

***Differential presence:
Deleuze and performance***

Submitted by Laura Cull, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama, November 2009

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Abstract

This thesis argues that presence in the performing arts can be reconceived, via the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, as an encounter with difference or ‘differential presence’ which is variously defined as immanence, destratification, affect/becoming, and duration. These definitions are developed through a series of four analyses of exemplary performance practices: 1) The Living Theatre; 2) Antonin Artaud; 3) Allan Kaprow and 4) Goat Island.

Chapter One rehabilitates the Living Theatre from a dominant narrative of ‘failure’, aided by the Deleuzian concepts of ontological participation, immanence, production/creation and ‘the people to come’. Reframing the company as pioneers of methods such as audience participation and collective creation, the chapter argues that their theatrical ambition is irreducible to some simple pursuit of undifferentiated presence (as authenticity or communion).

Chapter Two provides an exposition of three key concepts emerging in the encounter between Artaud and Deleuze: the body without organs, the theatre without organs, and the destratified voice. The chapter proposes that *To have done with the judgment of god* constitutes an instance of a theatre without organs that uses the destratified voice in a pursuit of differential presence – as a nonrepresentative encounter with difference that forces new thoughts upon us.

Chapter Three defines differential presence in relation to Deleuze’s concepts of affect and becoming-imperceptible and Kaprow’s concepts of ‘experienced insight’, nonart, ‘becoming “the whole”’, and attention. The chapter argues that Kaprow and Deleuze share a concern to theorize the practice of participating in actuality beyond the subject/object distinction, in a manner that promotes an ethico-political sense of taking part in “the whole”.

Finally, Chapter Four focuses on the temporal aspect of differential presence, arguing that through slowness, waiting, repetition and imitation, Goat Island’s performance work acknowledges and responds to ‘the need to open ourselves affectively to the actuality of others’ (Mullarkey 2003: 488).

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Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of individuals who have supported the process of generating this thesis. Firstly, Nick Kaye, who has been the most organised and diligent of supervisors. An exceptionally careful reader with an encyclopaedic knowledge of performance history, I have benefited from his expertise in a great many ways. Secondly, I would like to thank my examiners Alan Read and Jerri Daboo for their detailed and generous responses to the thesis.

I would also like to thank Matthew Goulsh for his generosity and unwavering encouragement of the project; Alice Barnaby for her support throughout the tough times at the start; Jon Erickson whose provocative questions helped me to consolidate my philosophical perspective; Beth Hoffmann who has taught me more than she knows; Freddie Rokem and Ed Scheer for much wise advice; and Cormac Power for sharing his thoughts on presence with me throughout.

I would also like to thank my parents: Ann Smyth and Roger Cull, my step-parents John Smyth and Liz Cull, and my sister Gillian Cull for their patience, understanding and unerring interest in this project over the years.

Thanks also go to Gabriella Giannachi; Chris McCullough; Graham Ley; Stefanie Kuhn; Maaïke Bleeker; Lin Hixson; Steve Bottoms; Baz Kershaw; Angela Piccini; Jon Sherman; Phyllida Barlow; Craig Smith; Sara Preibsch and Julie Bradford.

Above all though, I thank my husband, John Mullarkey who has encouraged me in my work on this thesis from start to finish. He has always known, intuitively, when it's time for confirmation or challenges, and has been my most vital source of both intellectual and emotional support. Never too busy to discuss a particular conceptual problem or help me to envisage 'the whole', I could not have asked for a better companion through this process.

Introduction

This thesis seeks to develop the concept of ‘differential presence’ in performance, by setting up encounters between the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and that of four different performance practitioners, chosen on account of their capacity to exemplify the value of bringing Deleuze to the study of presence: the Living Theatre, Antonin Artaud, Allan Kaprow and Goat Island. As a whole, the thesis is motivated by a series of core questions: What are the implications of Deleuze’s thought for the theorisation of these practices with regard to presence? How can his philosophy be employed to generate a new understanding of presence in performance that differs from the deconstructive argument, but nevertheless, does not involve some kind of return to essentialism or traditional metaphysics? Given Performance Studies’ proven commitment to the concept and experience of presence, can Deleuze help us to think in terms of differential presence, rather than in terms of difference as that which renders presence impossible? Can one be ‘present to’ (‘with’, ‘in’ or ‘among’) difference as becoming rather than being; and in what sense can performance be said to offer such encounters with difference to the artist and audience? In other words, the thesis’ central question is: what is differential presence, and how does it work in performance? In turn, its core proposition is that differential presence *does* happen in performance, and that this encounter deserves the attention of performance theory and practice, audiences and artists.

Organized conceptually, rather than chronologically, the narrative arc of the thesis begins with the Living Theatre whose practice will be framed as both pioneering and problematic in relation to the pursuit of differential presence, and ends with Goat Island who seem to solve not only the practical problems associated with performing differential presence but also the philosophical problems that have recently been assigned to the more Virtualist aspects of Deleuze’s thought. In other words, we start at a conceptual point where it seems as if performance needs to become adequate to Deleuze’s philosophy of difference; but we finish in a situation in which practice has become an exemplary mode of participatory and performative philosophy. Although it happens that Goat Island’s performances are the most contemporary of the examples we will address, this is not a narrative of temporal progress. Rather, the thesis begins with

the Living Theatre's work as a practice that generates a set of questions regarding the nature of differential presence and the problems raised by its pursuit as an aesthetic, philosophical and ethico-political goal. As the chapters unfold, I will suggest that the practices that follow provide multiple 'solutions' to these problems – where a 'solution' is understood in Deleuze's own sense, as one creative response amongst others.

A contemporary of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, Deleuze has, over the last fifteen years, proved to be an extremely fruitful thinker for scholars across the disciplines, leading to the recent genesis of the interdisciplinary field known as Deleuze Studies. Despite the vibrancy of this field as a whole, relatively few Theatre and Performance Studies scholars have chosen to engage with Deleuze's work and fewer still have addressed his philosophy from the point of view of presence in performance. I first encountered Deleuze's philosophy during my Masters study at Goldsmiths College in London from 2002-4. At Goldsmiths, a Deleuzian vocabulary had already infiltrated a range of disciplines including cultural studies, sociology and fine art and a series of research events took place, which framed their interests in Deleuzian terms¹. Since Deleuze, and other process philosophers such as Bergson and Whitehead, provided the dominant theoretical framework for much of the research activity being undertaken at the college, I was surprised by his relative absence from theoretical discussion in Performance Studies as I embarked on my PhD.

Likewise, Deleuze Studies has, hitherto, paid insufficient attention to Deleuze's engagement with theatre and performance. One aim of this thesis, then, is to make good this lack by questioning the implications of Deleuze's thought for the theorisation of presence in much the same way as other scholars have already mined the resources of, for example, deconstruction, phenomenology and psychoanalysis. As this introduction will discuss, Deleuze's thought has much in common with Derrida's, sharing his concern to retrieve the notion of 'difference' from its lowly position in the Western philosophical tradition, which has tended to conceive it derivatively as opposition and negation in relation to a primary identity or sameness. But, as I will also emphasise, Deleuze has a different concept of difference from Derrida, and is less concerned with undermining presence by introducing absence, than with multiplying presence by incorporating difference directly within it (Lampert 2006: 28).

¹ One example of such a research event would be the one day conference, *Mapping Intensities* held in June 2004, which I was involved in organising. The conference addressed art and architecture from a Deleuzian perspective, with speakers including Stefano Boeri, Mark Tribe and Sarah Cook.

This introduction is comprised of five sections. In the first section, there will be a general introduction to the concept of presence, exploring both its etymological roots and aspects of its history of usage in Performance Studies. The second section will provide an account of Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, the subsequent take-up of this critique in Performance Studies, and finally the critique of this critique, or what we might describe as the recuperation of presence by contemporary performance theory. This trio of discourses, I will argue, forms a significant part of the theoretical context for this research project. In the third section, the similarities and differences between Derrida and Deleuze's projects with regard to presence will be outlined, after which there will be a theoretical introduction to Deleuze's philosophy based on an exposition of the concepts of 'difference', 'becoming', 'affect', 'the event'/the 'virtual/actual' distinction, and 'duration'. I will then go on to explore why this particular project on Deleuze and presence is a valuable addition and original contribution to the current context. On the one hand, this context includes the existing literature on our four chosen practitioners and their relation to presence. On the other, it includes the contributions provided by what little literature there is on Deleuze and presence in Performance Studies. In the fourth part of the introduction, we move onto the question of this project's methodology. Initially, this will be addressed by examining the difficulties involved in thinking that there is such a thing as *a* Deleuzian methodology, before we go on to look at Deleuze's idea of 'transcendental empiricism' as a methodological concept. Finally, the fifth section returns to the analysis of the key research questions motivating the thesis, and accounts both for the choices of examples of practices and for the necessary omissions that occur in this, as in any, bounded and finite project. This section then closes with an introduction to the chapters that follow based on an explanation of the conceptual, rather than chronological, logic that determines their order.

1. Introducing presence

As Gabriella Giannachi has discussed, the etymology of the word 'presence' comes from '*prae* (before) *sens* (sum: I am), ie., 'before I am – in front of me – in view of me'. But as Giannachi notes, *sens* is also 'the present participle of *esse* (to be),' and,

as such, establishes a link between the notion of presence and the idea of a proximity to being, in its metaphysical sense. From this, Giannachi concludes that

presence indicates that which is corollary to, around and before being, where the emphasis is on being. This suggests that presence indicates something other than the self which is witnessed in its occurrence. This also suggests that being is indeed separate but indispensable to a reading and understanding of presence (Giannachi 2006: n.p.).

This, of course, is in contrast to the notion of ‘*ab-sens*’ where ‘*ab*’ indicates a position of being far off or away from being. These ideas: of presence as an encounter between a self and an other (or between an identity and difference), and of presence as involving a relationship with metaphysical being will be crucial for this thesis. However, one key objective of the project is to suggest that Deleuze’s thought allows us to conceive of presence beyond the subject/object distinction that defines the paradigm of representation. Presence, as ‘the state of being before, in front of, or in the same place with a person or thing’ (OED), is redefined as being *among* the other, ‘*within* it, together in a zone of proximity’ (Lawlor 2008: n.p.). But this participation is a presence among or within difference-in-itself, not an event of recognition; I am not before some ‘thing’ I recognize, but swept up within a multiplicity that I cannot fully know or understand. In turn, the thesis will draw from Deleuze to argue that presence as differential presence, is not so much a state to be occupied, but a creative process in which one might take part; differential presence never arrives or ends, but is always complete in and as the process of becoming. I will expand on Deleuze’s concept of becoming in Part Two of this introduction, but first I want to look at some of the ways in which the notion of presence has been defined, beyond its etymological origins, in performance theory.

The concept of presence in performance has been given a vast array of definitions and been evoked, both as a positive and negative value, for a multitude of rhetorical purposes. Of these myriad concepts, perhaps the most familiar or most widely used is what Jane Goodall (2008) calls ‘stage presence,’ what Cormac Power refers to as ‘the auratic mode of presence’ (Power 2008: 47), and Joseph Roach (2007) simply calls ‘It’: the concept of presence as the charismatic magnetism of a performer. ‘In theatrical parlance,’ Philip Auslander explains

presence usually refers to the relationship between actor and audience – the actor as manifestation before the audience – or more specifically to the actor’s psychophysical attractiveness to the audience, a concept related to that of *charisma* (Auslander 1997: 62 – original emphasis).

Or, as Patrice Pavis puts it, ‘to have presence... is to know how to capture the attention of the public and make an impression’. But more than this, he suggests, ‘it is also to be endowed with a *je ne sais quoi* which triggers an immediate feeling of identification in the spectator, communicating a sense of living elsewhere and in an eternal present’ (Pavis 1998: 285). Here, Pavis’ definition introduces a number of important concepts that continue to be associated with presence in both its philosophical and theatrical context, including: power, mystery, immediacy, feeling, identification, communication and spatio-temporal transcendence.

But there are many other definitions beyond the association of presence with charisma. Suzanne M. Jaeger, for instance, describes how contemporary performers might use the term when they ‘talk about “being in the moment” or having an “on performance,” in the sense of being really on top of it, or in good form’ (Jaeger 2006: 123). In these instances, presence might be used to name ‘a feeling of being fully alive to the audience and other performers, a feeling of supreme control and power, but also paradoxically an openness to the contingencies of a live performance’ (ibid.). It is less about the performers’ possession of charisma, then, and more about having ‘a special capacity for spontaneity’ (ibid.). Likewise, Pavis himself extends his definition of presence to include the audience who might use the concept of presence to refer to an intense experience of ‘being there’ – akin to what Power refers to as ‘the fictional mode of presence’ (Power 2008: 15) – in which any distinction between fiction and reality collapses (Pavis 1998: 286).

‘Being there,’ in this instance, is not conceived in terms of having a heightened awareness of the present, so much as a sense of the presence or presentness of a fictional world. In contrast, in 1967, the modernist art theorist Michael Fried would critique minimalist sculpture and theatricality in general, precisely on the basis that it was structured in order to foreground an awareness of the temporal process of viewing the work of art – akin to what Power calls ‘the literal mode of presence’ (Power 2008:

87). For Fried, that is, the idea that presence was the ‘sine qua non of theatre’ functioned as the devalued opposite in relation to the eternal or timeless nature of the modernist painting. Whereas theatre was derided for its preoccupation with the durational nature of aesthetic experience and intolerable dependence on an audience to complete it, the modernist work of art was valued for its autonomy through the transcendence of temporality (which Fried describes as its ‘presentness’) (Fried 1998: 167). For Fried then, the notion of ‘modernist theatre’ would be an oxymoron; theatricality could never strip away all extraneous or differentiating elements, because it could not exist or could not be made without consideration for an audience. In contrast, those who are now described as the modernism’s theatrical visionaries – like Artaud and Grotowski – perceived non-representational presence as the specific power of the theatrical medium.

But it was Jacques Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence, and his critique of Artaud’s aim, that would ultimately have the most significant impact on the status of the concept of presence in performance, as the second part of this introduction will now discuss. Until relatively recently and largely on account of this critique, ‘presence’ has been something of an excluded term in Performance Studies insofar as it came to be associated with the aim to establish direct, unmediated contact or ‘communion’ between audience and performance. In this next section, we explore this deconstructive critique in both its philosophical and performative contexts, before addressing the subsequent critiques of this critique and introducing the key studies that constitute the current revival of presence as a central concept for performance.

2. “After Derrida”: The thesis in the context of the critique of presence

2.1 The critique of the metaphysics of presence

As we’ve seen, the term ‘presence’ carries with it a particular set of connotations when used in the context of performance. But, of course, it also has a precise history as a philosophical concept: a context that has, in some cases, strongly informed the theorisation of presence in performance and continues to provide new ways for us to think our experiences of performance: whether as artists or audience. That is, both Western performance and Western philosophy have rich traditions of thinking presence

that intersect with one another in the work of theatrically minded philosophers – like Deleuze – and philosophically minded artists like Artaud. As such, rather than attempt the impossible task of summarising the plethora of ways in which both fields have separately defined presence, I will position this thesis as part of a tradition of discourse concerned with the implications of philosophical presence for performance and vice versa, of the performance of presence for philosophy.

One primary area of intersection that forms the context for this thesis is the critique of the metaphysics of presence by Derrida (taking his lead from Nietzsche and Heidegger), and the impact of that critique in Theatre and Performance Studies. Metaphysics is perhaps most easily defined as an area of philosophical enquiry motivated by the question: ““what is being?” or “what is being as a whole?”” (Bell 2006: 27) and is associated particularly with figures such as Plato and Hegel. In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida repeats Heidegger’s call to overturn this metaphysical tradition as that which ‘thinks in terms of... truth as correctness’ (Heidegger in Bell 2006: 28), of the coincidence of thought and the world, and therefore, of the possibility of ‘the *presence* of truth as self-evidence’ or givenness (Bell 2006: 28 – emphasis original). The totalising claims of metaphysics are always unquestioningly based upon an assumed presence of being, or the self-identity of an ultimate, underlying reality, as their condition of possibility. This founding presence or self-sameness, makes truth or the knowledge of reality, possible. Building upon Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, Derrida suggests that each of the categories that philosophers have used to try to ground philosophy – such as consciousness, or being – are always synonyms for the Now, or the present (consciousness of the self *now*, being that is present to hand *now*). What they forget is that the Now is always deferred and, as such, that self-presence is impossible in the flux of temporality.

But Derrida also argues that the very idea of self-presence is based on an act of exclusion or differentiation; presence relies upon and yet denies a notion of the fundamentally different or ‘other’ in order to define itself. One example of this to which Derrida returns, is a sense of time or temporal difference; when, for instance, we posit speech as immediacy and self-presence, we imply and yet forget what is for Derrida the irreducible delay between thinking, speaking and hearing. As is well known, Derrida coins the term ‘*différance*’ to refer to this ‘movement of both temporal deferring and spatial differing’, a pure difference which he goes on to argue is ‘the transcendental

condition for the possibility of differentiation’ (ibid., 59). *Différance* both makes possible and forever defers the idea of ‘a self coming into presence with itself’ such as ‘the plenitude of hearing oneself speak and of having a substantiality intimately tied to the vocalized expression of our ideas’ (ibid., 29).

In particular, Derrida was concerned with the relationship between language and meaning, in the context of which *différance* suggested that meaning could never be fully present in language, but would always be ‘at once “differential” and “deferred”, the product of a restless play within language that cannot be fixed or pinned down for the purposes of conceptual definition’ (Norris 1987: 15). Neither in the form of speech nor writing can language be understood to have a stable meaning or “transcendental signified”. The work of ‘deconstruction’, in turn, as the philosophical methodology derived from the concept of *différance*, is to locate instances of this double presupposition and denial at work in other philosophical texts: the notions of impurity that are inseparable from concepts of the pure, the false from the true, the copy from the original and so forth. Texts are constantly trying to keep *différance* at bay as that which threatens their self-present meaning, but Derrida’s deconstructions repeatedly use close reading as a technique to reveal the constitutive role of the excluded ‘other’ and the underlying play of meanings operating beneath the philosophers’ intention to express simple, self-evident truths. To give an example, Derrida suggests that Husserl’s attempts to argue for the self-presence and immediacy of the voice are undercut within his own text and on account of the unstable meanings of the language he employs. It is this, in turn, that allows Derrida to argue that the voice is never immediate, but always mediated by signs and the ‘flux’ of temporality.

2.2 Presence in performance becomes a ‘powerful illusion’

Derrida’s thought undoubtedly had a significant impact on performance, particularly as a result of his critique of Artaud (which we will examine in Chapter Two) and of those practitioners who conceived themselves as Artaud’s faithful followers. After Derrida, Marvin Carlson suggests, ‘theorists and performers could no longer comfortably embrace the goal of pure presence so attractive to modernism’ (Carlson 1996: 135-6); it was now understood to be naïve to express a desire for performance to construct an unmediated, direct presence with its audience. To a great extent, this shift

was based on the generalised acceptance of the idea that presence was ‘always already’ mediated or differentiated by representation, the argument that Derrida put forward in order to deconstruct what he perceived to be Artaud’s aspirations for the Theatre of Cruelty. Rather than as the basis of performance, presence was now understood as an effect of performance.

An early proponent of this perspective was Herbert Blau, who, as early as 1983, argued that

There is nothing more illusory in performance than the illusion of the unmediated. It is a very powerful illusion in the theatre, but it is theatre, and it is theatre, the truth of illusion which haunts all performance, whether or not it occurs in a theatre (Blau 1983: 143).

Likewise, it is largely this argument that we see at work in Philip Auslander’s essay, ‘“Just be your self”: Logocentrism and difference in performance theory’ (1986/1997), which attempts to deconstruct the acting theories of Stanislavski, Grotowski and Brecht for their presumption that acting could serve as a transparent medium for the revelation of the actor’s self. For each one, Auslander claims, there is some kind of pre-representational and fully present self that acts as the independent ground for the process of performance (just as logocentrism presumes that there is some autonomous order of truth and meaning that serves as the foundation for philosophizing). Regardless of the apparent differences between how each of these three figures construe the process of acting, the actor’s self (understood by Stanislavski, for example, as the actor’s subconscious experience) functions as an unquestioned source of truth.

In turn, Auslander argues, the capacity to expose this real self has been purported to provide theatre’s audiences with privileged access to universal human truths beyond cultural differences (Auslander 1997: 30). For Auslander, in contrast, this self-presence is not simply ‘there’ to be discovered in the process of actor training or performance, rather ‘the self which is supposedly *exposed* through the medium of acting is in fact *produced* by the mediation of psychotechnique between the conscious and the unconscious levels of the actor’s psyche’ (Auslander 1997: 32 – emphasis added). Auslander argues that to follow Derrida, acting theory must appreciate that this self is not a pure presence, but a presence that can only be recognised as such, by actor and

audience, insofar as it is a function of theatrical language and ‘inseparable from the language by which it expresses itself’ (ibid. 34). Even the physical body, to which Grotowski turns (Auslander argues), cannot give access to transparent, undifferentiated presence since it too ‘becomes absent from itself, passing itself off as, and taking itself for, the mind’ (Derrida 1978: 186).

Given the dominance of such arguments, figures like Artaud and the Living Theatre, who had been so strongly associated with the pursuit of presence, began to fall out of favour. Indeed, as Power has discussed, Elinor Fuchs’ article, ‘Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Re-thinking Theatre After Derrida’ (1985) very much suggests that, since the eighties, practitioners sought to reform the theatre for the poststructuralist era, by performing their self-reflexive awareness of ‘the stage as a site of representation and citation rather than “Presence” and “immediacy”’ (Power 2008: 118). In particular, Fuchs suggests that theatre needed to move on from the absolute value she perceives to be accorded to presence by figures like Julian Beck and Michael Goldman, under the influence of Artaud and Grotowski. For them, she argues, theatre was uniquely equipped to fulfil the longing to possess the present and to possess the self in the present that characterised the contemporary condition, such that ‘the exalted goal served by the actor was nothing less than the recuperation of full Reality’ (Fuchs 1985: 164). For Fuchs, The Living Theatre, amongst others, are positioned as ripe for deconstruction because she sees them as trusting speech over script, and the body over language, as the means to locate an inner self.

In turn, Fuchs argues that the avant-garde Theatre of Presence that was seen to have dominated the 1960s and 70s had now been surpassed by a post-Derridean Theatre of Absence that ‘displaces the Subject’ and ‘destabilizes meaning’ (ibid., 165). ‘In a motion that parallels Derrida’s deconstruction of speech and writing’, Fuchs claims, ‘theatre practitioners have begun to expose the normally “occulted” textuality behind the phonocentric fabric of performance’ (Fuchs 1985: 166). While actors once feigned spontaneity in their speech, gesture and behaviour, the new theatre – including practitioners such as The Wooster Group and Richard Foreman – now has ‘writing – as subject, activity and artifact’ at its centre (ibid. 163). While writing once ‘retired behind the apparent presence of performance’, it now takes centre stage. In this way, as Jon Erickson pointed out in 1995, Fuchs’ account seems to take Derrida’s concept of ‘writing’ literally, rather than in the expanded sense in which it was arguably intended.

Writing, for Derrida, is not just literally written discourse (as in the script), but ‘the trace of differentiation *per se*, as both the predication and the erasure of Being’ (Erickson 1995: n.p.).

In each of these cases of deconstructive performance theory we can see that presence is associated with the undifferentiated and with immediate contact, whether in the context of the actor’s self-relation or the relation between the actor and audience. But, were pre-Derrida concepts of presence in performance really as simple or naïve as these theories suggest? In response, let us now end this section by contrasting Auslander’s conclusions with those of another deconstructionist who interprets the implications of Derrida for performance in a different way: the French theorist, Josette Féral and her article, ‘Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified’ (1982), which pre-dates all the other Derridean performance theory we have looked at thus far.

With Auslander, as we’ve seen, presence is associated with performance understood as the transparent communication of truth and with the concept of a natural, pre-representational self as the foundation of acting. Indeed, for him, imagining the performance of *différance* is an ‘impossible task’ since ‘*différance* is itself a manifest term for something which properly has no name and does not exist’ (Auslander 1997: 38). One cannot perform *différance* because *différance* does not exist. Better, Auslander suggests, to devise ‘performance equivalents for Derrida’s practice of writing “under erasure”, using language bound up in the metaphysics of presence and crossing it out’ (ibid.). In contrast, Féral argues that performance – and specifically, the differential repetition of gesture in Vito Acconci’s piece *Red Tapes* (1976) – can operate as ‘Derrida’s *différance* made perceptible’ (Féral in Murray 1997: 292), an operation she associates with the presence of performance or non-representational theatre as distinct from representational theatre. Using Derrida’s vocabulary at the same time as implicitly challenging Derrida’s own reading of Artaud, Féral proposes that the performance practices of the previous two decades provide us with actual examples (and hence the proof of the possibility) of the very non-representational theatre that Artaud had sought to construct (ibid., 289). With Acconci, but also in the case of Kaprow and the Living Theatre, Féral argues, performance is ‘a theatre of cruelty and violence, of the body and its drives, of displacement and “disruption”, a non-narrative and non-representational theatre’ (ibid.). Performance, she says, ‘is the death of the subject’ because ‘performance means nothing and aims for no single, specific meaning, but attempts

instead to reveal places of passage' (ibid., 293); likewise, performing is not about representing either a character or oneself, but about becoming 'a source of production' and 'the point of passage for energy flows'. Though she does not refer to Deleuze and Guattari, Féral seems to see the performer as what they call a 'desiring-machine' when she argues that 'The gestures that he carries out lead to nothing if not to the flow of the desire that sets them in motion' (ibid.).

