and actors and is therefore at a loss to accommodate boundary-blurring statements from her subjects (Mast, 1986: 13) or interventions tending to destabilise the desired observational distance between observer and observed (Mast, 1986: 10-12). Given that my interest is, at least in part, in how such boundaries are established and the simultaneous constitution of perspective, position and embodied practice, traditional sociological methods, even at their most qualitative and interactionist, fall considerably short of providing appropriate tools for the current investigation.

Given the status of drama theorist Raymond Williams as a founding father of the field, the lack of attention to performance in Cultural Studies literature is evident and curious. This is especially so given the ubiquity of metaphors of theatre in recent French theory. As Timothy Murray points out, French poststructuralist theorists wanting to question utopic notions of representation 'have turned insistently ... to the figure of theatricality as a self-reflexive supplement to the models of language and image that shape the untroubled binarisms of structural linguistics, poetics, and psychoanalysis' (Murray, 1997). He argues that the reception of theorists such as Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, Fanon and Althusser in Anglophone Cultural Studies has ignored their writings on

theatricality, representation and culture, while theorists specialising in cultural representation such as Marin, Cixous, Girard, Lacoue-Labarthe, Féral and Durand have largely been left out of account¹¹. It would appear that the realist bias and privileging of the literary Murray identifies has affected the study of situated performance as well as its metaphorisation. Even in dedicated analyses of culture and cultural production, the Cinderella disciplines of dance and drama/theatre are those most often left off the list. 'Mainstream' commentary on Western culture still concentrates on the major artforms of visual art and literature, although the performing arts disciplines of music, and more recently film, have an extensive literature of their own. In recent years, 'oppositional' theorists such as Mike Featherstone have come to see the self in contemporary consumer culture as theatrical or performative: 'within consumer culture, which approximately coincides with the culture of narcissism, the new conception of self which has emerged, which we shall refer to as the 'performing self' places greater emphasis upon appearance, display and the management of impressions' (Featherstone, 1991: 187). Nonetheless, this interest has not spurred more than the very occasional study relating directly to the practice of the performer in 'legitimate' or alternative theatre, dance or TV, despite the centrality of analyses of performed mass media to the project of Cultural Studies overall (Fiske, 1987; Hall, 1997) and the recent growth in attention to particular iconic performers as figures of popular cultural mythology (see for example McCann, 1991; Pels and Crebas, 1991; Schwichtenberg, 1993). It would be inconsistent of me to argue that Cultural Studies ought now to adopt the theatre as a metaphoric frame for theorisation. But performance is a pervasive interactional mode; performers are also social actors habituated to, and sophisticated in dealing with, the presence of observing others. I strongly suggest that sustained attention to performance and the performative, both in its situated and theoretical aspects, would help address John Fiske's lament that 'both academics in cultural and media studies, and left-wing political theorists and activists have found the everyday culture

of the people in capitalist societies particularly difficult to study either empirically or theoretically' (Fiske, 1992: 154) and Angela McRobbie's call to remedy the situation where 'the site of identity formation in cultural studies remains implicitly in and through cultural commodities and texts rather than in and through ... cultural practices' (McRobbie, 1992: 730).

Assuming the suspension of the theatre frame attempted here, on what basis are aesthetic performers to be treated as, but distinguished from other, social performers? Their social position must be taken into account, inasmuch as they represent images of bodies and behaviours endowed with particular meaning in the surrounding culture, and are members of a culture who have chosen, or been chosen, to engage in specific forms of embodied expression. Mast (Mast, 1986) treats trainee actors as members of closed institutions. But for Western theatre culture, this considerably overstates the extent to which all actors and theatre subcultures sustain separation from surrounding social networks. In what follows, consideration is given to the economic and social formations that affect performers' practice. Companies and theatrical institutions are treated as more or less persistent social structures within which general and particular conventions emerge, and are investigated for their status as fields generating their own habitus, in terms of the relations between actors and the time/space and symbolic dynamics of their surrounding sociocultural context. Attention is given to the degree of specialisation and time/space separateness of performance practices, the impact of selection on the basis of psychological or physical characteristics, and the conscious and unconscious attachments and learned behaviours which characterise any particular identified occupational and social *habitus*. An assessment is made of the indebtedness of these groups and institutions to the attitudes and potential support or disapprobation of audience and other reference 'electorates', which have the power to affect the persistence of the group or institution, and thus the practices concerned,

although the potential for attitudes and behaviours to change over time is also acknowledged.

Bourdieu and Goffman: *habitus* and frame

In developing an appropriate theoretical framework and a sufficiently flexible research methodology, I am nevertheless indebted to the work of two clearly sociological thinkers, Goffman and Bourdieu. Each offers a number of concepts which amplify, and to a certain extent resolve, issues left hanging in the formulations of the other. In Chapter 1, I discussed problems specifically related to Bourdieu's two key concepts of field and *habitus*. His interest is in how social order is replicated and regenerated from one situation and context to another, and from one generation to another. He offers a materialist analysis which can be used as a corrective lens through which to clarify Goffman's impressionistic picture of the structures of social interaction. Bourdieu's use of the notion of *habitus* fruitfully combined previous ideas about primary psychological development and socialisation with an emphasis on the embodied constitution of not-necessarily-conscious dispositions to act as a consequence of class location and experience¹². His central notion of 'practice' as defining social organization as well as social interaction (Bourdieu, 1977), offers a clear bridge between a general notion of social action and attempts such as Goffman's to establish performance as characteristic of microsocial, or face to face, encounters. Bourdieu's work on the semi-autonomous 'field of cultural production' (Bourdieu, 1993a) and his assertion that cultural capital and symbolic goods are a source of sociocultural power and a significant means of exchange in the contemporary political economy (Bourdieu, 1986), add a much needed engine of distinction to Goffman's undifferentiated picture of the circumstances under which frames of action and interpretation might become operational or transformed.

Bourdieu's contention that 'there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world – particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields – and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it' (quoted in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 12) is not a new proposition in the materialist tradition. Williams' writings on culture anticipated Bourdieu's concerns in key respects and have the advantage of a strong sense of the lived particularities of cultural experience (Milner, 1996: 39-41). Bourdieu's thought is given impetus by his contention that, in late capitalist societies, 'principles of vision' themselves function as forms of capital. This allows him to transcend the classic 'base-superstructure' notion of the relationship of art to the organization of the means of production, identified by Williams as a central problem in cultural theory (Williams, R., 1980: 46). Bourdieu's emphasis on practice as strategic action within the constraints of objective circumstance and established values answers Williams' call for cultural analysts to 'break from the common procedure of isolating the object and then discovering its components. On the contrary we have to discover the nature of a practice and then its conditions' (Williams, R., 1980: 47). Both theorists attempt to account for the tacit and pre-semiotic sources of what may later be identified as conventions and structures of practice, Bourdieu from the point of view of persistence, Williams from that of change. The latter suggests that the accretion of small changes in 'manners, dress, building, and other similar forms of social life' are manifestations of a 'practical consciousness' which indicates the presence of 'structures of feeling' (Williams, R., 1985b). These organise and mark as significant what would otherwise be considered as more or less random cultural epiphenomena. Williams fails, however, to link such 'structures of feeling' to embodied practice and its generative circumstances, referring instead to shifts in quality and 'style'. Bourdieu's conception of *habitus*, as a set of structured and structuring dispositions established over time and informing subsequent reactions and constructions, provides the link

Williams lacked between practice and conditions of practice. Bourdieu's *Distinction* clearly showed how the 'rules of the game' of taste are employed both to defend and articulate the resources of cultural capital 'owned' by various class fractions and groups in late capitalist society, whilst his overall emphasis on practice foregrounded the way its dispositions are embodied, extending from the acquisition of goods to the actual physical consequences of class *habitus* in food consumption and patterns of work and leisure activity. His focus on the way practice recreates symbolic power, and the status of fields of artistic production as sites of struggles over the articulation of social and cultural value, will have considerable informing value in this study.

In other respects, Bourdieu's approach suggests problems rather than solutions. Despite its emphasis on the dynamic links between social position and embodied practice, his work on culture continues the blindness towards performance we noted as typical of contemporary sociology and Anglophone cultural theory. It also underestimates the degree to which culture can be counted as an instrument of social change. Bridget Fowler argues (Fowler, 1997) that Bourdieu's cynical deconstruction of interested cultural claims may itself be subject to criticism as representative of the taste snobbery of the patriarchal European intellectual *habitus* he otherwise decries. His reliance on specifically French cultural institutions allowed him to generalise from an entrenched state-consecrated cultural and educational high culture that may well not be replicated elsewhere. His specific analysis of culture included attention to the popular and 'middlebrow', but concentrated on the literary and visual canon: he frequently used the terms 'literary' and 'cultural' interchangeably when referring to the field of cultural practice, and employed the portmanteau phrase 'literary etc.' when dealing with the relations between the cultural field and the field of power. He paid almost no attention to the theatre as a mode of practice or as a sphere of cultural production, and none to notions of theatricality or the

performative. A few pages in *Distinction* are devoted to differences between boulevard and experimental theatre, but display little awareness of the theatre as an embodied space. What discussion there is quickly shifts to questions of theatre criticism, cast in terms of the 'perfect' correspondence between 'the space of the producers (playwrights and actors), the space of the critics ... (and the daily and weekly press), and the space of the audiences and readerships (i.e., the space of the dominant class)' (Bourdieu, 1986: 234). Bourdieu attributes cultural capital (and hence the ability to influence dominant structures of meaning) primarily to the 'dominated fraction of the dominant class'. This formulation downplays the way the iconography of the cultural canon can be redeployed by different groups to derive other meanings and agendas of interpretation and action¹³. His lack of interest in theatre may be explained partly by a disinclination to engage in debates over power and representation framed in terms of the theatrical *mis en scène*, partly by the shift in metaphor I identified, which allowed him to continue to rely on the notion of *habitus* without asking detailed questions about the processes of embodiment implied in his notion of the field. In his final years, Bourdieu responded to the seismic shifts occasioned by popular culture and the global influence of economic and political institutions (Bourdieu, 1998, Bourdieu, 1999), and to criticism of his lack of attention to analyses of gender, geography and race (Bourdieu, 2001). But there is a residual sense that his analysis and his activism remained at odds, the one accounting for the dynamics of cultural domination, the other supporting the survival of cultures of resistance.

In attending to the shifts and struggles which mark performers' efforts to negotiate between their own predispositions and the multiple – sometimes homologous, sometimes contradictory – definitions of the situation available to them, it has been fruitful to think Goffman's 'frames' alongside Bourdieu's *habitus*. Goffman emerged from, but resisted identification with, the interactionist tradition in American

sociology. Best known as the initiator, or at least the populariser, of the 'dramaturgical approach', his studies of what he termed 'the interaction order' or 'face to face behaviour' drew on phenomenology, linguistics, and social psychology and touched on gender studies, to a certain extent prefiguring the interest in embodiment and performativity of contemporary theorists such as Butler (Butler, 1993). In his best-known work, he advanced a set of concepts based on a spatial semiotics of theatre in order to explore social actors' attempts to manage their performances so as to present the best possible versions of themselves to the gaze of others. It is not my intention here to adopt this 'dramaturgical approach' as an informing framework. While Goffman's terminology is flexible enough to be useful in the analysis of performance behaviours in a range of social contexts, his own dissatisfaction with investigation by theatrical analogy is indicated in the conclusion to *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1971): soon afterwards he effectively abandoned it as insufficiently productive. Goffman was forced to admit that he had stretched the metaphor about as far as it could usefully go: 'a character staged in a theatre is not in some ways real, nor does it have ... real consequences' (Goffman, 1971: 246). He did suggest that performances on and off the stage were linked in ways not exhausted by metaphors of theatre: 'the *successful* staging of ... false figures involves use of *real* techniques – the same techniques by which everyday persons sustain their real social situations' (Goffman, 1971: 247). Clifford Geertz' suggestion that Goffman's study was restricted through its use of specifically theatrical metaphor and therefore 'not, at base, dramaturgical' [Geertz, 1983 #386@24] is borne out by the fact that when the latter returned to the question of performance in his much later work *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974), he no longer attempted to view the social world through the theatrical lens. It was clear to Geertz, and possibly to Goffman, that tying an investigation of performance as an endemic aspect of human behaviour too closely to one specific tradition of aesthetic performance was intellectually and culturally limiting. The

challenge, then, was to identify a vocabulary free of these limitations. The collapse of the 'dramaturgical' into the 'theatrical' might be seen as resulting from an initial attraction to local, familiar practices which could be surpassed in more sophisticated formulations. Goffman had already departed decisively from Kenneth Burke's 'dramatistic' scenario of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose, based on the common assumption of consciousness as providing a key to the interpretation of social action (Burke, 1952: xv), when he identified the terrain of the dramaturgical as covered not only by deliberate 'expressions given' but by inadvertent 'expressions given off' (Goffman, 1971: 14). He also quoted Dell Hymes to the effect that 'there is a sense in which *performance* is an attribute of any behaviour, if the doer accepts or has imputed to him responsibility for being evaluated in regard to it' (Goffman, 1974: 124).

It is this return to the matter, rather than the metaphor, of performance (Goffman, 1974) that has been most suggestive for the present study. Here, he borrowed Bateson's notion of the 'play frame' (Bateson, 1987b) to explore how certain performative behaviours were transferred, and meanings assigned or transformed, in the shift from one context or 'frame' to another. Goffman also adopted Bateson's term 'bracketing', together with Alfred Schutz's phenomenological notions of multiple realities and primary frameworks, in order to develop a processual and perspectival approach to the question of how perceived realities are organised and 'worlds' of interpretation generated. He then extended the notion of 'frame' to argue for a general theory of social interaction as performative, in the sense that ideas, attitudes and power claims are instantiated and enacted through verbal and physical behaviours available for scrutiny by others present to the performer. According to Goffman, it is the attribution of frame – that is, an imposed or consensual agreement as to the way the behaviours are to be interpreted within a particular definition of the situation – that determines the reality status awarded to performances of particular kinds in particular circumstances.

For Goffman, frames are layered or 'laminated', and changes in interpretation 'keyed', according to their distance from what he terms 'primary frameworks', frames whose 'anchoring' appears to be self-evident and can thus be disattended, e.g. the distinction between the natural and social worlds. At the time of publication he had not yet conceptually cut loose from his own culturally-affirmed notions of primary reality. He later accepted criticism from Jameson (Jameson, 1974) and others over the adequacy of the distinction between primary and other frameworks, given that a 'primary framework' is not necessarily ontologically real, but simply 'anchored' in its acceptance by the relevant social actors as foundational (Manning, 1992). This ambivalence about the self-evident nature of a 'primary framework' indicates the presence of a productive instability in his analysis of the dynamics of frame, just as twenty years earlier ambivalence about the persistence or otherwise of a foundational self had created an impasse, resolved by the key contention that the self is a product, not simply of the activity of a performer, but of the interactions between performer, audience and bystander over time *in the context of frame* (Goffman, 1974: 127).

Frame is, of course, a social product that must be established either prior to or in the course of an interaction. Goffman employs a tacit voluntarism which suggests that a primary framework, and its consequent keyings and laminations, might be established by means of negotiation – a species of social contract theory which bypasses the relation between interactional frame and established organisations or institutions. The potential circularity of this contention was avoided by Goffman, although in one of his final papers, 'Felicity's Condition' (Goffman, 1983), he stresses the importance of interlocutors negotiating, not a complete interpretation of frame, but a 'footing', or minimal agreement as to the situational definition as a precondition for communication. This 'footing' need not

necessarily be consciously or verbally articulated, but may be tacitly established through physical or pre-verbal vocal behaviours, which can themselves be recognised as citational of recognisable conventions. For the purposes of this study, what is particularly useful is Goffman's emphasis on the *work* involved, both in negotiating a definitional frame and in reiterating the 'strips of behaviour' that vehiculate performative interaction. It is also instructive that, by 1974, his perspective on theatre had developed from the invocation of the dramatic as metaphor to a more detailed assessment of what situated theatrical rehearsal practices may reveal as grounded instances of constituted and framed performance behaviours.

I am also indebted to Goffman's development of a dramaturgical *methodology* in the analysis of social interaction. Some of the most theoretically intriguing passages in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* have been identified by Philip Manning (Manning, 1992) as unmarked additions to the text of the Penguin edition, some six years after its original publication as a University of Edinburgh monograph. In these passages, which include the Introduction and Conclusion as well as substantial additions to the body of the text, Goffman departs from the individualist, voluntarist picture of performance, which marks the main argument, and introduces key qualifications such as the distinction between 'expressions given' and 'expressions given off' the emphasis on the establishment of a 'working consensus' by participants and the caution that 'a correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation -- this self -- is the *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not a *cause* of it' (Goffman, 1971: 244-45). This growing recognition of the relational and iterative nature of social performance may be seen as the thread linking the early work with his later emphasis on frame. It may also be identified as a dynamic informing his otherwise puzzling and apparently random choices of starting point as a researcher. Even in work which employed

other analogies, such as ritual or game, Goffman was willing to shift his own observational perspective so as to take strategic advantage of information accruing from the point of view of one interactant or another, although not always in a systematic manner. In this study, I aim to locate the perspectives and interests in play in the sites I investigate and to acknowledge the dramatic interactions that inform the outcomes I identify. To this end, I adopt what I term an 'ethic of performative observation' and take account of how the scene of play is constructed from influential points of view, including my own. Such an approach is very much in sympathy with the methodological corrective of 'reflexivity' called for by Bourdieu, while providing a mechanism the notion of reflexivity may not deliver in itself.

In order to evaluate the embodied enculturation processes active in the training and rehearsal experiences of any one actor or group of actors, it is first necessary to acknowledge that more than one process and frame of understanding is likely to be 'in play' at any one time and that this will certainly be the case over the durations covered by a complete rehearsal and performance cycle or a sustained period of training. The traditional view of the 'doubleness' of the actor in Western tradition reifies a binary division between actor and character, which builds on other binaries invoked in discourse employing theatre as a metaphor for the social e.g. truth/illusion, fact/fiction, world/stage, actor/audience. Such a distinction is useful insofar as Western theatre practice maintains conventions which bracket stage space/time and actors' bodies as lifted out from the surrounding conventions applied to social persons. The performer is only sometimes a character, a mythological figure, a comedian, a salesperson, a newsreader, a politician. She or he is always *both* a social person and a person representing something else. In this sense, it is possible notionally to separate practices of embodiment specific to a particular performance genre or presentational style from those affecting the actor in the everyday social world and then speculate about the ways they are

combined in practice. It must also be acknowledged that the abstract and/or aestheticised behaviours imposed on/developed by bodies through training in a specific scenic tradition can, in the terms introduced by Bourdieu, constitute a semi-autonomous *habitus* within the field of cultural production. Trained performers are likely to display learned attitudes and behaviours that function relatively independently of contemporaneous social performance forms. To a greater or lesser extent, actors will behave as members of a contained professional and social group or field when in each others' company, and/or sustain specialist practices of embodiment which mark them as actors in other social contexts. It may be more productive, however, to see the actor as enmeshed in and instantiating dynamics and modalities of embodied meaning-making and reception and practices of (re)presentation, in which the shaping of particular body zones and expressive modes and the pattern of distinction between social and aesthetic performative behaviours itself conveys information, not only about the ways in which processes of representation are organised, but also about tensions surrounding the presentation of selves in the surrounding culture.

Other Issues: culture and globalisation

In recent years, analyses conducted through intellectual frameworks such as postmodernism, postcoloniality, and globalisation have grappled with a rapid structural shift in political, economic, technological and cultural relations on a worldwide scale. Commentators have divided over whether to welcome or decry the process of globalisation and its effects, given that opportunities for differentiation and the ease of communication offered by the development of new digital technologies are offset by the dominance of the United States as a political and economic superpower, the massification of popular culture, the erasure of local differences and the use of ideologies of democracy and freedom (freedom of speech/freedom of trade) to promote a commodity market productive of

marked inequalities between individuals, classes, nations and global regions. In these debates, the role of culture as battleground and engine of this shift has been very much at issue - see the debate over global culture in *Theory, Culture and Society* (Boyne, 1990; Robertson, 1990; Wallerstein, 1990a; Wallerstein, 1990b). Jameson has identified the shift as characterised by 'the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural' (Jameson and Miyoshi, 1999). He presents a series of paradoxes to do with globalisation, pointing to its multiple structural possibilities and the degree to which configurations of domination and resistance are themselves shifting across the production, distribution and consumption of goods and values. He argues for a dialectic in which the contradictions between celebration/oppression, hegemony/difference and multiplicity/unity are acknowledged as inherent, but agrees that a fundamental alteration in the relationship between culture and economics has occurred, to the point that 'fresh cultural production and innovation - and this means in the area of mass-consumed culture - are the crucial index of the centrality of a given area and not its wealth or productive power' (Jameson and Miyoshi, 1999: 67). I would add that this also implies that bodies, selves and their behaviours are changing within paradoxes of substance/virtuality, visibility/invisibility and representation/instantiation, in a cultural economy marked by the becoming sensible of the scopic, and the becoming scopic of the sensual. Although this study is not intended as a contribution to globalisation theory, it has become clear in the course of my research that the issues dealt with by the performers and theatre organisations I have studied are indeed indicative of global cultural and economic dynamics.

The status of 'mainstream' Western theatre practice as a fetish object of increasingly embattled European and Eurocentric bourgeois elites is paradoxical, given that processes of economic and cultural globalisation and the development of an 'imaginary economy', via digital and visually

based communication technologies, have rendered issues of embodiment, and the mediation of ideologies through the performative, of particular moment at all levels of social, economic and political organisation. The film industry offers an extreme example of the centralisation of production and distribution in the globalised culture industries. In film, a regional version of nineteenth-century European theatrical performance practice, the American adaptation of Stanislavskian naturalism, has become dominant (Blum, 1984). This dominance clearly has the capacity to affect local theatrical practice and, as Mauss pointed out, can also be expected to affect expectations and perceptions of a range of performance behaviours from the theatrical to the political, across the huge diversity of cultures affected by the market dominance of Hollywood and its preferred representational modes.

In Australasia, actors and their performance practices are affected by this dominance in a number of ways. It affects their chances of occasional employment or significant careers in the US-based film industry itself, or in US-financed films shot and/or produced locally. It affects production and performance practices in the local arts and entertainment industries, to the extent that they are dependent on US models. It affects the training offered by acting schools and the repertoire of individual theatre companies, to the extent that they aim either to participate directly in, or to imitate, the financial and imaginary economy modelled on the practices of the US industry. It affects individual actors directly, to the extent that their inherent or acquired characteristics fit with the preferred aesthetic values of casting agents and directors influenced by that industry and/or with their perceived suitability to represent characters in the narratives chosen for representation (Bertone, et. al., 2000).

But theatrical production also takes place under significantly different conditions from that of film and accommodates a range of other motivations and perceptions on the part of participants and audiences.

Conditions of production for theatre traditionally require the co-presence of actors and spectators. Theatre is therefore more likely to take place within a localised social and cultural context and, although relations of production and distribution almost the inverse of film affect the frequency, size, location, dissemination and longevity of theatrical productions and institutions, theatre is also thereby more likely to depend on local official and volunteer support, to be undertaken from motives other than economic gain, and to reflect the cultural values and priorities of the national, regional, ethnic, class or otherwise culturally or subculturally based groupings that constitute its immediate and geographically extended audience.

The specific cultural situation in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand also impacts significantly on theatre practice. Nationalism, particularly as expressed through state subsidy of approved 'artistic' activity, has played a vital role in facilitating the development of particular types of theatrical expression in both countries since the mid 1970s. This is not to discount the influence of transnational and transcultural traditions, nor the impact of other aspects of a globalised cultural economy on Australasian theatre production and performance practices. Attachment to British, other North American and more broadly pan-European aesthetic traditions, the growing impact of Asian and Pacific cultural and economic influence through trade and migration and the constitution of the 'international' European performance avant-garde as model and market are all important factors shaping the choices made by actors and those who influence and use their labour. The particular status of both countries as white settler nations, the impact of post-war immigration from a range of regional and global sources, including Eastern and Western Europe, the Pacific, the 'Middle East' and lately East Asian and African groupings, and the renaissance of indigenous political and cultural activism, also currently have a major effect on the cultural imagination and on theatre training and production. It could be argued that the theatre is one of the key

arenas in which questions of globalisation, culture and national identity are currently played out in both nations (Kelly, 2001).

In the following chapters, this investigation will ask who actors are, what they do and what they think they are doing when they are acting. It will ask about the interplay between formally performance-oriented behaviour and other interactions which form part of the performance preparation process. It will ask what the background assumptions and conscious choices of actors and those most closely involved in shaping their behaviour – directors, teachers, coaches, other theatre professionals (such as critics and casting agents) and other actors - can tell us about the relations of power which prevail; the processes by which particular bodies are chosen and embodied subjectivities constituted; and the rules of representation which shape perceptions of appropriate behaviour and the possibilities for transgression and change in the surrounding culture(s). It will ask, what structures and practices are most likely to encourage the persistence of dominant modes of representation, which to support the expression of difference?

Chapter 3 will investigate the curriculum and the relations between staff and students of the National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney, Australia. Particular attention will be paid to the contexts of its foundation and current institutional positioning with regard to issues of culture, nation and globalisation. I will argue that the institution is best understood as constituting a mini-field, in which the bodies of students and the dispositions they develop are the subject of contestation by staff representing various field-specific and other traditions of practice. I point to disjunctions between body training regimes and frames of meaning/interaction in determining patterns of embodiment and the acquisition of a professional *habitus*.

Chapter 4 will discuss the curriculum and the relations between staff and students of The New Zealand Drama School/Te Kura Toi Whakaari in Wellington. Attention will be paid to the institution's positioning with regard to traditions of training and issues of contemporary cultural politics, in particular biculturalism and the rise of Maori theatre, and the consequent impact on students and their emerging *habitus*. I will argue that, although its structures and procedures are contested and in flux, Toi Whakaari provides a unique example of the facilitation of embodied cultural exchange.

Chapter 5 will provide an account of the lifecycle of Gilgul Theatre, an alternative Melbourne-based Jewish-Australian theatre company. Attention will be paid to its contexts of practice and the aesthetic and organisational strategies of its members, in particular the development of a proto-*habitus* and its vulnerability to changes in production practices, power relations and compositional/dramaturgical demands. I will argue that a consensus on style and approach and the conscious adoption of a politics and aesthetic of difference was insufficient to sustain Gilgul as a cultural entity in the absence of 'common enough' dispositions and bodyways and in the face of the different positioning of members with regard to other sources of economic and cultural capital.

Chapter 6 will address the conditions and practices leading to the foundation and longevity of The Women's Circus, a feminist community-based physical theatre company in Melbourne's Western suburbs. These will be assessed against a reading of the literature on contemporary feminist and women's performance. Attention will be paid to networks of recruitment and support and the relative contribution of regimes of training and other practices in building its strong loyalties and internal community *habitus*. I will argue that the Circus demonstrates the effectiveness of conscious strategies combining embodiment and

organisation, but that routinisation may affect its capacity to respond to new circumstances and new aesthetic challenges.

In Chapter 7, I will revisit the theoretical issues and bodies of literature surveyed in Chapters 1 and 2, in the light of evidence drawn from the case studies. I will argue that Australasian performance practice demonstrates the characteristics of a field, but that issues of embodiment must be taken into account for an adequate analysis. Heteronomous field constitution clearly affects processes of enculturation and embodiment in the selected sites; there is also a significant level of contestation over the definition of art theatre practice between two main competing globalised declensions of practice. I conclude that the development of a characteristic *habitus* is dependent on the 'keying' through which modes of embodiment and discourse are preferred, and that the creation of a new position or subfield is dependent on the presence of overlapping supporting frames. These frames are organised and elaborated performatively, and by means of tacit and non-verbal as well as discursive modalities. Each site displays a different configuration of bodies and a different pattern of engagement with cultural and social issues. Nevertheless, the case studies show that despite the impact of globalisation, theatrical performance practice in Australia is robust, idiosyncratic and displays decidedly local inflections in its internal relations as well as its relations to other fields including the field of power.

Chapter 3 - The Embodiment of Success: The National Institute of Dramatic Art

A variety of pathways are followed by those aspiring to careers as professional actors in Australasia. Of the 2,251 people listing themselves as 'actors and related professionals' in the 1991 Australian census, 1,230 (54.64%) had no formal qualifications (Strals et al, 1997: 93, Appendix Table 10). In a 1993 survey of Australian artists commissioned by the Australia Council, 64% of the actors surveyed spent fewer than half their working hours in their primary occupation, with 79% earning less than \$A 20,000 per annum (Throsby and Thompson, 1994: 63, Appendix 1 Table 6.2, Appendix 1 Table 5.1). In 1991, only 288 people were listed as having been employed as actors in New Zealand/Aotearoa. No figures were available on their level of qualification: 39% worked on a part time basis, with 64 % earning less than \$NZ 20,000 per annum (Government of New Zealand, 1995: 70)¹. Many actors presumably learn on the job. They may also acquire appropriate skills through private instruction, attend non-certificate classes, or begin courses of instruction without completing them². Despite these statistics, demand for actor training and other related performance education opportunities has steadily increased over the past thirty years³. In that time, a number of accredited drama programs have been established, through private providers, technical and further education institutions, and at tertiary level. Available figures indicate that there are at least 46 institutions offering certificate and degree programs in performance and related skills in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002) and 22 in New Zealand (Government of New Zealand, 2002b)⁴. There is intense competition between these institutions for students, resources and status, but in each country one professional actor training program stands out as pre-eminent: The National Institute of Dramatic Art in Australia and The New Zealand Drama School/Te Kura Toi Whakaari. An investigation of the programs of each school, and an analysis of influences and conflicts

evident through the structure of curriculum and the approach to pedagogy of key staff, should produce useful information about the local, national and international cultural landscape within which each school operates, and also provide insights into the position each occupies in its field of cultural production. I am particularly interested in the ways staff-staff and staff-student activity and interaction in each locale produces, or fails to produce, a distinctive and coherent *habitus* in the discursive orientation and bodyways of its students.

In this chapter, I will concentrate on the Sydney-based National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). NIDA was founded in 1958, through an agreement between the now defunct Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) and the New South Wales University of Technology, now the University of New South Wales (UNSW), with the support of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, now Corporation (ABC). Although housed by the University and awarding diplomas (since 1994 degrees) styled 'The National Institute of Dramatic Art at the University of New South Wales', NIDA operated as a separate incorporated company from its inception, in the words of founding director, Professor Robert Quentin: 'rejoicing in its association with the University and in its independence' (Quentin, 1979: 5). It has its own Board of Directors, advised by a Board of Studies, and its own sources of funding. It maintains a unique place in Australia's theatre industry, and amongst Australian tertiary institutions, as part of the system of elite National Schools that function to produce and legitimate notions of excellence in selected codes of art and sporting activity⁵. As the National School for drama, it currently receives Federal subsidy directly through the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, unlike its host university and other competing tertiary institutions, which are funded under a national formula through the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, or through State-based Technical and Further Education structures. Its students are eligible for Austudy or

Abstudy assistance⁶. It has also at various times received additional funding from the AETT, Australia Council and other Federal and State government schemes for special programs and projects. Increasingly, however, NIDA has come to rely on private donations for scholarships and infrastructure, the largest to date being \$US1 million given by successful graduate, Mel Gibson, towards the \$A33 million cost of Stage II of its purpose-built premises, the first stage of which was completed in 1988 (Hallett, 2001).

NIDA's funding structure allows it to run a number of specialist undergraduate and Graduate Diploma theatre programs with very low staff-student ratios. The full-time courses include undergraduate degree programs in Acting, Design, and Technical Production, an Associate Diploma in Theatre Crafts (costumes, scenery or properties) and Graduate Diplomas in Production Management, Directing, Voice Studies and Movement Studies⁷. Applicants for these courses must at least 18 years of age and are generally expected to have graduated from secondary school, although this condition can be waived (NIDA, 1997d). NIDA runs an Open Program providing non-accredited theatre skills short courses to the public, a part-time Playwrights Studio and a Play Development Program. It also invites a small number of professional artists (often NIDA graduates) to participate in extension and special project activities including the development of new plays, through The NIDA Company (NIDA, 1997d). Students participate in a Teaching Program specific to their specialisation and combine to work on the annual Play Production Program, in which later-year students present fully staged works for public performance⁸ (NIDA, 1997c). Students in the Graduate Diploma and Playwrights Studio programs are drawn from a variety of sources: they are often graduates of other institutions or industry professionals seeking to extend their skills. They follow separate programs of study that may or may not involve interaction with other students. The Open Program feeds off NIDA's public profile, opening its

facilities to eager acolytes. It tailors applied drama skills programs for teachers, youth groups and business people, providing work for current and past students as tutors and generating substantial revenue for the organisation. The one potential target group it does not service is professional actors: 'there's a need, but they don't have money' (Warren interview 1997).

When NIDA was founded, Quentin, (then AETT Opera Company general manager) and fellow Oxonian, AETT executive director Hugh Hunt, envisioned it as 'modelled on English schools like the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, that would prepare Australian actors trained in the classics for the Australian stage' (Lavery in Parsons, 1995: 393)⁹. Today, the three year program offers students a broad practical training aimed to equip them for work 'in the professional theatre, in film and television and in radio' (NIDA, 1997d: 11). Its approach to professional preparation could best be described as generic mainstream, with a debt to the British tradition still evident in the functional distinction between performance preparation and skills training, the curriculum space given to play production and a consistent emphasis on vocal technique whatever the particular skills menu offered to any one class cohort. According to the 1997 Prospectus, 'each course of study is planned as an integrated whole', with the Acting Course 'concerned with developing two complementary aspects of the actor's art: craft and imagination'. Although 'all subjects are compulsory. There are no electives', students are encouraged to develop special interests wherever possible, with the claim that 'play productions naturally involve students in individual study programs' (NIDA, 1997d: 8-11). The acting program covers skills training and studio classes in voice (including dialect), movement (including dance), acting (improvisation, character, scenework and rehearsal techniques), acting for film and TV, text analysis, music/singing, theatre history and a General Studies component. In First Year the emphasis is on foundation skills and studio work, with

performance/showings of exercises and small-scale play excerpts limited to in-house audiences. In later years, extended workshops on particular aspects of the craft, such as Shakespeare, radio drama, comedy and music theatre, are undertaken, together with formal performance seasons through the Play Production Program. By Third Year, the overwhelming emphasis is on rehearsal and performance, but students are also helped to prepare for the transition to professional work. This includes specialist workshops on audition techniques in various performance media, an orientation program introducing them to 'the practical realities of the entertainment industry' (NIDA, 1997d: 13) and a small number of continuing skills classes. The culmination of the course, and an ongoing test of its success, is the final Third Year production and Agents Day, where graduating acting students perform specially rehearsed audition pieces 'in front of an invited audience of directors, producers, casting consultants, and agents' (NIDA, 1997c).

NIDA boasts that its graduates enjoy an outstanding record of employment in a notoriously difficult industry. A 1996 survey conducted by staff member Terry Clarke revealed that of the 94% of graduates contacted, 84% were still working 'in film, theatre and television as practitioners, administrators and teachers' (NIDA, 1997: 1). The Acting Program functions as the core around which most other activities are orchestrated. It is the engine of NIDA's public profile, with graduates featuring prominently amongst Australia's best-known performers in theatre, film and television. 'Industry success' however, is not a neutral category and NIDA is by no means a passive producer of graduates who happen to comply with criteria established by others. As an organisation, it operates in a highly strategic way to maintain its dominant position within the field of cultural production. In the following discussion, I will concentrate on three modes of strategic deployment: its maintenance of a corporate presence; its overt adoption and dissemination of cultural values; and the ways particular physical characteristics, attitudes, values

and habits of performance – the ingredients of a *habitus* -are instantiated through the training regimes it institutes. Although NIDA clearly produces and reproduces discourses, practices and bodies supportive of dominant ideologies and representational traditions, it also produces and reproduces a *habitus* for selected ‘marginal’ discourses, practices and bodies. The dynamic tensions between ‘mainstream’, resistant and transgressive elements taking up positions internally, with regard to the Institute’s organisational and aesthetic agenda, reveal the presence of cultural contests significant elsewhere in contemporary Australia, played out through and across the bodies of its students and graduates.

NIDA operates to maximise its profile in ‘the industry’ and to secure the best possible career outcomes for its students. Most graduates appear happy to acknowledge the source of their training in theatre program notes and interviews, helping to foster a strong sense of corporate identity, the theatre industry equivalent of the ‘old school tie’. Like a great public school or military academy, its networks are very much a ‘closed shop’ – the ‘brand’ capital created by its elite status, the knowledge and resource capital represented by its staff, facilities, and industry contacts, are available only to insiders. The initial success of individual graduates in securing an agent and subsequently gaining their first work as professionals both relies on and enhances NIDA’s corporate image. Most graduates are successful in signing with an agent and a high proportion will find professional work as performers in one form or another in their ‘first year out’, whatever their subsequent fate. The pressure on graduates and on the institution is immense. However, NIDA’s involvement with its graduates does not necessarily end at this point: it pursues a central institutional strategy of generating continuing returns through a mutually supportive relationship with graduates throughout their careers.

It supports graduates in a variety of ways and maintains contact with a surprising number, especially those who either originate from NSW or take up residence in Sydney¹⁰. Membership of an unofficial but close 'family' of graduates offers lifetime access to staff consultation and to NIDA's library of playtexts and books on acting. NIDA puts out a stream of publicity material, including press briefings, newsletters and collections of news clippings, highlighting prominent graduates and their success in securing leading roles, fellowships and awards. It fosters an active network of alumni by keeping track of their careers and inviting them to its productions and functions. The generosity of staff to past graduates is noteworthy, providing mentorship and using institutional and personal networks to further their career opportunities, particularly those considered especially promising. A significant number of the current staff are themselves NIDA graduates and 'NIDA people' are frequently employed casually as guest tutors and directors in the teaching and production programs. The 'NIDA effect' in Sydney's theatre, film and television industry is particularly marked. Although less evident as a cultural formation in other major cities, the Institute maintains its national status through the regular appearance of NIDA trained professionals as actors, designers, directors and technical crew in the programs of State flagship and other leading theatre companies, in feature films and television drama programs and in festivals and 'national spectacles', such as those associated with the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games¹¹.

NIDA's close structural connections with Australia's 'mainstream' professional theatre field are amplified by a web of personal and working relationships and reinforced by the maintenance of a shared set of cultural values. In 1958, work for actors came mostly from commercial radio, the ABC, occasional opportunities in vaudeville and revue and the very few professional drama companies then operating¹². Sydney's Old Tote Theatre Company was established by Quentin in 1962 as 'a

professional company to produce classical plays and modern writing from Australia and overseas.' (Clark in Parsons, 1995: 413). NIDA's second Director, Tom Brown, was a consultant on most of the major Performing Arts Centres built in Australia with Federal and State support over the twenty year period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s. NIDA staff member Alan Edwards was the founding Artistic Director of the Queensland Theatre Company in 1969. NIDA staff members and graduates are particularly prominent as directors, creative and technical staff and actors in the network of 'flagship' theatre companies (and other significant organisational clients of the Australia Council's Major Organisations and Theatre Boards¹³) that constitutes Australia's state sanctified theatre apparatus. The current Artistic Directors of the State drama companies in Queensland and NSW, Playbox in Victoria, and the Bell Shakespeare Company¹⁴, all have NIDA connections.

Actor Training: Contexts and Conflicts

NIDA was founded at a historical moment when struggle over the cultural markers of national identity had reached a new phase. From its inception, it responded to the demands of its students' future employers and participated in contests over broader cultural values, as manifest in theatre training and production. Changes in the fields within which NIDA locates itself have affected its institutional positioning as well as the content of its curriculum. These changes are not simply sequential: their residue persists in the program in a number of ways. An overview of these contexts of practice is thus important in understanding both NIDA's stance towards external pressures and its current internal practice and power configurations.

For approximately thirty years from 1958, both the skills taught in the Acting Course and the performance repertoire closely reflected the repertoire, production values and assumptions about the theatre prevalent

in the network of state-subsidised theatres and the policy structures which supported them. This was a theatre conscious of its cultural and civilising mission, its production processes based on the realisation of the dramatic text. However, within this frame, repertoire as well as production and acting practices were still open to contest. From the 1950s through to the 1970s, the art theatre field was marked by a contest over the search for a national voice - what Harold Love dubbed 'the struggle for an Australian theatre' (Love, 1984)¹⁵. A single outstandingly successful play, in this case the Melbourne University Union Theatre Repertory Company's production of Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in 1955, had proved a watershed in perceptions of the relationship of theatre practice to national identity. The 'flagship' theatre companies, like the amateur companies that preceded them, still saw their role as maintaining a classical and contemporary theatre tradition, essentially literary and linguistically English, leavened by certain works from European naturalism, particularly Chekhov and Ibsen. To the next generation of university-educated writers, actors and theatre makers this seemed like betrayal: 'The theatre was imperialised ... as a performer ... you were a fifth column in the pay of the British or the Americans. You didn't speak like you really spoke, weren't relaying what you heard in the streets, you were an outpost of empire, an alien in a foreign land, except the land wasn't foreign -- you were ... You came from nowhere, said nothing, meant less, and went home' (John Romeril in Blundell, 1997: 174).

Sydney's Nimrod (later Belvoir St/Company B) and Melbourne's La Mama, the Pram Factory (home of the Australian Performing Group) and Hoopla!/Playbox (later Playbox at the Malthouse), became leading centres for the support of new Australian playwrights, fostering a vernacular and dynamically physical performing style¹⁶. NIDA played a significant part in this movement. Quentin, who had moved to the University of New South Wales to found its academic drama program in

1964, set up the Jane Street season of new Australian plays as a joint initiative of The Old Tote, NIDA and the UNSW School of Drama in 1966. When the Old Tote became an independent company in 1969, NIDA took over the running of the Jane Street Theatre as a venue for the Australian play seasons, showcasing the actors of the NIDA Advanced Course (now the NIDA Company)¹⁷. John Clark, NIDA's third and longest-serving Director¹⁸, was a supporter of the 'Australian voice' in the theatre, as well as of the 'new wave' of British and European theatre emerging during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He ensured the inclusion of old and new Australian plays, the work of 'radical' theatre reformers such as Brecht and 'angry young men' like Harold Pinter and Joe Orton in its play production program. This in turn helped facilitate their acceptance into the play production schedules of the 'flagship' companies. By the mid 1980s, the battle was pretty much over and a new set of established values, if not quite a new canon, had emerged. Notwithstanding occasional efforts to return to an entirely 'classic' repertoire¹⁹, the 'flagship' companies have expanded their repertoire to include regular productions of Australian plays and companies such as Belvoir St/Company B and Playbox have maintained the focus on new Australian writing.

But even as this consensus was established, the subsidised company structure and its values came under pressure from a number of sources. Shifts in political culture led to a progressive dismantling of the post-war 'big government' structures of support for public institutions and services, including education and the arts. As Richard Fotheringham points out, this had an immediate impact on the protected cultural industries' capacity to maintain their distance from the ideology and reality of economism: 'The old binaries assumed stability ... and that ideally all the first terms (non-commercial, high art, Australian) would line up against the second (commercial, low art, non-Australian). Discourse based on these beliefs ... has been over-ridden by the

discourse of professionalism which has become the dominant force operating to centralise or marginalise particular artists, companies and shows' (Fotheringham, 1998: 34). Increasingly, arts organisations were forced to justify their funding in terms of its economic contribution. The Discussion Paper from the 1999 'Nugent Inquiry' into the major performing arts organisations states that: 'Federal, State and local governments ... share a desire for the arts to be recognised as an integral part of the social, economic and cultural vitality of the country. The governments' cultural initiatives are premised on ... fostering a vigorous and sustainable cultural sector, including building the sector's economic potential and encouraging the development of partnerships with the private sector' (Nugent et al, 1999: 52). As government support declined both in relative and dollar terms, the major theatre organisations were forced increasingly to rely on the box office and on private and corporate sponsorship²⁰. Their repertoire choices became more 'commercial', with more emphasis on breaking even financially through less risky programming. Strategies adopted included programming Broadway and West End successes, musical comedy and music theatre in the play seasons of the leading drama companies; choosing 'straight' plays with reduced cast sizes²¹; the development of a 'star' system in which well known television and film actors were given lead roles²²; and the development of something like a 'circuit' amongst the 'flagship' companies, with an increase in co-productions and instances of one company's fully mounted productions being purchased by others (Nugent et al, 1999: 104-05). This resulted in an overall decline in the size and number of productions. Since the mid 1980s, progressively fewer employment opportunities have been available to NIDA graduates within the subsidised theatre company network, and the jobs that are available have been subject to increasing competition, with television and film exposure a distinct advantage in securing an actor employment.

Over the past two decades, television and film have become increasingly important sources of employment for graduates. The structure and economics of the film industry in particular have had a noticeable impact on NIDA's approach to skills preparation. Television production is the main income generator for the local industry: \$A472m in 1999/2000 as opposed to \$A74m in feature film production (Australian Film Commission, 2002), but film retains a higher status than television both in the size of the international industry and in its claims to aesthetic distinction. For Australian industry personnel, it offers the allure of participation in globally powerful production and distribution networks. Most Australian television programs are still produced by local businesses, which rely on overseas co-production and distribution deals to achieve international sales. Film production, however, has come to include an increasing number of 'international' productions, mostly US-based and financed²³, taking advantage of lower cost structures to use Australia as a 'back lot'. This has increasingly dwarfed the local industry. In 2000/2001 alone, the total value of foreign features shot in Australia was \$A368m, with approximately 60% of that amount spent locally²⁴. In many ways, this returns Australia to the cultural economics of the late 19th century, when the relative geographical proximity of California and the Australian east coast, together with their cultural similarities, led to a high level of traffic between them²⁵. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries Californian-based film culture is by far the dominant partner, but the traffic is not simply one way. In an interesting twist, the solid craft skills of Australasian personnel, and their status as English-speakers who occupy a cultural space *between* those of the United States and Great Britain, have allowed a significant number to achieve employment in the 'international' film industry²⁶.

Actors are a small minority of this cohort²⁷, but Australasian leading actors, including NIDA graduates, have recently secured a profile and influence far greater than their numbers would suggest²⁸. These actors are

powerful role models for students and, as an elite school and a producer of leading actors, NIDA is keen to continue its graduates' record in this regard. NIDA graduates' employment in the 'international' film industry has been achieved both by relocating to the continental United States in the search for work and through participation in locally produced foreign film projects. Both are high-risk strategies. Actors seeking work in the US must gain a work permit, secure membership in the powerful Screen Actors Guild and then compete in one of the world's most oversupplied cultural markets (Small, 1991). Actors aiming for international success from a local base must be selected for a role in one of the more or less high profile, but in any case relatively infrequent, overseas-financed projects filmed in Australia, usually either on Queensland's Gold Coast or in Sydney²⁹. Even then, they must generally be satisfied with supporting actor status, since the lead actors still tend to be imported. At the time of my field research in 1997, the imminent establishment of the Fox Studios in Sydney as an offshore film production hub was the cause of much excitement. Tony Knight, NIDA's Head of Acting, forecast that Fox would be a significant employer of NIDA acting graduates. He saw a greater concentration on film acting techniques as his major contribution to the development of the acting program: 'I think the biggest contribution I've made to the curriculum ever since I've been the head of the course, has been boosting up the amount of film and television work that's here. When I started, there was really only the two weeks with the ABC ... actors who have graduated ... were just saying "There's got to be more film and television, there's just got to be more"' (Knight interview 1997). Despite providing studio facilities for feature films such as *The Matrix* (1999), *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and episodes of the *Star Wars* series, the Studios have not so far attracted the continuous level of production required to make them financially viable. In its 2001 annual report, investment partner Lend Lease reported a net loss after tax of \$A65 million (Lend Lease Corporation, 2001: 68). It later withdrew from the project, writing down the value of its entire investment as a loss.

Nevertheless, the Queensland State government continues to offer incentives to film production companies and another major film studio complex is scheduled for Melbourne's Docklands development, with significant private investment and State government support (Zion, 2001). Despite the risks, the lure of work for Australian actors in local and international film production has affected NIDA's positioning, both in its public quest to participate in its famous graduates' success and in the approach taken to course structure and student selection. By no means all NIDA graduates will set out for a career in the international film industry; by no means all successful 'Hollywood Australians' have been or will be NIDA graduates. Nonetheless, film's prestige, its power to give actors the public profile years of stage work can no longer provide and the dominance of overseas, particularly American, companies in film finance, production and distribution have meant that, in recent years, more space in NIDA's acting program has been devoted to film techniques, and individual and institutional ambitions have been broadened to encompass 'international' success.

The field of theatrical performance practice has also been affected by other, differently configured, movements and positionings. Although less securely in receipt of government subsidy, the trajectories followed by youth and community theatre, together with the rise of a local inflection of avant-garde physical theatre, have had an identifiable impact on the conduct of training at NIDA, particularly in the area of skills development. As Adrian Kiernander comments, one effect of the 'Australianisation' of classical theatre practice under directors such as John Bell was a change of focus 'away from its previous dependence on the voice, and towards an awareness of the body that produces and comments on it' (Kiernander, 2000: 125). The developing discourse of an 'Australian body', marked by an expressive physicality, vitality, muscularity and use of space, was very much a product of the New Wave of the 1970s, when theatre makers took up positions in opposition to the

'restrained' Britishness of the flagship theatres. This sensibility coincided with the 'roughening up' of British theatre and a renewed emphasis on physical expressivity and communication evident in two other important streams of practice: the educational drama movement and the 'international' avant-garde. In both, the development of new positions with regard to the employment of the performer's body as an expressive medium has had an impact on training regimes, as well as on the style, content and communicative modes employed in performance. Through these competing streams, actor training has itself reached the status of a contested subfield of artistic practice, with its own movements, positions, institutions, networks and debates.

The realistic mode has dominated 'mainstage' Australian art theatre, film and television production over a long period. However, apart from American director and acting teacher Hayes Gordon, who trained a number of prominent actors at the Ensemble Studios in Sydney in his version of 'the Method' (Gordon, 1993), approaches to actor training in Australia owed more to the influence of British than American theatre traditions. The resultant 'soft naturalism' has instituted a pervasive but porous orthodoxy, with characterisation, emotional 'truthfulness' and text analysis the basis of most foundational actor training programs. In the past thirty years approaches to training drawn from European and North American avant-gardes and British educational drama have become more prominent, the mix varying from one institution to another. To the extent that North American non- and anti- naturalist protest against the dominance of Stanislavskian naturalism is itself influenced by European avant-garde theories and practices, this has had a 'multiplier effect' on the European inflection of contemporary performance training. While maintaining its overall industry orientation, NIDA has been open to these influences, offering students an eclectic range of skills classes and other exposure to prominent tendencies in training or performance. The trend towards physicalisation of Australian performance is felt both indirectly,

through the expectations of style and expressivity placed on actors in acting classes and play rehearsals, and directly, in the approach to teaching of Movement staff. Julia Cotton, Senior Movement Teacher and graduate of NIDA's Movement course, has a strong background in Sydney's physical theatre 'scene', having worked with *Legs on the Wall*, as well as her own company 'etc...' ³⁰. Interested students have the opportunity to work as cast members with the choreographers enrolled in the Graduate Diploma in Movement ³¹ and NIDA has also included physical theatre pieces in its Play Production Program. The influence of the French tradition of mime/physical theatre has been felt through short course modules taught by staff or students of Sydney's Lecoq-based Drama Action Centre, which hosts reasonably regular visits by 'third generation' French avant-garde acting teachers such as the Lecoq-trained Philippe Gaulier and Monika Pagneaux ³². And although the vocal program is still solidly in the British tradition, the 'classic modern' approach of Senior Voice Teacher Betty Williams is balanced by the 'physical turn' orientation of Head of Voice Studies Bill Pepper ³³ who runs the Graduate Diploma in Voice and thus strongly influences the next generation of Australian theatre voice teachers.

