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Spatial Form Theatre: Engaging the Observer as Creator

by

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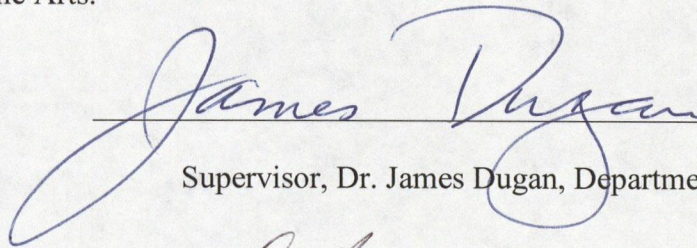
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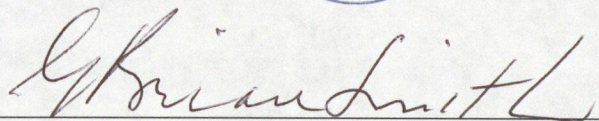
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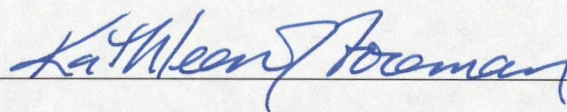
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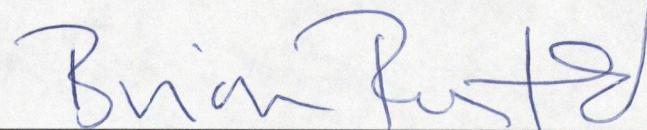
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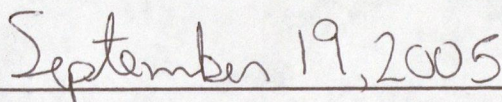
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Abstract

“Spatial Form Theatre: Engaging the Observer as Creator,” applies the concept of spatial narrative to performance creation and examines how it overcomes challenges of post-modernism, specifically in regards to the fragmentation of the linguistic norm. The first chapter describes three characteristics of post-modernism that contribute to this fragmentation and questions the relationship between the artist and audience. Using Buchner’s *Woyzeck* as an example, the second chapter discusses how spatial narrative addresses these questions by establishing the observer as a co-creator of the narrative through its structure. The third chapter applies spatial narrative to interdisciplinary performance to create Spatial Form Theatre using Ghost River Theatre’s *Eye for an Eye* as an example. The fourth chapter discusses techniques and tools used to create Spatial Form Theatre, drawing examples from my own work, *Momo: A Time Cabaret*.

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Dedicated to emerging artists creating new works and establishing new companies

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INTRODUCTION

The creative, mental, and financial burden of creating new work can exhaust an emerging artist, burning him/her out before having the chance to effectively refine his/her artistic practice and establish a career. Given that funding is harder to come by (and grant agencies put a large emphasis on new works), young companies need to be producing work on a regular basis. If a company hopes to gain longevity, and build an audience, it will have to have enough of a presence in the community to gain some momentum. This cannot happen without some solid tools and collective effort.

My exploration of Spatial Form Theatre begins as a tool for creation performance—compiling various exercises and models I have learned from workshops and apprenticeships/assistantships with local creation performance companies. However, the spatial creation process tends to produce a fragmented style of performance, one based on the compilation of various self-contained narrative units that do not succumb to the chronological sequencing of linear narration, do not have clear connectives, and tend to have multiple subjects; one which I have come to call Spatial Form Theatre. With further research on spatial narrative and post-modernism, I am able to articulate why Spatial Form Theatre works as a post-modern genre of performance. While at one time a fragmented performance may have been seen as incomplete, this dissertation will provide an understanding of how such fragmentation can not only benefit the artist in his/her creation process, but engage the audience in a way that they may also participate in the creative process.

Since post-modernism is a term that can span many meanings and interpretations, I will first outline three characteristics that describe post-modern culture. This will illustrate some challenges artists may encounter in considering how to best engage their audiences. Secondly, I will offer spatial narrative as a response to the challenges found in my exploration of post-modernism, using Buchner's *Woyzeck* as an early example. Spatial narrative will be established essentially as a name for a fragmented narrative that has three specific characteristics: a loss of chronological connectives, the use of multiple subjects, and the use of reflexive referencing. This idea will be further explored through a personal experience I have had working on a theatre creation project that incorporated multidisciplinary elements, and establish the term Spatial Form Theatre more thoroughly. And finally, I will propose a model for creating Spatial Form Theatre using my own creative process to adapt a children's book into a performance presentation.

In the end, this research is intended to speak to an emerging generation of artists, encouraging them to create in a way that will effectively communicate with today's audiences. The process itself is not limited to creating Spatial Form Theatre, and can be applied to creation as the artist desires. Nevertheless, Spatial Form Theatre establishes a valuable genre of performance that can have a wide range of accessibility and immediacy.

CHAPTER ONE

The Culture of Audience

To create performance is to communicate, and in order to communicate effectively it is important to find a language that will speak to the artist's audience. In a consumer society, language is multi dimensional; we consume media images rapidly and have easy access to global information. Post-modernists say that this has resulted in a schizophrenic society that literally "cuts and pastes" cultural icons into a smorgasboard of personalities and realities. Individualism is socially redundant, icons from the past are recycled to compose the present, queer is straight, and shared value systems are increasingly more difficult to find. From this emerges a fragmenting of language itself, making it difficult for the artist to privilege each spectator, in his/her diversity, to share in a dialogue with the performance. By looking at the elements that have brought about this transition into post-modernism, the artist can rediscover a potent language for the theatre and embrace the fragmented character of the audience.

This "schizophrenic" society is a result of, according to post-modernists, a fragmenting of the linguistic norm. In his book An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture, Dominic Strinati outlines three empirical characteristics that mark the emergence of the "post-modern individual", and characterize post-modern culture. The first is the deterioration of metanarratives that have governed modern society in the fields of religion, science, economics, etc. The great narratives that have once provided culture with authoritative "truths" about our world are being questioned by the post-modern individual, and he/she is less likely to accept that these narratives can truthfully represent

the cultural norm. This leads to the erosion of secure personal and collective identities, the second characteristic outlined by Strinati. Without established cultural norms, there is no opportunity for individuals to rise up and speak out against said norm, to establish a new “world view”. This makes it harder to invent new belief systems. Instead, the post-modern individual cuts and pastes his/her values from past systems without assimilating them into a particular identity. This makes it challenging to create new content (write new stories, invent new manifestos) because identity is so diverse. Instead, the ability to re-negotiate content with new paradigms presides over invention. This is the last characteristic Strinati outlines: the emphasis of style over content.

Along with other post-modernists such as Frederic Jameson and Paul Willis, Strinati demonstrates why the linguistic norm has fragmented and inspired a shift out of modernity. With this, he implies that the emerging post-modern individual uses language differently and therefore makes new demands on communication. Understanding these characteristics is valuable for the artist who creates performance for an emerging post-modern audience.

The Loss of Metanarratives

Every year, One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre presents the *High Performance Rodeo*, an international festival of experimental performance. One event that has gained popularity is the Ten-Minute Play Festival, an event that allows artists to become completely stressed-out within the course of twenty-four hours. Eight emerging companies are given a poetic suggestion, a prop, and a time limit of twenty-four hours to create a ten-minute play. This event provides a smorgasbord of styles of performance

including, the comic, the absurd, the minimal and, of course, the dramatic. There is always one group who will take the “bull-by-the-horns” and create a ten-minute dramatic play, and by “play” I am referring to the modernist style of psychological realism constructed on the principle that the audience is watching from behind a so-called fourth wall. In the 2005 festival, a group created a scene in which a young professional woman, on a daily basis, passes by a homeless person, panhandling. She generally ignores him, but their short interactions lead him to discover that she is a doctor who is about to travel overseas to help Tsunami victims. The play then ends with the panhandler posing the question, “how can we justify going overseas to help Tsunamis victims when we have our own problems right here on our own doorstep?” The play was well staged, directed and acted, yet assumed that I, as an audience member, had never thought nor acted upon this topic, and therefore it offended me. While the play was well performed, its quality was compromised by its social redundancy. My concern here is that I often find myself in this situation when I go to see “plays,” and it has brought me to consider that there is something above-and-beyond the quality of the plays (even when they are produced by reputable companies) that has fostered my great dislike for them in general.

Strinati’s discussion on the loss of metanarratives explains why I may be experiencing a disdain for the play that is based on modernist principles of psychological realism and the fourth wall. The “play,” as described above, comes from the world of the metanarrative, which enlists major cultural institutions to claim authority on truth, and produce narratives in the name of truth. Strinati explains:

...metanarratives, examples of which include religion, science, art, modernism and Marxism, make absolute, universal and all-embracing claims to knowledge and truth. (227)

The “play” that operates under modernist principles asks that the audience be a passive observer, living according to the experience of the characters and discovering truths as the characters do. But the fragmenting of the linguistic norm makes human experience diverse, and therefore difficult to establish truths in the first place. Thus, cultural institutions (let’s use the theatre for example) can no longer claim authority on truth, and no longer require metanarratives to establish truth for them.

Strinati attributes this to the development of mass media. As a consumer society we have access to a wealth of information from across the world, and continually cut and paste images, ideas and icons from a variety of cultures. This diversifies our human experience, and broadens our perspective of the human experience. He states:

Because of the speed and scope of modern mass communication, and relative ease and rapidity with which people and information can travel, time and space become less stable and comprehensible, and more confused and incoherent...It is becoming increasingly difficult for people to organize and interpret their lives in the light of metanarratives of whatever kind. (227)

In other words, metanarratives lose value in post modern culture because people themselves can access a multitude of perspectives on a single theme, and most likely have already experienced aspects of that theme in some way. Thus the “play,” while it may ring true to some, struggles to be diverse in its presentation of truth, because it is locked into the main character’s journey—and only that character’s journey. If the spectator does not identify with the truths presented by the character, then he/she has little opportunity to escape it.

Paul Willis is another critic who attacks the idea of metanarratives in post-modern culture. In his article, “Symbolic Creativity,” he questions why young people do not go to the theatre. I assume he speaks in relation to mainstream arts institutions, because he

makes reference specifically to “art institutions,” which suggests that he is talking about arts establishments that hold legitimacy and authority on performing art production.

While the theatre may have been regarded in the past as “...a landmark as a cultural institution...[a] representative of the art which dominant ideologies have both created and promoted” (Bennett 128), Willis attacks the institution of art for claiming this at all. He believes that creativity occurs in everyday life, not just in art institutions. He further suggests this as being a key factor in why theatres have trouble engaging younger generations (considered to be the emerging post-modern individuals) of audiences. He states:

The arts establishment, by and large...[utilizes] or even promotes fears of cultural decline and debasement in order to strengthen its own claims for subsidy, institutional protection and privilege. In general the arts establishment connives to keep alive the myth of the special, creative individual artist holding out against passive mass consumerism, so helping to maintain a self-interested view of elite creativity. (206)

Willis recognizes that with consumerism and mass communication people express, interpret, and create signs and symbols in everyday life to establish identity and create meaning. With this, the artist is no longer the authority on culture, and the spectator needs to be considered just as creative and expressive as the artist is. He further develops this idea by stating:

Most young people’s lives are not involved with the arts and yet are actually full of expressions, signs and symbols through which individuals and groups seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning. Young people are all the time expressing or attempting to express something about their actual or potential cultural significance. (206)

Willis regards the younger generation to be the emerging post-modern individual, and therefore a prime example of individuals who are symbolically creative. His argument asks that the art institutions embrace, not alienate, this new post-modern individual.

But this is not to say that by acknowledging both artist and observer as equal, theatre becomes about audience participation. It does suggest, however, that any presentation of a truth runs the risk of not sounding “truthful” at all. This is not to say that it won’t resonate truth to some, but it limits the potential of both the artist and the audience to explore the diversity in “truths” by locking into an absolute. By establishing an equal relationship between artist and observer, one that privileges both to decide his/her “truths” about the ideas presented, the metanarrative is eroded. To achieve this, the “play” must explore a new form that allows both to exercise symbolic creativity which is inherent within them.

Erosion of Identity and Shared Value Systems

The erosion of secure collective identities suggests that human experience has become so diverse due to the fragmenting of the linguistic norm that one can no longer identify with a unique world view or individuality. This is because, in a nutshell, “everybody’s been there, done that!” Strinati suggests that, traditionally, social class, religion, and local community were sources in which people could associate their identity, but with the fragmenting of the linguistic norm, identity becomes fragmented as well. Strinati states:

The erosion of once secure collective identities has led to the increasing fragmentation of personal identities. It is argued that we have witnessed the gradual disappearance of traditional and highly valued frames of reference in terms of which people could define themselves and their place

in society, and so feel relatively secure in their personal and collective identities.... [Moreover, no] new institutions or beliefs arise to give people a secure and coherent sense of themselves, the times in which they live and their place in society. (238-239)

This, then, suggests that it is increasingly difficult to assume there is a shared value system among a group of people; that their values may be more collage-like, cut and pasted from a variety of identities. Therefore the artist cannot assume an audience will come to the performance with a certain value system, otherwise the artist runs the risk of excluding members of the audience who do not identify with the value system the artist has assumed for them. This, too, is reflected in the ten-minute play I discussed in the introduction, wherein the aid being directed at the Tsunami victims was in question. The play assumed that, (a) I wasn't doing anything myself to help the homeless in Calgary and, (b) it was presenting a unique idea that directing charity locally was, in fact, more valuable than directing it overseas. My taking offence, here, occurred because a value system I did not hold was imposed upon me. Therefore, I could not identify with the characters, or the content, because I found it to be socially redundant.