Significantly, Auslander has a critique of Féral's essay that chooses to neglect much of this detail in favour of arguing that her position has much in common with Fried's in terms of its emphasis on 'presentness'. 'Whereas Fried posits presentness as a defining characteristic of modernist art,' he argues, 'Féral... posit[s] it as a defining characteristic of postmodern performance' (Auslander 1997: 56). Auslander neglects to discuss Féral's allusions to the presence of difference (or differential presence), in favour of unfairly criticising what he perceives as her (modernist) attachment to notions of medium specificity. Indeed, he describes her essay as dressing up 'Greenbergian aesthetics in poststructuralist clothing' (ibid.). In contrast, we are arguing that Féral moves between referring to the presence of difference in 'performance', 'non-representational theatre' and 'theatricality', rather than constructing a rigid opposition between the media of performance and theatre. And, indeed, we are proposing that her essay provides an important precedent for thinking presence *as* difference, rather than as the denial of difference. That is, although Féral's references to the actor's body as a 'point of passage' and performance as the revelation of 'places of passage' could seem to reiterate a standard metaphysics of presence (in which 'passage' is derived from 'point' and 'place'), from a Deleuzian perspective one could read her text as an effort to think towards the passage of places and points.

2.3 Critiques of the critique of presence, or, the revival of presence

There have already been a number of critiques of the deconstructive period in performance theory. As early as 1990, for example, Roger Copeland argued against Fuchs' reduction of theatrical presence to phonocentrism, proposing that

presence in the theatre has less to do with the distinction between speaking and writing than with the way in which the architectural and

technological components of the performance space promote or inhibit a sense of 'reciprocity' between actors and spectators (Copeland in Auslander 2003: 308).

Likewise, at the first Performance Studies International conference in NYU in March 1995, Jon Erickson presented a paper "A Critique of the Critique of Presence"² in which he criticised

certain theories being put forward at that time about avant-garde performance and the necessity of such performance to undermine any sense or illusion of presence for the spectator as an intrinsically political action (Erickson 2006: 144).

Thinking precisely of scholars like Fuchs and Auslander, but also of Michael Vanden Heuvel's *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance* (1991), Erickson argued that the concept of presence had mistakenly come to be associated primarily with the troubling authority of theatre's illusions, and with mindless absorption in contrast to an alienating, or absencing, theatricality. For him, this has very little to do with deconstruction; or rather, it constitutes an attempt to 'wed a certain reading of Derrida with a Brechtian tradition' (Erickson 1995: n.p.). Presence, here, comes to be associated with the masquerading of ideology as naturalism and the playwright's desire for mastery over theatrical meaning (Vanden Heuvel 1991: 4). In contrast, Erickson reiterates that Derridean presence is about the *longing* for the transcendental signified, and the *desire* to possess the present, both of which are construed as effects of, and rendered impossible by, *différance*. If presence is something we want but can't have, Erickson goes on to suggest, it makes no sense to say that it needs to be undermined. Theatre never gave us the experience of self-presence in the first place (ibid). As a result, Erickson suggests, the critique of presence is not as political as it thinks it is; rather, it is merely a 'radicalized formalism' (ibid.) that tries to attribute some kind of 'moral imperative' to breaking presence understood as 'the fundamental hypnotic hold of dramatic absorption' (Erickson 2006: 144).

Aspects of Erickson's argument have since been reiterated and expanded upon by Cormac Power, who points out that

² Thanks to Jon Erickson for providing access to a copy of this important, yet unpublished paper.

Far from wishing to replace the notion of presence with ‘absence’ or ‘textuality’, Derrida, in his key work *Of Grammatology*, declares a quite different ‘intention’: ‘To make enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words “proximity,” “immediacy” and “presence”’ (Derrida in Power 2008: 10).

Likewise, Power argues that the deconstructive theatre theorists ‘have tended to look at (P)resence [sic] as a singular, monolithic entity’ rather than exploring the complexity and multiplicity of notions of presence that theatre has generated (Power 2008: 118). For Power, theatre ‘has the capacity to explore and “play” with notions of presence’ (ibid.), to ‘make presence “strange” or to ‘defamiliarise the present’ (ibid., 135).

Such critiques belong to a broader revival of presence that can be seen to have taken place in performance scholarship over the last five years. Of course, the *Performing Presence* project itself (of which this thesis constitutes a part) demonstrates this changing climate. *Performing Presence: From the Live to the Simulated* was a major AHRC-funded research project managed by Nick Kaye and Gabriella Giannachi at Exeter University, Mel Slater at University College London and Michael Shanks at Stanford University. Running from October 2005 to June 2009, *Performing Presence* aimed ‘to combine expertise from performance and drama theory and practice, anthropological archaeology, and computer science to investigate means by which “presence” is achieved in live and mediated performance and simulated environments’ (Kaye 2008: n.p.). As one of two doctoral research students funded by the project³, my specific role has been to examine the nature of presence in live performance, as well as contributing to collective strands of research activity such as the production of a web-based project bibliography⁴.

³ The other doctoral research student funded by the *Performing Presence* project was Stefanie Kuhn who has been researching the nature of presence in simulated or mediated performance. While Philip Auslander has clearly problematised any fixed distinction between ‘the live’ and ‘the mediated’ in the context of performance, it has not been the specific concern of this thesis to address the relationship between these categories (Auslander 1999). However, Chapter Four on Goat Island does use Deleuze to insist that we rethink the association of presence with some simple ‘here and now’ in favour of a notion of multiple presents. Liveness, from this perspective, would not be conceived as an identitarian quality, which will be distorted by the mediation of reproductive technologies. Rather the live is already differential and multiple, in itself.

⁴ This project bibliography can be found online at: <http://presence.stanford.edu:3455/Collaboratory/1083> The Presence Project Collaboratory is a state-of-the-art web facility constructed and hosted by the Metamedia Lab (Stanford Humanities Lab) at Stanford University. On this site, you can find a more

However, this revival of interest in presence is also evidenced by a wealth of recent publications, including: Andre Lepecki's *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory* (2004); Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (2004); Hans Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006); Joseph Roach's *It* (2007); Phillip B. Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2008); Jane Goodall's *Stage Presence* (2008); James Thompson's *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the end of effect* (2009) as well as Erickson's essay 'Presence' in the collection *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy* (2006) and Power's *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre* (2008), to which I have already referred.

All these texts largely affirm the concept of presence, despite its poststructuralist critique. In some cases, such as in Erickson's writing, the recuperation of presence constitutes a challenge to the relevance of poststructuralism; there is a gap, for him, between 'a philosophically logical position and experience' (Erickson 2006: 151). For Erickson, that is, 'the micrological view of ontology,' exemplified by Derrida and Deleuze, 'is largely irrelevant to most people's practical experience of the world'. Likewise, he argues that 'the political operates in the real world at the level of conscious strategy and argument', such that the 'micropolitical' is merely theoretical posturing rather than an active intervention into the practical field of politics (ibid.). Differential presence as the 'experience of pure temporality' or pure difference is merely mystical for Erickson and, for him, 'mysticism is no basis for political decision-making' (ibid., 154). In this way, though Erickson's 1995 paper makes some remarks about John Cage's notion of presence as 'accession to Becoming' that are highly relevant to this thesis, his later work seems to have become less sympathetic to process perspectives in favour of pursuing what he calls the 'material psycho-physiological truth about personal presence that compels attention' (ibid., 146). In other words, Erickson now seems to want to ground his thought in subjective experience (albeit one grounded in a naturalised notion of the mind).

detailed outline of the Presence Project's activities and research questions, as well as documentation of practitioner workshops and interviews.

In contrast, this thesis will propose that, for Deleuze, neither ‘experience’ nor ‘politics’ can be taken as given or fixed, and nor should their theorisation be based on so-called ‘common sense’. Rather, as we will see in the methodological section of this introduction (and indeed, throughout this dissertation), Deleuze’s philosophy constructs ways of encountering the real as difference prior to its organization into conventional forms and recognizable ideas. In turn, Deleuze suggests that socio-political institutions are forms of sedimentation shot through with the revolutionary force of unconscious desire. ‘Real politics’ (as real change) happens for Deleuze, when this non-representative force splits apart the social fabric altering the status quo in unpredictable ways, such as in the events of May ’68: a real world event but also an irruption of the new that we simply cannot understand if we continue to position politics as only going on ‘at the level of conscious strategy and argument’.

In other cases, such as Power and Gumbrecht, the retrieval of presence is very much undertaken with the insights of poststructuralism in mind; they are post-Derridean insofar as they largely agree with Derrida (if not with his interpreters), whilst at the same time wanting to preserve the notion of presence as a value for performance. In Power’s case, for instance, there is the specific goal to ‘reconcile the Derridean critique of presence with the experience of theatre’s “presence”’ (Power 2008: 135). In part, he works towards this goal by re-reading Derrida’s essay on Artaud, arguing that although Derrida is ‘deeply sceptical towards the notion of unmediated presence in theatre’, it is not that he merely dismisses the Theatre of Cruelty ‘as naïvely implausible’ (ibid., 138). Rather, the opening two-thirds of Derrida’s text seems to perform Artaud, or to speak from Artaud’s position, in a manner that portrays some degree of admiration for Artaud’s ‘ambitious and impossible’ project (ibid). In turn, Power argues that Derrida does not ‘exclude or “close” the notion of theatrical presence’ in favour of absence, as his interpreters might suggest (ibid., 139). Indeed, Power even touches on the idea that Derrida might see the stage as a privileged site of the repetition of difference (ibid.)⁵.

Ultimately though, Power understands the differentiating power of theatre primarily in terms of the play between the real and the sign, in a way that equates the

⁵ This idea emerges in Power’s close reading of Derrida on Artaud, in which he notes that although Derrida says that ‘the menace of repetition’ is particularly well organised in the theatre, he also says that it is in the theatre, above all, where one is brought ‘so close to the origin of repetition’ (Derrida in Power 2008: 139). Power then goes on to suggest that ‘It is almost as if Derrida is qualifying the assertion that theatre is more about repetition and absence than presence by attaching the additional clause that theatre, like “nowhere else” brings one “close to the origin of repetition,”’ (Power 2008: 139) or *différence*.

real with simple presence. A chair, for instance, needs the theatre in order to differ from itself (or to make its presence “strange”) in Power’s schema (ibid., 143). In contrast, as we shall see, Deleuze’s thought locates difference and transformation in matter itself, deflating the privileged role assigned to representation by Derrideans. In the third part of this introduction, we will attempt to expand on this question of Deleuze’s relationship to Derrida, before going on to introduce a series of Deleuze’s key concepts and exploring how they might contribute to a new understanding of presence as differential.

3. An introduction to Deleuze

3.1 Differentiating Deleuze and Derrida

So what does Deleuze have to offer this debate? Why choose to engage with his philosophy in order to theorise presence in performance? As a philosopher of difference, and a contemporary of Derrida’s, does Deleuze’s thought really offer anything new to this discourse? No doubt, Deleuze and Derrida have much in common. Indeed, on the occasion of Deleuze’s death, Derrida described Deleuze as ‘the one to whom I have always considered myself closest among all of this “generation”’. He then goes on to say: ‘I never felt the slightest “objection” arise in me, not even a virtual one, against any of his discourse’ (Derrida 1995: n.p.). However, there are a number of key differences between their philosophical projects, such that the theorisation of differential presence (inspired by Deleuze) is a distinct undertaking from the deconstruction of presence (inspired by Derrida) that has already been undertaken by Power, Fuchs, Auslander and so forth.

In the first instance, they differ in their attitudes to metaphysics. As we’ve seen, for Derrida, ‘metaphysics is defined in terms of presence’ and the concept of *différance* is both ‘that which marks “the disappearance of any originary presence”’ and ‘that which thereby exceeds or transcends metaphysics, and thereby, at the same time, constantly disrupts and “destabilizes” metaphysics’ (Smith in Patton and Protevi 2003: 49). That said, it is not that Derrida thinks that he has escaped metaphysics (since, for him, this is impossible) with the concept of *différance*, so much that he proposes that we move to a different project altogether, in which philosophy is conceived as a species of

literature. In contrast, as Daniel W. Smith recounts, Deleuze described himself as a “pure metaphysician” and refrained from critiquing metaphysics per se as necessarily logocentric or based on presence (ibid., 50).

Secondly, Deleuze and Derrida differ in how they practice philosophy. Coming from the hermeneutical tradition, Derrida sees philosophy as ‘an essentially linguistic activity’ and as ‘a form of textual exegesis and commentary’ that provides ‘a critique of metaphysical oppositions embedded in language’ (Bogue 1989: 158-9, 78). Deleuze, however, engages in little ‘close reading’ and defines philosophy as the creation of concepts, arguing that such creative thought begins with the shock encounter with an unidentifiable outside force rather than being determined by language. Given this approach, it has been argued that ‘Deleuze does not question the status of his own discourse, and hence does not confront the inescapable problem of language’ (ibid.)⁶.

We will return to this objection in the next section on methodology. For now, let us focus on what is, perhaps, the most important distinction between Derrida and Deleuze for this project: the fact that Deleuze asserts that ‘difference manifests itself in sub-representative experience... and that non-discursive bodies/forces coexist and interact with the incorporeal surface of difference’ (ibid.). That is, even if most now agree that it was mistaken to read Derrida’s infamous statement ‘There is nothing outside the text’ as an implication of ‘linguistic idealism’, all the same, Derrida *does* primarily address difference in a discursive context, whereas Deleuze’s extended analysis locates the operation of difference in the realm of materiality. Difference is at work when sugar dissolves in water and when an eye responds to light; it is at work in the unconscious productions of desire; it is at work when the carpenter responds to wood. Consequently, Deleuze’s work should not be seen as a critique of Derrida’s, but as an expansion of a shared concern with the process of differentiation. After all, for Derrida, the concept of ‘writing’ does not merely refer to written discourse, as Fuchs implied. What he calls ‘writing’ is a model for differentiation, just as the voice was a model for identity. When he says that ‘There is nothing outside the text’, he means that writing, or difference, can be found everywhere; everything that claims to be self-identical is actually differing/deferred. And yet, Derrida spent the vast majority of his career analysing the difference in texts, whereas Deleuze went looking for this

⁶ This is the critique of Deleuze presented by Vincent B. Leitch in *Deconstructive Criticism* (1983).

difference (or ‘writing’) in other realms, such as thermodynamics and geometry (Welchman in Protevi 2005: 133-4).

To be slightly more critical of Derrida, or perhaps more so of his ‘followers’ in performance theory, this focus on difference in the text has sometimes led to the construction of presence as a ‘straw-man’ or easy target for deconstruction in a manner that this thesis hopes to counteract. That is, the chapters that follow will attempt to rehabilitate categories that have been deconstructed by Derrideans as synonyms for presence, such as ‘the body’ (which is discussed in all four chapters), ‘voice’ (a focus of Chapter Two), ‘affect’ (a focus of Chapter Three) and ‘community’ (which we look at particularly in Chapters One and Four). But this will not be a rehabilitation of self-presence; rather, we will argue that, for Deleuze, such categories were never self-present in the first place. For example, if we object to the idea that the body is a function or construction of discourses, this need not be understood as equivalent to saying that it is self-present. Rather, Deleuze’s position suggests that bodies participate in other forms of differentiation that are irreducible to discourse. The presence of the body is not just differentiated or changed by (and at the speed of) human discourses, but has its own processes of difference – its presence is the presence of (its) difference.

As such, when this notion of difference is transposed to the terrain of performance, the question of presence expands beyond concerns with the instability of meaning and the critique of claims to immediacy and self-presentation, that all too often seem to underestimate the complexity of the notions of presence being evoked. From a Deleuzian perspective, the thesis will suggest, presence and difference (or the presence of difference) are not incompatible; presence need not be construed as a self-presence that must pass through, and inevitably be distorted by, discursive representation in order to present itself. The unconscious produces in the real, Deleuze and Guattari argue; we need not think that our access to it is limited to the interpretation of representations. Difference, here, is not the ‘dangerous supplement’ that presence both needs and denies as its condition of appearance. Rather, presence can be reconceived with Deleuze as a nonrepresentational experience of difference in itself, as differential presence.

In this way, we might propose that Deleuze’s position lies somewhere between what we might call the liquidity of cultural relativism (a perspective sometimes manifested by a more extreme branch of deconstructionism) and the petrified nature of

an essentialist perspective. That is, it is not the case for Deleuze that reality is constructed by discourse; that all discourses create equally valid realities; or, in other words that ‘anything goes’ when it comes to making claims about what is ‘real’ or ‘true’. In this model, the differentiation of reality by discourse is understood to take place at an infinite speed: as quickly as I can think or write it, I can change reality. This stands in stark contrast to the temporality of essentialism, which denies any ontological reality to change. From the essentialist perspective the world is ultimately composed of fixed essences, and any apparent change is construed as a mere appearance that does not, in fact, change the essence of the thing in itself.

For Deleuze, however, ‘It is not that we are trapped within a world of representations, such that we are destined always to be separated from presence in itself’ (Colebrook 2002: 171-2); *re*-presentation does not belong to a different order of being from the real. But nor would he accept the position that the world is as it is, and remains unaltered by philosophy or the arts. In between pure relativism and pure essentialism is a multiplicity of speeds of change. The human productions conventionally described as representations: concepts, images, pictures, texts, performances and so forth, are reconceived, by Deleuze, as *re*-presentations, understood as a differential or ‘productive repetition’ without a self-present original. For Deleuze, representational thinking privileges ‘the thing itself’ which is understood as the origin or cause of the poor copy that it effects. In contrast, Deleuze develops the concept of the ‘simulacra’, as that which has no original. As such, Colebrook argues that, for Deleuze,

Life just *is* appearance: a plane of images or simulations. The supposed ‘real thing’ that lies behind the images is a fiction we impose on the flux of images. What we have is appearance or imaging itself: a world of simulacra without ground’ (Colebrook 2002: 162-3).

That is, there are inhuman as well as human forms of imaging or *re*-presentation. Deleuze’s expansion of the notion of difference suggests that there are numerous other inhuman processes of differentiation going on, acting upon and as the real at various different speeds, beyond the intervention of discourse. One example of this might be the ‘perception’ of the sun by a plant. For Deleuze, perception is direct; it ‘reaches the thing itself’ not a mental representation of the thing. For instance, ‘the plant “perceiving” the sun does not have a representation of the sun. Perception is the direct [or faster] relation

of the different beings of the world' (ibid., 163). Finally, it is important to qualify this by noting that, for Deleuze, there is no difference between things and images; perception *is* imaging, or *re*-presentation.

But we need to provide greater context for these remarks. In the rest of this section, I will do this by expanding upon Deleuze's concept of difference, and providing a brief exposition of some other key concepts and conceptual pairings from his ontology: becoming, affect, the event and the virtual/actual distinction, and finally, duration. As we shall see, the definitions of these concepts certainly overlap, to the point that, at times, they seem to be simply different words for the 'same' thing: difference in itself. As other commentators have noted, this can be seen as part of Deleuze's distinctive strategy of proliferating terminology – a strategy I have chosen to appropriate in the following chapters, rather than adopting a single conceptual vocabulary in the attempt to think the notion of differential presence. As Claire Colebrook says, Deleuze's ceaseless production of new terms is part of his response to the problem of thinking difference in itself, since 'any thought or image we might have of this profound difference will always grasp only a part or expression of difference' (Colebrook 2002b: xlii).

By addressing these key concepts, we will be able to address Deleuze's relation to the metaphysics of presence as a philosophical tradition, and in turn, to develop an initial understanding of what differential presence might be for Deleuze, and how it might work in an aesthetic situation. Ontology and aesthetics are inseparable for Deleuze, since the latter is conceived as one form of creative process amongst the many other creative processes that make up the nature of reality, not as a separate realm of representation. To appreciate this aesthetics, including Deleuze's all too brief analysis of the theatre, which will also be introduced here, we need to understand the ontology to which it belongs.

3.2 Key concepts in Deleuze's ontology

Deleuze wrote twenty-five books during the forty years from 1953 to 1993 that constituted the core of his working life, most famously the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), which were

written in collaboration with the psychoanalyst and political activist, Félix Guattari. As John Protevi suggests, Deleuze's work can be broadly divided into three different periods, beginning with 'an early phase of scholarly works that examine individual philosophers, including studies of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson (Protevi 2005: 132) – none of whom would have been considered "proper philosophers" by his former teachers at the Sorbonne: an institution 'steeped in the rationalist tradition' of figures such as Hegel, Husserl and the early Heidegger (Bogue 1989: 2). Secondly, there is the period characterized by the publication of *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), which Protevi describes as the phase in which 'Deleuze achieved a genuine independence of thought and no longer expressed himself vicariously through commentary' (Protevi 2005: 132).

And it is this period that has recently come to be validated as the most important of Deleuze's career, at the expense of the more experimental collaborative texts (with Guattari) that define the third period in Protevi's schema and, indeed, provide many of this thesis' theoretical resources⁷. James Williams, for example, refers to *Difference and Repetition* as 'Deleuze's masterwork' and 'the keystone of Deleuze's work as a whole' (Williams 2003: 1-2). Likewise, Erickson is not alone in thinking that 'Deleuze was better off without Guattari, who basically tried to make a political theory out of what wasn't really political in Deleuze's thinking' (Erickson 2007: n.p.). In this regard, Alain Badiou's critique of Deleuze in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (1997) has been influential, since here Badiou suggests that we ought to 'dismiss the works co-authored with Félix Guattari, beginning with the *Anti-Oedipus*' (Alliez 2004: n.p.)⁸. But even if the second period works are the key texts for those who want to keep Deleuze as a philosophers' philosopher, and away from the "diversions" of politics, the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* remain the primary texts for many interdisciplinary engagements with Deleuze, and for practitioners – not least because these experimental texts call out to be tested and tried out in practice. Though less accessible for certain kinds of readers (and therefore more valued by some), *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* still harbour the traces of transcendence in their disembodied conceptions of the virtual. Or, as Smith helpfully summarises, the transition between

⁷ Although Protevi cites the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* as the defining texts of this third period, we should also note the two other main texts that Deleuze and Guattari wrote together: *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) and *What is Philosophy?* (1991).

⁸ This suggestion is then reiterated by Slavoj Žižek in his book *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (2004).

The Logic of Sense and *Anti-Oedipus* is one from Deleuze's thinking of 'the event' as an effect akin to something like the irruption of the Lacanian Real into material reality, towards thinking the event as (desiring-) production or becoming. For Badiou (and Žižek), this is a bad move that turns Deleuze into a thinker of 'the One' rather than of multiplicity, whereas, for us, this is a good move that, in fact, emphasizes the multiplicity of actuality (Smith 2004). We will return to this particular debate in both Chapters Three and Four, so let us move on now to provide a general introduction to some of the key concepts that run across Deleuze's oeuvre, starting with the central notion of 'difference'.

Difference

As has already been suggested, *the* key concept for Deleuze's philosophy is the notion of difference-in-itself. Clearly though, as Vincent Pecora has noted, difference

is itself a term appropriated and reshaped by Deleuze, not one invented out of nothing. It has its own history, beginning perhaps with Saussure's description of language as a system of differences without positive terms (Pecora 1986: 36).

But the concept of difference (albeit a very different concept of difference from the ones that Deleuze and Derrida will respectively produce) goes back much further than this. Since Aristotle, Western philosophy has tended to create a distinction between the concepts of 'difference' and 'alterity', in which the former is conceived as a difference based on a primary similarity and the latter as pure heterogeneity (of which very little, or nothing, can be said). From this perspective, things can be said to be different 'on the basis of something they have in common,' such as 'genus, or kind' (de Beistegui in Protevi 2005: 152.). To be able to say that a cat is different from a dog, one must have first taken them to belong to the same category of animal. In contrast, a dog is not 'different', but simply 'other' in relation to an altogether uncommon thing, like a book (unless, of course, one puts the two together into an even more abstract and encompassing category, such as material thing). In this schema, difference does not give us the essence of the things in question (that they are animals), it 'merely indicates some quality of that thing' (that a dog is an animal with a particular set of contingent qualities belonging to 'animalness' that differ from those of a cat). While identity, or self-

presence, is construed as primary, differences are traditionally positioned as ‘qualitative, material, contingent, secondary and derivative’ (ibid.).

In contrast, both Deleuze and Derrida want to liberate difference from its historical construction as a derivative of identity, and show ‘how it is in fact the movement of difference itself that produces the apparent stability of the world of fixed identities (of substances and essences)’ (ibid.,151). Deleuze and Derrida argue that the apparent presence of the concepts that the Aristotelian tradition took as its starting points is, in fact, a product of a primary difference or ‘multiplicity’. There is not a world of permanent presences underpinning the differences between substances or physical systems; what there is, is difference as a kind of chaos or ‘virtually existent pure duration’ that generates the appearance of permanence and presence (May 2003: 147). Deleuze argues for the ‘lived reality of a sub-representative domain’ and for a mode of thinking adequate to such a domain by going ‘beyond the form of identity, in relation to both the object seen and the seeing subject’ (Deleuze 1994: 82). Likewise, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they posit a primary material flow, which is only subsequently organised by the provisional and temporary ‘strata’.

But importantly, for our purposes, Deleuze does not think in terms of difference as that which deconstructs self-presence, so much as in terms of difference as a new kind of presence. In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze argues that difference-in-itself is ‘the only moment of presence and precision’ (ibid., 36). In this way, although difference cannot, by definition, be ‘given to us in consciousness’ (since consciousness works with identities), it is, nevertheless, something we can encounter and ‘apprehend directly’ (ibid., 56). As Todd May insists, for Deleuze,

difference and becoming are immanent to our reality. They do not lie elsewhere, but here... The difference that produces qualitative diversity – the different stable identities of conscious experience – lies within the sensible, within appearance, not outside of it (May 2003: 147).