The loosening of Australian theatre's ties to the culture and practices of British theatre has also ironically been hastened through NIDA's continuing indebtedness to the models provided by British drama schools. The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) had from its foundation in 1904 concentrated on providing 'a study of the classical repertoire combined with intensive work in voice, movement, and text analysis' (Mekler, 1989: 259) or, as one of its ex-students put it, 'the same old curriculum, the well-worn path to the stars – dancing, fencing, mime, diction, voice production, acting and makeup' (McCall, 1978: 7). But by the time NIDA was established RADA had already begun to reform its curriculum in response to competition from other British schools, such as the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art

(LAMDA), the Central School of Speech and Drama, the Webber-Douglas Academy and 'radical' schools such as the Old Vic and, later, the Drama Centre and East 15. The Central School of Speech and Drama was founded in 1906, dedicated to 'a definite yet flexible body of principles rather than a multiplicity of methods and theories' (Mekler, 1989: 31). Rather than simply offering training for 'the profession', it maintained a strong commitment to general education in drama, including applied drama. In the post-war period, it ran courses for actors, stage managers, teachers and, later, speech and movement therapists. This school exerted a particular influence on the development of a more systematic approach to actor training, as did one of the most influential of the 'radical' schools, the Old Vic Theatre School (1946-52), headed by Copeau's nephew, the French teacher and director Michel Saint-Denis. In addition to interpretive work on text, the Old Vic emphasised an ensemble approach to performance and the integration into the actor's foundational technique of skills in movement, dance, voice, mime, acrobatics, fencing and improvisation, including *commedia dell'arte* and mask work. After its closure, this approach was disseminated through the influence of Saint-Denis's collaborator, George Devine, at the Royal Court Theatre, and through the Drama Centre, London. The Drama Centre was set up in 1966, to provide training specifically for actors working in the British postwar subsidised national theatre system. It relied on its charismatic founders, Christopher Fettes, John Blatchley and Yat Malmgren, and its opposition to the British tradition of pragmatic skill-based actor training to introduce a passionately 'foreign' note, in a comprehensive, ideas-based actor training method based on the legacies of Stanislavski, St Denis and Rudolf Laban (Fettes in Mekler, 1989)³⁴. Australian graduates of the Drama Centre founded the Drama Studio, Sydney, which operated from 1980 to 1990. Knight is a Drama Centre graduate and taught at the Drama Studio after his return from the UK in the early 1980s.

The educational drama movement functioned as a meeting point between 'student centred' learning and the improvisation-based, integrated approach to performance and training advocated by Saint-Denis and Devine. 'Developmental drama' was fostered by staff at the Central School of Speech and Drama, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and influential figures within the postwar British Department of Education and Science, who instigated a departure from the traditional playtext-based approach to teaching drama in schools, in favour of an experiential, process-based method of investigating issues and devising work for performance (O'Toole, 1992). This improvisatory and/or game-based approach³⁵ was warmly received in Australia in the 1960s and applied to actors' warm-ups and to the development of dramatic material in the 'experimental' theatre, as well as in the classroom. It also made a strong contribution to actor training practices at NIDA. Drama in education/theatre in education was once given status as a specialised mode of employment in NIDA's acting program,³⁶ but is now seen as of lesser significance. Nevertheless, warmup and rehearsal games from this tradition are still in regular use in the acting program and in auditions, and continue to be important for students working as tutors in the Open Program or with the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP), with which NIDA maintains ongoing links.

Characterising NIDA's Acting Program

An acting school has the opportunity to affect the characteristics, dispositions and habits of its students at the point of selection, in its promotion of general 'professional' behaviours and attitudes, and through the iteration of exercises designed to produce specific changes in embodiment. Although it may be possible to identify a set of basic skills or capacities more or less applicable to most performance situations, drama school training is by no means restricted to such basics. Any competent institution will aim to provide its graduates with more than

this, but equally importantly, will configure its offerings so as to position itself tacitly or overtly within the field in relation to other traditions and formations of practice. Selection of repertoire and the inculcation of skills, together with student selection based on perceived prior possession of or potential to acquire preferred characteristics, will vary considerably from one cultural, geographical and historical milieu to another. The influence of national and international movements, developments and fashions, as played out within the specialised milieu of actor training, is a major factor in determining the training offered to students and the discourses produced by the institution in promoting or justifying its curriculum choices. This is a world in which significant controversies and factionalism have been rampant since the turn of the century, in which notions of what an actor is and ought to be are the stakes at play (Hodge, 2000). The subfield of actor training has been subject to the competing claims of systems of acting promulgated by charismatic individuals, or otherwise linked to particular performance styles, genres and traditions. Approaches to training have frequently been characterised by positions valorising 'truthfulness', 'emotionality', 'intuition', and claims for the presence of inherent, universal, or organic performance qualities, while the actual techniques and exercises employed and the demands made on students may differ to the point of incompatibility from one approach to another. In characterising the position adopted by any one institution, a key question is the consistency between different curriculum areas and between members of staff. Some schools will demand adherence to a particular training method and ideology, while others, including NIDA, constitute a micro-field where different tendencies coexist and/or compete for authority. In either case, tensions and disputes are not uncommon, whether over perceived heresies or to achieve dominance and a 'speaking position' on behalf of the school.

In the broader field of Australian theatre practice, a strand of anti-intellectualism reveals the extent of competition between government-

funded educational and artistic formations for cultural legitimacy and resources. NIDA positions itself on the 'industry' side: Knight repeatedly characterised his course as 'industry based', 'purely practical', 'experiential', 'not academic' and so on (field notes), as distinct from the competing programs in performance theory and practice offered by other Australian tertiary institutions. Acting schools are also, although perhaps less directly, influenced by broader intellectual and cultural trends. The influence and decline of Marxist and other socialist movements, the advent of psychoanalytic, feminist, gay/queer theory and postmodern and deconstructionist approaches to social commentary and analysis, have all had an impact on the theatre and on approaches to acting. Then there are the reactions of theatre and film audiences, the influence of broader changes in economic and communication patterns, social values and patterns of interaction, and the direct or indirect impact of national and international events, which decision makers in the school community may feel called upon to answer by introducing or deleting elements in the training program.

In his 1984 review of Australian actor training, David Kendall described NIDA's actor training program thus: 'wholeheartedly undocinaire: openminded and accessible, say some; pragmatic to the point of intellectual pointlessness, say others ... there is no doubt that ... NIDA performs its stated function. It provides acting students with a sound practical approach to the work of the actor' (Kendall, 1984: 155-56). He regretted the lack of emphasis on what he saw as the simple goal of any drama school, 'to teach the actor to work by himself [sic]' (Kendall, 1984: 159) - in this regard, he was much more optimistic about the 'rigorous, uncompromising' program offered by the Drama Studio, an 'ideologically inspired school' offering 'a precisely distilled concoction of Laban and Stanislavsky' (Kendall, 1984: 157) - but was reassured that Yat practitioner Tony Knight was teaching the method at NIDA. The

same assumption was later made by fellow Yat teacher Janys Hayes (Hayes, 1996).

Writing in 2001, Barry O'Connor maps the Australian actor training landscape by distinguishing between 'single ideology' private schools and public sector schools, themselves divided into the three tiers of conservatories, university drama departments and technical colleges, which tend to be 'more eclectic and generalist in their programs' (O'Connor, 2001: 47). According to O'Connor, the public and private sector schools are not in competition, since they cater to different clienteles and offer different curricula. But in arguing for a further distinction between training processes which reinforce the actor's dependence on the director and those which place the actor 'in charge of the creative process' (O'Connor, 2001: 59), he singles out three coherent methodologies: Yat technique; the American Eric Morris's techniques as taught by Leonard Meenach at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT); and VCA Drama School Head Lindy Davies' Impulse Work. These offer a way to break free of the industry influence on actor training, which he sees as disempowering the performer. Like Kendall and Hayes, he identifies Knight as a Yat teacher and claims that the technique is 'most strategically' taught at NIDA.

In my own conversations with Knight in 1997, he was clear that he did not have space in the acting program to emphasise the Yat technique in any detail: 'the Second Years have had just a bit of it. The difficulty with Yat's work is it really takes three years to come to an understanding of it. I can only give them a hint of what it's like, so that they can look upon it ... as simply another way of ... working out character, based on whether it is a sensing, thinking, intuiting or feeling type. So I don't necessarily stick rigidly to the Inner Attitudes, 'cause I think that just takes a little bit of time.' Since coming to NIDA, he had also changed his assessment of the general applicability of the technique. While pleased to be able to

share the vocabulary in a 'two hour conversation' with actor Anthony Hopkins, 'who was trained by Yat, and does apply it', he was less convinced that the approach provided all the answers: 'I think ... there are restrictions to it as well, I'm not totally committed, I mean Yat himself is now, has changed the whole idea of it ...'.

Instead, Knight argues for the virtue of eclecticism: 'NIDA ... has been accused of being a jack of all trades and master of none, but I think the proof is in the pudding and the students are out there having successful careers ... there is this issue that an actor must develop their own technique of what is right for them.' On the other hand, the experience will have a definite impact: 'you are going to come into an institution, and three years later you're going to come out of it a very different person.' He characterises the process as one of enhancing the actor's confidence: 'that's definitely one thing that we aim for, a versatility, a confidence in performing, in being able to know who they are and what they are capable of ... one of the things that the journey through NIDA has been described as is the journey of identity ... they do come out of here with a very firm sense of who they are, they invariably leave here with a very, perhaps a little bit inflated, sense of confidence, but nevertheless they're out there and they're ready to go.' Knight sees the course as offering 'technical skills to improve and release creativity and a whole range of experiences that will enhance what that talent is, and develop it, and bring certain things under control. But as for the actual 'it', well, yes, that's ... you just don't know. It's too difficult to actually tell.' He recognised that auditionees will possess a range of attributes and experience and that students will respond to different aspects of the course: 'we as their teachers have got to stay flexible enough ... to allow any sort of technique, any response, and encourage it, rather than actually say "no, you've got to do it this way"'. But he does look for certain qualities: 'expressive capacities, imaginative capacities, rhythmic capacities ... a sense of rhythm is vital to an actor ... I think a sense of

humour is also fairly important.' However, there is one barrier requirement: 'if you are not prepared to accept criticism and change, then you are not prepared to come to a drama school' (Knight interview 1997 and field notes).

The constitution of NIDA's program reveals an ongoing state of flux with regard to the source and balance of skills the actor is expected to acquire, within a reasonably stable overall structure. While the institution's ruling values have changed only slowly, the skills program appears to multiply offerings, rather than to substitute one approach to skills training for another. The effect is rather like a smorgasbord, in which students are exposed to skills 'tastings' from a variety of sources and traditions. Key staff members at NIDA represent particular positions and approaches and find themselves in constant competition for space in the program, typically complaining of their inability to maintain the consistent developmental work required to produce real change according to the aims of their disciplinary approach. Specialist staff like Cotton regret the modular nature of the acting program: 'there's always a bit of this and a bit of that. And of course when there's pressure, it's the skills that are pushed out ... I could do with a bit more continuity' (Cotton interview 1997). Without that continuity, desirable habits will have little chance to 'take'. During lunchtime conversation in October 1997, staff lamented that despite the level of scrutiny and the blunt assessments to which students are subjected, the 'bad habits' of student X or Y were proving resistant to change. There was a difference of opinion about the cause:

A: That's why I was saying they really need a consistency of training. After First Year it stops – they just revert.

B: They come in like that and nothing is different three years down the track.

C: X is as thick as two planks, while with Z you only have to say something and it all clicks in ...

B: But he could do that when he came here.

A: What do you do? It's depressing.

For Knight, on the other hand, it is the whole process, rather than any particular segment or phase, that is decisive: 'you adapt the course depending on what the group is like, and the particular needs of each person. So I always get a little bit annoyed when people say "oh, NIDA is like this or that". I invariably say "what year are you talking about?" It's always very different because plays are very different, each year has an extremely different experience from the one that's gone before' (Knight interview 1997). The process is dominated by the play production program, as Cotton's and Knight's remarks affirm. Staff choice of repertoire will indeed have a significant impact on the 'basket' of skills experiences offered to any one student cohort, but Knight surely overstates his conclusion that the experience of each cohort is therefore qualitatively different. On the contrary, a consistent set of values and practices provide the frame within which a hierarchy is established of other components of the program. The contract entered into by the student is one of complete commitment to the institution. Staff power is modified by openness: 'that's why we have the tutorial system ... so the students have a chance to voice any problems every week ... and I think it's very important that it happens. Because they're the ones who are going to be teaching us, do you understand what I mean? They're the ones who have got the ideas'. But power remains power, nonetheless: 'of course, it's great to hear that they would like to do more Shakespeare and yes, they wanna do a musical, but it's like, well, what do they need? What do they need?' (Knight interview 1997).

On this point there is little difference between NIDA's eclecticism and the prescriptive approach of a 'single ideology' school. Although Knight

wants students to think of themselves as artists, their development as individuals is strongly directed through membership of a group, whose members are perceived as 'needing' to acquire particular professional characteristics in particular ways. Decisions on students' 'needs' are made by staff members, whose professional desire to effect changes in embodiment, in line with the goals of a particular approach to training, depend in their turn on the dominant values disseminated through the play production program, the ecology of which depends ultimately on the influence exercised by the Head of Acting through authority delegated by the Director of the institution. It is instructive that Knight, the current occupant of that position, has not sought to impose the techniques and values of his own particularist training in the UK. Instead, he appears to have positioned himself to speak from within the traditions of NIDA itself, from his perspective as a past student³⁷ and long term member of the 'NIDA family'. I would argue that these traditions produce a very specific template of the professional actor, which has persisted through the adaptations made by the institution as a result of shifts in internal and external orientation. Despite apparent internal indecisiveness on the level of specific skill acquisition, NIDA's success is in large part due to its capacity to produce graduates who are very much identifiable in their assumptions about acting, in their physical carriage and in their possession of core presentational skills, including vocal production. If the palpable effects of training cannot be sourced to the structure of the skills program itself, they must be sought in the preferences – the dispositions, the *habitus* – encouraged by other factors, in particular through the mimesis of professional behaviours in the play production program. I would emphasise that this is not simply a matter of responding to the demands of repertoire. Rather, it is the constancies of approach, the overdetermination of discourse and practice during the three years of a student's exposure, combined with the iteration of both articulated and tacitly modelled behaviours constituting the 'NIDA culture', that is most effective in producing the identified characteristics and capacities.

We are here in that difficult area which arises, as Michel de Certeau points out, when theory has to advance over an area where there are no longer any discourses. De Certeau labels these constancies 'procedures' (de Certeau, 1984: 43), but I would also invoke Goffman's notions of frame and keying to explain the processes by which, out of an overtly neutral spread of choices, some are endowed with greater significance and greater potential for attachment. I would also point out that the means by which NIDA's most lasting effects of *habitus* are tacitly constructed are much closer to the ways behavioural change proceeds in daily life than are the assumptions behind 'single ideology' attempts to consciously effect changes in actors' habits through training. The institution of procedure (as the nexus between discourse and practice prior to the appearance of articulated convention) begins during the process of selection. It can be observed in how the process is organised, how the institution is portrayed to candidates, how influential staff discuss students and behave towards them, how selection reveals lines of class, authority, gender and sexual preference, and in the invocation of 'industry' practices as justification for in-house relations and expectations.

Tops and Tails

Specific pressure on NIDA's students is concentrated at two points, graduation and entry. At graduation, key industry gatekeepers assess both individual actors and NIDA's success in training marketable candidates for 'the profession'. Insofar as it relies for its national and international profile on the continuing careers of a very small number of graduates, NIDA must ensure that only candidates with a reasonable chance of success are granted the institution's imprimatur. The selection process is of crucial importance in determining who is admitted to its courses in the first place. Predicting the future success of a young actor with possibly

very limited prior experience is an inexact art. It is true that NIDA adopts a fallback position in this regard. Students must progress through informal as well as formal assessment by staff, with particular pressure applied twice a year. Unfavourable Mid-Year or End-of-Year reports may result in a student being placed on probation or failing to proceed³⁸. This notwithstanding, NIDA's strong track record is a testament to the astuteness of staff responsible for auditioning applicants, the efficacy of its training methods, and the degree to which it has been able to position itself both to respond to and to anticipate the requirements of a competitive industry – more correctly the competing demands of an incompletely overlapping set of reference subfields - in producing actors who match industry requirements. NIDA remains the institution of first resort for a large number of young Australians seeking careers as actors. It is therefore able to be extremely selective in its intake. Each year, approximately 2,000 young adults³⁹ apply for the initial round of auditions, held from October onwards in most State capitals. About 26 will make it through to membership of the next First Year intake.

The audition process replicates the large-scale auditions now more common in the musical theatre than in either professional theatre or film, although it contains some contemporary features. It takes place in two phases, open audition and 'callback', each on separate days. All applicants must register by forwarding a standard written application form, a recent photograph and a service fee by the due date. They are then mailed a package containing information on the date and time of the audition and requirements for the monologue pieces they are expected to memorise. Each candidate must prepare three monologues, at least one of which must be from Shakespeare and at least one from the 'NIDA Suggested Audition Pieces'. The pieces for the 1997 auditions were divided in two sets of approximately 25, those for men on blue paper and those for women on pink. Each set comprised half a dozen 'big' speeches from Shakespeare, another half dozen from the postwar Australian

repertoire, and the remainder divided between twentieth-century US and European (including British) works. At least three in each set were from films or filmed plays (NIDA, 1997b). Candidates were advised that, if they chose to depart from this selection, they should be sure to choose monologues from plays, rather than poetry or other forms of writing, and should not present their own devised or written work. Whatever the source, they should familiarise themselves with the whole play or film from which the excerpt was taken and be prepared to discuss it during the audition. Their approach should be to 'choose appropriate scenes which you believe will show your abilities in the best way, and present them clearly and interestingly, with relevant physical action to assist your communication. Do not think of them as "speeches"' (NIDA, 1997a).

The selection task devolves into two different operations: to select negatively by rejecting the majority of auditionees and positively by testing the remaining candidates for range, responsiveness and any physical or emotional defects which might hinder them during their years of study or later professional careers. Each of these operations is also broken down into two phases. On the first day, the morning session for any group of applicants consists mainly of warm-up and physical/improvisation games, with some rejected at lunchtime. In the afternoon, those surviving the first cull present one or two monologues and are asked to respond to direction. By the end of this audition day, most candidates have been rejected; the remainder are invited to return for the later 'callback' audition, in some cases being asked to prepare additional work. In the callback audition, candidates get the opportunity to ask questions of the staff and student or graduate audition assistants. They again participate in warm-up and improvisation exercises, but undergo more intense scrutiny of their prepared pieces. The work in this session is closer to that in a rehearsal room: the candidates are stopped and asked to respond to questions or instructions, invited to redo the speech in whole or in part, with a different intention or physical 'score',

and so on. At the end of this day, another selection takes place: some students are placed on the 'short shortlist', while others are thanked for their work and dismissed. A combined 'short shortlist' from all the regional callbacks is then assembled at NIDA, where the final selection is made by a panel of senior staff. Of those rejected at this stage, some are encouraged to reapply, others given no feedback on their future chances of success. Each year, some candidates reapply for up to the fourth or fifth time. Even ultimately successful students and actors, such as Matt Newton, a Second Year student at the time of my observations, may have auditioned for several years before being admitted (Brennan, 1997: 8).

The notion of talent is frequently invoked in answer to questions about selection criteria. In a public interview, Clark commented: 'People ask if it's hard to get in. The answer is "yes" in one sense, but "no" in another. I mean, if you have a genuine talent I am sure we will find it' (Brennan, 1997). The notion is both all-encompassing and frustratingly opaque. On the one hand, it can be seen as inherent, something that no amount of training can alter – Knight referred to his belief in an 'acting gene' (Knight interview 1997). On the other, since NIDA is clearly interested in taking 'talent' and training it, it is not equivalent to a set of finished skills. Talent is neither fixed, nor even always in evidence to the same extent: if talent were both inherent and unquestionably evident, there would be no need for actors like Newton to audition more than once. In practice, talent appears to operate, in Bourdieu's terms, to sustain the *illusio* of the canonical view of theatre: 'the most successful ideological effects are those which have no need of words ... the political function of these ideologies may in some cases be reduced to the effect of displacement and diversion, camouflage and legitimation, which they produce by reproducing – through their oversights and omissions, and in their deliberately or involuntarily complicitous silences – the effects of the objective mechanisms' (Bourdieu, 1977: 188-89). The attribution of talent is the province of those already assured of artistic competence,

whose mastery of the relevant systems of classification is both tested and affirmed through their recognition of others as having the potential to acquire them. There is likely to be a 'basket' of general and specific attributes, aptitudes, responses, preferences, demonstrated knowledge and patterns of behaviour that staff members take into account in assessing the presence or otherwise of talent. It is entirely possible that the contents of this 'basket' will vary from one situation, and one expert reader, to another. The question is: which traits and what combinations of traits most influence staff to decide on the presence of talent? And how are different assessments resolved in the event of dispute?

In her 1996 study of Australian drama school audition processes, Kath Leahy noted the disproportionate success of candidates conforming to dominant cultural values of appearance or self-presentation, observing that auditioners succumb to the talent of the beautiful more readily than to that of others: 'it is not simply the protocols of performance that influence selection but also a myriad of other social and cultural codes of behaviour and perception' (Leahy, 1996: 138). She concluded, in terms reminiscent of Bourdieu's discussion of 'natural distinction' and the 'natural gift' (Bourdieu, 1990: 108-09), that the issue of 'talent' needed to be openly discussed as including cultural issues relating to class background, accent and demeanour. Applicants from non-dominant groups, 'should they dare to aspire to careers in the performing arts, have to learn as a foreign language the codes [others] absorb from infancy in order to enter the 'best' acting schools' (Leahy, 1996: 139). Students from middle-class backgrounds are undoubtedly advantaged in selection for most elite educational institutions⁴⁰, but I would argue that in NIDA's case Leahy overstates the influence of the 'performance of class' as a *direct* factor in selection.

Attractiveness and graceful physical integration are likely to play a part in the selection of students, particularly those with potential for playing

'leads', roles which it could be argued are constituted around conventionally idealised *imago* of gender and class. It is unlikely that a decidedly physically unattractive or severely disabled person would be selected⁴¹. But realist drama in whatever medium is not solely composed of roles representative of the middle classes⁴². Knight is looking for more than 'basically bland pretty faces that are very inexpressive' (Knight interview 1997). He identifies as significant particular capacities, such as intelligence, together with an ability to read a script and produce an 'imaginative, intuitive response'. The task is to identify potential, and it is clear that his own response is intuitive and global: 'Invariably, you know by the time the person opens their ... says their first line, you know whether they've got it or they haven't. I mean, one of the biggest things is, many people have the desire to act, but very few have the ability, and when you get the combination of desire and ability then you've got an actor'. As well as physical attractiveness, NIDA's selectors are likely to be looking for freedom from tensions and physical tics; the capacity to express emotion; vocal clarity or at least freedom from obvious impediment; the capacity to 'play' or commit to an imagined situation; the capacity to tell a story or otherwise sustain a narrative; the ability to sustain and enjoy an exchange with the gaze of others – components of that mysterious quality Knight calls 'watchability' – and above all the ability to accept direction, to generate fresh performance sequences in response to suggestion. One commonly invoked aptitude is the ability to 'transform', that is, to sustain an alteration from the actor's established physical and vocal habits so as to give the impression of an alternative personal integration, but Knight is prepared to recognise at least two types of actor: 'You have the personality actor, and you have the transformational actor. Now, NIDA is flexible enough to be able to cope with both. Probably if anything, erring a little bit more towards those who are going towards transforming, but there's certainly room for the personality actor here as well ... that's fine, there's nothing wrong with that' (Knight interview 1997)⁴³. Lack of formal educational attainment is

not a barrier to selection⁴⁴. Nor does NIDA expect uniformity of cultural reference and experience amongst its incoming students. According to Clark: 'Their ideas about acting are influenced by film and TV much more than theatre' (Hallett, 2001). Nevertheless, in the process of final selection, back at NIDA after callback auditions in all States have been completed, staff arrive at some consensus on ranking and the particular 'mix' of students to be given a start.

Students themselves come to recognise the force of implicit selection criteria as part of their enculturation. NIDA Second Year student Jacqui Delmege commented: 'It's a personality thing, it's a looks thing, and it might possibly – in maybe two out of twenty-five cases – be an acting thing.' As an 'insider' she had reached different conclusions about the implicit criteria applied to auditionees from 'outsiders', who might assume that successful applicants would share common characteristics. She now thought that staff were looking for a mix of *categories* of actor: 'it's where people come from, what they look like – they need a couple of this, a couple of that, I looked around and thought we're a set, like a box of Smarties' (Delmege interview 1997)⁴⁵.

In my own observation of the Melbourne callback auditions in November 1997⁴⁶, staff members exchanged comments about particular auditionees' employability, or their potential in the industry in specific sectors or genres. Conventional qualities were admired: 'Beautiful. A lovely voice, too'. Originality was in some circumstances a plus: 'He can turn on a sixpence. Do we have anyone like him in the school?' Applicants were compared to well-known actors, to current students and to other current auditionees, in terms of the qualities they appeared to display: 'He's like the boy in Adelaide, but I think the other boy is better. He's like Travis McMahon.' In some cases, staff members were on the look out for particular capacities: 'We haven't found a girl clown yet. They're so rare'. Conversely, conforming too closely to genre type, or having too

developed a set of established skills, could be a disadvantage: 'A dancer-singer. Well organised work, but is there anything else there?' In the two groups I observed, only one male applicant attracted universal approval. Tall, well-built, 'a real man, with weight', he delivered his monologues with the mannerisms of someone who had had extensive schooling in theatrical conventions. He used furniture to locate himself in space and maintained posture and direction of gaze without evident physical tension; he kept his voice pitched low and used breath effectively to mark particular words, while maintaining the overall flow of phrases. During improvisations, he marked climaxes by building pace and volume and then pausing for effect. He appeared to be conscious at all times of his orientation to the examiners and checked their reactions regularly, while maintaining a posture of deference towards them. Both staff members and assisting students praised his work, agreeing that 'his skills are pretty much developed – he's already an actor'. At that moment, at any rate, he was 'in'.

As well as testing performance skills through monologue and improvisation exercises, the 'callback' audition offered applicants a chance to ask questions of staff. These 'question and answer' sessions occurred at the start of each audition day and provided an insight into the key discourses of NIDA's internal culture, represented by Knight and leading actor and acting tutor Jennifer Hagan, assisted by Second Year student Sarah Norris and graduate Matt Dyktynski. The applicants were curious about rumours concerning internal discipline and the practice of 'culling' students from one year to the next. The assistants were clear that NIDA was an all-encompassing experience. According to Norris, it was: 'a very insular place. It sucks you in, you don't have the time or the desire to interact outside it.' As a consequence, part-time work was difficult to sustain and students could experience financial strain. However, noone could remember a case of a student having to leave for financial reasons. Small NIDA scholarships helped tide students through,

staff members hired them to garden or wash dishes. Dyktynski volunteered: 'I can't explain how it works – if I'd looked at it from the outside I wouldn't have had money for a potato'. The important thing was to 'surrender to the demands of the course ... you get to do it every day, and when you get out you don't.' Both referred to the surveillance students experienced, both internally and from the professional field. Norris advised: 'you need to be prepared to face criticism every day ... criticism can be very personal. Depends on how it's received, if you take it personally it can be very damaging'. Hagan added: 'people are constantly looking at you. Agents, directors ... one of the major advantages of going to NIDA is professional contacts and the friends you make – students have often made their own work.'

Knight was most emphatic about the discipline required, on two occasions comparing NIDA to the Canberra-based National Institute of Sport. He was also forthright about the level of scrutiny and the fact that students might be asked to leave part way through the course: 'the contract is for one year, not three. As Head of Acting I have to ensure a standard of excellence'. Assessment was constant: with two formal assessments every year 'you are told exactly where you stand.' It was hard, he said, for 'your generation' to understand the amount of discipline required. A lot of students found it not at all what they expected. The contract also specified that missing three classes in any one term was grounds for dismissal. This did not happen every year: 'each year is different. NIDA never stays the same, it evolves as the industry itself evolves'. Graduating classes were frequently smaller than on entry: 'The current [1997] Third Year is down to thirteen. On the other hand, there are still 25 people in Sarah's year, and we think most of them will probably go through to Third Year. It's a good group, isn't it, Sarah?' Conditions in 'the industry' were frequently invoked to authorise NIDA's procedures and the demands placed on students. According to Hagan: 'The industry is full of fierce competition'. Knight concurred:

'Industry dictates discipline. NIDA can give you training but it can't give you a career. Of the recent graduates who have had success ... all were terrific students, I can tell you that right now'.

There appears to be a proto-casting process in the audition situation, in which an actor who can be imagined 'getting work', on the basis of current or past industry patterns, will be preferred over one who is less 'commercial'. Such 'insider knowledge' results in a strong tendency to replicate the existing industry pool of actors. This is also suggested by the number of children of actors and other entertainment industry personnel selected: in 1997 I identified at least two in every year level⁴⁷. However, the Australian industry is in a state of flux. Rather than simply acting as a bastion of a particular tradition, NIDA's currency as an industry school also lies in its capacity to anticipate trends, to choose students who can become actors with an 'edge', able to find employment in, for example, film and TV product for the existing US and European markets, or media product aimed at new markets in the Asia-Pacific region⁴⁸. NIDA has also demonstrated its sensitivity to other than industry considerations in its strategic response to issues of access and equity in student and repertoire selection processes. Government and social pressure, research into imbalances in ethnic and gender representation in the arts (Bertone et al, 2000) and campaigns by the Equity division of MEAA on 'colour blind casting', backed by the recent commercial success of 'multicultural' theatre, film and TV programming⁴⁹, have helped to raise awareness of the need for greater inclusiveness, on grounds of equity as well as economic benefit. No official data are kept on students' racial, cultural and educational backgrounds, but from the very rough guide of surname identification and personal contact I estimate that in 1997 there were approximately 25 students from non Anglo-Celtic backgrounds out of a total of 63 in the Acting program. This compares reasonably favourably with demographic data for the general population and acts to redress the perception that

NIDA students are preponderantly from privileged majority culture backgrounds. But presence does not necessarily imply influence; it is one thing to admit students from diverse backgrounds, another to allow for the expression of diversity within the curriculum and its support structures.

As a long-term promoter of Australian theatrical nationalism, Clark is aware of the rise of Aboriginal and multicultural theatre and has created past opportunities for actors and playwrights from non Anglo-Celtic and Indigenous⁵⁰ backgrounds to participate in The NIDA Company. In recent years this has extended to an unofficial Indigenous affirmative action student selection policy, partly because 'we had to' and partly out of a desire to support Aboriginal theatre activists such as Michael Leslie (field notes)⁵¹. Knight was eager to emphasise that such students were admitted on their own merits, but conceded that the process had not been easy. Other students were often unused to encountering black or Asian students: 'invariably, for a lot of students when they come here, this is the first time they've ever met an Aboriginal person. Or had to deal with an Asian student. So that, yes, on a racial identification there are those issues'. Indigenous students in particular found adjusting to the demands of the course difficult. There were only ever one or two in any year cohort, there was little structured help for them in adjusting to cross-cultural issues⁵², it was easy for them to feel isolated. The institution's approach to acting and its background assumptions were unfamiliar: 'they're not necessarily the best at understanding Western technique. Their minds don't actually work that way. But when it comes to improvisation, and simple playing, that's when you get the work out of them. So if you can actually turn it into a game, then you get great results'. Knight's comments reveal a degree of condescension. He was prepared to bend a little, but had not seriously considered changing his own or the institution's orientation. Discussions with other staff members revealed related problems. The drop-out rate for such students was high

and those who did graduate found it difficult to get work or even an agent: the previous year, an Aboriginal woman was the only Third Year student not to get an offer of representation.

The atypical success of Aboriginal graduate, Glenn Shea, in securing a role on the TV drama series 'Water Rats' was cause for much celebration. Knight expressed particular approval of Shea's determination to enter the professional mainstream: 'He doesn't want to be considered as a black actor and only get cast in black roles. He wants to have the whole gamut'. The proportion of Indigenous and Black students has increased in the past five years or so and the success of actors like Shea, Paula Arundell and Ben Graetz is likely to encourage further acceptance of the representation of difference both within NIDA and in the industry as a whole. However, the rate and degree of change is likely to be slow. The Indigenous presence at NIDA has been supported by institutional positioning with reference to debates over national identity, in the theatre as well as in the broader public sphere. The ethnicity of 'other' minority candidates is less at issue in these debates and it is therefore likely that there is a lower level of pressure on the rate of their admission⁵³.

Another issue that emerged in comments from both staff and applicants, and was clearly a source of contention within the school, was the gender balance in the acting course. There is a tendency for more men than women to be accepted as acting students at NIDA. Women predominate in most other Australian tertiary performance education programs (Fotheringham and Hunter, 1994) and amongst theatre audiences (Nugent et al, 1999: 70). Amongst working actors, the ratio is reversed: men constitute 58% of professional actors and other theatre artists (Strals et al, 1997: 27). There is also anecdotal evidence to support the view that, in any one year, more male than female actors are employed. Statements from Knight on this matter were equivocal. On one occasion, he denied

the operation of any criterion except talent, asserting that 'we aim for equal numbers of boys and girls'. On another, he explained that: 'It's a vocational school – the theatre is sexist. There are more jobs for boys than girls'. In the callback discussion, Knight's response to questions about gender was to hedge his bets, acknowledging an imbalance but asserting: 'ironically, NIDA's female graduates are the most successful'. Of the two groups of 'callback' auditionees I observed, the first comprised 8 men and 1 woman, the second 7 women and 6 men. The television documentary series *Drama School*, which followed sections of the 2000 audition and selection process, showed that this was a recurring pattern, with 'talent' used to justify selection operations skewed by other considerations. The pressure of making a final choice between 56 shortlisted students for 26 places produced the following exchange:

Cotton: I'm keeping the boys and girls separate

Williams: Why are the girls always questionable, and never the boys?

Knight: Well, it's not, Betty, please, it's never like that. We're all ... everybody's on the table. These boys are questionable, we've said so many times, there's only an A people.

Williams: I thought we'd ...

Knight: We have done a preliminary list. Don't make it difficult.

Williams: Tony ...

Knight: You know, with statements like that. It makes it difficult. Of course the boys are being considered as much as the girls. We move on please.

Williams: Tony. I'm allowed to say something.

Knight: You are allowed, but you're too ...

Williams: Please

Knight: You take it off into a tangent. Which is not what it's about.

Williams: I ...

Knight: We are discussing their talent.

Williams: Yes.

Knight: Not whether they're actually, their sex. We're
discussing their talent.

(Cordell, 2001, episode 1)

While Williams was alert to the possibility that gender criteria were in play, the issue was resolved by the invocation of authority; whether 'talent' might manifest differently across gender or other criteria was not open for discussion. Men were overrepresented amongst 1997 acting students: 16 out of 25 students in both the First and Second Year classes were men, although the gender balance was nearly even amongst the 13 remaining Third Years, making a total of 62% of the acting cohort. Interestingly, the situation was reversed in all other programs except the Directing course. There were 78 women out of the total student population of 147. Women were also in the majority amongst full time academic and administrative staff. Given the numerical superiority of women, the palpably male and competitive 'feel' of the overall culture was somewhat surprising. Knight observed that 'it is extremely heterosexual, and the testosterone level can be extremely high' (Knight interview 1997).

In my analysis, this was not entirely accurate: masculine voices and concerns were certainly dominant, but NIDA's 'public space' was occupied by something of a standoff between heterosexual and homosexual male display. This is one area of practice in which NIDA clearly continues to protect a minority *habitus*. A. Laurence Senelick points out, 'however much the theatre has been pressed into service to endorse and advertise society's values, a "suspect" and marginalised personnel representing gay, straight and ethnic groups staff it' (Senelick, 2000: 9). Most key senior positions at NIDA are occupied by men, a

number of whom are openly gay. A general tolerance for sexual display, sexual activity and a diversity of sexual orientation was evident in the 'NIDA culture'. However, gay women, bisexuals and others were not equally prominent, and, despite the authority exerted by senior staff members such as General Manager Elizabeth Butcher, Hagan and Williams, women appeared influential only to the extent that they operated within the hierarchy marked by the dominant male individuals. A gay male presence and the values of a gay male subculture were palpably foregrounded, extending from staff links to the Sydney 'scene' to the number of gay male students selected and the general adoption of 'in-group' behaviours borrowed from the gay subculture⁴. My observation was, not only that staff encouraged competition between students, but also that there was a pervasive if largely unstated sense of sexual challenge, leading to tension between certain gay male staff and the heterosexual male students, accompanied by a level of complicity between gay staff and gay students, though this did not however extend to open or equal exchange. There was also a sense of generational shift between an 'older' NIDA culture, where a range of sexual expression was tolerated within conventionally patriarchal heterosexual binaries, and the 'new' culture, where a cohort of gay male staff exerted a strategic influence. This influence was exerted mainly in subcultural terms: while improving the access of gay men, it marginalised the possibilities for divergent expression on the part of women and minorities and generally accepted the class, gender and racial givens of industry 'success'. The result was a rather harsh interpersonal culture, in which rhetoric about the 'NIDA family' was accompanied by clear divisions of power. Fraternisation between staff and students outside work hours was discouraged, except in those instances where students earned extra money doing household and other tasks for staff. Only when the hurdle of graduation is in sight are reciprocal relations allowed to begin.

Although the institution was prepared to extend a degree of goodwill in the direction of a broader skills menu, and to address questions of ethnic and/or gender balance to a limited extent, its strategic frame was still very much that of current industry 'realities'. It was ready to be pleased at the success of individuals against the odds, but geared to groom for success, to recognise success, and to endorse existing criteria for success, rather than to use its industry influence to campaign for changes to dominant criteria. In this regard, its current stance towards the globalised performance 'industry' was a good deal more politically conservative than that it had earlier adopted with reference to the struggle for a national repertoire.

Inside the Program – learning an actor's habits

During my observation of rehearsals and classes, I chose to spend the majority of my time observing the Second Year students in skills work and the initial preparation for their end of year 'private' production of David Edgar's adaptation of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* (a triumph for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1980 under the direction of Trevor Nunn). On this occasion, Knight was to direct, with the assistance of staff members, Kate Davy in lighting design, Avigail Herman as Musical Director, Betty Williams as Voice coach and Julia Cotton as Movement coach and choreographer (NIDA, 1997). Uncredited in the program were linked skills workshops run by guest tutor, British born and Lecoq trained actor and director, Nigel Jamieson, whose past experience included work with director Mike Alfreds (Hulton, 1979-80) at Britain's National Theatre 'working on the form which became the basis for *Nicholas Nickleby*' (field notes). Skills workshops run by continuing staff, especially those attached to the production itself, were also geared to assist students in meeting the production's demands. The fourth term of the acting program, during which the production process was the main activity, began on my first day of observation at NIDA in August 1997. I

was thus able to observe a consistent process for two weeks of the early rehearsal period and then to return for the production season in early October. I also attended: Third Year skills classes and rehearsals for Behan's *The Hostage*, directed by Irish born John O'Hare; rehearsals for *Nathanial Storm*, the previous year's NIDA Company production of the musical play by Aboriginal playwright Anthony Crowley, remounted as NIDA's contribution to the Olympic Festival of the Dreaming and directed by graduate Adam Cook; and a First Year scenework presentation of David Williamson's *Don's Party*. This last, a usually unremarkable event, had attracted the attention of the 'NIDA family' because Williamson himself was scheduled to attend to see his son, First Year acting student Rory, perform⁵⁵.

In the previous three terms, the Second Year students had been divided into three groups. In the first term, they rotated for six weeks in a two week cycle between classes in film and TV technique, movement and a self-devised project, the term culminating in a two week scenework exercise from one of three plays selected by staff. The second term of five weeks was spent in classes and workshops leading to the production in the third term of a Shakespeare play by each group, with side involvements of workshops in radio technique and work with playwrights from the Playwrights Studio program. The entire group would come together for the first time to work on Nicholas Nickleby (referred to as 'Nick Nick'), apart from the skills workshops, for which they were divided into two. The students were not therefore always intimately familiar with each others' individual approaches and work habits. One point of interest was to observe how they responded to one another and to the process of forming the ensemble and working towards a performance style.

The first class I observed was a movement skills session taken by sessional tutor Brian Carby with one half of the year group. The students

were not particularly eager to start: they rushed in as the roll was called and then took their time organising themselves into gendered clusters, seven boys towards one end of the room, five girls towards the other. The class began with yoga stretches, then progressed to a sequence of Min Tanaka's demanding 'Muscle and Bone' exercises. These required the students, in two lines, to go through a series of increasingly complex step, turn and lunge patterns, with variations in pace and direction. A 'Muscle and Bone' sequence tests reflexes, body articulation and muscle memory. While one or two of the boys coped well, the girls were less adept, one breaking off to locate her asthma puffer. Carby kept up detailed but general observations and instructions on the exercises, emphasising correct body position and use of breath, with the occasional individual correction. Eventually however he exclaimed: 'What did you guys do for your week off? Drink beer?' He led the class into a series of stretches with the wall as support, coaching them to use the breath to neutralise undue mental activity and to focus on the integration of intention and movement. A brief conversation with Carby after the class revealed that he had worked with them once in the previous term. They were used to yoga sequences, but the gross physical movement through space demanded by Muscle and Bone was very difficult. Under the circumstances, he felt they responded fairly quickly.

I then moved with the same class group into the first session with Jamieson. After a few brief questions about what they had been doing, he took them through a series of warmup games, designed to stimulate body awareness and elicit different rhythms and energy states. These included a brief assumption of the posture and movement of 'Harlequin' and call and response exercises: a) 'Find', in which one person runs within the group, 'finds' someone through eye contact, they in turn run and 'find' someone else, and so on; and b) 'Balthazar says', a variation of 'Simon says' played with the instruction 'if you see anyone doing anything with lack of clarity, yell NO!!!' Jamieson varied the mood and pace with a

few words on the importance of focus and commitment in ensemble work, then set up a spatial awareness exercise, which consisted of instructing the group to fill the space, with each person knowing where every other person was, responding to each others' energies in choosing the time to move. He coached them to find eye contact, looking for points of stillness, sharing the sense of when to go and when to stop.

The class clearly experienced difficulty in absorbing these instructions and reaching the required group responsiveness. Jamieson pointed out that when the movement stopped, the group's energy became depleted. He moved into a mobile 'trust' exercise, 'Nigel falling forwards', in which one person makes the announcement and immediately begins to fall, leaving the others with the task of locating and catching them before they hit the floor⁵⁶. He moved back and forth between this exercise and practising support techniques like falling and catching. He encouraged focus and commitment, coaching for soft contact on interception, remarking that with every exercise the point was the *way* it's done, not just the mechanical fulfilment of the task. As he progressed from one exercise to another, each reasonably simple in structure but requiring complex shifts in attention and in physical, vocal and emotional dynamic, he coached: 'we're looking for the moment when we can find the *'complicité'* a term he translated as 'togetherness, the moment of marriage, the exchange where we can be together'. To conclude this part of the session, he revisited the earlier exercises, combining them so that the spatial awareness/eye contact exercise fed into 'Nigel falling forwards/sideways/backwards'. He cautioned against the excessive bravado some boys were now displaying: 'What we're really working for is not the fall at all, it's the response'. He then moved to another level of explanation, revealing that, while the object of the game was to keep the space filled, it was actually a composition exercise. He encouraged them to 'see' the lines of force in the space, moving the pace up another notch to allow more than one person to fall at once, but also reminding them to

keep alert, so that there would be a response between someone's decision to fall and there being enough people available to catch them. This last concept was especially difficult for some students, who tried to set up prearranged signals or simply went ahead and fell without 'sensing' the availability of catchers. Eventually the group's movements became freer and a sense of flow developed over a sequence of three or four falls. At this, Jamieson brought the sequence to a close, encouraging the group to 'mark this as exciting' with a chant of 'la la la human steps'.

He then made space for a brief explanation of the purpose of this style of work, pointing out that performance sequences could be built from such 'game blocks'. He demonstrated the point experientially by shifting the falling exercise into another gear, setting up 'cross-falling' teams while coaching the group to maintain eye contact, and reminding them that energy is defined by its level of conservation, its ability to seep, move, change and sustain. Stillness, he said, doesn't mean 'stop' and 'stop' simply creates moments of stillness: 'stillness is a challenge – keep it alive'. He returned to the space-filling exercise with a different focus, first coaching 'stop' and 'go', then allowing the group to decide spontaneously. He coached: 'don't anticipate'. The class then sat down for a 'change of attention break', while Jamieson introduced himself, spoke about his background and how the work in the session related to the 'Nick Nick' production they were about to begin. He explained the style as an extended exploration of storytelling, using shape and absence, enactment and reportage, the effect of events on and/or offstage, differences between witnessed dialogue and dialogue reported from one person to another, and so on. He then began another physical exercise, this time highlighting perception and the need to keep reinventing in order to prevent the onset of boredom for performers and audience. He pointed out that, in performance, the actors were 'team leaders' for the audience's perception: 'the game actually has very little in it to keep the

audience interested – it's your job to keep up the game, keep on inventing'.

In the afternoon, Knight held the first rehearsal call for *Nicholas Nickleby* with all cast and crew. The stage management team had engaged in extensive prior research. The walls of the rehearsal room were covered with photocopied pages: cartoons of Dickens characters from nineteenth century magazines, extracts from the original novel, contemporary photographs of scenes from London and other parts of England, the costume sketches prepared for the production. Knight addressed the assembled cast on the values of human compassion espoused by Dickens and the status of the RSC adaptation as '*the play from the 1980s*'. He reinforced the information Jamieson had given to the first group that morning, speaking about the ensemble style and the importance of storytelling in the play. Moving on to practicalities, he suggested that the male actors think about starting beards and emphasised that the size of the play (they were to attempt only Part One, but the running time would still be nearly four hours) meant that: 'We won't have time to go over anything. If you miss your scene, tough titty. See the stage manager to go over the schedule and make sure you know your calls'. The set model was then displayed, with the Stage Manager, Production Manager, director, designer and costume designer in turn addressing aspects of the design and its place in the flow of the performance. In this production, set modules would be 'flown' in and set items placed on trucks to speed up scene changes 'and get out of the way quick, or you're dead'. These presentations were concluded with a general round of applause. The cast then moved into a first 'read through', but with the added pressure of being asked to 'get up on the floor straight away', with the Stage Manager reading stage directions and Knight coaching: 'take notes because I won't be going over this again'.

The next morning, I observed a tutorial session, led by Knight. Discussion centred on the previous afternoon's rehearsal and on the connection between the work on the play and the work introduced by Jamieson. One student commented that the workshop had 'really helped – working on that ensemble feel, realising that even if you haven't got a lot to do, you are doing a lot'. Since the tutorial was formally part of the General Studies program, time was spent allocating tutorial papers for the term, before veering back to issues to do with 'Nick Nick' and a coming class module on music theatre led by actor-singer Robyn Arthur. Knight advised that time would be available once the performance season began for work on actors' individual audition pieces, commenting that 'the Third Years never turn up to anything anyway – please don't turn into that year!' Discussion then moved to next year's production program. The students displayed a detailed knowledge of music theatre repertoire and the production options being considered by staff. A conversation with Knight after this session centred on his poor opinion of the students' general education: 'they really start from scratch when they come here'. When I complimented him on the group's knowledge of musicals, he observed that only a few had this prior to starting the course: as well as the formal tutorial program, students were constantly exchanging information and learning from each other.

Over the next ten days, each day's schedule progressed on a similar pattern: an initial warmup class in movement or singing, then a longer workshop session with Jamieson or with voice coach Williams, followed by afternoon rehearsals dedicated to blocking spatial, movement and dialogue patterns. Williams and movement coach Cotton were in attendance at most rehearsals, occasionally intervening or making suggestions at Knight's invitation. Students found difficult the process of 'grasping' implicit character and sense cues from a text written in unfamiliar language, and initial progress was slow. But the actors were pushed to make connections, to build on the instructions given them and

work for performance energy. Knight coached them on rapid scene analysis, telling them to find only the right pauses, achieve the 'builds' within each scene and recognise the end of episodes, saying: 'Remember, once I've set something we won't go back over it until the run – unless there's time to do it on a Friday afternoon maybe'. The actors worked with energy, keeping discussion to a minimum. After the fourth or fifth repetition of a sequence, the recitation was much livelier and the story began to take more definite scenic shape, although details of individual characterisation and movement 'tracks' received very little attention. Instead, Knight and Cotton's concentration was on the relationship of one scene to another, focusing on 'big brush' issues, such as mood, pace and the way one scene dovetailed into the next.

There was a decided contrast between the exploratory mood in the voice and movement workshops, where issues of approach to physical and vocal characterisation were developed at length, and the increasingly frenetic atmosphere of the rehearsal room. Despite an effort to pay attention to the need for psychological motivation and understanding, the schedule kept bearing down, moving scene after scene before it and making Knight's own physical and emotional bearing increasingly taut. Edginess was also evident in comments from students on their attitude to various parts of the course (especially the Muscle and Bone classes, personalised by a *Seinfeld* reference to the tutor as 'the movement Nazi') and in the staffroom chat, which increasingly focused on the performance of individual students, featuring 'gallows' edge' discussions about the likelihood of this one or that managing to pass the End-of-Year assessment. The promises to auditionees about constant scrutiny certainly appeared justified. But one staff member confided to me that favourites – students selected as being especially talented – were allowed to get away with being late for class, while others might not get the same consideration: 'It's not fair that someone who's hardly ever been to class

on time passes, and someone else who's dull but really conscientious fails' (field notes).

The different relations possible between workshop and rehearsal, and the vital role played by frame and cue in determining whether or not skills were integrated into *habitus*, were highlighted in my observation of a voice skills session held by Williams, featuring a discussion on the dialects needed for the play. Unlike the sessions with Jamieson, this class was the subject of immediate attention and students proceeded assiduously to practise what they had learnt. The class included an introduction to regional English accents as well as Received Pronunciation or Standard English (RP). Williams reminded them to seek her out for coaching: 'you can't afford to wait a minute, you have to get those dialects down, but remember I'm working on *Hostages* and it's full of accents'. She played the group a tape of a talk by a leading dialogue coach on the benefits of standardised pronunciation. The group was clearly fascinated by this aspect of craft skill. In the discussion that followed, they developed enormously detailed distinctions between 'Australian RP', 'American RP', 'English RP' and 'Advanced English RP', including 'terribly advanced RP'. 'Cultured Australian', it was decided, was the accent that leant most towards England.

The question of standardised pronunciation of English has been the subject of some controversy amongst voice practitioners in recent years. A product of the BBC's search for a 'neutral' English pronunciation, RP is recognised as having clear regional and class associations: even those advocating its presence in an actor's skill set are now usually cautious. Michael McCallion observes: 'Standard English is a clear form of pronunciation, easily understood by most people who speak English, and it's certainly not the worst accent for resonance purposes' (McCallion, 1998: 126). Patsy Rodenburg speaks of 'a war' raging in theatre and in actor-training programs about whether or not to teach standardised

pronunciation, pointing out that RP should not be confused with 'posh, upper class accents' and concluding that: 'What I usually tell my students about RP is never to lose your own accent, but to learn thoroughly as many useful accents as you can' (Rodenburg, 1998: 125). Williams appeared to champion a less nuanced⁵⁷ position, maintaining that RP is simply an aid to clear speech. 'What is RP?', she asked, 'RP simply means "I am receiving your pronunciation"'. She explained the phonetic components in great detail, using mainly British examples to make the point that: 'All accents deviate from this. RP is neutral communication, after that you listen to the accent'. For many students, the glamour of a session on 'real' theatre voice was considerable, especially when Williams pointed out the money to be made by voice coaches who train people to unlock the 'power' of a clear, cultured sound: 'RP will sell your product for you – a lot of people are aware of its power, but they don't know why'. Notwithstanding the other cultural forces NIDA seeks to accommodate, this session demonstrated traces of a position reminiscent of the view of spoken English articulated by AETT Director Hugh Hunt in 1958⁵⁸. Despite the presence of eclectic or avant-garde influences in the skills program, the cues given by senior staff had a considerable influence on the direction of students' attention and the value placed on one activity over another. The behaviours expected of students in the rehearsal room, which mimic the standardised and pragmatic production processes of the industry, become the filter for other experiences – in this case, for the articulation of a cultural hierarchy which repositioned the students' own accents as 'provincial', unsophisticated and inadequate. They were not simply acquiring speech skills, they were acquiring the performative gloss of a supposedly 'international' status. More than anything else in my visit, this session demonstrated the persistent patterns of the struggle for cultural legitimacy in Australian theatre.