Frederic Jameson's work elaborates on the erosion of identity by demonstrating the end of individualism with the emergence of post-modernism. He states that while the modern era could present a unique individual, with a unique value system, the post-modern one cannot because of the fragmented norm. As there is no longer a norm to challenge or counter, individuality becomes redundant and there is less opportunity for people to find secure sources of identity. Jameson argues that this decline in individualism is due to the "death of the subject," a component that makes classical modernism a thing of the past, only to be replaced by post-modernism. He states:

This new component is what is generally called the ‘death of the subject’ or to say it in more conventional language, the end of individualism as such. The great modernisms were, as we have said, predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprints, as incomparable as your own body. But this means that the modernist aesthetic is in some way organically linked to the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique unmistakable style. (195)

Thus with the modern aesthetic, the subject challenges dominant ideologies and presents a unique individuality outside the norm. One can either accept or decline the values presented by the subject, on a personal and collective level, to secure one’s own identity. What differentiates the modern aesthetic from the post-modern one is that the subject no longer has a norm to challenge—it has been done too much. Thus the subject “dies” because it is no longer possible to be unique or present individuality.

Jameson goes on to describe how this creates a challenge for the artist, and gives insight as to why the “play” may struggle to be potent in post-modern times. He states:

What we have to retain from all this is rather an aesthetic dilemma: because if the experience and the ideology of the unique self, and experience and ideology which informed the stylistic practice of classical modernism, is over and done with, then it is no longer clear what the artists and writers of the present period are supposed to be doing....[The] writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds - they’ve already been invented; only a limited number of combinations are possible; the unique ones have been thought of already. (195-196)

If the artist can no longer invent new, unique, value systems or ideologies that people can connect with, then what is there left to create? How can the artist create something his/her audience can identify with, if identity itself has fragmented? Moreover, how can the artist challenge the norm when there no longer exists a norm to challenge. These are the questions that are brought forth by the post-modern aesthetic, where identity can no

longer be found in the individualistic idea of the “subject”. Jameson paints a bleak future for creativity, but gives insight as to what an artist can expect from the emerging post-modern audience.

Style over Content

So what of content? How does the artist create new innovative works if there is no new content? Strinati suggests that this post-modern dilemma shifts the emphasis from content to style. He outlines that although content may be recycled, it can be renegotiated through style, and this has come about due to the nature of a consumer society. Because we consume media images so rapidly, post-modern reality is thus defined by these images. Strinati, likewise, states: “The idea is that popular culture and media images increasingly dominate our sense of reality, and the way we define ourselves and the world around us” (224). This asks the artist to no longer invent new signs and symbols, but recontextualize ones that already exist in the everyday. Thus an artwork becomes all about the combination of symbolic systems and the way in which the spectator negotiates them as a whole.

Nevertheless, this is also not to say that common experience cannot be found in an audience, but that post-modernism puts a different slant on it, making it less about subject and more about recognition. For instance, Charles Ross is an artist whose theatrical success depends on this very idea of shared experience from the audience; he has been traveling the Fringe circuits for years, performing his “One Man Star Wars Trilogy,” and, recently, “The One Man Lord of the Rings.” In his one-man shows, in the course of an hour, with himself-only, a blank stage, a general wash of lights, a generic

black T-shirt and track pants, Ross performs the entire trilogy, articulating moments from the movies in a sort-of precise dance, with imitations only, and an occasional commentary. In a review from the Toronto NOW magazine, Glen Sumi states:

In less than 60 minutes – his only accessories being a bottle of water and knee and elbow pads – Ross makes the epic journey from the Shire to Mount Doom, wielding dozens of invisible arrows, killing hundreds of Orcs and deconstructing many iconic moments with deadpan wit along the way.

At the Edmonton Fringe festival last year, Ross sustained a sold-out performance for the entire duration of that Fringe. Audiences were said to have lined up five hours before the performance to get tickets. His success has lead him to perform at many other high profile events, some of which have been known to be associated with the “Star Wars” master himself, George Lucas.

Yet, while Ross manages to capture themes that do have a shared value system, and being that mass amounts of people are familiar with both these colossal Hollywood movies, his success is attributed to the way he moves through the symbolism and invites the audience to recognize that symbolism. It is in his one-man style of symbolism that the moments become very potent, because it is the content itself that is being renegotiated into the style of a one-man show. Sumi continues in his review:

One of Ross's strengths is his ability to distill the essence of a character or scene to its bare minimum. He's a master caricaturist. I'll never forget his Jabba the Hut, created by placing his forearms over each other, mimicking the creature's mouth.

This relates to what Strinati says about style over content. This moment is memorable not because he recreates an impressive Jabba the Hut, but because he is forced by his one-man style to reduce Jabba to a pair of flapping forearms; and everyone gets the reference. The style of Ross's work uses symbolism to trigger the personal relationship

one may have with the film. Ross never places the performance into the context of a story, he doesn't reinvent new content, he just stylizes the content that already exists within those movies. Strinati states:

...we increasingly consume images and signs for their own sake rather than for their 'usefulness' or for the deeper values they signify. We consume images and signs precisely because they are images and signs, and disregard questions of utility and value. This is evident in popular culture itself where surface and style, what things look like, and playfulness and jokes are said to predominate at the expense of content, substance and meaning. (225)

While Strinati's point illustrates superficiality in the consumption of style over content, this superficiality facilitates the fragmenting of a linguistic norm. As the artwork invites the spectators to move through symbolic moments, they are permitted, therefore, to negotiate the content themselves. For instance, Charles Ross' "One Man Trilogies" never reveal his own perspective on the films, because they are merely a combination of moments that are recognizable. Thus, each audience member is invited to hold whatever truths he or she may feel about the films, without being asked to agree with or disagree with those of Ross's.

This is a good example, as well, of what Willis discusses in his article "Symbolic Creativity;" that the idea of recognition becomes very potent in post-modernism. He emphasizes:

We don't want to invent [art] or propose it. We want to recognize it - literally recognize it....Those who stress the separateness, the sublime and quintessential in 'art' have actually assumed and encouraged a mindlessly vulgar, materialist view of everyday life. They counterpose this to their view of 'the imaginative'. They thereby view life as a cultural desert. The imagined symbolic deficit of everyday life is then, in turn, to be repaired, by recourse to a free-floating 'imaginative realm', to 'useless things', to 'art for art's sake', to the 'socially redundant'. (206-207)

Willis urges the artist to no longer invent content because everyday life is potent with symbolism. If the artist gives the spectator a chance to recognize symbolism from everyday life, and negotiate it according to his or her own personal norm, then an artwork can become potent. Thus, the artist is not caught in a trap of creating something original and then discovering that it is actually, as Willis says, “socially redundant”.

The emphasis on style over content acknowledges one of the key characteristics of post-modern culture; we are no longer able to define the present without using images from the past. Everything is recycled. Jameson adds, “...we [are] unable today to focus our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience” (198). But the idea of style over content just asks that there is a different emphasis on creativity. Art can still be potent if it shifts with it, and acknowledges the fragmenting of the linguistic norm.

Likewise, Ross is able to express this very idea in his creation of a show that is potent because of the style, not the content. Furthermore, the success of the “idea of a shared experience from the audience” is evidenced by Ross’s popular shows performed at numerous “Star Wars” conventions before thousands of fans and the five hour line-ups to see his “One Man Lord of the Rings”, where even “Gandalf” (Sir Ian McKellen) himself has been known to attend.

Conclusion

The exploration in this chapter is not meant to provide a summary of post-modernism as a whole, assimilating all of the current discourse into a simple three-part recipe. It is an attempt to illustrate some of the characteristics of post-modernism,

demonstrating how they result in the fragmenting of the linguistic norm, as outlined by selected post-modern theorists. With these characteristics one can begin to identify why certain stories, icons, symbols and styles seem to set the cultural trends. It is here that the artist can come to know the nature of his/her audience, and the demands culture makes on the creation and communication of an artwork.

CHAPTER TWO

The Observer as Creator—Spatial Narrative as a Post Modern Narrative Structure

If post-modernism leaves the artist at odds with innovation, how is the artist to create? If no new content can be invented, then how can new performance survive? The fragmenting of the linguistic norm asks the artist to make one major shift in the creation of an artwork—the observer is no longer a witness, but a creator as well. To accomplish this, the structure of an artwork should be open enough to invite the observer in, not as a passive witness but as an active creator. Then, the observer's own experience may shape the meaning of content according to his or her own value system, and moreover, his or her own linguistic norm.

Post-modern critics and artists have both been exploring structural models that enable the observer to be invited into an artwork according to his/her linguistic norm. "Spatial Narrative," which is a fragmented narrative structure, or open-structured narrative, is one model that exists. The term was coined by Joseph Frank in his article "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," and stemmed from his fascination with literature similar to Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* which subverted conventional use of chronological sequencing in narrative. It is the fragmented structure of spatial narrative that complements the character of post-modernism, particularly because of its three key principles: the loss of temporal/causal connectives, the use of plural texts, and the idea of reflexive referencing. With these three characteristics the observer is transformed into a creator as well, interpreting and connecting the narrative according to his/her own diverse experience and identity.

Like many literary works that have spatial form qualities, Buchner's *Woyzeck* is said to be ahead of its time because of its intriguing structure. Although it was written in the early eighteenth hundreds and only first published in 1879, its fragmented structure of self-contained units has a very post-modern appeal. In fact, *Woyzeck* is a good example of spatial narrative because it contains the three principles outlined above, and even though it was not created as a post-modern play, one cannot deny that it works well with the challenges put forth by post-modernity.

The Rejection of Chronology and Linear Narration

Spatial narrative has the quality of being a collection of moments surrounding an idea, whereas linear narration is a journey that forces the reader to follow the story as unfolding in time. In spatial narrative, each fragment accords to its own time and space and does not have to be justified chronologically within a governing "world" of the play. It may, then, have the appearance of being more like a collage, or a montage of vignettes. This is not to say that its structure is random or the content unorganized. Instead, it suggests that the units of the narrative relate to each other differently than in linear narration. In David Mickelsen's "Types of Spatial Structure," Gottfried Benn uses the analogy of an orange to describe it, and states that spatial narrative is

...built like an orange. An orange consists of numerous segments, the individual pieces of fruit, the slices, all alike, all next to one another...of equal value...but they all tend not outward, into space, they tend toward the middle, toward the tough stem...the tough stem is a phenotype, the existential, nothing but it, only it; there is no other relationship between parts. (qtd. in Mickelson 65)

Each slice of the orange can be seen to represent an independent unit, with its own beginning, middle, and end, or its own narrative style. While some units may contain interdependent information, their key relationship is that they all stem back toward a core idea. With this, a common space and time or a single reality is not required to assimilate each unit, and space is created within the narrative.

Buchner's *Woyzeck* was found as a bundle of self-contained scenes. The script was never finished due to his death at a young age, but critics believe that the script was meant to be a sort of fragmented montage because the scenes were self-contained and showed no sign of having chronological connectives. This is what makes it so characteristic of spatial narrative—each scene is like a slice of the orange.

A number of the scenes in *Woyzeck* reveal that Marie, Woyzeck's lover with whom he has a child, is unfaithful. He finds out about her affair with the Drum Major, and eventually murders her. These scenes do have a progression and a chronology about them, but they are still self-contained. Dispersed among these scenes are a series of other ones that are isolated moments in time, with no particular flow into or out of any of the other scenes. For instance, in the scene where Woyzeck shaves the Captain, there is no particular action or progression of plot. Instead the scene plays out like a lecture on morality and social class:

DOCTOR. We poor folk – you see, Captain, it's money, money, when you've got none. You can't set a fellow like me in the world on just morals; a man is flesh and blood as well. The likes of us are blessed in this world and in the next. I expect when we get to Heaven we'll have to help out with the thunder.

CAPTAIN. Woyzeck, you have no virtue. You are not a virtuous man. Flesh and blood? When I'm lying by the window and it's been raining and I see the white stockings tripping down the alleyways – damn it, Woyzeck, I feel love! I too am flesh and blood. But Woyzeck, Virtue, Virtue! How am I supposed to

spend my time? But I say to myself 'You are a virtuous man,'
(*Moved.*) 'a decent man, a decent man.'

WOYZECK. Yes Captain, Virtue – I don't have that problem.

We ordinary people don't have any virtue, we just follow our
natures. But if I was a gentleman and had a hat and a watch and a
long overcoat and could talk nicely then I'd like to be virtuous. It
must be nice to have virtue, Captain, but I'm a poor man.

CAPTAIN. Good Woyzeck, you're a decent man, a decent
man. But you think too much. It wears you down. You look so
hunted. Our discussion has quite upset me. Go now and don't run
so. Slowly, nice and slowly down the road. (Buchner 16)

While the fragment develops Woyzeck's character and asks questions central to the
themes in the play, it does not chronologically correspond to any of the other scenes. Nor
does it develop plot. Thus it is related to the rest of the scenes by its themes, but not by
space and time.

Other fragments are more abstract, depicting moments of paranoia, or creating
mood without having any attachment to chronology. A good example of this is a
fragment in which Woyzeck is experiencing some sort of hallucination in a field. He
rants:

WOYZECK. On and on, on and on – squeal and squeak go the
fiddles and the pipes. On and on, on and on. Stop the music!
Who's talking down there?

He puts his ear to the ground.