The rest of the concepts we will now introduce will all help us to consider what the nature of this encounter might be and tell us more about ‘difference’s mode of existing’ (ibid., 148).

Becoming

Another way of talking about Deleuze's concept of difference and its relation to presence, is through the notion of becoming, which has its philosophical basis in the writings of Heraclitus, Nietzsche and Bergson. In contrast to the unchanging or eternal nature of being, becoming can be defined as 'that which is changing, what is contingent, in constant process and flux' (Smith in Protevi 2005: 60). For Nietzsche, it is Plato who 'makes the unchanging and selfsame realm of being the object of true knowledge, and opposes it to our phenomenal world of flux, change and becoming' (Bogue 1989: 28). Plato is devoted to presence and transcendence, in a manner that Nietzsche regards 'as a veiled hatred of life, a means of finding our world guilty and deficient' (ibid.). As such, Nietzsche proposes that the fundamental task of philosophy is the reversal of Platonism – a call that Deleuze repeats – 'through an affirmation of becoming' (ibid.). Correlatively, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze argues that 'Neither multiplicity nor becoming are [mere] appearances or illusions'; that 'there is no being beyond becoming' (Deleuze 1983: 23); or, in other words, that 'becoming is the final reality' (May 2003: 143). Likewise, in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze proposes that becoming be reconceived as a zone of indistinction that precedes differentiation, not as a relation that must be preceded by the terms or presences related.

But above all perhaps, the notion of becoming binds together the concepts of difference and temporality. Time, for Deleuze, is not a discrete 'now' that beings occupy or are contained by; rather, 'we abstract the "now" as some sort of being or thing from the becoming or flow of time' (Colebrook 2002: 41). Time is immanent to what lives and as such what lives is ceaselessly becoming or self-differentiating; or, as Todd May summarises, 'Becoming is the unfolding of difference in time and as time' (May 2003: 147). And for Deleuze, there is no essential being or self-presence that grounds these processes of change – only dogmatic ways of thinking and acting that attempt to block or control becoming and which his thought encourages us to abandon.

Becomings, in the context of experience, concern the undoing of autonomous subjectivity and the immanence of an 'other' within oneself; becomings are an auto-affective experience of differential presence rather than self-presence. Phrased differently, they are processes of genuine transformation or change in which we come to

perceive things differently – whether they involve becoming-woman, becoming-animal or becoming-imperceptible. Deleuze and Guattari are clear that becoming does not involve a process of bare imitation or repetition and yet, as Leonard Lawlor points out, in becoming one ‘finds oneself before another who ends up being *in* oneself’ (Lawlor 2008: n.p. – emphasis added). But this is not a simple instance of trading places. The structure of becoming, as Lawlor insists, ‘is not reciprocal’. Rather, with ‘the other in me... I am not substituting myself for another; the structure of becoming is... a zigzag in which I become other so that the other may become something else’ (ibid.).

As Lawlor points out, a becoming is only successful for Deleuze and Guattari ‘if a work (*œuvre*) is produced’. Becoming must have creation as its result, though this is not to say that the experience of becoming is oriented towards some endpoint, goal or final form; becoming-dog does not end when we become recognizable as a dog as a ‘molar’ form. Rather, we might think in terms of writing as the creative product of a becoming, as Lawlor discusses in the context of a becoming-rat. Becoming-rat, then, does not involve starting to look like a rat, but by allowing the rat to become ‘a “feverish thought” in me, forcing me to think’, and to ‘start to write like a rat’. For Lawlor,

To write like a rat is to write in the style of the rat’s agony, to fabulate a legend of rats – so that the work produced will call forth a new people. Writing like a rat, we might be able to call forth a people who themselves have the feverish thought of the rat in them, forcing them to think differently (ibid.).

One reason for the necessity of creation is to aid future becomings; ‘by writing the becoming down one “conserves” the formulas that will allow others to become and cross thresholds’ (ibid.). However, Lawlor perhaps over-emphasises writing (although he also mentions the production of ‘a diagram, a map, a score, a concept’), as if this were the only form of creation that might be produced by becoming (ibid.). In fact, Deleuze and Guattari are also interested in both embodied and visual forms of creation, such as the performance artist, Lolito’s becoming-dog (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 247) and Van-Gogh’s becoming-sunflower (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 175).

Becomings are always political for Deleuze and Guattari, since they always involve both what they call ‘becoming-minor,’ and the calling forth of ‘a people’ or ‘minor race’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 109). We will deal more with the notion of the minor soon, when we go on to introduce Deleuze’s key essay on the theatre: ‘One Less Manifesto’, and the notion of minor theatre it develops. For now, we can say that the concept of the minor and of minority has nothing to do with quantities for Deleuze and Guattari, rather it relates to the oppression of those who differ from an imposed standard: ‘Man’, and, as such, includes women and animals. In turn, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari note that minorities experience ‘unimaginable sufferings’ at the hands of the majority, but also have in common ‘their resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present’ (ibid., 110).

Secondly, the productions of becomings – as writing or performance – are said to call forth a people or to evoke some kind of collectivity from this minority basis. Writing like a rat, for instance, ‘aims to produce a rat-people’ through a process akin to contagion; the forcing of thought that the animal provokes in me spreads to those who come into contact with the product of my becoming-animal, who, in turn, develop a new relation to animals as a result (Lawlor 2008: n.p.). Alternatively, Deleuze and Guattari claim that Artaud – who is the subject of Chapter Two – argued that the aim of art and philosophy should be ‘to write for the illiterate – to speak for the aphasic, to think for the acephalous’ or headless (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 109). But as Deleuze and Guattari make clear, the preposition “for” here does not mean “for their benefit,” or yet “in their place” (ibid). Rather, to think or write or perform for the minor ‘is a question of becoming’, which, as we’ve seen, is not representational. Becoming-animal, for instance, is ‘for’ the animal in the sense that it allows the animal to become something else. There will be further analysis of this concept of a people to come in Chapter One on the Living Theatre, so for now, let us move on from becoming to the related concept of ‘affect’.

Affect

Becomings, for Deleuze and Guattari, involve affects; indeed, they sometimes say that ‘affects are becomings’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 256). But we might also say, as Lawlor does, that affect is ‘the motive or motor of becoming’ (Lawlor 2008: n.p.). And yet, at the same time, we must also note the extent to which the capacity to be

affected is laid open by the process of undoing molar subjectivity. If we are going to be motivated to become other, Lawlor argues, we must first pass through the process of desubjectification or ‘the clean break’ that he associates with aging in order to experience the externality of affect (ibid.). The crucial distinction here, as we will discuss further in Chapter Three, is between affect and feeling or emotion, which Deleuze construes as ‘a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal’ (Massumi 2002b: 28). Through the notion of affect, we are invited to reconceive love, pity or shame, for example, beyond the concept of emotion. Whereas emotion, for Deleuze and Guattari, is related to the formation of subjects, affect throws subjectivity into disequilibrium, cracking our sense of self. In the process of feeling the subject enfolds the threatening outside into its own internal world (as ‘introjection’), whereas affect acts upon it like an arrow (or ‘projectile’), forcing the subject to relate to the otherness of the outside, rather than suppressing its heterogeneity through identification. ‘Affects are projectiles just like weapons; feelings are introceptive like tools’, they suggest (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 400).

Given this definition, the concept of affect also allows us to rehabilitate the concept of the body as differential rather than self-present. Following Spinoza, Deleuze defines a body ‘dynamically’ in terms of ‘the sum total of intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential’, as well as by its speeds or in terms of its relations of movement and rest (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 206). Although Deleuze uses the word ‘essence’, this concept of the body should not be confused with the stable, self-identical body deconstructed by Derrideans. Rather, the essence of a body is constituted by its relation to other bodies:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into compositions with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (ibid. 257).

In particular, Deleuze speaks of the affects of joy and sadness, where the former is understood as that which increases our power of acting and the latter as that which

diminishes or separates us from it. And, as the quote above suggests, he is clear that the powers of a given body, or bodily assemblage, are not unlimited; rather, it is the limit of our potential to transform and be transformed in relationality that defines our essence. However, Deleuze also argues that

The most beautiful thing is to live on the edges, at the limit of her/his own power of being affected... Everything which exceeds your power of being affected is ugly. Relatively ugly: what's good for flies is not inevitably good for you (Deleuze 1978: n.p.).

In this sense, Deleuze suggests, we can come into contact with an affect that is too much for us; this is the risk of desubjectification. While affects are always 'beyond us' in the sense that they originate outwith the subject, they can be evaluated – not once and for all – but relative to what they allow each different body to do. For example, as we will discuss further in Chapter Three, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the power of the artist's body is greater than that of others since they are able to encounter 'something in life that is too much for anyone' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 172-3).

This leads us to a third aspect of the concept of affect: Deleuze and Guattari define the work of art as the creation of affects. Whereas philosophers create concepts, and scientists create functions, artists are defined as 'presenters of affects', who extract impersonal affects from subjectified 'affections', and then render affect perceptible to the audience via the materiality of the work of art. As *What is Philosophy?* makes clear, this presentation of affect is synonymous with the productions of becoming and their contagious impact on those who come into contact with them (ibid., 175).

The 'virtual/actual' distinction and the Event

For some commentators, like John Protevi and Brian Massumi, the distinction between the virtual and the actual seems to be *the* fundamental conceptual dyad of Deleuze's philosophy. Like many of the concepts we have discussed so far, 'the virtual' has been multiply defined by Deleuze's commentators: it is 'change as such' or 'the mode of reality implicated in the emergence of new potentials' (Massumi in Genosko 2001: 1066); it is 'difference's mode of existing' (May 2003: 148); and it is 'the realm of affect' (O'Sullivan 2006: 51). And crucially, for Deleuze, the virtual is never a

synonym for the artificial or the simulated, or as that which lacks reality (as in virtual reality). Borrowed primarily from Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), Deleuze's notion of the virtual/actual distinction is used both as an alternative to the possible/real distinction and, Smith suggests, 'as a way of reformulating the relationship between the empirical and the transcendental (the latter being the 'ground' or 'condition' of the former)' (Smith in Protevi 2005: 7). The possible, Deleuze argues, prevents us from understanding life's creation of differences because it is retrospectively constructed from the real 'like a sterile double' (Deleuze 1988: 98), despite the fact that we tend to think of things being possible before they become real over time. With the concept of the possible, the real is understood to be limited to reproducing the image of the possible that it realizes, and, at the same time, the possible 'is simply traced off the empirical' in a manner that does nothing with respect to the project to think the conditions or ground of reality (ibid.).

The concept of the virtual is designed to remedy this problem. Unlike the possible and the real, the virtual and the actual do not resemble one another; the former is not a blueprint for the latter. And secondly, unlike the possible, the virtual does not lack existence prior to its passage into the actual in the temporal process Deleuze calls 'actualization' or 'differentiation': a slowing-down of the chaos of the virtual, or a deceleration which allows consistent forms to emerge. Rather, the virtual is conceived as an already existing source of pure difference that can be called upon to explain the emergence of novelty in actuality; it is a 'surface or plane [which] ...allows new forms to arise' (Welchman in Protevi 2005: 134) as it is actualized in processes of divergence and creativity. In short, Deleuze says, 'The characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated' (Deleuze 1988: 74). The virtual is dependent on the actual to exert its creative force and the actual (or empirical) on the virtual as its transcendental condition. Despite this association with the transcendental, Deleuze insists on the immanence of the virtual within the actual; the virtual is not outside or distinct from the actual, he argues, but inheres within identifiable forms as the motor of their becoming. Likewise, Smith emphasises the idea that, for Deleuze, the realm of the virtual is not fixed, but conditioned by changes in the actual (Smith in Protevi 2005: 8).

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze uses the actual/virtual distinction to differentiate two kinds of time: 'Chronos, or the actual time of the everyday, and Aion, or the time of the

virtual' (Protevi 2005: 583). And it is in this virtual realm of time in which Deleuze positions what he calls 'events' which 'lie in wait for bodies,' in and through which they can happen (ibid.). But what happens? What is an event? For Derrida, Deleuze was 'above all, the thinker of the event' (Derrida 1995: n.p.), and likewise Deleuze himself stated: 'I've tried in all my books to discover the nature of events'. In the first instance, Deleuze suggests, the event is 'a philosophical concept, the only one capable of ousting the verb "to be"', and in this sense, allied to becoming (Deleuze 1995: 141). Secondly, whereas for Badiou, events are rare, historical moments that disrupt the status quo (such as The French Revolution), 'events are numerous and natural, yet also imperceptible' for Deleuze (Mullarkey 2009: 143). But thirdly, Deleuze seems to differentiate between events and 'the Event' (as he distinguishes between becomings and becoming) when he argues against the presence of the Event in *The Logic of Sense*, claiming that it is 'something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening' (Deleuze 1990: 63). In this way, the Event is construed as a kind of atemporal realm that contains and conditions the actual time of the everyday.

But do we need this concept of virtuality? Why does actuality need to look for something outside itself to explain the production of novelty? Does the virtual/actual distinction leave Deleuze himself vulnerable to deconstruction? What reason is there to assume that the dynamics of virtual and actual that Deleuze claims condition reality operate universally rather than simply *appearing* to function as such on the human scale? Again, it is Chapters Three and Four that will address these questions directly, looking at critiques of the virtual as a moment of anthropocentric omniscience in Deleuze, which positions the virtual as the universal (or ontological), invisible background to the actual, when, in fact, it may only appear as such from the perspective of human actuality. In contrast, we will suggest that there are a range of different affects and bodies of which 'we', humans, can only say that they are beyond our powers of representation. And yet, although we cannot *know* them, our bodies can affect and be affected by these other bodies; in constructing ourselves as affective bodies we can think and experiment in contact with inhuman forces.

Duration

Finally, let us look at the key concept of duration as it appears in Deleuze's thought, and its relation to his reconsideration of presence. As Giannachi notes, the

concept of presence has an etymological connection to notions of time, since ‘the noun presence is linked to the adverb present’ meaning ‘the present time’, but equally ‘at this moment; also, in the next moment, straightway, at once’ (Giannachi 2006: n.p.). Traditionally, then, presence is associated with immediacy and the Now – both of which, as we have seen, have been targets for deconstruction. For Deleuze, likewise, there is no simple present, but nevertheless he concurs with Bergson’s argument that we *can* intuit the existence of durations other than our own, and have a direct experience of real time as difference in itself (as Chapter Four will discuss in detail).

In his early work, Bergson posits a clear distinction between duration and extensity, or memory and matter. But ultimately, it becomes clear that Bergsonian duration is a process of qualitative variation, which constitutes one way in which things differ from themselves; duration is, Deleuze suggests, ‘the variable essence of things’ (Deleuze 1988: 34). In this way, the concept of duration is closely linked to that of becoming and of the virtual. Indeed, in *Bergsonism*, Deleuze argues that becoming, as it appears in Bergson’s *Time and Free Will* and *Creative Evolution*, is ‘duration as psychological experience’ (ibid., 37); secondly, later, he argues that ‘duration, is the virtual’ (ibid., 42); and finally, thirdly, his 1978 lectures on affect imply that affect and duration are synonymous (Deleuze 1978: n.p.). However, Deleuze later insists that duration or becoming is not limited to consciousness or to human psychology; rather, duration is a process of alteration ‘belonging to things as much as to consciousness’ (ibid., 48). In its simplest form, Deleuze says, duration is ‘a lived passage or transition,’ but to say it is lived, he argues, ‘obviously doesn’t mean conscious’ (Deleuze 1978: n.p.). In turn, duration is presented as synonymous with Bergson’s particular concept of ‘memory’, which, as Deleuze explains, he defines as “the conservation *and* preservation of the past in the present” (Bergson in Deleuze 1988: 52). As Deleuze argues,

We have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe that the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused Being with being-present. Nevertheless, the present is not; rather it is pure becoming, always outside itself (Deleuze 1988: 55).

3.3 Deleuze on performance

As Jonas Barish and Martin Puchner, amongst others, have discussed, there is a long tradition of anti-theatricality within philosophy, exemplified by figures such as St Augustine and Rousseau⁹. And indeed, aspects of Deleuze's thought – such as *Anti-Oedipus* – might seem to reproduce rather than challenge that tradition in ways that would appear problematic for a thesis such as this. *Anti-Oedipus* is perhaps Deleuze's most explicitly anti-theatrical book, insofar as it is premised upon the sense that there is a 'mysterious tie between psychoanalysis and the theatre', with the former, of course, being the main target of the book's 'schizoanalytic' criticism (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 305). But what is being critiqued here is not the actual theatre, so much as the psychoanalytic use of a theatrical model or metaphor to represent the unconscious: 'The unconscious as a stage' (ibid). According to Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis reduces the productions of the unconscious to theatrical representations, which are understood as forms of absence or lack. Further, they allude to the theatrical example of the audience's identification with a character (traditionally associated with presence), as one way in which the 'mechanism of repression' that is the Oedipal myth is continually reinforced. 'We are all Archie Bunker at the theatre,' they say, 'shouting out before Oedipus: there's my kind of guy! There's my kind of guy!' (ibid., 308)¹⁰.

Yet, as Jean Khalifa notes, *Anti-Oedipus* is less an indictment against the theatre per se, and more a statement of support for those practitioners already working to challenge the notion of theatre as a representation. 'If the unconscious is not a theatre of representation, theatre (dramatic art) must not be one either' (Khalifa 2003: 79), Deleuze implies. Deleuze had already hinted at his interest in non-representational theatre in *Difference and Repetition*, but it would not be until 1978 that this interest would find its fullest expression as the essay 'One Less Manifesto' or 'One Manifesto Less' (depending on whose translation of the title you prefer), which was published as

⁹ The more obvious target for the accusation of anti-theatricality, of course, is Plato. However, Martin Puchner has convincingly argued that Plato's relation to the theatre and theatricality is much more complex than this insofar as his philosophy is bound to the theatre as much as it struggles to resist its values. As Puchner suggests, 'A more differentiated picture of Plato's relation to the theatre emerges when one considers his relation to the two dominant dramatic genres: tragedy and comedy. Plato is said to have written tragedies at an early age, and so we can presume that his rejection of the theatre was based on a fundamental engagement with it. Indeed, rather than simply attacking tragedy and comedy, Plato revises them constructively, offering his own version of tragedy in the *Apology* and a new comedy in the *Symposium*' (Puchner 2002: 522).

¹⁰ 'Archie Bunker' is a reactionary, white working-class character from the 1970s sit-com *All in the Family*.

Deleuze's contribution to *Superpositions* (1978), the collaborative text he produced with the Italian actor, director, playwright and filmmaker, Carmelo Bene (who contributed his script for a production entitled, *Richard III: or, The Horrible Night of a Man of War*). Bar his all too brief discussions of Artaud and Beckett in *Essays Critical and Clinical* and in the volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, this is Deleuze's 'only sustained discourse on theatre' (Kowsar 2001: 30) and, as such, it is a vital text for anyone concerned with the relation between Deleuze and performance. In this essay, Deleuze argues that theatre is not representational, but presents opportunities for encounters with the nonrepresentative force of 'perpetual variation' or difference in itself. Here, already, is an initial definition of differential presence in performance: a moment of contact with the real understood as becoming rather than being, which Deleuze associates with what he calls 'minor', as opposed to 'major' theatre. Whereas the latter is complicit with authority and State power for Deleuze, the former is a kind of political theatre that 'surge[s] forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming' (Deleuze 1997: 256). In this regard, 'One Less Manifesto' is also of central importance for introducing the politics of differential presence, insofar as it provides an elaboration of the conceptual dyad of 'major' and 'minor' that Deleuze and Guattari had already introduced in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975)¹¹.

Deleuze defines a minor theatre as one that places all the different elements of theatre – its language, gestures, costumes and props – in perpetual variation, through a process of 'subtraction' or 'amputation' (Deleuze 1997). Whereas in much conventional theatre, the tendency is to submit the speeds and slownesses of performance to the organizational forms of plot and dialogue and to emphasise characters over transformative becomings that sweep them away, a minor theatre seeks to affirm the

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari took the term 'minor literature' from a 1911 diary entry by Franz Kafka, in which he discusses the directly political role of Yiddish literature in Warsaw, as the site in which the collective concerns of an ethnic minority might be articulated (Bogue 1989: 116). Ronald Bogue has argued that Deleuze and Guattari's book on Kafka fails to provide a clear delineation of 'exactly how this revolutionary practice [of minor literature] works... for Deleuze and Guattari offer no satisfactory examples of the process of transformation which leads from deterritorialized sound to a dissolution and restructuring of content' (Bogue 1989: 120). As such, Bogue contends that 'One Less Manifesto' might be seen as providing the specific, practical program that the collaborative work fails to offer. Further, Bogue goes as far as to suggest that, for Deleuze, the performance of a minor usage of language is the *culmination* of the project of minor literature; or in other words, 'One Less Manifesto' completes what *Kafka* begun. Performance as much as literature has an important role to play in the bid to make language stutter, or the endeavour to become a foreigner in one's own tongue and the performance of language in Bene's theatre provides Deleuze with the 'fullest instance of a minor style' (Bogue 2003: 141).

primacy of perpetual variation over the fixed representation of subjects, objects and a coherent fictional world.

For Deleuze, there is no fundamental separation between art and life, or aesthetics and ontology. Lived experience is not more real than aesthetic experience, nor is theatre a mere illustration of the force of difference to which Deleuze accords ontological priority; rather, it *is* that differential force that presents itself to affect alone (Zepke 2005: 3-4). Indeed, we might even suggest that for Deleuze art can be *more* real than life, or at least bring us closer to the reality of difference. Whereas in everyday, conscious life we tend to experience affect as mediated through the subject/object relation, art can provide transformative, material encounters in which the viewer is carried away from herself as a fixed subject in order to enter into composition with the pure affects of a painterly, musical, literary or theatrical ‘body’. The work of art makes perceptible ‘the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 182).

In this respect, ‘One Less Manifesto’ must be read in the light of Deleuze’s wider philosophical project, and the notion of the perpetual variations of minor theatre alongside the idea of life as constituted by becomings rather than beings, process rather than substance. However, given his onto-aesthetic position, it is also important to note that there are no *essentially* major or minor theatres for Deleuze, but rather different *usages* of theatre and its elements that we can call major and minor. In the first instance, Deleuze argues that Carmelo Bene’s practice constitutes a minor usage of theatre because he employs a tripartite, subtractive method that removes the ‘elements of Power’ from theatre – eliminating both representations *of* power and representation *as* power in order to set free the movement of difference. This process involves: ‘(1) deducting the stable elements, (2) placing everything in continuous variation, (3) then transposing everything in minor (this is the role of the company in responding to the notion of the “smallest” interval)’ (Deleuze 1997: 246). This subtraction (or amputation) constitutes what Deleuze also calls a process of ‘minorization’ – the undoing of the major in order to release the minor, which he defines as a revolutionary practice.

‘One Less Manifesto’ particularly concentrates on the minorization of language in Bene’s creative appropriations of Shakespeare. Again, Deleuze emphasises that there

are not major or minor languages per se but major or minor usages of language, and hence what matters in Bene is not the fact that it is Shakespeare being spoken, but *how* Shakespeare's words are being performed. The major Shakespeare, Deleuze claims, speaks "the king's English": homogenised and invariant' (Deleuze in Fortier 1996: 5) whereas a minor theatre-maker must 'amputate the text because the text is like the domination of language over speech and still attests to invariance or homogeneity' (Deleuze 1997: 245). In contrast, Deleuze argues that minor usages of language allow us to apprehend 'language's most inherent, creative property': a fundamental variability (Deleuze 1997: 245). Whereas the structuralist distinction between *langue* and *parole* suggests that there is an underlying set of rules or constants, in relation to which specific enunciations are understood to be deviations from a norm, Deleuze's position implies that any given language ought to be understood as 'a multiplicity of semantic worlds' in which all possible differences of meaning are virtually present (Bogue 1989: 147). Deleuze suggests that there are minor usages, which perform this difference within language in Bene's *Richard*, such as Lady Anne's differential repetition of the phrase "You disgust me!". There is no fixed meaning to this enunciation, Deleuze argues;

It is hardly the same...[enunciation] when uttered by a woman at war, a child facing a toad, or a young girl feeling a pity that is already consenting and loving... Lady Anne will have to move through all these variables. She will have to stand erect like a woman warrior, regress to a childlike state, and return as a young girl – as quickly as possible on a line of ...[perpetual] variation (Deleuze 1997: 246).

In this way, the actress playing Lady Anne transmits an enunciation through 'all the variables that could affect it in the shortest amount of time' (ibid., 245), allowing the phrase to actualize its immanent difference.