Overall, my observations showed NIDA's students to be exposed to a variety of well-taught approaches to performance. The 'immersion factor' means that they may well encounter transformative experiences and, at the very least, become aware of a broad horizon of craft skills they might draw on in later years. A core aspect of the *habitus* developed by the acting program at NIDA is the ability to withstand scrutiny, and quickly to produce a clearly articulated physical and vocal stage image, with as little evidence of tension as possible. But in the absence of a consistent set of sequenced tasks presented to students, the values they absorb are very much dependent on the informal 'NIDA culture', which tends toward a hard-edged competitiveness, justified by an appeal to 'industry values' in something of a circular argument. The danger of this situation is that a 'realism' born of accommodation to the most reactionary industry pressures and behaviours can dilute the power of the institution to influence its environment, and the power of the individual to imagine change. Both the initial selection of candidates and subsequent habituating processes are governed by a strong predisposition towards reproduction of field positions, and position-takings, on the part of its gatekeepers, who act as expert readers in assessing the 'basket' of general and specific attributes, aptitudes, responses, preferences, demonstrated knowledge and patterns of behaviour deemed desirable in 'the industry'. Despite incorporating a tolerance of identity dispositions deemed marginal in the wider culture, this *habitus* currently tends towards cultural and political conservatism. NIDA's institutional position-takings are heavily dependent on its internal authority structures and on the results of positional contestation between staff as representative of field positions. Nevertheless, NIDA's continued success is based on its ability to respond quickly and strategically to changes in its reference constituencies, in particular those in the political, economic, cultural, and specifically aesthetic domains. It is likely, therefore, that decision-makers within the institution will continue to monitor art and commercial theatre, TV and film, for changes in taste as expressed

through the preferences of insiders, audiences and critics. They will respond to developments elsewhere in the field of theatrical performance practice as well as to broader social forces, in ways calculated to maintain the institution's profile and position.

Chapter 4 - Bicultural Bodies: Toi Whakaari/The New Zealand Drama School

The New Zealand Drama School/Te Kura Toi Whakaari (hereafter Toi Whakaari, or simply the School) is a private institution, founded as New Zealand's first full-time pre-professional actor training program in 1970 by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council under the direction of Nola Millar (The New Zealand Drama School/Toi Whakaari, 1996). A technical production training program was added in 1992. It is currently recognised as New Zealand's national course in professional theatre/drama training. Established as a one-year diploma, the acting program at the time of my observation in 1996 consisted of a two-year, ten term course. It was then undergoing scrutiny by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for accreditation as a three year program, with the aim of achieving parity both with other New Zealand post-secondary educational programs and with drama schools overseas. This accreditation has since been achieved and the first intake for the three-year acting program commenced in 1997. In 1998 it amalgamated with the New Zealand Ballet School to form a new institution, Te Whaea/ National Dance and Drama Centre.

I visited the School on two occasions. The first visit of three weeks included a fortnight's observation of the School's activities prior to the 5th Australasian Theatre Training Conference, hosted by the School in the first week of July 1996. I returned in July 1998 for a further week's visit, during which I was able to conduct further interviews and observe classes. In the intervening period there had been a number of staffing changes, including the appointment of Annie Ruth, heretofore the Head of Acting, as the School's Director to replace Robin Payne (Director 1991-98). Although the students whose work I had observed in 1996 had graduated, several were working at the School or in local theatre productions. I was therefore able to converse with or re-interview a

number of people with whom I had previous contact. At the time of my first observation, the School's curriculum included five terms in each of the two years of the course. The first year was devoted to 'freeing the actor's instrument', with classes in Voice, Movement, Acting, and Performance Studies. In the second year, preparation for public performance was added to the core program, with the addition of an individual performance project in which students were encouraged to devise and present a solo show (monologue) of their own choosing. With the introduction of the third year, this 'Performance Research' component was taken out of the second year program and replaced with a module in Acting for Camera. Preparation for performance was the main focus of the new third year, with the core classwork component shifting to a focus on 'diagnostic and maintenance work'. Electives included a Cooperative project, a Film and Television project, an opportunity for professional secondment and the Performance Monologue, in addition to the compulsory Graduation Production.

The three-year curriculum framework appeared to follow the general pattern established in studio drama schools in the British tradition, although there was perhaps more emphasis on self-devised and directed work than is common in other such elite schools. An immediate difference between this and other drama schools is however the pervasive presence of Maori language, physical and cultural practices in each of the core subject areas of the program. In the 1996 Prospectus, *Karanga*, *Waiata*, *Haka/Kapahaka* and *Taiaha*¹ are mentioned in the Voice, Movement and Acting streams, along with the more standard elements of Physiology, Vocal Mechanics, Text Analysis, and Improvisation. The Prospectus frames these inclusions with the following statement: 'because Toi Whakaari/NZ Drama School acknowledges the Treaty of Waitangi as the foundation document of this country, a long term objective is to explore the significance of biculturalism for the drama profession. The policies that are being developed have put Toi Whakaari

at the forefront of institutions striving for a bicultural environment' (TNZDS/Toi Whakaari, 1996).

Context A: The Drama School

In addition to the institutional decision to offer itself as having a commitment to biculturalism, Toi Whakaari must, as the national drama school, respond to the expectations of a range of vitally important constituencies with regard to the skills and employment prospects of its graduates. These are constituted most immediately by theatre practitioners and employers within New Zealand, but also by government educational and arts bodies, and those further afield with whom staff or graduates are likely at some stage to interact professionally. New Zealand's Anglophone theatre traditionally perceived its 'centre' as the stage practice of London and the British regional theatre. Since World War II this has broadened to include the influence of 'mainstream' American and European stage traditions, together with that of the 'global' avant-garde, particularly where training is concerned. Graduates of the School increasingly expect their training to equip them for work in other locations, particularly Australia, Europe and the United States. Other important internal factors are the School's own corporate ambitions, and the professional profile and self-definition of its staff. Above all, Toi Whakaari is expected to function as a *bona fide* drama school - that is, to prepare its students so that, on graduation, they are equipped to function as professional actors to a level of competence that reflects well on the status of the school.

It is therefore appropriate to consider how curricular and extra-curricular practices at Toi Whakaari respond to, and create challenges for, its relationship to the various formations to which it refers. The School's institutional perception of theatre practice as a field must be analysed, together with the ways in which its individual members represent and

react to the theatre traditions which currently exert an influence upon it. 'The theatre' is by no means a unified field. It sustains complex interactions with surrounding cultural fields, displaying highly variable modes of behaviour, production, organisation, procedure and discourse, as well as dominant, marginal and resistant preferences of taste, attitude and accent. Acting training discourses and practices similarly vary in important ways from one location to another. In this thesis, I am most concerned with an analysis of the practices of people who consider themselves, and are considered by others, to be field participants: self-definition is particularly important, since entry to the 'profession' is not necessarily gained through formal qualification, and is often maintained through commitment rather than because it is a primary source of income. As Sharon Mast points out: 'actors, unlike other professionals, spend a great deal of time doing other kinds of work ... the subjective identification with the occupation [is] the defining feature, rather than actual participation in the activity of acting' (Mast, 1986: 7).

It is not surprising that at around 3 million people, the small population of New Zealand/Aotearoa is unable to sustain a very large volume of professional theatre production. Only a small number of professional actors can hope to make a living from their work in local theatre, film and TV production. Despite this, the country supports a lively theatre culture, in which fully professional and non-professional production activities overlap and interact more than is common in larger population centres². Toi Whakaari's immediate reference group, 'The New Zealand theatre' or 'New Zealand theatre community', therefore includes not only the few full-time or seasonal professional drama companies in Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch and Paimerston North, but also those engaged in other amateur, community, university, part-time professional, semi-professional or pro-am theatre making contexts, some of which claim or are understood to be working 'at a professional level'.

There is a significant degree of overlap in personnel and production principles between the similarly small theatre, TV and film industries, as participants move between performance modes and industry structures in the course of their careers³. Toi Whakaari's extended community of reference therefore includes a range of participants in theatre, film, TV and advertising, secondary drama teachers and university and technical college departments of theatre and drama, as well as members of local Arts Councils and drama societies such as the Shakespeare Globe Society.

There is now also a significant subgroup of teachers and students of other theatre/drama/performance training institutions based in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Toi Whakaari was for a long time the only such school, but is now in competition locally with many other bodies offering either complete or partial actor training. It must consistently demonstrate that the quality of its teaching and the professional success of its graduates warrant its claims to a pre-eminent position. Staff and students of these other institutions, together with the larger body of those working as theatre professionals in New Zealand, either exercise or are perceived to exercise a reasonably high degree of surveillance of the school. Members of the New Zealand theatre community come into constant contact with staff, students and graduates, and 'talk' - information or rumours - about the school circulates in proportion to its prominence.

Many graduates make their way to Australia or further afield in search of work. This means that Toi Whakaari is expected to provide graduates with a level of skill and a range of theatre experience that will not only prepare them for employment in highly competitive situations where a strongly identifiable New Zealand accent may be a disadvantage, but also give them an understanding of the literature of theatre, theatre traditions and current practice comparable with training offered by other major English-language drama schools. 'Overseas' expectations, however, wi!!

not be uniform. Sheer growth in the number of schools and individual teachers offering training for professional performers across Europe and the Americas has created an international training subsector, with links to 'the profession' of great variety and variable strength. The competencies expected of Hollywood actors are very different from those auditioning for an off-Broadway theatre, and stylistically quite other for co-operative theatre in Britain or a term spent working with Philippe Gaulier in Paris. Staff and directors of Toi Whakaari therefore make it their business to be familiar with the major reputable international training institutions and trends, which in any case constitute an informal knowledge network - in many ways a more knowable field than the constant fluctuation of companies and production houses in 'the industry' proper.

The Student Body

As a government-approved educational institution, the School receives funding from the Ministry of Education. However, its students are required to pay tuition fees (NZ\$3,000 per annum in 1996) and must also find money for books, class materials and other course costs in addition to living expenses. They are warned that due to the demanding nature of the course: 'Part time work is extremely difficult to manage and therefore students need to have substantial savings before entering the school' (The New Zealand Drama School/Toi Whakaari, 1996). The decision to commit to the rigours of the drama school training offered by Toi Whakaari is therefore an easier matter for students with family or other financial backing. It might also be expected that other cultural factors would work to make entry, and later progress, difficult for students from less privileged backgrounds.

In her study of audition processes in Australian drama schools, Kath Leahy observed a bias towards middle-class students capable of displaying personal presentational traits such as command of space and

'the lack of constraint and tension, the lack of fearfulness, that impress us in high-dominance people' (Leahy, 1996: 136). We have seen how, at NIDA, such acquired capacities as an acquaintance with English-language dramatic literature, and an educated command of spoken and written English, was a significant advantage during the selection process and in coping with the curriculum and general knowledge demands of the acting program. Insofar as the training program at Toi Whakaari is built around the British text-based dramatic tradition, applicants who are Māori, Islander or otherwise economically or culturally 'other' might be expected to encounter greater hurdles than middle-class Pakeha.

This expected tendency is counterbalanced by the School's strongly articulated commitment to biculturalism. Robin Payne, Director at the time of my first visit in 1996, resisted suggestions of anything amounting to an affirmative action program, pointing out that the proportion of students identifying as Māori or Islander was relatively small and varied from year to year (Payne interview 1996). According to the School's Annual Report, in 1997 the student population included 7 Māori students, 3 Pacific Islander students, 2 overseas students and 36 Pakeha students⁴ (TNZDS/Toi Whakaari, 1997), although informal conversation indicated that the 'Pakeha' group included a number of people who identified as being of mixed heritage. I did not have the opportunity to observe any part of the selection process at Toi Whakaari. However, the class groups I observed on both visits certainly contained sufficient non-Anglo Saxon students to make their presence, and their differing responses to the training, a noticeable factor in the pedagogical and social dynamics of the institution. Of equal if not greater significance was the pervasive presence of information about, and opportunities to experience the embodied practice of, Māori culture and language (*tuha Māori* and *te reo Māori*) in timetabled activities and in the corporate cultural rituals of the School.

The structure, character and frequency of these corporate rituals, and the apparent enthusiasm with which students participated in them, struck me most clearly as a point of difference between Toi Whakaari and most other drama schools. At the time of my visit, the School was preparing to host an Australasian theatre training conference⁵, so there was perhaps a greater than usual emphasis on the articulation and rehearsal of 'identity-presentational' devices. NIDA is also particularly alive to the power of corporate performance activities, both as a means of fostering group identity and as a promotional medium. However, at Toi Whakaari these emphasised group participation in rituals modelled on those of a traditional *whanau*, the extended relationship group in Maori culture, rather than the demonstration of curriculum-based skills by small groups and individuals as at NIDA.

The most significant, marking the entry of the visitor into charged cultural space, was the *powhiri*, conducted in the same manner as a traditional welcome on the *marae*, or Maori meeting ground⁶. In this ceremony, strangers, or *manuhiri*, are formally challenged by the hosts or *tangata whenua*. Introductions are performed, each party or their representatives in turn giving information about themselves and their origins, together with an extended exchange of speeches, songs and prayers. In later conversation, students revealed a degree of cynicism about the integrity of such rituals. They estimated that formal *powhiri* took place two or three times a term (up to a dozen times a year) and commented that they sometimes felt like 'rent-a-*powhiri*'. Both Pakeha and Islander students expressed reservations about the authenticity of being asked to take on someone else's culture in public performance to the extent expected by the School. However, I encountered no one who was actively antipathetic or dismissive. Most volunteered their belief that the School experience provided students with real opportunities for increased cross-cultural awareness both within and outside the curriculum. I also observed that those Maori students who already 'knew

it all' received positive affirmation and seemed to feel reasonably comfortable in drawing on their heritage in other performance contexts.

Context B: The Practice of Biculturalism

Some understanding of the context of contemporary cultural politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand is crucial to an assessment of the implications of the School's commitment to biculturalism, and its influence on the content and conduct of actor training at Toi Whakaari. The constitution of the categories Maori and Pakeha, and the history of relations between the 'two peoples', is complex. It cannot be treated exhaustively here, but it is important briefly to consider the background to biculturalism, and its impact on the policies and programs of contemporary cultural and educational institutions, before proceeding to any detailed discussion of the performance training program at the School.

Biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand emerged as a result of the renewal of Maori political and cultural activism in the years following World War Two. The Maori renaissance, framed in essence as an argument about sovereignty, aimed to restore the guarantees provided to Maori under the terms of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi⁷. 'Progressive' elements in non-Maori New Zealand saw biculturalism as an expression of the need to acknowledge Maori culture and practices as an integral aspect of New Zealand's cultural and political future (Sharp, 1990), partly in response to Maori demands, but also as a means by which the desire for Maori unity or *kotahitanga* might be accommodated within the existing political framework, thus heading off separatist claims for Maori sovereignty (Cox, 1993).

The discourse of biculturalism acknowledges two main groupings, Maori and Pakeha⁸, within a national entity doubled as New Zealand/Aotearoa. On the basis of the moral and institutional support offered by the Labour

administration, biculturalism was recognised as replacing - though not according to Sharp completely extinguishing - other ways of conceptualising the relations between ethnic and cultural groupings such as multiculturalism, which would include the Maori as one ethnic group along with 'the wider array of other races (and cultures) in New Zealand' (Sharp, 1995: 116)⁹.

By the late 1990s, biculturalism had attained the status of a dominant discourse, representing a more or less 'centrist' consensus despite a constant level of contestation from a variety of sources. Subsequent conservative governments refrained from actively dismantling the policy and institutional frameworks established under Labour. Maori activists in government and other established institutions have been able to operate by replacing arguments of equity and social justice with arguments based on the efficient delivery of services (Tahi, 1995). Moreover, the cross-ethnic conservative vote has encouraged appeals to 'Maori chauvinism' from the conservative side of politics, allowing the discourse of biculturalism to survive as an alternative to previous official notions of assimilation¹⁰. 'Maori radicals' are still suspected in some quarters of having seditious intentions (Hazlehurst, 1993). However, biculturalism appeals, at least in principle, to a broad, more-or-less-liberal constituency and not merely to those on the political left. It presents a strongly redressive aspect as a legal and cultural response to a century and a half of social and economic injustice. It also offers a clearly defined image of a future New Zealand and has an almost unanswerable imaginative appeal as corporate sign of an overall 'Kiwī identity'. As Simon During observes: 'once colonialism itself has lost its legitimacy ... New Zealand is inevitably coming to know itself in Maori terms' (During, 1985: 370).

It is important to recognise the central role that struggle in the cultural sphere, and a particular emphasis on the performance of culture, has played in attempts to orchestrate a functional level of Maori political and

social integration. This is not simply a matter of what Bourdieu would term *rassentiment*, or accommodation to otherwise unpalatable material realities, although there is a paradoxical but very clear relation between the decline of traditional ways of life and the force with which a status is claimed for Maori as *tangata whenua*, the people of the womb/soil with a primary spiritual relation to the land. Expressions of desire for cultural as well as political cohesion go beyond a strategic appeal to identity politics. According to Maori leader Ranginui Walker, the cultural and spiritual dimension, including the transmission of original myths and the revival of *te reo Maori* or spoken Maori language, is as important, if not more important, than political struggle in the maintenance of *Maoritanga* (the Maori way) (Walker, 1978). It is on the normative level that Maori can be most united, in respect for *te kawa o te marae* or the customs of public ritual interaction on the *marae*. Despite significant local differences that have been almost as effective as the efforts of the colonisers in preventing the desire for *kotahitanga* from reaching fruition, uniting in the performance of such rituals maintains the imbrication of effectivity and expression essential to the preservation of lived cultural identity¹¹, simultaneously calling to mind and calling into being the Maori connection to *tīhe mauri ora*, the breath of life animating all things (Karetu, 1978).

In an era when Maori are becoming increasingly urbanised and an increasing proportion of their young people have lost contact with both *te reo Maori* and with the customs of their *iwi* or *hapu* on a daily basis (Potiki, 1991a), the Maori cultural revival, especially through the *marae* or meeting-house movement (Tauroa, H. and Tauroa, P., 1986; Tauroa, H., 1989) has become a central rallying point for the expression, the development and to a certain extent the redefinition of *taha Maori* (the Maori dimension or view of things). It has also provided an important arena for the education of Pakeha and others in the key principles of the Maori worldview, and the structural hierarchy of *rangatiratanga* that

supports it. There is a wide range of Maori opinion, and difference in Maori leaders' willingness to compromise or seek accommodation with the Pakeha 'Other'. But contemporary success in registering Maori cultural claims on the public consciousness, coupled with successful appeals to law, make it clear that *tangatat whenua* activism has been an effective lever in securing both moral and practical benefits. Unless and until that activism has secured a significant alteration in the political, economic and social disadvantage experienced by Maori, it is extremely unlikely that their leaders will give up a rhetoric that grants them one half of the national sky. For the next decade or two, at any rate, biculturalism will remain the strait and narrow gate by which those who desire lasting cultural and social change must pass.

Despite official support for biculturalism, its impact on the day to day experience of many Pakeha has been little different from previous policies of assimilation. Maori remain in the minority; it is possible for middle-class white people, from the suburbs of regional towns and cities, to live their lives with little substantial cross-cultural contact, and almost no active engagement with Maori language, culture or attitudes. Despite the practice of performing 'Maori songs and dances' in New Zealand primary schools and at formal regional and national events (Armstrong, 1974), many Pakeha emerge from school with very little knowledge or understanding of Maori culture¹². It is seen by many New Zealanders as at best peripheral and at worst irrelevant - formal support for biculturalism is tolerated, but active involvement may be deprecated or viewed pejoratively as 'ideological soundness'. One result has been that, while government departments and government-funded institutions present a formal bicultural identity, with their titles listed in both English and Maori, there are no standardised principles of bicultural practice, and few established models by means of which a state of 'adequately bicultural' public or private existence might be measured. Although schools, universities and other educational institutions have taken the

lead, for example in establishing *marae* on their grounds and negotiating acceptable ritual procedures for public gatherings (Barlow, 1991: 71-7), I was assured by several informants that it is only in education or the arts that biculturalism is foregrounded – and even here, it is difficult to generalise about practice.

Despite the establishment of biculturalism at the level of national discourse, *appropriate* bicultural practices must in any event demonstrate local differences, since Maori customs and expectations vary from one region and ancestral grouping to another. A thoroughgoing biculturalism in any one social or cultural context therefore requires, not only a specific commitment, but a preparedness to explore and, in a sense, improvise practices that will characterise relations between the particular Pakeha and Maori traditions invoked by the work at hand. As an avowedly bicultural institution, The New Zealand Drama School/ Te Kura Toi Whakaari must engage both with *taha Maori* and with the task of making connections between European and Maori performance practices. As a publicly funded body, its commitment to biculturalism means that it has volunteered its practices to stand as a model for others, open to scrutiny (and quite possibly disapproval) from a variety of contending viewpoints. The cultural meaning and the consequences of its bicultural program therefore reach far beyond paying lip service to a national cultural given.

For Toi Whakaari to commit itself to acknowledging the Treaty of Waitangi as ‘the foundation document of this country’ is not only to place itself firmly in the left-liberal sector of the New Zealand political horizon, but to enter into an engagement with a new kind of imaginative politics, in which ‘Maori’ stands in dynamic relation to its binary opposite term, ‘Pakeha’, as one of two major constituents of New Zealand’s cultural, social and political identity. Given the Maori emphasis on cultural revival, this engagement will also mean that it must be prepared to invite the participation (and to come under the scrutiny) of

Maori cultural activists. In so doing it offers itself as a strategic ground through which the potential course of that revival can be explored in its interaction with the Pakeha community. A major implication is that its programs must aim to admit Maori students into contact with European intellectual and cultural traditions, and into interaction with Pakeha students, under terms in which their own traditions will receive equal recognition. This in itself alters the perspective from which both cultural traditions are presented, and implies that both *will* be presented. Such a program therefore requires that the institution go beyond simply introducing Maori and non-Maori students to Maori language and cultural traditions. The underlying ideology and effect of biculturalism is to establish two separate but increasingly intertwined cultural groupings, in which one group, the Maori, are dealing with European traditions while being described as remembering or recreating their own, and the other, despite the impossibility of 'obtain[ing] an unambiguous closure of meaning for the label' (Spoonley, 1995: 96) are learning neither from European nor Maori cultural traditions in an environment they would experience as neutral, but rather are also *learning how to be Pakeha*.

Unsurprisingly, such excursions into the new territory of biculturalist practice are complex and uncertain, in the absence of established models for implementation. They are also contingent in the consistency of their reception and extremely unpredictable in their longterm effects. There are significant elements in the ethnic constituencies of both Maori and Pakeha which resist or downright refuse either the policy or specific aspects of its attempted realisation: an institution run according to bicultural principles may be subject to accusations of tokenism on the one hand and of adventurism on the other. It could, in any case, be argued that the experience of individuals whose origins entitle them to membership of one or other of these groupings cannot be equal in any meaningful way (Sharp, 1995). For the Maori entering the erstwhile European institution, contact with the 'other' culture is inescapable and

likely to have been engineered against a set of social and economic realities which will conspire to reinforce that individual's continuing sense of disadvantage. For whites, a 'Pakeha' identity may take a long second place to other determinants of a sense of self, such as sub-ethnicity, city or region of origin, class, gender, sexual preference, religious denomination or popular subcultural allegiance. Any formal program of bicultural experience may thus be viewed as non-serious or in other ways tangential or unwelcome. It may be perceived as having little substantive impact on the individual's future goals and values. Conversely, it can lead to romanticisation of the 'other', or constitute yet another opportunity for the appropriation of Maori forms by well-meaning members of the dominant culture. Insofar as a 'safe' program of bicultural contact acts as a substitute for unstructured personal experience, it courts the danger of becoming a channel whereby inhabitants of an unsatisfactorily fragmented cultural present can project themselves into fancied participation in an 'authentic' experience of 'spiritual' native culture. There is also a likely ambivalent reaction from people whose origins are 'other' to both groups. Whilst Andrew Sharp argues that biculturalism and multiculturalism need not conflict in practice, New Zealanders of other Polynesian, Asian or European backgrounds at the School openly expressed their sense of being unrecognised within the closure implied in a neat bifurcation of the culture into Maori and Pakeha¹³.

The School's implementation of bicultural programs in performance training and cultural awareness has therefore encountered predictable structural difficulties, as well as coming under considerable scrutiny from externally located individuals and groups. Furthermore, in each year of their operation, the outcome of such programs will depend on interaction between specific constellations of staff and students. These bodies have already been subject to a multiplicity of inscriptive experiences, very few of which will have conformed to the ordered ascriptions of the

biculturalist overlay and all of which have left prior traces. Their individual habits, responses, attitudes and expectations are themselves active variables in the complex and unstable, structured and structuring, longitudinal experiment in embodied cultural experience that is the School's bicultural program.

Maori Theatre

Until recently, there has been little crossover between Maori and Pakeha cultures with regard to the forms and functions of performance. Even this formal bifurcation leads to misunderstanding, since each 'tradition' needs to be understood as an accumulation of performance occasions, locations, spaces, modalities and applications, itself subject to regional, generational, linguistic, stylistic and other differences. While Maori culture has developed a complex array of sacred and secular forms of performance, incorporating movement, poetry/story/recitation, oratory and song (Best, 1925; Salmond, 1975), there is no Maori word for 'theatre', and no place in traditional Maori culture for 'plays' or other narrative and/or impersonation-based presentations as understood in the Western dramatic tradition (Kouka, 1998). For writers like Anne Salmond, recognition of the inherently dramatic *quality* of Maori performance forms from a Western point of view is accompanied by an insistence on their ritual/spiritual foundation, which seems to preclude any easy exchange between Maori and Western performance traditions. From this perspective, the encounter of Maori students with Western drama, and Pakeha with Maori ritual, could only be on the basis of an exchange of cultural 'foreignness', imbued with the existing imbalance of power between the dominant white culture and the minority, even if resistant, indigenous one.

As Trevor James has pointed out: 'Since it seems that Maori tradition is not closed but open, reinvention may in fact be a natural communal

process and part of the tradition' (James, 1996: 57). From the turn of the twentieth century, contact with white culture and its conventions of public performance led to the development of display-form adaptations of ritual and recreational movement and music genres, such as the action-song (Balme, 1989/1990: 154). These were designed for presentation to both Maori communal and white audiences, particularly on formal occasions. The later rise of the 'culture club' phenomenon encouraged the competitive presentation of increasingly elaborate *kapahaka* routines by community-based Maori performance groups, who came together for special purpose *hui* or gatherings. Although emptied of ritual content and subject to criticism for their quality of quietist *ressentiment*, for a time at least these *hui* constituted one of the few opportunities for the reaffirmation of Maori cultural pride and could thus be defended as a source of nascently national, rather than tribal, cultural identity (Potiki with Balme, 1996).

During the past quarter century or so, the adoption of Western dramatic forms by Maori theatre-makers has become an increasingly important platform for the presentation of a Maori voice in the public life of New Zealand. Maori theatre also acts as a forum where questions of cultural and personal identity can be negotiated for Maori audiences. In the words of Roma Potiki: 'Maori theatre can be seen as *tino rangatiratanga* in action. By that I mean it is a visible claiming of the right to control and present our own image and material in ways we deem most suitable, by using self-determined processes' (Potiki, 1991b)⁴.

Christopher Balme has traced the development of this 'autochthonous' theatre, which he claims is 'arguably the most significant development ... since the establishment of the professional community theatres in the early 1970s' (Balme, 1989/1990: 149). Initiated as a direct politico-cultural response to the Land March of 1975, and to race-based incidents such as the Auckland University 'haka party' scandal of 1979

(Hazlehurst, 1988), early Maori theatre groups were almost without exception co-operative in organisational structure, adopted a collective approach to the theatre-making process, and devoted themselves to agit-prop style pieces suitable for performance at rallies, on *maraes* and in community halls, as a means of raising Maori political awareness. Although they had much in common with other politically-committed theatre groups in Europe, the United States and elsewhere in Australasia, Balme notes how they 'mirrored in certain respects the Maori way of doing things' (Balme, 1989/1990: 151). Their performance pieces were constructed to conform to *marae* conventions such as the dramatic opposition between *tapu* and *noa* (sacred/commonplace) and *tangata whenua* and *manuhiri* (hosts/visitors). When translated into spatial terms, these oppositions provided a ready-made symbolic and presentational 'theatre' language. Although later Maori theatre was increasingly dominated by the dialogue form and by representational acting, giving rise to more conventionally recognisable 'plays' and thus contributing to the prominence Maori poets and playwrights have gained amongst their Pakeha peers (Balme, 1996), it has never simply become a subset of white theatre traditions. Balme notes extensive continued use of the rituals of the *hui* and, despite their being overwhelmingly written and spoken in English, the inclusion in plays by Maori writers of an admixture of *te reo Maori* and Maori 'cultural texts' such as *whaikorero* (oratory), *waiata* (singing), and *karanga* (ritual calls or keening). He has recently argued that continued efforts by Maori theatre activists to build a 'syncretic' theatre, aiming at the development of 'a theatrical language where the signs can be read by various cultures without forfeiting either artistic or cultural integrity' (Balme, 1996: 186), have led to an awareness of the need to interact theatrically with other than Pakeha cultures. Recent work by 'second generation' Maori playwrights, such as Hone Kouka, has included collaborative projects with Samoan, Tongan and other performance makers from the broader Polynesian diaspora in New Zealand (Balme and Carstensen, 2001). Such collaborations, he

argues, have begun to create new pathways of cultural interaction and to open the possibility for the development of newly inflected performance languages, less heavily dependent on Anglo-and Eurocentric theatrical traditions, spaces and audiences.

However, this focus on a textual and cultural analysis of form, on particular plays and particular playwrights, produces a picture of Maori theatre that overstates the consistency of its development and the unity of its shifts in style. Hone Kouka's attempt at a *whakapapa*, or genealogy, of Maori theatre acknowledges a variety of points of origin in terms of region, intention, style and working methods, and details shifts and differences of approach evident throughout the period, relating to gender politics, the shift from a rural/nostalgic to a contemporary/urban sensibility, and continuing experimentation around issues of spoken and sung language, movement/dance and music. A significant number of leading Maori theatre practitioners have been women, but their approach to performance-making has varied considerably. The preference of deviser/director/activist, Roma Potiki, for collaborative methods has continued well beyond the 'first wave' identified by Balme (Potiki and He Ara Hou, 1999: 31). Others, such as the playwright and novelist, Renée, have worked within the more conventional structures of Anglophone literary theatre, away from the Maori theatre networks. Several of the 'second generation' playwrights such as Riwia Brown, Rena Owen and Briar Grace-Smith, have also worked as performers and/or directors and are thus alert to the theatrical possibilities of non-language based performance modes, and to the communicative possibilities of borrowing from contemporary urban culture in ways that depart from the traditional adaptations and interpolations described by Balme. For Roma Potiki, 'a play doesn't somehow acquire deep meaning because it has a haka or a karanga thrown in'. She reserves the right to 'learn to de-bunk myths. Myths that not only Pakeha people have built around us, but also the ones we uphold about ourselves' (Potiki, 1991a:

59-61). She identifies the myth of the 'warrior-image' as a particular problem, insofar as it condones 'macho, violent' behaviour by Maori men. She also welcomes the inclusion of Afro-American and other contemporary urban music and cultural references in Maori theatre, arguing that current everyday experiences are valid subjects for theatrical attention. According to Hone Kouka, the expectation that Maori theatre would be 'the means to fill the spiritual void', for Maori and non-Maori audiences, courted stultification, 'turning what was once new, innovative and fresh into tired clichés. Many of our writers have thankfully rejected this mantle and the Maori voice has evolved into an unruly, unpredictable and wide-reaching animal' (Kouka, 1999: 9).

Balme provides little detail on how the newly inflected performance languages he identifies have been transmitted through body-based performance modalities. As Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins point out, analyses which see the body in performance simply as locus, volume or inscribed surface omit 'a crucial performative fact: the body also *moves* ... [it] functions as one of the most charged sites of theatrical representation' (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996: 203). Potiki acknowledges that the initial activist performers 'didn't have the theatrical background, but we had a cultural background and a lot of imagination'. Later performance makers, including those attempting to work within the framework of Pakeha theatre institutions and performance genres, were faced with the need to develop increasingly sophisticated performance-making and presentational skills, which would win the respect of colleagues in the established theatres, while still continuing to mark their difference as Maori. The theatrical strategies by which 'Maoriness' is made theatrical have included: the insertion of the 'traditional' body as a performative interruption in an otherwise seamless simulacrum of a Western drama; the detailed assumption by Maori actors of dominant Western acting habits, and their absorption into Pakeha theatre and/or its conventions through 'colour blind casting'¹⁵; the importation of

traditional Maori forms and/or the adaptation of Western dramatic conventions to conform with traditional ritual practice as in Marae Theatre, to produce the syncretism noted by Balme; and the development of hybrid performance forms including dance theatre, which operate on the reaction to and absorption of theatrical performance vocabularies outside the frame of the strictly 'dramatic' tradition.

Increasingly sophisticated performers have been required to implement these strategies. As the networks of practitioners have grown, works have been created to showcase performers' capabilities as much as performers have been asked to develop skills in line with the demands of playwrights and directors. It should be remembered that, for many urban young people, Western popular music and other entertainment genres are more immediately familiar than traditional performance forms. Many Maori performers have developed their craft 'on the job', as members of community and other performance groups, drawing on traditional and/or contemporary performance skills under the leadership of established artists¹⁶. Others have pursued music, dance and interdisciplinary modes such as dance-drama. A range of training opportunities are now available to young Maori performers, but institutions differ in the orientation of their performance training, and the extent to which they provide openings for the expression of a 'Maori point of view' within their curricula. Some institutions accept Maori and Islander students into institutional training programs open to the general population, with or without affirmative action policies. The Applied Arts Drama program at Northlands Polytechnic, Taitokerau, has had considerable influence on the current generation of Maori performers, as has Toi Whakaari. However, the openness of both to Maori students is relatively recent. According to Potiki: 'When Rangimoana Taylor first went through NZ Drama School in the 1970s there was no context for him: you either fitted in as the Maori boy or not. Nowadays ... you have more and more graduates each year ... you can use your own culture ... and it is validated within the

course content.'(Potiki with Balme, 1996: 173)¹⁷. Other programs, particularly at the technical education level, are aimed specifically at non-Pakeha. Skills development and potential employment are a feature of the combined training and performance programs in dance-drama offered to young Maori and Islander artists within a pan-Polynesian rhetoric by the Whitireia Community Polytechnic in Porirua¹⁸, and by the Auckland based Taiao dance-theatre company.

Maori theatre has been supported by a number of existing 'white' theatre companies, who have helped foster the network of Maori performance artists currently active in New Zealand/Aotearoa. The Fortune Theatre in Dunedin, and Centrepoint in Palmerston North, have actively encouraged Maori playwrights and directors, and included Maori plays in their regular seasons, since the early 1980s. Wellington's The Depot, established in 1983 as a venue for contemporary New Zealand theatre, became 'the backbone and home of Maori theatre in this country' (Kouka, 1999: 15). During the 1990 Wellington International Festival of the Arts, The Depot was consecrated as a *marae* for a season of Maori theatre and later changed its name to Taki Rua to signify its bicultural policy. It was the first theatre to introduce regular *te reo Maori* seasons, and remained a significant site for Maori theatre productions up until the decision of its artistic directorate, including Kouka and Toi Whakaari graduate Tanea Heke, to close it as a venue in favour of a greater emphasis on touring in 1998.

Maori theatre therefore has a matrix of networks of its own, and has already had a significant general impact on the training, repertoire and production practices of New Zealand theatre. As the national drama school, Toi Whakaari's bicultural stance has however given it a particular strategic significance as a partner in the continuing development of Maori theatre and Maori theatre practitioners¹⁹. The level of exchange between Toi Whakaari as an institution and Maori theatre practitioners

may be seen in the number of School graduates active in Maori and hybrid theatre projects across the country, and in the number of visiting Maori teachers employed for teaching blocks or on specific School projects. Students are encouraged to attend Fringe, pro-am and professional productions, many of which feature more or less well-known Maori artists. The School also offers its facilities as a rehearsal and pre-production space for selected projects, particularly those involving a high proportion of graduates, rather on the model of the NIDA Company seasons. During my second visit, I was able to sit in on rehearsals and a preview performance for the touring revival of Kouka's *Waiaora*, hosted at the School's new Te Whaea campus. The open plan layout of the building meant that activities in the rehearsal studio were clearly visible to participants in regular classes. The presence of a number of immediate past graduates, some of whom had been students on my first visit, and the audible repetition of Maori language and chanting, generated a palpable physical and aural presence which became a point of focus for current students.

Towards a Bicultural Theatre

The emerging field of 'bicultural practice' is charged with conflicting expectations and fraught with the difficulties attendant on any attempt to 'structurate', in Giddens' terminology, a working model for institutional and personal conduct, in the absence of either cultural consensus or any significant body of established tradition. It is also, however, a field where there is much to be gained for an institution such as Toi Whakaari in terms of cultural capital. Firstly, there is the stated goal of giving opportunities to individual Maori and Islander theatre professionals. Secondly, there is the opportunity to encourage and materially support the development of a professional Maori theatre. Thirdly, there is national and international status to be gained in standing as a model of intercultural action. Toi Whakaari's commitment to the rhetoric of

biculturalism, and to the attempt to shape a bicultural institutional culture, allows it to draw on support from a number of broad political and cultural coalitions, with the additional benefit of distinguishing it within its core reference group of theatre and theatre training institutions.

Biculturalism remains voluntary, both for individuals and for institutions. No matter how strongly an institution wishes to pursue a policy based on bicultural principles, it cannot force people to participate against their will and must rely on a plea for tolerance from those who might otherwise wish to resist it. This is especially at issue when dealing with members of the majority group in any given context. From my observations however, despite its apparent binaries, biculturalist practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand paradoxically creates a new cultural space in that it requires the interaction of the two constructed cultures. This in turn opens possibilities for negotiating new modes of intercultural practice and new ways of being. As these emerge, they come to stand as a middle term not only between the 'twin peaks' of bicultural policy, but between the decultured 'equality' of globalisation and a view of indigenous culture which sees all 'others' essentially as expropriators. As practised at Toi Whakaari, this space can also provide an entry point for cultural 'others' whose backgrounds do not allow them official access to the bicultural imaginary.

In important ways, the practice of biculturalism implies an addition to or transformation of the sense of self of everybody involved, as long as it is maintained within an open ethos which helps prevent the calcified communalism evident elsewhere in the region (Bharucha, 1998). This is especially so in a drama school actor training, where the bodies and subjectivities of student participants are in any case subject to influences designed to effect major changes in outlook and *habitus*. By adopting biculturalism as a founding principle, Toi Whakaari undertakes to re-create the student not only as actor, but as a person with a new, culturally

liberal, outlook and identity. It is my interest in the effects of this double training, and what I can gather of the students' response in coming to know themselves as belonging, or not belonging, in the vanguard of the new bi/cultural politics, that constitute the threads of my account in this chapter.

Bends and breaks: bodies and spaces

Students at the School have contact with different approaches to the development of contemporary performance, and are exposed to the influence of practitioners in a variety of ways, from formal class tuition to observation and interaction both inside and outside the bounds of the School's training, rehearsal and performance program. At the same time, changes in Western performance practice, in particular the wider dissemination of twentieth-century avant-garde explorations of image-based and physical theatre, have provided a new space for cultural exchange which is at the same time less mimetically fixed and potentially more open to influence from 'other' cultures. These developments, in some of which Toi Whakaari as an institution, and its staff and graduates, are heavily involved, also open up new possibilities for curriculum development and pedagogical practice.

Although theatre training practices might be expected to produce a close relationship between discourse and practice, I would argue that the performer's body can never be a 'pure' illustration of a particular aesthetic tradition, but must constitute a mixed economy of habits and patterns of behaviour, accumulated over time in a variety of contexts. Individual traditions and regimes of training differ in the uniformity of outcome at which they aim, the sets of characteristics or behaviours they impart and the degree to which the bodies produced in training are distinct from those in other occupations in the surrounding culture, in and outside work hours. Bodies do not simply reproduce learned patterns, as

Bourdieu points out: 'the *habitus* – embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active present of the whole past of which it is a product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present' (Bourdieu, 1990: 26). Specific responses by and through specific bodies in specific situations are, to a certain extent, unpredictable and may well generate unexpected behavioural elements, or display new combinations of elements learned in other sequences and contexts. Training encourages or inhibits the display of previously learned behaviours, and students receive positive or negative responses to behaviours produced within the frame of institutional activity. To this extent, the training environment acts as a dynamic template, by means of which individual p/preferences acquire collective consistency.

On the other hand, the effects of training may not persist beyond the time and place of its acquisition. Some behaviours may be lost without continued practice, or may only be reactivated in certain circumstances, for example in the co-presence of others with the same skills or in response to the structural expectations active within a given context. Others, such as changes to body architecture, or changes that affect the interconnecting matrix of gestural or vocal behaviours to the degree that they become a consistent style, may become ongoing personal or professional characteristics, produced independently of context. The bicultural approach to training offered by Toi Whakaari is likely to affect different students in different ways, depending not only on what they absorb or respond to during their course of study, but also on where they go and what they do professionally after they leave. For some, exposure to cross-cultural experiences will significantly extend their knowledge and range of expressive options. For others, it may broaden their understanding of an 'other' culture, without much affecting their later day to day personal or professional behaviour, or it might become sedimented in body memory as part of the culture of their dear old alma

mater, reactivated only at reunions or in moments of recall and release. It is likely that the experience will have different weight for Maori, Pakeha and 'other' students; a great deal also depends on how the potential behavioural and attitudinal horizons of each component culture are framed, managed and 'keyed' over the life of the training program²⁰. In this section, I will attempt to analyse the interplay of positions taken up by teaching staff with regard to the theory and practice of training in both cultures. I will also assess the impact of *Maoritanga*, and other bicultural space(s) of exchange, on the *habitus* consequently developed by students as evidenced by the choices and reactions I observed in class.

In the period between my two visits, a number of staffing changes had taken place. From observation and conversation with my informants, some of these may be identified as part of an ongoing tendency for members of an informal personnel pool, drawn from New Zealand's professional performing arts community, to 'churn' through the School, occupying casual or contract positions of greater or lesser duration several times over a three to five-year cycle. The composition of the pool is itself of some interest as an indication of the School's positioning on the local and national cultural scene. It is self-perpetuating to the extent that it appears to include a number of past Toi Whakaari graduates, but also extends cross-generationally to include some older artist-teachers, as well as more recent 'home-grown' artists and international arrivals. Despite some crossovers, its boundaries appear functionally to exclude the drama and theatre scholars of nearby Victoria University, as well as artists wholly identified with 'mainstage' Anglocentric text-based theatres. Overall, the pool might be characterised as the more contemporary, 'with it' faction of New Zealand's performing arts, with a commitment to theatrical nationalism including the Maori theatre, to biculturalism, and, where international influences are concerned, to currents in European and US theatre rather than to the exclusively British heritage of previous generations. Institutionally, the School's theatre

connections were with Downstage, The Depot/Taki Rua and Bats Theatre, rather than with the more conservative Centra. In any one year, individual staff arrivals and departures from the pool appear to be of less significance than the character of the overall mix.

The smaller number of staff on continuing contracts of from one to three years or longer have a stronger influence on curriculum development, teaching style and content. Apart from the long term Head of Technical Production, British-Australian Bill Guest, Business Manager, Biddy Grant, and office staff, the focus of the other four full-time staff was exclusively the acting program. Changes in personnel at this level can have a significant effect on the basket of skills students gain and on the School's internal culture, although here too the 'churn' effect can be observed²¹. It is on the effect of these key changes that I wish to concentrate. During both visits, I was struck by the proportion of full-time staff who were either not of New Zealand origin or who had trained or practised overseas for some period. Robin Payne, Director of the School during 1996, belongs to a prominent New Zealand theatre family. She began training as an actor at NIDA in Sydney and later completed the teacher-training course at London's Central School of Speech and Drama. Although originally aspiring to direct, she spent a significant part of her career as a voice coach in Australia, the US and UK, before being invited back to New Zealand in 1989 (Payne interview July 1996). She continued to teach Acting and Voice during her term as Director. Annie Ruth, at that time Head of the Actor Training Programme and Improvisation and Acting Tutor, is a graduate of Victoria University and the New Zealand Drama School. She spent a considerable period of time in the UK and Greece during the 1970s and 80s, working mostly as a teacher outside the theatre. Her long-term interest in improvisatory acting practice was sparked by work with ex-British Canadian resident, Keith Johnstone, on impro and theatresports, but also owes a great deal to the influence of British directors, Mike Alfreds, Mike Leigh and Peter Brook

(Ruth interviews July 1996, July 1998). Acting Tutor KC Kelly, an American with experience in the Broadway music theatre, was a graduate of another 'old school' British drama school, the Webber Douglas Academy, but was also a private student of acting with US Method actor-teacher, Michael Howard, over several years in New York. Bert van Dijk, then Co-ordinator and Tutor of both Movement and Voice, is a qualified psychologist, a graduate of the Institut voor Dramatische Expressie, Utrecht, and a trained mime artist. Both he and Robin had participated in workshops run by Jerzy Grotowski at different stages of Grotowski's move from theatrical to paratheatrical activity, but Bert's approach to the integration of voice and movement work came from another tradition: entirely to Robin's. His technique was founded in work with the eccentric Roy Hart Theatre (Williams, D., ed., 1985a). This, and his self-description as a disciple of Enrique Pardo, founder of PanTheatre International, placed him firmly in the European avant-garde physical theatre movement.

The background and interests of these four key Acting program staff thus spanned a considerable horizon of European theatre practice in the second half of the twentieth century. They represented disparate, and potentially conflicting, positions with regard to the shape and purpose of performance, its dominant expressive modes, and the time, intensity and commitment required to produce a competent performer in their particular tradition. As Annie Ruth commented, the School's aim for First Year students was 'to get them a sort of basic methodology ... we're filling up their kitties, we're giving them as much information - and by information I don't mean stuff that kind of fits their heads, but stored body memory information - about as many different ways of approaching their work as we can give them'. The demands of the timetable would inevitably create compromises, she continued: 'I'm sure each of the teachers would say that in any one year there's some element

of their work that gets a really good go and that year is very solid in it, and in another year they won't be' (Ruth interview 1996).

At the time of my initial observations in the middle of Term Three, 1996, the First Year students were divided into two groups²², alternating between sessions with the two teachers of acting, Kelly and Ruth. The group working with Kelly was in the final stages of a bloc of scene work classes, based on Shakespeare monologues which would be the subject of their first 'showings' to a limited audience of staff and students. The other group was working with Ruth on a series of extended improvisation exercises. The Second Year group had regular technique classes (voice, movement, singing and Alexander technique) but spent extended periods each day working on their solo Self-Devised projects. A distinguishing feature of the weekly schedule was the time allotted to cross-school activities. Repertoire singing, dance, *taiaha*, 'philosophy' seminars and activities such as the First Year actors' showings and regular *Panui* or school meetings were all timetabled to include both year groups of actors, and frequently the technical production students as well (Schedule for week of 24/6/96).

Annie explained that the timetable, while set in its broad outlines, was framed to allow for flexibility in response to needs or issues as they arose: 'I do the timetabling for the school, and my philosophy ... [is] if there's a reason to change we should be flexible enough to change. So the planning needs to be done and it needs to be in place, but it's not written in concrete. Which makes my job harder, but at the same time I think it's much better for the school' (Ruth interview 1996). The School's internal structure therefore attempted to mirror the balance between an overall *turangawaewae* philosophy, based on a strongly grounded sense of place and origins, and an ability to be flexible and improvise appropriately in response to problems posed in the moment. In practice, its smooth running appeared to depend very much on a shared

sense of community and on its authorisation of what were, in many cases, opportunities for syncretic or hybrid interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange as 'authentic'. The specific brand of biculturalism created by and within the School was a key tool in building 'school spirit' and corporate identity. As such, the question remains as to whether the deployment of Maori culture in this context is appropriate or simply strategically appropriative – the answer must lie in its generative potential inside and outside the immediate School context.

Participation in *kapahaka* and other Maori cultural traditions could play a significant part in developing the expressive means available to individuals and groups, but the students' skills were also frequently co-opted in the service of institutional display. As noted above, students were clearly ambivalent about this aspect of their supposedly bicultural training, grumbling about the number of times their studies were interrupted to put on a show for public or promotional purposes. However, the same student who described their attitude to the *powhiri* with which I was welcomed as 'Rent-A-Powhiri, just going through the motions' was a willing member of a Second Year group which offered a spontaneous *haka* at the completion of the First Years' performance assessment: 'that meant something, we wanted to do it for them' (field notes). Such expressive group acknowledgements were an organic part of the School's internal exchanges. Their foundation lay not only in the *taha Maori* and *kapahaka* sessions included in the curriculum and taken by guest Maori tutors, but in the conscious inclusion of Maori vocabulary and examples, and the teaching of chant/movement forms such as *haka* (challenge/affirmation) and *karakia* (prayer) as exercises by Pakeha tutors in other classes.

The School's commitment to biculturalism necessarily involved it in negotiations with Maori leaders and communities as to the level and content of its cultural program, and the legitimacy of those who teach and

participate in it, an ongoing project of great delicacy. Whereas the establishment of *Maoritanga* as a partner culture within the School had initially been propelled by the demands of Maori activists²³, the actual implementation of the bicultural program necessarily involved the access of Pakeha students to ritual knowledge. This was an ongoing subject of controversy between Maori leaders with different positions on cultural purity. Through its pedagogical and governance systems, the School has taken great care to ensure that its interface with Maori cultural practices takes place under sufficient traditional authority. The formal *Taha Maori* component of the Performance Studies program is co-ordinated and taught by Maori. There are at least two Maori representatives on the Board of Trustees and on the Board of Studies, and the integrity of the School's overall approach is overseen by senior Maori advisers (in 1996 by designated *kaumaatua*, Puoho Katene and Keri Kaa). However, even during the brief period of my observation, it was evident that the School's selection of Maori staff and advisers had immediate political consequences as a result of the links and alignments thus established with particular sections of the Maori community. The School's conduct of Maori studies, and the compromises involved in opening these studies to non-Maori, required constant diplomacy, and the program remained inherently volatile.

Shortly after my arrival, I was invited to a ceremony held to mark the graduation of the Second Year women students from a *karanga* induction program held at a *marae* about fifty kilometers from Wellington under the direction of tutor, Tungia Baker. In the traditional *marae* welcome, the women of both *tangata whenua* and *manuhiri* play a central role. As the *manuhiri* approach, one of the senior women on the *marae*, the *kai karanga*, calls out to the approaching strangers and sings them onto the *marae* grounds with the *karanga* call. The *manuhiri* reply through their *kai whakautu*. It is only then that the full ceremonial speeches can begin. According to Hiwi and Pat Tauroa, the *karanga* functions as the 'key' by

which visitors to the marae may enter safely. It is also the medium by which the living and the dead of the *manuhiri* may cross the physical space to unite with the living and the dead of the *tangata whenua*. (Tauroa, H. and Tauroa, P., 1986: 36). The *karanga* can be issued only by the women of the *marae*, led by the *kai karanga*. The Tauroas are quite clear that 'it would be most unusual for formal lessons to be held in the art of *karanga* ... young women will not *karanga* while their grandmother, mother and/or elder sister are still living ... years of attendance at marae, years of listening, will ultimately prepare a woman for the role of *karanga*' (Tauroa and Tauroa, 1986: 38-39). But in order to conduct a *powhiri* as a functioning *whanau*, it was important for Toi Whakaari to be able to muster members with enough ritual knowledge to carry the appropriate roles. When in the role of *tangata whenua*, the women staff and students of the School take collective responsibility for the *karanga*. Given the specificity of its vocal demands, the cultural matrix of which it forms a part and its deep spiritual resonance, this is not something that can be passed on in the course of a normal class. Tungia Baker was therefore responsible for conducting a species of initiation retreat, with all the women (both acting and technical production students) in the relevant year group being taken to a *marae*, where over several days they were taught the basics of the *karanga* call and inducted into its sources and significance.