Eh? What do you say? Louder, louder! Stab? Stab the she wolf
dead. Stab, stab the she wolf dead. Shall I? Must I? Do I hear it
up there too? Is the wind saying it? I can hear it on and on, on and
on. Stab her dead, dead! (Buchner 31)

Again, this scene is self-contained, and has no indication of where it is supposed to occur
in the chronology of the plot. Furthermore, the poetic nature of the dialogue could be
interpreted in numerous ways; a dream, a hallucination, a drunken rant, or a
schizophrenic episode.

In both cases, these scenes are moments in time that work in numerous points in the script. Since the original order was never known, translators and adaptors have been playing with the order of units, and this has varied the interpretation of the story a lot.

McLeish states:

Woyzeck...is like a jigsaw, gradually built up before our eyes. Each of its twenty-four scenes is self-contained. None flows out of or into any others. Our picture of each character, and of the developing situation, does not grow organically, like a plant (as happens in earlier drama). Rather, it is a kind of collage, in which each new piece changes the total picture, by juxtaposition rather than development. (xv-xvi)

It is in this way that *Woyzeck* relates to spatial narrative. The self-contained units present fragments of Woyzeck's life, but do not assimilate them into a single space and time, or create a linear journey. Thus each adaptor has the opportunity to organize the episodes in a different way. There are no causal/temporal connectives to indicate the original order Buchner may have intended for the final draft.

As spatial narrative does away with linear narration and chronological sequences, the author can explore the narrative with more diversity. One moment in time can be presented from a variety of perspectives over and over again. It can be overlapped with another moment in time and seen simultaneously or a moment in time can be entered and exited quickly without exposition or conclusion. Essentially, spatial narrative allows one to cut-and-paste moments in time without the restrictions of a linear narration, "...[undermining] the inherent consecutiveness of language, forcing the reader to perceive elements of the [narrative] not as unrolling in time, but as juxtaposed in space" (Smitten 18). The goal thus becomes to map the ideas and ask the questions so as to give the observer a comprehensive view of the subject. Sharon Spencer states:

...its goal is the evocation of this illusion of a spatial entity, either representational or abstract, constructed from prose fragments of diverse types and lengths and arranged by means of the principle of juxtaposition so as to include a comprehensive view of the book's subject (xxi).

But the important aspect to this, and what gives spatial narrative its post-modern quality, is that the observer is free to move through this "map" in his/her own way; without the causal/temporal connectives there is no longer a right way for the observer to connect the various fragments, thus less opportunity for the author of the narrative to govern the observer's interpretation of it.

This is the case with Buchner's *Woyzeck*. Since the self-contained units do not flow into one another, the adaptors can manipulate the order in their own way. As the order is manipulated, different aspects of the content is punctuated. Moreover, even though tied to the order deciphered by the adaptor, the observer adds another layer of interpretation. This is because the adaptor never gets to relate how or why he/she chose a particular order, but trusts that the observer will find similar connections, if not more. While the observer is less free to connect the fragments in his/her own way, there is still much opportunity for him/her to find his/her own relationships in the narrative. Thus, both experience some level of freedom to juxtapose and connect the narrative in their own way. This is because,

From the compositional elements offered by the spatial artist, the reader composes in his own mind the fiction to be made; the reader is no longer chained to the temporal succession of events noted on the page but rather is invited to make his own sequential conclusion from the objects of the work itself. (Klinkowitz 45)

In turn, the observer becomes an active participant in the creation of narrative, an author himself/herself which privileges his/her own values to shape the work. When this occurs, the presence of a linguistic norm becomes unnecessary.

This fragmenting of time, and the need for a spatial form of narrative, does not come out-of-the blue. It is based on the idea that as a consumer society our ability to communicate is sophisticated because we consume images from media within a non-linear fashion. Sharon Spencer states:

...by offering us the swift language of visual images in film and television, technology has shown us new ways of organizing what our senses receive: we take in sensations and words all at once instead of sequentially. It is no wonder that sequential linear time—the time of the novel as a narration—has increasingly lost its relevance for the arts. (xx)

Spencer's statement demonstrates that the very process of communication changes as we consume more and more signs and symbols in our everyday life. This reflects back to Willis' argument as well on Symbolic Creativity, devaluing the concept of the metanarrative and giving cultural authority to everyone's everyday human experience.

How much or how little chronology can be fragmented in spatial narrative is of course up to the creator. As seen in *Woyzeck*, there is a mixture of scenes that accord to a sort of chronology, and ones that don't. But, it is the self-contained units, the 'slice of orange' structure that gives the creator more freedom in which to explore a variety of "moments," ideas, and questions in the narrative without having to worry about how they all flow together. Without the connectives the creator in a sense surrenders more to the observer, understanding that he/she is sophisticated enough to associate and relate the fragments in a way that will be meaningful and significant.

Plural Texts—Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

With the fragmenting of time and space comes another characteristic key to spatial narrative: the use of plural texts. Without linear narrations the story no longer has to be about one character and his/her belief systems. The observer is no longer limited to identify or not with this principle character, because the idea of plural texts allows the content to be shaped by numerous perspectives. Again, each segment of the ‘orange’ may contain its own perspective of the content.

With plural texts there is a more diverse representation of value systems, none of which privileges a particular norm. While they all revolve around a central idea they are without hierarchy. Sharon Spencer, who calls spatial structure “open” or “architectonic” states:

...open structured novels embody multiple perspectives, some of which are actually contradictory, whose purpose is to expose the subject from as many angles as possible-and, ideally, with an impression of simultaneity....the open structured novel may well constitute an intellectual exploration undertaken by a novelist who actually is not certain what he believes about the nature of reality...
(52)

As the content is explored from many angles, it allows a variety of value systems to be represented. If the observer does not identify with one value system, then they might with another. Moreover, the playing out of these value systems might trigger a new perspective for the observer; one that is not represented. However, in all cases, identity becomes diversified. The observer can freely associate his/her own identity with the characters in the narrative: it is not inclusive, it is not exclusive. With multiple value systems at play, any sense of a linguistic norm becomes corroded.

With the presentation of multiple value systems, a subject cannot exist because there are multiple norms, all which claim validity. This refers back to Jameson's concept of 'death of the subject'. What can emerge, however, is the power of the archetype, which does not require the invention of an individualistic character, but the recognition of a symbolic one.

The story of *Woyzeck* is not told from numerous perspectives, but the self-contained scenes do revolve around certain archetypes. Through this, Woyzeck himself becomes a sort of catalyst to communicate the different value systems present in the narrative, and only on occasion does one see his beliefs. In fact, rarely does Buchner even engage Woyzeck in any dialogue that isn't concerned with a hallucination or paranoid rant. In a sense, Woyzeck becomes more of an object or specimen to be examined—being affected by his environment. Thus, archetypal characters like the Captain, the Doctor, and even someone as secondary as the Journeyman, are able to present their own "views on humanity" throughout the short scenes.

For instance, the Doctor ridicules Woyzeck for succumbing to his more animalistic nature when he catches him urinating in the street:

DOCTOR. I saw you Woyzeck, you pissed in the street, pissed
against the wall like a dog. And three groschen a day plus food.
Woyzeck, it's bad, the world is going bad, very bad.

WOYZECK. But Doctor, when nature calls ...

DOCTOR. Nature calls, nature calls! Nature! Haven't I proved
that the *musculus constrictor vesicae* is subject to the will?
Nature! Woyzeck, man is free. In man, Nature manifests itself as
freedom. Couldn't hold his urine! (Buchner 21)

Woyzeck has little to say against the Doctor, who is disgusted at him for succumbing to nature. He tells Woyzeck to resist his nature and exercise his free will – the key factor

that separates man from animal. In many of the scenes with the Doctor, Woyzeck takes on a sort of animal quality, being put on public display as a personal experiment of the Doctor's.

However, the Doctor's values are opposed by the Showman, who cleverly gets his horse to put humanity to shame by acting "human." This scene finds Woyzeck at the fair with Marie, watching a demonstration by the Showman of his horse that can urinate on command into a bucket. He states:

SHOWMAN. That's it. Put humanity to shame. This animal's in a state of nature, you see. Plain and pure nature.... You were made out of dust, out of sand, out of clay. Do you want to be anything more than dust and sand and clay? (Rudall 15)

The Showman encourages man to succumb to his nature, and thus counters the Doctor's values. These types of contradictions occur with numerous characters throughout the play, presenting different beliefs and asking different questions; it is here where the presentation of a subject breaks down.

Critics argue that the varying attitudes presented in the self-contained scenes are similar to scientific case studies; in fact *Woyzeck* was based on a real life figure. This is why they believe the episodic form of the play to be a deliberate choice, as Buchner studied scientific presentations outside of playwriting. It is said that the fragments of *Woyzeck* resemble more a scientific presentation:

Buchner's main 'literary' activities, outside drama, were the arguing of political points of view and the preparation and presentation of scientific research....[A] scientific presentation is a collection of self-contained exposition or demonstrations, strung on a thread like beads on a string, each making its point in its own individual way. This is how *Woyzeck* is constructed. Individually, the scenes can seem trivial or meaningless; their power only comes when the play is taken as a whole. (McLeish xvi)

The purpose of each unit is not to unfold a story about a man named Woyzeck, but to distribute an idea or ask a question that pertains to the greater themes of the play. This is how Woyzeck escapes the role of the subject. The emphasis is not on whether or not one identifies with him, but how one relates to the questions raised in the overall content. Moreover, there is no summation or conclusion ever made about these questions, and one can identify or reject them as he/she desires.

The use of plural texts thus has a similar effect as does the loss of chronological connectives. Without the subject the narrative does not facilitate the communication of a single set of values only. As the values become diversified, the opportunity for the observer to identify with the content increases. And even if the observer does not identify with any of the value systems presented, at least he/she has been invited to respond in his/her own way to the content.

Making Connections through Reflexive Referencing

With the loss of temporal/causal connectives and the use of plural texts, the reader is invited into the content through reflexive referencing. This is where the post-modern emphasis of style rules over content; it is not what content is, it is how one can engage with content through form. In spatial narrative, a greater burden is placed on the observer to negotiate the different narrative units. The style acknowledges man's inherent need for what Barthes calls "structuralist activity," which asks that we no longer represent ideas, but signify them.

Structuralist activity embodies the principles that when man creates an artwork he does not create an original impression of the 'real', but in fact recreates it according to his own understanding of it. Barthes states that man,

...takes the real, decomposes it, then recomposes it....creation or reflection are not, here, an original 'impression' of the world, but a veritable fabrication of a world which resembles the primary one, not in order to copy it, but to render it intelligible. (Barthes 215)

This shifts art into a symbolic realm. Nothing in art can be copied, it can only be signified, leaving each observer to render it intelligible according to his/her own perception. Thus Barthes' idea of structural man acknowledges that both the artist and the observer are involved in the final creation of an artwork.

What completes the spatial narrative is the observer's ability to connect the fragments by 'reflexive referencing'. Here, all of the moments in time, and all of the values at play are cross-referenced with each other to complete the work and decipher its meaning. It is the observer's

...alertness to reflexive referencing, his ability to construct a syntax for the work, [that] creates a whole out of the discrete parts of the narrative....The implication...is that spatial form narratives place a greater burden on the reader's synthesizing power than do more conventional temporal narratives. (Smitten 21)

The reason that reflexive referencing becomes potent to the post-modern individual is because there is no right or wrong way to connect the fragments into a whole.

[As the reader] grasps the relationships between the parts through reflexive reference, the attentive reader of spatial form begins to perceive a pattern or whole form. The perception of spatial form demands that the reader maintain an aesthetic distance from the particulars of the work, so that he may see the whole....[Thus] the reader is encouraged to identify not as a particular human being with particular characters but as a human mind experiencing a form, such as a square or a labyrinth, created by the

interaction of fictional beings with one another and with
their environment. (Daghistan and Johnson 53)

The style of spatial form and the idea of reflexive referencing thus allows what Barthes calls “structural man” to do what he does best – make intelligible the content according to his own will without being tied to a specific journey set out by the creator.

Reflexive referencing plays a large role in deciphering the order of *Woyzeck*. Originally the manuscript was discovered in four bundles, “...three contained jottings and drafts of individual scenes, the fourth a copy of the play as we have it, up to the scene where Woyzeck gives Andres his possessions...” (McLeish xxi). Thus, the order of the scenes has been experimented with throughout many adaptations. As adaptors manipulate order they discover different ways in which scenes will reference each other, to the point where the meaning of the text can be altered.

For instance, in comparing Gregory Motton’s translation (whose order is based on Werner R. Lehman’s adaptation from 1967) with a newer adaptation by Nicholas Rudall, one sees that the Accusation scene has been placed differently. With Motton, Marie is seduced by the Drum Major in scene seven, and following that scene Woyzeck confronts her saying:

WOYZECK. A sin, such a big fat sin - it stinks so much you
could smoke out all the angels from Heaven with it. You’ve got a
red mouth Marie. No blisters?
.....
Devil! Did he stand here? Like this? Like this? (Buchner 19)

But in neither of these scenes does it articulate exactly how Woyzeck had known of this affair. He does indicate that he has *seen* the Drum Major, but that could refer to any number of other sequences that may or may not have come before this one.

On the other hand, in Rudall's adaptation/translation, Woyzeck's accusation comes after the scene in which the Captain and the Doctor humiliate Woyzeck. Whether it is based on gossip, or something they saw, the Captain and Doctor actually plant the seed of Marie's affair in this version:

CAPTAIN. Tell me Woyzeck, have you found a hair in your soup recently? I don't think he gets it. A hair... Woyzeck... from someone's moustache... an engineer say... a sergeant... a drum major?

.....
CAPTAIN. Look at his face! Well maybe not in his soup-but if he pops round the corner he might find that hair sticking to a certain pair of lips...(30)

This scene, which appears much later in Motton's translation, thus suggests that the ruthless gossip of the Captain and the Doctor make him believe that Marie is having an affair.