Deleuze goes on to argue that Bene's minor theatre deviates from what he calls *majority rule*. Under this state of rule, groups such as 'women, children, the South, the third world, etc.' (ibid., 255) are, despite their numbers, constituted as subordinate minorities in relation to a standard measure: the supposedly universal model of Man, who in fact represents the specifically 'white, Christian, average-male-adult-inhabitant of contemporary American or European cities' (ibid., 253). A political theatre, for

Deleuze, would not be one that aims to *represent* these minorities, or to represent *conflicts* between men and women, or the first and third worlds. Rather, a revolutionary theatre reveals the perpetual variation underlying these representational oppositions. Conflicts, Deleuze states, ‘are already normalized, codified, institutionalized. They are “products”. They are already a representation that can be represented so much better on the stage’ (ibid., 252). ‘As a substitute for the *representation* of conflicts,’ Deleuze argues, ‘Bene proposes the *presence* of variation’ (ibid. – emphasis added): an example of how theatre can help us to enlist in the revolutionary process Deleuze calls becoming-minor. With his minor usage of language – as well as his minorization of character, props and costume – Deleuze finds in Bene a literary and performative methodology that allows theatre to ‘surge forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming’ (ibid., 256). Bene’s theatre of non-representation, he claims, has the capacity ‘...to construct in some way, a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential. To render a potentiality present and actual...’ (ibid., 254). And for Deleuze, the suppression of difference, or the failure to affirm presence as *perpetual variation*, is an ethical as well as an aesthetic problem. The affirmation of difference is Deleuze’s overarching value – be it in philosophy, literature, theatre, science or politics.

However, Deleuze’s enthusiasm for Bene, along with a select group of other theatre practitioners such as Grotowski and the Living Theatre, must be put in the context of some less flattering remarks he makes about theatre as an art form. In *L’Abécédaire* for instance, as Charles Stivale has reported, Deleuze remarks that theatre tends not to provide opportunities for ‘encounters... with certain exceptions (like Bob Wilson, Carmelo Bene)’ (Stivale 2000: n.p.)¹². Likewise, we might note that Deleuze himself uses the actual term ‘presence’ relatively infrequently. He does make passing reference to presence, not only in ‘One Less Manifesto’ as we have already seen, but also in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981) when he speaks of the ‘hysterical presence’ of Bacon’s painting, as that which ‘directly attempts to release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation’ (Deleuze 2004c: 52); and in *Cinema 2* (1985), when he suggests that cinema does not lack presence, but has its own ‘different mode of presence... which rivals that of theatre and may even outdo it with different

¹² Deleuze justifies this remark, on the basis that ‘he has trouble remaining seated so long’. We might do well to take such comments with a pinch of salt, however, given that Deleuze seems to have had no problem sitting through such epics as Syberberg’s *Hitler: A film from Germany*. See ‘C for Culture’ (Stivale 2000: n.p.).

methods' (Deleuze 2005: 194). However, these allusions to concepts of presence tend to be brief, and therefore ultimately of less importance for us than the key terms of Deleuze's ontology, which we have already outlined and that allow the project to create its own concept of differential presence.

3.4 Why Deleuze? The value of Deleuze for theorising presence in performance

Rethinking reception

We have already noted that Deleuze offers us a theoretical means to rehabilitate the category of 'the body' from its perpetual deconstruction without appealing to self-presence. Now, though, we can expand on the point that the same must be said of the notion of affect, as well as emphasising the potential importance of this rehabilitation for Performance Studies. For instance, the Deleuzian concept of affect or becoming holds great promise for the analysis of how performance impacts on audience, offering an alternative to the over-emphasis on interpretation and the construction of meaning that derives from Performance Studies' embrace of semiotics, critical theory and psychoanalysis. As Barbara Kennedy suggests, each of these discourses prioritised 'ideological and political foci to the detriment of affectivity and art' (Kennedy in Cull 2009: 183). 'Where was the body and feeling in such debates?' she asks. 'Why did none of this theory explain the vital, visceral and electric pulsations of my 'autonomic' response to the arts?' (ibid.).

To affirm affect is not to reinstate some kind of dichotomy between feeling and thinking, or body and mind, but to suggest a different conception of the impact of performance beyond the notion of meaning received by the representational consciousness of a subject. For example, when Deleuze argues that the 'essential aims of the arts should be the subordination of form to speed, to the variation of speed, and the subordination of the subject to intensity or to affect, to the intense variation of affects' (Deleuze 1997: 249), this is by no means a call to embrace a theatre of emotion over a theatre of the mind, or to give ourselves over to the pleasures of the 'merely' formal properties of a work of art instead of wrestling with its conceptual dimensions. Rather, Deleuze's 'onto-aesthetics' (Zepke 2005: 4) posits the corporeal transformations of (human and inhuman) bodies in connection with one another *as* a kind of thinking –

specifically a kind of asubjective thinking conceived as affect or sensation. Conceived in terms of their power to be affected, Deleuze suggests that bodies can think in ways from which consciousness would do well to learn; he argues that difference in itself is that which ‘can only be sensed’, since consciousness works with identities (Deleuze 1994: 139). For Deleuze, incomprehensibility is precisely where genuine thought begins; not being able ‘to make any sense’ of an event is what makes us *really* think as audience members, rather than getting locked into thinking with a fixed set of ideas. As encounter, thought is involved in bringing something new into being, rather than simply reaffirming what has already been thought; thought is creation rather than representation.

The concepts of affect and becoming are also important in order to challenge the dominant status that the discourse of representation has come to hold in the theorization of acting. In particular, perhaps, they offer us a new way to think about character and the actor’s relationship to the ‘other’ he performs, as Chapter Four, on Goat Island, will discuss. Becoming has nothing to do with representing the other, in the sense of acting as the representative for the other’s absent presence. As Lawlor argues, ‘In becoming I do not become the representative of what I am becoming; it is not a relation of one thing (me) standing in *for* another (the animal, for example)’ (Lawlor 2008: n.p.). Rather, as Chapter Three on Kaprow will also emphasise, Deleuze and Guattari allow us to mobilize our thinking beyond the rigid separation of subject and object, and towards the idea of the participation of perception in and among the processes of the world.

Rethinking the politics of presence

Deleuze’s thought is also important in terms of thinking the politics of presence. There has always been a political dimension to the deconstruction of presence in performance; undoing the concept of self-presence can be seen as a political act. For instance, Lawlor has shown how the Derridean deconstruction of the supposed self-presence of auto-affectation, might be employed as part of a critique of species-ism and the consequent domination of the inhuman by the human. As Lawlor argues, ‘humans believe they have the right to dominate the animals because humans believe that they possess a special kind of subjectivity’ – a belief that has its ‘conceptual origins’ in both the Cartesian cogito and the Kantian notion of autonomy. For Lawlor,

The Kantian idea of autonomy means of course that I am self-ruling; I give the moral law to myself (unlike the animals upon whom nature imposes its laws). But in order to give the law to myself, I must tell it to myself. Kantian autonomy therefore is based on auto-affection. What makes me, as a human, autonomous is my supposed ability to hear myself speak at the very moment I speak. Because the voice seems to be purely immediate and mine, I hear myself speak in pure presence. This pure self-presence gives humans a dignity that far surpasses that of animals. It justifies the human right to domination (ibid.).

In contrast, both Derrida and Deleuze show how the idea of auto-affection is not about the self feeling itself as itself (self-presence), but about ‘a thing’s immediacy to its own variation’ (Massumi 2002b: 8). In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Lawlor argues, Deleuze points out that ‘when Kant introduces receptivity into the self, this puts a crack in the self’ and, as such, that

human auto-affection is really and always hetero-affection... In thought, in my interior monologue, when I hear myself speak, I also inseparably do *not* hear myself. What do I hear if not my “self”? I hear the other voices of the animals (Lawlor 2008: n.p.).

In this sense, the politics of differential presence manifests itself as a politics of the animal and the inhuman. As Protevi argues, ‘Deleuze’s most basic philosophical instinct is against anthropomorphism’ (Protevi 2005: 132), and against the subordination of the world to consciousness and common sense, in a manner that suggests that Deleuze’s thought might be well suited to offer theoretical support to the recent turn towards the animal and ecology in Performance Studies¹³. Differential presence, as we will emphasise particularly in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis, is

13 To some extent this work has already been done by scholars such as Alan Read in *Theatre, Intimacy and Engagement* (2008), particularly pp. 149-150 and 256; by Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow in ‘Animalizing Performance, Becoming-Theatre: Inside Zooesis with The Animal Project at NYU’ (2006), *Theatre Topics*, Volume 16, Number 1, March 2006, pp. 1-17; and Jennifer Parker-Starbuck in ‘Becoming-Animate: On the Performed Limits of “Human”’, *Theatre Journal*, Volume 58, Number 4, December 2006, pp. 649-668. Baz Kershaw also touches on Deleuze’s, but also particularly Guattari’s thought, in *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (2007).

not just a category of human experience, but a way of conceiving the relation between human and inhuman bodies and their respective durations.

The political side of Derridean deconstruction has also been addressed in its theatrical context. Philip Auslander, for instance, draws from the example of the Wooster Group's production of *LSD (... Just the High Points...)* to argue that the company's deconstruction of presence allows them to investigate the ways in which both racial and sexual difference is suppressed in theatrical representations, and specifically in their appropriated source, *The Crucible* (Auslander 1997: 64). The authority of Miller's text as a representation founded by an originary presence is destabilised when the character of Tituba is not portrayed by an African American, but by a white actress in the grotesque, caricaturing mask that is 'blackface' – one of the most extreme examples of the way in which difference is judged from the perspective of a standard that takes itself for a universal norm. To make such a character come to life, to give it presence rather than block presence with visible artifice, is equated with authorising a racist fiction. But equally, for the performer to claim that she is being herself (not the character) onstage, implies that she occupies some kind of transcendent ground out-with the circulation of, and constitution of identity by, representational categories. If nineteenth century American blackface performance contributed to the justification of slavery, then Auslander suggests that the politics of the Wooster Group's practice lies in their performance of 'a critique of presence in which... charismatic performance is accompanied by its own deconstruction' (ibid., 67) – for instance, in Ron Vawter's presencing of the impassioned ideologue, whilst substituting 'gibberish' for a comprehensible speech.

Deleuze's 'One Less Manifesto', however, offers a different account of the politics of presence – where it is presence, as difference or variation, which is invested with the power to expose the oppressive nature of representation. In his deconstructive readings of 'the experimental theatre and performance of the 1960s', Auslander assumes that the political aspirations of groups like the Living Theatre were based on the liberatory power they attached to the idea of self-presence. The assumption, he says,

was that because the presence of the actor as one living human being before others is psychologically liberating, pure presentation of

performer to audience is the best means available to the theatre to make a radical spiritual/political statement (Auslander 1997: 62).

In turn, Auslander's deconstructions of the immediate actor reconceive such groups as politically dubious, and correlatively situate his own scholarly practice as the politically valuable act. Drawing from Deleuze here allows us to reconceive the 'pure presentation' of the performer as the presentation of difference, in a manner that also permits us to rehabilitate a valid micropolitics in the Living Theatre's work – as Chapter One will discuss in depth.

3.5 The thesis in the context of existing literature on Deleuze, presence and performance

Although there are a good deal of recent studies of art and performance that make use of Deleuzian concepts, and studies of Deleuze that refer to examples of performance, there are few precedents for the Deleuzian analysis of presence. Such precedents as there are tend to make reference to Deleuze, or to discuss him somewhat briefly, whereas this study aims to generate a detailed and in-depth account of the Deleuzian concept of differential presence. For instance, Martin Puchner cites Deleuze as part of his broader discussion of the relation between presence and representation in performance, in the essay 'The Theatre in Modernist Thought' (2002). For Puchner, Deleuze is part of 'the theatrical turn in philosophy' (along with Nietzsche, Benjamin and Butler), but nonetheless Puchner remains cynical about the value or relevance of Deleuze's 'protheatrical theory' for actual theatrical practice (Puchner 2002: 524). To Puchner's mind, Deleuze's concept of the genetic role of difference-in-itself and of repetition as the return of difference (rather than the same) 'all sounds rather speculative', and he complains that 'it is difficult to picture what these two forces of difference and repetition really are' (ibid.). In turn, while he notes that the theatre that Deleuze wants is one in which difference presents itself, he suggests that theatre itself remains more concerned with the attempt to 'try to somehow represent a world'. In addition, Puchner argues that the 'different performances of a single play imply precisely a model of difference that is anchored by an identity, namely, the identity of the play that is being rehearsed over and over again' (ibid.). And finally, he concludes that Deleuze's commitment to differential presence means that he 'must insist on the

theater as a performing art and repress the function of the theater as a (representational) medium'; he is anti-literary and anti-textual.

With such a reading of Deleuze in place, Puchner posits a sharp contrast between Derrida and Deleuze, which he claims is 'the consequence of their respective reliance on the model of the text and of the theater,' (specifically 'the anti-textual theater of the avant-garde'). He argues that

While Derrida's insistence that any form of presence is forever interrupted and displaced in a chain of signifiers is derived from the fact that text displaces presence, Deleuze's understanding of singular events is based on the precarious form of presence that characterizes live human bodies on a stage (ibid., 526).

At first, this might sound compatible with our own argument that Derrida and Deleuze explore difference in different realms. However, Puchner later equates this unstable presence of bodies, upon which he claims that Deleuze's interest in theatre is based, with the stability of 'unmediated presence' (ibid., 527). As such, he implies, the theatre Deleuze wants is 'an imaginary theatre' as open to deconstruction as Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Deleuze's call for a theatre without representation is misunderstood as a call for a theatre without difference.

Another engagement with Deleuze's relation to presence in performance is provided by Maaïke Bleeker's essay, 'The A,B,C's of Différance: Jan Ritsema and the Relationality of Theatrical Presence' (2004). Though thoroughly poststructuralist, Bleeker's analysis does not 'set out to deny the longing for some kind of intense experience of 'being there' as an important drive behind the making of performances and the watching of them' (Bleeker 2006: 139). Rather, Bleeker makes use of both Derrida and Deleuze to attempt to account for such experiences of 'presence', without needing 'to ground these experiences in some kind of independently existing materiality or given' awaiting discovery (ibid.). Bleeker's essay introduces several valuable insights for how Deleuze's philosophy, and particularly his 'account of thinking in terms of movement', might allow us to reconsider the experience of presence as 'a thinking process, an ongoing flow of thought, that develops in and through interaction with what is seen on stage' (ibid., 147). In turn, she identifies Deleuze's book on Francis Bacon as

‘a useful starting point for a reconsideration of “presence” in the theatre’ as a presentation of affects that makes the audience think (ibid., 148). However, the vast majority of the essay takes the form of a deconstruction of an interview with contemporary dancer, Jan Ritsema, in a manner that could be seen to underestimate the already differential nature of the notion of presence at work in Ritsema’s theory and practice. Though an important precedent, the brevity of Bleeker’s treatment of Deleuze means that the essay does not reduce the necessity of this extended and in-depth study of Deleuze and presence.

4. Deleuze and the notion of methodology

The next section of this introduction will address the question of methodology: elaborating the nature of the thesis’ own methodology and justifying its usage for the study of presence. As has already been indicated, this methodology is primarily influenced by Deleuze, and hence the first subsection of this discussion will provide an account of what has become known as ‘Deleuzianism’, though not before having recognised Deleuze’s problematic relation to the very notion of ‘methodology’. Having addressed its Deleuzian influences, the second subsection will then attempt to outline the other characteristics of this thesis’ method, particularly touching on its contentions regarding the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, or philosophy and performance.

Deleuze himself has a complex relationship with the notion of ‘methodology’. Indeed Claire Colebrook suggests that

There is a problem with talking about “method” in Deleuze, simply because his whole approach to life and thinking set itself against any idea that we should approach problems with ready-made schemas, questions or systems... Philosophy, especially, ought to be creative and responsive, forming its questions through what it encounters... If Deleuze has a method it is that we should never have *a* method, but should allow ourselves to become in relation to what we are seeking to understand (Colebrook 2002: 46).

Likewise, O'Sullivan expresses the opinion that 'The desire to outline a Deleuzian methodology is... somewhat wrong-headed', insofar as Deleuze's own thought and the approach to thought he encourages is one that breaks with pre-existent methods. 'One might be able to extract such a method or system,' O'Sullivan concedes, 'but this would be to render Deleuze's thought inoperative, to freeze it in, and as a particular image of thought, to capture its movement, precisely to *represent* it' (O'Sullivan 2006: 3).

Nevertheless, Deleuze does address methodological questions and discuss existing methods, such as Bergson's notion of 'intuition'. Alone and with Guattari, he also introduces a series of synonyms for his approach, including 'schizoanalysis', 'rhizomatics', 'nomadology' and 'micropolitics'. Finally, Deleuze frequently addresses the question of how philosophy ought to be done, what it might involve and how it might relate to art in ways that offer valuable insights into methodological debates, even if they do not amount to a single, coherent method. In the first chapter, on the Living Theatre, for instance, we will address Deleuze's argument that philosophy must become more 'abstract' – an argument that, as we shall see, is not in favour of philosophy becoming divorced from the world, but of thinking on the level of process and difference. In the case of each of these contributions, we can frame Deleuze's comments on methodology as responses to the dominant methodologies of the philosophical context from which his work emerged; namely, structuralism (particularly in its psychoanalytic manifestation) and phenomenology.

Of all these responses to the problem of methodology, the most important is arguably Deleuze's idea of 'transcendental empiricism' and his definition of philosophy as concept creation. 'Transcendental empiricism' can be understood as a response to Kant's theory of 'transcendental idealism,' which, in turn, might be construed to conceptualise the event of presence insofar as transcendental idealism concerns the recognition of an object by a subject. As Ronald Bogue explains, this event of recognition or presence is made possible by the harmonious functioning of the faculties (of sensibility, understanding, memory, imagination and so on); when they all perceive the same object as the same, in an agreement that 'establishes the identity of the subject (as union of the faculties)' (Bogue 1989: 57). In contrast, Deleuze is more interested in the differential powers of the faculties, for instance, in the idea that there are things that can only be sensed rather than understood. According to this account, as he describes it in *Difference and Repetition*:

Rather than all the faculties converging and contributing to a common project of recognising an object, we see divergent projects in which, with regard to what concerns it essentially, each faculty is in the presence of that which is its 'own' (Deleuze 1994: 141).

Deleuze contends that 'For each faculty there exists something that it alone can experience... and this something is revealed only in moments of disequilibrium, through contradictions and enigmas' (Bogue 1989: 58). Or as Deleuze himself puts it

Empiricism truly becomes transcendental ... only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being *of* the sensible: difference, potential difference, and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity (Deleuze 1994: 56–57).

In this way, Deleuze also rejects Kant's reduction of experience to that which we can represent to ourselves and thus, the exclusion of difference as nonrepresentative force. Kant's project in *The Critique of Pure Reason* was to locate a universal set of conditions for the possibility of knowledge, whereas what transcendental empiricism seeks is an experimental method that aims to have real experience as its object and to go beyond the understanding of experience as grounded by any specifically human phenomenon such as subjectivity or language. It is not a question of developing a methodology that allows thought to access a transcendent realm, since 'for Deleuze both difference and becoming are immanent to our reality' (May 2002: 147). Nor is it a methodology for achieving self-same presence as the coincidence of subject and object. Rather, transcendental empiricism conceives thought and experience as differential presence – in which difference is never captured and understood once and for all, but continues to present us with encounters that challenge the supposed unity or identity of the subject.

With regards to the nature of concepts, perhaps some of Deleuze's clearest remarks on this theme are to be found in *Negotiations* in which he reiterates an argument that we will find throughout his work: 'Philosophy is always a matter of creating concepts' (Deleuze 1995: 136). It is this that makes philosophy 'creative or

even revolutionary’, for Deleuze, rather than ‘communicative ... contemplative or reflective’ (ibid.). However, he stipulates that philosophy is not a matter of creating any kind of concept whatever. Instead, genuinely creative philosophers are subject to the constraint that their concepts must ‘have a necessity, as well as an unfamiliarity, and they have both to the extent that they’re a response to real problems. Concepts are what stops thought being a mere opinion’ (ibid.). In this way, one concept is not as good as another, for Deleuze; they are not arbitrary, subjective or detached from reality. Or as Khalifa puts it ‘philosophy for Deleuze only has meaning when provoked by life or by the world’ (Khalifa 2003: 24).

But nor are concepts representations of the truth of the world. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues for ‘a thought which moves’ over a static image of thought based on determinate concepts by which any given thing can, or cannot, be identified. Deleuze’s concepts do not stay the same as themselves from one text to another, but are transformed by coming into contact with ‘the outside’, with the excess of experience. ‘You have to construct intellectually mobile concepts’, Deleuze argues (Deleuze 1995: 122); and it is the actualisation of this imperative that makes *A Thousand Plateaus*, in particular, so productive for an interdisciplinary study such as this. Indeed, the thesis follows this Deleuzian method insofar as it creates its own concept of differential presence, and synonyms such as the ‘theatre without organs’ (introduced in Chapter Two).

5. The thesis: questions, parameters, examples and structure

5.1 The research questions

At the start of this introduction, we noted that one of the central questions motivating this thesis was, simply: what is differential presence, and how does it work in performance? However, we are now in a position to move from these very general questions towards an introduction to the more precise questions that the thesis asks regarding the relationship between key Deleuzian concepts and differential presence, and between differential presence and key concepts from performance theory. In Chapter One, for instance, we ask after the relationship between differential presence and Deleuze’s own concepts of ‘immanence’ and ‘production’, as well as the relation

between differential presence and the *theatrical* concepts of audience participation, improvisation and collective creation. Likewise, in Chapter Two, we consider the relevance of Deleuze's concept of 'the body without organs' for the theorisation of differential presence, but we also address the connection between this presence and Artaud's concepts of the 'Theatre of Cruelty', 'Flesh', 'incantation' and 'vibration'.

In this way, each chapter of the thesis questions what particular strategies or techniques their respective practitioners theorise and use – in rehearsal and in performance – to create a minor theatre of differential rather than self-presence, a 'theatre-without-organs', or performance as an experience of becoming. How do they (re)approach the traditional theatrical elements of text, body, space and time? How do they (re)conceive of the role of the director or the artist and their relationship to the audience? In turn, these practical questions prompt us to address the multiple facets of differential presence and its relation to the key philosophical categories of language and meaning, self and 'other', time and matter. In Chapter Three, we examine how both Deleuze's notions of 'affect' and 'becoming-imperceptible,' and Kaprow's concepts of 'experienced insight', 'lived change' and 'becoming "the whole"', contribute to our understanding of differential presence. And finally in Chapter Four, we conclude our theorisation of differential presence by placing the Deleuzo-Bergsonian notions of virtuality, duration and multiplicity, alongside a series of concepts created by Goat Island, including 'slowness', 'waiting' and 'hybridity'.

That said, if the thesis is concerned to generate responses to certain key questions, it also derives from the core proposition that one *can* be 'present to' (or 'with' or 'in' or 'among') difference as becoming rather than being; one *can* encounter difference as affect and duration. In this sense, the thesis proposes that one of the implications of Deleuze's thought is that performance theory and practice must affirm the presence of difference for not only aesthetic and philosophical, but ethico-political reasons. Such an affirmation is by no means easy or without risk. However, this proposition will gather its strength from the analysis of exemplary practices that aim to show this affirmation at work and convince the reader of the reality of differential presence as a mode of relation.

5.2 The parameters of the project

How do you define the parameters of a project to articulate a Deleuzian concept of differential presence in performance? Where does the territory of such a project begin and end? How do you choose which practical examples of performance to discuss? Perhaps, firstly, it is worth noting that, while the Derridean deconstruction of presence forms a highly significant aspect of the context for this project, neither it, nor Deleuze's relationship to Derrida, is the specific subject of this thesis. We will return to the difference between their perspectives, particularly in Chapter Two on Artaud, but there is still considerable work that might be done in another context to address this relationship with regards to presence.

Secondly, since this is an interdisciplinary project concerned with the intersection of Deleuze, performance and presence, rather than a solely philosophical or solely theatrical project, we can neither be concerned with Deleuze's entire oeuvre in all its extensive, technical, and complex manifestations, nor with the entire oeuvres of the prolific practitioners addressed in each chapter. Rather, the project focusses on those aspects of Deleuze's philosophy of difference that are of the greatest relevance to performance and to the theme of presence, though even these aspects must be treated selectively and as determined by the particular practice being discussed. With this in mind, while the thesis will draw from a wide variety of different texts by Deleuze (with and without Guattari), including a number of lesser known texts such as 'One Less Manifesto' and transcripts of Deleuze's lectures on affect, we will not attempt to extract concepts from each one of his twenty-five key works. In particular, the project excludes many of those texts from the first period of Deleuze's career (as outlined by Protevi) which provide highly technical and specific analyses of individual philosophers such as Kant and Hume, and, as such, are less immediately relevant to discussions of performance. Likewise, the project will focus on those aspects of the artists' practice that we judge to be of the greatest relevance to Deleuze and to the concept of differential presence this project aims to develop.

5.3 Why *these* practices?

The thesis will focus on the work of four practitioners who are all broadly sympathetic to Deleuze and, as such, all four practices both lend themselves to, and benefit from, a Deleuzian reading. This Deleuzian sympathy is particularly pronounced in the cases of Artaud and Goat Island, since the former has already been written about by Deleuze himself, whilst the latter are familiar with Deleuze's work and explicitly theorise their own processes in Deleuzian terms. In the case of the Living Theatre, we have made it our explicit aim to seek out and foreground the Deleuzian aspects of the company's working practices and the theorisations of that practice by Julian Beck and Judith Malina, emphasising – for instance – their commitment to an ontology of movement and change, to relations of immanence and creative connection, to 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' processes of producing performance and so forth. Likewise, with Allan Kaprow, the chapter extracts the aspects of the artist's thinking that resonate most strongly with Deleuze's philosophy. For example, we will focus on Kaprow's interest in the affective, rather than signifying, properties of works of art; on his conception of reality as 'constant metamorphosis' (Kaprow 1966: 169); and particularly, on his exploration of the artist's capacity to undo both the bounds of his own distinct identity and that of the art work, which we suggest connects strongly with Deleuze's concept of becoming-imperceptible.