Although I witnessed only the conclusion, a ceremony in which the Toi Whakaari students were allowed to *karanga* as symbolic representatives of the *marae*, it was evident from conversations with staff and students that bringing the process to successful completion demanded flexibility and a willingness to take cultural and personal risks on behalf of all parties. Tungia Baker required the credentials to perform such an induction within her own community, but also the permission of the particular *marae* community for a proceeding which would involve the tricky business of hosting strangers – many of them Pakeha - in a role

play in which they would behave as if they were *tangata whenua* and would be encouraged to perform in a way many Maori women would refuse. Such permission was not easily granted and was subject to challenge, reiteration and even withdrawal²⁴. Baker also needed to win the confidence of the students – actors and ‘techies’, Maori and non-Maori – and facilitate their participation in what was for most an unfamiliar cultural landscape, and for some a confronting and even aversive experience. Finally, she needed to maintain the legitimacy of the process while strategically adapting it to the knowledge and ritual status of the participants, creating an ‘authentic enough’ experience while avoiding ritual transgression. She attempted to achieve this through the construction of what, in effect, became a performative frame, allowing Pakeha bodies to occupy an *as if* traditionally sacred space.

The workshop provided an embodied experience and specific skills²⁵ which could be put to immediate ‘use’ in ceremonies conducted within the School. Otherwise, it was of more importance as a cross-cultural immersion experience than as an integral element in an overall performance training. By report, at least one student was overtly resistant to participation in an alien ritual, questioning its relevance to her professional work now and in the future. From another perspective, however, the workshop provided an introduction to ritual process²⁶, stored body memory information and an approach to performativity which students of other Eurocentric pre-professional training programs were unlikely to access. It was, moreover, a particularly empowering experience for the women in the student group, allowing them to bond and acquire a specific ritual status within the School *whanau* which flowed on into other activities. The authority and respect generally accorded women was a noticeable feature of the internal culture of Toi Whakaari. Combined with a student-centred pedagogy and an attention to process and discussion, it gave students a very different sense of their relations with staff than that prevailing at NIDA. The detail of the

karanga induction process also required a level of physical and vocal release potentially of value in other areas of the course. I was told of a moment when one Pakeha student was suddenly able to produce a full-bodied sound so far unrealisable in voice class – a breakthrough any actor training course would value.

A similar set of issues surrounded the School's adaption of the traditional Maori martial arts discipline, *taiaha*. This highly developed form, which incorporates both armed and unarmed combat practice sequences, is traditionally a male-only pursuit. Although it is fairly common for martial arts such as fencing to be included in drama school curricula, the School's access to this local discipline was enhanced when it discovered that Kieth Walker, a technical production student, was an adept²⁷. At the time of my first visit, Walker was in the unusual position of being a student in the technical stream while acting as *taiaha* tutor to the acting students; he was still employed as a specialist tutor on my second visit. The situation was further complicated by the School's preference that women students be included in the *taiaha* class. Walker was therefore faced not only with decisions about how to teach the discipline at a beginners level while adapting it to the needs of male and female actors, but with the need to seek endorsement from his traditional mentors for the unconventional cross-gendered nature of his classes. The problem had been addressed by segregating the *taiaha* classes by gender, 'twinned' against other classes in movement and *Taha Maori*. The women's classes concentrated on 'gentler' movement patterns, and less on combat preparation, although Walker's approach was then clearly still developing. Walker himself saw the process as innovation. While strongly maintaining the integrity of the tradition in which he had been trained, he was happy to explore its deployment within the frame created by the new community of the School, and sure enough of his competence and authority to negotiate the concatenation of cultures that ensued.

I observed a number of instances where students appeared to borrow elements from both traditions in their approach to performance problems. In the Shakespeare scene-work, I observed one of two First Year student groups, for four two to three-hour sessions over two days. Students had chosen to work either singly or in pairs on selected scenes. They were expected to learn their lines independently, and at least in the sessions I observed, Kelly did not deal specifically with vocal technique issues involved in analysing and speaking the text. Instead, the focus was on character development and scene analysis. On the first day, students were invited to explore archetypal animal images of their chosen characters, and then to improvise the situation experienced by the characters, before replaying the scene using the text. At this stage, lines were not secure in all cases, and students were reminded to do more work on the pieces out of class hours, either alone or with their scene partners. A week later, the students' work was much closer to presentation. The process now involved the students presenting their scenes in turn, using defined spatial relations and any necessary costume or props, to an audience consisting of Kelly, myself and those other class members who elected to remain. There were occasional interruptions instigated either by Kelly or by the scene participants, to redo sub-sequences or to try out alternative actions, positions or dynamics in specific instances. When the scene was completed, Kelly made suggestions, then the scene was presented again without interruption. In his comments, Kelly employed a vocabulary derived from Anglo-American post-Stanislavskian conventions, asking students questions about beats, motivation and relationship dynamics. He did not make direct reference to Maori culture. At the time of the showing, which was presented to the whole School community as well as students' immediate family if they wished to attend, I saw the work of both student groups. I was struck by the way in which Tanea Heke, a Maori student who had chosen Queen Hermione's speech from *The Winter's Tale*, worked with stance, weight, energy distribution and gesture in ways that were strongly reminiscent of traditional cultural

patterns. I assumed she was drawing on her background prior to coming to the School, using familiar patterns in a new situation. It turned out that, although she was indeed invoking images of the *whare nui* or meeting house with its strong centre poles and sturdy roof beams, this was in response to a conversation she had had with Robyn Payne about the Queen's situation, having to approach her estranged husband at court, surrounded by accusers and in danger of death or exile. The specific gestural vocabulary she employed was borrowed from a *karakia* she had learned at the School in one of Annie Ruth's classes. A mature age student who had embarked on a rediscovery of her *Maoritanga* via Maori language courses and teacher training after a previous career in the public service, Heke had demonstrated little previous interest in physical expression before coming to the School 'I've spent probably the best part of my thirty three years ... avoiding anything - the word 'physical' and I have never really been good friends, babe. My sister's taken me to about two aerobics classes in my whole life, you know, just the whole thing gives me the screaming skeets. So coming here to School was this huge, you know, leap in faith ...' (Heke interview 1996). Like other students, she was immensely excited by van Dijk's classes in physical theatre, which opened up a completely new realm of experience in which she 'found' expression and energy levels at a pitch never before encountered. The capacity to manipulate energy and attention through zones of the body, and the sheer physical stamina acquired in his Muscle and Bone classes, were also very much present in her Shakespeare presentation. While the School's bicultural approach gave her permission to find a solution to a Shakespearean performance problem from within her 'own' gestural heritage, that solution in fact represented a series of operations on a culturally complex set of performance *matériel* available within the School environment.

Another Maori student, Waimihi Hotere, approached the problem quite differently. Brought up in a middle-class family and with a Catholic

school education, she had a notably strong background in traditional performance, having worked since childhood in culture club and performance troupe activities. She felt very much at ease with the traditional Maori activities offered by the School, where her prior knowledge gave her a distinct edge. However, although she was immensely proud of her heritage in 'the only thing that is unique to New Zealand, which is the Maori culture' she didn't find these activities 'much of a stretch'. Instead, she found it more of a challenge to apply her highly developed capacity for physical analysis to the different technical requirements of acting in the Western tradition: 'I can see the distinguishment - the, um, the, the different movements within a movement, which is like a dancer, when they see a dance, you know, a sequence of steps, they can pick each one up and follow it so easily. That's the way I am with actions or poi, or, you know ...'. Waimihi was committed to achieving excellence in the 'other' aspects of the curriculum. Despite difficulties with some of the academic requirements due to her previous disinterest in schoolwork, her real frustration was with the components of the acting program which could not adequately be addressed through technical means alone. She found Ruth's improvisation classes particularly difficult: 'I'm a lot better off following somebody than I am making it up, initiating something'. This was however the aspect of the course that eventually interested her most, because it was giving her something new. Ruth's classes were carefully structured to challenge students emotionally while allowing them to build bridges from their own reactions to those of an imagined character. Waimihi had begun to glimpse a new horizon of expression, which she described using strikingly corporeal imagery: 'that's where I find that Drama School is really amazing, it's not only teaching you how to act, it's ... teaching you how, you know, a roller coaster emotions, the pain that you encounter on the way, but then being able to say yes, I do recognise you, and you are going to sit here, on my shoulder, for when, when I need you to come, when I need you I'll get you' (Hotere

interview 1996). The School's bicultural policy enabled Waimihi to include her previous experience 'in the frame' of her current training in performance and to be proud of her achievements to date. It also encouraged her to extend beyond them and trust in a new way of performing in which control was not the most important issue. To this extent, although her response to current experiences was strongly inflected through the specifics of her previous embodiment, particularly the skills and learning style acquired through Maori cultural activities, her position could not simply be labelled as 'Maori'. She was already adept at negotiating between Maori and 'other' cultural spaces, and was not inclined subjectively to define the new territory as specifically Pakeha, proceeding to make it her own.

For these students, the School's approach evidently provided a rich and, most importantly, a matrixed approach to the acquisition of performance skills, consonant with its eventual goal of graduating students with a solid but individually nuanced performance method and vocabulary. Students of Maori and Pacific Island background were clearly engaged with the Western drama program, and staff were prepared to put in considerable effort to assist such students within the horizon of their expertise. For example, during my second visit I attended a professional performance which included a young man of Samoan background who had been a student on my first visit in 1996. Although physically adept, his performance work had then suffered from a noticeably constricted vocal delivery. By 1998, his vocal production had changed; he told me that voice teacher, Keeley Eastley, who taught at the School during 1996 and 1997, had worked with him extensively both in an out of class time to release his voice and that he hoped to continue to build freedom and flexibility in his vocal work²⁸.

Many non-Maori students also responded well to the mix of Western theatre and Maori cultural awareness and performance skills, although

for some the 'bicultural' activities were something of a nuisance, or at best peripheral to the main business of a training in theatre that would equip them for later professional work. To a degree, this attitude was supported through the relatively separate conduct of Maori and 'Western' skills classes. The inclusion or otherwise of intercultural references was very much a matter of individual preference on the part of individual teachers. Ruth, for example, often began her acting classes with a *karakia*, or included non-Pakeha movement material in warm-ups²⁹. Van Dijk's classes reflected his strong engagement with the pan-cultural horizon of the European avant-garde, including vocal and movement material from a wide range of cultural sources³⁰. In other classes, however, the content and pedagogy referred very much to the cultural horizon of text-based Anglophone theatre or Anglo-American contemporary dance.

Within this 'half' of the School's activities, the major source of conflict was not its relation to Maori culture. There was evident tension in outlook, pedagogy and the demands on students in terms of performance preparation between van Dijk's strong advocacy of physical theatre, and the Anglo-American understanding of theatre shared by other staff. In the conventional Anglo-American drama school, there is generally a clear distinction between the acting class, as a core element of the curriculum, and the stream of specialist skills classes in movement and voice.

Formally, this separation was maintained in the staffing structure at Toi Whakaari. However, van Dijk's teaching skills, personal interests and pedagogical approach focused on a wish to merge these elements into a unified, 'holistic' approach to both performance training and performance making³¹. This approach was grounded in a convergence of avant-garde teachings which emphasised the actor as creator rather than interpreter of performance material. Van Dijk's methods of physical training emphasised physical energy, impulse and connection 'through the body'. He wanted to engage with modes of performance outside the Western dramatic tradition, and had forged a strong potential interface

with groups outside the School engaged in Maori and other South Pacific performance, forms in which song, movement and storytelling are integrally combined. An energetic and charismatic teacher, van Dijk's classes were popular with students, especially those of non-Pakeha background, a number of whom expressed to me their interest in pursuing further study in physical theatre in Europe and elsewhere. However, his interest in voice and acting, and his claims on the loyalty, time and bodies of the students³² could be perceived to encroach on the areas of expertise of other staff. The situation was not at crisis point at the time of my first visit, although it was evidently an issue.

By the time of my second visit in 1998, the School had undergone an internal reorganisation, as well as relocating to new premises. Ruth had succeeded Payne as Director and van Dijk had left the School, going on to form a mixed-race male troupe, 'Pantheatre *Poneke*', which featured graduates of both Toi Whakaari and Whitireia Performing Arts School³³. At the School, the problem of how to build an integrated but sufficiently broad training curriculum in Western drama had been approached through several new key staff appointments. Lyne Pringle, previously a movement tutor, returned as Movement Programme Manager. Australian Simone Lourie, a graduate of Wollongong University and NIDA³⁴, was Voice Programme Manager, and Tom McCrory, an Englishman who bridged the European avant-garde and British traditions, having trained with Philippe Gaulier in Lecoq technique, and worked with the British physical theatre company Théâtre du Complicité, had recently been appointed to the acting staff. Discussions with staff revealed they had embarked on a 'new' actor training program, with Lyne, Simone and Tom working as a team to integrate physical and vocal work in the Western tradition, while paying attention to the New Zealand context. The aim was a new configuration of the actor's physical and vocal 'journey', based on an integration of physical and imaginative work. If successful, this would overcome the disjunction inherent in the usual

progression of students from class to class under teachers with different orientations, but the program would still try to provide students with a horizon of choices rather than impose a specific physicality or uniformity of presentation³⁵. It would draw on, but not be governed by, specific training codifications such as Laban or 'Yat' technique. The 'training team' also wanted to explore further the management of biculturalism within the program by incorporating more *Taha Maori* elements into mainstream actor training (field notes). The scheme was still in its early days of operation. It would require frequent reassessment, but would be grounded in regular discussion between the teachers and on an ethos of collaboration between the team and other regular and contract staff members. The reaction of students, and any identifiable changes in their outlook and *habitus*, would take at least another three years to emerge.

As of 1998, then, the program of actor training offered by Toi Whakaari was embarking on another experimental cycle, attempting to balance the expectations of its local and international reference groups with the demands placed upon it, and opportunities offered it, through its status as an iconic bicultural institution in the context of a renegotiated New Zealand nationalism. To the extent that its reference formations remain in flux, it is likely that the balance at any one historical moment will be subject to change. Toi Whakaari has, however, already made a significant contribution to the 'biculturalisation' of New Zealand theatre and provides a unique platform whereby embodied cultural exchange might be facilitated. Amongst drama schools in the region, it stands out for its sustained attempt to promote interaction and exchange between a globally dominant theatre tradition and a threatened indigenous culture in the process of re-emergence and even reinvention. While facilitating a variety of outcomes for individual students, its support for those of minority background, and its institutional commitment to the enterprise of biculturalism, continue to function as powerful potentiators of cultural change.

Chapter 5 - Brief Light of Exile: Gilgul Theatre

In this chapter, we will look at the discourses and practices affecting one particular group of performers and performance makers, the Gilgul Theatre Company. This company was selected partly because their circumstances typify those faced by other independent groups of artists attempting to establish a creative and organisational framework from the ground up. Such groups and their members tend to situate themselves within the 'art theatre' alternative/experimental stream of Australian cultural practice. The members of Gilgul came from middle class backgrounds, and as university-educated artist-intellectuals saw themselves as entitled to claim both a voice in cultural debate and support from government-established support structures such as the Australia Council. Not all such claims are successful in attracting financial, material or discursive support: few such companies are able to maintain a full time, ongoing organisational structure, and few survive for more than a year or two. At the time this research was initiated, Gilgul was a functioning, if occasional, entity. By the time of writing, it had effectively disbanded. Its status as a 'project -based' organisation dependent essentially on its members' commitment rather than on a continuing administrative and financial infrastructure, its 'lifespan' of seven years (1991-97) and the warm critical reception generally accorded to its work mark it as a more than ordinarily successful small or independent performance company working in contemporary Australia.

In other respects, however, the reasons for studying this company lie in the constellation of its particularities: its self-description as Jewish and its counter-claim for status as Australian art theatre, the complexity of its cultural and aesthetic points of reference, its development of a highly physical performance style, and the impact its makeup as an ensemble of creator-performers had on the shape of its work.

Over the past twenty-five years, Australasian theatre has been a key forum for discourses of nationalism, as Veronica Kelly has recently argued (Kelly, 2001). In Australia, the certainties of the 1970s Anglo-Celtic 'New Wave' of Australian theatrical nationalism had been destabilised by 1991. Artists and intellectuals were beginning to grapple with the complex realities of a nation comprising a multiplicity of cultural, regional, class and gender identities. Gilgul emerged at a time when Australia's taste makers and audiences were ready to challenge the ways these complex identities had been represented.

Although Gilgul is by no means the only 'multicultural' or 'ethnic' theatre company to have achieved funded status in Australia in recent years', the level of critical and other attention it received gave it particular prominence. Gilgul both exploited and exceeded the boundaries of 'otherness' its stated cultural allegiance created. 'Multicultural' companies are by definition diverse, displaying very different compositional and stylistic preferences, and maintaining different relationships with their reference communities and cultures of origin (Shevtsova, 1993). Writing about contemporary Asian-Australian theatre, Jacqueline Lo claims that 'the hybridisation of cultures in contemporary Australia carries with it transformed relations to tradition and the 'native homeland' which can only be experienced through the categories of the present' (Lo, 1998: 68). However, as members of a Jewish theatre company operating in the Diaspora, it was precisely the indeterminacy and ambivalence of their relations to notions of authenticity, origins, land and time that fuelled the work of Gilgul's theatre makers. The constitution of past, present and future, and where exactly 'here' might be, were for them the issues.

Although the bodies on stage were framed as 'Jewish' they functioned as sites or hosts for a play of signifiers which deconstructed stable identity

and reconstructed embodied race, gender and historical location as contingent, threatened and fragile. As a consequence, Gilgul was able to trump the hierarchy of Australian parochialism which operates continually to remarginalise the cultural production of most non Anglo-Australian groupings (Mitchell, 1992). Writers such as Lyotard (Lyotard, 1990) and Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) have allegorised 'the Jews' as the minoritarian culture *par excellence* and thus the archetype of the boundaryless, ahistorical postmodern experience of culture. John Stratton argues that, to the contrary, Jews as the 'exceptional Other' have been less discriminated against than other minorities in Australia (Stratton, 1999). In the context of contemporary Australian culture Gilgul's Jewishness, the largeness of its themes and its appeal to a broadly European sensibility, do appear to have allowed it to claim a cachet usually reserved for visiting 'international' artists.

Gilgul positioned itself across a number of contested categories in the field of cultural production. It presented itself as a Jewish theatre company, when not all of its members were Jewish. It claimed professional status, when several of its members earned their main income from other sources. None had received a studio based drama training, although all were tertiary educated and had backgrounds of training and/or experience in different strands of contemporary performance practice. Moreover, their skills did not break down easily into conventional categories. Rather than one director and up to six actors, the group could also be viewed as 'four theatre directors, three musicians, three writers, a dramaturg, a choreographer, an actor fluent in Yiddish, and an actor fluent in Hebrew' (Yoni Prior in Richards, A. and Prior, 1996: 2). The company culture was able to make a virtue of these contradictions. Its members gloried in a certain illegitimacy, which allowed them to make their exotic and 'outsider' status a central counter in their claims for artistic authenticity.

Background and Production History

Gilgul Theatre was formed in May 1991 by artistic director Barrie Kosky and company manager and lighting designer Robert Lehrer, two young Australian Jewish men with the ambition to create what they billed as 'Australia's First Professional Jewish Theatre Company' (Gilgul Theatre, 1991). The name Gilgul was drawn 'from the Hebrew word meaning revolution, rolling or metamorphosis, but ... used in mystical writings to describe the transmigration of souls, or reincarnation' (Prior, 1998a: 6).

Not long graduated from the 'establishment' trajectory of Melbourne Grammar School and Melbourne University, Kosky had already made something of a name for himself as a budding *Wunderkind* through his work as a director of musical and dramatic theatre. His 'big break' had come through the mentorship of John Truscott, eminent theatre designer and then director of Melbourne's Spoleto Festival, who had invited him to direct the premiere of Sir Colin Davis' *The Knot Garden* for the 1989 Festival (Carillo Gantner in Reimer, 1996). However, his music theatre company, Treason of Images, failed to secure ongoing funding from the Australia Council. Despite directing offers from established companies, including the Victoria State Opera and The Australian Opera, Kosky was impatient with the restrictions of directing in an institutional setting: in colleague and friend Tom Wright's words he wanted the challenge 'of doing it himself, not being the journeyman director but being the total control freak, having your own company' (Wright in Reimer, 1996). He had also begun to explore the personal and creative implications of his Jewish heritage. According to Wright: 'It was a really interesting thing to witness the change that happened in Barrie. If the subject of Judaism was brought up, he would not respond except in a very dismissive way. And then something happened quite distinctly as his work progressed ... [he] came to realise that ... Judaism, diaspora, and

the pain of the past and of my grandparents is a major factor in making me what I am, and ... I'm only going to be making gestures ... if I don't explore that' (Wright in Reimer, 1996). This realisation was cemented during a trip to Eastern Europe, during which he visited Auschwitz and the Jewish cemetery in Prague. Robert Lehrer's recollection is that 'Barrie was very struck by ... a lot of Jewish history that he had rediscovered by ... going to Eastern Europe. He had some very powerful images in his mind about that trip, and how that could be transferred to a theatrical environment' (Lehrer in Reimer, 1996).

Over the next few months, Lehrer garnered support – some financial, but largely in-principle and in-kind – from Melbourne's Jewish business and community leaders, while Kosky as the company's artistic leader gathered together a troupe of actors and then embarked on rehearsals for the company's first production, based on Solomon Anski's classic of the Yiddish theatre, *The Dybbuk*. The Aims and Objectives of the new company, as expressed in its bravely worded manifesto, emphasised the provision of opportunities for young Jewish performers, and for both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences, to experience Jewish culture 'in a form previously unseen in Australia'. It also aimed 'to satisfy the continuing need for knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment within the Jewish [sic] community' through artistic exploration of 'the particular complexity and diversity of the Australian diaspora' (Gilgul Theatre, 1991).

Gilgul Theatre produced five original works in the seven years between 1991 and 1997. Their first, immensely successful, production of *The Dybbuk*² was followed by *Es Brent* (which combined Mordechai Gebirtig's ghetto lament of the title, Elie Weisel's *The Trial of God* and references to the *Purimshpil* tradition) in 1992 and *Levad* (a work for solo actor based around Jacob Gordin's *Mirele Efros*) in 1993. This last piece was produced in association with the Playbox Theatre, Melbourne's established 'second house' and avowed home of new

Australian playwrighting. All three were toured to Sydney in 1993 as 'The Exile Trilogy' under the auspices of Belvoir Street Theatre. *The Wilderness Room* followed in 1994 and, after a longer interval, *The Operated Jew* in 1997.

The first three works shared a similar perspective, 'looking back' on the experience of Eastern European Jewry and its cultures through the literature and performance modes of Yiddish popular and art theatre forms, including cabaret, in the decades between approximately 1920 and 1945. The number of actors involved in each piece varied from one (*Levad*) to six (*Es Brent*), but the three works were realised using similar compositional methods. Each piece used an existing 'classic' text as its jumping off point, but juxtaposed this with other religious, historical and theatrical sources. Each piece constituted an original, ensemble-driven piece of theatre in which character, spatial and temporal references were doubled, multiplied and displaced. A central trope was the actors' concurrent inhabitation of several overlapping personae; 'characters' in the various text-based fictions, 'presenters' in different theatrical, cultural and historically referenced modes and styles and 'actors', personae represented in more or less detail as 'lost souls' - the ghosts of Jewish actors, most probably past members of the famous Vilna Troupe³.

Each piece employed a devising process, which depended on Kosky's collaboration with a more-or-less continuing ensemble, but remained suffused with the director's voice and aesthetic choices. The last two varied distinctly in tone and compositional approach, both from each other and from the plays of The Exile Trilogy. They were still recognisably 'Gilgul', however, featuring the company's trademarks of an intensely physical performance style, the use of striking stage images and the employment of songs and instrumental music both to accompany and to counterpoint the stage action. The director's active presence at the

keyboard as leader of the ensemble has been a feature of all Gilgul productions.

Gilgul: positions and citations

Gilgul Theatre in its style and expressed identity was a theatre between worlds. I will endeavour to tease out some of the discourses and practices that brought the company together and contributed to its rapid recognition as a force in Australian theatre, but also, eventually, to its demise. In the first instance, I will discuss the web of associations and assumptions collecting around the company's self-description as a 'professional Australian Jewish theatre company'.

Gilgul's claim to professional status was, at the time of its inception, stretching a point. Company members rehearsed at nights and on weekends, in between other commitments. The company itself had few if any financial reserves. Kosky had, however, already made a name for himself as a promising young director of theatre and music theatre, and had attracted the attention of those willing to serve as mentors. The collaboration of Peter Corrigan, architect, architecture professor and leading opera and theatre designer, delivered both his personal creative support and material and student labour resources, via the involvement of Corrigan's students at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Kosky's profile ensured that the company's work attracted the attention of established critics and arts industry gatekeepers, and both Kosky and Lehrer were able to capitalise on the community and business networks available to them as tertiary-educated sons of established Melbourne Jewish families. The fact that their first two productions were rehearsed and performed in rent-free, if dilapidated, premises, was a significant advantage, both in saving expenditure and in helping the company develop its signature presentational style, without the time pressures caused by the need to find and pay for studio and theatre space. Most

members of the Gilgul ensemble would class themselves individually as 'professionals'⁴. They were, however neither formally trained nor fulltime actors. The company's collective description of itself as 'professional' was therefore initially aspirational; it became valid only as its work was well received critically, and as the company was then successful in securing government funding. This allowed it to pay professional rates during rehearsal and performance seasons, but it never provided long-term employment to any of its members.

Gilgul's status within Australian Jewry and its self-conscious placement in relation to the history of Jewish diasporas, also require teasing out. Jewish settlement in Australia is contemporaneous with European settlement as a whole – at least eight and possibly as many as fourteen Jews sailed as convicts on the colonising First Fleet in 1788 (Rutland, 1997: 8). While the proportion of Jews in the general population has remained reasonably constant from that time to the present at about 0.5 of one percent (Turnbull, 1999: 9), Australia's contemporary Jewish population is far from homogenous in its geographic origins, economic circumstances, religious affiliations, political convictions or cultural reference points.

The early Jewish settlers were largely Anglo-Jewish in origin and, up until the end of the nineteenth century, appeared content to represent themselves as Jews individually and communally through their synagogue membership. Their rabbis tended to regard themselves and their congregations as loyal British subjects distinguished only through their membership of Judaism as a religious 'denomination' (Rubinstein, 1987: 36). Even here, however, the 'official' picture of homogeneity ignored the community's internal divisions along the fault lines of language, class, economic circumstance and religious practice. Not only did English-speaking Jews and Jews from Western and Eastern European countries tend to worship in separate congregations and live and work in

different areas in the same city or region, but the failure to maintain traditional Jewish cultural and religious practices, either through isolation or lack of conviction, led to the assimilation of many Australian Jews into a general population not distinguished for the intensity of its religious affiliations. Writing for contemporary Jewish day-school secondary students, Hilary Rubinstein presents the history of the Jews in Australia as the drama of a struggle between assimilation and cultural identity. Despite the difficulty of estimating numbers – until the 2001 census, Jews were counted by religion rather than ethnic origin – the rate of assimilation is suggested in her citation of Charles Price's guess that in 1979, up to 250,000 Australians had at least one Jewish ancestor (Price quoted in Rubinstein, 1987: 16).

In the twentieth century, successive waves of migration from Europe, and lesser emigrations from Asia, South America, South Africa and even Israel, further complicated the texture of Australian Jewish life. The rise of Zionism (for much of the century opposed by European Bundist socialism and communism) and later the political creation of the modern nation of Israel altered the emotional orientation of many Jews, in the direction of a renewed sense of 'race' and national consciousness (Stratton, 1999), while having little numerical effect on patterns of diasporic migration (Yehoshua, 1983). In particular, the arrival of Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe in the early part of the century, and of Holocaust survivors after the Second World War, created significant concentrations of difference within Australian Jewry, which in turn sparked the establishment of new religious, philanthropic and cultural institutions. This was particularly evident in Melbourne, which had grown in the postwar years to overtake Sydney, not only in its total Jewish population, but as a centre for Jewish educational and cultural activities, especially in the promotion and preservation of *Yiddishkeit* (Rutland, 1997: 356-7).

Contemporary Australian Jewries include people of Anglo-Jewish, Ashkenazic, Sephardic and Oriental Jewish backgrounds; English, French, German, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew speakers; orthodox, liberal, *hasidic* and secular persuasions; large and small business operators, professionals and workers; feminists, socialists, communists and conservatives; writers, teachers, artists and other intellectuals. Their attitudes and identities as Jews, as Australians and as members of the *gola*, towards their ambivalent status as settlers, as wanderers and as Jews -- in exile, in the Diaspora -- cannot be simply or effectively categorised. In Joan Brandt's words: 'Dispersed throughout the five continents, condemned to a life of homelessness, wandering, and exile, the Jew can never serve as a stable model, a fixed image or type with which one identifies and through which the identity of a people is fashioned or realized, for his very existence problematizes such a traditional mimetologic' (Brandt, 1998: 143).

Gilgul constituted yet another voice, or series of voices, in this disparate articulation of unstable yet dynamic Jewish identities. Wright remembers Kosky's personal interest in Judaism as something that 'happened quite distinctly as his work progressed, and it was tied in with his work. A realisation that in order to do lasting work ... you had to be able to express deeply personal issues, some of the unresolved things in yourself' (Wright in Reimer, 1996). Kosky's cultural identity as a Jew was articulated alongside his identity as a theatre maker and his experience as someone with a particular set of perspectives and capacities: 'I'm not a painter, I'm not a writer ... the bottom line is I do theatre because it's a vehicle for expression ... and it's, I think, the only thing that I can do really well' (Kosky in Reimer, 1996). Although forming a theatre company dedicated to exploring Jewish culture from an Australian perspective, Kosky was uninterested in defining that perspective, or in opening any new or synthetic discourse of home or nation. Rather, he was interested in theatricalising the fragmentations of

exile, by invoking the ways in which the experience of the present was haunted by the poetry and tragedy of the past. 'The idea of Prague intoxicated me, through Janáček's music, through Kafka. When I went there for the first time, it was one of the most extraordinary, most profound places I'd ever been to ... in a lot of my subsequent productions, the slightly dislocated quality of the Prague Jewish cemetery has been a quite deliberate presence ... the walls sing and the shadows whisper, and you feel somehow that the Jewish presence that is now only memories is sort of still there' (Kosky in Reimer, 1996). Although the company clearly identified itself as Jewish, and as Australian, it refused to overwrite the sense of displacement experienced by the exile with a newly mythologised centre, either in its constitution or in the content and presentation of its material.

The bodies of its actors were presented as Jewish bodies, but by no means all were Jewish in origin or orientation. Those that were Jewish were not Jewish in the same way. *Gilgul's* internal composition, as well as its intended audience, included Gentiles as well as Jews. According to actor Wright: 'The fact that I'm not Jewish was clearly important to Barrie ... It wasn't as if he was trying to set up a ghetto of performers. Quite the contrary, he was embracing the Jewish myth and the Jewish theatre and the Jewish tradition as part of the Australian theatrical tradition' (Wright in Reimer, 1996). In Yoni Prior's words, Kosky's choice of actors was 'a combination of astute casting and inspired guessing' (Prior, 1998a: 8) which helped to create an ensemble varied in cultural origin, age, gender balance, sexual orientation and theatrical experience 'No-one's had the same training, no-one's had the same background. No-one has the same outlook on life, the same point of view. Normally that's a disaster. Somehow magically it just seems to work' (Kosky in Reimer, 1996). In making their theatre, the individual and collective approach to Jewish culture taken by the group necessarily reflected both their personal experiences and the fragmented insights and

understanding available to them from the Australian diaspora. They spoke from and contributed to an articulation of the instability of that position, while finding their mutual meeting point in the crossover between Jewish culture and theatre practice. They were thus able to locate a starting point for their own work in an elaboration of the history and practices of Jewish, and particularly Yiddish, theatre, itself the quintessentially displaced and dismissed art of exile.

As Corina Schoef points out, Jewish theatre is almost by definition an impossibility (Schoef, 2001). Jewish folk traditions emphasised music and storytelling as an accompaniment to religious and secular ritual, rather than enactment as an entertainment in its own right. This cultural preference, combined with priestly strictures against inappropriate (that is, gender confused) costuming and a scholarly distaste for vulgar representation, meant that until the late nineteenth century the prototheatrical *Purimspil* were, with a few literary exceptions, the sole examples of theatre indigenous to the Jewish cultural tradition. When, at the very end of the century, the turbulent winds of oppression and transmigration in Eastern Europe fanned the spark of small-town cabaret, in the Rumanian town of Jassy, into a fully developed transnational practice of Jewish theatre within a decade, that theatre was inevitably marked by, and itself participated in, the Jewish cultural politics of the era. This was marked above all by the struggles between enlightenment and tradition, between secularism and religion, between socialism and Zionism, between the life lived in the 'old' agrarian settlements of the Pale and the 'new' urban centres, both in Europe and in the migratory destinations of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia.

These struggles were played out in and over the Yiddish language, which had become the *lingua franca* of Jews in Eastern Europe, but emphatically not that of the enlightened Western European Jews or the Zionist Hebraicists, either before or after the creation of Israel

(Goldsmith, 1998). The emergent theatrical practices thus coalesced into a specifically Yiddish theatre, rather than a generically 'Jewish' theatre, a history which contributes to its lack of legitimacy even in modern Israel (Prior, 1998a). Yiddish theatre was dominated by the popular, sentimental, melodramatic, rubbishy genre potboilers of *shund*, occasionally and significantly aspiring to the condition of an art theatre (see Sandrow, 1977 for a valiantly encyclopaedic account). It became the vehicle for the expression of a supranational sense of peoplehood, a means of articulating a commitment to the democratic socialism of the Bundists, of preserving an identification, not with the official patriotism of Israel and the *aliyah* (or return to the Holy Land), but with the contingent, threatened but none the less organic emotional attachments of home-in-exile. That so many Yiddish speakers and so many Yiddish theatre artists perished in the ghettos and camps of Nazi - and Soviet - occupied Europe, has served only to cement the associative pull of Yiddish theatre for diasporic survivors and their descendants, despite the decline of Yiddish speaking communities and the dismissal of Yiddish by representatives of 'legitimate' Judaism (Kerler, 1998).

Before *Gilgul*, no other group had sought to occupy precisely this cultural space. Australia's theatrical history certainly includes Jewish theatre artists, entertainers and entrepreneurs who played largely to audiences from the dominant culture⁵, but Jewish theatre in Australia was, with rare exceptions, Yiddish. It was also mostly amateur. Despite the presence of individual 'professional' actor/entertainers from as early as 1908 and, occasionally, travelling companies often made up of family groups (Zable, 1998), the Jewish communities were numerically too small and geographically too scattered to support a professional theatre on the scale possible in Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, with the support of cultural institutions such as Melbourne's Kadimah, founded in 1911 to promote Yiddish culture and support new arrivals (Rutland, 1997: 92), Yiddish-speaking *kulturtuers* persevered through

several generations and company structures, to present cabaret, drama and recitations for the enlightenment and amusement of local audiences. One of the most enduring of these was the David Herman Theatre (1949-1992), named after the director of the famous Vilna Troupe (Zable, 1998: 13-15).

It was, then, almost inevitable that Gilgul, with its linked ambitions to produce professional theatre and to explore the implications of the Jewish cultural heritage in the context of Australian diasporic experience, would turn to the repertoire of Yiddish theatre and the personae and imagined performance styles of Yiddish theatre actors for inspiration. The encounter, however, was conducted under the aegis of a contemporary theatrical sensibility. Informed by their awareness of current, deconstructive, performance practice, the ensemble were unburdened by traditional pressures to reproduce narratives, discourses and practices as seamless wholes. More interested in performativity than textuality, their 'Yiddish' theatre was itself a fabrication, a composite constructed from observation, fragments of texts, scraps of songs, old film footage and found objects (Prior, 1998a: 32-38). It combined high art and *shund*, tragedy and *Purimshpil*, sacred texts with cabaret. It was realised through floor improvisations, which combined all these ingredients with energetic actions, repeated gestures and bits and pieces of languages, including English, Yiddish and Hebrew, to achieve a dense, rhythmic physicality and auralty, hammered into musicality in performance through the driving force of Kosky's piano accompaniment.

At this level of abstraction, Gilgul's work was unlikely to appeal to communal audiences looking for simple cultural confirmation. Gilgul was unashamedly an art theatre, Kosky unabashed in his determination to produce art at whatever level of difficulty he chose: 'Melbourne is an outrageously conservative, self-satisfied and comfortable city. The I-know-what-I-like and I-like-what-I-know runs right through it. The only

reason there's an interesting underbelly to that is a reaction against it' (Usher, 1994: 13).

In 'The Exile Trilogy', Gilgul's success had been partly assisted by Kosky's ability to 'react against' key texts and the expectations an audience might bring with them from traditional interpretations. The integrity of these works was also boosted by the play of metaphor which, like free association in a communal séance, returned again and again to the unspoken and unspeakable horrors of the *Shoah* – according to Sander Gilman the substitute for 'Jerusalem' in a postmodern centre/periphery model of the Jewish diasporic experience (Gilman, 1999: 3). However, in the fourth work, *The Wilderness Room*, the company's own artistic journey had brought it out of Europe and to a place both before and beyond the Holocaust – the desolate and ambivalently inhabited shores of Terra Australis. For the first time, the company was creatively on its own, entirely responsible for the choices it made with regard to texts, images and references, without the figurative guidance either of a 'core text' or of the ghosts of theatres past.

The Wilderness Room

The development and rehearsal period for *The Wilderness Room*, prior to the opening of the three week performance season on November 30 1994, provides the focus for my analysis in the second half of this chapter. I attended six days and/or nights of rehearsal, one preview and two evening performances during November and December 1994. I also interviewed the director, designer, stage manager and actors, either alone or with Yoni Prior, between February 1995 and May 2001.

An Australia Council Creative Development and Production project grant made possible an eight week development period for *The Wilderness Room*, a significantly longer timespan than the three to four weeks usual

in Australian rehearsals for a text-based piece in the 'mainstream' subsidised professional theatre. By this time Gilgul had won: Victorian Green Room Awards for Best Production and Best Direction for *The Dybbuk* in 1992; a Sydney Critics' Circle Award for the design of *The Exile Trilogy* in 1993; Green Room Best Design Medals for *Es Brent* in 1992 and *Levad* in 1993, and Yoni Prior a nomination for Best Actress for *Levad*. It might be said that Gilgul had 'arrived'. The company and Kosky himself had a prominent profile as successful theatrical innovators and a new production was greeted with intense expectation from patrons of contemporary theatre, 'key players' in the theatre industry and the company's networks of support within Melbourne's Jewish community.

At the time of this project, the company consisted of Kosky and Lehrer, designer Peter Corrigan, stage manager Matt Delbridge, and five actors. Tom Wright and Michael Kantor had both worked with Kosky in student theatre at Melbourne University and each has subsequently developed their own trajectory in contemporary and avant-garde performance. Wright had little if any previous contact with Jewish culture, but was himself a theatre director and intellectual with a strong interest in religious history and philosophy. He was a member of the Gilgul ensemble for *The Dybbuk*, *Es Brent*, *The Wilderness Room* and *The Operated Jew*. Despite periods away from the theatre, he has since worked extensively as an actor, director and dramaturg on special projects and for a number of theatre companies, including the Mene Mene Theatre, as have Kantor and Louise Fox.

Kantor is not culturally Jewish, although of Jewish descent on his father's side⁶. He had pursued an interest in physical theatre, enrolling in workshops with Philippe Gaulier and Monica Pagneux in Paris in 1988 (Gilgul Theatre, 1994). He was a member of the Gilgul ensemble for *The Dybbuk*, *Es Brent*, *The Wilderness Room* and *The Operated Jew*. His career outside Gilgul was initially linked closely with Kosky's, as

assistant director on a number of the latter's opera and theatre productions. He has since however made a significant career as a director in his own right. His productions have appeared in major Australian arts festivals, and he has like Kosky begun to explore international opportunities for work, particularly in South East Asia and Europe.

Yoni Prior is an experienced actor and director and a trained drama teacher. Slightly older than the rest of the company, she came to Kosky's notice as an actor who could speak Hebrew, and later as the translator and director of a contemporary Israeli play at Carlton's La Mama theatre during the 1991 Melbourne Comedy Festival. She was a member of the Gilgul ensemble for *The Dybbuk*, *Es Brent*, *Levad* and *The Wilderness Room*. Of Anglo-Australian middle class background⁷, her interest in Jewish culture and Hebrew language and literature had led her to undertake part of a Master's degree at Tel Aviv University and to work as an actor in the modern Israeli repertory theatre. She has continued in her career as a performer and director of drama and improvised comedy and as a dramaturg working with contemporary dancers. She is currently Head of Drama at Deakin University.

Elisa Gray answered an advertisement for actors placed by Lehrer in the *Melbourne Jewish News*. She was a member of the Gilgul ensemble for *The Dybbuk*, *Es Brent*, and *The Wilderness Room*. She has a long history of involvement in student and amateur theatre, both within and outside the Jewish community, while continuing to hold other fulltime jobs, at the time of this research in the insurance industry and later as a primary school teacher of Yiddish. She has made a particularly strong contribution to Jewish theatre groups such as the Melbourne Yiddish (Youth) Theatre and Saltpillar Theatre. Gray was brought up in a practising Jewish household and was thus the most culturally Jewish of the Gilgul company. She is a fluent Yiddish speaker as well as a fine

singer and continues to perform in amateur and fringe theatre and cabaret in Melbourne.

Louise Fox was a member of the Gilgul ensemble for *Es Brent*, *The Wilderness Room* and *The Operated Jew*. She is culturally Jewish but linguistically Anglophone. She came to the company with an extensive background as an actor and writer in experimental theatre. Unlike the other actors she is based in Sydney, but had worked in Melbourne for Kickhouse Theatre before joining Gilgul and continues to work in theatre, as well as in television, film and radio comedy as a writer and performer. Her subsequent work with other members of the ensemble includes Mene Mene Theatre and, most notably, her role as the Fool in Kosky's 1999 production of *King Lear* for the Bell Shakespeare Company.

Initial Rehearsals

I had followed the company's work as a spectator since *The Dybbuk*, and had a personal and professional connection with Yoni Prior going back to the late 1970s. However, apart from witnessing the dress rehearsal of *Levad*, my direct observation of Gilgul's rehearsal process began with the afternoon rehearsal on 22 October, at about the half way stage of the development of *The Wilderness Room*. I had initially hoped to witness the rehearsal process from its inception, but several members of the company were hesitant. They already felt under pressure from the presence in the rehearsal room of the cameras and crew of director Melissa Reimer, who was engaged in filming a documentary about Barrie Kosky timed to coincide with his work on the Adelaide Festival. It also appeared that the rehearsals were going less than smoothly. In reconstructing these events, I rely heavily on the accounts of participants in later interviews⁴.

As in previous productions, formal rehearsal was preceded by informal discussion and 'a period of what was loosely described as Gilgul's research, which basically means bits from here and bits from there and people fossicking out information ranging from literary source material to Biblical sources, but basically examining the various texts that may be used and simultaneously me just thinking about the music with that' (Kosky interview 1995). The ideas Kosky initially presented involved exploring notions of Australia as both a Promised Land and a desert – a land of wandering, pain and continued yearning. However, given his long periods of absence from Melbourne owing to Festival commitments, individual ensemble members were pretty much free to interpret these ideas and to engage in 'research' of greater or lesser intensity, as they pleased.

There had been one or two get-togethers at which ideas for the piece had been canvassed. Kosky recalled that initially 'I had some information about it but in terms of detail I didn't know anything. I just knew there was a bunch of Jew books on the First Fleet' (Kosky interview 1995). Other cast members were even less clear: 'It was an odd process in that we knew that this play was coming up for a year and a half. We knew that we were all going to be involved, it was all a dead cert kind of thing, so really we were relying on little snippets of information from the director to guide us in some way as to how to prepare. Thinking back, those snippets were as abstract and as small as The First Fleet - just those three words, nothing more - convicts, obviously, slight hints about war trials ... What else did Barrie let on about - not much' (Kantor interview 1995).

Three months before rehearsals began, Kosky provided the others with photocopied pages from *Australian Genesis*, Rabbi John Levi's published account of early Jewish convicts and settlers. This was followed by material he and other members collected during the nearly ten months

between the end of the Sydney tour and the start of the rehearsal period proper. Suggested book reading and a package of photocopied extracts formed a 'primordial soup' of sources that might be useful for this or subsequent projects. These included the anti-Semitic novel, *The Operated Jew*; Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore*; the Talmudic readings of Emmanuel Levinas; information on the Kimberley Project of the 1930s, when a proposal was mooted to establish a Jewish state in the Kimberleys region of Western Australia; and excerpts from the Books of Isaiah, Exodus and Numbers. More songs were suggested from the two books in Kosky's possession, *Songs from the Yiddish Theatre* and *Songs from the Ghetto*, which had already furnished much of the musical material for the previous shows. References to early colonial art and music were also collected, with particular attention to the music of Sir Isaac Nathan, a successful composer and free settler who wrote settings for several of the lyrics of Lord Byron. Ideas needing further development included ways of linking notions of justice to Talmudic scholarship and Australia's notoriously unsuccessful prosecution of Ivan Poliakovich for war crimes.

Prior read Elaine Scarry's *The Body In Pain* and Sandor Gilman's *The Jew's Body*: 'the notion of the body was an obvious one since ... all of the other works have very strong images of the suffering Jewish body and the notion of travelling - and obviously the First Fleet theme tied into that' (Prior interview 1995). Wright 'was more interested in various biblical texts - things like the Book of Numbers, the, the Book of Joel, Genesis ... the thematic concerns of wandering, claiming a landscape and the dotted line of journeying across that landscape as a people's own. The parallels that might exist between a colonial fragment and a tribal fragment in biblical Old Testament narratives' (Wright interview 1995). Fox went to the Jewish Museum in Sydney and read some library books; she thought about objects that might become important and about the Passover ritual, the Seder, as providing a possible framework. Apart from

that 'I really didn't get a lot of work done at all' (Fox interview 1995); she was helping support a friend through a terminal illness, and had little time or energy to devote to external matters. Gray, too, found it difficult to devote time to private research: 'With working and everything I was hard pressed to finish the stuff that we were given' but she did read the material Kosky distributed 'and just let it sort of mull around in my head, knowing full well that where we started and where we ended could have two completely separate poles' (Gray interview 1995).

In general, this resourcing phase was seen as an opportunity to amass possible stimulus material, rather than one where specific compositional or staging ideas were to be put forward. In fact, efforts to arrive at hard and fast suggestions before rehearsal began were resisted as premature. According to Wright: 'I couldn't conceive of any other way of working, except to build up an enormous reservoir of inspirational material to which you can bring both your mind and your body when you actually do hit the rehearsal room' (Wright interview 1995). The notions company members did have of the eventual shape of the work appear to derive from remarks Kosky made at various times, which created quite disparate impressions. Kantor reported: 'I knew that Barrie also was interested in something that was quite expressionist and bleak, and he told me certain little phrases like "this will be the most depressing one", and "there will be no rapturous applause after this one, there will be dead silence". That was what he wanted - dead silence in a dramatic way' (Kantor interview 1995). Prior 'presumed it would be more character-based, because we were doing research on historical individuals' and, as an actor, spent some time thinking about how the information derived from written sources 'might be expressed choreographically, what sort of physical language and gestural language we might be working with' (Prior interview 1995). Gray thought it would be 'more sort of bawdy and comical. Something that would be really different for *Gilgul*' (Gray interview 1995). Fox began by imagining 'an image of this incredibly

claustrophobic cylinder shape with people on different levels speaking. That was the first image that I had'. But then she also remembered: 'Barrie saying that he wanted it to be funny. And I thought yeah, sure, funny, mmm! So he didn't really have much of an idea' (Fox interview 1995).

According to Kosky: 'I hadn't any idea about what sort of style, what sort of length, how many people ... the only thing I did have was that I felt very keen it was in a very small space. That was probably the first decision that was carried right through' (Kosky interview 1995). Julian Meyrick (Meyrick, 2000) has detailed the influence exerted on previous Gilgul productions by the physical and metaphorical space in which they were mounted. The entire devising and performance process for *The Dybbuk* and *Es Brent* had been conducted at a leisurely pace in the filthy but artistically suggestive space of an old abandoned motor repair works in St Kilda; when the company toured to Sydney, an effort was made to recreate the tone of this space by mounting *The Dybbuk* in the NSW Railway's Eveleigh workshops. For *Levad*, Kosky and Corrigan had attempted to exploit the shape of the Playbox Theatre, and its history as a beer malthouse, in creating an encompassing physical and sensual environment for both actor and audience. For *The Wilderness Room*, Kosky decided to move in yet another scenic direction and mount the production in the spare environment of the contemporary Karyn Lovegrove Gallery. This was a 'found' space in the sense that it was again in an old industrial building, at one time a retail emporium. It had high ceilings, but had been renovated, with polished floorboards and sectioned by stark white-painted walls.

The problem for the company lay in finding a way into the 'world' of their new work, in circumstances where neither the space nor the proposed historical and textual sources offered many obvious clues as to how to proceed. This was compounded by the gallery's exhibition

schedule, which meant that most rehearsals in the crucial initial development period had to be held elsewhere. There was also, despite the plethora of textual sources, a particular kind of text the company was unable to locate. The previous processes had relied heavily on existing 'classic' playscripts or other texts, and on the theatricalisation of metaphors about the theatre. Given that this work dealt squarely with Australia, it would have been desirable to locate images, characters or texts from Australian or Jewish-Australian theatre history which could be deployed as at least one thematic strand within the piece as it developed. Jews who had made contributions to Australia's early theatre history included such colourful characters as Barnett Levy, the licensee of the Theatre Royal in Sydney (McGuire, ?1949). Identifying suitable repertoire was, however, more problematic. Isaac Nathan's opera *Don John of Austria*, although worthy of notice as the first opera composed and performed in Australia, provided little assistance: 'It would have been easy if someone had written an appallingly bad play of the First Fleet that we could use, but that wasn't there' (Kosky interview 1995). *The Recruiting Officer*, the first play performed in the colony of NSW, was briefly considered, but 'we made a decision not to do that ... we examined notions of eighteenth century theatrical text and they just were not right for the whole aesthetic of the Company really' (Kosky interview 1995).

After the first days of rehearsal had been spent sharing sources and thoughts, the company was already at something of an impasse, with no core text to form the initial grid of story around which the consonances and dissonances of the final performance piece might be woven. Both in terms of formal role differentiation and informal personal authority, company consensus left it to Kosky to initiate and conclude general phases of rehearsal and particular discussion and compositional activities. Tom Wright reported a certain unease at Kosky's level of preparation: 'I had spoken to Barrie perhaps more than most of the rest of the cast about

some of the ideas that he had been keen to explore, but what became clear in the course of the early rehearsal period was that in fact Barrie hadn't progressed very far down his conceptual avenue and as a result a lot of the early things were fairly inchoate' (Wright interview 1995). It was perhaps not unexpected that Kosky's first impulse was to fill this gap by creating Gilgul's own text, which might form the 'spine' of the new work.

Whether through deliberate choice or simply as the line of least resistance, the first period of discussion and debate segued into almost four weeks in which the company entered into a collective writing process. This involved sitting around a table, exchanging ideas, arguing, composing dialogue and song lyrics either singly or as part of a group, demonstrating the results in a music session with Kosky on piano acting as an audience for the efforts of others.

Kosky's tactic was to engage the group in constructing a core text by way of an appeal to the history of theatrical practice, in an extension of the use made of the styles and history of Yiddish theatre in their earlier work. There was no attempt at a reconstruction of eighteenth or early nineteenth century performance practice or rigorous research into ballad or other popular music forms. However, Kosky did lead the company in a series of exercises designed to produce a text, including the lyrics for songs, that would have the flavour of the English street ballads and popular entertainments of the era: 'We had a lot more homework this time where you get set a task - we were devising a language and we had to write a little ditty ... We had a whole glossary of terms ... Yiddishy sounding or rhyming slang, a whole mixture of things ... once we had done that we all discussed which things we thought sounded best and we just sat there and made a dictionary' (Gray interview 1995).