The placement of the Accusation scene therefore changes the potential interpretation of the play. In Motton's, Woyzeck seems to be driven more by revenge because the scene order suggests he has witnessed her adultery. Thus, as his paranoia intensifies over the course of the play it can be attributed to this event. But in Rudall's, one could question whether or not she actually went through with the affair, and if Woyzeck murdered her based on an assumption fueled by the Doctor and the Captain. Moreover, one could question how much of his mental state was affected by this betrayal, and how much was affected by the scientific experiment the Doctor was conducting on him in which he only ate peas. Both generate a new world of possibilities without providing any definitive answers. The potency in both these cases, however, is that the observer is invited to imagine the content that is never fully articulated and to fill in the blanks; it is in this investment that he/she is welcomed as an equal to the creator.

Essentially, reflexive referencing is not about content, but what is done with content. It is a stylistic feature of spatial narrative that shapes the content in a way that gives the observer the final responsibility to connect the fragments into a whole. Spatial form narrative is not about content, but about how we are invited to participate in the content. Imagination and innovation is not in what is said, but in how it is said. There is no longer a need to capture content into an absolute meaning or a truthful representation, because it assumes that the observer is sophisticated enough to do this according to his/her own belief systems, and that signification is infinitely more interesting than representation.

Likewise, this is what had interested Barthes in his discussion of structural man.

When signifieds are ultimately unstable and closed, the sign-making relationship ossifies and the sign can never show itself off as sign. But what has interested Barthes is the way people make the world intelligible to themselves, and such knowledge involves a defabrication of the sign system to show how signs function in creating a usable reality. People give meanings, not words, and once so endowed, writing creates meaning not present in those words before. (Klinkowitz 46)

Spatial form turns narrative into a process of signification. The journey is in this negotiation of symbols as thus appeals to symbolic creativity. The interest of the artist is no longer to assimilate diversity into an absolute, but to accept that the fragmenting of the linguistic norm makes both the creator and observer equal hands in making intelligible—a narrative.

Conclusion

Thus, structure begins to play a big part in solving the challenges of post-modernism: here is where the artist can find a model for post-modern creation. In

acknowledging that the reader is also creatively capable and in providing an opportunity to contribute to the artwork, the artist enables equality between creator and observer to be established. There is no cathartic end wherein the audience is asked to identify with the journey of the main character: there is no way for the creator to control the journey for the observer. Instead, there is smorgasbord of moments that relate as each person sees it, and any sense of a linguistic norm no longer exists. This is not to say that a good old-fashioned story will not engage the emerging post-modern individual. It merely demonstrates that a fragmented form has qualities that a linear narration cannot accomplish; qualities that tend to respond to the challenges of post-modernism.

CHAPTER THREE

Eye for an Eye as an Example of Spatial Form Theatre

The idea of Spatial Form Theatre, which is what I will investigate in this chapter, is not new. In fact, my interest in this form, before I could even put a name to it, came out of working with a variety of local companies such as One Yellow Rabbit and Ghost River Theatre, who focused on “creation performance”—referring to collectively generated, project based work. One company in particular, Ghost River Theatre, had had quite a bit of success with a show called *Eye for an Eye*, which told the story of an Albertan, Wiebo Ludwig, who was a farmer at war with the oil and gas companies. The show was received with great success, and after many incarnations was selected to represent Alberta arts and culture in the “Alberta Scene” festival in Ottawa.

My interest in *Eye for an Eye* is that it has the three principle characteristics of spatial narrative, making it what I call Spatial Form Theatre. This demonstrates that while spatial narrative has its roots in literature, it is also applicable to performance. The only difference being that the language of theatre is much richer than in literature, because it uses not only a written or spoken language, but a visual and auditory language as well. Since *Eye for an Eye* contains the characteristics of spatial narrative, it has the same effect on the creator/observer relationship and also addresses the major challenge presented by post-modernism and the fragmenting of the linguistic norm.

The Orange Theory—Narrative Units in *Eye for an Eye*

In February 2001, I worked with Ghost River Theatre on *Eye for an Eye*, which was a concept by Doug Curtis (Artistic Director for Ghost River Theatre), and collectively written under the direction of Curtis by an ensemble who also performed the piece (Kira Bradley, Tony Eyamie, Karen Johnson-Diamond, Duval Lang, Donna Sharpe, and David Rhymer—who also composed and arranged the music). Ghost River Theatre, a creation performance company which had had its start on the fringe circuit, had taken an interest in the true story of Wiebo Ludwig, a farmer from Alberta who had blown up a sour gas well, and was under investigation for the death of a 16 year old girl, Carmen Willis. The story had graced the news for a couple of years, and as fragments from media, interviews with farmers and general research on the effects of toxic sour gas flaring accumulated, Curtis realized there was a compelling story to be told. Curtis organized an ensemble of actor/writers, and a composer, to put together what he called “a piss and vinegar cabaret.”

I worked as the assistant director on the project. With the fragments of information that had been accumulated, the ensemble wrote a smorgasbord of monologues, dialogues and songs that were then assembled into a script, under the direction of Curtis. As the script was staged and rehearsed, pieces were arranged, rearranged, tweaked, etc. until the show opened with much success.

The narrative units of *Eye for an Eye* operate on the orange principle discussed in the latter chapter. Segments are divided into monologues, dialogues, and songs, each one being very separate in its style. The monologues break down the fourth wall, and directly address the audience as though they are themselves a character in the story. The

dialogues revert back to the fourth wall convention. Here, the characters interact with each other, and the audience observes without being addressed. The songs, in true musical theatre style, break out of character completely by shifting into the presentational world of song and dance. They are satiric at times, emotionally reflective at others. The narrative units are distinct from each other, and contain their own rules of space and time. This is established right from the beginning as the first three narrative units are dialogue, then song, then monologue.

The first narrative unit (dialogue) depicts the media trying to find a headline for the Reverend's story. The actors, who play the main characters of the RCMP, the Executive, the Reverend and Kati, assume the roles of a bunch of journalists looking for a catchy headline. They discuss:

(all characters assuming role of media even though listed as their characters)

RCMP. We don't want to lose this story

KATI. Who are we telling it to?

RCMP. The guy at the Fas Gas-

EXEC. He cares about the girl he doesn't care about
anything else

.....
KATI. Six thousand gas wells running along the foothills
of Alberta. If they burn at 98% efficiency, no problem. Strong
winds mean they can only burn at 33% efficiency-

RCMP. People don't want to hear about what the oil and gas
industry is doing, they care when the price goes up.
People want to know about the belt spanking, the
miscarriages, the aborted fetuses. (Curtis 2-3)

This narrative unit uses the audiences as a fourth wall and establishes the space and time to be a newspaper office commenting on events that have already occurred. However, this shifts immediately, because the narrative unit to follow is a song that acts as a

prologue to the story and introduces the main characters. The Executive sings, acting in a narrator role, while the other 3 characters present themselves to the audience.

EXEC. He was deaf to the roar of the flare as it screamed
 around him
 He was blind to the gas as it flared like the midnight sun
 In his hand he held a crude homemade bombing
 of drywall screws and nitro-glycerin
 [ALL.] It's an easy mistake to make
 It's enough to cause your faith to shake
 There's filth in the air
 From the putrid flare
 As it lights the sky (Curtis 6)

This narrative unit, unlike the one preceding it, is very presentational. It situates space and time as in the theatre. Following this musical theatre moment is a monologue from the RCMP. In storytelling style, the RCMP officer directly addresses the audience, bringing us back to the beginning of her investigation. She relates:

The cop who shipped out before I came here left me this list of names. At the top it says; "His Supporters". So off I go to see this farmer and his wife outside of Edmonton. Hello, how are ya? Need to talk to you about the Reverend. And so the wife let's me in....Her farmer husband comes in. 5'6" 140lbs, 10lbs less than me, doesn't want any cookies, introduces himself and he's got leathery fingers that have just been on a cow's udder and nearly breaks my hand....So, down to business; "I need you to tell me everything you know. About oil wells and flaring...and gas and pollutants. And the Reverend." (Curtis 7)

This narrative unit positions the audience as another character, and as the RCMP officer relates the story she situates time at the beginning of her investigation, which is in a sense the entry point into the telling of the story, and the most sequential journey presented in the play.

Overall, each of the units demonstrates three narrative styles that are used throughout the performance, and are examples of how the narrative is divided into segments. Each of these units is self-contained; according to their own laws of time and

space, but stemming toward the central story in their content. This idea is furthered by the staging which allows the actors to be both players and observers of the story. During the performance, the actors are seated on two benches at the back of the stage until they are required to perform. As they are required to “take the stage,” they do so in a pedestrian manner. Curtis did this to keep fragmented units flowing. He states:

We spent almost a week having them do exits and entrances in that little staging area, Crump Manor. And it looked awful. It didn't have any flow to it, it seemed to interrupt what we had in terms of script and narrative. I thought...we need to see them. They need to be present, they need to be witness to others speeches. (Curtis Interview)

The staging also makes clear beginnings and endings to each narrative unit, without apologizing for the fragmentation of it. This is enabled by the use of minimal set and props, keeping the inherent “theatricality” of the space. Therefore, there is no ‘world’ that governs *Eye for an Eye* other than a theatrical one because the space is kept neutral. It can be adapted into any time or space with only a word, gesture, lighting shift or sound byte. This allows the narrative units to exist side by side, connected only by a common theme, giving it a spatial narrative quality.

The organization of narrative units is the first quality of spatial narrative we see in *Eye for an Eye*. The storytelling is, in the end, a series of fragments that revolve around the various facts and perspectives, and questions the real life story raised for Curtis and his ensemble. While Curtis did not set out to create ‘Spatial Form Theatre’, he did deliberately choose a structure that was fragmented, allowing the diversity in the story to be exhibited. The spatial organization of narrative units accomplished this, creating a performance that mapped ideas and asked questions without ever assimilating the information into an absolute truth.

Abandoning Narrative Succession

With the orange theory, *Eye for an Eye* abandons narrative succession (another trait of spatial narrative.) The units do not unfold in time, but juxtapose and overlap various moments from the story. The audience is asked to negotiate the fragments into a cohesive narrative by making their own connections and exploring the various relationships between the self-contained units.

As demonstrated in the first three narrative units, time does not accord with chronological connectives. Each unit deals with a different fragment of the story without having to be assimilated into a single reality that sets the play. While the songs contribute a great deal to the disruption of a linear narration, stopping the characters in time to sing back-up in satirical commentary on the RCMP, or listen to a heartfelt ballad of an oil and gas executive, they are not the only contributors to the fragmenting of time. In many instances, the placement of a monologue or dialogue may seem unrelated until the end of the play gives it a further context. This is particularly the case with Kati's units.

Kati's character is developed almost entirely through monologues. The main theme of her monologues deal with the typical life of a sixteen year old girl growing up in small town Alberta. While the other characters share a common story—the investigation of the Reverend's involvement in the bombing of a sour gas well—Kati's monologues follow their own story, and seem often unrelated to anything else. For instance, on pages 20-25, we are presented with three scenes that are all connected. The RCMP officer is interrogating the Reverend about his whereabouts on the night a sour gas well is bombed. This scene then “morphs” into another interrogation scene with the

Executive and the RCMP officer, but this time she's the one being interrogated. Directly following those scenes, the RCMP officer breaks out into a song, relating her conflicting emotions towards both men. However, her song is followed by one of Kati's monologue (who has just been singing back-up). Here, Kati tells the audience about the Matrix movie:

Oh man. I just saw the coolest movie- The Matrix! There's this guy, Keanu Reeves-and he's a drone computer guy, boring life, boring boring job-but he's a secret underground computer spy. Somebody appears and tells him 'Find out about the Matrix'. So he does....But the coolest part is that they can all jump twenty feet in the air, do a somersault, do these kicks, spin around sideways-and it's all in slo-mo but freakin' fast - oh man! If I could play hockey like that[,] I could outdeke Wayne Gretzky. (Curtis 26)

The fragment is not connected in anyway to the previous three units which did follow a narrative succession. It only connects back to some of her previous monologues that reveals her passion for playing hockey. This is not to say though that the fragment is unnecessary to the narrative as a whole. It could be seen as a metaphor for the oil and gas industry; it could establish character, or it could be a comic anecdote that is used to transition out of, or introduce, a new combination of ideas. The point is, the fragment is to be contextualized within the overall performance by the observer. Without a causal/temporal connective to situate it in a governing time and space, the fragment relates to the other narrative units through juxtaposition, not succession. This gives it a spatial quality.

Moreover, *Eye for an Eye* uses the overlapping of time, which is another characteristic of spatial narrative. In the previous chapter, Susan Spencer was cited on her views regarding different moments in time occurring simultaneously. This is to say that moments may be seen simultaneously, even though they may signify different times

and spaces. For instance, near the end of the performance, a narrative unit depicting a call to 911 is presented. The Reverend makes this call after some vehicles which have been joyriding on his property have been shot at. The unit has the Reverend center stage, framed by the actors who normally play Kati and the Executive. Kati and the Executive become the voice of the 911 operator. As the phone call plays out, the RCMP officer, in her own separate space and time, listens to the call, and comments on it, directing questions and assumptions to the Reverend, as he speaks to the operators.

TEL. RCMP
 REV. This is the Reverend calling
 TEL. Hello, Reverend. What can I do for you?