In each case, the conjunction with Deleuze allows us to frame these practices in ways that respond to existing affinities with Deleuze's philosophy of difference, but also, oftentimes, re-reading the practitioners' work against the grain of dominant interpretations in the secondary literature. This is particularly critical with respect to Chapters One, Two and Three, each of which will work to reposition their exemplary practice as affiliated with the values of immanence rather than transcendence, with multiplicity rather than 'The One', and, above all, with differential rather than self-presence. In other words, it should become clear that the choice of examples for the thesis is not just based on the concern to connect Deleuze and performance, but also to introduce (or create) a new concept of presence. And in this regard, some of the choices of examples are somewhat strategic in relation to existing literature: Chapter Two addresses Artaud, for instance, as much because we want to rehabilitate his concept of presence, as because of the amount of attention given to him by Deleuze. A similar sense of the need for recuperation motivated the decision to address the Living Theatre

in Chapter One. Much derided in critiques by Christopher Innes (1981/1993) and Gerald Rabkin (1984), and often reductively represented in presence theory, this chapter asks if their work really is just an ‘affirmation of live, unmediated *presence*’ (Copeland 1990: 28) or if there are more complex understandings of this concept at work in their creative processes and productions.

That said, there are, of course, an unlimited number of examples of theatre and performance that we might have discussed here, for a range of reasons. In the first instance, the thesis might have chosen to adopt the logic that all the practices under discussion must figure in Deleuze’s own writing, however briefly. If this were the case, the current Chapter Two on Artaud would then, perhaps, have been accompanied by chapters on Carmelo Bene, Samuel Beckett, Robert Wilson and John Cage, each of whom Deleuze makes reference to in a number of works. However, a proven connection to Deleuze has not been the only principle underlying the choice of examples, partly because an objective of the thesis is to demonstrate the extent to which Deleuzian concepts are designed to function in new contexts, to be transplanted from philosophy and put to work in interdisciplinary studies. Secondly, the risk of this model is that the thesis would remain on the level of exposition, articulating Deleuze’s position rather than introducing new arguments, perspectives, and concepts on the practices in question.

Nevertheless, these are not the only four exemplary practices that might have been discussed. Indeed, given the ontological claims that Deleuze makes for his philosophy, it must be the case that differential presence subsists in every example of performance – however representational or non-experimental it appears to be. In theory, I could have used the Naturalist theatre of Stanislavski as an example of differential presence. But again, the reason for choosing these four practices is the theme of presence with which all of them have previously been associated, albeit – I argue – in a limited fashion.

One might also observe both the masculinism and the predominantly Western nature of Deleuze’s theatrical canon. To follow his choice of examples is to end up focussing on the contributions of white Western men. No doubt, to some, this thesis will not present an adequately different picture. There are still chapters devoted to Artaud and Kaprow, rather than to Tatsumi Hijikata and Lygia Clark. In response, we might

first note the central roles played by Judith Malina in *The Living Theatre*, and by Lin Hixson and Karen Christopher in *Goat Island*. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the definition of a political practice in this thesis is not so much based on *who* makes it, but *how* the work is made: does the practitioner seek to enter into a becoming-minor? For Deleuze, however controversially, the micropolitics of liberating difference-in-itself is ultimately more important than pursuing the macropolitical goals of feminism or Marxism or postcolonialism, which tend to pursue wholesale social change on behalf of an identity.

Finally, the thesis is not only concerned with what Deleuze has to say about performance and the arts in general, but also with what performance might have to say back to Deleuze. As a result, it tends towards practitioners who not only make work which seems able to enter into a dialogue with Deleuze, but who also write about that work. Despite the controversial claim of *What is Philosophy?*: that philosophers are unique in their capacity to create concepts, Daniel W. Smith argues that Deleuze was actually interested in what artists had to say, conceptually, about their own work, at least in Bacon's case.

Deleuze himself insists that we do not listen closely enough to what painters have to say. "The texts of a painter act in a completely different manner than the paintings," he notes. "In general, when artists speak of what they are doing, they have an extraordinary modesty, a severity toward themselves, and a great force. They are the first to suggest the nature of the concepts and affects that are disengaged in their work." Deleuze thus uses the interviews not as definitive statements on Bacon's part but rather as the starting point for his own conceptual inventions (Smith 2003: n.p.).

Likewise in this thesis, I have chosen to study four artists or companies who have produced their own sizeable archives of commentary in the form of interviews and independent writings, but at the same time, I have attempted to stay alert to the powers of rhetoric to misrepresent practice, and to treat the artists' writings as one resource amongst others, rather than as *the* dominant or determining source of evidence.

But it is not only because they write about what they do that these practices become amenable to philosophical investigation; it is also because performance itself is a kind of thinking. In part, this approach reflects my own background, since I trained as an artist and performer before choosing to focus on academic writing in my graduate studies. Likewise, having worked within the research project, *PARIP* (Practice as Research in Performance)¹⁴, I have developed a significant interest in the practices and discourses that have been generated in the emerging field of ‘practice-as-research’, which refuses the theory/practice binary in favour of exploring the nature of the knowledge and ideas that practice itself produces. Performance does not need philosophy to do its thinking on its behalf; rather, we need to establish forms of exchange in which the different kinds of ideas generated through the practices of performance and philosophy can come into contact with one another.

Thus, this thesis’ opening contention is that these practices are, in themselves, profoundly philosophical; Kaprow’s *Activities*, for example, constitute a project to think differential presence or presence as affect and becoming-imperceptible. Thus, although the thesis will draw heavily from Deleuze in order to articulate some of the conceptual detail of this theorisation of presence, this will not be a one-way flow of ideas from Deleuze to practice. Rather, we will suggest that ‘activating the detail’ of examples of performance not only allows us to address the difficulties of putting differential presence into practice, but to show how performance acts as a kind of resistance and perpetual challenge to theorisation (Massumi 2002b: 17).

5.4 A conceptual structure

As we have already pointed out, this thesis is structured conceptually rather than chronologically. The chapters are in the order that they are, as a means to construct a specific narrative or sense of development across the dissertation as a whole. For example, we begin with the Living Theatre, partly because their notion of presence is not fully differential in relation to the other practitioners; they still hold onto notions of transcendence, whether with respect to the role of the director or the presence of the

¹⁴ I worked as Project Officer for PARIP from April-September 2005. *PARIP* — Practice as Research in Performance — was an AHRC-funded research project directed by Professor Baz Kershaw and the Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television at the University of Bristol, running from 2001-2006. For more information, see: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/>

actor. Further, we will see how their macropolitical goals lead them to try and steer or control creative participation for specific anarcho-pacifist ends. Despite their attempts to dislocate the performance from the mechanisms of control they associate with the State and with theatre as an institution, they nevertheless end up attempting to impose a transcendent system of organization on the becomings released by their own events. More positively, we also begin with the Living Theatre because the vast scope and diversity of their theatrical experimentation provides us with an opportunity to outline the range of areas of performance to which the concept of differential presence might relate, including: the performance of language, meta-theatrical structures, improvisation, participation, acting, collective creation, and chance processes. Although we will pay particular attention to *Paradise Now* (1968) on account of its canonical position in presence theory, the chapter also addresses early work such as *Many Loves* (1959), and recent pieces like *Utopia* (1995).

In Chapter Two we move on to address the work of Antonin Artaud, who has none of the Living Theatre's macropolitical goals for his own performances of language and recognizes far better the 'crowned anarchy' that reigns within our own body. Artaud pursues differential presence at the level of the voice and the body, constructing 'a theatre without organs' and a 'destratified voice' in order produce performance as an encounter with differential presence. Of all the examples, Artaud might appear to be the most conventional 'author', choosing to work primarily alone and without inviting any active audience participation. And indeed, we will note his lingering tendency to think of presence conventionally, in terms of controllable meaning and the communication of ideas, as well as thinking it differentially, in terms of the forcing of thought. However, given the extremity of his own experiences of self-dispossession (whether we choose to categorize them as 'schizophrenic' or not), he is in a unique position, in the context of this thesis, to dispute the characterization of thought, voice, language and body as self-presence.

Chapter Three is dedicated to an analysis of Allan Kaprow's 'Activities', in which we see the undoing of the sovereign artist, art-work and audience member into a participatory whole (and so contra Artaud's lingering auteurism). In this chapter, I suggest that Kaprow is working towards what Deleuze might call a 'becoming-imperceptible' of artist, work and audience, not in order to escape 'this world' and politics, but in order to participate immanently in the whole as change. The world, for Kaprow and Deleuze, never was some singular thing to be escaped. Rather, the problem

is how to access the world's differential presence. This chapter elaborates upon the Deleuzian concepts of affect and becoming that we have introduced here, questioning further how they might enrich our understanding of differential presence, alongside Kaprow's key concepts of 'nonart' or 'lifelike art', the 'experienced insight', and 'lived change'. Here, differential presence will come to be conceived as an undoing of the subject/object relation, which enables us to experience ourselves as 'in the midst of things' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 280), or as 'becoming "the whole"' (Kaprow 2003: 217). For Deleuze, as we will discuss, the experience of becoming-imperceptible marks a kind of limit point of becoming; it takes becoming and our relation to difference to an extreme. Yet, while Kaprow will be shown to take up this challenge, and perhaps to take the experiment of becoming further than the previous two examples, we will ultimately argue that, despite his best attempts, he failed to break away altogether from the art-world and its organizing forces. However, this chapter will also emphasise the need for practice to feed back to philosophy, which in this instance takes the form of a critique of Deleuze's artistic elitism via Kaprow's democratisation of aesthetic experience.

With the final chapter of the thesis, we arrive at the example of Goat Island who bring together the best of each of the previous examples. Like the Living Theatre, they are committed to the process of collective creation or collaboration as a means to generate performance as differential presence; but, like Artaud, they improve on the Living Theatre from a Deleuzian perspective, because they address the question of presence at the micrological level of the body, movement, duration, voice and so forth. However, whereas Artaud maintained a faint concern with the notion of communication, Goat Island (like Kaprow) reject the very idea of making a performance function as an illustration of existing ideas. In turn, they share Kaprow's interest in locating difference *within* the ordinary, through experiments with the multiple durations of different bodies. That said, Goat Island do not privilege active, audience participation in Kaprow's sense; and nor do they consider it necessary to leave the context of 'art' or 'theatre' in order to construct performance as an experience of differential presence. In their a-disciplinary works – inspired as much by classical theatre as performance art and contemporary dance – Goat Island suggest that the contemporary theatrical, 'black-box' space is always already multiple rather than a mechanism of control which suppresses the appearance of difference. The theatre space is not just *a* space and *a* time in which other times and spaces can only be imitated; it is

always already a differential space and time in which ‘the past’, for example, is not construed as absent or virtual but as a different, co-existing duration. Differential presence, here, is understood as an attention to the multiplicity of the present – an experience that we can have without leaving the theatre, via performances that invite us to attend to ‘it’ differently. Ultimately, this argument leads us to make ethical claims for differential presence as an experience offered by Goat Island’s performances, and as a concept generated both in the company’s writing and in Deleuze’s thought.

Chapter One

Beyond failure, toward differential presence in the Living Theatre

Introduction

This opening chapter of the thesis will outline the concept of differential presence through an encounter between Deleuze's philosophy and the work of the Living Theatre – the American experimental theatre company founded in 1947 by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, which still continues to work today. The Living Theatre originally conceived itself as a challenging alternative to the mainstream Broadway theatres, at first on the basis of its choice of material by modern poets and playwrights whose work was 'decidedly *not* part of the familiar repertoire of that era' (Rabkin 1984: 9)¹⁵. Aware of and engaged in the emergent innovations that were taking place in art, music and dance, the company also conceived itself as 'bringing interest and stimulation to [theatre as] an art medium which tends to become repetitive in its form rather than creative' (The Living Theatre in Mee 1962: 195). Thirdly, Julian Beck conceived the company as breaking away from the 'critical attitude towards art' which had come to dominate 'after the war and in the early fifties': the view that 'you cannot mix art and politics; you cannot mix art and activist-social thought, they don't go together; they degrade each other'. For Beck this attitude constituted 'a form of censorship' against which he and Malina, as 'confirmed theoretical anarchists', sought to rebel (Beck in Schechner et al 1969: 37).

Although they received the greatest critical acclaim for earlier works such as *The Connection* (1959) and *The Brig* (1963), the company are best known for *Paradise Now* (1968) – a piece that Stephen J. Bottoms refers to as one of the 'countercultural landmarks' of the 1960s (Bottoms 2006: 238). Collectively created while the Living Theatre were in exile in Europe and subsequently toured around the US during the politically and socially volatile years of 1968-69, *Paradise Now* is frequently cited by scholars as exemplary of the concern with presence, and the rejection of representational theatre, understood to characterise the American avant-garde theatre (or 'alternative theatre' or 'Off-off Broadway' theatre) of the 60s. For Bottoms, for

¹⁵ This unfamiliar repertoire included plays by Paul Goodman, Gertrude Stein and Federico Garcia Lorca.

instance, the Living Theatre should be seen as at the forefront of developments which, by 1968, saw ‘ensemble explorations of the theatrical “here and now” (as opposed to the “then and there” of representational drama)’ acquire

a significant new twist. Concern with the immediate “presence of the actor” onstage, began to be complemented by a desire to highlight the presence of the audience – by inviting spectators to participate directly in the theatrical event’ (ibid., 237).

Likewise Roger Copeland notes that *Paradise Now* (and particularly its ‘Rite of Universal Intercourse’) ‘is often regarded as a quintessential affirmation of live, unmediated *presence*’ (Copeland 1990: 28). There can be no more extreme example of the eradication of barriers between audience and performer, Copeland suggests, than the event of audience members taking up the invitation to join with the Living Theatre performers in the pile of ‘caressing...loving’ bodies on the floor. Quite simply, Copeland proposes that The Living Theatre wanted to ‘affirm presence by creating opportunities for physical interaction between audience and spectators’; the emphasis being on touch, rather than alienating vision, as the sense that leads directly to presence (ibid., 34). In stark opposition, Copeland argues, 1980s performance is characterised by the construction rather than dissolution of boundaries between performer and audience; a tendency that Copeland illustrates with reference to the work of Richard Foreman. In the 1960s, he goes on to suggest, *Paradise Now* would have been viewed, via Artaud, ‘as an attempt to reunify the community in a neo- (or pseudo-) ritual, erasing any sense of theatrical rift’ (ibid., 28). And in the 1980s and 1990s, Foreman’s performance would perhaps most often be read via Brecht’s concept of the V-effect as a deliberate attempt to distance the performer from the event in order to encourage thinking rather than immersion, conscious reflection rather than presence.

However, as we noted in the general introduction, more deconstructively inclined performance theorists from the last two decades such as Herbert Blau and Philip Auslander have drawn from Derrida in order to translate the critique of the metaphysics of presence to the critique of presence in performance practice and discourse. Given their appeals to notions of “truth” and “authenticity”, the Living Theatre (as well as Artaud and Grotowski) have been a natural target for accusations of naivety. Looking back over the theatre of the sixties and seventies, a skeptical Blau

noted

There has been a serious effort over the last generation to eliminate the *as if*, to return performance to unmediated experience, as with The Living Theatre, but with whatever measure of “truth” or “authenticity” it is at best only appearance. There is nothing more illusory in performance than the illusion of the unmediated (Blau in Schechner and Appel 1990: 253).

In the attempt to eradicate fiction, Blau argues, practitioners like the Living Theatre merely revive what he conceives as the illusion of presence as the experience of truth. Arguing from a similar perspective, Martin Puchner contends that the theatre’s use of physical bodies as its medium is what fuels ‘the recurring fantasy that theatrical mimesis can be unmediated’ (Puchner 2002: 521). And here is where the discourse of failure – the failure of the Living Theatre, the failure of the sixties, the failure of presence – begins. The project of the Living Theatre fails for Blau because it is premised upon a fundamental, metaphysical error: that performance can itself be a full presence rather than a representation of that presence.

But this chapter will suggest that we should be wary of allowing this deconstructive critique from preventing us from seeing the value in the non-representational experiments of the Living Theatre. That is, we may wish to complicate the notion of presence that they were working with, but we need not add our voice to the chorus of those who insist on the outright impossibility of presence as non-representational relation. Rather, this chapter proposes that we return to this call for presence *with* Deleuze who shares the Living Theatre’s concern with non-representational processes (events, forces, sensations...), but who conceives the non-representational as differential presence rather than self-presence. By drawing from Deleuze’s thought we aim to demonstrate that there is plenty worth rehabilitating from the company’s attempts to use performance as a place in which to think through how a theatre without representation might work – with regard to acting, directing and particularly, the audience – if not from the final strategies that the company actually used in performance.

This thesis begins with an encounter between Deleuze and the Living Theatre for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the structure of this project has been devised on the basis of a conceptual logic rather than a chronological one; this is not a history of differential presence in performance, but a theorisation of it, which will begin in a broad, exploratory fashion before going into greater depth and detail, both in relation to Deleuze's philosophy and the examples of performance, in the following chapters. Arguably, the practice of those who become the focus of these later chapters constitute more complex and nuanced investigations of presence, and certainly their work makes for an easier 'fit' with Deleuze's ontology than the Living Theatre's – a practice all too often driven by concerns with truth, transcendence, identity, unity, and universality (in other words, with notions linked to traditional conceptions of 'presence') that are anathema to a Deleuzian philosophy of difference. And yet, if we take Deleuze's ontological claims seriously, we must commit to the idea that differential presence is at work in *all* forms of performance, not just in those practitioners who articulate their ideas in Deleuzian terms (Goat Island) or have already been embraced by Deleuze himself (Artaud). But more than this, beneath some apparently naïve or romantic ideas about the means to arrive at a more harmonious condition in global politics¹⁶, the Living Theatre can be seen to have been pioneers in terms of their determination to undo representational relations - between author and work, director and cast, audience and performance - in order to make way for the immanent processes of participation, collective creation and the creation of community in a manner that has some interesting resonances with Deleuze's ideas.

The body of work of the Living Theatre – particularly in the period from 1947-1978 – charts a line of evolution in a manner that has arguably rarely been equalled by other theatre companies at the time or since¹⁷. From 'meticulously crafted' works like *The Brig* to *Paradise Now* 'which consciously denied traditional craft in its rage to drive theatre into the streets' (Rabkin 1984: 13), from performing scripts to collective devising, the company ceaselessly remade itself. Because of the scope of this

¹⁶ See the critique of the Living Theatre by Christopher Innes: 'Perhaps reflecting the naivety of American radicals in the 1960's, their slogans were at best sophomoric statements of conviction, with little relevance to the actual situation [...] where "universal intercourse" was proposed (without any sense of irony) as a solution to the problems of the Middle East' (Innes 1993: 182).

¹⁷ This specific time period indicates the duration from the founding of the company to the end of the paratheatrical cycle *The Legacy of Cain*. Arguably, this was the company's most consistently experimental period, before the return to the performance of scripts in the 1983 season at the Joyce Theatre and the reenactment of past performances – such as *The Brig* in 2007 - that has characterised much of their recent practice.

experimentation, this opening chapter will touch on many of the ideas related to the performance of differential presence that we will go on to develop and expand upon in subsequent chapters: the relationship between mind and body, conscious and unconscious, self and other, art and life, representation and creation, and so forth. In the first section of the chapter we will address some aspects of context, looking at the dominant tendency of secondary commentators to construe the Living Theatre's overall project in terms of failure. However, this first part will also address issues of methodology specific to this chapter. Here, we will draw from aspects of Deleuze's 'micropolitical' and 'abstract' methodology in order to suggest ways in which the Living Theatre might be rehabilitated from such negative portrayals.

In the following four sections, we will move beyond failure and toward the concept of differential presence, rather than self-presence, positing The Living Theatre as pioneering explorers (albeit flawed and conflicted ones) of some of the ways in which theatre might be reconfigured to unleash its 'nonrepresentative force', as Deleuze himself appreciated¹⁸. First, we will examine the relation between differential presence and *participation*, introducing a redefinition of the concept of participation as a creative presence rather than 'absolute communion', two routes to which might be the Living Theatre's processes of audience participation and collective creation. Next, we will look at differential presence in the light of the important Deleuzian concept of *immanence* as a quality of relation the Living Theatre attempted to access by subtracting any transcendent elements – director, intending author, or spectating consciousness – from their processes of creation and performance. The following section will examine the company's poetic uses of language and their experiments with the thinking body and improvisation as ways to access a *nonrepresentative* power of theatre, before we close the discussion with an examination of the Living Theatre's relationship to concepts of *community*. Although the company themselves often spoke of their desire to generate an 'absolute communion' or self-present community of performers and audience (Beck and Malina in Mantegna et al 1970: 24), we will address the mis-fit of this ambition with

¹⁸ We can be sure that the Living Theatre were known to both Deleuze and Guattari; for instance, in 'One Less Manifesto' Deleuze cites the company amongst an alliance of practitioners whom he perceives to be working with theatre as 'nonrepresentative force' (Deleuze 1997: 241). And six years later, in an interview with Charles Stivale, Felix Guattari would refer to the Living Theatre in order to argue that the notion of a 'deterritorialized' America is not just a utopian dream. Guattari says, it is not 'that there isn't a potential America, an America of nomadism. Some people still exist . . . I was thinking of Julian Beck, of Judith Molina [sic], the former members of the Living Theater. Just because they've been completely marginalized is no reason to ignore their existence. They still exist nonetheless (Guattari 1985: n.p.).

their equal concern to make performances that cause ‘other escapes’, creativity or becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 322).

1. Contexts and methodologies:

Process over content, production over representation, becomings over history

Under this heading we are going to look at the narrative of failure that dominates the secondary literature on the Living Theatre and then at how, methodologically, one might rehabilitate the company from such a narrative. We will look at three interrelated ways in which this recuperation might happen, starting with an ‘abstract’ methodology that focuses on the ontological processes at work in the Living Theatre’s performances rather than on the specific, and sometimes flawed, contents of those processes. Next, we will argue in favour of approaching the theorisation of the Living Theatre as a creative production rather than a faithful representation of the company understood as a fixed and self-same object. And finally, we will argue in favour of a break with the methodological emphasis on socio-historical context, not only with regards to the Living Theatre but also in relation to the study of Deleuze and Guattari’s first collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus*.

So, first, the context of failure. As the introduction has already suggested, a great deal of the secondary academic literature and critical commentary on the Living Theatre tends to describe the company in terms of failure – a discursive context that the company arguably shares with the events of May ’68 in general. Erika Munk, for instance, describes *Paradise Now* as a work that ‘failed at a task seriously conceived’ (Munk in Harding & Rosenthal 2006: 50). For all their revolutionary rhetoric, it is argued, the Living Theatre failed to achieve their ambitions to produce a theatre that functioned as a genuinely transformative ritual. Arnold Aronson, for example, argues that the ambition to create secular modern rituals – common to the Performance Group and the Living Theatre – failed to appreciate that 1960s America was not a ‘community with shared beliefs, shared experiences, or, most important, shared rituals’ (Aronson 2000: 101). What they created were merely faux-rituals or pseudo-rituals, Antony Graham-White concurs, which borrowed the ritual form but lacked its transformative force. Christopher Innes, in turn, dismisses the company’s political ambitions to affirm the real within performance as mere category error (Innes 1981: 191); he brands as

failure their “inability” ‘to distinguish between theatre and reality, sex and politics’ (ibid., 198). At the same time Innes argues that the company’s emphasis on process, and a correlative hostility to product, was necessarily ‘self-defeating’, and that the logical outcome of such an emphasis is the ‘crude acting, unsustained characterization and imperfect physical imagery’ that the company presented in *Paradise Now* (ibid., 192).

This chapter will not argue that the impression of failure in the work of the Living Theatre is an illusion. Indeed, we might say that there is something of a harmony of failures in the Living Theatre’s *Paradise Now* and Deleuze and Guattari’s first collaboration: *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). In both cases perhaps there is an over-estimation of the revolutionary power of desire combined with an equal under-estimation or disregard of actual, social conditions and of both practical and ethical risks (to which Deleuze and Guattari pay much greater attention in a subsequent collaborative work, *A Thousand Plateaus*). Just as Julian Beck’s notion of ‘the world-prison’ has been dismissed by some as melodrama, there has also been a critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s over-estimation or exaggeration of the impact of psychoanalysis and the Oedipal representation of desire on the lives of ordinary people. The encounter here between the Living Theatre and Deleuze and Guattari shows up a degree of naïvety in the philosophers’ early work too.

Throughout 1972-3, Deleuze and Guattari defended and clarified the position they had attempted to articulate in *Anti-Oedipus*. In the interview, *Abecedaire*, for instance, Deleuze identifies two key forms of misunderstanding in the reception of *Anti-Oedipus* that emerged in the attempts to put the book’s philosophy of desire into practice: “spontaneity and *la fête*” (“Some people”, Deleuze says “thought that desire was a form of spontaneity, others thought it was an occasion for partying (*la fête*)”). However, Julian Bourg suggests that the problem was that ‘even if *Anti-Oedipus* did not make the claim for limitless liberated desire, it did not make a clear case against it’ (Bourg 2007: 120). As such, Bourg argues that ‘Despite their continual efforts to explain that they were not merely advocating a free-for-all celebration of unfettered desire, it was not merely by chance that their work was judged in that light’ (ibid., 121). Ultimately, he argues, *Anti-Oedipus*’ desire is ‘lawless’. And indeed, the book’s language of desiring and desiring-machines is all but abandoned by the works that followed; according to Deleuze, the notion of ‘desiring’ being dropped on account of its ‘residual subjectivism’ (Deleuze 1995: 184). In this way, as John Mullarkey notes,

The move from *Anti-Oedipus* to *A Thousand Plateaus* is simultaneously more physicalist and less psycho-sociological: ethology replaces ethnology (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 328); schizophrenia expresses nomadology only at the level of *pathos* and not universally (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 506); and ‘lines of flight’ and rhizomatics take over from schizophrenia (Mullarkey 2006: 198 n21)¹⁹.