The writing process and the subsequent attempts at staging its results lasted for nearly four weeks out of the total eight allotted for rehearsal. Each actor was allocated a Jewish convict character recorded as having been transported to Australia on the First Fleet⁹. Each character had an introductory ballad announcing their name, their crime, and something of their history. The company also introduced satirical material, demonstrating the class conflict in Georgian London, and did some improvisatory work on the physical conditions experienced by the convicts on board ship. The process was exhaustive and exhausting in its detail. In Prior's words: 'we wrote, we found a really tight format, literally rhyming structure and four lines on this subject, followed by four lines on how I was caught, followed by a chorus that involves the aristocrats ... we had made a whole set of decisions about each of the characters. We had written versions of character histories. We had certainly written up all of these scenes - and we put them to music - and once we started putting them on stage we got into trouble ... the minute we did it in any way that was literal it just looked utterly banal' (Prior interview 1995).

Several company members reported having been less than convinced about this entire trajectory, which had led only to the creation of pastiche. Louise Fox felt that 'the writing ... was pretty much a case of treading water until we had some genuine ideas' (Fox interview 1995). Kantor was worried by what he described as 'this Fast Forward humour mode taking over ... my preoccupation was with trying ... to get back to what I thought was most interesting about this voyage, this Noah's Ark of Judaism coming across the seas ... at the same time as not disrupt what was going on, even though I wasn't a hundred percent sold on it' (Kantor interview 1995). Wright was more forthright; he 'found in the early weeks of rehearsal that the convict side of things was being treated far more literally than I had expected ... there is only so much of interest

you can say about First Fleet convicts as far as I am concerned - it seemed to me to be a dead end, a cul de sac' (Wright interview 1995).

Despite these misgivings, there appears to have been no serious attempt to question the direction of the rehearsal, or to propose a substantive alternative, until the allotted period was nearly half over. Even then, there was no sudden break or explosion - rather, the decision to abandon the 'characters' and their accompanying theatrical style came after every effort to give them life appeared to fail. This stage of the rehearsal, in which the company's efforts to match Kosky's dogged pursuit of a solution within the parameters he had set were repeated without success, day after day, might well be described as Gilgul 'in the wilderness'. Yoni Prior describes it as: 'days and days of us sitting around, which is most unlike us; sitting around with head in hands. There have never been such long silences in Gilgul rehearsals. We had this material, but we didn't really know what we wanted to say with it. We could see all of these parallels but they were like still frames - they didn't move anywhere, they didn't come to any conclusion'. Not that the company did no work at all - the problem was rather that 'there's a bout of work and then you go away at night and you worry about it, and you come back with your concerns the following day and throw it open. That is really quite painful ... you would have to drop it and start again' (Prior interview 1995).

Participants recall a general mood of frustration. The solution was a radical decision to abandon the structure almost in its entirety. Instead of a play about Jews on the First Fleet, the 'Wilderness Room' was to be in its physical manifestation a room in the Jewish community's Montefiore Homes for old people in Punt Rd, near St Kilda. It was also a metaphoric space, in which Jews who have lost their memories try to piece the Pesach *Seder* (Passover ritual) together from objects they find about

them, in an effort to invoke the presence of Elijah who, in this ritual, is one day to return to take all Jews to the Promised Land.

The decision was articulated by Kosky. All the members were happy to have it made and seem to feel that they had been consulted, although nobody was exactly sure how it came about. Accounts differ, but it appears that there had been a series of informal discussions and that clarification emerged during one session at which several company members were absent. Kosky places this session as occurring during a rehearsal day: 'I think there was this rehearsal when not everyone was there, I think there was me, Louise, and Tom sitting in the kitchen there. And it was only because Michael couldn't come that day and Yoni was whatever and Lisa was working that it wasn't everyone. It ... was just through people talking about it, what's happening, what's wrong, that suddenly goes "dadada" and we finished off with a whole series of new ideas which we then presented to everyone that evening. Everyone went "ah", so literally it was just "phew"!' (Kosky interview 1995). Fox concurs, although placing the discussion in the context of one of a series of lunchtime 'talkfests': 'when we first had the idea that the people in this place were actually the descendants of the First Fleet people ... this journey was a remembered journey, or it was a passed on story which is very much a part of Jewish history anyway; but this was a specific Australian version of that. To me the whole show changed shape in that conception. I instinctively felt that it was the right way to go ... I don't think we ever really looked back from that point ... we genuinely have our relatives like that. It was just a much more concrete thing ...' (Fox interview 1995).

The decision to concentrate on Pesach and the *Seder* ritual as the source for a core structure was accompanied by another radical move: in a characteristically bold manner Kosky decided almost entirely to dispense with words. The only language emerging from the actor's mouths in the

final form of the piece was in the shape of song lyrics. Other language – the voice heard in the wilderness, the voice of The Wilderness Room – was on tape, with the ‘recitation of the generations’ (*the Book of Numbers* 20-43) played at a low murmur as a prologue and at key points during the show.

These two decisions changed both the stylistic impact of the composition and the demands it made on the actors. The first meant that ‘it stopped being a historical piece of theatre and started to become an expressionist piece of theatre, which it should have been’ (Fox interview 1995) The second “took us out of theatre and placed us firmly in the arena of performance art” (Prior interview 1995). Combined, they meant that physical rather than verbal communication became the primary means of the actors’ communication on stage, both with the audience and amongst themselves as performers. The relatively late stage at which they were made enhanced the sense of urgency with which the company approached the final phase of rehearsal.

Rehearsal Observation 1

The first rehearsal I was invited to attend took place in the afternoon of 22 October 1994, in a hired rehearsal space in a warehouse building in Richmond. The large bare room was divided into two areas, one with an open floor, the other containing a couple of old sofas and some chairs. A makeshift table had been constructed by laying a piece of particle-board over some milk crates.

When I entered at about 2pm, as arranged, Kosky, the actors and Delbridge were all sitting around the table, engaged in a noisy discussion about the lyrics for a song, the ‘Hadgadyah’ from the *Seder* ritual. I chose a chair in the lounge area, but at a little distance from the group; individuals looked up and smiled but continued their activity. Prior was

reading while comparing two Hebrew texts, the others writing in their notebooks while engaged in a variety of cross-conversations. It was difficult to make out exactly what was going on, although most of the talk was from the women and from Delbridge, who was trying to establish a version of the song for his records. After ten minutes or so, Kosky suggested they wind up, but was howled down, with Fox saying theatrically: 'We all work differently, Barrie, and it's about time that was recognised'. Several minutes later, however, the transcription was completed to everyone's satisfaction, and without any overt signals, the group left the table and began to order various objects in preparation for work in the open area of the room.

At this point, Kosky's voice began to emerge as authoritative although the others were by no means silent. A surf of comments and queries to him and amongst themselves accompanied his statements, but now they were clearly alert for his guidelines as they refined the details of what they were about to do. They then embarked on a 'walk through' of a physical sequence set in a previous rehearsal. The sequence, one version of each character's efforts to reconstruct the *Seder* ritual in turn, would become the pattern for later variations. The timing of the actions was ordered by Kosky beating out a rhythm and giving verbal cues – for example, after the first walk through a song was added to the physical score. The tone of the rehearsal was concentrated, although punctuated by interpersonal commentary both during and at the end of the sequence, which they repeated several times.

I observed a pattern of interaction consolidate as the details of the sequence were refined. The cast would discuss problems as they emerged, amongst themselves or addressing Kosky, then Kosky would summarise and announce a decision. This decision was sometimes queried for clarification, but rarely contested; the 'doing' took precedence, even though accompanied by an undercurrent of

commentary, and it was only when working through the sequence uncovered an as yet unsolved problem that the company paused for another general discussion.

It appeared that each actor, in negotiating their way through the rehearsal period, was balancing an unstable coalition of role demands for different configurations of mental and bodily praxis. Once the structure or task matrix for a particular sequence had been established, the actors then took individual responsibility for the technical development of material from their particular perspective, obviously occupied with their own line of physical and vocal business, timing and occasionally repeating actions and manipulating objects in the space. Each attempted simultaneously to experience and to observe their own reactions to the performance task and to report on any problems they encountered. Responsibility for the overall composition was not however left entirely to Kosky. The actors were all clearly attending to the 'shape' of the piece as a whole, although not necessarily in a co-ordinated way, and felt able to offer comments or suggestions freely.

This level of participation encouraged a strong sense of ownership on the part of the ensemble. In interview, Fox strongly endorsed the benefits an actor derives from working in this way: 'I think the most important thing is to define the actor as an investigative agent as much as anything else. The thing about *Gilgul* is that it presumes that you have a brain and a response and a contribution ... I think it is about performers' intellectual responsibility for the piece, as much as responsibility for their own performances, and that is something that I just think is paramount' (Fox interview 1995).

The company had all worked together before and their ease, both with one another and with the patterns of work and discussion in which they were engaged, was palpable. Although Kosky's agreement appeared to

be required before an issue could be considered resolved – an impression confirmed in later sessions – he appeared often to act more as a chairman than as a leader setting boundaries or requiring specific results.

Movement from one task to another, or from a task to a break, was fluid and often a matter of tacit understanding, rather than following a set rehearsal order or a consciously outlined body of company conventions.

It quickly became apparent, for example, that an observer attending only to the work 'on the floor' would miss vital components of the development process. Sessions were not easily divided into 'work' and 'break'. Despite the first impression of chaotic, noisy cross-conversation and the frequent irruption of competitive 'gagging' and repartee, there was always an underlying focus on the work at hand. It was just as likely that a discussion over coffee would segue into an earnest exchange about a particular detail or point of interpretation, as that a company debate over a rehearsal problem would be interrupted by an actor's need to tell a joke or go to the toilet. There was strong tacit understanding and evident personal warmth between company members. However loud an individual might be at times, it was not easy to identify a dominant personality; each was sufficiently attuned to the others to pay attention and to switch mood and task focus fairly rapidly, in the interests of the progress of the work as a whole.

Language and Power

At other times, however, Kosky was both abrupt and directive in his comments, revealing an easy assumption of decision-making authority and the active way his observation of the company's activity was undertaken. Although he did not appear to have a developed mental picture of the 'right' direction a moment or sequence should take, he was constantly assessing the scenic possibilities of the activity being undertaken, and ready to intervene with a suggestion to extend the

activity, or take it in an as yet untried direction. In interview, he reflected that:

‘the process ... happens in a series of stages – but these stages vary from production to production. This one was very much an attempt to rely on certain images and sounds and music and atmospheres, which was much more difficult ... you are replacing a narrative or a structure or a text with the importance of sound or silence or repetition of some form or another?’ (Kosky interview 1995).

The relationships between company members in terms of the power they exerted over the final performance outcome were therefore complex, a complexity reflected in the content of company banter. This banter simultaneously satirised and affirmed the company’s position in relation to Jewish culture and Kosky’s position within the company. A number of catchcries emerged, during this and subsequent rehearsals, such as the ironic call ‘You stupid, stupid Jew!’, directed at one member or another, or the women members’ bandying about the term ‘faghag of Zion’. Constant raillery was directed at Kosky and his importance (and self-importance) in the world outside the rehearsal room. According to Fox:

‘I take the piss out of everybody I work with, really. Also very much to take the piss out of Barrie, because Barrie would [be] working on the Adelaide Festival with a whole lot of people who thought the sun shone out of his arse .. I think one of the roles of Gilgul and my relationship with Barrie personally is to prick his bubble a bit, to say “You’re just a silly Jewish boy” and “you’re lucky to be working with these very good people, so don’t be such a little prat and get on with things”’ (Fox interview 1995).

Nevertheless, such banter also acknowledged Kosky’s right to make decisions and, ultimately, his control, not only of this process but of the company’s overall trajectory. One such revealing exchange, taken from my notes on this rehearsal, runs thus:

TW: Do we need all three verses? We can easily get the *matzohs* out within two.

[Indistinct exchange between TW, MK and BK].

BK: What we'll do is this [gives instructions]. There, is everyone clear?

YP and EG: No.

BK: Let's give it a go [ensemble executes sequence].

BK: [coaches] do it with your faces in the towels.

EG: [gets the giggles]

TW: Keep doing that and you'll be out.

BK: [goes into the space and cuddles her] Lis, it's moving and you're wrecking it.

EG: I wasn't, I just think it's funny.

BK: [mock threat] You'll be out.

EG: Back on the street, a faghag of Zion.

BK: [hits her playfully] People have died doing this.

Rehearsal Observations 2 and 3

Two weeks later on the afternoon of 12 November, the session was again devoted to elaborating and firming up the characters' *Seder* sequences. The work had progressed to the point where all such sequences could reliably be run through; each was now being incorporated as part of longer sequences. The shape and rhythms of the final form of the performance were becoming apparent. So too, however, were tensions caused by the growing realisation, on the part of all concerned, that the performance season was due to commence in two and a half weeks and they had not yet devoted sufficient time to the final section to have a clear idea of its content or performance demands.

The company's responsiveness to one another, their ability to move tacitly from one task and mood and one rehearsal segment to another, was again very much in evidence, as was the playful but adversarial quality of their hectically comic exchanges. An analysis of the taped record of the last two hours of this rehearsal for task segmentation, mood and focus reveals shifts in activity about every five minutes, except for run throughs of the *Seder* sequences. These took longer and longer to perform, as one section was added to another (the final run took 45 minutes), and were increasingly carried out in silence as concentration deepened.

Despite the good work on this central section, the company was left with barely half an hour at the end of the allotted rehearsal session to begin work on ideas for the final section of the performance. Some of the ideas suggested and sketched out in walk-through mode involved revisiting material on the First Fleet convicts, although now at a much higher level of abstraction. Large cardboard refrigerator packing-boxes brought in by Peter Corrigan represented the ships of the Fleet; the actors explored crawling into and out of these boxes as if washed up on an abandoned shore. They also experimented with accompanying songs, including sections of the pastiche Cockney ballads from the abandoned text-based work of the first four rehearsal weeks.

By the rehearsal on 20 November in the gallery space, the company was again in crisis mode. Insufficient progress had been made on the final section. Wright brought the whole process to a standstill, challenging the assembled company, including Kosky, to justify the way actions and symbols were interwoven in the piece as a whole. At about 6.15pm, I followed the company to the upstairs kitchen attached to the gallery, as they again gathered around a table deep in discussion. Gray took very little active part; she and Delbridge remained in the room, listening, Delbridge taking notes. Corrigan joined the group part way through,

bringing with him a couple of sample costumes. Like Gray, Delbridge and myself, he sat silently, listening to the debate and its outcomes. Kosky began by proffering an interim idea for a thematic link to the end of the show, but this was not accepted. Then Kosky, Fox, Prior and Kantor proceeded to debate in detail the layers of meaning attached to the symbolic content developed thus far – The Wilderness Room, its relation to the figure of Elijah, and the recitation of the generations, or *tolodoth* - in an effort to tease out the question of where the driving action was located. Did it lie in the characters' quest to recite the ritual accurately or in the power of the room with which they were so desperately trying to connect? In this debate, Wright took the role of chairman, and he rather than Kosky was clearly the one to whom the others deferred. At every turn, he intervened with questions, driving for clarification. He continued to 'have trouble' understanding the logic of the positions being put to him, using a classical dialectic to force the others to produce better solutions.

The discussion continued until, just before 8.30pm, Kosky was able to summarise a consensus position which might form the basis of a breakthrough:

BK: The generations are part of The Wilderness Room. On a physical level it's about calling up Elijah. It's also about desperately trying to locate yourself in the generations. You are abandoned twigs trying to find your tree.

The solution was to be found in the notion that, having exhausted the possibilities offered by the individual *Seder* rituals and finally uniting in a common gesture, the characters would be expelled from or burst through the confines of The Room, into the Promised Land. This Land was also the shores of Australia, and also, again, the wilderness. Ideas for actions which Kosky had long entertained but had previously only briefly investigated – measuring, crawling, characters attempting to hammer

nails into the landscape and into themselves, the actors being trussed as a sacrifice – could be explored as a prelude to the intimation of another dilemma, that of the characters' potential inability to see and understand their new land, thus initiating another cycle of loss and wandering. The company proceeded downstairs at 8.55pm, spending a final hour in the attempt to realise some of these ideas in sufficient detail to form a structure for further rehearsal in the short time left before the season was due to begin.

The Performance

Over the next ten days, this final sequence took shape in circumstances complicated by set construction, publicity and costume calls, and the need to finalise lighting, sound and props decisions. In the end, it was shaped most decisively by design decisions taken by Kosky and Corrigan. It had been decided to make 'The Room' both warm and claustrophobic by lining the gallery walls with a ribbed rubber carpet underlay. This material, which was of an odd caramel brown colour, fortuitously toned well with a colonial Tasmanian painting located by Corrigan in the Victorian National Gallery, John Glover's racist *The River Nile*. As the characters were released into the wilderness, they crawled towards the back wall of the playing space. Suddenly, five windows opened in the wall, displaying multiple reproductions of the painting, which depicts a supposedly idyllic but slightly grotesque scene of simian black figures frolicking on the banks of a river amongst oddly stylised eucalypts. The characters reached the wall, but failed to look up. Instead, they began to mime sewing up their eyes, ears and mouths; in the midst of the Promised Land, they were unable to see an already tainted Paradise¹⁰.

Detailed work on the piece continued, through the preview performances on 28 and 29 November and even after opening night, although the

overall structure was by then fixed. In interview, company members expressed positive sentiments about *The Wilderness Room*. Fox said: "I was proud of the quality of discovery in the show. Perhaps it didn't have the same wham bam theatricality as our earlier work, but ... it was honestly discovering things" (Fox interview 1995). Others expressed pride in its visually and mentally arresting qualities and its status as an original piece of performance making. However, audiences appeared puzzled and the critical reception was decidedly unenthusiastic. Helen Thomas, writing in *The Australian*, called it 'thin, sombre and opaque' contrasting it unfavourably with the richness of *The Exile Trilogy* (Thomas, 1994). *The Age's* Helen Thomson thought it failed 'partly because its symbolic content didn't connect for the audience. For me, there was a sense that the actors were engaged in a ritual for themselves, which left the audience out' (Helen Thomson in Reimer, 1996).

For Kosky, the piece was, of all his work, the one which had elicited the "most bizarre diversity of opinion". With typical bravado, he assured his public that: "I think my most difficult work is yet to come. So that should be interesting, because if some audiences are finding this difficult, you know, God help them in a few years' time" (Kosky interviewed in Reimer, 1996).

The Aftermath

In later conversation, however, he was less sanguine, attributing the problem to his having allowed too many voices to operate too freely in the making of the show. While 'everyone felt that people could speak out and quite honestly say what they thought or felt ... which is fine ... but in this particular case, if certain things are just not happening and it is very difficult, you have ... the collaboration extending to areas that perhaps it shouldn't have extended so democratically, I would say.' He also volunteered that 'the mistake I think we made - or maybe I made - was

to take the process that Yoni and I had used in *Levad* and to try and make that work with five people ... there is a difference between sitting down and writing and doing bits and pieces of whatever with one person, and doing it with five ... there were five one-person shows emerging' (Kosky interview 1995).

Other company members pointed to Kosky's own lack of preparedness at the beginning of rehearsal and his preoccupation with the Adelaide Festival and other aspects of his burgeoning career as a public figure, as explanations for the relative thinness and lack of clarity in his contributions. Whatever the balance of blame, *The Wilderness Room* and its difficulties became a watershed for the company. Interpersonal tensions, differences in perception and weaknesses in approach and technique not evident in previous, more successful productions were revealed. One very obvious area of tension lay in the way Kosky had been able to capitalise on his work with Gilgul and elsewhere in terms of profile and career opportunities. Even though he was careful to give credit to other members of the ensemble, the overwhelming public impression was of Kosky as genius auteur director and the other members of Gilgul as a band of willing acolytes, rather than a group of co-creators (Prior, 1998a: 117-19). This was a particularly potent factor in Kosky's relations with Lehrer, who found himself left out on a limb as the former's fame and geographic mobility increased.

A related issue was the company's internal power balance, as tested by Kosky's willingness and capacity to accommodate the sense of ownership expressed by several members of the ensemble. In the course of preparing for *Levad*, Kosky and Prior had effectively become 'Gilgul' and Prior's sense of entitlement was evident in her comments about the way the company functioned. She saw Gilgul as a family, with very strong relations of affection binding them together: 'It happens to be a group which is essentially very loving ... we are all very touchy feely

and we do care about each other ... and that provides a very solid platform' (Yoni Prior in Kosky interview 1995). She saw company members' individual strengths in terms of a functional role allocation, which contributed to the strength of the company as a whole. Fox also saw the company as functioning like a family. There was 'something patriarchal about Tom's approach' and Prior was 'the matriarchal equivalent in the Company' (Fox interview 1995). Wright, on the other hand, while alive to the impact of particular personalities on process and performance outcomes, was 'not terribly convinced by the idea that Michael, Elisa, Yoni, Tom and Louise make up the core of this group. The company and this company mythology - I don't know of any of that'. He was strongly of the opinion that 'Gilgul is ultimately Barrie's theatre company. If he wanted to do the next project with three chihuahuas or with eight 77 year old Moroccan dancers, then he would, could and should do it and that would be very much part of the same continuum.' (Wright interview 1995).

As well as these contested perceptions, the rehearsal process for *The Wilderness Room* revealed another weakness in Gilgul's communal equipment, the failure to develop a conscious and coherent approach to physical technique and the rehearsal process. In previous work, the company had built up a strong sense of mutuality and an apparently solid performance vocabulary on the back of the interplay between the company's self-presentation as Jewish and its extensive use of theatrical metaphor. This interplay was centrally mediated through the actors' bodies, in a process that Prior has described as 'Yiddishkeit meets Aktokeit': 'in the gaps between formal work sessions on scenes, in breaks and lapses, we 'muck around' - playing Jews we have known, telling stories and jokes ... this ... bleeds and is absorbed into the work on the making of scenes - infusing what we are making and *how* we are embodying it. Those who are Jewish or can 'act Jewish' are teaching the non-Jews our repertoire of party tricks ... this repertoire is absorbed by

the non-Jews through mimicry, and in to the aesthetic of the performance by osmosis' (Prior, 1998b). These 'acting Jewish' bodies became the currency of a transient *habitus* built on the densely layered set of quotations out of which Gilgul's ultimately self-referential fictional worlds were created. Its behaviours were generated performatively, and became part of a set of tacit conventions in which the intellectual content of the plays sat alongside an approach to building performance in which good ideas were recognised on the basis of the actors' capacity to visualise and realise them physically 'if I can immediately transfer it in my mind to an image on stage, if I can see that it could end up there, then it feels like a good suggestion' (Prior interview 1995). According to Kosky: 'the Company works best when there is an organic and sometimes unexpected ... moment where there is literally a collective light bulb that goes off. Every production that I can remember had stages where it is just like "aaah"' (Kosky interview 1995). There was clearly a common awareness and understanding of non-verbal modes. When discussing staging ideas, company members would use musical terminology, referring to rhythm, dynamic or silence, but this and other modes of communication were intuitive and imagistic rather than working from analysis to realisation: 'when Barrie said "go and hang on those hooks" I don't remember us saying "what is the hook?" or "what is the ..." Somehow we take that on trust ... I think we are a bit chary about too literally deconstructing stuff that doesn't work in that area' (Prior interview 1995).

The fragility of this consensus became apparent when, in preparation for *The Wilderness Room*, the easy flow of associations dried up and it became clear that the actors could not continue to rely on the ways of 'acting Jewish' they had developed. Despite its reputation as a theatre company strongly reliant on physical expression, in moments of crisis the group tendency was to retreat to the discussion table; the company did not appear to have common access to other ways of solving

compositional dilemmas. While Prior, Fox, Kantor and Gray each had access to one or more sets of devising and/or performance training techniques, the university experience shared by Wright, Kantor and Kosky, and their loudly expressed disdain for 'drama school' or 'MTC' (Melbourne Theatre Company) modes of operation, meant that these skills were neither accessed nor interrogated within the company. With the tacit understandings of the old *habitus* proving inadequate to the task, the company found itself without a performance vocabulary or a methodology which would allow it to move easily from verbalisation to embodiment. In his other professional work, Kosky was able to draw on established institutional production conventions and on performers already schooled in particular techniques. But while readily able to distinguish between the results of different systems of training, he expressed himself as having 'no desire to know about an actor's technique'. This lack of desire to know (and therefore to intervene) in an actor's processes was apparently based in his valorisation of difference, and a desire that the actor be fluent 'in their own individual languages, not a language that is imposed on them. They can use their voice, and they can use their body and they can use their mind; not someone else's construct of their body and their mind ... that is why I am so opposed to something like Suzuki because ... ultimately what you see on stage is everyone doing the same thing, from exactly the same perspective, and who on earth wants to see that?'. He felt that training should be seen as a continual process, and was wary of a situation where 'a group of people are dictating training skills and then those people are not the people who are going to be using those training skills, and then you have a huge problem'. When working with Gilgul, he preferred to juxtapose the various styles the actors brought with them 'my role is not to push an actor towards doing a particular style. My job is to see that this style can work with that style ... there are a lot of cooks there, cooking it up, which is what it is. And we don't spend three hours a day stomping and we don't spend three hours a day doing yoga' (Kosky interview 1995).

The interview responses of some of the actors indicated their feeling that this professed disinterest sprang as much from ignorance, as from a deliberate 'division of labour' between actor and director: 'to be honest Barrie has never been through a training school; he's probably never done improvs with people before' (Fox interview 1995). In a curious way, Kosky's professed disinterest in the actor's process could be seen as flagging a 'no go' area in Gilgul's conversation, where despite the intensity of discussion about ideas and compositional choices, conscious reflection on the detail of process itself was largely absent. Both Prior and Gray, although expressing themselves differently, pointed to the lack of consistent physical work as a weakness in the company's process; "I was sitting there saying "When are we going to prance around. When are we going to prance?" because that would still make or break it and I felt we spent far too much time around a coffee plunger" (Gray interview 1995): "I think we talked too much in *The Wilderness Room* and there wasn't ... enough rehearsal time. Probably that amount of talking and negotiating needed to happen, but then ... there was a hole in the action department, there wasn't enough improvisation" (Prior interview 1995).

The difficult devising process for *The Wilderness Room*, the multiple sources drawn on for inspiration, its refusal of easy theatricality and its willingness to explore the personal associations of cultural and religious ritual, had paradoxically created the most intimate, the most deeply Jewish and the most difficult for an audience of Gilgul's works. It was also one in which the irony, the metaphoricity and the performance conventions developed in previous works were largely absent. The reception accorded to *The Wilderness Room* highlighted the ambivalence of the stance adopted by Kosky and the company, between the rhetoric of intransigent 'art' and the appeal of professional success. The 'professional Jewish Australian theatre company' faced a crossroads.

The Operated Jew

As it turned out, Kosky's decisions when mounting *The Operated Jew* in 1997 provided temporary answers to most of these issues, in ways which ironically became a 'final statement' on the company's dilemmas. In this production, which was again critically well received, Kosky chose to work with a smaller group of actors, omitting Prior and Gray. The show drew on various sources and ideas canvassed, but not employed, in *The Wilderness Room*, most obviously the anti-Semitic diatribe by Panizza that provided its title (Zipes, ed. 1993). It was able to combine an exploration of contemporary anti-Semitism with a hard-edged but comic exposure of Jewish cultural and personal bodily neuroses. It also found a new, coherent theatrical style. Musically, Kosky finally laid aside the old books of Yiddish songs in favour of techno-beat, combined with glossily presented dance club lighting techniques. Physically, the show was rendered coherent through its reliance on a vocabulary of physical exercises reminiscent of Meyerhold's theatre training techniques. The ensemble of Kosky on keyboards and Wright, Kantor and Fox (plus the assistant stage manager seated onstage on a stool wearing an Anubis mask) produced a slick, high-powered and very theatrical performance piece, which decisively turned its back on the 'grunge, touchy-feely' experimentalism of Gilgul's previous works.

In 1996, the year he came to national prominence as Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Kosky described his work with Gilgul as 'the foundation of all my work ... The Gilgul work is my soil, and then there's occasionally these plants that grow up in that soil, an opera production or another theatre work, but to me the Gilgul work is ... that fertile ground on which I really get my nourishment, and the long term ideas and process that can be involved with that' (Kosky in (Reimer, 1996)). Despite this expressed commitment and the occasional

canvassing of ideas for possible further projects, no productions have been undertaken since *The Operated J. W.*

The piece was Gilgul's last, but also one in a series of later professional collaborations between the artists concerned, in various combinations¹¹. Its four cast members were perhaps those least attached to the particular structure and relationships 'Gilgul' had represented, although they clearly continued to want to work together while maintaining a career in the broader Australian theatre¹². After 1997, therefore, the tensions inherent in Gilgul's original constitution had been resolved to make it very clear that its continued existence was at Kosky's behest. In conversation with Prior, Kosky might continue to mourn the opportunities for organic art-making Gilgul had offered¹³, but it became increasingly difficult to reassemble the personnel, to recreate the circumstances and even perhaps to renew the enthusiasm, that had produced 'Gilgul' as a particular entity. The question seemed to become progressively less urgent as time went by, and Kosky's career choices since 1997 have taken him successively – physically, geographically and financially – further away. Although, as Wright remarked, he could decide to revive the company in one form or another at any time should he so choose, his decision first to move to Sydney, and then to accept the position of co-Artistic Director at Vienna's Schauspielhaus early in 2001, makes that increasingly unlikely. Gilgul appears to have been consigned, finally, to the past tense.

Chapter 6 - Raising the Bar: The Women's Circus

Founded in 1991, Melbourne's Women's Circus operates at the intersection of particular trajectories of feminism, physical theatre and community arts. Originally an initiative of the Theatre Department of the Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCArts) in Melbourne's disadvantaged Western suburbs, it has since assumed its own artistic and organisational identity, while still retaining its office and rehearsal space at the Centre.

Donna Jackson, then also Theatre Co-Ordinator for FCArts, was its founder and first Artistic Director. A trained drama teacher, Jackson had moved into the community arts field with a strong social action agenda, which she established as a priority for the in-house and outreach theatre work done by FCArts. Her activism was consciously powered by her working-class origins and identification as a lesbian. She had previously worked in women's refuges, as well as in theatre and music, and maintained links with activist women's health networks, particularly those combating sexual assault, as well as with theatre and music activities in Melbourne's feminist and lesbian communities. The decision to found the first Circus program was an extension of her previous work with young women at risk, and with survivors of sexual assault. There, she had discovered that physical theatre and circus skills, which engaged directly with the bodies of the women involved, were an effective means of empowerment for the individuals concerned, as well as providing a simple and spectacular performance vocabulary. One of her main goals was to encourage women, including survivors of sexual abuse, to develop means of physical expression through theatre in a safe and supportive environment:

'It was important to develop a place where we could work on my/our strengths and to present women as strong and in control

rather than always working on the defensive. I wanted a place where I could grow, have fun, be challenged, and learn with a whole range of women who had different belief systems to my own and be able to sell ideas of feminism to as wide an audience as possible without compromising our beliefs. I wanted all these things and I got them' (Jackson, 1997: 4).

Jackson's initial project proposal emphasised the link between the skills development component and the performance program as a message vehicle 'which will heighten the awareness in the community of the socio-political status of women'. It claimed that a positive effect of circus skills was 'bringing women together to work co-operatively and physically', arguing that for incest survivors, who 'dissociate themselves from their bodies because of past abuses' physical performance work could provide unique advantages: 'Support groups where survivors can discuss their abuse are important however, there is a time when some women need to move from support groups into activities which not only increase their self esteem but also work for positive change in the society'. Skill-building and political action were connected: 'Trainers will be women who have worked with the Fruit Fly Circus and Circus Oz, who have particularly high skill level and also a political perspective on women's position in society'. The document detailed the extent of FCArts' existing work with women and women's groups. Projects included the Women's Good Theatre Company, which produced a touring show about women, age, and eccentricity; the Sowaddayawant Women's Theatre Company, working with women in prisons; the No Frills Young Women's Theatre Company which produced a schools touring show about incest and domestic violence; the band Nice Girls Don't Spit, in which Jackson was a prominent performer; and Chicks on Sticks, a women's stiltwalking group. Most of these 'groups' had also been established at Jackson's initiative and were effectively one-off projects rather than ongoing organisations. At that stage, the plan for the

Circus was also limited to a single six-month undertaking, but the response was such that by the time of the first intake Jackson was able to envisage it as an ongoing entity. In retrospect, the initial forecast expenditure of \$29, 840 including administrative co-ordination, trainers' wages, workshop materials, childcare and a production budget for the performance season seems ludicrously small (Footscray Community Arts Centre, 1990).

During late 1990 and early 1991, Jackson used formal advertising, as well as word of mouth through her own networks and those of FCArts, to announce the Circus' formation and to publicise its structure.

WestCASA, the Centre Against Sexual Assault, was acknowledged as a supporting organisation. A special invitation was issued to sexual assault survivors, although the project was open to all women. The project was planned to run over six months starting in May, consisting of workshops in circus and performance skills run by Jackson, chief trainer Sally Forth, and other circus, physical theatre and music trainers and culminating in a public performance season in November. An eager response from applicants was clear very early on. The first workshop series, a basic training program lasting six weeks, was planned on the basis of providing places for sixty women. New members could choose one of two two-hour workshop times on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons for acrobatics, or opt for the Music group on Monday evenings, taken by FCAC Music Co-ordinator Sue Speer. Although numbers fluctuated, retention rates were high. The Circus Newsletter for June 1991 claimed that 96 women were currently engaged in workshop activity, with a further 26 on the waiting list (Jackson, 1991). The performance program for that year listed a total of 80 performers, musicians, trainers, 'techies' and front of house support staff (Women's Circus, 1991a)¹.

After that initial season, the Circus continued to grow in numbers and organisational complexity, with support from participants, audience

members and funding bodies. The 2001 season, for example, included 170 participants, including twenty professional artworkers (Women's Circus, 2001). Although there has not been a performance season every year, the workshop program has continued and at the time of writing the Circus is proceeding towards formal separation from FCArts and incorporation as a stand-alone company. It has maintained an enviable record of stability in philosophy, funding and internal organisation. Jackson was succeeded as Artistic Director by performer Sarah Cathcart in 1997, and in 2002 by director/writer Andrea Lemon; Forth as chief trainer by Amanda Owen in 1997 and by Circus 'graduate' Andrea Ousley in 1998². Each of these women has a strong background in women's and feminist theatre making and each developed a particular way of working which affected the Circus' choice of material and the particular mix of skills in each annual performance season. An equally powerful influence has been the ability to attract financial support and sponsorship from philanthropic trusts and other private sources, State and Federal arts funding bodies and quasi-government foundations³.

The Circus' success has been due above all to its capacity to attract new members and to retain the commitment of previous participants. From its first season, the Circus formed a definite and conscious community, which has developed its own complex internal culture. Existing inner-city feminist and friendship networks have been instrumental in recruiting both members and spectators. In a continuing pattern, women who first attend as spectators later apply to join the workshop group, or enrol as formal supporters. A significant number of participants have maintained their involvement over five years or more, in some cases taking up positions as trainers or leaders of groups of less experienced performers. Others leave for a period and then return, sometimes moving into other areas such as design, music or 'front of house', or simply staying in touch via the 'Sisters and Supporters' mailing list. Still others leave, but remain part of informal friendship and other networks

associated with the Circus and its spinoff Performing Older Women (POW) group. Such women constitute a powerful if informal elite, whose opinions form an influential backdrop to the ongoing discussions negotiated through the Circus' formally participatory decision-making structure. This structure has undergone several revisions. However, the Circus' basic ethos and modes of interaction have remained constant since its foundation. It has now become a recognisable part of Melbourne's cultural landscape, with its seasons eagerly anticipated and generally well reviewed. Its continuing vitality as a performing company, and its continuing engagement with the women who maintain it as participants, supporters and loyal audience members, mark it as an unusually long-lived and successful example of feminist community and feminist performance practice.

The Circus as physical/community theatre

The Circus could be analysed as an example of radical or community theatre, or of contemporary physical or interdisciplinary performance. Radical theatre in Australia has presented a variety of models of community, through the images it presents and in the practices undertaken by its creators (Hibberd et al., 1984; Filewood and Watt, 2001). These range from agitprop troupes formed for one-off 'rapid response' performances to established companies such as Popular Theatre Troupe, Melbourne Workers Theatre and the various New Theatres operating from the 1930s onward (Parsons, 1995: 400-04). Since the formation of the Australia Council and in particular its Community Arts /Community Cultural Development unit, community theatre has become a key formation by means of which the at times incompatible aims of cultural democracy activists and government policy-makers have been negotiated⁴. Community theatre has operated alongside and as a component activity of the broader community arts movement, which has sought to set up its own alternative institutions,

seek government funding on the basis of arguments around social justice, education or health, and/or entrench itself within local government rather than compete directly for the resources contested by 'high art' practitioners and institutions. Lacking the support of established institutions and patrons of the arts, community arts/community theatre has continued to rely heavily on support from government in both policy and financial terms, and remains vulnerable to political pressure and to the real or threatened withdrawal of State funding as governments and priorities change.

Community arts workers, whether employed directly by local government, located within community-run arts centres, or supported by the union movement or philanthropic organisations, operate on the 'animateur' principle to initiate and administer arts projects at a community level. Community arts projects tend to adopt a much broader frame for creative activity than the discipline boundaries defended by high art institutions and practitioners, and community performance projects are therefore likely to borrow from a range of forms and traditions including popular theatre, dance and music as well as physical theatre and circus in mounting their productions. The 'new circus' wing of the physical theatre renaissance in Australia, represented by companies such as Circus Oz and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, has been remarkably successful in gaining official recognition and funding support⁵ while remaining closely associated with radical politics and community practice. Other performance activities have survived less well, with a drastic decline in the number of community theatre companies receiving government support evident from the 1980s through to the 1990s (Milne, 1993). Community theatre activists have responded to this in a number of ways, including a resort to mixed-media projects, festivals and touring (Fensham, 1991) and by establishing a base for specific theatre activities within the programs of broader community arts organisations. FCArts has been particularly influential in this regard.

Founded in 1974, the Centre is part of the radical/community arts/arts worker infrastructure described above. It operates as an entrepreneurial umbrella organisation for a diverse range of arts activities, supporting programs in theatre, music, writing, visual arts, craft and digital media and the activities of a kaleidoscope of ethnic, political and artistic community-based groups. It maintains a multi-arts and multi-cultural focus, with a particular emphasis on youth activities, and its theatre program has given rise to a number of significant organisations and projects, including the Women's Circus (Milne, 1992).

The community arts and physical theatre movements have also proved important sources of support for Australian women's and feminist theatre. Theatre activity associated with the women's movement never attained the level of sustained support, or the organisational infrastructure enjoyed, even if only briefly, by the professional community theatre companies. Individual women playwrights have had works produced by mainstream and other theatre companies since the 1940s, a process considerably assisted by the foundation of the Playworks organisation in 1985, and individual theatre works have enjoyed some success, but there have been few ongoing women's theatre companies. The Melbourne Women's Theatre Group established itself with the help of International Women's Year funding and maintained continuous production from 1974 - 77, and the Women and Theatre Project at Sydney's Nimrod Theatre in 1981-82. More recently, South Australia's Vitalstatistix has achieved a commendable production record, and groups such as Sydney's Legs on the Wall physical theatre company and Queensland's Rock n Roll Circus have demonstrated a consistent awareness of gender politics. But on the whole, women's and feminist theatre has been sustained on the rhizome principle, with different initiating individuals and groups of women coming together to engage in more or less short term projects manifesting a wide variety of processes and performance styles, feminist discourses, and intents with regard to political content, aesthetic standards and

company structure (Tait, 1994; Tait, 1998). Despite persistent interlocking networks, feminist theatre has remained a fringe activity in terms of funding, organisational location and level of production output.

Under these circumstances, the Circus' prominence and longevity are especially significant, but its politico-cultural anomalies should also be noted. Housed in the Western suburbs, its participants are largely drawn from inner city and other areas of Melbourne. Supporting a significant lesbian presence, it maintains itself as an organisation open to all women and generally performs to mixed audiences⁶. Strongly woman-oriented, it is not overtly identified with any of the theoretically disparate strands of feminism currently at issue in political and academic debate, and has managed largely to outrun the factionalism that has dogged the women's movement in recent decades. Styling itself a circus, it employs a range of physical and theatrical modes and devices, each year demonstrating considerable variation in its theatre-making process and shifts in the composition, message and meaning of its theatre images. It employs professional performance artists and arts administrators, and attracts funding on the basis of its perceived artistic excellence, yet its lifeblood, and the majority of its participants, are amateurs with in some cases little or no prior herstory of physical training or performance experience. It emerged from the broader community arts field, rather than from the dedicated theatre formations occupied by our other case studies. As community theatre, it also stands out as having in a sense created its own community, as much as it has arisen in response to an existing community demand⁷. Despite being determinedly local, it maintains strategic international alliances, for example with the Australian branch of Amnesty International in the project that travelled to the Non-Government Organisation Forum associated with the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the attendance of Circus representatives at the first *Rencontres Internationales du Cirque Sociale* in France in 2001. The Circus has managed the difficult

balancing act of forging its own identity as an organisation with an identifiable politics, sense of mission and internal culture, while maintaining support from a broad range of artistic and sociocultural formations and constituencies.

In this chapter, I am particularly interested to trace the relationships between physical and social practices in training, between the Circus' positioning as a feminist and as a performance organisation, and between the Circus-as-process and its organisational and community base, in order to identify how the strands of performance and community *habitus*, and discursive field positioning, have operated to support it. I have had a long term involvement with FCArts, initially as an arts worker and later as a member of the Committee of Management. I have had the opportunity to observe the development of the Circus over a long period of time, and to engage in both formal and informal conversations with its members. I was admitted to regular direct observation of workshops and rehearsals during the initial 1991 season, with supplementary interviews undertaken in 1993 and occasional observation of workshop and performance sessions at various times through to the 1994 performance season. My description of training processes thus relates to the Circus' initial establishment period; commentary on later developments is derived from discussions with participants, access to Circus documentation⁸ and from the more traditional critical perspective of the spectator at a performance.

The Circus as a feminist enterprise

I want to concentrate on the Circus' positioning within feminist performance theory and practice, placing my own observations against a reading of what is by now a substantial body of commentary and theory on women's and feminist performance. The literature is dominated by accounts of women's theatre practice in the Northern Hemisphere,

particularly the United States and the UK. In recent years this focus has broadened to include more diverse forms of performance practice, particularly circus, ritual and physical theatre and metatheatrical activities. Developments in less globally dominant cultures have also been taken into account. In so doing, feminist performance scholarship has put into play questions of representation, ideology and embodiment from a feminist perspective. While primarily concerned with the documentation and description of women's performance-making, academic feminist theatre theory and commentary has itself become a significant field of activity, in which advocacy of particular theoretical and political positions, and attempts at discursive hegemony, have assumed great importance. We can understand the at times fiery divisions between feminist theatre theorists by recalling that feminist theatre and feminist politics have always had an intimate connection. My reading of this literature has been influenced by the ways in which it assists in explaining, or fails in important ways to illuminate, the particular structure and practices, including practices of embodiment, evident in the Women's Circus.

Analyses of women's theatre dating from the early to mid 1980s provide an account of the explosion of performance-making associated with second-wave feminism from the late 1960s on, highlighting the personal and thematic links between women's theatre practice and the broader feminist movement. This approach departed from the historical focus of previous feminist scholarship which attempted to 'redress the canon', reclaim the place due to women's achievements in European theatre history (see for example Gilder, 1961; Holledge, 1981) and thus provide a 'backstory' for current activity (Malpede, 1983). Instead, it borrowed from literary and dramatic theory to detail the content, including the arguments put forward, in contemporary theatre events presented by the playwrights, performers and groups under review⁹. It also endeavoured to give an account of theatre-making processes and issues specific to

women's and feminist theatre. In each case, efforts were made to categorise the work of particular groups within typologies of feminism. Attempts to account for the evident variety of concerns and approaches to feminist theatre practice became a recurring problematic in the literature on women's performance.

Contemporary debates within the feminist movement were reflected in discussion of the relationship between feminist politics and feminist aesthetics, such as: whether and how to distinguish consciously feminist work from women's work in general; the link between feminist content and feminist practice; and the effort to build a feminist counterculture, including debates around separatism and lesbian visibility. Although a significant proportion of feminist theatre commentary has continued to document and support the achievements of women in the traditional, 'malestream' literary theatre, my interest here is in studies that record the formation and development of groups and performance collectives, and the work they produce. A feature of feminist theatre practice dating from the 1970s, such groups have tended to devise and produce their own original work, and have endeavoured to establish participatory creative and decision-making processes, as distinct from the traditional divisions of labour and hierarchical authority structures typical of mainstream theatre production.

Whatever the structure and location of particular groups, this strongly shared ethos became characteristic of feminist theatre, despite there being little evidence of direct influence between one group and another. Most groups emerged spontaneously and saw each others' work, or exchanged information on working methods, only subsequently, often by the slow exchange of personnel over time; Charlotte Canning gives a good description of this process in early women's theatre in North America (Canning, 1996). Despite the bewilderment occasioned by the diverse, even contradictory, positions taken by women performance-makers in the

name of feminism, an identifiable commitment to what Canning calls 'collectivity and collaboration' has been noted by many commentators¹⁰. This is certainly prominent in the working methods and organisational culture of the Women's Circus. However, I would argue that most studies of such groups have concentrated on the relationships and meanings available through a study of the theatre event as observed from the spectatorial position. The theoretical frames adopted have thus given insufficient attention to feminist theatre as embodied cultural production. A similar lack is also evident in studies based on observation and interview; where the focus is on what the theatre-makers are trying to say, rather than on why and how they are doing what they do. This has obscured the embodied representational dynamics, and the production of *habitus*, strongly linked to the devising processes employed by feminist performance makers.

Dinah Luise Leavitt's pioneering study of feminist theatre groups in Minneapolis, including the long-running At the Foot of the Mountain theatre company, provided some detail about work practices, but she was primarily concerned 'to determine if a distinct aesthetic is developing' and to ask about the effect of feminist theatre practice in political and artistic terms. (Leavitt, 1980: v-vi). She identified 'three basic types' of theatre group: 'One group wishes to develop women's talents for subsequent use in mainstream theatres, another promotes woman-oriented feminist theatres within the male-dominated structure, and a third is interested in matriarchal theatres'. Her conclusion was that: 'For this third type to exist would require a social revolution, for it implies either a large separatist female culture or a move by the whole society away from patriarchal values, neither of which has occurred yet' (Leavitt, 1980: 108-09).

Identifying the work of feminist theatre groups as 'message oriented', Elizabeth Natalle was concerned to 'define the relationship between

feminist theatre and the women's movement' (Natalle, 1985: 3), arguing that the strength of its links with a larger specific social movement was a key factor in its emergence. She acknowledged that their task was made difficult by the 'erratic and unorganized' growth of feminist theatre, the brief lifespan of many groups and the evident variation in working style and political orientation from one group to another. Her work is distinguished by its efforts to address the question of lesbian theatre, whether as a subset of feminist theatre or as a phenomenon in its own right. However, her emphasis on communication meant that, despite the useful detail she provides, it is difficult to deduce much from her account about the aesthetic choices, or the interactional and devising processes, adopted by the groups concerned.

In her influential *Carry On, Understudies* (Wandor, 1986), Micheline Wandor pointed to the development of a recognisable tradition in English women's theatre from 1968 to the 1980s. She linked changes of style and focus to four phases, from the emergence of Women's Liberation with its emphasis on consciousness-raising and the solidarity of all women in sisterhood, through the militant advocacy of feminist and gay sexual politics, to the emergence of a skilled body of theatre advocates and practitioners. Wandor's account acknowledged the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement and feminism, and the Gay Liberation Front and gay politics, on the formation of groups such as The Women's Theatre Group, Monstrous Regiment and Gay Sweatshop. But her final (and by implication most theatrically sophisticated) phase highlighted the work of a prominent group of women playwrights including Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill, Mary O'Malley, Nell Dunn and Claire Luckham. She distinguished three discourses or sub-traditions within feminism - radical feminism, bourgeois or emancipist feminism, and socialist feminism, concluding that a mixture of the first two most ensured eventual social acceptance and a measure of commercial success. Although her description of feminist tendencies may be of some assistance in locating

the Women's Circus in an ecology of feminisms, the Circus' longevity, its foundation date and the lateral manner in which it absorbed and adapted a variety of sources in establishing its culture and work processes, place it outside the implied evolutionary trajectory of her 'phase' framework. Indeed, the Circus' very existence functions to falsify any such schematic.

Later commentators such as Jill Dolan (Dolan, 1988) and Gayle Austin (Austin, G., 1990) adopted categorisations of feminisms influenced by Wandor's¹¹, but argued for a more critical appraisal of the exchanges between feminist theory and feminist theatre practice. They differed, however, in their relationship to the differences feminist practice has produced. Austin argued for vigilance, for the need to pay continuing 'attention to women' in the interests of identifying new modes of feminist practice. She wrote that a feminist approach 'means taking nothing for granted because the things that we take for granted are usually those that were constructed from the most powerful point of view in the culture and that is not the point of view of women' (Austin, G., 1990: 2). Dolan refused to accept all women's work as feminist *per se*. As a materialist feminist, she wanted to denaturalize the gendered assumptions of both theatre-makers and audience, in order to show how representation created meanings with 'very specific, material consequences' from an ideological base. Rather than the "playful pluralism" espoused by early feminist criticism (a phrase coined by Annette Kolodny (Kolodny, 1980), Dolan aimed at a critique of theatre practices, including purportedly feminist practices, from a critically feminist spectatorial position: 'Feminism loses some of its polemical force if it is not linked to a coherent ideological structure. Therefore, it is crucial to identify common characteristics that describe the differences amongst the feminisms' (Dolan, 1988: 3). This theoretical drive to distinguish between different feminist tendencies and between feminist and other 'women's' theatre, within a developmental and historical

frame, was clearly influenced by wider feminist debates. However, although her focus on the feminist spectator uncovered the explicit and implicit ideological underpinnings of apparently unexceptional structures of theatrical representation¹², the analysis ultimately remains within the framework of traditional dramatic criticism, failing to engage with the problematics of cultural production as embodied process.

In *Feminism and Theatre* (Case, 1988) fellow materialist feminist Sue- Ellen Case produced an ambitious argumentative architecture, which aimed to discuss women's theatre in terms of its relationship to history as well as to radical and materialist feminism. Beginning with a demonstration of how feminist representations of women have struggled for space against the patriarchal construction of the female in the theatre since the Athenian classical period, Case ended by drawing a different distinction, that between privileged and marginal feminisms. She demonstrated how difficult it has been for Black, Chicano and Native American women in the United States to claim the same level of attention, even from within the women's movement, as that devoted to the differences between 'radical' or essentialist and materialist feminisms. In so doing, Case ended up problematising the very distinctions she had intended to deploy. In one sense she was simply responding to the issues facing cultural activists in a United States forced into a greater awareness of race, as well as class and gender based, politics. In a more theoretically productive sense, however, she could be seen to replace categorisations derived from one particular set of intellectual traditions and politico-aesthetic practices with a more nuanced understanding of the way feminist, and other, practices and contexts are interactively produced.

Commentators whose focus has included the cultural economy of the theatre industry, the internal structure of companies and theatre making/devising processes, as well as the performance event itself, have

been even less eager to arbitrate on the links between particular theatre companies and particular feminist tendencies. Lizbeth Goodman, in her survey of largely British feminist, lesbian and Black women's theatres (Goodman, Lizbeth, 1993), queries the notion that feminist theatre, like feminist thought, can be described as developing in one consistent direction. She was writing at a time when feminist theatre, like other theatres which present images and discourses alternative to the mainstream commercial theatre and 'approved' subsidised theatre, had suffered funding cuts and other pressures which affected their continued existence. Rather than finding the variety of perspectives presented through women's and feminist theatres an occasion for theoretical judgements, she wished to acknowledge the richness and power to generate ideas and action provided through at times quite distinct, but hard to categorise, feminisms and theatrical practices.