 REV. I just had a couple of vehicles run through the yard here.
 You'll probably find a couple of bullet holes in their
 boxes.
 RCMP. How do you know where the bullets landed?
 TEL. Ok, you shot at someone, sir?
 REV. Someone shot at them, yes.
 RCMP. But you said the bullets ended up in the boxes. Which
 means-
 TEL. Do we know who shot at them?
 REV. No, you don't.

 TEL. The vehicles were shot at?
 REV. Yes. You can identify them.
 RCMP. You can identify the vehicles?
 TEL. Are you sure you didn't hit anyone, sir?
 REV. Uh, I don't know.
 RCMP. Then how can you identify the vehicles?
 REV. The license plate number is UNV306.

 RCMP. You saw them clearly-you had enough time to see.
 (Curtis 51-53)

As the RCMP officer comments on the Reverend's phone call, her time overlaps with his, and within one short fragment of narrative a world of ideas is presented. The commentary of the RCMP officer questions the Reverend's account of what has

happened, without ever providing a clear idea of who is responsible—as was the case in the real story. Therefore, the overlapping of these two moments communicates various ideas within a single narrative unit, giving the audience many ideas to negotiate as they see fit.

Although time and space are fragmented in *Eye for an Eye*, it does not mean that chronology is abandoned altogether. As stated in the previous chapter, while spatial narrative does not have causal/temporal connectives, it may still be bound to chronology. For instance, there are narrative units that are interdependent and do accord to a chronological unfolding of time. A good example of this is the two scenes in which, in dialogue style, the Executive and the Reverend have a confrontation. The first one demonstrates the Executive offering the Reverend a deal in which they buy his land and he leaves the province.

EXEC. Our company is prepared to offer a one-time settlement
in the form of a land purchase at a generous amount to
compensate you for your losses and inconveniences.

.....

REV. So I move somewhere else and you just come after me
there. What's the point?

EXEC. That won't happen. One of the stipulations in
accepting is you leave the province.

REV. Leave the province. We have a right to live where we
choose. We will not be pushed around.

EXEC. I'm not here to bargain, Reverend. This is a one time
take it or leave it offer. You leave the province and
discontinue your efforts against us. You make a
statement to the effect the land is fine and you no longer
have concerns. If you ask me this is the best you can
hope to get. (Curtis 16)

The Reverend rejects this offer, but this scene is followed up with another one, near the end of the performance. In similar style, the Reverend now approaches the Executive to take him up on his offer.

EXEC. What is it you want?
 REV. I'm accepting your offer.
 EXEC. I'm sorry, you're too late.
 REV. You offered eight hundred-
 EXEC. You're too late. It was a one time offer. You should
 have taken it while it was on the table.
 REV. And I'm taking it.
 EXEC. And I said, you're too late. You threaten the lives of
 my workers, you shoot at them, you fancy yourself some
 kind of vigilante cowboy. Well fuck you buddy, fuck
 you. (Curtis 40-41)

Because this scene is retaliation to the first one, it is subject to a chronological organization. It requires the first scene, where the offer is made, in order to understand this one. However, although it follows a chronology, it is important to recognize that there are numerous narrative units between these two scenes that fragment time and space and disrupt any causal/temporal elements. The second scene merely refers to the previous one by bringing the actual "offer" back on the table. Thus, a large span of time passing has been suggested, but not actually played out. These two narrative units demonstrate that although there is a fragmenting of time and space, the narrative units can be interdependent.

The reason the fragmentation of space and time in *Eye for an Eye* worked so well was because, as Curtis states, "...the storytelling existed in a number of realities and legalities." Instead of summarizing the events into his own view, asking the audience to see the story according to his truths, the audience is free to negotiate the ideas and questions presented in the narrative according to his/her own value systems.

Archetypes of Alberta

Another characteristic of spatial narrative found in *Eye for an Eye* is the use of plural texts. The use of plural texts allows for there to be four distinct perspectives telling the story, rather than one. The texts are given equal weight, which means that there is no established norm. This is because the portrayal of character is not based on the modern idea of the subject. The audience is not presented with a unique individual fighting against the oil and gas industry—which is a large industry in Alberta and could be considered a type of ‘norm’. Instead they are invited to see four archetypes negotiating their value systems surrounding a topic that is current in Alberta life. This fragmentation of identity makes the values presented diverse, and does not force the observer to see one as more legitimate than another. Thus the observer is not limited to either identify with, or reject, the truths presented in *Eye for an Eye*, but actually determines the truths for him/herself according to his/her own values.

Essentially, the four characters are icons representing the four communities Curtis saw as involved in this story. The Reverend is iconic not only of Wiebo Ludwig, on whom the story was based, but of the farmers and environmentalists who dealt with similar conflicts. He is the ‘little guy’, who lives in a closed religious community and is marginalized by both the corporation and the small town community. We see this in one of his first narrative units. He talks, as though speaking at a public hearing:

Thank you for this chance to speak. When we moved here, we bought poor land with no running water, no electricity and turned it into a self-sufficient farming operation. We cut down trees to build our houses. We made our own windmill to generate our own power....We raised our families. We were stewards of the earth under God....Until we got new neighbors. You cut down trees and burned them. You slashed through berry patches to put in their roads and rigs. You were at war with the land, violating it, raping it. You put up sour gas wells a hundred feet from our

property line. You flared without warning. Where once there was a single gas well in a two mile radius of our land, there were now ten. Our Garden of Eden became a casualty of our neighbors raging war against the land, victimized by gas leaks from established wells and the high pressure venting and flaring of toxic waste. (Curtis 8-9)

The Reverend's character provides a voice that is filled with facts about sour gas contamination, and represents farmers who have also had similar problems with the industry. Yet, while his redeeming values may focus on family and simple living, he could also be perceived as a religious vigilante whose self righteousness and old fashioned beliefs turn him into a pariah.

At one point, in an interrogation by Marge, the RCMP officer, he turns to her and says "Help yourself. God helps those who help themselves. Be humble before God and to your husband" (Curtis 43). The evangelical tone also presented in the Reverend works against his character, suggesting that maybe his intentions, although justified in the eyes of God, may not actually be justified in a Court of Law.

The Executive is iconic of the oil and gas industry, and in a sense represents the mainstream consumer. His value system revolves around economics, and the realities of everyday life that oil and gas answers. He states,

It's unfortunate the Reverend has so many oil wells close to his property. I feel bad about that. I do. But we are in the midst of a boom. The whole province is. That's what happens. Let me say there are a lot of happy landowners that make a shitload of money from us. We're writing cheques for 20,000 dollars and rarely is it because of environmental concerns; it's how much money they can make because we drilled on their land and they don't want that screwed up. Perhaps I can strip it down to a few simple facts. Supply. Demand. You pull in, roll down your window, and demand. And we supply. There's nothing evil about it. We're in the business to provide a product. We provide. And you consume. That's the way it is. (Curtis 10)

He illustrates how oil and gas is beneficial to the economy, and in many instances will be the voice that counters the Reverend's statements about sour gas contamination. This text, juxtaposed with the Reverend's makes it difficult to tell what is fact and what is fiction. Furthermore, while at first the values of the Executive seem mostly driven by corporate greed, we later find out that he too values family. In a confrontation with the Reverend he states,

You think you can paint this in black and white terms—I'm bad, you're good. Well I'm not a bad person, Reverend. I'm not. I have a family just like you. Whether or not I believe in your cause is irrelevant. I don't run the fucking company. What am I supposed to do? Abandon my family for you? (Curtis 41)

In this sense, he shares many values with the Reverend, and acts as an archetype for common Albertans who work in oil and gas, and must do so to provide for their families. This makes it difficult to assimilate their characters into traditional roles of hero and villain. Both hold mainstream and subversive value systems making them neither for, nor against a supposed 'norm'.

The RCMP officer is an icon of justice, and represents the person who strives to be diplomatic. While she can sympathize with the Reverend's situation as a farmer, she also recognizes that he has threatened the lives of people working on oil well sites with acts of violence. While she may not like what the oil and gas industry is doing, she is accountable in protecting them. We see her caught between the two sides in a series of units set up as an interrogation between her and the Reverend, followed by her and the Executive, followed by a song. In the first one, we see the Reverend sitting on a stool, with the RCMP officer circling around him interrogating him.

REV. ...I think you care. You should come out to our farm, and see what they've done. You could help

us.

RCMP. How could I help you?

REV. Investigate their crimes. Stop the corporations.

RCMP. They haven't broken any laws.

REV. They've broken God's law.

RCMP. I am here to serve people.

REV. We *are* the people.

RCMP. I am sorry Reverend, unless you can provide me
with a witness, I will have to consider you a suspect.

REV. Now I know whose side you're on. (Curtis 22-23)

As this scene ends, the Reverend exits the lit area that establishes the room, the RCMP officer sits on the stool, and the Executive starts circling around her in the same interrogation style she had just exhibited with the Reverend.

EXEC. Whose side are you on? You bring the Reverend in for questioning and then you release him?

RCMP. I had no reason to keep him.

EXEC. Are you going to wait for the next bombing? A possible death whether by accident or intent?

RCMP. No, but right now I don't know who is responsible for these bombings.

EXEC. It's clear to the whole town. Why are you the only one having problems seeing it?

RCMP. How is it clear? Where is your evidence?

EXEC. Let me point out we have a lot invested in this area; we want this resolved quickly.

RCMP. Everyone has a stake in this. Just let me continue my investigation.

EXEC. Your investigation better turn to prosecution pretty damn quick or someone's going to shoot him.

RCMP. Anyone who takes that route is going to have to pay for it. (Curtis 23-24)

As the two texts play out, the RCMP officer weighs her personal views with her legal responsibilities. She symbolizes a balance, a careful weighing of the various values at war. As her own belief systems are influenced and confused by the others, she signifies the perspective that is diplomatic, and is cautious to place things in black and white terms.

Lastly, Kati is iconic of the greater community of the nearby town. Her character is based on the 16 year old girl who was shot on Ludwig's property. While many of her monologues rarely seem to connect to the other three characters, she paints the picture of a typical teenager in small town Alberta. Her innocence and naivety demonstrate a value system that is shaped by gossip, her parents and the media. She states:

Dad says: ["That Reverend is skating on some thin ice."
Dinner table gets tense. I say "I thought they were just a bunch of religious weirdoes. Nobody cares what they think. "It's not about thinking, it's about doing." Okay Dad. Religion escapes me; Church is a big thing for my mom. I think it's kind of a social thing to do. But why would anyone want to live in a closed community? I don't think they play any sports at all. Lots of nasty talk about them. Mom says [they're] old testament. Like I'm supposed to know what that means.
(Curtis 50)

Kati's texts suggest that the Reverend's surrounding community does not look fondly upon outsiders. She symbolizes the tension that has accumulated in the greater community towards him. While at first this may seem unrelated to the rest of the story, it questions how prejudice may have affected the events in the story.

As the various texts play out in juxtaposition to each other, the observer is invited to see a variety of value systems without being told which one is more legitimate than the other. In Curtis' view, this was the power in this story. In the creation process, the actors themselves were very split in their views, so Curtis decided to embrace this rather than try and assimilate it into his own vision. He states:

I would write a paragraph, and I would pass it off to Duval and say take what you need...I kinda encouraged everyone to bring their perceptions.... There were a couple of cast members who thought Ludwig was out to lunch, and others who thought 'right on for environmentalism', so we had the divisions within our process which was very valuable. I had a board member at the time who worked for an oil and gas company, and he said rarely is it about an environmental concern. We ask to go drill on their

lands and the farmer knows he's going to make \$20,000...So I said to Tony, let's take that speech and let's give it to you. That's really valuable. (Curtis Interview)

Thus the story was not written according to Curtis' personal view of the story, nor did he assume his view would be the truthful one. The plural texts not only demonstrated diversity within the communities involved in Ludwig's story, but also the divisions within the artists creating it.

By using this characteristic of spatial narrative, *Eye for an Eye* never represents a particular norm, and never draws attention to a 'subject'. All the individuals in the story signify values that are very familiar and hold truths. Thus the observer can identify freely with different characters, and even multiple characters, and decide for themselves who holds more truth.

The Kati Vocabulary—The Power of Reflexive Referencing

The final characteristic of spatial narrative found in *Eye for an Eye* is reflexive referencing. The self-contained units contain symbolic systems/codes that become cross referenced throughout the performance. A simple gesture, word, or lighting state, can refer to an entire narrative unit, without having to take the observer back to that moment in space and time. It is in the cross referencing of the units that the observer creates the narrative connectives; doing so with his/her understanding and interpretation of the content. Thus the creator and the observer share the responsibility in determining the final meaning of a text.

One of the strongest uses of reflexive referencing in *Eye for an Eye* occurs throughout Kati's story. Kati symbolizes innocence—a girl who unexpectedly gets

caught up in the battle between Ludwig and the oil and gas industry. What is interesting about her character is that she seems to have little to do with the story until the final moment of the performance when she is shot. At this climactic moment, when her story merges with the others, the observer is invited to consider how she went from being a secondary bystander, to a tragic victim, in a mere moment. As well, her death is communicated using fragments of text and gesture that have been distributed through the performance, but never in this context. The re-contextualization of these moments bring about strong symbolism without ever even re-enacting the actual death.