However, and this brings us to the first methodological point, the heuristic device of a process/content distinction allows us to see that there are different kinds of ‘failure’ at work in the Living Theatre, and, as such, that they partly succeeded on another level. Sometimes the failure concerns a flawed or inconsistent attempt to fully engage in an otherwise ‘good’ process – from the Deleuzian perspective of this thesis – as we shall see in the following discussions of collective creation as an attempt to establish presence as an immanent relation between company and ‘work’. In turn, as many critics have foregrounded, the Living Theatre are often also guilty of what we might call failures at the level of ‘content’ - with their emphasis on ‘breaking the touch barrier’, for instance (or what that might mean for an all too deconstructable notion of presence), as a particular ‘content’ of the process of participation (Beck and Malina 1971: 74). The idea of creating performance as a participatory process constitutes an important part of our project of conceiving presence as self-differing, but the attempt to instantiate that process through orgiastic touch and mere physical proximity has its obvious risks and limitations. At other times, as in the case of the company’s transcendent notion of ‘trance,’ it is the thinking process itself that fails, at least in terms of this thesis’ pursuit of differential presence. Or to give another example of this, whilst the company clearly critiqued the sedimentation of other oppositions in a segregating social structure (the separation of rich from poor, actor from spectator, body from mind, and so forth), other aspects of their discourse express an apparently deconstructable conception of the world as that which could be divided into examples of honesty and falsity, the alienated and the authentic. Finally, there is another kind of failure that can

¹⁹ As Bourg suggests, Deleuze defines ethology as “the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing” (Deleuze in Bourg 2007: 155). In contrast, ethnology is conventionally defined as a branch of anthropology, and as such with specifically human forms of socio-cultural behaviour.

be rehabilitated from a Deleuzian position – such as the failure to commune with, or ‘get through to’ the audience, insofar as this ambition itself can be shown to be ‘faulty’ qua representationalist. As we shall see in due course, the anecdotal accounts of these ‘missed encounters’ between audience and a Living Theatre event can be re-read as a different kind of success.

The heuristic device of a process/content distinction allows us to get beyond the predominantly negative perspective presented on the group’s work in the secondary literature. Contra this existing discourse on the Living Theatre, we can re-evaluate the content of the group’s performances, with a view to focusing upon the primary forms or processes from which these contents derive. From this processual perspective, what counts in the Living Theatre is not the fact that they tried to lead, half naked audiences out into the streets in sub-zero temperatures to start a revolution – a contextually specific act that critics like Innes evaluate as doomed to failure for all sorts of conceptual, artistic, practical and political reasons. What counts is participation as a form of refusal of fixed boundaries, whether between audience and performer or theatre and street. As Solomon has discussed, the company have been much criticized for leading spectators ‘out of the hall into the public square at the end of *Paradise Now*, urging them to free the prisoners from local jails’ (Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 65). However, ‘Beck and Malina asserted that they did not literally expect that the rush of spectators would, in fact, open the jails, but that they would experience the possibility – and the limitations – of their collective power’ (ibid.). What counts is the experience of collectivity and participation.

The Living Theatre’s individual works, and the details of these individual works, are the products of a more fundamental engagement with processes of movement across thresholds, with processes of connection unrestricted by conventional categories akin to what Deleuze and Guattari theorise as desire, becoming, or immanence. Another way to frame this approach is to see it as a response to Deleuze’s call for philosophy to become more ‘abstract’. By ‘abstract’ Deleuze does not mean that philosophy should become more unworldly, but that it should focus its attention on processes – on the molecular movements and becomings between things, rather than on the molar things that ‘do’ the moving and becoming. Thinking at the appropriate level of abstraction, for Deleuze, means thinking change as such, movement in itself, or relation *per se* rather than focussing on the object moved or the things related. Things or objects are re-

evaluated as movements and becomings when they are seen more ‘abstractly’ as connected to each other, plugged in to each other, always and everywhere as related somehow. Process philosophy contends that, as humans, indeed as living beings, we are geared towards objectification; in order to survive we need to treat the world as a set of objects, whereas in reality what there is is movement, ceaseless change, or what Deleuze also calls perpetual variation. In terms of performance then, a Deleuzian approach involves reading performance at the level of processes. ‘Process’ in this sense does not mean the developmental processes a given company undergo in order to produce a performance, but the movements or becomings that are operative in theatrical events such as the dissolution of the transcendent spectator in the event of participation.

To give an example, in the context of ’68, the theatre as institution was understood to function as one more State apparatus which organized people as passive observers in relation to the performance as representing object. As much as the school, the hospital, and the factory, the theatre was seen to bind people to the strata of ‘the organism, signifiacance and subjectification’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 159). As such, the movement from theatre to street involved a process of resistance to the strata, and yet one could imagine an alternative universe in which the necessary movement could be reversed, and the most radical, destratifying gesture would be to take people into a theatre rather than out of it. What matters is that through performance, the street can enter into a process of becoming that challenges existing conceptions of its identity. But there can be no eternal formula for revolution. As Hanon Reznikov has suggested²⁰, the street only functions as a radical site for theatre as long as ‘you’re doing something that runs counter to the accepted or expected notion of what a sidewalk is for’ (Reznikov in Rosenthal 1998: 157-159). Likewise, the idea of resisting interdictions is still valuable, even if we are no longer particularly concerned about resisting laws around marijuana usage; and the company’s performance strategies – such as performing in the aisles – may well now have become clichéd, but that needn’t devalue their commitment at the level of process to participation rather than representation. In this way, both *Anti-Oedipus* and the Living Theatre’s exile period works have aspects that transcend that specific context, on the level of process. And on this processual level, there is a definite ‘fit’ between Deleuze and the Living Theatre, in terms of their shared concerns with desire, Life, creativity and transformation, community and participation.

²⁰ After Julian Beck’s death in 1985, Hanon Reznikov took over as co-director of the Living Theatre with Malina.

In the same way, we can look to the well-known example of Richard Schechner's response as an audience member to 'The Rite of Guerilla Theatre' at the start of *Paradise Now*. In this 'rite', actors go from spectator to spectator, speaking phrases such as: 'I am not allowed to travel without a passport', in 'a very quiet, urgent, but personal voice... With each repetition, his voice and body express greater urgency and frustration...He is obsessed with the meaning of the prohibition and by the ramifications of the prohibition...By the end of two minutes, all of the actors have reached a point close to hysteria' (Beck and Malina 1971: 15). As Schechner describes, 'When Steve Ben Israel, I believe, came up to me and started shouting ... - "I am not allowed to take off my clothes," I felt it was time to take off my clothes': an act that, at the time, Schechner conceived as a 'put-down gesture' (Schechner et al. 1969: 29). Later, however Schechner re-interprets his response, arguing:

I felt it was time to take off my clothes, because I didn't really understand what he meant. I was directing Dionysus in 69 at the time, and a lot of nakedness was part of that show. But the point was not that you *could* or *couldn't* take off your clothes; the point was that you were not *allowed* to take off your clothes. The point was that an unjust law constrains those who obey. So my taking off my clothes, though it was theatrical and fun, was not the point of that scene. And I remember them later on explaining it to me; they would not let me off the hook. 'No, you didn't understand what we were doing. It's not about whether you can smoke marijuana or take off your clothes or smuggle yourself across a border without a passport; *it's about the existence of unjust circumstances that put you in a position of breaking the law to do good*' (Schechner in Smith 1986: 118 - emphasis added).

Schechner's first response puts content over process; the Living Theatre point him to a notion of law operating on at another level. Doing 'good' is not about taking drugs or being naked – these are merely the specific routes to creation and immanence that seemed relevant to the Living Theatre at the time they were working; they are some specific contents of the experimental processes they initiated.

Despite these instances of flawed thinking we have noted above, we can locate a concern with the Deleuzian notion of difference as fundamental processuality, change and movement both in company's practice and in Julian Beck's writing. For example, in a text from 1969, he argues that 'In order to perpetuate itself, that is, in order to stay alive, life has to change' (Beck 1972: n.p.). And a year later, he reiterates that

Nothing is more natural than change. That is what anarchism is about... The anarchist wants to create the conditions so that the process, this process of the universe, goes on with maximal effective extension of life and joy' (ibid.).

In fact, the Deleuzian equation of life and becoming is reflected in the very name of the theatre; it is the *Living* Theatre because it never ceases to change.

And this brings us to our second methodological point, that one can only approach the theorisation of the Living Theatre as a process of conceptual production in relation to other processes rather than a representational reproduction in relation to an object. As Jack Gelber once remarked, 'It's very hard to talk about the Living Theatre as a static entity, because in fact the Living Theatre is different kinds of theatre depending on when you saw them' (Gelber in Smith 1986: 109). In turn, one might add that what the Living Theatre 'is' or 'was' is irreducible to its own rhetoric, always eliding the company's own attempts to represent themselves in texts, manifestos, interviews, photographs and films. As such, at times, the chapter will be generating creative readings of even Beck and Malina's *own* interpretation of their practice in order to emphasise the formal connections between their work and the broad themes of Deleuze's ontology: participation, immanence, production and community. In this sense, the chapter will not claim to faithfully represent what the Living Theatre *really meant*, so much as to construct the specifically Deleuzian aspects of the thinking that constitutes the 'virtual' line of variation running through their 'actual' practice. In this way, the emphasis on a methodology of production rather than representation (or representation as production) is not about imposing an arbitrary meaning on a static body of work but to approach that body of work as a varying product of differential processes and allowing the Living Theatre to transform our thinking. Foregrounding this ontological level also allows us to retrieve some lesser-studied details from the literature on and by the Living Theatre, but equally to introduce some primary concepts

in Deleuze's thought that will provide the much-needed context for the more specific concepts of presence (as difference, as becoming-imperceptible) that will follow.

But before we move on to these themes, let us finally address the methodological issue of socio-historical context. On a socio-historical level, there would seem to be a clear case for a productive encounter between the Living Theatre and Deleuze (particularly in his collaborations with Guattari²¹). Both were thoroughly involved in the revolutionary protests of May '68 in Paris, critiques of the capitalist state, and the celebration of drugs, free sexuality and the 'primitive' as aspects of an alternative way of living and operating in the world beyond bourgeois conventions. Similarly, it is in the spirit of '68 that both the Living Theatre and Deleuze identify the "molar" formations of 'the school, the family, the factory, the state' as the targets of any "molecular" revolution of desire. From this perspective, *Paradise Now* and *Anti-Oedipus*, which will be the focal examples of this chapter, may be seen as products of and responses to the revolutionary period of "the 68 years" and as such, as works that must be addressed in that context. *Anti-Oedipus*, the first collaborative work produced by Deleuze and the 'anti-psychiatrist' and political activist, Félix Guattari, was 'published in the afterglow of the events of May 1968'²² and as Eugene Holland suggests,

...It may be that the events of 1968 brought these two otherwise quite unlikely collaborators together in a way that would be unthinkable outside the context of that tumultuous and fertile moment, and that their thought-experiment was conducted in an effort to respond to it (Holland 1999: viii).

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Bogue has argued:

²¹ Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration can be mapped back to April 1969, when Guattari initiated a correspondence with Deleuze, which developed into a friendship and after two and a half years, the production of the *Anti-Oedipus* project. According to Bourg (2007), most of the book was 'worked out between August 1969 and August 1971', during which time The Living Theatre divided into various international 'cells', having returned to the States from their self-imposed period of European exile.

²² What Lenora Champagne has called 'the explosion of May 1968' might be summarised as an eruption of protests, riots, strikes and occupations that sought to effect change in what the protesters saw as the repressive social relations that had come to dominate France under capitalism. However, while starting in France, the spirit of revolt soon spread around the world with comparable protests and occupations taking place in the US, Germany, Italy and Japan amongst others.

... many saw a philosophical expression of the spirit of the May 1968 student revolt – some, because the book offered an exuberant and iconoclastic synthesis of Marxist and Freudian motifs within an anti-structural, Nietzschean thematics of liberation; others, because it seemed to enunciate an irresponsible and anarchistic politics of libidinal self-indulgence (Bogue 1989: 1).

Likewise, The Living Theatre could easily be perceived as a theatrical expression of the '68 spirit: from their interest in drugs and meditation, to their fervent belief in a revolutionary overhaul of the capitalist State. Further, Julian Beck and Judith Malina were directly involved in the events of May – leading the occupation of the Odeon Theatre and drawing attention to the militants cause by withdrawing the planned performances of *Paradise Now* from the 1968 Avignon Festival.

And yet, to some extent, it is precisely these shared links to '68 or some generic notion of “the sixties” that allow some to dismiss both the Living Theatre’s *Paradise Now* and Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* as outdated, and indeed as little more than documents of a now discredited brand of ‘hippy’ radicalism. That is, although a common socio-political context is perhaps the most obvious reason to study Deleuze and the Living Theatre alongside one another, it is also this context which ‘dates’ them, allowing subsequent generations to reject or criticise works such as *Anti-Oedipus* and *Paradise Now* as very much ‘of their time’, and of limited relevance to contemporary conditions. The risk is that if '68 becomes the dominant contextual frame through which these works are read, then other aspects of their projects are missed. As Bogue describes, the association of Deleuze and Guattari with May '68 had some ‘unfortunate side effects. They became symbols of anti-psychiatry and the spirit of May, and as a result the broader concerns that informed *Anti-Oedipus* were often ignored’ (Bogue 1989: 6). Bogue continues by pointing out that *Anti-Oedipus*

was neither a spontaneous effusion of May '68 irrationalism nor an opportunistic exploitation of the cult of Lacanism. Rather, it was the result of nearly twenty years of investigation in philosophy, psychoanalysis and political theory on the part of its authors; hence, it was as much a response to intellectual currents spanning decades as a reaction to the May insurrection (ibid., 1).

Likewise, I want to suggest that the ‘datedness’ of some of the specific contents of the Living Theatre’s performances should not put us off attending to the ‘broader concerns’ or processes with which their work engages – concerns which come to the fore when we conceive works such as *Paradise Now* not simply in the context of ’68 but as the result of twenty years of theatrical investigation on the part of Beck and Malina. For many, the Living Theatre are the quintessential sixties theatre group. And as such, Alisa Solomon argues

It’s easy to blame the Living Theatre – and there’s a lot of will to assign blame in these reactionary times for the myriad alleged sins that have collectively come to epitomize “the sixties”... With a triumphalist post-Cold War crowd of victory, today’s conservatives pronounce the moral defeat of all that druggy lassitude, sexual abandon, pious rebellion, romanticizing of the poor and demonizing of the state with which they characterize the period (Solomon in Harding & Rosenthal 2006: 56).

So, to mention the Living Theatre today is, as Solomon implies, to risk being accused of ‘harking back to those hippy-dippy times, those naïve and destructive days of group-groping, fuck-the-system free-for-all that we’re all supposed to have grown out of’ (ibid.). *Paradise Now*, in particular, has come to act as a ‘shorthand descriptor for the decade’s theatrical experimentation’ insofar as it is imaged as constituted by ‘nearly naked, long-haired men and women twined in a sweaty group embrace, groping at the audience, and leading them in [a] Pied Piper procession through the streets’ (ibid., 57). Problematically – both for an analysis of their past practice and for the company themselves who continue to operate today - this image has come to stand in for the Living Theatre’s entire legacy.

The remainder of this chapter is broken down into a series of four thematic or conceptual headings: participation, immanence, production and community – each of which will contribute something to a new understanding of the abstract notion of ‘presence’. In some cases, the themes will be familiar from existing presence discourse. For instance, we have already seen how Copeland equated presence and audience participation in *Paradise Now*. However, this first section aims to reinvent the concept

of ‘participation’ via Deleuze and Guattari as a becoming or trans-categorical meeting of the different, rather than as an attempt to dissolve difference based on a belief in some underlying, universal sameness. And as the section on the theme of participation merges into that of immanence (there can be no fixed boundaries here), we will see how the notion of participation can be extended to discuss not just the relation between audience and performance but between performers and work, and art and life. That is, as one would expect from a discussion of a philosophy and a theatre of immanence, many of the themes of this chapter are overlapping: the Living Theatre’s interest in the process of improvisation, for instance, could equally have been discussed under the headings of immanence or production. But we have imposed these distinct headings in order to provide what is intended to be a broad, clear account of the multi-faceted process of differential presence which this thesis will continually work towards.

2. Participation in creativity: activating audiences and actors

So, under this second heading we will look at the contribution that the concept of ‘participation’ might make to a theorisation of differential presence in the Living Theatre. In the course of this examination, we will address two senses of ‘participation’, starting with its most conventional theatrical definition as a more active mode of audience engagement with performance, in contrast to ‘spectatorship’, before attempting to extract a more ontological notion of participation from Deleuze, which concerns both the relation between ‘self’ and ‘other’, and ‘part’ and whole’. This ontological participation, we will argue, is operative in the breakdown (rather than the successful enactment) of scripted audience involvement and in the collision of differing perspectives that occurs between the actors in the process of collective creation.

To begin with the term ‘participation’ as it is conventionally understood in a theatrical context, we can say that participation, or the attempt to dissolve the boundary between actor and spectator, was one way that the Living Theatre attempted to break with representational theatre. At first, this was simply a spatial practice: of placing actors in what was conventionally the space of the audience – a practice that, although entirely institutionalized now, was innovative when the Living Theatre first used it in the late fifties with productions such as *Many Loves* (1959). Beck and Malina were also amongst the first in the American theatre world to read the translation of Artaud’s *The*

Theatre and Its Double in 1958, which famously includes the following passage encouraging theatre-makers to break out of the ‘two-worlds’ structure of the theatre space:

In order to affect every facet of the spectator’s sensibility, we advocate a revolving show, which instead of making stage and auditorium into two closed worlds without any possible communication between them, will extend its visual and oral outbursts over the whole mass of spectators (Artaud 1977: 66).

While conventional theatre architecture was seen as reinforcing the idea of the spectator as detached subject or disembodied mind before the object of performance, using the whole of the house was intended to force the spectator to experience him/her self as part of the performance.

By the 1960s, the notion of audience participation had become very popular, with practitioners like The Performance Group as well as the Living Theatre exploring the idea of theatre as ritual. For advocates like Richard Schechner ‘the move from theatre to ritual happens when the audience as a separate entity is dissolved into the performance as “participants”’ (Schechner in Graham-White 1976: 323). Traditional theatre was associated with the segregation of the audience into a separate space such that they could not interfere with the pre-determined unfolding of the artist’s creation. By contrast, ritual seemed to provide a model for a desirable form of audience engagement and participation that the Becks, amongst others, associated with the origins of theatre. Julian Beck enthusiastically evoked an image of a new audience as ‘a congregation led by priests, a choral ecstasy of reading and response’ (Beck in Bigsby 1985: 80). And according to Innes, the Living Theatre

repeatedly termed their political aim ‘prophesying’, referred to the actor as ‘a priest’ or ‘shaman’, and pointed out their ‘concern with primitive and mystic rituals’; they described their theatre as ‘performing a ceremony’ and its intended effect as ‘an absolute communion’ between audience and actors (Innes 1981: 187).

However, drawing from Deleuze and Guattari allows us to re-evaluate participation on a more abstract, processual level: not as ‘ritual’ but as a taking part in a differential whole, akin to what *Anti-Oedipus* calls ‘desiring-production’ or what the authors would later theorise as a process of becoming that dismantles ‘binary aggregates’ or ‘molar’ categories. Correlatively, we will re-evaluate the presence of participation not as ‘absolute communion’ but as the ‘intimate contact’ man can construct ‘with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 4), an immanent participation in difference as the ultimate reality. The notion of ‘absolute communion’ connotes a transcendent move beyond social differences towards a realm of being in which ritual participants might meet one another, premised upon a presumption of a universal humanity or ultimate sameness. In contrast, as we shall see, although the Deleuzian notion of participation also involves the dissolution of fixed distinctions between ‘self’ and ‘other’, the consequent presence involves the creative coupling and re-coupling of heterogeneous parts: the meeting of the different beyond differences.

Deleuze’s ideas on participation come primarily from Spinoza who, in his *Political Treatise* (Chapter 2, No. 6), argued that

Men conceive of themselves as being in nature like a kingdom within a kingdom. For they hold that the human mind cannot be produced by any natural causes, but is created immediately by God, and is, therefore, independent of everything else to such an extent that it has an absolute power of determining itself... (Spinoza in Leibniz 1989: 280).

Spinoza broke with this ‘two-worlds’ view and insisted on the immanence of mind and matter; the participation of all things in nature. There is only one ‘kingdom’, in other words, in which all things participate. In the opening pages of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari re-invent this Spinozist view using a machinic vocabulary. Drawing from Georg Büchner’s unfinished biographical narrative of the schizophrenic Jakob Lenz²³, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that ‘Lenz’s stroll’ outdoors provides a paradigmatic example of how man [sic] can experience himself, not as an independent kingdom but

²³ Jakob Lenz was an 18th century author who moved in the same circles as Goethe, but suffered from recurring bouts of schizophrenia (Knapp 2003: n.p.)

as ‘one part among the others’:

Lenz has projected himself back to a time before the man-nature dichotomy, before all the co-ordinates of this fundamental dichotomy have been laid down. He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 2).

What matters is that the schizophrenic experiences himself as a participant in ‘nature as a process of production’, in nature as what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘desire’. There is no separation, they argue, between producer and product; rather, both nature and industry belong to the same process of production that is ‘of man and by man’ – not in the sense that it belongs to him or is controlled by him, but in the sense that man ‘ceaselessly plugs’ into nature as part of its creative process (ibid., 4-5).

Deleuze also addresses the ontology of participation in his reconsideration of the relationship between ‘part’ and ‘Whole’ through the concept of multiplicity. Here Deleuze differentiates between ‘discrete’ and ‘continuous’ multiplicities defined as a distinction between that which *does not* and that which *does* change in kind when divided into parts (Deleuze 1988: 41). Correlatively, Deleuze takes on an emergentist perspective in works such as *Cinema I*, such that the Whole is always more than the mere sum of its parts (Deleuze 1986: 23). As Smith has discussed, according to ‘the principle of *difference*’ that characterises Deleuze’s thought, the Whole is not a totality that unites the fragmented, but a variable and varying effect of the relations between its dissociated and disconnected parts (Smith in Deleuze 1998: xxiii – original emphasis).

We will deal with these ideas further under the next category of immanence, but for now let us move on to explore the ways in which the Living Theatre attempted to generate this creative, participatory presence by their own means. In this expanded sense, we can see that ‘participation’ not only relates to the dissolution of the distinction between performers and audience, but between authors and performers, and more

broadly between art and life. In each of these three cases, participation refuses separation but not difference; it is not about homogenisation but about becoming part of a heterogeneous whole. Let's begin with the most obvious case: *audience participation*. Certainly, there is no question of the Living Theatre merely jumping on the 'participation-bandwagon' of the sixties, given that the origins of the company's engagement with audience participation as a process can arguably be traced back to their earliest productions. For instance, in *Many Loves*, although they did not yet explicitly address the problem of how to transform the audience into performers, they were concerned with what Beck called 'the problem of recognizing the presence of the audience' (Beck in Schechner et al 1969: 37). First performed by the Living Theatre in January 1959, Williams' *Many Loves* is set in a dress rehearsal and, as Mee notes, this meta-theatrical structure lets the company 'throw lines to the audience and even have some of the actors sit with the audience, delivering their speeches from the auditorium' (Mee 1962: 197). But even with respect to these tentative beginnings, the following quote suggests that Julian Beck was troubled by the political and aesthetic implications of allowing the audience to remain in a position safely 'outside' the work, and indeed the actors to remain comfortably detached from the audience. At the time, Beck believed that

these play-within-the-play devices arose out of a crying need on the part of the authors, and of us, to reach the audience, to awaken them from their passive slumber, to provoke them into attention, shock them if necessary, and, this is also important, to involve the actors with what was happening in the audience... The intention was to... bring everyone closed *to life*. Joining as opposed to separation (Beck in Aronson 2000: 55 – emphasis added).

To be alive, Beck suggests, is to be open and connected to, rather than separated from, our surroundings, or even simply to attend to, rather than fail to notice, this primary relationality.

This ambition to construct connections, to plug the audience into the work and into the actors (and vice versa), became an increasingly dominant concern as the

company developed new pieces during their so-called ‘exile period’²⁴. As Malina later emphasised, participation was not specifically about ‘trying to get the audience to get up and dance and sing in the aisle’ – which was of ‘no interest’ to the company – but about undoing the audience-performer distinction as that which stifled the creativity of both parties (Malina in Kattwinkel 2003: 25). *Paradise Now*, for example, was structured in such a way as to make room for the audience to generate creative responses to an invitation from the company. The performance consisted of a series of eight of what the company called ‘Rungs’, incorporating a ‘Vision’ performed by the actors, a ‘Rite’ which aimed to establish contact between audience and performers, and an ‘Action’ to be initiated and conducted by the audience.