The danger with this approach is that it risks a return to the naïve inclusivity of "playful pluralism", losing the incisiveness Dolan undoubtedly acquired through her materialist critique. It also provides few tools for understanding how the different practices emerge and are sustained, or how they draw from and relate to the audiences and communities in which they operate. Recent feminist performance criticism has attempted to address what Peta Tait characterised as a 'multiplication of feminist positions' by appealing to context and strategy – an understanding that ideas about 'women' and 'feminism' may be deployed in different ways under different circumstances – and by appropriating the recent explosion of intellectual interest in performativity and the body in the service of an analysis of performance consciously framed as theatre. Judith Butler's work on the performativity of gender (Butler, 1990b; Butler, 1993) has been of enormous influence, both in its suggestion of the way the apparent-real of sexual difference is produced through iterated citation of discursive/behavioural tropes, and in its protest against 'compulsory heterosexuality'. The combination of

performative analysis and queer theory, together with a dynamic reappraisal of the potential of semiotic analysis as a means of identifying how signs are produced, rather than simply how they might be read, has allowed theorists such as Peggy Phelan (Phelan, 1993) to produce a sophisticated reading of the imbrication between context, sign production and the generation of systems of meaning in performance.

In Australia, the phenomenological approach taken by feminist philosophers such as Liz Grosz and Moira Gatens has encouraged theatre theorists to follow the lead of dance theorists in asking about the experience of performance in the flesh, from the performer's perspective as well as that of the audience. The productivity of this perspective is evident in the shifts in theoretical frame utilised by Tait, one of the most prolific of Australian feminist theatre analysts. Her early work employs a number of established methodologies, from the documentary analysis and interviews in her study of the by-then defunct Melbourne Women's Theatre Group (Tait, 1993) to the qualitative statistical analysis of her enquiry into the rates of employment of women in the Australian theatre and entertainment industry (Tait, 1995)¹³. In *Original Women's Theatre* she relied heavily on the approaches taken by Natalie, Wandor, Dolan and Case to frame her reconstruction of the concerns and processes of the WTG in terms of how the group 'actually managed to expand feminist ideology using theatre' (Tait, 1993: 2). She gave a lively account of the group's debates, paying particular attention to the internal tensions between those members who preferred working in a popular theatre style before a mixed audience, and those who, in the Group's final three productions, explored the performance possibilities of the 'sexed female body' and a lesbian sensibility to and with a committed, women-only audience. Her theoretical frame did not allow her to 'read' these bodies in more than schematic terms however, a lack addressed in subsequent work through her contention that contemporary feminist theatre practice 'sustains a genre through the physically performative enactment of

gender identity' (Tait, 1994: 4), and through her use of a phenomenological approach reliant on Merleau-Ponty, Butler, and Phelan, to think through the implications of analysing the 'fleshed muscular phenomenologies' of 'sexed and queer circus bodies' (Tait, 2000).

Other contemporary Australian feminist commentators have also moved beyond the untheorised spectatorial position, and the pairing of event and ideology, in order to find an analytic language to address issues of rehearsal, process and embodiment in feminist and other performance. According to Kerrie Schaefer, methodology is itself a creative and inventive process: 'the experience of observing and analysing rehearsal and performance leads to a constant re-think of descriptive tools and theoretical methods' (Schaefer and Ginters, 2001: 109). She cites the feminism of corporeal difference articulated by Australian feminist theorists such as Grosz, Gatens, Gunew, Threadgold, Carol Pateman, Rosi Braidotti and Meaghan Morris, as better placed to elucidate the complexities of contemporary performance practice. Fensham refers to Gilles Deleuze, to Grosz, and to dance theorist Susan Foster, in unpacking the dynamic materiality of the technologically mediated performing body in contemporary dance events (Fensham, 2000).

Studies of the perceptual and experiential complexities of the body in performance and its reception, fit well with the notions of kinetic and kinaesthetic intelligence espoused by physical practitioners in the tradition of twentieth-century dance theorists such as Rudolf Laban and Mabel Ellsworth Todd. The current rapprochement between dance and performance theorists is welcome and promises to enable a closer engagement with the detail of the performance-maker's perspective. But appeals to 'physical intelligence' or the 'physical mind' (see for example Pearlman, 2000) too often resort to metaphysical generalisation at the expense of an account of how physical processes, vocabularies and codes

actually function in practice, the specific circumstances in which they are developed and transmitted, and the processes through which patterns of physical behaviour are shaped and acquire meaning – that is, the point at which theories of performativity intersect with ideological and communicative analyses. In my account of the Women's Circus, the ways the participants shape, and describe the shaping, of their bodies and their experiences, is of major interest. However, I remain convinced that a thoroughgoing materialist analysis, albeit with a focus on the detail of habituated practice, and an acknowledgement of context – of how frames of meaning are grounded and/or shift around particular behaviours – will produce at least as good if not better an account of representational/performative processes than the phenomenological approaches currently fashionable among feminist and other theorists of performance.

Canning's recent study (Canning, 1996) tracing the development of feminist theatres in the United States from 1969 to the mid 1980s, provides a detailed account of the positions, context and working methods of a number of feminist groups, from a materialist perspective. It combines an awareness of contemporary feminist theoretical debates with detailed documentation, interview and a productive set of research questions. Although short of detail on rehearsal room interaction and approaches to the devising process, she carefully traces the intersections between feminism and radical politics, emphasising the moves towards and away from an aesthetic politics of collectivity and collaboration. Her acknowledgement of links between internal organisation, approaches to theatre-making and the theatre image, together with the importance of the intimate interface with community developed by many feminist groups, in many ways comes closest to the approach I will take with the Women's Circus.

As established at the outset, these are the Women's Circus Aims and Objectives:

- a) To reaffirm women's control over their bodies.
- b) Build self-esteem through physical and performance work.
- c) To allow women to set their own personal goals for development.
- d) Create a safe, non-competitive environment for women to work in.
- e) Enable women of different ages, abilities, shapes and sizes to come together to create a theatre event.
- f) Communicate feminist ideas in an entertaining and challenging manner. Create a theatre event which is of a very high standard.
- g) Establish a women's circus/theatre company which will be ongoing at the Footscray Community Arts Centre.

(Distributed sheet 1991, reprinted in *Women's Circus*, 1991c).

While reflecting the inclusivity often deemed characteristic of 'early' second wave feminism, they also reveal a canny address to a number of issues and constituencies important for the Circus' ongoing success. The unabashed universal appeal to 'women', the emphasis on 'women's control over their bodies' and the promise of a 'safe, non-competitive environment' indicate a base in some form of essentialist feminism, harking back to women's movement concerns of the 1970s. The emphasis on self-esteem and body image ('women of different ages, abilities, shapes and sizes') acknowledges more recent popular feminist concerns, while offering a developmental or educational inflection. But the absence of 'race/ethnicity' and 'sexual preference' from the list of 'difference characteristics' is notable, as is reference to class, despite Jackson's personal avowal of her working class origins. The Circus' lack of ethnic diversity remains an unresolved issue, whereas the omission of sexuality in the Circus' 'official' self-description points to an ongoing dynamic discussed below. The final two aims, however, taken together with the tag to the 'difference' aim, which specifies the creation of 'a

theatre event of a very high standard', place the Circus in another discursive field, that of the battle faced by community arts projects to achieve recognition in an arts arena hierarchically organised on a high-low axis through notions of 'excellence'. The qualification 'women's circus/theatre company' hints at an each way bet, allowing the organisation to establish its own aesthetic space outside the established expectations of either performance tradition. It is clear that the Circus aims to be both excellent and popular. The reference to 'entertainment' is a signal that, while this is to be a woman-identified activity, it will refuse separatist principles, at least as far as its audience goes. The overall statement, while overtly straightforward, indicates a sophisticated understanding of feminist and other political dynamics. Above all, however, it reveals its author's determination: the Circus will survive. It will be 'on-going', and its aims are framed to further that possibility.

While the Circus' claims to a feminist position and practice are central to its ethos and ongoing existence, I aim to demonstrate that it is less productive to attempt a categorisation of that feminism than to show how its stated core values have functioned to facilitate the absorption of a variety of other political, cultural and aesthetic influences. The Circus' positioning has allowed it to generate productive external relationships with a range of formations and institutions, while retaining a strong sense of itself as a community advocating and supportive of women's interests and identity.

Establishing the Circus

Despite its strong sense of community and participatory ethos, the Women's Circus was not founded as a collective. Unlike the women's theatre companies of the 1970s, its goals and values as a feminist enterprise, the template of the annual cycle of training and performance, and the emphasis on process and skill-building, were all articulated well

before the first intake. The Circus' version of feminist principles was detailed by means of a series of prepared statements, with a strong emphasis on consultation, collaboration and individual responsibility, within a clearly outlined organisational structure. On entry, participants were provided with a set of documents which included the Circus' aims, a Job Description, and a workshop and performance schedule.

Although participants were volunteers, trainees within a workshop structure which promised a skills development phase as well as an eventual performance experience, they were expected to sign the Job Description, constructed on the model of an employment contract, before workshops commenced. This set out in some detail a set of ethical principles, performance criteria and behavioural expectations, constituting a formal agreement dealing with the participant's approach to the work, to other individuals and to the Circus as a whole. It stated:

Your job is:

1. To have fun
2. Allow yourself time to develop
3. To challenge yourself
4. To work with other women in a feminist way i.e. to recognise all women are different – support, encourage other women
5. To treat other women with respect
6. To come to training on the day when you're too tired, too depressed – have a better offer
7. To work to break down the hierarchy that states that the 'most able' is the best
8. To recognise that there will be conflict while we getting [sic] this circus together and that it is natural and healthy
9. To talk to the woman you have conflict with 'one on one' and to try to resolve it. If that doesn't work to get another woman you both feel ok [sic] about, to help facilitate

10. To arrive at workshops-rehearsals on time
11. To be prepared to 'take direction' as the show is moving from workshopping to rehearsal
12. To support the Women's Circus in ways other than performing
13. To recognise that all theatre work is of equal importance i.e. administration, cleaning up, technical areas, performance, training, rehearsing
14. To talk to the trainer, director, other women if you have a problem

An almost immediate revision was the addition of 'to work safely', later amended to 'To work safely both as an individual and with other women' (Distributed sheets 1991, reprinted in Women's Circus, 1991c).

The provisions of the Job Description reflect Jackson and Forth's past experience in theatre and other women's groups, and their response to the difficulties endemic to women's collective enterprises. The document attempted to anticipate and forestall common problems – lateness, conflict, lack of commitment – as well as problems that might emerge amongst this specific group of women. Survivors of sexual assault and incest survivors in particular were likely to experience a higher than usual incidence of depression, mistrust, lack of confidence and emotional swings, as the physical training triggered suppressed or incompletely processed body memory. Although the expectations placed on members were bluntly phrased, they were offset by the promise of support both in and outside the workshop situation, and by the acknowledgement that difficulties, both personal and interpersonal, would be faced and overcome as a part of the journey.

Contradicting Raphael Samuel's description of the history of socialist or alternative theatre as 'a succession of moments separated from one

another by rupture', early newsletters also placed great emphasis on the Circus' place in 'herstory', linking the current project with a tradition of radical and women's physical performance, particularly in Melbourne. A particular influence was the Real Mighty Bonza Whacko Wimmin's Circus, a late offshoot of Circus Oz, the Australian Performing Group/Pram Factory collective and the Melbourne Women's Theatre Group, which operated for two years from 1979. The newsletters carry accounts from Robyn Laurie, Ollie Black and other Wimmin's Circus members, together with messages of support for the new venture: 'It is wonderful to hear that the tradition of wacky women and circus continues'. (Black in *Women's Circus*, 1991c).

Circus literature also emphasised organisational efficiency: information about the estimated project timeline was included in funding submissions, and was available to workshop participants when they signed up. This shows a planned project life of 28 weeks overall, within which a series of shifts of emphasis led from the acquisition of basic physical skills to the final performance:

May 13th: Workshop – exploring options/basic training - 6 weeks

June 18th: Next info night

Workshop - choose 2 skill specialisations – 6 weeks

July 30th: Develop – Story, Music, Extend skills – rehearsals 6 weeks

September 10th: Intensive rehearsals 7 weeks

29th October: Tech 1 week

7th November – 16th November: Show - 2 weeks

(Distributed sheets 1991, reprinted in *Women's Circus*, 1991c).

The timeline was adhered to: skill development, rehearsal and performance periods went ahead on schedule. However, in order to

achieve this result, a great deal of effort was required from the participants, in addition to their workshop, rehearsal and performance time commitments. The notional user-pays fee of \$A10 (\$A5 concession) for a two-hour workshop was frequently waived in favour of participation in the 'labour exchange program', which provided basic administration, equipment making and repair services, childcare, working bees to clean and weatherproof the rehearsal space and the regular quarterly Newsletter. During the first season, the Newsletter carried regular appeals for usable goods, such as paint, carpet and prop-making materials, all of which required labour to adapt to Circus requirements. In addition, support groups were formed, including a group for Big Women, and the Tower of Strength group for incest survivors. These met at irregular intervals, but spawned smaller groups of four or so women within a training workshop, who took on the responsibility of looking out for the needs of members and for issues affecting them, which the group as a whole needed to understand. Regular Information Nights were held, involving the whole Circus membership, and ad hoc meetings were called for specific discussions on organisational or aesthetic issues, all conducted outside workshop hours.

Putting the Circus together was by no means a solo effort. The emphasis on mutual support, collaboration and trust was intended to foster a sense of open, collegial feminist community. This operated alongside a decision-making structure which, while encouraging consultation, put Jackson firmly in place as chief image-maker, director and final arbiter in the case of conflict: 'Everyone expresses an opinion – like about child care – but then say even if a majority were against it, I'd decide. We're having child care' (Jackson interview 1993). But despite her at times autocratic style and the fact that the performance season dominated the trajectory of the year's programming, it was the work on skills development and the intimate negotiation between body as self, body as vehicle and body as metaphor that formed the Circus' core day to day

activity, acting as its main arena for interpersonal exchange and personal development. The workshop process most closely tested the Circus' stated intentions to develop work, as well as to present work, in a feminist manner. It challenged the training staff, the head trainer in particular, to develop ways of working that encouraged the steady development of performance skills, while taking account of individual differences, including the ability and willingness to take physical risks.

The Training Program

Forth's background and approach was crucial in influencing the constitution and content of the Circus' physical training program, and in determining a style of work and a set of assumptions around training that continued even after her departure. Originally trained as a classical ballet dancer in Adelaide, Forth's interest in contemporary dance and theatre had extended her performance vocabulary in directions that led eventually to circus and physical performance. A past member of Adelaide's Australian Dance Theatre and a theatre in education performer under South Australian Theatre Company director George Ogilvie, her participation in women's theatre and dance performance in Adelaide during the 1970s had prompted a move to Europe, where she worked with Netherlands-based experimental theatre company KISS, and with English women's comedy and physical theatre troupe The Cunning Stunts. Returning to Australia in 1983, she worked as a performer with Circus Oz, and as Director of Brisbane's Rock and Roll Circus, before moving back to Melbourne, where she accepted Jackson's invitation to become the inaugural trainer for the Circus. Her interdisciplinary approach to physical performance was also informed by an advocacy of yoga and alternative health practices derived from Chinese medicine, which she integrated into her overall training style: 'If you eat right and visualise you don't need to train as hard' (Forth interview 1992).

Forth attributes her awareness of skills, structure and personality as potentially positive or negative influences on group process to her accumulated experience in co-operative work and decision-making: 'Collectivity - it just comes down to personalities - your person - who you are. And if you're allowed to become cruel and mean you will, sort of thing, to get what you want. Or you're treated in a way that makes you like that, like I've become fairly cruel and mean in some collective processes because I had to protect myself from some people who I thought were going to destroy me. But it has forced me to be strong about my ideas.' (Forth interview 1992). With Jackson's support, she was determined to institute an effective group process as the basis of her work with the Circus, emphasising self-discipline and a culture based on supportive interpersonal relationships as much as excellence in technique. She had little to go on in the way of previous models and found herself constantly challenged to revise her assumptions and expectations: 'In 1991, I started off with the idea that I was training serious circus artists towards performance of specialist acts ... I developed a training method which was demanding for all ages and expected a high standard of physical commitment ... At first I was frustrated by women's reactions to physical exercises. I had to learn to respect women's feelings, realising they were not lazy but were dealing with a lifetime of negative experiences. It reinforced my belief that emotional reactions to physical exercises reveal the close connection between the spirit, mind and body. I am grateful for the perseverance of the women who overcame difficulties and who found new strength and confidence and playfulness' (Forth, 1997: 85).

In her recent handbook on feminist theatre practice (Aston, 1999a), Elaine Aston acknowledges the importance of finding a feminist process to support the refiguring of the theatre image, and the disturbance of systems of representation, desired by many feminist performance practitioners. However, her suggestions for 'finding a body, finding a

voice' rely in general on circumventing rather than confronting issues like lack of confidence, negative body image and the problems that arise with touch and other intimate contact between bodies in physical theatre practices – the example she gives is the 'sculpting techniques' used in theatre-making influenced by the work of Augusto Boal (Aston, 1999a: 46-48). Her suggested ways of dealing with these issues include discussion and the institution of clear boundaries; she does not detail physically based processes through which they might be addressed and resolved. Her suggestions for workshop exercises also remain piecemeal and derivative, waystations to the performance text, rather than the building blocks for a new syntax of physical performance. Given that Aston is drawing on the experience of the influential Magdalena Project¹⁴, her tentative outline of the possibilities for a feminist approach to physical performance process makes the achievement of Forth, her fellow specialist trainers and the Women's Circus participants all the more remarkable.

Skill development – the detail

In its early stages at least, this development of an identifiable, and identifiably feminist, approach to physical skills training was a matter of trial and error, involving the negotiation of a variety of inputs and relying on feedback from participants, as much as the expectations of 'experts', for its evaluation. The formal skills component of the workshops was determined by Forth with the assistance of Nicci Wilkes (ex Flying Fruit Fly Circus), Natalie Dyball (Fruit Fly Circus, Circus Oz) and Cathryn Niesche (Legs on the Wall). Participants with backgrounds in gymnastics, dance, clowning and theatre were also encouraged to contribute skills and ideas.

A six week period of 'basic training' – in flexibility, stretching, basic individual gymnastic and acrobatic moves such as balances, handstands

and rolls, and the beginnings of group balance work – was followed by opportunities for individuals to acquire specialist skills. In her June 1991 Newsletter column, Forth indicated that the core component would include ‘general training in group balancing, hand stands and rolls, 3 ball juggling, poi work, and basic trapeze for arm strength’, but that participants were now also to choose two specialist areas from a list including:

Acrobatics (floor work, dive rolls, round offs, handsprings, hoop diving, somersaults); Aerials (trapeze, single swinging and spinning, double spinning rope and double rope); Juggling (3, 4 or 5 balls, group passing, clubs, solo and group rings, and plates); Ribbon/flag/stick work; Spinning bowls (fire and water); Stick balancing on different parts of the body; Lasso; Tightrope; Unicycle; Balance Beam; Stilts plus flags; Group Bike; and Clowning and knockabout, in double and group work (Women's Circus, 1991c).

This was an ambitious list, given the wide variety of physical adeptness and preparedness for risk amongst Circus participants. The real challenge was to develop these skills in such a way that they could accommodate and transmit meaning, both to the participants in the workshop and eventually in performance. An obvious answer was to ‘sculpt’ semi-representational images in the style advocated by Aston, though the abstract form of circus skills militated against this approach as an encompassing foundation for a performance vocabulary. There was also the problem that a certain uniform skill level would be required in order to make effective any performance based on circus skills. The approach eventually decided upon, a ‘mixed economy’ of representational and semi-representational image and abstract skill display, was unified through a broader theatrical image-based narrative. It succeeded through the effort to understand and exploit the associational meanings implicit in the detail of physical activities, rather than their overtly representational potential.

In the process, a repertoire of double and group balances practised by all participants became the foundation of the Circus' eventual performance vocabulary. According to Forth: 'The double balance work is one of the strengths of all the circus performances and friendships have developed while mastering a difficult balance' (Forth, 1997: 85). The key here, as in the spectacular group balances also employed as a basic tool, was the articulation of trust, on a physical as well as an emotional level. Rather than the boundaries and permissions Aston suggests, the Circus women worked to overcome their resistance to touch, and their fear of taking responsibility for another's needs, through learning to give and receive weight, and through attention to the details of kinesthetic awareness – learning to know and accept the exchanges between one's own body boundaries and position in space and those of others. For the audience, these balances then instantiated the trust and collaboration achieved during the workshop process. A performance incorporating these elements conveyed women's physical collaboration, as well as physical confidence, on a visceral level, going a considerable distance towards solving the problems of control of frame and perception that plague feminist theory.

Trust exercises, together with prompts for proprioceptive awareness (cold showers!), strengthening exercises such as the 'situps from hell' and stretching exercises derived from Chinese acrobatics and Iyengar Yoga, became a staple of the workshop routines. Great care was taken to select and develop exercises so that participants could connect physical development and emotional awareness, emphasising the link between individual strength and relations with others:

'I've recently introduced corrective exercises which are emotionally based. That encourage people to be not arrogant, not to think of themselves as good or bad - that try to encourage yourself to be yourself. I'm introducing - well, tricks or games really that

involve pitching yourself against others, like you just think like a rock and we won't be able to turn you over - derived from Japanese Zen and samurai training, that bring out strengths and elements in different people ... That's really what we're trying to do in the Circus, that everyone's compassionate to everyone else, but it doesn't mean they're sympathetic or drippy or they can't achieve anything.' (Forth interview 1992).

Forth also increasingly encouraged the women to supplement their experiences in the workshops by attending to diet, and adopting regular programs of exercise and other body practices in their daily lives. The Circus Newsletter carried a regular column from Forth, which often included exercise, dietary and other health advice to be followed outside workshop hours, with the aim of achieving physical and psychosomatic changes in which the specific skill acquisition program was only one aspect of a holistic 'healthy feminist' lifestyle. The success of Forth's approach to skills acquisition and the increasingly strong sense of community manifested across a range of Circus activities were mutually reinforcing, ensuring reiteration and duration for the values and corporeal practices advocated, and facilitating widespread take-up of body-based practices generally associated with Circus culture amongst women not directly involved in the workshop program, such as those in the music, administrative and technical support groups.

Workshop structure

My extended observations of the workshops took place from June to August 1991, at a time when basic skills had been established¹⁵. The focus was now on exploring how the circus' movement vocabulary might express ideas, through the combination of skill elements into longer phrases and constructed physical images. The original two-hour workshop format had been extended to three, to allow for warm-ups,

group work, individual skills work and discussion. Communication between group members was facilitated through a noticeboard and the open Circus Journal, a large volume housed in the rehearsal space in which many participants recorded their immediate responses and more considered reflections. Participants were also encouraged to keep their own journals: 'I would like to impress upon people the value of a book which records the circus training to help you remember the exercises. Since the beginning of training I have encouraged participants to stretch and do additional work at home etc. to avoid strains from only training once a week' (Sally Forth, *Women's Circus*, 1991c: 3). Women frequently transcribed items from their personal journals into the Circus Journal and placed photographs, drawings, poems and other items on the notice board. A typical workshop format ran as follows:

Start time: women who had arrived early warmed up individually, going through a series of stretches in their own space. Forth then called everyone together. She and others made brief announcements and gave an outline of the session's aims and time structure.

First half to three-quarters of an hour: warmups. These consisted of basic stretches on the floor and at barre, concentrating on hands and feet: leg swings, arm extensions, singly and in pairs. Then, to concerted groaning, the 'sit ups from hell' – a pairs exercise in which one partner held the other's legs down while the other executed a rapid series of sit ups, the number varying with fitness. Then handstands and balance work in pairs, extending, for example, into a muscle memory exercise taken by Jackson, based on holding and transforming physical positions on cue, in different dynamics.

Next hour: skill groups. By this time, women had chosen the two main skill areas they wanted to concentrate on. Throughout the space, small groups of women juggled, worked on wire walking or rope climbing, or

practised particular elements such as handstands. Larger groups concentrated on aerial work, mostly trapeze taken by Forth, and acrobatics taken by Dyball. The latter group would again warm up with forward rolls and cartwheels extended into sequences, and then practise skills involved in physical comedy with objects such as chairs and tables. There was much joy and hilarity in these sessions when, for example, skills included learning to walk on an upended chair so that it ended up upright with you sitting on it. Halfway through, women had the opportunity to swap groups, with some choosing to do so, and some persevering with what they had been developing. In subsequent sessions as skill levels increased, special sessions were devoted to learning particular skills such as stilt walking, unicycling and group balances.

Following hour: performance development. Forth called the groups together into the acrobatic area of the space and the special focus for the day was explained, with opportunity for questions. For example, one task was to work on images that could form part of a ritual and the women were asked to incorporate contrasts between ideas, in this case life and death. Small groups of five to six people each were formed. In a manner reminiscent of Boal's methods, but using the pair balance and acrobatic vocabulary they had been working on, they were given time to prepare a sequence of moving images. This was followed by a 'show and tell', where images were presented, good ideas noted and suggestions made as to improvements in position, use of space, dynamics and clarity. General discussion, guided by Jackson, covered the relative merits of the approaches used by each group, including the impact of more and less representational techniques. Throughout the discussion, there was an emphasis on supportive and constructive interaction and criticism. Many ideas were generated. The women participated both physically and verbally; their enthusiasm was evident, as was the attention given both to their own work and to others'. Forth and Jackson finished by

summarising the morning's process, with a brief forecast of how it might lead into the next session's work.

Last half-hour: the women moved back into the warmup area. They put on warmer clothing, as the space was not heated, and formed a large circle for the weekly discussion. Information about circus subgroups and meeting times was passed on, including reports from the trapeze group who by that time were working independently¹⁶. There were exchanges about how the ideas of power and domination chosen as the performance theme might be developed in coming weeks, and perhaps a presentation, for example from one member who had ideas about how to incorporate clowning into the show. If necessary, additional workshop times were scheduled. The last activity might be a brief demonstration on, for example, poi making¹⁷, with a request that everyone makes a pair of pois before next week's session.

After the session, the women would break up into smaller informal discussion groups as they prepared to leave. Some had other commitments and left promptly, others stayed back to talk or make arrangements to meet for other activities or further training. The workshop session was focused and concentration sustained throughout; this informal 'hanging out' time was important for the development of the Circus' internal culture, since it fostered friendships and led to additional formal and informal groups and suggestions for activities both within and outside the Circus' official structure. Although not listed in the available printed material, a 'no flirting' rule imposed by Jackson was widely known and important to the workshop ethos. This was relaxed outside workshop hours and informal socialising became an opportunity for lesbian women to recognise and relate to each other. Strong bonds, including sexual relationships between lesbian participants, became a feature of the Circus, although an 'open' culture that welcomed women of all sexual orientations was consciously maintained.

Moving Towards Performance

During the workshop phase, the general theme of power and domination was refined through group discussion into a decision to concentrate on images associated with 'women and institutions'¹⁸. 'The Institution' became the central image for the performance, an institution which, reflecting the concerns of the women's movement at various times, could be read as a prison, a mental institution, self-and-other-imposed bonds of repression, and/or the patriarchy in general. It was decided to mount the production outdoors, along the banks of the Maribyrnong River where the Arts Centre was located. The performance would start near the Centre's main building with individual small group 'teaser' sequences, and progress to a makeshift amphitheatre in nearby parkland¹⁹. A storyline developed by Jackson, featuring jailers' ('the screws') repression of an individual woman and the eventual successful rebellion of the inmates of 'The Institution', was broken down into segments²⁰. A storyboard was then constructed using key identifying images, with performance locations and skill sequences allocated to each.

Small groups formed during the workshops to work on particular skills, or to present images and develop particular sections of the storyline, became the basis for groups presenting performance segments. The segmented storyline/storyboard outline was distributed to groups with suggestions as to how to proceed; images and routines already developed were given a place or adapted to a new focus, and new small group and whole group scenes choreographed.

Jackson's background in developmental drama teaching was a strong influence on the way this participatory but strongly organised process was orchestrated. At the Information Night heralding the start of the rehearsal period proper, she took care to ensure that the character of this

next phase, and its differences from the previous phase, were clearly spelled out. Her précis, recorded in the *Circus Journal*, is typically direct: 'Don't expect to get any better than you are now. You're not gonna learn anything else in the next 7 weeks – what you can do now is what you'll be doing in the performance. So if you can only walk across the tightrope now, don't expect to be doing triple back flips in 7 weeks' time, OK?' (Jackson in *Women's Circus*, 1991b).

From September onwards, the *Journal* revealed less emphasis on personal struggles and group issues, instead recording the segments and routines developed in rehearsal: notes, ideas, quick stick figure diagrams and aides memoire, like 'Breathe in going down and out coming up' from the acrobatic group; records of the *poi*, 'wellie-dancing' or chair routines; notes from the music group, including the scores for pieces developed by individual women; and a list of the elements, ideas and props required for each of the groups working on the initial small group images along the riverbank. Less than a complete documentation, and far from unified in the approach taken by the various scribes, the *Journal* functioned in rehearsal as a vital communal memory bank and communication tool.

In this period, too, individual and group performance personae began to reach definition. Groups such as the stiltwalking 'screws' adopted a corporate visual identity: the screws' entrance, striding in on stilts clad in long black coats and hats, but with individual makeup and habitual physical characteristics, was an impressive sight. They adopted umbrellas as their badge of rank: 'the screws on stilts rule, okay! If it rains we're prepared!!!' (*Women's Circus*, 1991b, September). The images created in rehearsal were becoming clearer, and their meaning associations were the subject of discussion, although by now it was well accepted that meanings were metaphoric, probably multiple, and shifting: 'A few womyn had a discussion on Thursday night about who the screws represented. Men? Men and/or womyn who work in institutions? I see

the screws as individuals, groups, workers, countries who have power over others. I also see the screws as the part of myself that does not do something because I fear what others would think of me P. S. One whip is nothing compared to 40 angry [six female symbols] (Women's Circus, 1991b, October).

The approach to performance-making adopted by the group had been carefully cumulative to this point, but decisions made during this period had transformative force. Jackson was responsible for 'polishing' decisions on the work of the small groups, and strongly directed the 'big group' scenes, making executive decisions and demanding discipline in the repetitions necessary to achieve 'tightness' and co-ordination in performance. Nevertheless, some of the most far-reaching visual decisions were made by individual performers and confirmed through group discussion. A big issue was whether or not the women should be identified as individuals in performance. Some felt uneasy at revealing themselves in front of an audience, some wanted it to be clear that they were presenting 'characters' and not themselves, some thought the group should demonstrate a strong commonality, still others wanted to make the point that women were individuals. At one performer's suggestion, the women adopted bold, expressionist makeup, with black designs on a whiteface background. They were liberated by this decision, which allowed them to present their imagined characters to an audience within a strong visual identity, while allowing for quirky individuality in each woman's design. This decision, made quite late in the rehearsal process, informed the next, that all performers would hide their hair under white bathing caps to layer a sign of prison uniformity over the wild assortment of dyed red and purple undergarments that otherwise constituted the inmates' costumes. This simple (and cheap) solution to a performance problem was the foundation for one of the most vivid signifying moments in the show, when as a symbol of their defiance of the screws, the women tore off their caps and freed their hair.

During this period, preparations by the musicians, technical crew, administration, marketing/publicity, and 'front of house' also neared completion. The momentum generated took even the project leaders by surprise. Many of the staff of FCArts (by mid 1991, all women) were directly involved and all were supportive, but the Circus' demands on resources and staff time placed increasing strain on all concerned and began to threaten the operation of other Centre activities²¹. Jackson was still officially Theatre Department Co-Ordinator, supported by her assistant Karen Martin and by trainee arts worker Swee Leng Lim, who were both also Circus participants; the Centre's Music Co-Ordinator, Sue Speer, was also Circus Music Director; logistical support was provided by the Centre's overworked administrator Victoria Jones; and new Centre Director Elizabeth Walsh found the Circus' publicity needs overshadowed her other duties. Within the technical crew, women were learning 'on the job'. The crew of thirteen women included some reasonably experienced riggers and lighting hands, but also many who had never scaled a ladder or changed a light bulb. They had to prepare the large outdoor space and smaller pre-show performance sites, beg, borrow and improvise props and equipment, rig and 'tech' a complex show about which last-minute decisions were still being made, and provide twenty-four hour security, all on little or no budget. It is important to note how much the 'non-performing' or 'semi-performing' areas, such as the music and technical groups, contributed to the development of a *habitus* or physically-based way of being within the Circus culture. Technical co-ordinators Helen Bradley and Carmel Duffy held workshops on basic electrics, wiring, lighting and sound prior to the show, combining education, practical work and feminist principles. The tech crew offered empowering opportunities for women interested in learning these traditionally gendered skills, as well as an avenue for involvement for women who did not yet feel confident enough to work as performers: 'As women we are very much taught to be helpless, and I

think the circus transforms that, whether you do the hands-on things yourself or just see other women doing it. You learn anyone can do it. And I think a lot of the kids like to see their mums do things. We're not just changing us, we're changing other generations as well' (Rosie Finn in *Women's Circus*, 1997: 165).

The performance season brought its own physical and emotional challenges, individual women expressing everything from elation, to panic, to an odd sense of loss. For performer Katy, the project had moved into the space of dreams: 'Last night I dreamed I was flying. I flew right over the heads of my captors to freedom.' Others were conscious of the enormous cost in time and energy, for their families as well as themselves. One wrote: 'Amidst the glory, rave reviews, full houses and happy faces I look to see if there is a cost, and I find it when I hear my children say Where are you going, mum? Again? No!!' (*Women's Circus*, 1991b, November). Forth responded with active advice about dealing with the stresses of performance, emphasising the need to rest, eat well and continue light warmups, reassuring women about the surges in emotion they could expect.²² By the time of the post-show evaluation, an overwhelming sense of pride and pleasure pervaded the women's recorded comments. Participants were already thinking about the following year's work, expressing their desire to continue and their dreams for the Circus' future. Maria, for example, reflected: 'I loved it ... but by the time I began enjoying it, it was over. It still amazes me how well women work together. May the future bring me more, more, more ...' (*Women's Circus*, 1991b, late November).

Building an Audience/Building Community

Jackson's expectations about audience numbers had been based on her previous community theatre experience. Her original vision was of a performance in the warehouse rehearsal space: 'I have been looking

carefully at the warehouse trying to imagine 90 or so women on stage plus an audience of 120 and wondering if we will all fit' (Jackson in *Women's Circus*, 1991c). The decision to move outdoors acknowledged the growing interest that accompanied the project as it developed, providing room for greater audience numbers, as well as initiating a tradition of performance in non-traditional spaces that added considerably to the Circus' mystique. Even so, audience response, both in numbers and in intensity of emotional reaction, took organisers and participants by surprise. Front of House co-ordinator Marg Dobson remembers that: 'by the third week people were desperate to get in. They played the most amazing emotional trips on me ... and I wasn't prepared for it at all. I don't think anyone was prepared for how many people turned up' (Marg Dobson in *Women's Circus*, 1997: 189). After the first season, audience numbers continued to grow, although they seem to have stabilised in recent years. The Circus has developed a secure audience base, with over 3,000 people typically attending each two-week season²³.

After the first season, which was greeted warmly by critics in Melbourne's major daily papers²⁴, the Circus was inundated with inquiries from women who had seen the show and wanted to become part of it all. This pattern continued from year to year, each season bringing a fresh crop of inquiries, a new waiting list and eventually each March an intake of 'New Women', to be inducted into Circus life and in their turn affect its developing culture. Strategic decisions then needed to be made about total numbers, the proportion of new members that could be absorbed and the mix of basic skills, small group and large group work that would best achieve the aim of integrating each new intake.

Longstanding members also constituted a growing, and increasingly vocal, subgroup. Wanting to continue their training, some women were dissatisfied with the proposed gap between the end of year performance and the March start for the next year's program. A 'scaled down'

Saturday morning summer workshop program was instituted in January 1992, which in later years developed into specialist 'summer school' sessions, with guest tutors and/or other performance opportunities, like the Circus' appearances at the Williamstown Festival in 1993 and the Sydney Festival in 1996. Many women were content to retain their commitment to the Circus as part of their existing life pattern. Others – some who had an extensive background in physical activity, technical work or performance before joining the Circus, and some whose ambition was sparked in the course of their training – wanted to work as performance professionals and were keen to use their Circus experience in synergy with a career in various branches of the arts, albeit with a bias towards community theatre and circus, and other community arts. Deb Maziarz, Ruth Bauer, Annie Fayzdaughter, Jean Taylor, Karen Martin and Andrea Ousley amongst the performers, Dori Dragon and Maureen O'Connor amongst the 'techies', have all for example done extensive work with, or themselves initiated, other community groups and small performance companies using skills learned in the Circus. Some have been given paid work in the Circus itself: the longer it continues, the greater the influence its own 'graduates' have had on its aesthetic and institutional life. The Circus culture has also attracted and supported artists apart from performance practitioners: photographers Vivienne Méhes and Franca Stadler, illustrator Nicole Hunter, poet Patricia Sykes, film-maker Cathy Johnstone, journalist Louise Radcliffe-Smith and writer and publisher Susan Hawthorne have all been influential within the Circus and contributed to its internal culture, as well as to the documentation and dissemination of its activities.

Over the years, the Circus has developed a matrix of ancillary activities, many of them through its longstanding championship of women's health and well being. The Circus ran its own Women's Circus Health Weekends starting in 1996 and has received regular support from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Forth's emphasis on health

inside the Circus contributed to this facet of activity, as did members' association with a growing network of alternative health practitioners including naturopaths, massage practitioners, yoga teachers, and so on. This soon extended to general support of a 'women's culture' of tradespeople and professionals including women mechanics, plumbers and lawyers, as well as more traditional occupations like hairdressers. The Circus thus occupies a strategic place within a range of women's and other social and cultural networks in addition to its role as a dedicated performance institution.

Its general performance workload increased markedly as the Circus' reputation grew and, with it, Jackson's reputation as a director. Even during preparation for the first season, groups of Circus women undertook 'demonstration gigs' by invitation from arts industry and women's groups, such as the Writers Week Festival, the Western Women's Health Service and the Reclaim the Night Collective, both as an effective means of publicity and in solidarity with like-minded causes²⁵. In later years these opportunities multiplied, ranging from small one-off performances to extended public seasons, such as the Circus' featured appearances on spectacular river barges during Melbourne's Moomba Festival in 1994, 1995 and 1996. In 1995, the Circus community devoted a major effort to preparing and fundraising for the attendance of thirteen Circus women at the Fourth UN World Women's NGO Forum and Conference in Beijing, to present a performance featuring the stories of women political prisoners in association with the Australian branch of Amnesty International. This tour was followed by a show in Melbourne by the whole Circus based on the same source material. Each of these activities enlarged the Circus' network of contacts, but also increased audience expectations, and placed additional pressure on organisers and performers. One answer to this was to involve supporters to better effect. The Sisters and Supporters Network, which had existed since the Circus' inception, was a means of gathering

financial and personal support, but had little other strategic impact. The Big Sisters group, convened occasionally at Jackson's invitation, was formed in an effort to bring together a group of influential senior women to advise on strategic direction and to act as a pool of consultants on particular issues, such as fundraising, marketing and internal organisation.

Organisationally, the Circus needed to adapt as numbers grew, but also to take into account the desire – which rapidly grew into a demand – from ongoing members for more involvement and more power in its decision-making structures. Jackson's at times autocratic style came under increasing criticism, but there was also a consciously expressed trust in and respect for her judgement (Ousley interview 1993), and a determination to resolve internal issues of power and participation in an optimistic and pragmatic fashion. This pressure began to build during the 1993 'Women and Sport' performance season and came to a head towards the end of 1994, as I have documented elsewhere (Richards, A., 1998). In 1995 a thorough internal review resulted in organisational overhaul, instituting a more participatory structure. A number of factors have however combined to enhance the power of influential longstanding members. The interim 'Top Dog' system, which evolved from 1993 onwards, featured semi-independent 'crews' based on the small groups of the first season, each given responsibility for tasks and nominating, or endorsing the self-nomination, of a 'Top Dog' as its leader or co-ordinator. In the 1995 restructure nine groups were established (Newsletter, Tech Crew, Support Group, Music Group, Trainers/Tutors, Physical Training, Special Projects, Labour Exchange and Childcare), representatives from each forming a policy-making committee which advises the administrative group, consisting of the Artistic Director, the Administrator and the Workshop Director/Chief Trainer. Many of these committee positions were occupied by previous 'Top Dogs' and subsequent changeovers have been made within a structure

demonstrating overall stability in personnel. The balance has further shifted since Jackson's retirement at the end of 1996. Although the Artistic Director still retains a great deal of practical and aesthetic influence, the Circus is now effectively a 'constitutional monarchy' in which the opinions of its members, as articulated by the leadership group, carry significant weight. With the Circus' charismatically-led establishment phase behind it, and its 'ways of being' established, an incoming Artistic Director can expect to have to respond to a strong internal *habitus* and in turn be able to adapt, rather than transform, its ethos and performance vocabulary. As Swee Leng Lim remarked: 'people come and go, but it's still the same Women's Circus' (Lim interview 1994). That said, given that the Circus' core values include openness, a welcome to difference, and a preference for action over debate, new ideas and ways of working can be expected to receive at least a provisionally positive response²⁶.

Bodies, Issues and Resistances

The 1991 season established an approach to the working process, a performance vocabulary, a set of communal values and a number of characteristic performance tropes that became a lasting part of the Circus' corporate identity. It also revealed disjunctions and tensions, particularly over internal power balances and styles of decision-making. Some were resolved, or at least negotiated, over the next few years, but other issues were less easily addressed. The inclusion of survivors of incest and sexual assault was a key component of the original vision, and an important aspect of the pitch for funding. It remains one of the Circus' strong claims to feminist and social activist status. Recruitment of survivors had been effectively carried out through women's and health networks. However, establishing an effective approach to physical work, and especially to performance work, with a mixed group of survivors and other women presented continual challenges in practice, and revealed

contradictions in some of the Circus' basic goals, which continued as a source of conflict and dissatisfaction. There was an obvious potential contradiction between the desire that women find self-actualisation through physical work, which they were encouraged to take at their own pace, and the inexorable march towards performance, which placed pressure on all participants to achieve consistency in skill development at the same time.

Incest survivors often reported feelings of disconnection from their bodies, a lack of trust in themselves and others, and specific fears to do with touch and body image. Despite the symbolic centrality of their presence, the survivors felt that insufficient attention had been paid to their needs as the first workshop cycle got underway. There were no support structures in place for them and few references to their situation in group discussions: 'we haven't been talking about the issues that come up for women working physically, and how working this way can bring up issues/memories/fears for many women, particularly survivors of abuse' (Women's Circus, 1991b, September). In response, survivor and activist Helen North convened the Tower of Strength Support Group, which discussed their hopes, fears and expectations, and canvassed ways of overcoming the blocks hindering their ability to use the Circus experience in a positive way. The group developed strategies, including 'the formation of support groups of four or so women within training workshops ... [as a] framework for providing and receiving support within the circus and a means of breaking down individual women's isolation' (Helen North in Women's Circus, 1997: 44).

It is clear that this strategy, which included ongoing Support Group meetings, succeeded for some women. Survivor Linda Wilson reported: 'I have never trusted anyone with my physical safety ... it was a huge and frightening discovery for me ... the circus not only enabled me to discover this, but to work on it ... I felt safe at the circus, safe enough to

be myself' (Wilson, L., undated, ?1992). For Helen North, however, the resulting compromise was still unsatisfactory. Even though she respected Jackson, she felt that the survivors were being sidelined politically, and that despite the non-competitive rhetoric there was too much emphasis on the performance agenda at the expense of real engagement with survivors' issues (North interview 1992). She remained with the Circus until 1993, but eventually left feeling that her energies were better directed elsewhere.

A similar set of issues surrounded the Circus' success with other 'priority groups' identified for positive discrimination in recruitment on the basis of their under-representation in Circus membership. As well as survivors of sexual assault, the Circus had agreed to give priority to women over forty and, from 1993, to women from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Strategies employed were inadequate in attracting and retaining women from these groups. Older women joined the Circus, but frequently found the expectations of physical prowess, and the standards set by younger women, too confronting; women from non-English speaking backgrounds were not being reached in the first place. It was evident that despite its inclusivist stance, in practice the Circus was dominated by young, fit, middle-class women of Anglo-Celtic background. The problem for older women was met through Jean Taylor's initiative in forming POW (Performing Older Women), which by 2002 had a membership of around 50 (POW - Performing Older Women's Circus, 2002). Taylor and others ensured that POW's aims clearly spelled out its commitment to lesbian visibility as well as older women's physical and performative development. The issue of how to establish greater cultural diversity in the Circus has proved more intractable. Vig Geddes' account of efforts to attract NESB women reveals a series of well-meaning initiatives, but a lack of effective internal support mechanisms. She also makes the point that: 'There has been no formal follow-up of women who have left, so it is difficult to

know in what ways the circus could change to better satisfy women's needs' (Vig Geddes in *Women's Circus*, 1997: 48-51).

Such difficulties reveal a tacit stasis, the dominance within the Circus of a group for whom its rhetoric and practices are sufficiently comfortable to work against systemic change and the active recruitment of outsiders and minorities. The curious position of lesbians – practically influential, formally invisible – is one indication of the Circus' preferred occupation of a popular, uncontroversial feminist middle ground. Another is the evidence of the Circus' framing of its performing bodies. Whereas its early performance projects, such as the 1991 season, presented women in irreverent, scanty costuming doing risky and at times raucous things (Stephanie Bunbury's review of the 1994 season lauded its 'worthiness, vigor and vulgarity' Bunbury, 1994), in later years, while the worthiness remains, the vulgarity is increasingly absent. In recent years international feminist performance artists have been increasingly preoccupied with the provocations of what Rebecca Schneider has dubbed 'The Explicit Body' (Schneider, 1997) in its intersections with commodity capitalism – a direction pursued with relish by fellow Australian queer physical performance group Club Swing (Tait, 1998). There are signs that the establishment of a *habitus* within the Circus has, while undoubtedly contributing to its longevity as a performance organisation, inhibited its continued movement within the rhetorical field of feminist performance practice

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted an analysis of the field of cultural production in contemporary Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand through an investigation of four selected sites of theatrical performance practice. Paired to include two elite training academies and two 'alternative' theatre companies, these were selected to illustrate the spread of the field. They represent key positions in the subfield of state-subsidised theatre culture. The investigation was concerned with the internal dynamics of embodiment and enculturation evident in these selected sites, but also with the constitution of the field in its relations to other fields, including the field of power. It has been approached as a problem in Performance Studies and has been carried out using a mixed qualitative field study methodology, together with an account of cultural and other contextual factors affecting the positions taken up by the people and organisations concerned. The data was drawn from my own observations, from formal interview and informal conversation with site participants and from other published sources including official statistical surveys. The conceptual apparatus employed drew primarily from Bourdieu's imperfectly aligned notions of field and *habitus* and from Goffman's theory of perceptual and behavioural frames. I also consulted bodies of literature drawn from Performance and Cultural Studies, together with feminist and other scholarship on embodiment, postcoloniality and globalisation. In the Introduction, I defined the research in terms of three main research questions. What kind of answers to each of these do our findings now suggest?

The autonomy of the field in relation to established patterns of social performance

Contemporary Australasian theatrical performance practice demonstrates the characteristics of a field, according to Bourdieu's criteria. It occupies a social space of positions and practices and demonstrates a homology

between positions taken and positions taken up, together with 'a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 16). It is a component of the field of cultural production: it shares some positions and maintains relations with other activities in the 'literary or artistic field' Bourdieu describes, but it operates according to schemes of perception and appreciation that mark it as a self-referential 'world', or set of social spaces, and so deserves attention as a field of practice in its own right. A study of this field provides a useful corrective to analyses of culture that focus primarily on disembodied modes of representation, in that it is impossible adequately to understand its operations unless it is treated as a set of related bodies and behaviours.

A primary conclusion of the research is that any adequate analysis of field operations must take issues of embodiment into account. The persistence of field positions is very much dependent on the establishment of *habitus*. In turn, the establishment of *habitus* depends on certain patterned behaviours or habits being privileged in relation to others. The occupation of positions within the field and the contestation over positionality that accompanies it happen simultaneously with the production of frames of meaning that organise habits strategically. These are keyed or weighted by agents, either operating from established positions of authority or in contest for such positions, within the subfields constituted by the positions themselves and by positional alliances within and outside the field¹. These cycles of interaction and the incommensurate relations between field and *habitus* govern the production and reproduction of bodies, behaviours and field positions overall. Bourdieu recognises the relation of field and *habitus*: 'we still have to describe the relationships among the individual agents, thus their *habitus*, and the forces of the field, which are objectified in a trajectory and a work' (Bourdieu, 1993a: 189). But his and other studies of culture tend to leave the located, embodied practice of agents out of frame. Since

embodiment is both the mode of interaction and the medium of aesthetic expression for performers, an investigation of their patterns of behaviour serves a double function: it can reveal general aspects of embodiment and the acquisition of *habitus* otherwise hard to access, while also providing detail on the dispositions and bodyways specific to the field.

The institutions and formations studied clearly reveal tensions between groupings of positions and dispositions within the field. It is possible to construct a plausible theoretical abstraction of this field, comprising 'ideal types' (Weber, 1980: 51-55) of dominant/autonomous and subordinate/heteronomous poles. The autonomous or 'mainstream' pole is marked by claims to distinction based on a canonical approach to repertoire and by rules governing the production of a high art theatre aesthetic, the heteronomous or 'alternative' pole by claims to relevance, engagement with 'the real' and by the desire to instantiate and 'real/ise' marginal, oppositional, transgressive and emergent cultural forms. However, the positions taken up by the studied configurations are in practice far less clear-cut: 'art' and 'relevance' constitute symbolic capital, strategically invoked by the occupants of one position or another, from time to time, in contests over status and resources.

Considered as a component of the broader field of cultural production, the field of theatrical performance practice demonstrates a particularly heteronomous character. It maintains relations with nationally and internationally active fields and formations, which constantly impact on its practices and products. Of all forms of Western art practice, theatrical performance production processes are most dependent on face-to-face and body-to-body interaction in a social context. This is true both of the relations between practitioners and of those between artists/artform and audience. Mimetic relations also govern the works of art produced, at least insofar as key production and audience formations support the persistence of realist and other mimetic conventions². A full picture of

these relations, requiring analysis of the whole cycle of production including interaction with audiences (McConachie, 1992), is outside the scope of this study. However, as the case studies show, the impact of heteronomous field constitution, as mediated through social performance practices, clearly affects the processes of enculturation and embodiment in the selected sites. In both Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, field positions are still marked by the inheritance of colonialism. The state-consecrated culture established after World War II was specifically British in character, its performers trained to mimic 'British' comportment and vocal inflections. Important subsequent shifts have been produced through other external cultural influences, albeit with local inflections. The theatre continues to be an important arena for the rehearsal of issues of nationalism and cultural identity, but the struggle for a national voice has been succeeded by more complex considerations, which affect the representation of particular local cultural formations, policies of multi- or bi-culturalism, indigenous issues, social movements and so on, in their relation to an increasingly internationalised cultural politics, further contributing to the heteronomy of the field.

The field is also marked by the unequal distribution of both economic and cultural capital. For many subordinate players position is tenuous and contingent on recognition by others; for dominant players status may not ultimately depend on the field itself, but on forces outside it. Field configuration has been decisively affected by the theatre's shift in status from a popular mass medium to a relatively marginal and heavily subsidised sphere of cultural and economic activity, and by the continued subordination of local culture to the products and cultural traditions of Britain and the United States. Government subsidy in the years following World War II was instrumental in creating the conditions for an art theatre; contemporary art theatre practice continues to be affected by indebtedness to subsidy and direct or indirect relations to the field of power. To a certain extent, these relations are symbiotic: a relatively

autonomous sphere of artistic practice is enabled through government support, at the same time as the state derives prestige from its patronage of artistic 'excellence'. Since the mid-1950s, contests over the canonical configuration of high art theatre practice have reflected, and in some ways led, debates over nation and national interest. At the same time, government policy has undergone marked shifts in response to economic and cultural globalisation. A significant proportion of Federal and State support for the arts continues to be directed to established performing arts companies and activities, though this cannot keep pace with costs and has been progressively less easy to obtain. It is difficult, though not entirely impossible, for non-mainstream artists and new projects to access subsidy. This has exposed the field to new pressures: mainstream art theatre repertoire and production practices have become increasingly commercialised, while non-mainstream practice has fractalised between the attempt to build local relations with specific audience and interest subgroups, and an emergent configuration of avant-garde art theatre practice.