For instance, Kati has a ‘black skate’ vocabulary that is established in her first monologue, and used throughout. The ‘black skate’ vocabulary is always used to describe her love for hockey, and her growth as a player. This reference makes its debut in her first monologue. Here, we see the desires of a young girl learning to skate on the local pond. She uses the vocabulary to describe how one of the boys skates circles around her in black skates. She describes,

Black skates carving, black skates cutting, black skates lightening, black skates stopping, on a dime. That day on the pond left me wanting. I want black skates. (Curtis 10)

The ‘black skates’ vocabulary appears again as she describes her development as a hockey player. In a following unit, she uses the black skates vocabulary to tell us more about her hockey playing desires. In this unit, she has stolen her brother’s black skates and sneaked down to the pond for an early practice;

Black skates are sturdy, made to survive. I lace them up I put my hot shots in my shoes. I wave to all my fans dressed in white birch bark. And wipe out. For years-get up, go to pond. Black skates carve, black skates cut, no lightening. Fall down. (Curtis 20)

The reference reappears a couple more times, again establishing this as a symbol of her childhood. But it comes to its most potent moment in the final monologue where Kati uses this vocabulary to describe a bullet ripping into her chest and killing her as her friends go joyriding on the Reverend's property. As they travel up the road to his farm, her voice fills with fear and hesitation until the moment the gunshots are fired;

The gate is open
 And through the headlights, I see that the trees are dying.
 Then someone [threw] beer cans from the other truck.
 Then, my guy gets creeped out.
 Then we turned around to get out of the compound.
 Gunshots hitting the truck
 Gunshots-

KATI is shot.

Black cutting...black ripping...black hole in my chest. (Curtis 56)

Here, a poetic phrase that has been associated with the innocence of her childhood has become a deadly reference. In a moment, Kati's death is signified without it ever having to be actually portrayed, and the relationship of her story to the others becomes clear. This has all been accomplished through a simple reference.

Furthermore, this association is punctuated by a physical reference Kati establishes throughout the play. This vocabulary—let's call it the 'gun shot' vocabulary—is established in the opening song, "Easy Mistake to Make." As the song proceeds to the verse that acts as a prologue to Kati's story, she moves to center stage. All the characters, excluding her, sing:

The glare of the night in a truck light silhouette
 A flash from the barrel and the blood flows from the ragged flesh
 And you look for blame and all you find are lost regrets
 She is gone and the fault and the guilt will never rest (Curtis 6)

In this verse, Kati performs a movement where she drops her body forward and comes up quickly to look as though she is being lifted up and suspended. Her movement indicates alarm and she slowly reaches her hand down to her chest as though she has been shot.

This moment quickly comes to an end as the chorus comes in and the song ends.

The gunshot vocabulary then appears throughout the performance, often as a subtle addition to another character's scene. For instance, it is used in a segment where the Reverend asks the audience if they've ever used a gun. The analogy is to suggest that the flare can be seen as an act of violence. He asks the audience directly,

Have you ever used a gun? ... That piece of five maybe ten cent metal travels [at] the speed of light speed of sound straight through your skin, into your body, exploding, shattering into a thousand pieces, connecting with bone, tissue, rendering vents in your body....They're picking us off one by one. A calf, a farmer's wife, a grandson. Their cancer digs away at us and each time we try to complain, another bullet hits us.
REV blows up a paper bag and bursts it (Curtis 26)

As he tells this monologue to the audience, Kati, on her bench refers to the gunshot vocabulary by touching her chest. As these moments overlap, the possibilities for what they could mean are diverse. The Reverend uses the gun to describe a flare, to show how the flare makes him a victim. He blows up the paper bag and pops it which could symbolize either blowing up a gas well, or actually firing a gun. Or, the gunshot vocabulary could be a symbol of how the Reverend's battle with the oil and gas industry could have ended up killing Kati indirectly. The reference begins to raise questions, without contributing the answers.

The 'gunshot' vocabulary finally punctuates her death along with the 'black skate' vocabulary. The movement becomes a symbol for her death and comes to its full meaning only after the end is played out. It is in the recognition of this moment that her

death is articulated. The actor never portrays her death by acting it out, she only needs to signify it because of how the referencing operates. The potency of this moment is that very little is done or said on stage, allowing the observer's imagination to realize the full implications of her death. This suggests that the power of the observer's imagination is more capable of visualizing this moment than any actor could ever hope to portray.

Kati's vocabularies create many associations throughout the performance, which are not meant to be read in one way. Thus, the observer's own 'structuralist' nature is put to work, allowing him/her to imagine the various levels of meaning in his/her own way. The reflexive referencing empowers the observer to negotiate content making the creator *only* responsible for establishing the references. Kati's death does not come as a surprise. From the beginning we know she ends up getting shot, whether it be from knowledge of the real story, or from the prologue. But through the style of this moment the audience's imagination is triggered, giving them an opportunity to be actively engaged in deciphering what is NOT being shown. Curtis trusted that the audience would generate, in their minds, a much more believable death scene than could ever be portrayed onstage.

Conclusion

What is interesting about spatial narrative in performance is that the language is much more dense. Text and narrative not only occur in the spoken text, the written text, but in the visual and auditory language as well. Tadeusz Kowzan, in an article entitled "The Sign in the Theatre" states;

Of all the arts and perhaps of all the fields of human activity, spectacle is the one in which the sign shows itself in the richest and most dense way.... Everything is sign in a theatrical presentation. (56-57)

Thus, while one character is telling his/her story, musically, a leitmotiv could play in reference to another character's story. Or, referencing can occur with a visual or spoken language, a lighting shift or sound byte.

While *Woyzeck* provided us with an example of spatial narrative in the previous chapter, the exploration of *Eye for an Eye* takes this study a bit further and puts it into the context of spectacle. As the spectacle becomes more interdisciplinary, fragments of narrative can truly be cut-and-pasted, overlapped or played out simultaneously, exploring the potential of the spatial narrative to an even greater extent.

CHAPTER FOUR

Creating Spatial Form Theatre

In 2002, I founded a company called Solocentric Theatre and Dance. While this company began by producing an annual solo performance festival, my artistic associates and I had a much greater vision than being solely (no pun intended) an arts presenter. Although we would not have been able to identify it at the time, much of the work that inspired us as creation performance artists had a spatial form aesthetic. We had also discovered this work to be the result of certain creation techniques, and we began to adapt it to our own works. These techniques were primarily introduced to us by One Yellow Rabbit, a Calgary-based theatre company which runs a creation performance workshop called *The Summer Lab Intensive*, and further influenced by Ghost River Theatre's production of *Eye for an Eye*. From these influences, my colleagues and I began to create our own work, using the characteristics of spatial narrative as a tool to establishing an aesthetic that we now name Spatial Form Theatre. This chapter will demonstrate how using techniques based on the characteristics of spatial narrative will result in Spatial Form Theatre.

Since the company's founding in 2002, we have not only generated our own solo work, but also created two full length interdisciplinary pieces that are not solo performances, but can be considered Spatial Form Theatre pieces. I will be using one of these pieces entitled *Momo: A Time Cabaret* to illustrate how spatial narrative was used as a creative process. This project is a good example of how the spatial creation techniques resulted in performance that had spatial narrative characteristics, thus

addressing the challenges of post-modernism. While we strove to make *Momo: A Time Cabaret* Spatial Form Theatre, the techniques can be useful in any sort of performance creation environment, but do not necessarily result in that type of theatre.

Background on the Project

Momo: A Time Cabaret is based on a children's book by Michael Ende, called *Momo*, and this being one of my favorite books, I had been eager to explore this as an interdisciplinary theatre piece. In October 2005 I began a three week workshop with an ensemble of three other actors and a composer. The goal in the three weeks was to create a first draft of what I was calling a children's cabaret, presenting the script and songs in a recital-style public performance. While I was the key creator and facilitator of the project, certain aspects of our creation process were collective. I worked closely with my composer/musical director Cameron Falkenhagen, and the ensemble, (David Friesen, Ben Laird, and Cherie McMaster) who contributed to the brainstorming aspects of writing and editing of the first draft. The script and songs were presented in conjunction with The Pro Arts Society for their *Music at Noon* program. The challenge was to capture the magic of Ende's story in an hour long stage-friendly version, with minimal set, props and a cast of four performers. Through the Spatial Form Theatre model we were able to achieve this.

Listening to a Canary that Just Won't Sing—Creating Narrative Units from *Punctum*

Sometimes the most challenging aspect to developing a new work is finding an entry point of creation. This can be intimidating especially if the artist does not have a clear vision of what he/she is trying to create. The first technique is a great way to start the creative process because it allows the artist to generate a body of explorative writing without being tied to a particular vision. With this technique, the goal is to generate a lot of material without anticipating whether or not it will end up in the final product. The artist should set a limitation for this process, marking a date, or number of pages at which he/she will stop generating new explorative narrative units. This will bring closure to the free-writing exercise, thus helping the artist to move on to the next stage of this technique in which he/she begins amalgamating and shaping the script. For example the artist might want to do ten-to-twenty hours of explorative writing, or aim for a hundred pages of material before he/she moves on to the next part of the process. In the past I have generated up to four hours worth of material which would end up as an hour-long show. The object of overwriting is that the ideas do not get locked into a vision before the impulses have been explored, and that the artist's own judgment does not become an obstacle. However, without setting some limitations to this part of the process the artist runs the risk in getting stuck here, never having an opportunity to deeper develop any of the generated writing.

In 2000, I had taken One Yellow Rabbit's *Summer Lab Intensive* workshop and had been introduced to the concept of *punctum*. This term originates from photography studies, coined by Roland Barthes in Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.

Barthes explains that in photography there is "...[the] element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me..." (27). This is the *punctum*. While it is difficult to articulate why a particular detail may inspire the imagination or strike interest, Barthes defines this as the characteristic that divides the photographs he loves from the ones he only takes a "polite" interest in. He states: "...most [photographs] only provoke a general, and so to speak, *polite* interest; they have no *punctum* in them: they please or displease me without pricking me..." (27). At the Summer Lab Intensive, artists were encouraged to write about anything that "pricked" them as a starting point to creation. Thus, the idea of *punctum* was adapted into a tool for creative writing.

When the artist writes from the *punctums*, he/she initiates creation from his/her favorite, most inspired ideas without worrying about chronological flow or connectives. These are often the easiest parts of the performance to create because they are the most interesting to the artist and therefore have creative momentum. The artist finds his/her *punctums* in images, poetic suggestions or any kind of detail found in the research and development of his/her piece. From these isolated moments of interest, the ideas are turned into narrative units (written, physical, musical etc.) and fragments of potential material.

When I began the workshop process for *Momo: A Time Cabaret*, I conducted a series of free-writing exercises based on various *punctums*. My biggest obstacle right from the start was trying to ignore the linear narration of the book so that I would not end up doing strict adaptation. My goal from the start was to create Spatial Form Theatre and I needed to trust that the story could be communicated in this way. Writing from

punctum gave me creative momentum because it focused my writing on the ideas that most inspired me.

Using passages from the book, and the surrealist paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, I compiled various *punctums* that would inform the free-writing process. Then, I randomly selected one and forced myself to free write for about five to ten minutes. On a good day I found that I would write a well-rounded self-contained unit within the ten minutes. However, when I was slow to be inspired, I made myself write for the duration of the ten minutes even if I had no momentum, hoping that the passage would at least bring forth new *punctums*, which it often did.

For instance, chapter two of Ende's *Momo* is called "Listening"; it establishes Momo's character, and had many *punctums* for me. While the chapter mainly tells a story of how Momo solves a quarrel between a Bricklayer and Innkeeper through her pure talent of listening, the *punctum* is at the end of the chapter:

Another time, a little boy brought her his canary because it wouldn't sing. Momo found that a far harder proposition. She had to sit and listen to the bird for a whole week before it started to trill and warble again. (Ende 21)

I isolated this *punctum*, and added it (literally cut it out of the text) to a pile of other bits extracted from the text. It was one of the first units I free-wrote on, turning it into a monologue for Momo:

Even though I live in this big old amphitheatre outside the city, I never feel lonely. The Townspeople know where to find me for I spend most of my time on the amphitheatre stairs - well sometimes I get distracted because I see a shiny pebble or a colorful bird feather, and I like to collect those sorts of things but otherwise I stay here. It's not like I have to go anywhere because people usually come to me, to tell stories, to hear stories, to play make-believe or sometimes just to sit and stare and listen. I like to listen to everything. Sometimes people ask, what are you listening to and I say the silence of course, and it confuses them. Why would anyone want to listen to Silence. But you see, most people don't

know how to listen properly. I on the other hand have a talent for listening. And the folks in the town know this. That's why they come to me with their problems. One time a little boy with a canary came to visit me because his Canary wouldn't sing. I had to listen to him for a whole week before it started to trill and warble again. I listen to cats, dogs, the wind, the rain - they all speak to me. Sometimes, when I am all alone at night, I stand in the middle of the amphitheatre and listen to the stars. I imagine I am in the centre of a giant ear, and the stars sing to me the most majestic music in the world. It's very soft, but can be heard if you practice listening as much as I do. It is on these nights that I have the most beautiful dreams. I think those who still think listening isn't an art should try to do it half as well as I do! (Repond Explorative)

Without knowing how or if it would become part of the first draft, this monologue was added to the initial body of explorative writing. It was in revisiting this piece, after the initial free-writing stage had ended, that this piece was integrated with another—a song that Cameron had composed to open the cabaret. The song established expositional elements to the story, but it lacked detail about Momo's best talent, "Listening." Since this is an important theme to her character, we inserted my Listening monologue into the song. The two established the following narrative unit:

Scene

(enter a chorus of townspeople and Momo)

CHORUS. What an odd little girl...
 don't you have a family, parents
 someone who might note your absence
 people who will know you're missing
 sleepless nights by the window wishing
 for sweet reunions, filled with laughter
 happy endings ever after

What a strange little girl
 your face is dirty, hair's a mess
 where did you find that patchwork dress?
 you have no shoes, your feet must hurt
 walking 'round on stones and dirt

What's your name little girl?
 is it Jane, little girl?

or is that too plain, little girl?