If we take the Deleuzian account of participation to heart, then ideally these interventions would not merely be accommodated by the company, who are able to continue to perform the rest of the piece as planned. Rather, the audience sections must be allowed to connect to the work as a part that *changes* the whole. The audience’s relations to one another and to the performers must be allowed to constantly produce the whole as their varying effects. Arguably, this happened with *Paradise Now*, but only on those occasions when the performance ‘broke down’ rather than when it worked. For instance, in one performance on the American tour, the invitation to “free the theatre” did lead to the stage becoming crowded with naked spectators, however it also led to the play being ‘brought to an abrupt end by a public discussion on the political relevance of the Living Theatre itself’ (Innes 1993: 189). In contrast, what Malina calls the ‘beautiful’ pre-rehearsed interventions of already sympathetic audience members could be seen to blend too easily into the work, doing little to couple ‘life’ with ‘art’ nor to ignite the creativity of the actors.

In their favour, we must acknowledge that the Living Theatre did allow every kind of audience participation to happen; there was little policing of the audience except on the occasions when the company felt the need to ‘steer’ *Paradise* back on course. For example, during ‘Rung II’, the actors are instructed to give support to any kind of

²⁴ As Saul Gottlieb describes, The Living Theatre went into ‘voluntary, self-imposed exile’ from the US and into Europe from September 1964, following ‘the seizure of the Fourteenth Street theatre by agents of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service’ in October 1963, and until their US tour in 1968-9. Despite Malina and Beck having to return to the US to serve prison sentences (of thirty and sixty days respectively during the winter of 1964-65), the company managed to tour a number of existing works to various cities across Europe during this time, and develop two new pieces: *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* and *Frankenstein* (Gottlieb 1966: 137-8).

movement, dialogue or scene that members of the public might decide to enact. However, the instruction then continues: ‘If this digresses from *the revolutionary theme* or from the plateau to which we have been brought by the Rite and the Vision, the actors then try to guide the scene back to *the meaning* of the Rung’ (Beck and Malina 1971: 45 – emphasis added). This quote is emblematic of a recurring problem for the Living Theatre: the incompatibility of the desire to generate an audience experience of creative, participatory presence and the ambition to communicate or transmit a single political message or final meaning. In contrast, and this is a point that will be developed towards the end of this chapter, we might argue that creative, participatory presence *is itself* political, insofar as it rejects the didactic relation to the audience prevalent in existing forms of so-called ‘political theatre’.

As Bottoms reports, Judson director Lawrence Kornfeld criticised what he saw as the disingenuous nature of the Living Theatre’s attempts to dissolve the actor-spectator distinction in the process of audience participation:

Those events that play amidst the people are playing a sleight-of-hand trick: they are trying to convince us that they are not separate from us, [like] a grown-up coming into the midst of children and playing with them as if there were no differences in age between them and the kids (Kornfeld in Bottoms 2006: 242).

But is Kornfeld being fair about the notion of the child in this analogy? In contrast, the Deleuzian position would argue that the molar category of ‘the child’ as defined by their age (what age? when do we stop/begin relating to the world like children?) covers over more fundamental relations of ‘childness’ that those categorised as ‘adults’ can implement in what Deleuze and Guattari call a ‘becoming-child’. This becoming has nothing to do with imitating a molar child - for instance, putting our hair in bunches - but by adopting new ‘childish’ relations to our bodies, to others, to the world. In turn, whereas for Kornfeld it is the fundamental distinction between ‘them’ (the actors) and ‘us’ (the audience) that is real – a distinction institutionalised by the very architecture of proscenium arch theatres – the Living Theatre’s attempts to ‘play amidst the people’,

indeed even to become indistinguishable from the audience, affirms a more primary relationality or becoming that precedes those fixed identities²⁵.

At the same time, participation was an important term for the May '68 revolutionaries who wanted to encourage people to become active participants in, rather than merely passive consumers of, the social. From this perspective we might suggest that audience participation is but the first step along the way to a more thoroughgoing dissolution of the audience-performer divide, the ultimate stage of which could be the creation of community theatres or 'people's theatres' in which those who were once the 'audience' no longer need the 'performers' to invite them to participate. Or further still, to pre-empt the route that Grotowski was to explore in his paratheatrical experiments and Allan Kaprow in his *Activities*, participation can be taken to the limit such that there is no performance, only an experienced event, such that there is nothing to *see* and nothing made to be seen by anyone other than the community of creators who generate the event. In contrast, and despite the stated ambition for *Paradise Now* to function as a reciprocally participatory 'voyage for the actors and the spectators' (Beck and Malina 1971: 5), much of the performance involves exercises undertaken by the actors – always in a 2:1 ratio, in which the audience participation is reserved to the final section of each 'Rung'. During much of the rest of the performance, the audience are re-positioned as spectators to the 'Rites' and 'Visions' enacted by the company.

However, from a different perspective, we could say that literal audience involvement is only one way to access the creative, participatory presence that the Living Theatre sought, and equally, that one ought not to equate the creativity of the audience with physical interaction rather than spectatorship. As Gerald Rabkin's critique of the group's 'continued reliance' on confrontational strategies in the 1980s demonstrates, it is also a *temporary* method that relies on unfamiliarity or unrecognizability for its disturbing effects²⁶. Novelty is effective and affective, or better effective *as* affective. In this regard, it seems important to note, as Rabkin does, that the Living Theatre were the first to present American audiences with new and unexpected uses of various theatrical elements; that they were the first to experiment with novel

²⁵ In *The Enormous Despair*, Malina recalls how in a Yale performance of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* in September 1968 'the long wait in the dark' was 'filled with the sentimental preaching of a lady of religious bent' whom a critic from Time Magazine mistakes for an actress with the company (Malina 1972: 30).

²⁶ As Rabkin notes 'There is, of course, no reason why an imaginative director cannot use the entire house, but it can no longer be assumed that that now familiar use is still provocative' (Rabkin 1984: 17).

forms of production and dramaturgy that have since become commonplace. For instance, Rabkin notes that *The Connection* was the first play he had ever seen which began ‘with the house and stage lights on, with the performers gradually moving onto the scene’ (Rabkin 1984: 11). Likewise, he notes the way in which the ‘virtually plotless’ and repetitive nature of *The Brig* presented a challenge to most American audiences’ views of what constituted ‘a play’ at the time (‘this was *not* a play!’) (ibid. 10).

Another of these ‘firsts’ was the company’s exploration of participation in their experiments with *collective creation*, their move from performing existing scripts to collaborative devising. In this way, we can suggest that differential presence concerns not only the relation between audience and event, but the relations between company members during the process of creating performance. Again, although clearly influenced by the wider context of ‘68 in many ways, the Living Theatre had already begun to create collectively prior to the strikes and the emergence of collective creation in French companies such as the Théâtre du Soleil and Le Folidrome. Beck and Malina claim that the Living Theatre found themselves working on a collective creation almost by accident in 1964, in the development of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, the first original production undertaken in their ‘exile’ period. According to Beck ‘Mysteries had no director’ – a shift in the nature of the company’s creative process that he presents as accidental, as something that happened to the company without them knowing or planning it (Beck 1972: n.p.). However, though collective creation might have happened to the Living Theatre by accident, by 1969 Beck was arguing that ‘the real work of the director in the modern theatre is to eliminate himself’ (Beck in Shank 2002: 36).

Whereas in previous productions the company had tended to use an authored script as the basis for performance, *Mysteries* was conceived as an opportunity for all company members to engage in the process of creative production, beyond the form of improvisation. Primarily, this participation took the form of lengthy, multiple discussions which the Living Theatre refer to as their ‘rehearsals’. In turn, published notes concerning *Paradise Now* document only the first five of one hundred general discussions in which all company members participated. According to Beck, discussions such as these became ‘an integral part’ of the company’s ‘working method, and were the source material out of which *Mysteries*, *Frankenstein*, *Paradise Now*, and

the mise-en-scene for *Antigone* were created' (The Living Theatre 1969: 90). These notes also emphasise that these participatory discussions did not tend to lead to instances of 'absolute communion' between the actors, as much as disagreements and debates – demonstrating the difficulty involved in putting the idea of connecting heterogeneous parts into practice. For instance, there are the divergent opinions of company members around the question of how social change happens, the relation between social and individual repression, and the role that theatre might play in undoing these repressions²⁷.

So, collective creation was often a lengthy and somewhat painful process for the Living Theatre given their diverse backgrounds and differing views, allowing Bradford D. Martin to suggest that

the often frustrating tedium of collective creation parallels the New Left's experiences with consensus-based decision-making in trying to constitute a process of working that reflected the egalitarian sentiments of participatory democracy (Martin 2004: 68).

However, if what matters most is the participation of all company members in the process of creating a work, then there is no reason to position 'agreement' or 'consensus' as the goal of that process. Company member Henry Howard once remarked that "The whole company has thirty political ideologies and there has to come out of it one front – not one mind because the thirty of us are never going to agree" (ibid., 69). In turn we might suggest that the resulting 'front' is a differential creation rather than a self-identical presence that represents a single concept. Of course, in this sense, collaboration or collective creation is not opposed to working alone, but to any practice structured by a transcendent authority that is positioned 'outside' the creative process. In the famous opening sentence of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze recalls his and Guattari's last collaboration: 'The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd' (Deleuze and Guattari

²⁷ One of the company members, Gene Gordon, expresses doubts about the power of theatre in the face of the contemporary socio-political climate, saying – 'I see the rise of fascism again. I find it difficult to work on a play about Paradise Now without working on the real problems of fascism – money war wages... To change the world we have to get rid of money and governments' (The Living Theatre 1969: 94-95). While another, Henry Howard, argues that *Mysteries* and *Antigone* have already dealt with these problems and that the ambition now should be to 'create a play that will change... the outlook' (ibid.).

1988: 3). Individual presence is always already differentiated, for Deleuze and Guattari, though not on account of the penetration of representation but because of what they conceive as the material, vital difference that runs through all bodies.

3. Theatres of immanence: exit the transcendent author, director, spectator

We will continue to consider the Living Theatre's collective creation at the start of this third section, but now from the perspective of thinking differential presence as constituted by specifically immanent rather than transcendent relations between creator and created. What does Deleuze's concept of 'immanence' have to contribute to our understanding of differential presence? In order to address this question we need to begin with a theoretical introduction to the concept of immanence itself. After this we will attempt to evaluate the extent to which Beck and Malina were able to relinquish a transcendent, directorial position in favour of establishing differential presence as an immanent relation to others and to difference. Here, we shall examine three elements of the Living Theatre in turn: their creative process, their communal style of living and their relation to their audience in performance.

Deleuze calls immanence 'the very vertigo of philosophy' and indeed, this highly elusive concept can be seen, as Christian Kerslake argues, as '*the* problem inspiring his work' (Kerslake 2002: n.p. – emphasis added). Giorgio Agamben, in turn, suggests that, for Deleuze, immanence is both that which must and cannot be thought (Agamben in Khalfa 2003: 158). The plane of immanence is what Deleuze himself calls 'the not-external outside and the not-internal inside' of thought (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 60). But perhaps the easiest place to begin in order to generate an opening definition of the concept is by looking at immanence as that which is opposed to 'transcendence'. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari propose their own thought as an alternative to the 'illusion of transcendence' perpetuated by much of the history of philosophy, whether in the form of a transcendent God or a transcendent subject who occupies a place outside the material world. As May explains, philosophies of transcendence are committed both to dualism – the idea of Being as composed of two, interactive types of substance such as 'mind' and 'matter' – and to the idea of the primacy of one of these ontological substances over the other (May 2005: 28-29). In contrast, philosophies of immanence like Spinoza's as well as Deleuze's, are based on

the notion of univocity – the idea that “‘being” (or “Being”) is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said’, and the rejection of any hierarchical, ontological distinctions (ibid., 34). Although such a position seems to imply the eradication of differences, Deleuze is able to nuance the definition of univocal being in order to embrace the principle of immanence within his philosophy of difference. Without getting lost in the technicalities of Deleuze’s engagement with Spinoza, we can say that this nuancing involves a refusal of any distinction between worldly products and a transcendent producer, between agent and event, in favour of the notion of being as a processuality ‘immanent in whatever manifests it’ (Deleuze 1990: 16). Or again, ‘Being is said in a single and the same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself’ (Deleuze 1994: 36).

In a recent essay, Holland has helpfully demonstrated the pertinence of this articulation of the relation between immanence and transcendence for establishing differences between modes of creative practice, in his case between classical symphony performance and jazz. Holland argues that

The classical symphony orchestra requires a transcendent instance of command in the figure of the conductor to guarantee coordination, whereas coordination arises more spontaneously and in a manner immanent to the group activity in jazz. Classical music entails a social division of labour whereby some merely execute what others (composers and conductors) conceive and command (Holland 2006: 195).

In the same way, the figures of both the author and the director might be said to function as transcendent authorities in the conventional theatre. In contrast, both in the process of collective creation, and in the company’s arrival at it as a way of working, the Living Theatre’s emphasis is on ‘emergence’. That is, they treat process – whether it is a company’s process or a production’s process - as a self-organising system that will generate its own unpredictable creations without need of a transcendent design or author. In collective creation, Beck suggests

a group of people comes together. There is no author to rest on who wrests the creative impulse from you... We sit around for months

talking, absorbing, discarding, making an atmosphere in which we not only inspire each other but in which each one feels free to say whatever he or she wants to say... In the process a form presents itself (Beck 1972: n.p.).

Beck also suggests that the final work will always be more than the sum of its parts and, as such, cannot be quantified in terms of individual contributions. Indeed, he suggests that contributions as such cannot be measured: 'The person who talks least may be the one who inspires the one who talks most. At the end no one knows who was really responsible for what, the individual ego drifts into darkness... everyone has greater personal satisfaction than the satisfaction of the lonely 'I''(ibid.).

Equally, in collective creation, there is no longer an isolated director who stands outside of the work and manipulates the performers as the pliant material of his vision. In this sense, the processes of collective creation used to make work during 'the exile period' might be productively contextualised by the caricatured role assigned to the director in the company's creation of *The Brig*. *The Brig* was a 'play' by the young ex-Marine, Kenneth Brown, which presented itself as a document of a day in a US Marine prison in Japan in 1957. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, *The Brig* presents a vision of one of the most extreme manifestations of top-down, State organisation. The world of *The Brig* is one that strives, as far as possible, to restrict life to processes of reproduction or the repetition of sameness. Any perceptible variation in the performance of a regulated movement or speech is suppressed through fear and punishment. Unpredictability, we are shown, is the privilege of the guards who interrupt the prisoners' performances of orders, indulge in unexpected outbursts of violence and sometimes impose additional, arbitrary amendments to the regulations to express the relations of power between them and the inmates. When one prisoner, 'twenty six' (or 'James Turner' as he reminds the guards he is actually called), acts similarly unpredictably he is promptly ejected from the brig world to face an uncertain, but no doubt unpleasant, future. For Beck and Malina, Pierre Biner suggests, 'the brig was the image of the world as a whole and, by analogy, of such microcosms as the school, the family, the factory, the state' (Biner 1972: 68), and, arguably, the institution of the theatre. Indeed, it was exactly because of this sense of theatre's complicity with the State's transcendent relation to its citizens that the student protesters occupied the Odeon Theatre during May '68.

Given this interest in collective creation, as a process that generates a self-differing performance irreducible to the intentions of any one authorial subject, it seems strange that – as we have already noted – the company still sought to control the political ‘meaning’ of the various Rungs of *Paradise Now*. Furthermore, it would be inaccurate to describe the Living Theatre’s practices purely in terms of immanent presence, not least because of the perpetually central role that Beck and Malina played in the composition of works – albeit against their best intentions. That is, despite the Living Theatre’s attempts to create collectively, to genuinely collaborate in the absence of the judgment of a director, traces of transcendence remained. For example, although Beck describes *Frankenstein* (1965) as a collective creation in an interview with Biner, he also acknowledges that during ‘the last five or six weeks’ before its performance in Venice, he and Malina broke off from the rest of the company to work on the piece’s overall structure. ‘It was no longer possible to have twenty-five directors on stage. The pieces of the puzzle had to be assembled. Judith and I were holed up in the hotel room’ (Beck in Biner 1972:160). Beck goes on to say that the same situation occurred before *Paradise Now*, and many commentators have since argued that the company’s operations were less decentralised than they were claimed to be. Robert K.Sarlós, for example, argues that in the case of *Paradise*, Beck and Malina ‘ended up dominating and manipulating the anarchistic collective’ (Sarlós 1982: 167). Similarly, in relation to the 1970s period when the Living Theatre split into four separate ‘cells’, Rabkin argues that ‘the disappearance of the non-Beckian cells after the 1970 declaration’ exactly confirms the unequal importance of the Beck and Malina in relation to the other company members (Rabkin 1984: 18). Even a sympathetic commentator like Paul Ryder Ryan made similar remarks in relation to the rehearsals for the play-cycle *The Legacy of Cain*, inviting us to consider the pragmatics of immanence as collective creation:

While in theory Malina and Beck have tried to stay in the background and let the collective assume the directing leadership, in practice they find themselves guiding the rehearsals a great deal, mainly because they have more experience than other members of the group (Ryan 1974: 18)²⁸.

²⁸ In interviews with Biner, Beck also acknowledges that he and Malina control the casting for every production (Biner 1972: 165).

And yet, it is noteworthy that Deleuze's own essay 'One Less Manifesto' forces us to question whether a top-down directorial approach is necessarily at odds with the project to liberate desire as creative production insofar as, here, Deleuze happily affirms Bene's notably dictatorial, directorial methods. We might say then that collective creation *can* lead to relations of immanence, but that many things can be collective creation. What matters is not the presence or absence of a director, but *how* we approach directing or the *nature* of that director. He argues that: 'It is of little consequence that the actor-author-director exerts influence and assumes an authoritarian manner, even a very authoritarian one' (Deleuze 1997: 54). Because of the 'minoritarian' nature of the work that Bene is trying to make, Deleuze argues,

This would be the authority of perpetual variation in contrast to the power or despotism of the invariant. This would be the authority, the autonomy of the stammerer who has acquired the right to stammer in contrast to the 'well-spoken' majority (ibid.).

The political function of the minor theatre as Deleuze sets it up, is to awaken a "minority-consciousness" in its audience or to enlist the audience in a "becoming-minority" by putting all the elements of theatrical representation – character, gesture, enunciation – into variation. If a dominant director is needed to construct such a theatre, then so be it, Deleuze seems to imply; whatever way works.

As we've seen, Holland's article also emphasises the social nature of cultural activities, the way in which activities like jazz or theatre 'induce a certain division of labour' or style of social organisation that contributes to the wider organisation of the social field (Holland 2006: 195). In this sense, it is not just that theatre can function as a microcosm of the social in the event of performance. Rather, theatre can be understood to have a socio-political dimension in terms of the style of organisation manifested in its creative process. From this perspective we might say that the Living Theatre's processes of collective creation suggest a 'social ideal' of bottom-up rather than top-down organisation and the integration of difference into group production. Indeed, Rabkin suggests that this might be the best way to understand *Paradise Now* and the transformation of the Living Theatre as a company during 'the exile period'.

It was no longer a theatre in the formal sense; it was a tribe, a commune. The new performers on stage... were not primarily artists sharing in a collective effort, but members of a family cultivating alternative modes of living. And... why not? The violent, polarized society we lived in then demanded new strategies (Rabkin 1984: 13).

And the Living Theatre actively publicised this way of life – as a non-nuclear family or self-organized community. For instance, in *The Living book of the Living Theatre*, there are as many images of the group cooking together or looking after children, as there are of the productions themselves. In this way, while Rabkin retains a distinction between art and life, the company themselves could be seen as early proponents of the idea of art *as* the creation of ways of living, a concept that has since become of central importance for contemporary art practice²⁹. That is, just as Beck and Malina worked hard to withdraw themselves from playing the role of director as transcendent producer through collective creation, they also resisted becoming leaders of the Living Theatre as a form of social organisation. Instead, they sought to establish their presence immanently, by merging into the community in their daily life as much as in their rehearsals.

The immanence/transcendence dyad can also help us to address the company's ambivalent and perpetually shifting relation to their audiences. At times, The Living Theatre's rhetoric appears to be premised upon an implicit God's eye view on society; as if they feel able to position themselves outside the world-prison that they critique. As 'priest' or 'shaman', the Living Theatre actor seems to be figured as a portal to transcendence; as the one who can lead the audience to a paradisiacal world elsewhere. And yet, at other times, Beck and Malina re-affirm their commitment to and participation in actuality. For example, in an interview with Biner, they say that the decision to perform *Antigone* (1967) in 'ordinary work clothes' rather than "'polite' bourgeois costume' was conceived to emphasise their immanent relation to 'the public' and to the very system from which their work attempts to take flight. The performance does not constitute a critique of society 'from the height of a pedestal or from outside,' Beck argues. 'We feel as responsible for the state of things as does the public. We are not doing enough to effect a change for the better'. The only way that theatre can effect

²⁹ Examples of this can be found in a wide range of contemporary visual art practice, including the Dutch group Atelier Van Lieshout (<http://www.ateliervanlieshout.com/>), or the Croatian group Red Plan.

change, he continues, is if it is made ‘*with* the public...What we are saying to the public is, We are with you, among you...’ (Beck in Biner 1972: 159-160).

But both the philosophy and theatre of immanence has a long tradition of transcendent thinking to contend with. And indeed, theatre historian David Wiles has emphasized the extent to which philosophy and theatre impacted upon one another in this regard. For instance, Wiles calls the divide between active actor and passive spectator ‘the Cartesian theatrical dichotomy’ (Wiles 2003: 7) since it was Descartes who ‘cultivated the detached scientific gaze: reality viewed from a non-place somewhere on the margins’ (ibid., 4). Descartes’ philosophy conceived of the mind as somewhat like a ‘miniature theatre’ in which an ego or self ‘could contemplate reality and decide how to deal with it, before sending appropriate messages down... to the body’ (ibid.). Human thought was not understood as *in* the world, or as *part of* the world but as a separate representative system that produced and responded to its own images of reality.

Likewise the theatre came to be conceived as a Cartesian space in which the passive spectator could view the on-stage reality at a remove, with their gaze directed by ‘the focalizing lens created by a proscenium arch’. In this way, the spectator’s gaze was ‘directed towards a stage and via the perspectival décor towards a Euclidian infinity’ (ibid., 8); or as Mike Pearson has argued, the proscenium arch theatre can be thought of as a ‘spatial machine’ that positioned the spectator as the transcendent observer of the performance as object (Pearson in Wiles 2003: 2). As such, Descartes can be seen as a ‘seminal figure in the history of western theatre’ particularly with regard to its spatial organization. Within this ‘ocular space’, Wiles explains

The invisible ego not only views the action but also quells the actor with the controlling power of its gaze. It does not submit to any embodied immersion in space – space as apprehended through kinetics, smell, sonic vibrations or an osmosis running through packed shoulders (Wiles 2003: 7).

Wiles’ characterization of immersive space here immediately suggests links to the Living Theatre’s work during the exile period – such as the activation of olfactory space through the use of incense in *Mysteries*. It also invokes the space of *Paradise Now* in

which there was often no single focal point to direct the audience's gaze, and the crowd tended to arrange and rearrange itself in multiple, self-organized formations.

To return briefly to the process/content distinction that we introduced in the methodological section, one might object that the means that the company developed to instantiate differential presence as a relation of immanence between actors and audience now seem too literal, clichéd, or simply flawed. For instance, in *Mysteries* where the actors famously 'died' in the aisles, being literally among the audience *spatially* was hoped to affirm the reality of being among them *ontologically*. But while such an example may be fairly easily rehabilitated as a pioneering instance of what has since become a clichéd, and as such inoperative mode of crossing the audience-actor threshold, it is perhaps harder to locate the value for the theorisation of immanent presence of the company's more confrontational modes of audience address. Famously, what starts as whispering in the opening of *Paradise Now* turns into the increasingly frustrated shouting of interdictions, by the actors at the audience: 'I'm not allowed to travel without a passport'; 'I'm not allowed to take my clothes off'; 'I'm not allowed to smoke marijuana'. Having been among the audience, barely distinguishable from the audience, the company then seem to go to the opposite extreme: positioning themselves as external to individual audience members in a manner that recalls the relation between the officers and prisoners in *The Brig*.

And yet, even these outbursts can be re-evaluated as resistances to the law as the ultimate form of transcendent organisation. Moreover, we noted at the start the extent to which May '68 and the associated themes of desire and liberation from oppression act as points of connection between The Living Theatre and Deleuze and Guattari. However, the methodological section of this chapter also gave a preliminary indication of the point we can expand upon now: the extent to which the reader must subtract the specifically '68 contents of both *Anti-Oedipus* and *Paradise Now* in order to locate their lasting relevance. What concerns us long-term are not the specific 'routes' that the Living Theatre or Deleuze & Guattari may have temporarily recommended in the pursuit of differential presence, or what this chapter variously conceives as presence as participation, immanence, production and community. For example, both The Living Theatre and Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the perception altering capacity of drugs to destabilise the role of conscious thought as the transcendent 'director' of the actor's experience. Again, in an interview with Biner, Beck argues that most

contemporary actor trainings remain on ‘the level of conscious interpretation’, the actor tends to draw only on his conscious experiences. As Biner reports, the Living Theatre reproaches the popularised and highly selective version of Stanislavski propounded by the “Method” in particular, ‘for its total reliance on rationality and psychology and upholds the premise that life unfolds on various, diverse levels that are intricately interconnected and also simultaneous’ (Biner 1972: 97); ‘The world of conscious experience is not enough’ (Beck 1972: n.p.).

And the practical implications of this premise can be seen in the Living Theatre’s aspiration to access unconscious levels of perception, and their suggestion that one way to achieve this state is through the use of drugs.