Contemporary theatrical performance practice is subordinate to the influence of newer image-based forms and technologies such as film and television, but in important respects derives its claims to art status from its resistance to them. Despite increasing pressure on components of the field of cultural production to justify the receipt of government support in economic terms (Stevenson, 2000), such resistance has allowed performance practitioners to continue to argue for protection and even exemption from market forces. The case studies reveal a contest over the configuration of the dominant 'autonomous' pole of theatrical performance between two competing globalised declensions of practice. An alliance between the 'old' high art Anglophone text-based theatre and the globalised corporate culture industry is under challenge from a 'new', 'international', image-based and interdisciplinary physical theatre movement, influenced by a different strategic alliance, between the

European avant-garde and North American/British and local intelligenstias. In this struggle, different forms of capital are deployed. The 'old' declension draws on economic capital, political support and cultural legitimation through its association with the literary field and the residual prestige of the British theatre tradition. The 'new' declension relies on international cultural capital, foregrounding non-verbal rather than literary communicative modes (Allen and Pearlman, 1999) and claiming distinction through its acknowledgement (and appropriation) of non-Western and paratheatrical modes of performance. The rise of a discourse of 'pure performance' and its associated practices raises the possibility of a split between institutional dominance and claims to field-specific autonomy. NIDA orients itself decisively towards the first declension, while Toi Whakaari gains strategic benefit from the second. Even here, however, the split becomes blurred on closer inspection. Actors trained in mimetic traditions can move relatively easily from theatre to film and television. But despite the profile of a small number of 'stars', they remain a subordinate employment category in the mass media industries; the theatre retains its status as their 'true home' and source of artistic legitimation. Performers emerging within the 'new' avant-garde formations are less likely to seek work in the mass media. Their skill base, their anti-mimetic aesthetic and their disdain for commercialism make transfer difficult: avant-garde artist/performers are frequently marginalised economically and in terms of their field position. They are, however, quite likely to value new technology and to use digital sound and image manipulation in the works they produce, hence entering into alliances with rising new technology industries and their practitioners, including visual and sound designers³. They are also more likely to valorise intercultural activity and to blur social performance boundaries based on gender, race and sexual preference (Pippen, 1998), aligning themselves to some extent with more avowedly 'left wing' community-based performance activists. At NIDA, a pragmatic 'industry' outlook coexists with efforts to reproduce the traditions of the

literary theatre and to preserve the residue of the Australian white nationalist New Wave. It acknowledges newly fashionable performance practices and multicultural redefinitions of national identity without admitting them to structural influence. At Toi Whakaari, an alliance with the 'new' avant-garde has coincided with a move towards Maori culture in response to local politicocultural circumstances, but the 'old' configuration of Anglophone practice is still present as a form of cultural insurance.

The heteronomous or marginal pole is characterised by a palpable lack of both material resources and cultural capital. Theatrical performance practice in this area of the field depends above all on the capital of commitment. In many cases artists are only able to occupy field positions by foregoing economic benefit, relying heavily on the support of specific audiences/communities and on activism around civic values and public goods. The self-description as 'professional', typical of non-mainstream performance practice, echoes the inversion of dominant values noted by Bourdieu as typical of the autonomous cultural field: artists working at the margins maintain strong stylistic and practice links with the avant-garde and frequently defend their work in terms of its artistic, as well as its sociocultural, value. Community theatre workers occupy the most heteronomous, as well as the most marginal, field positions. They are more likely to identify with the working class or with other marginalised social groups, but are also more likely to work through organised community-based or political institutions. They generally expect payment for their 'work', but are willing to accept very low rates or to operate on a barter system within countercultural formations. As the case studies show, alternative forms of institutional support for community theatre and other socially-oriented performance activities are available through philanthropy and through the strategic deployment of other avenues to state subsidy. These include funding structures supported by the discourses of cultural democracy, social justice, multiculturalism and

community. Non-institutional support must be garnered through individual activism and through appeals to particular social and cultural groupings, including those based on identity and political allegiance. Gilgul Theatre benefited from the strategic deployment of both high art and marginal cultural discourse and networks; institutionally, it was unable to survive the pressures of its structural position, although individual members, particularly its charismatic director, were able to capitalise on their position-taking as artist/outside to develop careers in better supported cultural structures – in Kosky's case straddling 'new' and 'old' globalised formations⁴. The Women's Circus, in contrast, has been able to build on a community base to become an ongoing organisation. It relies on the commitment of inner-urban feminists, including lesbian women, and maintains strong resource networks, gaining support both within and outside the formal arts subsidy structure on health and social justice grounds. Its survival and success in instituting its own dispositions and procedures shows that it is possible to change the field of positions through a strongly differentiated claim, although there are also indications that institutional conservatism can develop when an alternative position becomes routinised, reducing its ability to respond to further changes in its frameworks of reference.

Performance training and rehearsal interactions reveal a broad horizon of behaviours constitutive of *habitus* in its relation to field positionality. At the heteronomous pole, performance organisations (or proto-organisations) recruit directly from the surrounding population, with more-or-less effective filters for aesthetic orientation and skill set in place, depending on the activity. Recruits to the Women's Circus were drawn from existing women's networks and from those attracted to the image or idea of the activity; few had prior performance experience. Staff, who already had field-specific skills, were nevertheless not drawing directly on those skills in building the new organisation, but were improvising on the basis of prior experience. The clear articulation

of values, including relational expectations, provided a consensual framework which shaped subsequent interactions, allowing the organisation to develop, achieve internal complexity and survive changes in structure and leadership. This performative process – participants were encouraged to express their feelings and demonstrate the changes they experienced to themselves and to others – channelled established patterns of social performance in new directions, encouraging the development of a *habitus* specific to the Circus and allowing it to solidify as the organisation matured. The two training academies also recruit directly, but are positioned as gateways to later professional work formations. They therefore actively select on the basis of both field-specific and social performance characteristics, aiming at an enculturation process that will produce suitable candidates for formations and field positions in which the institution is already invested. Their selection, recruitment and training procedures are not monolithic: the research shows that each institution functions as a mini-field, within which staff, allied to different intra- and extra- field positions, are in contestation for space and influence. The development of a characteristic *habitus* thus depends on the ‘keying’ through which one mode of embodiment and discourse is preferred over another. Again, this is a performative process in which the student is an active participant. Although the institution’s corporate positioning is influential, as is the modelling of professional behaviours by staff, it is likely that patterns of contemporaneous social performance will continue to shape ‘mainstream’ performance training alongside the field-specific behaviours which are overt elements of the training regime.

The research does suggest, however, that the more autonomous the desired field position, the more distant the inculcated aesthetic performance *habitus* will be from connections with contemporaneous contexts of social performance. In the frame of Western performance, high art forms such as opera and ballet demonstrate a greater autonomy and hence greater differentiation from the everyday in the bodways of

performers than does theatre in general. The 'new' internationalist avant-garde comes closest to replicating this distinction. Its investment in training and its goals of persistent embodied change were encountered in this study through the presence of practitioners from specific avant-garde traditions as staff in the training academies. Gilgul also revealed a different configuration of relations with the social from that of 'mainstream' theatrical performance practice. Its members, who had prior performance experience, were largely drawn from university-influenced formations. The company made a concerted bid for art theatre status, investing its 'outsider' position and its citations of Jewish and European heritage to claim prestige in opposition to the established institutions of the 'provincial' and 'boring' local industry. Unlike the other sites studied, the process of performative habituation within the company did not invoke the participants' existing social experience as a basic element in the specific *habitus* being developed. Instead, the contemporaneous social performances of Gilgul's members were bracketed in favour of a specific, synthetic set of behavioural conventions. All stage bodies were presented as 'Jewish' and an ironic mimesis of 'Jewishness' developed as the company's internal interactive mode. The artifice involved was not hidden, but itself became a counter in the knowing theatricality that was simultaneously the company's dramaturgical method and its mode of cultural critique. But despite the intellectual and performative sophistication of its members the company as a whole eschewed both organised body regimes and codified approaches to performance vocabulary and compositional methodology. 'Acting Jewish' as a proto-*habitus* proved an insufficiently robust framework to sustain the dramaturgies involved in the continued production of new work. Reasonably successful efforts to invoke body techniques - as well as literary and cultural references - were made in later work, but it appeared that by then the company structure itself had lessened in importance as a 'container' for performance exploration. Some company members were able to deploy the aesthetic capital created

to move into other field positions, but all were effectively returned to their prior contexts, habits and dispositions. Since this pattern of intense though contingent habituation, followed by dispersal and return to non-field specific contexts, is itself typical of the project-to-project experience of many professional performers, the question of the conditions under which particular and field-specific *habitus* can develop must now be the subject of consideration.

Embodiment in performance practice in relation to the dynamic tensions active in reference cultures

Performance training and other forms of psychophysical habituation produce systems of practice in which body techniques are intimately linked to dramaturgies (modes of aesthetic/expressive production) and to other struggles over position and distinction. In its 'pure form' or ideal type as an unconscious and uninterrogated behavioural set, *habitus* tends toward the holistic, that is, to the state where social actors inhabit and manifest a complete and congruent world of overlapping frames and performances. In the contemporary cultural context *habitus* is more likely to be multiple and partial. A *habitus* in the process of formation is therefore itself usefully understood as a dynamic field, supported by ecologies of other behaviours and vulnerable to the withdrawal of framing support⁵, at least up to the point at which a set of dispositions is so comprehensive that it and its associated interpretive frames can withstand other competing behaviours and terms of reference. Despite the displacement of an 'ideal type' of traditional *habitus* in contemporary experience, the case studies show that the generation, individuation and adaptation of culture and *habitus* is a living process even in the most elite and hieratic of institutions.

Bourdieu's discussion of *habitus* assumes that the social actor remains in the same social space over time, but it is important to recognise that an

actor may be subject to, or able to activate, more than one *habitus* or *proto-habitus* depending on context. Social behaviours are produced performatively on the basis of generative dispositions, but actors can reproduce, adapt, or create new behaviours. This process can be seen clearly in the transition from social to aesthetic performance and in the generation of new aesthetic performance modes. Against Butler (Butler, 1990b), I would argue that performative behaviours are not simply a matter of reiteration. Mimicry is itself an almost impossible ideal: 'the same' behavioural sequence will vary in small but significant ways from one body and one context of reproduction to another and the recognition of 'sameness' is itself dependent on conventions of production and reception. Improvisation is a crucial element in both adaptative and creative modes. It is to be expected that improvised behaviours will not stray too far from existing frameworks and will be filtered through existing frames of understanding /meaning and selected for replication accordingly, but it is always possible for new behaviours to emerge. In fact, they will constantly emerge, on the model of random mutations. They will persist where compatible with existing field positions or where they are perceived to instantiate new frames of meaning/understanding. I suggest that this generally occurs on a tacit 'trial and error, lock and key' basis (Feyerabend, 1978). But this study shows that there are occasions where the production of new behaviours and body techniques potentially constitutive of *habitus* is conscious and methodical. Again, possibilities for improvisation are not limitless. Framing and filtering processes will set boundaries to speculation and limit non-conforming or transgressive behaviour. Gaining a foothold is crucial: a new field position and its accompanying *proto-habitus* can generally only be initiated with considerable effort. But, after a certain point and in the absence of repression, the overlap of frames can create a subfield conducive to the transformation of improvisation into convention through iteration/rehearsal and thence into code. The Women's Circus and its supporting networks are a good example of a 'stand-alone' position and

the accompanying development of *habitus*, achieved through the integration of physical habit and value frameworks over time⁶. The other case studies give evidence of a new position, and/or support for a marginal *habitus*, being established within the ecology offered by an existing institution. This can occur with official support as in the case of Toi Whakaari, or unofficially as in the strategic position occupied by the gay subculture at NIDA. Without such support, it is difficult for a 'new' *habitus* to survive.

In the case of Gilgul, 'acting Jewish' was balanced precariously between seeking authentication from the Jewish community and endorsement from the theatrical avant-garde. Given their anti-authentic aesthetic, it is unsurprising that members who wished to continue as performance professionals opted for the protection of other field-specific positions and institutions, drawing on their experience in performative theatricality but allowing their 'Jewishness' to decay into latency. The same dilemma holds for other performers who move from one project to another, without ongoing institutional protection. The existence of a low-level but persistent 'base *habitus*' then becomes strategically important. This *habitus* operates, as Hebdige suggests for all subcultures (Hebdige, 1979), through entrenched and/or latent 'strips of behaviour', which will be recognised by other members and readily activated/elaborated when the overdetermination of frames signals an appropriate context. The corporate ritual life of both training institutions provides a good example of initiation into such a base *habitus*, although questions must remain about the degree to which Toi Whakaari's 'bicultural bodies' will find frame support and opportunities for the activation of relatively recently acquired behaviours after graduation. In this context, NIDA's emphasis on modelling 'professional' behaviours through its play production program, its active maintenance of industry links and its offer of ongoing institutional and emotional support to graduates, assumes great strategic importance in tiding over those without opportunities for professional

practice for shorter or longer periods of time. Performers without such sources of support will find it harder to maintain and renew a 'base *habitus*'. They must rely on specific skills classes, 'scene' opportunities at launches and openings and interaction with other members of the field⁷. Again, I would argue that this demonstrates the subordination of specific habits or body techniques to the keying power of frame in determining the persistence of generative dispositions.

It is important to note that the action of frame and the foundations of *habitus*, are established interactively through modalities that include, but are by no means restricted to, the discursive. Against the dominant trends in semiology, cultural and media studies which have either asserted that language is central to cultural meaning (Barthes, 1967) or devoted considerable energy to constructing visual and other more or less syntactically organised communicative modes as 'languages' (Hall, 1997), I would argue that it is precisely the often unconscious absorption of dispositions and associations by way of non-verbal modalities and their incommensurability with language that contributes so much to the persistence and generative power of *habitus*. In my discussion of the NIDA selection process, I hypothesised that social values were being transmitted and applied through *imagos* or 'templates' of ideal bodies and behaviours imbricated with other dispositional assumptions, but also observed that the mechanisms of preference guiding selectors were wholly or partially unavailable to discourse⁸. Avant-garde and physical theatre practices have consciously foregrounded these 'other' modalities as the foundation of their techniques and dramaturgies; however, awareness of and attention to them is still a matter of keying and enculturation. In the Women's Circus and at Toi Whakaari, new *habitus* have been successfully established through the conscious application of a combination of body-based skill regimes, together with embodied ritual and other iterative extra-technical interactions. But consciously 'alternative' non-verbal performance-making techniques, such as those

Jamieson attempted to impart at NIDA, were unlikely to become established in the bodies of students when not endorsed by, or perceived as secondary to, other dispositions and practices implicitly or explicitly valued by those with institutional and contextual authority. Conversely, where the congruence of frames and positionality create a predisposition favourable to a particular behavioural element or sequence, or where the element or sequence completes a potential ecology, fills a gap or creates a link between existing frames of practice, then the unexpected production of, or short-term exposure to, new behaviours can be absorbed and reproduced almost instantly, resulting, as Mauss observed, in quite solid conditions for future reproduction.

I would certainly advise anyone setting up training curriculum, a new theatre company or other organisational structure, to review their field position and to consider their institutional ecology as a practice, that is, a set of embodied perspectives and experiences. Goals are far more likely to be achieved, and a productive *habitus* to develop, where there is a congruent relation between the inculcation of specific body techniques or regimes, the iteration of corporeal encounters on an institutional or community level and the way related frames of meaning are organised and keyed. Informal as well as formal encounters will influence the way meanings are produced, explicit and implicit meanings must both be considered⁹. Where specific physical capacities and styles are dramaturgically important, so is 'thinking through the body' to develop new pedagogies. Here, corporeal zones and levels of integration must be addressed in concert with an assessment of the epistemological reach of accompanying frameworks of understanding and modes of discourse. Above all, such a process needs to be understood as performative. An engagement with perspective and an understanding of the effort involved on the part of participants – appreciation of their differences, empathy with their struggles and an ethic of mutual support and trust – is more likely to produce a *habitus* generative of new solutions to performance

problems than is a culture dependent on mimicry and the defence of entrenched power relations.

Australasian theatrical performance practice therefore reveals strong connections with social performance in its reference cultures. It is subject to a mix of influences, where transcultural, transnational and/or global factors are at issue alongside national and local factors. As in the broader sociocultural sphere, outcomes vary and are a matter of continued contestation. These connections, as with field-specific interactions, show framing processes at work. I suggest that *habitus* in reference cultures is also likely to be multiple and partial. A distinction needs to be made between embedded or 'base *habitus*', which derive a capacity to persist through overlapping frames of meaning and practice, and the strategic application of body techniques in particular performative circumstances or in response to specific technical or dramaturgical demands/expectations. Positions and their accompanying relational dispositions are more likely to persist and to be capable of reproduction where they have institutional or other structural support, particularly where 'keying' of frames of meaning and interpretation is directed by those in positions of authority, or where alliances with other positions or fields and access to specific kinds of capital can be established. Their constitution remains, however, as Bourdieu suggested, a matter of practice in which unconscious elements and non-verbal modalities predominate and where improvisation and its reception make an important contribution to how interactions are shaped.

The Representation and Expression of Cultural Difference and Social Change

The research has shown that Australasian theatrical performance practice constitutes a field delineating a diversity of positions and practices. Performers are artists who instantiate and crystallise culturally linked

ideals and bodyways. They exercise their own influence both within the fields and subfields they occupy and in the broader cultural imaginary. While comprehensive cultural and performance analyses need to take into account the 'reach effect' of different media of transmission and representation, the case studies show that body-to-body processes are still culturally central and in their aesthetic form a powerful and effective means whereby a reference culture is enabled towards a condition of performative reflexivity. Josette Féral observes: 'Performance does not aim at *a* meaning, but rather *makes* meaning insofar as it works right in those extremely blurred junctures out of which the subject eventually emerges' (Féral, 1997: 292). I would add, with Victor Turner, that performance does not address questions of subjectivity alone. It is above all a social process: 'a condition in which a sociocultural group ... turn, bend, or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other ... components which make up their public "selves"' (Turner, V., 1986: 24). Theatrical performance practices, as elements of this reflexive process, will inevitably participate in shaping the perceptions a society has of itself. In turn, a society's established perceptions, ideas and positions will impact upon the field of performance, creating the conditions for contestation over who performs, what they perform, the circumstances of their performance, how it will be received and by whom.

Against Bourdieu, I would suggest that the field of theatrical performance practice deserves study in the context of contemporary sociocultural politics precisely because of its blurred boundaries - it is a field where heteronomy can function as an item of cultural capital. Contemporary discussions of globalisation reveal a high level of anxiety, not only about its potential to iron out local differences in a totalising sameness, but also about the degree to which existing samenesses, of national, gender and other 'personal' identity, are being frozen and

turned into commodities or items of ex/change, thus preventing the emergence of new differences (Spivak, 1995). Unlike Watson, (Watson, 2001) I do not see that globalisation need necessarily result in a uniform 'professional identity' for performers across cultures, any more than it ought to result in the preservation of all existing variants of national or local performance practices. As the case studies show, there are a number of competing images/frames of professional behaviour, and a variety of possible relations between performers and their reference culture(s), currently extant in the field. In an era when theorists argue that the global economy is becoming increasingly aestheticised (Roberts, 2002), performers are important players in 'the economy of the imaginary'. Their bodies are sites of struggle over social values and the limits to what human bodies can represent. These processes operate on a different level to the processes of representation that tend to be the main focus of other cultural studies. But, to the extent that a performer functions as a *mimos*, the ostension of performers' bodies within the narrative and image-based frames of performance (and the splitting-apart and cobbling-together of sameness that they *are*, whatever they *present*) acts as a variable with the potential to disrupt, even where it appears to underline, the mimetic power of theatrical representation. Performers are certainly subject to the cold winds of competition and the field positions available to them guarded by committed interests, but we should not discount their power to propose, present and protest.

To what extent can studios and rehearsal rooms act as behavioural laboratories? In the observed sites, particular sociocultural issues were clearly being negotiated, through the direct engagement of participants and filtered through field-specific concerns. It might be expected that the choice of 'authorised' government-subsidised performance institutions and formations would skew the findings towards the dominant/autonomous pole, but this did not turn out to be the case. Globalisation, locality and identity were matters of general contestation,

although different dynamic relations to dominant cultural formations and to other fields, including the field of power, were evident from site to site. Multiculturalism/biculturalism, gender and indigenous/postcolonial issues manifested in sometimes surprising ways. NIDA, the most conservative elite institution, itself functioned as a contested field. Its students experienced complex processes of induction into field-specific rules of seeing, being and interpretation. NIDA also manipulated its corporate positionality to accommodate contradictory high art, pragmatic industry and government policy configurations, and provided a space for the elaboration of selected marginal bodyways and *habitus*. It operated as a patriarchal, but not a solely heterosexual, hierarchy. It appeared to have lost something of its role in the representation of national identity, was ambivalent on the question of multiculturalism and had difficulty accommodating the needs of indigenous and other minority background students and women, other than those selected for star potential according to established criteria. In many ways, NIDA's stance mirrored problems with indigenous reconciliation and the accommodation of cultural difference experienced in its reference cultures. It allied itself to what it saw as the dominant culture's terms and appeared unwilling or unable to offer greater concessions than could be managed with largely symbolic gestures toward inclusion. I would predict continued difficulty over these issues and over the question of succession when the current Director retires.

Biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand has produced a differently configured space for both social and aesthetic performance to that prevailing in Australia. Here, local considerations have allowed aesthetic performance practice to lead in exploring, rather than simply reflecting, a particular set of new expressive/effective possibilities. The equivalent national training institution, Toi Whakaari, was also grappling with issues of globalisation and how best to prepare its students for future professional employment. Representatives of the internationalist avant-

garde were more prominent, the 'new' declension of art theatre operating as a catalyst to bridge a classical 'British' theatre training heritage and an emergent bicultural nationalism. As at NIDA, a number of contested positions were in play, but Toi Whakaari adopted a different approach to globalisation and identified other avenues to international success, paradoxically through its engagement with and aestheticisation of locally originating sociocultural issues. It was clearly occupied with issues of communitarian and local identity, but appeared to be aware of, and took steps to provide for, the expression and performative representation of other marginal identities. The authoritative position of women with a background in drama and education, employing a student-centred approach to learning, was evident in the open internal culture of the institution, its relatively even gender and ethnic mix and its support for individual students' development needs. As a field in miniature, Toi Whakaari was not yet a fully stable formation, its *habitus* still in process. But the successful change of Director and other key staff showed that the 'new' elements were sufficiently congruent to form a resilient internal culture. This included a genuine effort to address cultural issues performatively: its program already had a clear impact in other areas of New Zealand theatre and was a potential 'beachhead' for the negotiation of biculturalism in other sociocultural spheres.

Gilgul Theatre thrived on the energy it derived from a fragile but dynamic balance of poststructural, postcolonial and cultural- and field-specific sensibilities. The timing of my field study provided an opportunity to observe corporate and personal responses to the stresses experienced by a minority proto-*habitus* in relation to the power of more established field formations. The position taken by the group and the perceived quality of its product were initially effective in securing it a presence in the field, but it was vulnerable to the strategic actions of individual members and the contradictions inherent in its internal balance of power. Sustaining an aesthetic, its internal dispositions and a field

position required a balancing act that ultimately failed and led to eventual dispersal as a functioning entity. The company resisted offers of institutional support tied to changes in procedure, but could not continue without them. Ironically, the effort to substitute a 'professional' *habitus* for the idiosyncratic, theatrical/ethnic proto-*habitus*, which initially differentiated it from more established field formations, was one of the factors contributing to its demise. Internally, gender politics cut differently to the cultural and field-specific issues the company faced. Its women members were more likely to invest emotionally in 'Gilgul', but their collective desires had less power than the more instrumental positions articulated by the men. Kosky's own career and aesthetic imperatives exerted the greatest influence on the company's formation and dissolution, despite the collaborative way of working that prevailed at its height. 'Professional' career ambitions as well as gender, cultural and historical loyalties appeared to govern later collaborations between its members. Gilgul's example shows how hard it is for small alternative theatre companies to survive – their record is not good in general – but also that it is possible for the performative expression of cultural difference to challenge established structures and demand at least temporary acknowledgement and accommodation within the field.

The Women's Circus is a specifically feminist and 'alternative' performance organisation, which has enjoyed exceptional longevity and success. It has built on its direct relationships with a 'critical mass' of pre-existing practices and networks of support, but also on its strategic deployment of field-specific claims to relevance and excellence. It shows the potential for an alliance between performance and social change in its conscious development of a *habitus* that bridges aesthetic and social performance. Its techniques and positions combine the traditions of community and physical theatre with an emphasis on health, social justice and women's issues. It aspires to more than theatrical status, but its corporate identity is inevitably bound up with performance

presentation, blurring the boundaries between effectivity and expressivity with its avowed emphasis on entertainment. It operates with a mix of the ritualistic and the fictional/speculative in its internal relations and in its relations with its audience, who are predominantly but not exclusively women. How far, then, can the Circus bear the weight of expectation as an instantiation of feminist utopia? It has been outstandingly successful in developing new bodyways and new feminist body-based approaches to pedagogy and community-building, but the development over time of its habituation processes reveal an increased conservatism and decreased ability to achieve its own goals of greater diversity in the cultural and class origins of its members. The style and content of its produced works also reveal a growing distance from recent concerns with the disruptive and transgressive display of the body in the specific reference subfield of women's/feminist performance. On the other hand, it has proven robust as an institution, able to respond dynamically to changing circumstances. It occupies an iconic cross-field position as a political women's performance organisation and retains enormous affection and loyalty from both members and audience.

Composing a thesis is also a process and a performance. The keystrokes I make now mark a pause, a breath in a web of stories and encounters, in the flesh and over distance. For me they are already the marks of memory, but the solidity of text stores what has passed through my body in a form that will now enter, in unpredictable ways, into the bodies of others. In the course of this research over a twelve year period, I have engaged with other bodies, spaces, sounds, words and texts in complex ways. The memory of sound, sight and touch connects me to other people, to paper, to plastic, to words on pages and images on screens, but also to ideas, to ways of looking at things and ways of speaking about them. It is easy to forget that in the process of looking, remembering and writing, those bodies, those images, those texts and those objects are being manipulated, turned and re/presented. I own what I have written as

my account, as honestly told as I can - but also as fiction, as a story about sensation and perception. Like the Salvation Army with the drunk, my purpose has been to bring the reader to see something of what I see. But the material in my show is not insensate. I have carefully chosen the frame, the distance and the place from where I invite the spectator to begin, but I do not want to recreate the space of theatre in theory and I hope the reader has not felt obliged to stay where I suggest they stand. I hope also that I have not been too much in the way; above all I have wanted to open up a space for new encounters and for new conversations, answers to Goffman's question 'what is going on here', inflected and refracted through different voices and positions. As Terry Threadgold puts it: 'A whole range of theoretical fictions are necessary ... to let us see around the corners of our theories and the stories in which we are entrenched, because they are in our bodies' (Threadgold, 1997: 133). I would add, we also need to be reminded to put our bodies back into our stories. It is in the hope of getting outside the monologues of disciplines that have but one ticket outlet and bind our ordered bodies in our ordered places, that I have set up my patch and presented my show. I want to remind you that audiences can be performers too. If someone says, 'do not forget the other woman', I would ask, do you know where she lives? Do you know what she does and what she sees? Find her out, visit with her, ask her - tell me.

Notes

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ Bourdieu refers here to the position of unsophisticated observers faced with scholarly culture, but the point applies with equal force to other situations where mistakes are made through the application of inappropriate interpretive frameworks. The problem of 'spectacles of culture' is very much at issue in the academic approach to performance, where as Terry Threadgold points out: 'much academic theory owes a good deal to the practice of performance but ... [has] forgotten the materiality of which it was born' (Threadgold, 1999: 64).

² The space and time of the performance event brings the world of the performer into conjunction with the world of the audience. It crystallises the imaginative, physical and phenomenological relations between aesthetic and social performance. It is the moment in the performance cycle towards which processes of training tend and around which ecologies of practice are organised. But it is not the only way performers engage with their reference cultures, nor are the performer/audience relationships of Western theatre the only point of theoretical interest in the world of performance practice. In this research project, the formal performance event has largely been bracketed out in order to focus more closely on other constitutive elements of the field, as has the detailed focus on audience constitution, conventions of behaviour, reading practices and so forth that forms the 'other term' in considering performance as a socially situated set of practices. Such bracketings make it easier to see that performance events are organised in a variety of ways and at different levels of formality, as are performer/observer relations. In the chapters that follow, occasions and relations of performance are attended to and described as they were encountered in the course of observation.

³ In the Western tradition, associated field descriptors with strong associations to the literary dramatic canon, as distinct from 'physical theatre', 'circus', 'music theatre', 'opera', 'vaudeville' and so on. Writing in 1968, Raymond Williams could speak of the connection between a work of literature and its performance as being 'the normal situation' in drama (Williams, R., 1972: 170) Although this connection is still a strong mark of distinction for 'mainstream' European theatre, it is now recognised by performance theorists as a particular rather than a defining case.

⁴ There is a strong argument that even in the most canonical of text-based theatres, the actor's art constitutes a distinct and vital element, a point forcefully made by Coquelin 'Yes, the actor creates, even when interpreting the dreams of a genius like Racine, Corneille and Hugo ... there is always a considerable distance between the type dreamed of and the type actually living and breathing ... it must have its peculiar manner of coming and going, of laughing, crying, walking, breathing, talking and moving .. this habit which the character needs is furnished by the actor, and the actor alone' (Coquelin, 1954: 21). He goes on to show how 'stage business' and other extra-textual elements of performance practice are transmitted between performers independently of the playtext itself. I would argue that in any case writing for the theatre is the product of an intersection of practices. An experienced theatre writer (many of whom have themselves been actors) becomes part of a performance *milieu* over time, familiar with particular groups of theatre makers and contributing, often in direct exchange with specific actors, to the development of located style and performance practices (Cixous, 1997). The contemporary performer working on a historical theatre text encounters traces of other bodies and voices, echoes of the actors for whom the play was written and who first inhabited it.

⁵ The subdiscipline of theatre semiotics initiated the project of a taxonomy of such distinguishing variables in performance *qua* text/object (see for example Elam, 1980; Pavis, 1982). Increasingly, it has been recognised that performance is more process than object, and that visible variables of practice are themselves culturally based; the project of a universal taxonomy of theatrical means has been succeeded by attempts to situate

'thick descriptions' of theatrical practices in relation to their sociocultural contexts (Pavis, 1992). See extended discussion in Ch. 2.

⁶ Techniques originating in theatrical performance practice, and trained performers themselves, are being used increasingly widely in situations ranging from classroom drama to medical and corporate training. Therapeutic applications of performance techniques (such as psychodrama and Playback Theatre), particular aspects of training (such as voice or improvisation), and particular traditions (such as *butoh* and other physical theatre forms), offer continuing workshop series that have only a tangential relationship to performance presentation. Even in the absence of a formally constituted audience, however, the ostender-onlooker relationship is usually preserved in some form as a core aspect of the activity.

⁷ 'Actors' are certainly to be found in the dramatic theatre, in film and on television portraying characters, and speaking dialogue generally written by others; however, such a narrow definition leaves out of account important strands of contemporary performance practice. Mark Minchinton uses a Deleuzian vocabulary to argue for a distinction between 'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian' production practices in contemporary Australian theatre. In his view, majoritarian practices depend on the primacy of text and the authority of the director; they are organised hierarchically on the basis of a rigid division of labour, whereas minoritarian practices are characterised by collective performance-making and a commitment to engage with the text performatively (Minchinton, 1998). While his description of 'majoritarian' practice provides a reasonably accurate sketch of production processes in the major State subsidised theatre companies, the bracketing of all 'other' realisation practice modes as 'minoritarian' is reductive. Bourdieu's notion of the field when applied to performance, in my view, affords recognition to a range of modes of practice which may be treated as positions taken and defended; it acknowledges the rhetorical element inherent in the choice of a particular way of working, and allows for a more nuanced assessment of the relations pertaining within the field as a whole.

⁸ It could certainly be argued that Bourdieu undertook to analyse preferences in consumption and physical deportment in his later writings; however, despite the detailed attention devoted to the links between taste and lifestyles in Chapters 3 and 4 of *Distinction*, Bourdieu appeared to be less interested in mapping the genesis of *habitus* and more in the ways in which, once acquired, it functions as a social operator 'both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification ... of these practices' (Bourdieu, 1986: 170). The sense of embodiment as practice and process is obscured in the focus on somatic phenomena as data revelatory of objective conditions of existence.

⁹ The Latin does accommodate a plural. English definitions range from the literal meaning of 'the condition or state of a thing', notions of habit, deportment and the figurative attribution of nature or character, to its neoclassical sense of 'an acquired perfect state or condition' (Lewis and Short, 1975: 836). I would propose that a contemporary amendment, to include the notion of a 'perfect enough' habitual condition, is compatible with Bourdieu's presentation of *habitus* as generative sets of largely unconscious dispositions.

¹⁰ In the mid to late 1990s, Australia's approach to multiculturalism came under intense criticism, both from conservative commentators defending a national identity based on British institutions and heritage (Blainey, 1994) and from those opposed to its institutionalisation as a means of managing rather than developing difference. Critics such as Sneja Gunew have pointed out that Indigenous Australians have sought to distance themselves from the homogenous 'non-Anglo other' to which multiculturalism consigns them. She also notes the difficulties faced by official multiculturalism in dealing with 'non-ethnic' cultural groupings, gender politics, and other issues. She suggests the need to link questions of cultural difference to an analysis of power inequalities as a way forward (Gunew, 1993).

¹¹ This unit has persisted, but various changes of name, function and organisational location are a pointer to its continually marginalised status. It is currently known as the Community Cultural Development Board.

¹² The policy of biculturalism is differently framed to that of multiculturalism in recognising indigenous and settler cultures as equal contributors to national identity. Debate in Aotearoa/New Zealand reveals a broad spread of opinion on the constitution and implementation of biculturalism as social policy. Biculturalism has been resisted by conservative nationalists, critiqued by Maori leaders on the grounds that it deflects real political demands (Walker, 1991), criticised for excluding women and those of other European, Asian and Polynesian descent (Mohanram, 1999a) and described as 'a synthetic creation, a product of Western intellectualism' (Upton, 1992: 151). The implications of its introduction are ambiguous, with an ambit extending far beyond the strictly cultural sphere. Nevertheless, as I will argue below, it has fostered the development of distinctively new alignments and conjunctions in the field of cultural production, which has become a core arena for the redefinition of positions on an experiential as well as a symbolic level.

¹³ The Australia Council Act 1975 states that the functions of the Council are: to formulate and carry out policies designed: i) to promote excellence in the arts; ii) to provide, and encourage the provision of, opportunities for persons to practise the arts; iii) to promote the appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the arts; iv) to promote the general application of the arts in the community; v) to foster the expression of a national identity by means of the arts; vi) to uphold and promote the rights of persons to freedom in the practise of the arts; vii) to promote knowledge and appreciation of Australian arts by persons in other countries; viii) to promote incentives for, and recognition of, achievement in the practice of the arts; ix) to encourage the support of the arts by the States, local governing bodies and other persons and organisations (Australia Council, 2001).

¹⁴ The stated General Priorities for Creative New Zealand Arts Board's funding programmes in the categories of Creative and Professional Development, New Work and Presentation, Promotion and Audience Development privilege activities that support both established and emerging artists, encourage originality, innovation and excellence, reflect New Zealanders' experiences and cultural identity, including experience of Maori arts, and have the potential to engage young audiences. However, applicants are warned that projects that can demonstrate little evidence of demand, and those from artists without a 'track record' are unlikely to be funded (Government of New Zealand, 2002a).

¹⁵ In 1992, the 'five guiding principles' of government involvement in the arts were defined as 'access and participation; creativity and excellence; diversity; valuing national heritage; and industrial viability' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992: 5).

¹⁶ See for example work emerging from the Centre for Performance Studies at the University of Sydney: (Threadgold, 1995; Potts, 1996; McAuley, 1999; Threadgold, 1999) (Schaefer, 1999; Fewster, 2001). In recent years the Centre's theoretical orientation has shifted from a commitment to semiotic analysis to the recognition of the usefulness of tools drawn from ethnography and reflexive sociology (Maxwell, 2001). However, its methodological focus continues to be the observation of specific in-theatre productions rather than on the interaction of field, *habitus* and cultural practice attempted here.

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ 'Naturalism', the particular declension of mimesis most favoured in the Western art theatre in the early twentieth century, requires a lengthy and detailed mental and physical preparation based on emotional identification with the role on the part of the actor. An emphasis on practical techniques addressing the problems encountered by working actors in 'genre' theatres will produce identifiably regional differences in style and approach, but I would still classify the British classical tradition with that of the various Stanislavskian schools, insofar as it retains characterisation as the basis for a range of presentational modes. As John Barton points out, a contemporary British actor will approach Shakespeare on the assumption that their task is to portray a psychologically 'believable' character, focusing on motivation or intention rather than on a historically more accurate rhetorical emphasis and gestural style (Barton, 1984).

The same point would broadly apply to the techniques taught in European acting schools preparing performers for careers in the classical and boulevard theatres, despite quite wide ranging differences of style in dramatic fashion along a continuum from the more 'realistic' or quotidian behaviours required of actors in domestic drama, to the specifically shaped physical and vocal stylisation expected of actors in rhetorical theatre forms. 'Soft naturalism' - the more or less detailed identification of the body of the actor with the embodied image of the character as a notional social personage - still constitutes a major epistemological performance framework within Western theatre, consistently held across other variations in technique and approach.

² Phenomenological and psychoanalytic/semiotic approaches have been enormously influential in opening new imaginative terrain for contemporary feminist theory, especially in exploring the imbrication between body-as-flesh, body-as-representation and body-as-experience (Kirby, 1997). The process of 'thinking through the body' (Gallop, 1988) in dialogue with various strands of French theory (Gatens, 1996) has in turn influenced avant-garde and contemporary feminist theatre practice. But as Elin Diamond points out from a materialist perspective: 'suppose we turn down the intensity of the phenomenological spotlight and wonder what body is in view, what body is viewing? Can bodies either perform or perceive outside of the material markings of gender, race, or ethnicity? ... when phenomenological methods are used ... both the desire and the material specificity of perceiving subjects tend to drop out' [Diamond, 1992 #526@394]. On the final page of *Thinking Through the Body*, Jane Gallop returns to the problem of what we do not see 'the difference between women, the question of the other woman, the rifts in feminist plenitude are extremely difficult to confront and even more difficult to hold on to' and finishes with the exhortation 'let us not forget the other woman' (Gallop, 1988: 177). For the purposes of this study, an emphasis on practice and a methodology productive of perspectival shift were of more immediate relevance than the level of speculation and the viewing distances implicit in psychoanalytic and phenomenological enquiry, although the 'ripple-effect' of these traditions may be identified in subtle ways in the discussion that follows.

³ I do not propose to enter the lists on differences between 'audience' and spectator/s'. Most of those attending at and to a performance will be both listening and watching: Karen Gaylord (Gaylord, 1983) has suggested the term 'attendant' to distinguish physically co-present spectators from others. I will use the terms interchangeably, except insofar as spectatorship tends towards the singular, and audience generally implies plurality. Both terms suffer from the cultural particularity I am arguing affects the effective application of theatre metaphors to social analysis of performance, but a satisfactory alternative term has yet to be developed in academic discourse, and is in any case less crucial for the terms of this study than might be the case in other performance research.

⁴ I draw here on Goffman's insight that it is the audience, of all other elements, that is actually specific to and constitutive of the theatre frame. However I would argue that the collective 'theatre audience' is the performed culmination of a complex set of learned behaviours. Performance in general also begins with the watcher, but it is not yet necessarily marked and categorised for type.

⁵ From 1908 to 1929 Craig edited, published and provided most of the content for the quarterly subscription-based theatre journal *The Mask*. His writings were notable, not only for their antipathy to realism and the literary theatre, but for their intense if schematised interest in non-Western theatre forms as the basis for his vision of the spiritual and formal rebirth of an abstract and ritualistic European theatre.

⁶ Anthropology (including ethnomusicology) has continued to pay attention both to particular performance traditions, and to performance as cultural feature and cultural metaphor (see for example (Blacking and Kealiinohomoku, 1979; Geertz, 1980; McAloon, 1984; Blackburn, 1988; Conquergood, 1989; Schechner and Appel, 1990; Napier, 1992).

⁷ The lower case 'i' is intended to signify a demurral from colonising aspirations. Nevertheless, accounts from Australian conference delegates have highlighted the extent to which Northern Hemisphere issues and personnel are hegemonic in the organization's perspective, and its proceedings (D'Cruz, 2001: 21-23; Fensham, 2001).

⁸ Zarilli's publication is a representative anthology of articles on acting in *TDR* and other North American journals from 1972 to 1992, and may therefore be viewed as constituting a tentative canon of techniques, tendencies and theories. Very few of the articles feature critical analysis.

⁹ Like most canons, the lists offered are not exactly iterative, but feature a strong focus on European figures such as Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Copeau, Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, Barba, Littlewood and Brook, and European/US figures such as Stella Adler, Michael Chekhov, Chaikin, Meisner and Strasberg with occasional new entrants (Hodge wants to endorse Włodzimierz Staniewski) and token extra-European or non-Western entrants such as Suzuki and Augusto Boal. These names however highlight rather than destabilise the essentially Eurocentric construction of the canon.

¹⁰ Mast argues that the socialisation of the actor 'has more in common with the extreme socialisation of, for example, religious converts than with the ordinary secondary socialisation of, for example, nurses' (Mast, 1986: 121). The 'conversion process' she identifies is achieved through a series of stages, including objectification of the body, the self and others. 'Objectification' for Mast occurs, as far as I can deduce, when the student actors' relationship to their bodies as expressive instruments passes out of 'normal' and into corporeally mediated behavioural modes. She concludes that 'acting may produce a diminished capacity to verbally elaborate upon one's own self-conception' (Mast, 1986); without enculturation in the modalities and codes within which her subjects are operating, her 'spectacles of culture' simply do not allow her to understand what is going on.

¹¹ Feminist theory is again an exception. The writings on theatre of Artaud, Foucault, Derrida, Irigaray and Kristeva, and writer-theatre makers Duras, Benmussa and particularly Hélène Cixous, have informed the sustained attention to the performative evident in feminist Performance/Cultural Studies re-visions of mimesis and representation (Case, 1990; Threadgold and Cranny-Francis, 1990; Diamond, 1997; Threadgold, 1997). As Virginia Nightingale acknowledges, the engagement between feminism and French theory has also been influential in shaping critical approaches to the study of audiences and reception in the mass media (Nightingale, 1996).

¹² Bourdieu acknowledged the derivation of the term from Scholastic translation of Aristotle's *hexis*. *Habitus* is 'that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1993b: 86). He adopted it rather than using 'habit' in order to convey the sense of something historical, a property or capital acquired over time, but powerfully generative rather than 'repetitive, mechanical, automatic, reproductive'. He also wanted to emphasise its systematic operation: 'One can only speak of a linguistic *habitus*, for example, so long as it is not forgotten that it is only one dimension of the *habitus* understood as a system of schemes for generating and perceiving practices, and so long as one does not autonomize the production of speech *vis-à-vis* production of aesthetic choices, or gestures, or any other possible practice' (Bourdieu, 1993b: 87). He variously cited its previous use by Durkheim and Mauss (Bourdieu, 1993b) or argued that he was developing similar notions in Hegel, Husserl, Weber, Durkheim, Mauss and Panofsky, in the latter case with the aim of 'rescuing Panofsky from the neo-Kantian tradition in which he was still imprisoned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 12). He claimed that he was very close to Chomsky in wanting 'to give to practice an active, inventive intention ... I wanted to insist on the *generative capacities* of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1990: 13).

¹³ Rossi-Landi on the other hand suggests the floating presence of collectively invested ideas and images, 'parking lots of artefacts' (paradigms), a constant mixture of verbal and non-verbal or non-discursive categories ... [which] *pour out of the productive process and stay there waiting*' in coagulations which Threadgold in turn reminds us form 'a grammar ... in the body' ready to be reactivated intertextually and intercorporeally in different circumstances (Rossi-Landi quoted in Threadgold, 1997: 98-99).

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ These figures should be treated with some caution; criteria and sample sizes vary between surveys, and self-reporting may not give a reliable picture of occupational patterns. The Throsby survey for example shows only 28% of the actor respondents as without qualifications, another 12% with a basic qualification in progress (Throsby and Thompson, 1994: 16, Table 8). Nevertheless there is enough consistency to suggest a significant discrepancy between the educational profile of those in employment and the employment outcome for students currently in training, and between average income figures and the expectations of students graduating from 'pre-professional' courses.

² Throsby lists 43% of actor respondents as nominating formal training, 37% on-the-job learning, 12% private training and 6% self-teaching as the training avenues most important to their artistic careers (Throsby and Thompson, 1994: 16, Table 9).

³ In 1996, there were 1,323 students enrolled in Drama courses in Australian universities, according to DEETYA's Higher Education Statistics Collection for that year (Strand, 1998: 187, Table 26).

⁴ There is a fairly even split between trade and further education and higher education providers, with 23 of each in Australia, and 12 certificate/diploma awarding to 10 Bachelor level degree awarding institutions in New Zealand. Again, these figures are approximate. Different sources give different figures, complicated by the imperfect overlap of classification into Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Drama, Theatre, Acting etc. courses, and the different nomenclatures and awards operating in different Australian states. Many university level 'Drama etc.' courses are also not separately listed, with students enrolling in studies run by differently named academic units, or listed as majors within a general BA or BEd programme.

⁵ Others in this system include the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, The Australian Film, Radio and Television School in Sydney and the Australian Ballet School, the National Academy of Music and the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne.

⁶ Means tested, Federally funded general and Aboriginal schemes to assist tertiary students. Like all other Australian tertiary students, NIDA students pay a portion of their yearly tuition costs through the Higher Education Scheme (HECS), and must also pay both UNSW and NIDA amenities and services fees.

⁷ The Graduate Diploma programs in Voice and Movement are offered in alternate years.

⁸ The Second Year productions are 'less elaborately' presented with smaller budgets for costume, set design and other technical support, but still aim at full production status. The Third Year productions, especially the final production attended by agents and other influential industry figures, emulate the production values of the State flagship companies in the range and 'finish' of craft skills displayed.

⁹ Ian Watson identifies two basic approaches to training: indirect, where actors 'learn a basic grammar of performance and apply that grammar to creating performances' and direct, where 'students are taught roles from the traditional repertoire directly'. According to Watson, indirect training is more common in the West, direct training in the traditional performance cultures of Asia. While this is a useful distinction, it does not address the differences between British drama schools such as RADA with a training program specifically geared to the technical demands of the classical stage repertoire, the Americo-Stanislvskian 'psycho-emotive' approach dominant in North America, and the various meta/physical techniques taught by the gurus of the internationalist avant-garde. I would also argue that insofar as training academies orient themselves towards one field position or another, they are much more interventionist in selecting and directing students in the service of the reproduction of those positions than Watson allows; there is no such thing as a generally applicable performance technique despite areas of overlap between the various approaches.

¹⁰ I do not have statistics to support this, but this is a strong impression based on my own observation and from statements by staff e.g. Jennifer Hagan 19/11/97 (field notes).

¹¹ A team of NIDA design graduates led by Head of Design Peter Cook was selected to design the Flag Handover to Australia at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta (NIDA, 1997: 8); NIDA personnel were heavily involved in the design and production of ceremonies for the 2000 Sydney Olympics and in the arts festivals held in the three years leading up to it, including the Festival of the Dreaming in 1997.

¹² From the 1920s until after World War II, there was effectively no professional theatre culture in Australia. The large commercial production houses such as J.C. Williamson's 'The Firm' produced mainly light opera and comedy; the Fuller Brothers specialised in vaudeville. Some 'high art' opera or drama productions were mounted, but generally with imported stars and sometimes with entirely imported casts. Revue was popular but employed very few actors, as did radio. 'Serious' drama was the province of amateur companies such as the Mercury Theatre or the Independent, and the production of local works was largely restricted to the left-wing New Theatre movement, and to groups such as Louise Esson and Vance and Nettie Palmer's Pioneer Players. From the 1950s through to the 1970s, with government and frequently with university support, the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Australian Council for the Arts (later the Australia Council) gradually created an infrastructure for professional theatre with the establishment of a network of 'flagship' State sponsored theatre companies in most capital cities, and the support of smaller companies and other professional activities (Love, 1984; O'Brien, 1989; Parsons, 1995).

¹³ The Australia Council's 1999 Major Performing Arts Discussion Paper lists the Bell Shakespeare Company; the Sydney Theatre Company and Company B (Sydney); the Melbourne Theatre Company and Playbox Theatre Centre (Melbourne); the Queensland Theatre Company; the State Theatre Company of South Australia; and the Black Swan Theatre Company (Perth) as 'Key Organisations' under the heading 'Theatre - Text Based' (Nugent et al, 1999: 251, Appendix 1).

¹⁴ Born in NSW and trained in Britain at the Bristol Old Vic and with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Bell was a tutor at NIDA before co-founding the Nimrod Theatre in 1970 and the eponymous Bell Shakespeare Company in 1990.

¹⁵ Against Tyrone Guthrie's conclusion that Australia was 'not ready' to produce quality theatre and that Australian actors needed to be trained in Britain, Leslie Rees protested 'to my mind, the development of any really significant theatre must go hand in hand with the emergence of a native drama [sic]. ... let it grow out of Australian soil and ripen in Australian sunshine (Rees in (Love, 1984: 198-99).

¹⁶ The division was never quite as neat as it appeared. The APG, which voted itself out of existence in 1980, produced works by Brecht, Fernando Arrabal and Heathcote Williams as well as by writers such as David Williamson, Alex Buzo, Jack Hibberd and Romeril. The repertoire of Nimrod straddled the two camps (Meyrick, 2001). Reflecting the preferences of its triumvirate of founders, it offered both new Australian plays and 'Australian' (that is, lively and physical) interpretations of Shakespeare and other 'classic' playwrights.

¹⁷ Plays and actors from the Jane Street Theatre seasons were particularly influential in the 'new wave' of Australian nationalist theatre production in the 1970s. As well as revivals of earlier 'indigenous' successes such as 'Steele Rudd's' *On Our Selection* (1979), key works such as Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis's *The Legend of King O'Malley* (1970, directed by Bell) and Williamson's *Don's Party* (1972, directed by Clark) had their premiere seasons at Jane Street before transferring to larger theatres.

¹⁸ Tasmanian born and with degrees from the University of Bristol and UCLA, Clark was tutor in theatre history at NIDA from 1959 before being appointed Director in 1969. Although talking of retirement, he is still in that position as of the time of writing.

¹⁹ As happened with the Sydney Theatre Company under Wayne Harrison for a period in the early 1990s.

²⁰ In 1992, the Sydney Theatre Company reported that it received only 13% of total revenue from subsidy, 9% from State government sources and 4% from the Australia Council (Katherine Brisbane in Parsons, 1995: 574).

²¹ From 1992 to 1998, the average size of casts in the play seasons of the Queensland Theatre Company reduced from 12.4 to 8.7 actors (Nugent et al, 1999: 106).

²² Subscriber promotions for the Melbourne Theatre Company's 2002 season featured the theme 'put stars in your eyes'. Season advertising used star designs and images of the star actors leading the cast of each of the eleven plays.

²³ From 1990 to 1999, of 25 foreign films made in Australia, 16 were from US companies.