MOMO. Momo, my name is Momo

CHORUS 1. That's a pretty name but I've never heard it before. Who gave you your name little girl?

MOMO. I did

.....
CHORUS. What do you do little girl?

MOMO. I like to tell stories, play make-believe or sometimes just sit and stare and listen. I listen to everything. I listen to cats, dogs, the wind, the rain - they all speak to me. Sometimes, when I am all alone at night, I stand in the middle of the amphitheatre and listen to the stars. I imagine I am in the centre of a giant ear, and the stars sing to me the most majestic music in the world. It is on these nights that I have the most beautiful dreams.

CHORUS 1. I will take care of her!

CHORUS 2. No, it's better if I do.

CHORUS 3. If she stays at the amphitheatre, we can all take care of her together!

TRIO. So sweep and paint and build a stove
I'll bring bread, and you bring clothes
bring lots of love we'll build a home
for Momo
a table, chairs for honoured guest
something now for needed rest
Build a cot to lay her head
and when it's done I'll bring some bread
That was already said.

What a lovely little girl (Repond, Cabaret 2-3)

By combining the two units, the free-writing process easily found a context and the *punctum* was incorporated. Even though the line that I had loved most, my initial *punctum*, "listening to a canary that won't sing" was lost as the two pieces were merged, it gave me creative momentum. Plus, (with my persistence) the line itself did eventually find a perfect home in another narrative unit, which made me very happy.

In creating self-contained moments through the free-writing process, the artist can create from any moment in the story, helping the strongest ideas to be articulated without judging how they will function in the final product. Therefore, chronological connectives

do not have to be considered—as has been demonstrated in the discussion about spatial narrative. In a sense, the very process of creation possesses a spatial quality. Without the rules of linear narration, the artists can focus his/her attention on the ideas that have drawn his/her interest in the first place.

In the Absence of *Punctum*—Addressing a Creative Block

When the artist revisits the free-writing material, he/she may discover that there are units missing that are necessary to the storytelling. While these units contain information that is chronologically important to the narrative, they can still be created without causal/temporal connectives. This is because in spatial narrative it is not important to see how the characters arrive at a particular moment in time, but to see that moment, itself. In this case the artist may know what content the narrative unit needs to incorporate, but has no idea how to shape that content into an interesting self-contained unit. Thus, it needs the infusion of a *punctum*, and often the *punctum* itself can be discovered through free-writing exercises.

In my process with *Momo: A Time Cabaret*, the best example of this occurred with “The Demonstration.” With Momo as their leader, the children of the city stage a protest to expose the Men-in-Greys’ evil plans to steal everyone’s “Time.” This demonstration is needed because it establishes Momo and the children as a primary threat to the Men-in-Grey, and creates the main conflict. In the book, this spins the plot into chapters upon chapters of Momo being stalked, led to safety, returning home, being led to safety again, and so on. Creatively, I felt hindered by this because it was not “stage”

friendly and it interrupted my progression with the writing. I needed to find a *punctum* to help me shape the content.

Here, I enlisted the creativity of my ensemble to engage in a timed, collective, writing session based on the demonstration scene. This was a timed exercise (approximately five minutes long) where we improvised the scene in character, with one person documenting the lines on a laptop. At the five minute mark we stopped. We had generated a collage of text:

Children of the city. Have you noticed a change in your respective adult?
 Mine looked different.
 And acts different
 He doesn't play ball with me
 He doesn't read me stories anymore
 And when I spilt my milk, he didn't get angry at me like he usually does
 Mine looks kinda' like a robot - or one of those strange modern toys that
 run around in circles but go nowhere...
 This is a very serious condition. They do not know they have this disease,
 and they do not know who is responsible. But I do.
 Haven't you noticed the strangers in the city?
 I saw a stranger lurking in a corner. He was smoking a grey cigar?
 I saw one leaving Madame Benoir's boutique, he avoided my eyes and I
 felt cold.
 These are the men-in-grey. They are the cause of this terrible disease.
 They want our adults to be like them, and we have to stop them.
 BUT HOW?
 Well, doesn't anyone have any information on them?
 I've seen them too, those cigars smell gross. They are mean and they
 don't even get out of our way when we pass them.
 Do you think they like to play make-believe?
 Do you think they tell stories, or have a magic trick up there sleeve.
 I know they like to save time
 I know they like to get people to save time
 Then we won't.
 We need to teach people how to waste time again...
 We'll parade through the streets with information
 We'll hand out pamphlets that show people how to successfully be time
 wasters
 How do you successfully waste time?
 Us kids are pros at it-

Wasting time is easy to do when you enjoy life, and have friends and use
 your imagination.
 But take it from us, we are the experts and here are a few ways you can be
 a timewaster too.
 Spend time with friends, laugh, tell jokes, make up new languages that
 don't make any sense but sound bizarre...
 Balance a bean bag on your head while spinning in circles until you fall
 down
 Recite the alphabet with a mouthful of jawbreakers
 Fry a worm with a magnifying glass
 Dance around pretending the front of you is really the back of you and the
 back of you really the front.
 Pretend that frogs are spoons and spoons are frogs
 Have a contest to see who can jump the farthest off a swing
 Dig a hole to china
 Find a fence with wet paint and make handprints in it
 Roll down a hill until you throw up
 Sit in a comfortable position with your hand under your chin, and a
 thoughtful gaze
 Lie on your back and try to see shapes in the clouds
 Catch bugs in a jar
 And release them
 And release them...
 But do not ever run with scissors
 Unless they are made out of jello
 Timesavers are going places, timewasters are reclaiming their spaces
 Timesavers are successful planners, timewasters march through the streets
 with banners
 Timesavers belong to the future
 Timewasters are super-dooper
 Timesavers live each moment in strife
 Timewasters love each moment in life (Repond Explorative)

The text we had developed was in no way a usable narrative unit, but in it we discovered
 a riff about “timewasters” verses “timesavers” which we enjoyed very much. This idea
 became the *punctum* for the narrative unit we needed to develop. This was reshaped into
 a narrative unit with song that portrayed the children battling the values around
 “timesaving” by propagating “timewasting” activities:

MOMO. We need to re-teach the adults how to waste time
 again!
 ALL CHILDREN. Effective ways to being a time waster.

MARIA. Recite the alphabet backwards with a mouthful of jawbreakers
 FRANCO. Fry a worm with a magnifying glass
 MOMO. Listen to a Canary who just won't sing!
 MARIA. Dig a hole to china
 PAOLO. Catch bugs in a jar
 MARIA. And release them
 PAOLO. And release them...
 MOMO. Dance around like you've got ants in your pants!
 FRANCO. But whatever you do, do not ever run with scissors
 ALL CHILDREN. Unless they are made out of jello
(singing)

ALL BEWARE THE MEN-IN-GREY
 THEY WILL STEAL YOUR TIME
 THEN HIDE AWAY

SO WASTE SOME TIME
 COME OUT AND PLAY
 IT'S A BEAUTIFUL
 AND SUNNY DAY

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD
 ACT A BIT ABSURD
 TURN AROUND AND MAKE A FUNNY FACE
 (Repond Explorative)

It was the idea of “timewasting” that became the *punctum* for the demonstration scene.

In the book, this moment actually has the children exposing the plans of the Men-in-Grey. But in our cabaret, we only needed to show that the children were a threat to them because they reject the idea of being a “timesaver.” Thus, we were able to find our own way of communicating the content—in the compactness of a single narrative unit.

The benefit of this technique is that the artist can gain creative momentum without being limited to the logistics of linear narration. The *punctum* permits the artist to develop narrative units from any moment in time and space. This process is fragmented in nature, and does not limit creative possibilities by assimilating the ideas into a whole until the content has had a chance to be explored. The spatial quality exists

because the artist is not limited to exploring the work in one way, which is very creation performance friendly.

Whose Story is This? Telling the Story Through Different Characters

Exploring the story from a variety of perspectives is an effective way of developing material that may be shaped into the final product. This technique functions also as a free-writing exercise and is based on the spatial narrative concept of plural texts. Since plural texts reject the idea of the ‘subject’, the artist can investigate the storytelling from different characters as a tool for creation—even if they are secondary. By organizing the characters into archetypes, the governing value systems and identities involved in the narrative will be distilled into a single voice, able to tell the story from his/her point of view. Thus, he/she becomes the ‘subject’ with the power to unfold the narrative.

Assimilating Ende’s characters into archetypes was one of the first exercises I used in my process. The Men-in-Grey were represented by the Agent, the adults and townspeople by Salvatore the Bricklayer, and the children by Maria and her gang which included two other boys Paolo and Franco. Momo was not an archetype as she was based directly on Ende’s character. Seeing the individual journeys of these archetypes I discovered that the greater part of the story could actually be communicated through Maria and Salvatore, who are essentially secondary characters in the book. However, they not only witness the actions of Momo and the Agent, they are affected by them. Thus, Maria and Salvatore became great storytelling devices and moreover, interesting subjects.

Maria, for instance, has an interesting journey because her values are deeply affected by the Agent. Through the shift in her values, the plot unfolds. While the Agent convinces the adults in the town to value ‘timesaving’ activities, Maria values ‘timewasting’ activities like playing make-believe, using her imagination and spending time playing silly games. She is an icon for all of the children in the book, and her values are representative of that community. But as the Agent commandeers the town she notices a change in some of the other children, particularly new children; as she investigates this shift in her community, she communicates details of the plot to the observer:

Scene

(Maria sees a “new kid” at the amphitheatre playing with a robot toy. She approaches him)

MARIA. You’re new here, aren’t you?

NEW KID. Yah.

MARIA. Welcome to the amphitheatre

NEW KID. Some amphitheatre. It’s just an old run down building now. Where I come from everything is new. New houses, for miles-and-miles.

MARIA. Well, then why bother coming here?

NEW KID. Nothing to do there. Well, except on Saturdays when my parents let me help them wash our new car... if they have time... besides, lots of kids from my neighborhood started coming here. Our parents are too busy to take us anywhere special these days.

MARIA. I am sure you’ll like it here. We play all sorts of games with Momo. We like to pretend the amphitheatre is a boat.

NEW KID. I brought my own toy to play with.

MARIA. What is it?

NEW KID. A robot that transforms!

MARIA. What does it transform into?

NEW KID. Another robot! Duh!

.....
 MARIA. Well, do you want to play a game? I found an old tablecloth. We could pretend I am a space princess, and this is my cape and your robot could –

NEW KID. You know you could buy a real space princess cape
in one of those new department stores.
MARIA. Or I could just imagine that this tablecloth-
NEW KID. Why don't we play a different game. How about
you're a tablecloth seller, and my robot has come to your
store to purchase one.
MARIA. Uh. Okay. Hello sir, would like to purchase this
lovely tablecloth?
NEW KID. Sorry. I don't want a dirty old tablecloth. I prefer
to buy a one new. Good bye. (Repond Cabaret 14-15)

Through Maria's interaction with the New Kid the work of the Agent is visible; the Timesaving bank has shifted the values of the adults. Furthermore, as Maria tries to engage his imagination, we learn that the situation with the adults is affecting the children. These are both important details that unfold the plot.

As Maria's story unfolds, we see the same thing happen to her. As the performance progresses Maria is also usurped by the same 'timesaving' values of the Agent and the Adults. Toward the end of the performance, she and her friends play a strange new game that embodies the new values:

Scene

(As Momo tries to find her way back to Nowhere house and Never Lane she stumbles upon the children playing a strange game. They are now all dressed in grey)

CHILDREN. mux5641
storing data is quite fun
DATA RETRIEVAL IS THE NAME
STORING INFO IS THE GAME
MARIA. Look, it's Momo! Hey Momo, shouldn't you be at
your play class.
MOMO. Do you know the way to Never Lane? I'm trying to
get back to Nowhere house to see the Professor.
PAOLO. Ha ha! Momo's still playing make-believe!
MARIA. Hasn't your play class taught you how to play
properly? We don't play make believe anymore, we play
games that are useful for the future.
PAOLO. Play with us Momo! You can be card number
MUX7489!

MARIA. And I'll be card MUX9951!
 PAOLO. No fair! You were that last time.
 MOMO. Please, if I can just get to the strange still city where
 shadows stem from all directions and the sun never sets
 or rises, then I can find my way from there. Surely there
 is someone who knows how to get to the strange city
 MARIA. All this chit chat is affecting the productivity of our
 data retrieval game. Now hurry up and lie down like you
 are being filed.
 CHILDREN. Mux5641
 storing data is quite fun
 DATA RETRIEVAL IS THE NAME
 STORING INFO IS THE GAME (Repond Cabaret 27-28)

Through the shift in Maria's values, we see that the children have been corrupted. This demonstrates the power of the Agent, and raises the stakes in the conflict because he has usurped a community that is a major threat to him. Maria thus becomes a powerful subject; it was only in seeing the story from her perspective that I discovered how static Momo and the Agent actually were, even though they are symbolically the hero and the villain.

In spatial narrative, plural texts enable the existence of a diverse representation of value systems within the narrative. When I applied this to my creation process for *Momo: A Time Cabaret* it did not operate in this way. The story focuses more on the corruption of one really good belief system and therefore follows a modern convention of good versus evil. However, the plural text concept allowed me to break away from seeing the story according to Momo, and discover storytelling tools in the secondary characters. In fact, as we created a final script and discussed where we would go after this workshop, we decided that Momo would be completely phased-out as a storyteller and remain only as a physical presence, operating as a catalyst more than a subject.

Connecting the Dots—Organization the Script through Reflexive Referencing

The final technique deals with organizing the material generated in the last two exercises into the first draft of a performance script. As the artist reviews his/her material, which will consist of numerous self contained narrative units, he/she will discover various relationships between certain units. This occurs through the spatial concept of reflexive referencing.

Since the units are self-contained they will not be connected in time and space. However, when a unit references another, they form a relationship from which the story evolves. This is because each unit signifies an aspect of the story, even though it may not be developed in full. It is the job of the artist to decipher the best process of signification through the order of narrative units. In this sense, the material is being organized into a blueprint that will unfold the narrative through the power of referencing. With this blueprint the artist's goal is to distribute the ideas so that the observer can complete the story through his/her own imagination.

When I created *Momo: A Time Cabaret*, my biggest challenge was figuring-out how chapters upon chapters of Ende's plot could be resolved in a couple of fragmented narrative units. After the characters had been established and the conflict introduced, the performance could only afford to have four or five more units to resolve everything. Furthermore, Ende's story is very linear, so the narration is very chronological. It seemed impossible to extract a moment from the sequence of events that resolve the story, and when this was attempted the unit became cluttered with plot details and lacked any shape that would give it performability.

At this point I could have generated more fragments. However, the performance was approaching and I knew that this would not necessarily solve my problem but frustrate me more. Instead, I committed to the material I had developed and discovered that there were enough abstract units (fragments that didn't seem to go anywhere) that could be reshaped into highly symbolic units. In the end I didn't need to generate more fragments, I just needed to add a line here and there to make the unit more significant. As a result these units provided enough information to refer to events that enabled the story to be resolved.

It may be useful at this point to describe what, in Ende's story, we were trying to resolve in four to five narrative units (which would account for about ten minutes of the performance). Following Momo's lead, Maria and the children threaten to expose the Men-in-Grey in "the Demonstration." After the demonstration, Momo follows a mysterious turtle to Nowhere House in Never Lane. Here she meets Professor Hora, the keeper of time who explains: the Men-in-Grey survive by smoking the petals of the time lilies that they steal from people. As people invest in the Timesaving Bank they deplete their personal stash of time lilies, which are kept by the Professor in a very surreal place (that includes a huge pendulum and a black lake.) At the end of this initial visit with the Professor, Momo returns home to find she has been gone for a year, and all of her friends have fallen victim to the Men-in-Grey. She panics and tries to find her way back to the Professor, leading the Men-in-Grey right to him. However, the Professor has a cunning plan in which he is able to make time stand still, thus sending the Men-in-Grey into a panic (because they cannot survive without the stolen time). Because of this they lead

Momo back unknowingly to their headquarters and in a vaudevillian chase sequence she manages to abolish them all and release all of the stolen time back to its rightful owners.

The logistics alone were too much to stage in an intimate black box studio with minimal props (which was the type of theatre we are limited to economically but enjoy as an aesthetic). With much discussion amongst the ensemble and some skillful shaping of obscure narrative units that had been generated in the free-writing we solved the problem. The key was to imply aspects of the journey without actually developing them. Through reflexive referencing the observer is given the bare bones of a journey, tempting the imagination without controlling it.

The performance opens with a letter from the Professor to Momo. Although this narrative unit opens the play, it articulates the details around Momo's final quest to save the day. In the performance, our composer/accompanist acted as the Professor and reads:

To my dear Momo, when you arrive here you may notice a change. All the clocks will be stopped, every arrow, every pendulum, every grain of sand in the hour glass. Do not be alarmed. I wouldn't leave you without any time. On the table there will be one time lily, and that will give you one hour to restore time back to its rightful owners. I would help you, but I'll be taking a nap. And time will stand still. More haste, less speed. I know you'll find your way back to the amphitheatre, like the day you first arrived. (Repond Cabaret 1)

Since the observer has no context for this fragment, it is difficult to contextualize.

However it is filled with references that are important to the unfolding of the story. It establishes the Professor as a friend to Momo, it suggests he has the power to control time, and it indicates that time has been stolen from someone. These obscure references trigger the observer's imagination without knowing what they mean, or how they relate to the overall story.

This opening unit is referred to next in a unit called “The Dance of Cassiopea”.

(One thing I have come to realize about fragmented narratives is that anything can be solved with a dance)! In this narrative unit, the storytelling is told in dance and music. While there is no text, the choreography portrays a “following” sequence. A dancer takes on the role of Cassiopea, the turtle who leads Momo to the Professor’s house. Cassiopea urges Momo to follow her choreography which symbolizes her being led somewhere. Cassiopea leads Momo to a single bright spotlight and exits. Momo basks in the light and soon falls asleep. When she wakes up, the lighting state returns to normal to suggest she is back where she started. She reflects on her experience, not sure if she was just dreaming, in a song:

there was a lake
a dark deep glassy lake
so dark you couldn’t see the bottom
so smooth, not a single ripple

flowers,
I could sit and look at them forever
blooming all the time
but never more than one at a time

was it a dream?
was it only just a dream?
I met an old professor
a kind and gentle man

He told me time was precious like love
or was it love is precious like time

I remember nowhere house
at the end of never lane
I remember flowers
by a dark, deep glassy lake (Repond Cabaret 23)

The song refers to a place with strange flowers and a lake - Nowhere House, Never Lane; and an old Professor who tells Momo about the preciousness of time. It establishes her first encounter with the Professor and begins to contextualize the opening monologue in which the relationship seems to exist already. From this referencing the two narrative units are established as separate occasions even though chronologically the first one happens after the second. The “Dance of Cassiopea” thus deals with the moment where Momo comes to understand the mechanics of time, which allows her to defeat the Men-in-Grey.

When Momo finally encounters a dangerous situation in which she is confronted by the Agent, we are able to contextualize this relationship with the Professor further. As the Agent urges her to give up her time to him, she remembers the words she learned in her mysterious journey to the lake. She sings to the Agent:

time is love
 love is time
 look inside
 and you'll find it
 waiting
 time's waiting
 time's waiting
 for you (Repond Cabaret 26)

As she sings this the Agent skulks away and threatens her further, but Momo's courage is bred by her encounters with the Professor. Thus, we see how her journey to the ‘Glassy Lake’ gives her the power to defeat the Agent.

All of this comes to a conclusion with Momo's final return to the Professor's house. As things get worse for Momo, being ultimately alone because the Men-in-Grey have corrupted the entire town, she returns one more time to the Professor's house. It is in this unit that the opening unit will have a context. Upon her second return, Momo is

given everything she will need to defeat the Men-in-Grey. But how does she get there?

This poetic sequence allowed us to symbolize her return without having to describe exactly how it happens. She states:

If I shut my eyes and listen to my heart I will hear the time
lilies. I'll follow their song inside myself to the glassy lake.
I'll swing on the pendulum that sends one time lily blooming as
another one dies, and go back through the tunnel that leads to
nowhere house. And all I will have to do is open my eyes and I
will be there...

Professor? Why do you look so sad? I found my way back. The Men in
Grey came for me, they wanted you and the time lilies, and I was mighty
lonely but...I followed the path inside my heart so they couldn't follow
me! Professor? Are you sleeping? (Repond Cabaret 29)

If we reflect back to the Professor's letter in the opening, he tells her that he will be sleeping when she arrives—which is this moment. This passage indicates that the Professor is sleeping and therefore connects the two. Again, the implication is all that is needed here. The observer is free to make the association and imagine how it plays out according to his/her own will. The next scene affirms that all has returned to normal, having Maria and Salvatore waking up as if out of a strange dream and carrying on as if the Agent had never arrived.

The details around Momo's quest are never explained and leave the observer with many questions. I think this was the strength of the piece because it didn't get bogged down in the logistics of linear narration. Therefore I was able to distil into performance my favorite moments from the book without cluttering the writing with exposition. In the end, should someone really want to know the details of the plot, they can read the book for themselves. This is why I felt Spatial Form Theatre would be a good model for the project. The stage can be very limiting, but the imagination is not. There is way too

much content in the book that cannot be articulated onstage (unless one has limitless resources and a fantastic budget). But everyone has an imagination that can be triggered by reflexive referencing. When this occurs, the observer is given just enough information to participate in creation of content. These abstract units that were used to resolve the narrative may not have been rich in content, but they allowed the observer to engage with the story in a post-modern way.

Conclusion—Economy of Creation

Overall the spatial creation process can be seen in three parts. The first is to generate fragments of writing (can be choreographic or musical) from random impulses. From this the artist ends up with a collage of narrative units that have no connection in space and time, but will relate in some way to the central theme or concept. The second is to explore aspects of the narrative (whether the source is a found story, personal experience, etc.) from various perspectives. This also will contribute to the collage of narrative units, but can sometimes be more functional since they are not created solely on random impulse. The final part of the process is a selection and editing process that allows the artist to shape a first draft of performance out of the free-writing. I use the term economical in relation to creative momentum. The artist doesn't have to worry about causal/temporal connectives and assimilating the ideas into a vision before the creation can begin. This can become the biggest obstacle to the creative process.

Furthermore, since the free-writing process is fragmented, it can easily be collective. This can bring diversity to the writing and increase the amount of material being generated. Thus, in the assembling of the first draft, the artist no longer has to

‘invent’ the performance; he/she just needs to decide on an order by cutting and pasting the fragments into a whole. In the end, I am able to create a post-modern aesthetic in performance by giving the process itself a post-modern characteristic.

CONCLUSION

My Manifesto—Theory to Practice

In establishing the idea of Spatial Form Theatre, I do not want to exclude similar genres that use a montage, cabaret, or vignette structure. All of these will share characteristics with spatial narrative even if they may lack other characteristics. Furthermore, many artists have been exploring the use of fragmented narratives while not calling it Spatial Form Theatre. For me, the exploration of this term, in conjunction with post-modern theory has strengthened my practice as an artist, giving me a way to articulate why I value what I create.

Theatre is at its roots language; I create to communicate. If post-modern critics, like Strinati, Jameson and Willis, establish that the linguistic norm has fragmented, then that will affect the way in which I communicate with my audience. With the decline of metanarratives, absolute truth no longer exists. As this occurs there is no norm to consent to or rebel against, which erodes individualism and shatters identity. Finding common values within the audience or inventing new stories is increasingly difficult making it challenging for the artist to generate content that isn't redundant or exclusive. But if the communication is mutual, if the audience has a role in creation as well, the artist is relieved from assimilating his/her diversity into performance.

With spatial narrative I am able to engage my audience in a dialogue, asking them to imagine what has not been fully played out on the stage. The concept of self-contained fragments free from chronological sequencing allows the narrative to be absorbed in more than one way. Plural texts make the content diverse as it is communicated through

numerous subjects; content is negotiated through symbolism. This relieves me of the burden of inventing new stories or finding conclusions, and allows the audience to have his or her own relationship with the performance instead.

Finally, I can sustain my career as an artist because Spatial Form Theatre lends itself to being economical. From the creative perspective, free-writing exercises help me generate material without having to consider how it will all fit together. Since the units are self-contained, I am not thus restricted to creating “moments” from a single space and time, or from the perspective of a single character; and this lends itself well to collective creation. But this economy also extends to financial elements, as Spatial Form Theatre does not make some of the same financial demands on companies as mainstream theatre does. Without chronological connectives, the narrative does not have to be rooted in a single space and time. Therefore there is no need for elaborate sets, costumes or props, and the design concept can be kept quite neutral and minimal. Furthermore, since the creation process develops self-contained fragments, it can not only be created by numerous artists, also on one’s own time. This is to say that the creative participants can create the self-contained fragments on their own agenda, coming together only for a short rehearsal period where the text is compiled and edited into a full draft. Financial economy is very valuable to the emerging artist who is trying to establish a career, maintain longevity, and most often juggling more than one job or contract as well.

When I think back to my time as an undergraduate student of theatre, I was impacted particularly by the ‘artistic manifesto’; the artists who demanded that theatre answers the need of the culture. Ibsen, Brecht and Beckett are studied because they identified a cultural shift and responded to it by revolutionizing whatever theatre practice

was mainstream at that time. Spatial Form Theatre is my manifesto, my post-modern revolution that allows me to communicate effectively with my audience and sustain a career for many years to come.

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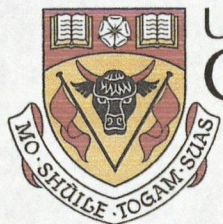
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Appendix



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW

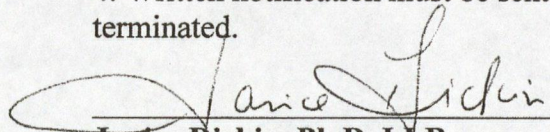
This is to certify that the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary has examined the following research proposal and found the proposed research involving human subjects to be in accordance with University of Calgary Guidelines and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *"Ethical Conduct in Research Using Human Subjects"*. This form and accompanying letter constitute the Certification of Institutional Ethics Review.

File no: 4234
Applicant(s): Jennifer Nicole Repond
Department: Drama
Project Title: Spatial Form Theatre Creation Techniques
Sponsor (if applicable):

Restrictions:

This Certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the project and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modifications to the authorized protocol must be submitted to the Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for approval.
3. A progress report must be submitted 12 months from the date of this Certification, and should provide the expected completion date for the project.
4. Written notification must be sent to the Board when the project is complete or terminated.


Janice Dickin, Ph.D, LLB,
Chair
Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

3 March 2005
Date:

Distribution: (1) Applicant, (2) Supervisor (if applicable), (3) Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee, (4) Sponsor, (5) Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (6) Research Services.