²⁴ This does not include post-production services alone, estimated at \$A262m in 1999/2000. The AFC's figures suggest that Australia gains a share of 4-7% of total offshore US film production expenditure, estimated at between \$US 1.7-2.8 billion in 1998. All data from (Australian Film Commission, 2002).

²⁵ American actor and entrepreneur J.C. Williamson, for example, toured Australia from San Francisco in the 1870s, eventually becoming one of Australia's leading theatrical figures as founder of 'The Firm' which dominated Australian commercial theatrical production until the mid 20th century (Parsons, 1995: 643-45).

²⁶ The structural dynamics behind the success of individual Australasians within the US-financed 'international' film industry are complex and outside the scope of the current study. Nevertheless, it appears that a combination of production cost pressures and the cultural as well as financial mechanisms behind global film product distribution in the wake of the collapse of the old Hollywood studio system, has created circumstances in which the entry of a cohort of antipodean creative and technical personnel, both locally and US-based, has been facilitated by more than individual effort.

²⁷ Figures compiled by the Australian Film Commission (AFC) show that, in 1996, actors as an occupational category represented only 2.58% of the total number employed in the audiovisual industries including film, radio, television and advertising. These industries employed only 23% of Australian actors working in that year (Australian Film Commission, 2002).

²⁸ Numerically, fewer actors than other occupational categories have made the transition to US-based employment; nevertheless, Australasian actors trained in what is still a very 'British' performance tradition appear to have been able to occupy the space of the 'quality actor' traditionally taken by British performers in Hollywood, while offering the additional advantage of being able to mimic American accents and/or speak in accents which sound relatively neutral/unplaced to an American ear. NIDA has certainly capitalised on the success of graduates such as Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Colin Friels and Cate Blanchett in general publicity and in its appeal to prospective students.

²⁹ A matter for State-based rivalry, with Victorian complaints of dominance on the part of the Sydney-based industry (Victorian Film and Television Industry Working Party, 1999).

³⁰ etc ... worked in Sydney and on the Australian festival circuit during the early to mid 1990s.

³¹ This course is held every two years, in rotation with the Graduate Diploma in Voice.

³² The Lecoq tradition has recently achieved renewed prominence through the success of le Théâtre du Complicité, a group of mainly British, French-trained physical theatre practitioners. This group visited Australia in 1997.

³³ The 'physical turn' in British theatre vocal training revolves around the succession from figures like Cicely Berry (Berry, 1974; Berry, 1987) to Kristin Linklater (Linklater, 1976) (Linklater, 1992) and Patsy Rodenburg (Rodenburg, 1992; Rodenburg, 1993; Rodenburg, 1998). Berry's work marks the 'classic modern' position between an older emphasis on speech and enunciation (Turner, J. C., 1993) and an 'organic' body-based approach influenced by methods such as the Alexander Technique (McCallion, 1998). While still manifesting a strong engagement with speech and text, an emphasis on the integration of body, breath and emotion and stress on impulse and imagination situate voice teachers like Linklater and Rodenburg as a bridge between traditional and avant-garde formations in both Britain and America (although a distinct from avant-garde techniques such as those taught by associates of the Roy Hart Theatre and Enrique Pardo). Several NIDA staff and/or students in the graduate voice course have studied with one or more of these teachers. Linklater and her students have had a particular influence on Australian voice training from the mid 1970s onward; her last visit to Australia was in 2002, when she conducted classes with the Bell Shakespeare Company amongst others.

³⁴ The Drama Centre's specialised training vocabulary is reliant on an uneasy accommodation between three different traditions of performance practice and analysis: Saint-Denis' artisanal approach to embodiment and skill integration; Stanislavskian character development in one of its Method manifestations, through acting teachers Doreen Cannon (who later moved to RADA) and Reuven Adiv; and 'Yat', the idiosyncratic development of Rudolf Laban's Modern Educational Dance and movement analysis techniques by Malmgren, Laban's disciple and *soi-disant* 'spiritual heir'. Malmgren claimed to have developed the 'technique for training' that the master lacked (this is energetically disputed by other Laban practitioners, particularly those influenced by Laban collaborator Irmgard Bartineff at the 'orthodox' Laban Art of Movement Centre in London (Newlove, 1993)). Malmgren's Movement Psychology (later Action, then Character Analysis) technique is formally based on the identification of 'somatic pathways to action' through the integration of 'inner' images and 'outer' movements (Hayes, 1996: 3-8). It combines Laban's ruling notion of Effort with the Jungian personality functions of Thinking, Sensing, Intuiting and Feeling, to form a system of Inner Attitudes with corresponding effort-actions (Hayes, 1996: 6). In practice, as Kendall admits: 'this 'work' cannot be explained or described; it must be experienced' (Kendall, 1984: 167).

³⁵ Developed in Britain by figures such as Brian Way (Way, 1967), Gavin Bolton, Dorothy Heathcote, Clive Barker (Barker, 1977), John Hodgson (Hodgson and Richards, 1974) and Keith Johnstone (Johnstone, 1989). In America, the independent dissemination of a systematic approach to improvised 'Theater Games' by actor and teacher Viola Spolin (Spolin, 1963; Spolin, 2001), together with the further systematisation (and trademarking) by Johnstone of Devine's approach to improvisation as the competitive team-based *TheatreSports* phenomenon (Pierse, 1995), ensured the international popularity of improvisation/theatre games.

³⁶ Drama and education was the focus for the NIDA Company's work in 1978 (Quentin, 1979: 17).

³⁷ Like the then Director of *Toi Whakaaari*, Robin Payne, Knight was himself a victim of the 'First Year cull' after his initial training at NIDA, and went on to complete his studies elsewhere (Cordell, 2001, episode 7/8).

³⁸ At one time NIDA's admission policy was to select in the First Year intake approximately twice the number of students expected to graduate – a large number were not invited to commence Second Year. As a result of sustained criticism this policy has been modified, but its legacy persists in rumour – see below for retention rates at the time this study was undertaken.

³⁹ NIDA specifies that applicants must be at least 18 years old. Most students selected are between 18 and 22; older people are very rarely accepted.

⁴⁰ Recently published figures reveal that people from a low socio-economic background make up about 25% of the Australian population, but take only 14.5% of university places. This declines to 7.3% for an elite institution such as Melbourne University (Cervini, 2003).

⁴¹ The 2000 intake included a young man with a malformed forearm, who was advised to have a prosthesis fitted (Cordell, 2001, episode 1/2). Before Agents' Day in the same year however, Clark is shown advising the graduating Third Years to dress so as to 'make sure they can see your bodies – you've got 10 seconds to make an impression' (Cordell, 2001, episode 7/8).

⁴² The interaction of class (and other manifestations of social power) and corporeality in the theatre is complex, occurring within a number of overlapping frames. It is refracted through patterns of mimesis, modes of representation and processes of mediation dominant in particular styles and historical periods. The action of class and ideology in drama has been noted by critics since Lukács (Lukács, 1968) who argued that in modern drama, the construction of character and the narrative frame itself are bourgeois in constitution, despite the presence on stage of representatives of various social classes. Theatre audiences are overwhelmingly middle-class (though in Australia also overwhelmingly female); the 'heterophallogocentrism' through which the gendered and/or racialized body of the actor is positioned within the drama as the object of the audience's desiring gaze and identification has been critiqued by a number of feminist

theatre and dance scholars (Case, 1988; Foster, 1996). In her finely argued work on mimesis, for example, Elin Diamond points to the difficulties suffered by female actors in escaping subsumption by 'the sensuous semblances produced by the exchange economy' (Diamond, 1997: 82). I am certainly interested in the way ideologies and 'ways of seeing' are instantiated in this particular selection of actors' bodies, but would stress the field dependent nature of the process, and that it is important to recognise professional selection procedures as a linked but dynamic variable in the reproduction or contestation of a dominant mimesis which 'posits a *truthful* relation between world and word, model and copy, nature and image' (Diamond, 1989: 58).

⁴³ Here Knight invokes a common binary, traditional in the European theatre, used to distinguish one emphasis or another within the always present 'doubleness' of person and role. There have been many similar attempts at a schematic typology of actors. A parallel terminological distinction is that between *acteur* and *comédien* (Redgrave, 1961), whereas the distinction between the 'presentational' and the 'representational' actor deals with mode of address rather than approaches to embodiment (Beckerman, 1990). The Brechtian *gestus* was designed to allow the actor to 'freeze' the role so as to reveal 'the social attitudes encoded in the playtext' (Diamond, 1997: 52) although Diamond also points out the extent to which this leaves opaque the social attitudes embedded in the body of the actor (Diamond, 1988). There are of course many different kinds of actor and styles of acting. Knight and his colleagues are unlikely to select systematically solely on the basis of the two he mentions, but like 'talent' such conventionalised typologies serve as shorthand for the frames and values actively or tacitly exercised during the selection and training process.

⁴⁴ In conversation, Knight referred on several occasions to his frustration with students' lack of general and field specific knowledge e.g. of grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure, theatre history and canonical texts, and Australian theatre practice (field notes). While desirable, and clearly class-linked, attributes, these are apparently not elements of 'talent'.

⁴⁵ The next day however she approached me with something she particularly wanted to add: 'I love this place – I wouldn't want to be anywhere else' (field notes).

⁴⁶ The following transcriptions of conversation are taken from field notes.

⁴⁷ Of the 1997 Second Year group, both parents of Newton and Norris are well-known performers, and Douglas Blaikie's father is a drama academic. Reference to the industry antecedents of particular students arises spontaneously in conversation with both staff and other students. The selection of such candidates would seem to be evidence that field enculturation is a criterion in assessing the presence of talent; the phenomenon is too consistent to be a product of chance.

⁴⁸ Despite strict controls on students' outside work, NIDA's industry contacts were used to assist Karen Pang, an ethnically Chinese Second Year student, to audition for a program aimed at East Asian audiences through Rupert Murdoch's Star TV network; other students were developing club or cabaret acts and, in one instance, a career as a club DJ (Karen Pang interview 1997).

⁴⁹ The run of success Nick Giannopoulos and colleagues have had since 1987 with the comic *Wogs Out of Work* theatre series and spin-off ventures into TV (*Acropolis Now* 1989-91) and film (*Wog Boy* 2001) signalled the entry of the 'ethnic' actor to the mainstream, although at the cost of continuing stereotypes (Mitchell, 1992). Dramatic TV series *Heartbreak High* (1995-99) and *The Secret Life of Us* (200-01) and films such as *The Heartbreak Kid* (1993), *Head On* (1998) *Looking for Alibrandi* (1999) and *Lantana* (2000) have featured non-Anglo actors in sympathetic leading roles. With representation of cultural diversity gaining increasing audience acceptance, there are signs that differences may be progressively less pejoratively marked, but it is still the case that actors from non-Anglo backgrounds are underrepresented numerically within the profession and in their chances for employment.

⁵⁰ Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. There are also significant communities of Maori and other Pacific Islanders now resident in Australia, as well as other Black or Brown people of African, Melanesian and South Indian origin, who tend to be subject to discrimination along with people of 'Middle Eastern', East Asian and South-East Asian descent. A detailed analysis of race, class and gender in Australia is

outside the terms of this study, but it should be noted that the multiple structural disadvantage suffered by Indigenous peoples is of a different order to that experienced by other communities.

⁵¹ Leslie has been instrumental in creating opportunities for young Aboriginal actors through the technical education system over the past fifteen years or so, in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and subsequently in Victoria. Several students recruited and given an initial training by Leslie have been accepted for mainstream courses at WAAPA and NIDA. Ben Graetz, a Second Year student in 1997, was one of these students. He expressed his desire to be accepted as a professional actor, but also wanted to 'give back' by continuing Leslie's work (Graetz interview 1997).

⁵² Admittedly difficult for the institution to provide, since the background, experience and orientation needs of individual Indigenous students varied a great deal. Of the students I spoke to, most came from major or regional cities but had very different levels of education and cultural interests. They found the General Studies program, rather than the performance training itself, particularly hard. NIDA's 'high culture' orientation depended on literacy and particular canonical knowledges rather than the sophisticated image-based understanding of Western popular culture they already possessed, a problem compounded by the relative paucity of resources devoted to this program within the institution as a whole.

⁵³ Images of non Anglo-Celtic background students are frequently selected for official publications such as NIDA's Prospectus and Annual Reports; the institution is eager to convey the impression of diversity, but the impact on its in-house training and selection practices is less clear.

⁵⁴ The open expression of emotion is a distinctive feature of theatre's internal culture, and the quotation of camp affectations reasonably common. What I observed was more specific, with 'Sydney scene' behaviours being adopted and inflected as the syntax of bodyways within NIDA; a similar subcultural coding may be observed in recent Sydney-based theatre productions, including Bell Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*.

⁵⁵ This event was a good example of NIDA's corporate ceremonial life, albeit on a relatively small and 'in-house' scale. A large number of people crammed into the rehearsal room where the showing took place. Students wedged together on rubber mats close to the edge of the playing area, while a number of chairs had been set out for parents and staff. All available senior staff were in attendance and Clark made a speech welcoming Williamson, recalling their work together on the 1972 production, and celebrating the symbolic significance of the occasion as marking a generational cycle in Australian theatre. Clark seemed to have less contact with students on a day-to-day basis than I remembered from my own time at NIDA, but he took an active role in such ceremonies, of which there were a number, of varying levels of formality, during both of my 1977 visits.

⁵⁶ Standard 'trust' exercises are often more or less static, or contained in spatial terms. By beginning with an exercise requiring co-ordination across space, Jameson was setting the group a greater challenge, but also habituating them to one of the key elements of the fluid performance style to which they were being introduced.

⁵⁷ And slightly different to the position she expressed in a 1991 interview with researcher Helen Philipp. In that interview, Williams recalled her resentment as a student at RADA 'my [very strong London] accent was ironed out totally ... but at that time when I was training that was how it was'. She acknowledged the class base of RP, which she located as 'coming from the 19th century', and expressed an ambivalence, as a teacher of dialects, between the need for actors to acquire a level of technical skill which will allow them to 'make the sounds that [a] character would make' rather than simply reproducing their own vocal patterns, and a sensitivity to the current trend towards 'trying to hold on to the roots of your dialect so that you're not totally ironing it out'. She also observed that: 'I actually think that good Australian speech is the nearest thing in the world to the most neutral of sounds. I think it's a lovely sound. I think John Bell has that', while acknowledging that if she expresses that opinion 'when I go to England people look at me as if I'm mad' (Philipp, 1991, Appendix: 9-15). The classes I observed were held within the context of work on a specific production with a specific

group of students; I would not wish to make general assumptions about Williams' views on vocal production and its social implications on this basis.

⁵⁸ Hunt insisted that any Australian actors he was forced to employ must continue to use the trained voice and elevated speech of the British theatre. Plays such as Sumner Locke Elliott's *Rusty Bugles* only encouraged Australian actors 'to persist in the harsh, unpoetic and untrained speech of their audiences' (Brisbane, 1991: 280).

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ *Karanga*: the women's welcome call on to the *marae*, or tribal meeting-place, is an important part of Maori social and spiritual ritual. *Waiata*: including both sacred and profane song, *waiata* is a key component of *marae* ritual, and an important mode of teaching and learning in traditional culture. *Haka*: a movement and song form performed by men on ceremonial occasions. *Kapahaka*: specifically references the movement to preserve performative cultural forms originating in the early 1930s, but is today deployed as general term referring to the skills components of both men's and women's movement and song forms, and to the display of such forms in *hui* or gatherings including competitions. *Taiaha*: a traditional martial arts form including both display and combat applications. I am indebted to Maori staff and students of Toi Whakaari for my understanding of these and other terms, but see also (Tauroa and Tauroa, 1986; Barlow, 1991; Kouka, 1999). Any misunderstanding or misinterpretation is my responsibility.

² On the other hand, there is no internal touring circuit equivalent to that sponsored by the Australia Council under its 'Playing Australia' program. Instead, a successful play is likely to receive a number of productions in different local centres. This practice increases the number of actors employed, but reduces the length of any one employment opportunity (Barry O'Connor/Robbie Warwick, personal communication).

³ The New Zealand film and TV industries, like their Australian equivalents, have been very much affected by the globalisation of Anglophone cultural production, and in particular by exchange rate differentials which make them attractive as production locations. Although public and private investment in commercial production infrastructure has not yet reached the same fever pitch as in Australia, the New Zealand film industry has in some ways been more successful in securing wider recognition for 'local' product and in protecting the employment of local creative and technical personnel, as evidenced by international hits like *The Piano* and Peter Jackson's *Lord of The Rings* trilogy. New Zealand based actors, however, remain in an ambivalent position. Although international investment has undoubtedly increased the overall volume of employment opportunities for actors, locals are with rare exceptions not cast in featured roles. *The Lord of The Rings* has for instance afforded unprecedented exposure to individual Australasian actors, but most of those featured are Australian – many of them NIDA graduates – rather than New Zealanders.

⁴ The report also mentions that 29 students were between 20 and 25 years old, 19 students 26 or older. Comparative figures on age were not available for NIDA.

⁵ The Australasian Theatre Training Conference (ATTC) was initially convened by John Clark, the Director of NIDA, as a grouping of studio schools distinct from the membership represented by the scholarly association, the Australasian Drama Studies Association. The first ATTC conference was held at NIDA, with representation by invitation from the 'big five' Australasian studio schools: NIDA, the Victorian College of the Arts, the West Australian Institute of Performing Arts, the Queensland Institute of Technology Academy of the Arts, and Toi Whakaari. Conferences were held at irregular intervals in subsequent years, attracting a more varied representation.

⁶ The *marae* proper includes an entire complex of buildings and spaces, including the *whare nui* or meeting/sleeping house, the *marae ate* or ground in front of the *whare* where the initial ritual is played out, and the *whare kai* or eating house. Entry into, movement around and behaviour within these spaces is governed by the interplay of states of *tapu* (sacred, singular) and *noa* (profane, common). The ritual barriers designating particular bodies and behaviours as *tapu* or *noa* are imposed and lifted at different times, according to decisions made by the leaders of the *tangata whenua* of the

marae and the particular ritual occasion. Although the ritual provides a form and an expected succession of events, the transition from one phase or space to another is always at issue and cannot be taken for granted (Barlow, 1991). There is no formal space for the detached observer in *marae* ritual; while conducting my observations, I needed to acquire a basic understanding of appropriate behaviour in order to work effectively in situations which employed ritual structures. Where Western conventions applied I occupied the role of observer, quasi staff member or member of informal student groups as appropriate.

⁷ The legal status of the Treaty of Waitangi has been subject to continuous contestation in the now nearly one hundred and sixty years since its promulgation. There are serious differences in terminology and interpretation between the texts in English and Maori which comprise it (see the copy of the text in both languages in Wilson, M. and Yeatman, 1995: 213-15), together with (Wilson, M., 1995: 1-17). In the Treaty, which ended the Maori Wars of the 1820s to 1830s, the Maori chieftains gave the Crown *kawanatanga*, or the right to govern, in return for the continued recognition of *tinorangatanga*, the 'rule of the notables' or chiefs. According to the Maori, this covered rights over their traditionally held lands, together with forms of property such as fishing rights and *taonga* or treasures, these latter including the Maori language as well as ritual objects (Wilson, M., 1995: 2). Differences in translation, and possible deliberate misuse, of the term *rangatiratanga* in the Treaty created significant ongoing divisions between Maori leaders, British colonial governments and the ethnically English or English-speaking national governments which succeeded direct British rule. Maori leaders appear to have understood the reference to *rangatiratanga* to guarantee the continuance of effective self-government in lands not specifically ceded or sold; the British clearly considered Maori sovereignty to have been superseded, and proceeded to punish as rebellion any protests or resistance which followed. Despite the guarantees of protection given by the Treaty policies of immigration and assimilation, together with the alienation and economic exploitation of tribal lands, were pursued with vigour over the ensuing century and a half, with the result that the Maori came in many ways to occupy the position of an underclass. In the years following World War Two and with increasing vehemence during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Maori activists and leaders began to agitate not only for a recognition of the Treaty, but for full restitution of the Maori understanding of its provisions including the equal status of Maori language and culture and the equality with European law of Maori *tikanga*, or customary law. The success of this activism, which gained increasing support from elements in the New Zealand Labour Party, was seen in the passing of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 and its subsequent amendment following the election of a Labour government in 1984. The Act established the Waitangi Tribunal, a body given jurisdiction to hear claims under the Treaty. Although the Tribunal was given only the power to recommend how grievances might be redressed, 'for the first time Maori had a forum in which they could seek recognition of grievances that had arisen through a failure to honour the terms of the treaty' (Wilson, M., 1995: 3).

⁸ Although not formally constituted as a nation prior to white settlement, Maori recognise a cultural identity based on a common language and an oral tradition which details the links between groupings in the thousand years the two main islands have been inhabited. The category of Pakeha was established to describe the British (mainly English and Scottish) settlers of the 18th and 19th centuries. Although it could be stretched to cover other European settlers, it clearly excludes other Polynesian peoples, and non-white settlers such as Indians. The terms under which biculturalism has been inscribed have also been criticised by feminists as legitimising patriarchal notions of authority within and across its binary categories (Mohammam, 1999a).

⁹ In his essay 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?' (During, 1985), Simon During argued that a politics of postculturalism could serve to replace the bifurcated essentialisms produced by biculturalist rhetoric. Pointing out the constructed nature of notions of Maori unity produced as a response to European incursions during the colonial period, he later argued that 'a New Zealand identity can be constructed not simply from a Maori or a Pakeha viewpoint but by Maori-izing Pakeha formations and vice versa ... constructing a non-essentialist unity across a maintained difference'

(During, 1991: 35). Trevor James argues that Maori are unlikely to accept During's proposal as being different from previous European attempts to speak for or co-opt Maori sensibilities, since it still denies the connected spirituality central to Maori cultural identity. He further protests that During's 'assumptions of loss and syncreticity, [his] skepticism and secularism, exclude the critic from assessing the evidence provided by Maori texts' (James, 1996: 56). Whatever the merits of a non-dualist approach to the question of relations between cultures and ethnicities, it is clear that Maori interests are unlikely to accept any discursive or political accommodation that does not include an acknowledgement of the special status of Maori culture, its spirituality and its relation to the land.

¹⁰ For example, during my second visit in July 1998, the Minister for Maori Affairs in the Nationalist/New Zealand First coalition government, Tau Henare, announced while on a visit to London that "Only with the full participation of Maori can New Zealand grow as a nation and reach its full potential. We navigated and peopled the length and breadth of the Pacific while Europeans were still creeping around the coast in rowboats" (Smith, 1998).

¹¹ Although there are undoubtedly crowd-pleasing elements in a skilled traditional *marae* oration, I prefer to conceptualise such ritual in terms of the dynamic relation of efficacy/expressivity rather than use Schechner's notion of the 'efficacy-entertainment braid' (Schechner, R., 1988) which too closely adopts the perspective of Western secular aesthetic performance.

¹² Conversations with individual New Zealanders prior to my visit had led me to understand that exposure to Maori songs and language was a component of the national primary school curriculum, and so part of the universal cultural experience. Students at Toi Whakaari were however emphatic that this had had very little impact 'I understood maybe 'haere mai' and 'kiaora', that's about it - even now I only get one word in twenty' (Second year student, field notes). In contrast, the level of exposure at Toi Whakaari felt much more like an immersion experience 'when I first came people were giving speeches in Maori and making jokes, and everyone was laughing. I thought everyone but me knew what was going on' (Henderson interview, 1997). Formal language classes were not part of the School's curriculum, and Pakeha students were not expected to achieve, language fluency. However, familiarisation with the cues and conventions of Maori social and ritual interaction was an important component of a student's initiation as a member of the School community. As Henderson astutely observed 'Now I know *when* it's a joke, and I laugh along with everyone else. It's kind of a group support thing' (Henderson interview, 1997). Maori colloquialisms and ejaculations were a feature of the language use of all students (in particular an exclamation 'cheeh' or chaaaay' which was used to indicate sympathy, approval, support etc) and functioned both as a 'language bridge' between Maori and Pakeha students, and as a badge of corporate identity.

¹³ Staff at the School were aware of this difficulty, and tried to address it within the terms of Maori ritual practice, encouraging individual students to establish their *turangawaewae* or standing place by acknowledging their origins and ancestry, and engaging with the songs and stories of their ancestral tradition(s). My first encounter with this aspect of Toi Whakaari's internal culture was during the 4th ATTC Conference at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, where students from Toi Whakaari performed selections from their *kapahaka* repertoire, as well as pieces framed as an exchange between the cultural traditions of individual students. This approach did preserve a level of cross-cultural inclusiveness within the School, and was clearly successful in individual cases: for example Jacob Rajan, a student of Indian background who graduated in 1995, was able to use his Second Year devised monologue *Krishnan's Dairy* as the basis for later professional work. On the other hand it produced renewed difficulties for students who did not have a strong sense of cultural belonging or who were uncomfortable with claiming 'authentic' membership of any one of the traditions notionally available to them. There appeared to be little space within the School's authorised imaginary for an exploration of cultural fragmentation and displacement of the kind conducted by Gilgul Theatre (see Chapter 5). A group of students with whom I discussed the issue felt that things were easier for those with a strong traditional

background of any sort. A student with a strongly Irish upbringing had ready access to performance material in the form of song and story, whereas, in a reversal of their previous sense of entitlement, those who identified primarily as members of the general Americanised Western contemporary might be left feeling they had 'no culture' (field notes). Despite this, such students were generally positive about the process of discovery or re-imagining required of them. 'I'm an absolute technology boy. It's really weird coming to this School ... I've been asked to know I am a New Zealander, we're different but we have a lot in common. Americans were me and 'they' were Maori, now we are us and Americans are over there. I've spent my life blurring the boundaries between culture and technology, but we created technology – maybe we can have the best of both worlds' (Henderson interview, 1997).

¹⁴ The section of Potiki's Introduction to *He Reo Hou* (Potiki, R., 1991b) from which this passage is taken is virtually identical to that published in *Australasian Drama Studies* the same year under the title of 'A Maori point of view: the journey from anxiety to confidence' (Potiki, R., 1991a). Each text includes additional sections different in content and argumentative intent.

¹⁵ Both strategies were used in Riwia Brown's *Ivirangi Bay*, which I saw at The Depot/Taki Rua in 1996. The 'main' plot was a stylish film noir thriller à la du Maurier's *Rebecca* in which what to all intents and purposes were Western dramatic roles were taken by Maori actors, including Toi Whakaari graduate and leading lady Hera Dunleavy. The mood, and the final dénouement, depended however on the irruption of a Maori 'ghost' woman in full traditional dress, performing untranslated *waiata* and *haka*. Both the unassimilated Maori body and the *reo* meanings of the chants performed were integral to the plot development.

¹⁶ Of the students of Maori background at Toi Whakaari during my first visit, only two of the First Year acting students, both women, had an extensive background in traditional culture and performance skills prior to enrolment, in both cases through family participation in culture club and other activities. Their skills were certainly valued within the School, and in both cases the students were called on as leaders in *tikanga Maori* activities.

¹⁷ Taylor himself, who was instrumental in the development of Maori theatre at The Depot/Taki Rua, instituting the concept of Theatre Marae with Jim Moriarty and later founding the Dunedin-based Kilimogo Theatre Company, was employed as *Taha Maori* tutor at Toi Whakaari during the period of my second visit. He was supportive of the School's efforts but felt they did not go far enough in adapting to a Maori perspective. His own teaching methods included lectures as well as physical/experiential classes, and appeared to combine traditional concepts and practices with elements borrowed from both European and Asian sources, perhaps reflecting his experience in avant-garde theatre. I participated in one class in which he taught the concept of *wiri* (breath, movement, spirit) alongside the foundational elements of an expressive movement style of his own devising, combining hatha yoga principles with traditional Maori movements and cosmology. Such 'middle term' approaches to embodiment are certainly strategically important in the development of hybridised performance forms, but were not necessarily foregrounded as such within the training environment, or of such duration in any one student's experience to constitute a stepping-off point for an individual, let alone a group, performance vocabulary.

¹⁸ During my first visit, Whitireia staff members had been invited as guest lecturers to Toi Whakaari to develop the presentational aspects of the conference opening ceremony, and to teach students the requisite skills in *haka* and *waiata*. I participated in these classes and in the subsequent performances, being treated as a member of the Toi Whakaari *whanau* during the resulting *powhiri*. I was interested to observe that, as well as learning traditional songs, the students were encouraged to develop their own action-songs and movement sequences using traditional techniques and gestural elements. Although those students with a background in Maori performance culture took a greater leadership role in these exercises, all members of the group were encouraged to contribute. New physical skills such as *poi* work were also learned in smaller groups, and aptitude recognised as learning progressed, regardless of background. I also acquired knowledge on external *marae* visits, at theatre performances and other

occasions and within the school when being introduced to classes where the tutor observed Maori protocols.

¹⁹ A Maori student who completes the program at Toi Whakaari will have had some exposure to traditional performance forms, alongside the particular mix of training in Western theatre; and a student of Pakeha or 'other' background will have experienced Maori performance forms, participated in lectures and workshops focusing on Maori language and culture, and have met, been taught by and/or studied with many of the leading figures in Maori theatre. All students will have the opportunity to develop solo and/or group pieces of their own choice, as a spur to their later creative development; these may well reflect aspects of their experience of bicultural performance-making.

²⁰ A fundamental difficulty is that the School remains a national drama school in the Anglo-European tradition which aspires to contemporary cultural relevance, rather than one which has been set up from the start as a bicultural theatre research institution. From conversations held during my visit, I gathered that the School was subject to continued criticism of its programs as tokenistic. One (Maori) member of staff considered that the school had not gone nearly far enough in accommodating to the Maori way of doing things, saying that it was all pretty much on the surface. "They go only so far and no further. They'd never consider a Maori head of school. They've had a lot of trouble with their Maori advisers, people get pissed off after a while and leave, because it's pretty inflexible. If the timetable pressures conflict with Maori time, so what, they should learn to go more towards the Maori way' (field notes). On the other hand, a wholesale adoption of 'the Maori way' might well have a negative impact on the School's standing in the broader community, its ability to attract students looking for an elite Western theatre training, and its status as a producer of employable 'talent' for theatre, film and TV in New Zealand and further afield. In structuring a bicultural curriculum, the School's staff must inevitably strike a compromise between at times incompatible expectations, while attempting to produce a program with integrity in its mix of skills classes, professional readiness and cultural explorations.

²¹ In 1996, 'Core Part-time and Casual Tutors' included New Zealand director, dramaturg and theatre historian Murray Lynch, Singing Tutor Laughton Patrick and Voice Tutor Nerissa Moore. Lyne Pringle was listed as a casual movement tutor. By 1998, Laughton Patrick had retired, Murray Lynch had returned to the professional theatre after a stint as Head of the Acting Course during 1997 and KC Kelly had also given preference to his work as an actor although he was still on the list of casual staff, as was Nerissa Moore. Lyne Pringle on the other hand was back on the fulltime staff as Movement Programme Manager.

²² Lettered as 'Group W' and 'Group X' in order to avoid any impression of hierarchy.

²³ A Maori activist group had, according to Robin Payne, stormed the School offices in the late 1980s and effectively taken the then Director hostage to highlight the urgency of their bid for reform of the existing program (Payne interview 1996).

²⁴ I was told that, although the program had been underway for several years, the permission of 'friendly' *marae* could by no means be taken for granted. Agreements could fall through at the last minute, as in fact happened in the case of the planned *marae* visit during the following week's conference. Protracted negotiations on ritual matters on the part of the Director and the School's Maori advisers was common; much of the success of the bicultural program clearly depended on securing the ongoing goodwill of key Maori opinion leaders in relationships which required regular reaffirmation and reformulation.

²⁵ Each participating student was awarded a completion certificate.

²⁶ Students were each given their 'own' *karanga*, authenticated through steps which involved forming a connection to the land first tangibly, then symbolically by means of association with ritual objects. Unlike traditional women whose *karanga* was deeply tied to a particular place, the Toi Whakaari students were 'released' in the final stage of the ceremony; the experience was to have meaning in their own bodies rather than through a connection with the objects relating to the *marae*. Access to ritual knowledge in traditional Maori culture is strictly controlled – I cannot be certain, but I would imagine that Tunga Baker's conduct of the process was carefully modulated and that potentially there was a great deal more to which students were not given access.

²⁷ The officially listed tutor, Paiki Johnson, had experienced a period of ill health. He died in 1998.

²⁸ Misa Tupou, personal communication July 1998.

²⁹ It was however my impression that the scenarios on which the improvisation work was based generally required non-Pakeha students to imagine themselves in a 'white' situation, rather than the other way round. For example, in one class I observed, a male student from a Rarotongan background was paired with a Pakeha woman student, and asked to react to a situation in which they as a couple were faced with a choice between proceeding with her pregnancy, or his acceptance of an offer to work internationally with the United Nations. The situation was quite clearly outside the reach of the young man's experience and general knowledge – he responded creatively within the frame of the set context, with the couple eventually deciding to name the baby 'Sarajevo'. However, it was apparent that this task, and others in Ruth's carefully annotated 'big black book of scenarios' required a command of information and associations that were much more likely to be familiar to a student of Pakeha background.

³⁰ The 'universalism' of the avant-garde has been criticised from both feminist and post-colonial perspectives. Despite the interest by avant-garde practitioner-theorists in non-Western performance traditions, and the allusion to or inclusion of elements of those traditions in their work, such elements are often uncontextualised and impressionistic or inaccurate. There is a good example in a garbled 'Maori' chant reproduced as a possible class exercise in (Callery 2001: 208).

³¹ As outlined above, the overall approach of Toi Whakaari staff was aligned with postwar innovations in theatre practice and training, which included an emphasis on the integration of acting, voice and movement; several had participated in workshops in avant-garde teachings and techniques similar to van Dijk's. However, for most other staff reception of these techniques was through the filter of British rather than continental theatrical formations; they were more inclined to see theatre as a 'broad church' whereas van Dijk was aiming to further the claims of a specific approach, which would produce specific embodied outcomes.

³² Like other staff, he felt that there was insufficient class time being allotted for his work; like some other staff, he offered additional classes and workshops outside School hours, some open to outside participants. Where a sense of overall co-operation prevailed, such activities were tolerated and even encouraged by fellow staff members. However, once tensions developed, they were more likely to be seen as destabilising.

³³ I attended the troupe's first production, a piece entitled 'The Butterfly's Evil Spell'. This work brought together eight physical theatre performers, the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca, the design of lighting artist Helen Todd, and the Victoria University's gamelan orchestra. Its programme acknowledged the influence of the Roy Hart Theatre on 'the Extended Human voice', affirmed an affiliation with Enrique Pardo's Paris based PANTHEATRE and Pardo's work on Myth and Theatre, and claimed that the troupe's Actors training 'follows the steps of Eugenio Barba and his Odin Teatret in what could be termed 'autogenic training': confronting and giving form (per-form) to one's fantasies through the process of self-discipline and self definition.'

³⁴ Simone has since been succeeded by fellow Australian Robbie Warwick.

³⁵ Lyne used the metaphor of gardening to explain her approach to physical training. A 'cultivated' actor was of course a product of consistent aesthetic choices – there could however be a number of different styles of cultivation, and it was important to create ruptures on an arbitrary basis, that would make it difficult for new 'root systems' to take hold. Physical changes were most likely to be maintained where the student concerned was an aware and willing partner in the effort to develop new expressive capacities. There were however some existing habits, particularly habits of tension, that were like noxious weeds; like 'old man's beard' they would keep reappearing without a regular weeding regime (field notes). This analogy could be extended to other habit situations; any *habitus* based on the specific conventions of a bounded social group will be vulnerable to contamination from others current in surrounding cultures, unless regularly practised. 'Secondary habits' learned more or less as a replacement for others are most likely to be vulnerable to disintegration or erasure, unless reinforced over an extended period of time.

Notes to Chapter 5

¹ As well as indigenous theatre companies such as Kooemba Jdarra (Queensland) and Ilbjerri (Victoria), other multicultural or ethnic companies to achieve at least occasional project funding include Doppio Teatro (South Australia), Taqa and Triquinuela (New South Wales) and the Vietnamese Youth Theatre (Victoria) (see Messariti, 1994; Mitchell, 1998). Other professional and community theatres and companies such as Playbox, La Mama, Melbourne Women's Theatre, and the Melbourne Workers Theatre (Victoria), Black Swan and Deckchair (Western Australia) and Sidetrack and Urban Theatre Projects (New South Wales) have produced plays by authors from non English speaking (NESB) and non-standard English backgrounds, and occasionally in languages other than English. Many more individual multicultural theatre projects have been funded through local and regional community arts organisations, often with the support of the Community Cultural Development Fund of the Australia Council (Kelfala, 1986). However, it is generally true to say that NESB actors and authors, and works for the theatre dealing with the concerns of non-Anglo Saxon communities, are significantly underrepresented in Australia's mainstream theatre productions despite the official promotion of multiculturalism as a core feature of Australia's postwar immigration policy (Milne, 1994).

² The production received awards for Best Production and Best Direction in Victoria's Green Room Awards for 1991.

³ 'Six dead souls are lost. Who are they? Wandering minstrels? Former members of the Vilna Theatre Troupe? Shattered and melancholy reflections of European Jews? Wise fools? They are running from something. From someone. Footsteps, curses, cries and songs. Names. They are calling out names. The name of a relative, the name of a prophet, the name of a lover, the name of a character from a bible story remembered from childhood. Names with no reply' (Gilgul Theatre, 1992).

⁴ Elisa Gray adopted the 'pro-am' or dedicated amateur position, clearly stating that her approach was to organise her theatre work around her job and family commitments (Gray interview 1995). Other members also worked at non-theatre jobs for varying periods but saw their artistic careers as primary.

⁵ The best known of these was vaudevillian 'Mo' or Roy Rene, respectively the character and stage names adopted by one of Australia's most famous Jews and probably its most enduringly recognised entertainer (Parsons, F., 1973). Born Harry Van der Sluys, Rene's trademark black-and-white makeup, patter and physical routines traded on a grotesque of the stereotypical Jewish comedian. His relationship with the Jewish community was ambivalent, not only because of unease on the part of Jewish leaders about the effect of his humour on perceptions of Jews in general – he 'resembled the personification of an anti-semitic caricaturist's dream' (Rubinstein, 1987: 185) – but because he himself was not a particularly observant Jew (Rutland, 1997: 277-79).

⁶ And a member of the Murdoch family of media proprietors on his mother's side.

⁷ Her mother is a respected academic psychologist.

⁸ Prior was planning her Masters dissertation around the work she and Kosky had done in devising *Levad*, but had run up against methodological problems in recording and reflexively analysing her own rehearsal reactions. She invited me to observe the devising process for *The Wilderness Room* as a means of testing out a combination 'inside/outside' perspective on rehearsal observation and analysis; I agreed as long as other company members were amenable, and with the proviso that I could make use of the resulting material for my own research. Participants were interviewed by me and/or Yoni Prior according to a schedule of questions, devised under a Deakin University Arts Faculty research grant to investigate actor-director interaction. This research has formed the basis of joint and solo conference papers. All commentary and conclusions in this chapter are however my own unless acknowledged through quotation or citation (see Declaration and Acknowledgements).

⁹ Elisa Gray played Esther Abrahams, Yoni Prior played Sarah Burdo, Louise Fox, Amelia Levy; Michael Kantor, Aaron Davies; and Tom Wright, John Harris.

¹⁰ In the light of recent political events, this scene seems doubly prescient. Conflict over the validity of claims to Indigenous status has caused serious rifts amongst the surviving descendants of Tasmania's Aboriginal population, which was subjected to concerted efforts at extermination by the settler population during the 19th century; adult and child refugees denied asylum by the Howard Liberal/NCP government and detained in desert camps in Woomera and other locations in 2000-2001 controversially protested their situation by sewing up their lips.

¹¹ Kantor has worked with Kosky more than once as his assistant director, and Wright as his dramaturg. Kantor, Wright and Fox have collaborated in productions as Mene Mene Theatre, and Kosky has directed Fox, most notably in *King Lear* for the Bell Shakespeare Company. On the technical side, Lehre has designed lights for Mene Mene, and Matt Delbridge has stage managed a number of Kantor's subsequent works.

¹² Kosky and Fox have spoken about the strength of their personal ties in both aesthetic and cultural terms. Kosky: We saw in each other an absolute passion for theatre, but theatre as performance, not theatre as text. People like Louise, - you meet them, you work with them, you don't have to explain anything ... we both have an uncanny ability to talk and listen at the same time ... we sound just like we are going to be, in 50 years' time, in the Montefiore homes, two old Jews going *nhaah nhaah nhaah*. Like bridge night at my grandma's ... Louise: People ask us about the relationship between a gay man and a straight woman, but I don't think our sexuality has anything to do with the relationship ... there is the shared Jewish history thing ... one friend who saw us working together said "You're the sister he can openly compete with without destroying." So there is a sibling quality and a ferocity to it' (Cunningham, 2000).

¹³ Prior, personal communication, 2001.

Notes to Chapter 6

¹ The Circus' policy is to use women in all roles where possible, and to train them where skills are lacking. However, it has also welcomed the efforts of men volunteering useful skills in a supportive manner. Longstanding unionist and arts activist Paddy Garrity was instrumental in co-ordinating the refurbishment of the disused warehouse that became the Circus' rehearsal space, and ex-APG and Circus Oz rigger Alan Robertsor. worked with the Circus from 1991-93, designing, building and rigging equipment for the aerials acts, and continues to act as a rigging and safety consultant. By 1994, however, women were building and hanging their own equipment (Louise Radcliffe-Smith in *Women's Circus*, 1997: 149).

² Music Directors for the Circus have included Sue Speer, Marianne Permezel, Kim Baston and Andrea Rienets.

³ Support during the initial season was gathered from various sources, and included in kind as well as financial support. The Victorian Women's Trust, the Stegley and Lance Reichstein Foundations, the Victorian Health Promotions Foundation, the Women's Health Service for the West, the Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault, the Reclaim the Night Collective, Zelda's Place Incest Refuge and SWISHO - Single Women in Supportive Housing were all acknowledged in newsletters or program guides during 1991. The Winter 2002 Women's Circus Newsletter lists major funding sources for 2001 as the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Victoria, VicHealth and the R.E. Ross Trust, with a combined value of \$A98,000 (*Women's Circus*, 2002: 9).

⁴ Commentators such as Tony Bennett have argued that community arts is best understood as 'an administrative field ... brought into being by and through the activities of government arts and cultural bodies, agencies and programs' (Bennett, T., 1993). However, this fails to take into account the history of cultural, artistic and political activism with out which the community arts movement cannot be adequately understood (Watt and Pitts, 1991; Watt, 1992; Milne, 1994).

⁵ Circus Oz is the sole exception to institutionalised high art practice included amongst the companies serviced by the Australia Council's major Organisations Board.

⁶ Specific 'women only' nights have been included in most seasons, but the majority of performances are open access. Although statistics are not available, women make up the bulk of spectator numbers but men are welcome and do attend.

⁷ According to Richard Fotheringham, community theatre is distinguished by its engagement with 'a particular sub-group of people who are assumed to have interests in common'. This commonality is defined in terms of geography, work experiences, institutionalisation, or organisation, and it is assumed that 'this community approaches, or is approached by, a group of professional theatre workers. Together the community and the artists devise a performance project with the intention ... of saying something about the community's life experiences, memories of the past, and hopes for the future' (Fotheringham, 1987: 20). The Circus fits this profile to the extent that it was devised and staffed by professional theatre workers, and called on the resources of feminist networks that predated it. Its community of address, 'feminists/women', was however evangelically defined by potential as much as actual identity. Its aims also exceed the boundaries of theatre in its desire to actualise rather than simply to represent that community. Its activities take on the quality of ritual in the sense that they emphasise effectivity as much as expression.

⁸ A self-conscious articulation of its own identity has been a feature of the Circus' discourse since its inception, and participants have been consistently encouraged to record their feelings and responses as part of the Circus experience. Available sources included the communal journal kept in the rehearsal room, the quarterly Circus Newsletter, strategy plans, financial and other reports submitted to sponsors and funding bodies, and the collectively produced book *Women's Circus: leaping off the edge* (Women's Circus, 1997).

⁹ A great deal of useful work continues to be done by feminist theatre scholars in this vein. To this could be added the considerable effort that has gone into the collection of playscripts by women, and interviews with women playwrights and other theatre practitioners. Except insofar as it provides information about similar approaches to performance-making, or is accompanied by pertinent theoretical insights, this strand of feminist theatre scholarship is however not of direct relevance to the current study.

¹⁰ Elaine Aston provides a concise survey of the literature on feminist theatre groups and their processes (Aston, 1995: 58-64).

¹¹ Dolan distinguishes liberal, cultural or radical, and materialist feminisms as characteristic of American feminism. She sees liberal feminism as linked to liberal humanism, working within existing social and political organizations on an equalitarian and radically individualistic agenda, and distinguishes between the gender essentialism common to both cultural and radical feminism on historical grounds, quoting Linda Gordon's description of a move from 'androgyny to female uniqueness'. It can be seen therefore that the categories employed are not necessarily logically consistent; rather they describe broad rhetorical and political positions adopted by sections of the American feminist movement. Dolan nevertheless argues persuasively for their *functional* usefulness in an analysis of particular instances of American theatre practice, in particular when framed around the question of destabilising gender representations aimed at the 'ideal' (male, patriarchal) spectator.

¹² In this, she continues the analytic trajectory of the work on 'the gaze' and subjectivity initiated by feminist film critics such as Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1975) and Teresa de Lauretis (de Lauretis, 1984; de Lauretis, 1987).

¹³ The work for both these studies was carried out earlier than the publication dates suggest, in the case of the WTG interviews as far back as the late 1980s.

¹⁴ The Magdalena Project was initiated by Jill Greenhalgh, and emerged from women's workshops held in the mid 1980s in Cardiff, Wales. Internationalist in stance, it continues to run women's workshops and festivals, and maintains strong links with other formations of the European avant-garde. Many of its projects use physical theatre techniques and evince interest in ritual and women's spirituality; its orientation is firmly toward art rather than popular theatre traditions (Bassnett, 1989).

¹⁵ I was formally present as an outside observer, but was encouraged by Forth and other tutors to participate, partly so that I could understand the training experience directly, partly in order to make the other participants more comfortable. I participated in warm-ups and large group exercises, but at other times was able to take up different positions within the space to observe individual activities.

¹⁶Despite the Circus' emphasis on non-competitiveness and setting individual goals, it was inevitable that women working on the more technically difficult and spectacular skills would develop their own sub-group identities. The aerials group and the stiltwalkers, in particular, began to form unofficial elites, a phenomenon which became more evident in later years as the skill gap between continuing members and New Women widened. Women from these groups were also prominent in other aspects of Circus culture and organisation – there was possibly a feedback effect between adeptness, commitment and willingness to work in all areas of Circus life.

¹⁷A feature of traditional Maori women's performance, the intricate patterns made by these 'balls on strings' were introduced by a Circus member of New Zealand origin.

¹⁸The show was untitled in the 1991 program, but is referred to retrospectively as 'Women and Institutions'.

¹⁹Louise Radcliffe-Smith remembers that 'before the space could be used, circus members levelled the ground, removed truckloads of weeds, filled in drainage holes and mended railings' (Women's Circus, 1997: 146).

²⁰A version of the storyline was printed in the program. It read (slashes mark carriage returns): 'They lived along /THE RIVER /Strange Women who did not fit in. /So, they were locked away in /THE INSTITUTION /Rules, games, tricks for food! /THE BETRAYAL /DIVIDE & RULE /The technique used to keep women divided. /She stepped out of line. /We punished her.' (Women's Circus, 1991a).

²¹For several years, the Circus was run out of FC Arts, with minimal additional administrative backup, relying on part time and voluntary staff. Long term Circus administrator Mandy Grinblat began work as a volunteer, graduating to paid status in 1994 as the Circus' success allowed it to establish its own organisational and administrative base.

²²See a condensed example of this advice in (Forth, 1997: 157-59).

²³3,194 tickets for were issued for the 2001 season (Women's Circus, 2002).

²⁴The Circus has received consistently favourable treatment from reviewers, especially from The Age's theatre critic, Helen Thomson. Feature articles in mass circulation magazines such as Woman's Day, and appearances on daytime television shows, have also enhanced the Circus' reputation as an eccentric but established theatrical phenomenon, and extended its popular appeal.

²⁵Jean Taylor provides a detailed account of this level of activity in the Women's Circus Book (Taylor in Women's Circus, 1997: 131-33).

²⁶Sarah Cathcart's influence was palpable in her greater emphasis on storytelling, the illustrative use of imagery and in the Circus' increased exploration of the possibilities of vocal and musical sound. However, there does appear to have been resistance from the group to some exploratory possibilities including new ways of working physically, and an established preference for narratives of identity that may indicate an artistic stasis, even a conservatism, marking the embedding of *habitus* into tradition. At the time of writing, Andrea Lemon's first production as Artistic Director has not yet had its performance season; the effect of these tendencies on the Circus' future work therefore remains to be seen.

Notes to Chapter 7

¹Bourdieu's theorisation of the field relies on the persistence of contest as its foundational image. I would argue that alliance between positions is at least as important as contestation in establishing the boundaries of fields and the hierarchies of power and authority within them.

²Feminist theatre theorist Elin Diamond, in her analysis of the operations of mimesis in Western theatre, began by arguing against it on the grounds of its reproduction of patriarchal relations of power. She now acknowledges its strategic potential for feminist performance makers; the performer as *mimos* can model new social relations by occupying the field of play 'a feminist mimesis ... would take the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not reproducing the same' (Diamond, 1997).

³ Despite the 'tech wreck' affecting financial markets at the start of the 21st century, recent urban and cultural planning research has highlighted the importance of the alliance between 'new technology' and cultural activity in revitalising urban centres (Sandercock, 1998; Landry, 2000). It is therefore likely that avant-garde performance forms will develop stronger cross-field ties to these new economic and cultural formations in the short to medium term.

⁴ Kosky has worked on several occasions as a guest director at NIDA including the term before my observations there took place in 1997; he continued to direct for Opera Australia and the Bell Shakespeare Company before his departure for Europe. He has also engaged in 'alternative/commercial' work, including staging gay dance parties in Melbourne and Sydney and producing tourist displays at Fox Studios.

⁵ Goffman's terminology, including 'the definition of the situation', impression management, the operation of trust, the distinction between attachment and commitment, the establishment of transformation rules through keying, the ways 'strips of behaviour' are rehearsed, the effects of disendorsement or disbelief by others and performers' own breaking frame by 'flooding out' through shame and other affective display, are useful in understanding the mechanisms supporting performative interaction within frames, and how participants move from one frame to another. (Goffman, 1971; Goffman, 1972; Goffman, 1974).

⁶ The example of the Circus is also important in demonstrating that intense immersion is not necessarily the only effective way *habitus* can be established. Workshop participants only meet once or at most twice a week for most of the year; however, the combined effect of organisational persistence and the complex network of activities that constitute the 'Circus culture' provide the keying and frame congruence I have argued are the conditions necessary for a *habitus* to develop.

⁷ Although not directly encountered in this study, actors' agents provide crucial structural support for the ongoing *habitus* of performers working in mainstream theatre, film and TV. Agents and other industry gatekeepers are therefore the primary audience at which the final performance of graduating trainee actors is aimed (Cordell, 2001, episode 7/8). Avant-garde performance *habitus*, like 'classical' music, dance and vocal production, depends to a greater extent on the integration of disposition with a specific and technically demanding set of physical skills. Avant-garde including physical theatre performers are therefore more likely to emphasise repetitive physical practice, and training schools and other locations for that practice are more likely to constitute the institutional networks that support the persistence of their base *habitus*.

⁸ There is another possibility, that my interlocutors were being disingenuous or deceptive. The exchange recorded in the 'Drama School' video series showed that cues for discussion of issues relating to gender were being offered by other staff members and refused; but as feminist have observed in other contexts, gendered and other habituated positions tend to be occupied with such a level of prior investment that opening up a space for discussion is itself a matter for considerable effort and radical cross-modal translation/transformation.

⁹ The work of anthropologist Mary Douglas is suggestive when considering implicit meanings and the relations between bodies and the symbolic life of cultures and organisations (Douglas, 1973; Douglas, 1975)

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