I believe that the bourgeois government have forbidden [drugs]... because they are afraid and want everybody to remain in the prison in which we live permanently. Perhaps what one learns with drugs is more real than what one learns with the drug of education, of politics, of language, of words (Beck in Biner 1972: 93).

Likewise in another text, Beck ‘proposes the systematic use of psychedelic drugs to “enable one to begin to associate differently in the head, remember differently, learn time differently” (Beck in Innes 1981: 272). This idea of drugs as a way to access unconscious modes of perception, and to bring thought and experience into a more immanent relation with the movement of the world, is also addressed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Here, Deleuze and Guattari report on the experiences of Artaud and the Beats that drugs can facilitate the leap from what they call ‘the plane of organization’ – characterized by the perception of discrete ‘things’ – to that of ‘consistency’ or ‘immanence’ – characterised by the perception of a primary relationality prior to ‘things’. For Deleuze and Guattari, drugs provide one means to perceive presence as movement and, as such, they can act as an agent of becoming. All drugs, they say, whether ‘hallucinatory or nonhallucinatory, hard or soft’, allow the imperceptible to be perceived, the direct investment of desire in perception and the perceived, and render perception molecular (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 282). In other words, ‘drugs eliminate forms and persons’: the molar entities that shape our perception as long as we occupy the transcendent plane of organization. In contrast, molecular perception perceives the world immanently, as ‘speeds and slownesses without form, without

subject, without a face' which Deleuze and Guattari describe as 'the moment when desire and perception meld' and in which the 'unconscious as such is given' (ibid., 283).

And yet at the same time, *A Thousand Plateaus* takes care to warn us that drugs cannot be presumed to have fully predictable effects – 'drugs do not guarantee immanence' (ibid., 286) – any more than the elimination of the director might in relation to the production process. If the actor having a new experience of time is one possible outcome of drug-taking, then 'the glassy body of the addict' is another (ibid., 285). As a more cautious Deleuze and Guattari remind us in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we must be careful not to reify hallucinogenic drugs for instance, as the *only* way to arrive at an immanent relation to the world, as transferable objects that will function in the same way despite the new contextual relationships composing them. Why not 'succeed in getting drunk, but on pure water' or 'succeed in getting high, but by abstention,' they suggest (ibid., 286)?

We will stay with this theme of unconscious reality as we move into the next section, which will begin by looking specifically at *Anti-Oedipus* in order to redraw a parallel between the unconscious and theatre, though as a site of production rather than the representation of the real.

4. Theatres of production: contacting reality beyond representation and enactment

Within this fourth section, we will address how the Deleuzian concept of 'production' contributes to our theorization of differential presence. First, we need to explore the notion of production by looking more closely at *Anti-Oedipus*, and its central argument that the unconscious is a site of production rather than representation, a factory not a theatre. Secondly, it will be argued that we can move from this apparently anti-theatrical notion of production towards a concept of a 'theatre of production' as that which manufactures differential presence. Specifically we will look at four different ways in which the Living Theatre sought to construct such a theatre: their affective use of language; their concept of the body as defined by the power to think the unthought; their interest in chance techniques; and their experiments with improvisation. Thirdly, we will conclude this section with an attempt to complicate the notion of presence that emerges from the Living Theatre's opposition of 'enactment'

and ‘the act itself’ (Beck in Schechner et al 1969: 25). On this basis it will be proposed that *Paradise Now* constitutes what we might call the production of a ‘real fiction’ or a ‘fictional reality’ rather than either a representation or a self-present act.

How do you expose theatre and thought to the ‘outside’? How do you put them into contact with ‘a little real reality’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 334)? These are key questions for both the Living Theatre and Deleuze and Guattari, particularly in *Anti-Oedipus* which they describe as ‘calling for the rights of a new functionalism’ versus a dominant, psychoanalytic representationalism in relation to their chosen field of study: unconscious desire (Deleuze 2004b: 243). Importantly for this study, Deleuze and Guattari contrast the functioning of the unconscious with that of the theatre as that which is expressed through representation. Indeed, Deleuze suggests that:

Perhaps the most fundamental idea [of *Anti-Oedipus*] is that the unconscious ‘produces’. What this means is that we must stop treating the unconscious... like some kind of theatre where a privileged drama is represented, the drama of Oedipus. We believe the unconscious is not a theatre, but a factory... Saying the unconscious ‘produces’ means that it’s a kind of mechanism that produces other mechanisms. In other words, we believe the unconscious has nothing in common with theatrical representation, but with something called a ‘desiring-machine’ (ibid., 232).

Contra the theatre, unconscious desire manufactures machinic connections rather than representations as its ‘units of production’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 24); Deleuze and Guattari critique psychoanalysis because it ‘fails to grasp that the unconscious is a factory and not a theatre’ (Deleuze 2004b: 219). In other words, Deleuze and Guattari want to reevaluate the productions of unconscious desire – such as, the desire to become a horse shown by Freud’s patient ‘Little Hans’ – not as representations of meanings but as acts of creation³⁰. ‘The unconscious doesn’t mean anything’ Deleuze says (ibid., 221); desire ‘is perfectly meaningless’ (ibid., 232). As such, we do not need to interpret the unconscious as psychoanalysis seeks to do; rather, they say, ‘The problem is

³⁰ ‘Little Hans’ (whose real name was Herbert Graf) is the subject of Freud’s 1909 case study ‘The Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy’. Freud interpreted ‘Little Hans’’ sexual curiosity and ‘phobia’ of horses according to an Oedipal model of desire in which the horse is understood to represent the father. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Little Hans was engaged in a ‘becoming-horse’ that has nothing to do with the familial context (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 259).

knowing how the unconscious works. It is knowing how “desiring-machines” work, and knowing how to use those machines’ (ibid.).

In interviews responding to the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasise their view that psychoanalysis has mis-read the “pure lived experience” of schizophrenics (but also children and ‘the primitive’) by insisting upon interpreting their acts as representational. In contrast, they argue that schizophrenic experience constitutes living in its purest form: as a particular, “intensive” form of feeling (ibid., 238), an ‘almost unbearable... intense feeling of transition, states of pure, naked intensity stripped of all shape and form’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 18). Schizophrenia, Deleuze argues, ‘is a shocking and very very acute experience, an involuntary experience, of intensity and the passing of intensities’, that is articulated, for example, when ‘a schizophrenic says: “I feel I’m becoming a woman”’ (Deleuze 2004b: 238). These experiences tend to be described as either hallucinations or delirium, Deleuze and Guattari note; however, their own analysis conceives them as becomings: ‘intense nervous states’ through which the subject passes, but which cannot be said to belong to that subject. As they will go on to emphasise in *A Thousand Plateaus*, becomings – such as Judge Schreber’s ‘becoming-woman’ – have nothing to do with imitation: ‘Nothing here is representative; rather, it is all life and lived experience: the actual, lived emotion of having breasts does not resemble breasts, it does not represent them’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 19). Deleuze and Guattari argue that such becomings bring ‘the schizo as close as possible to matter, to a burning, living centre of matter’, to ‘that unbearable point where the mind touches matter and lives its every intensity’ (ibid., 19-20).

The apparently anti-theatrical remarks in *Anti-Oedipus*, and in the interviews Deleuze and Guattari gave about the book, must be read in the context of Deleuze’s affirmation elsewhere of the revolutionary power of theatre as nonrepresentative force; namely, in *Difference & Repetition* and ‘One Less Manifesto’, but also in other sections of *Anti-Oedipus* itself. We must be clear that it is not the theatre *per se* that Deleuze and Guattari reject, so much as a psychoanalytic model of the unconscious which conceives desire as producing ‘merely theatrical’ fantasies, rather than producing the real. ‘If desire produces,’ they argue ‘its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality... The objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself... To desire is to produce, to produce within the realm

of the real' (ibid., 26-27). In fact, they will go on to imply that actual theatres can manifest the liberation of desire insofar as they function as "theatres of production":

The movement of the theatre of cruelty; for it is the only theatre of production, there where the flows cross the threshold of deterritorialization and produce the new land – not at all a hope, but a simple 'finding', a 'finished design,' where the person who escapes causes other escapes, and marks out the land while deterritorializing himself (ibid., 322).

This idea of causing others to 'escape' (not the world, but representation, conscious thought, the plane of organization) through one's own escape was also Julian Beck's idea of the contagious way in which nonrepresentative theatre might work – perceptually and politically. For instance, in *The Life of the Theatre* he writes:

I am a slave who dreams of escape after escape, I dream only of escaping... of a thousand possible ways to make a hole in the wall, of melting the bars, escape escape, of burning down the whole prison if necessary.

And then again, he argues that: 'Great art means that you get swept, as if by wind (unseen forces) out of the solitary cells of the jails of suffering. Great art as the key for jailbreak... as key to creation' (Beck 1972: n.p.). The artist's escape has the purpose of unlocking creativity for others. In turn, despite the company's more didactic moments, Innes suggests that they did also think in terms of a politics *of* perception. For instance, he notes

their assumption... that spiritual change is the pre-condition for meaningful exterior political change; and that dealing with a social issue on its own terms will only perpetuate the established cycle of violence and oppression, of which it is a symptom (Innes 1981: 189).

Likewise, for Deleuze and Guattari, 'Everything is political' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 213); not only how we vote but 'modes of perception, kinds of actions, ways of

moving, life-styles, semiotic regimes' (ibid., 227). Every kind of power has a 'microtexture' to which their 'micropolitical' philosophy attends.

We will say more about the micropolitics of the Living Theatre in the fourth section. For now, let us return to the implications for theatre of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the psychoanalytic interpretation of the unconscious. On the one hand, it suggests that we might conceive the theatre as a "desiring-machine": as something that means nothing (or is not a representation of meaning) but works in and produces the real. In the Living Theatre's earliest works, we might suggest that they explored this nonrepresentative power of theatre through a poetic rather than communicational use of language, in their attempts to 'revive or recreate poetic drama for the contemporary world' (Aronson 2000: 51). Performing works by Gertrude Stein and Beat poets Kenneth Rexroth and John Ashberry, the company developed a poetic diction more concerned, as the Beats themselves were, with sound and rhythm than significance: "How can you enlarge the limits of consciousness if language atrophies?" Beck asked (Beck in Aronson 2000: 55). For Beck and Malina, it was only this poetic rather than everyday usage of language that could reconnect listeners with the unconscious. This concern with the asignifying aspects of language arguably re-emerges in the exile period, for instance with the performance of "Street Songs" in *Mysteries*: 'an incantatory poem by Jackson MacLow based on the chants of the anti-war and civil rights movements ("Stop the war," "Freedom Now," "Free the blacks," etc.)' (Aronson 2000: 71). Dismissed as 'fiercely adolescent and rhetorical insurrection' by critic Richard Gilman (in Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 65), the company's use of simple slogans as performance text tends to be construed as failing to recognise the complexity of political conditions. But surely we could equally suggest that, given the company's prior concerns with the poetic, the point is that even these most apparently communicational or informational language units – slogans – are performative qua incantation, rather than representation.

However, we must be clear here that this concern with the asignifying or affective usage of language is not an indication that the Living Theatre were making a theatre for the irrational body, as distinct from, or as opposed to the rational mind (as some German audiences apparently concluded on watching *Mysteries*).³¹ On the

³¹ In *The Life of the Theatre*, Beck reports: 'When we played the *Mysteries* in Berlin in 1965, the German audience cried out: "You are using the same techniques that the Nazis used! the same mass hypnosis! the

contrary, we know that they thought in terms of the body as doing its own kind of thinking. In turn, although the Living Theatre devoted a great deal of time to discussion in the preparation of *Paradise Now*, it is important not to over-emphasise the role of ‘talk’ in the company’s methodology. Equally important are physical exercises, improvisations and experiments that allow the body to introduce new ideas during the rehearsal process. Correlatively, though the company are known for their ‘willful disregard for actor training’ and particularly for their rejection of the acting conventions associated with the then dominant “Method” school (Aronson 2000: 60), it would be a mistake to think they were uninterested in the knowledge and indeed the ‘unknowing’ of the actor’s performing body. Echoing the Spinozist mantra oft-repeated by Deleuze – “we do not yet know what a body can do” – Beck argues that the theatre can help people ‘to find out what it is to have a body, and to begin to use and make joy with it’ (Beck 1972: n.p.). Indeed for Deleuze, following Spinoza, the affect of ‘joy’ involves the increase of the body’s lived power or power to act; joy is the intensification of life as creativity.

The important point here is that the Living Theatre saw the body as a site of creation, in Deleuze’s sense; that is, as the locus of the new or unthought, not because it is made meaningful by a transcendent subject but because the body itself has powers of differentiation, the power to differ from itself that Deleuze conceives in terms of ‘virtuality’. It is this virtual dimension of actual things which lies at the heart of Deleuze’s critique of *hylomorphism* – ‘the doctrine that production is the result of an ... imposition of a transcendent form on a chaotic and/or passive matter’ (Protevi 2001: 8). In contrast, Deleuze’s thought ‘emphasizes the self-organizing properties of ‘matter-energy’’ (Marks 2006: 4). This self-organizing, creative aspect of matter, including the matter of the performing body, is conceived by Deleuze as the difference or line of variation running through all things. Such a perspective is also echoed in remarks made by Beck about the Living Theatre’s rehearsal processes; for instance, his comment that: ‘...Whenever we work physically we find things that we could never find if we did nothing but think’. Or again: ‘Exercise should not be used to train the body to express the banal. We want things not yet known to the controlled consciousness which is

same appeal to emotional response and that’s dangerous! You have to be rational! When Julian Beck sits in the middle of a stage, lit by a spotlight directly over his head and hypnotizes us with magnetic voice and you enchain us by repeating slogans until we echo them... you rob us of our rational ability to see the world, to assess it and act accordingly. You make us into brainless animals. We don’t want to feel, we want to think’ (Beck 1972: n.p.).

ruining us' (Beck 1972: n.p.). A further, more specific example comes from the Rite of Rung VII in *Paradise Now*, in which the actors are described as reaching

as far as they can toward the creation of new sounds and new sound relationships. They listen closely to one another; they experiment in the use of their vocal chords and voice boxes in creating sounds and sound relationships which are, so far as they are consciously aware, not in their usual range of sounds (Beck and Malina 1971: 122).

The creation of new sound was also an element of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, during a section of which 'The actors began to play an organ that was in the theatre and to create sounds with every element and part of the theatre they could' (Aronson 2000: 72). The actors experiment in order to find out what the body of the theatre building can do – in becoming-musical-instrument rather than being a house of representation.

The idea of generating a theatre of creation rather than reproduction was something that the Living Theatre had been experimenting with for some time. For example, in *The Marrying Maiden* (1960), they had explored the potential of chance techniques. As Biner explains,

The Marrying Maiden turned out to be almost entirely different from one performance to the next. The author [Jackson MacLow], drawing on the rules of chance of the hexagrams in the I Ching, constructed six dialogue-and-character scenes. He provided a series of directions for the actors consisting of five degrees of vocal volume and five degrees of tempo in delivery. And, he specified, by means of a hundred adverbs and adverbial phrases, the tone in which certain words or groups of words were to be spoken – with gaiety, sorrow, and other emotions following each other solely by chance (Biner 1972: 55).

Malina then built on MacLow's explorations of chance, adding a dice thrower into the structure, whose throws determined the sequence of the performance and interjections of a recording created by John Cage. As Biner reports, each time the dice thrower threw a five, 'the tape recorder was activated – Cage's "music" actually consisted of a taped

reading of the play, with certain parts electronically distorted by Cage but most of the text remaining audible' (ibid.). In this collaboration with Cage, we can see that the company's evaluation of experiment and commitment to creation as the production of the new operates not just in individual performances but in their attitude to theatre in general. Like Allan Kaprow, who we will discuss in Chapter Three, and Deleuze and Guattari, the Living Theatre were always committed to experimentation as the aesthetic value par excellence. When the Living Theatre began, Malina envisaged it as a theatre that would operate at 'the highest level of artistic adventure, the highest level of experiment' in order to bring the existing field of theatre (which she described as 'a little retarded') up to the level of the aesthetic risk-taking that she perceived to be going on in dance, music, painting and poetry (Malina in Bottoms 2006: 24-25). By working with artists like Cage and MacLow, the Living Theatre produced theatre as a new assemblage transformed by its connection to other disciplines.

The Living Theatre also sought to instantiate creation through improvisation. In contrast, Innes' insistence upon a fundamental 'incompatibility of improvisation and art' reinstates the dualist, two-worlds view that Deleuze rejects (Innes 1981: 198). 'Art', Innes seems to suggest, is a kingdom within a kingdom: a separate sphere of conscious, mindful creation that operates independently of the accidental, chaotic process of improvisation. But as Holland suggests, improvisation need not be conceived as the embrace of chaos over order, but as a process that allows self-organised order to *emerge*, rather than being imposed from without. This constitutes a new attitude to the event of performance, understood not as a representation of a prior creativity but as an act of creation in a manner that establishes connections with the Living Theatre's aim to break with performance as enactment of an existing script. Malina has suggested that the Living Theatre's real commitment to improvisation emerged with their production of *The Brig*, which the company first performed in May 1963. 'A great deal of *The Brig* is improvisatory,' she states. 'Every time an actor playing a prisoner steps on a line there is an improvisation, every time an actor playing a prisoner has an open button there is an improvisation' (Malina et al 1964: 212). And after *The Brig* then, Beck argues, 'It would never again be possible for us not to improvise. We would have to construct plays with forms loose enough so that we could continue to find out how to create life rather than merely repeat it' (Beck 1972: n.p.).

As David Wiles has discussed, commercial theatre tends to treat the “work” or show as an ‘ontological constant’, as a commodity that stays the same as itself night after night, and no matter where, when or in relation to whom it is performed (Wiles 2003: 1). In contrast, it was in relation to *Paradise Now* that the Living Theatre most clearly articulated their aim to create a theatre of production or creation, rather than reproduction:

We said in preparing *Paradise Now*... that we would not reproduce something but we would try to create an event in which we would always ourselves be experiencing it... not reproducing and bringing to life the same thing again and again and again but always it would be a new experience for us and it would be different from what we call acting’ (Beck in Schechner et al 1969: 25).

As Beck suggests here, this notion of the work as becoming rather than being constitutes a different kind of relation between performer and “work”, in which acting is reconceived as a process of living rather than representing. In contrast to the theatre of reproduction, in which the actor presumes to have the controlling power to repeat the known or to reanimate a self-present past, in the theatre of production the actor encounters the performance as an unknown, self-creating process the future life of which is always uncertain.

In the same interview with Schechner, however, the company speak of this non-representative theatre in terms of a shift from ‘enactment’ to ‘the act itself’ in a manner that falls back on a binary between self-present reality and alienating representation, or real life and illusory fiction, which we will never find in Deleuze (ibid.). Equally problematic are productions like *The Connection* (1959), in which The Living Theatre seemingly sought to access reality through the most obvious means: in this case, by putting ‘real’ drug users on stage (albeit within a meta-theatrical structure that made it extremely difficult for the audience to say with any certainty which aspects of the performance were ‘real’ and which were ‘fictional’). As Bottoms reports, ‘production anecdotes suggest that some members of Freddie Redd’s quartet – the jazz ensemble who played live onstage during the performance – were indeed drug users, and that, on occasion, one or other of them would pass out, for real, during the performance’ (Bottoms 2006: 29). But as John Mullarkey has discussed, it would be a mistake to

think that the ‘direct exploitation (manipulation) of the Real’ in this way is ‘*the way to [create] reality*’ in performance, given the view that reality is differential rather self-identical presence. Fiction employs ‘all the resources of the unreal (performance)’ in a manner that ‘succeeds all the more in the mimicry of reality’s own perpetual movement. Reality is not like itself either, but is what always mimics or coincides with itself only in part’ (Mullarkey 2009: 203-204). In other words, from a Deleuzian point of view, we err if we attack representation on the basis that it distorts the truth of the otherwise self-identical presence of reality (as here and now). Attack representation, but only in order to liberate a self-differing reality from being petrified in immobile images or static concepts, since Deleuze’s brand of anti-representationalism does not construe presence in terms of the unmediated or as *access* to truth; nor, correlatively, does he equate ‘fiction’ or ‘mediation’ with representation.

With this argument in mind, we might suggest that *Paradise Now* was less a self-present act (‘the act itself’), and more what we might call a ‘real fiction’ or a ‘fictional reality’ – beyond the real/fictional duality of representationalism³². For instance, consider the closing sequence of the performance when the company announce that “The theatre is in the street”, lead the audience out of the theatre, and encourage them to break open the doors of local prisons. As we have already noted, ‘Beck and Malina asserted that they did not literally expect that the rush of spectators would, in fact, open the jails’ (Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 65); rather, we might conceive this gesture as an invocation of an anarchistic community that was missing or still to come. For Deleuze, the political function of art is not to raise the consciousness of an existing people or claim to produce theatre that represents a particular self-present class or nation – operating on what he calls the ‘macropolitical’ level. Rather art’s political task is to contribute to the invention of a people to come, of a community that is ‘missing’ to the extent that they ‘exist in the condition of a *minority*’ (Smith in Deleuze 1998: xlii). We will say more about this in the final section, which will consider differential presence in terms of notions of community.

³² There is a resonance here between my concept of ‘real fiction’ and Jill Dolan’s writing on the notion of ‘utopian performatives’ in her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005). Here Dolan argues that performance does not produce representations of utopias, but makes ‘palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better’ (Dolan 2005: 6 – emphasis added). She then goes on to suggest that ‘The politics [of performance] lie in the desire to feel the potential of elsewhere. The politics lie in our willingness to attend to or to create performance at all, to come together in real places... to explore in imaginary spaces the potential of the “not yet” and the “not here”’ (ibid., 20). In response, I would want to emphasise the immanence of this ‘elsewhere’ to actuality (and indeed, this will be emphasised in Chapter Four). The palpability of the visions to which Dolan refers suggests their differential presence, albeit a presence that resists recognition or identification.

5. Differential community: in search of an audience to come

Etymologically, the very term ‘community’ suggests an aspiration to identity rather than difference, unity rather than multiplicity, harmony rather than disjunction or rupture, and is associated with known conventions and rituals rather than improvised or experimental processes of relation³³. And indeed, we will now suggest that there is a tension in the Living Theatre between their double ambition to constitute the audience as immanent, creative participants in performance and to establish the relation they call ‘absolute communion’. If creativity is the production of difference, then absolute communion seems to repress creativity rather than encourage it. At the same time, if differential presence involves the perception and encounter with difference then it might at first seem more aligned with the *disruption* of community rather than with its creation.

However, in this fifth and final section, we shall propose that one can work towards a concept of ‘differential community’ as that which might name a collective experience of differential presence, or the nature of the community that differential presence invokes. To arrive at such a concept we need to draw together the notions of community that emerge from the Living Theatre and from Deleuze and Guattari, looking particularly at the idea of a people that are ‘missing’ and the concept of ‘becoming-minor’. Finally we will return to the recurring issue of the incompatibility between the Living Theatre’s overt political goals for their work and the necessarily unpredictable and unquantifiable nature of the theatre of participation, immanence and production which they were also involved in making.

In interviews with Biner, Beck suggests that ‘community is in some way the most important aspect of our work’ (Beck in Biner 1972: 163). As we have already seen, the structuring of *Paradise Now* as a series of participatory “Rites” evidences the Living Theatre’s interest in ritual as a performative form. However, this work can also be seen as a creative reinvention, both of the concept of ‘ritual’ and that of

³³ See Sue-Im Lee’s work on community in contemporary fiction, for example: ‘Befitting a concept central to the etymology of community, “communion” describes a spiritual union or meeting of souls, and this meaning continues to inflect the prevailing understanding of community as a condition of intersubjective continuity and transparency’ (Lee 2009: 24).

‘community’, of ritual as a performance with the power to bring forth a ‘people to come’ rather than as a ceremony that entrenches the values of an existing community. Re-reading the Living Theatre’s experiments retrospectively, perhaps we might now conclude that the people were ‘missing’, that they lacked the right audience for the work they were making, at the time when they were making it. Like Nietzsche or Artaud’s work, we could say that theirs was a theatre of the future that sought to *create* the community or people appropriate to it, rather than finding a ready-made audience already open to experiencing the processes that the work sets in motion. This constitutes a new idea of ritual contra the dominant anthropological view that defines ritual as the affirmation of the values of an existing community. And indeed, Solomon’s essay on the company’s more recent works suggests that the people are *still* missing. Discussing the Living Theatre’s *Utopia* (1995-6), a work which sought ‘to overcome the spectator’s disbelief in her own desires’ (Malina in Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 59), Solomon proposes that its ‘failure to find – and reach – an audience in New York’ had less to do with the arguable ‘failures’ of the production itself³⁴, and ‘more to do with the ideological climate and artistic expectations an audience brings to a performance’ (Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 60). What was missing in New York, she suggests, was a people with a common belief in, or openness to, an alternative to consumerism. What was there was cynicism, resignation and jadedness (ibid., 62)³⁵.

The notion of ‘a people’ and community was clearly important to the Living Theatre; ‘The Relation of the Artist to the Struggle of the People’ is, after all, the subtitle to Beck’s first notebooks, which were published in the same year as *Anti-Oedipus*. And while Beck’s language here echoes traditional Marxism, the Living Theatre’s own way of life and attitude to their audiences constitutes a more unconventional contribution to notions of community or social formation. Ultimately, Beck has stated, they wanted the community of the company ‘to function truly like an anarchist society... a society where the group is not sacrificed to the individual any more than the individual is to the group... a society without authority’ (Beck in Biner 1972: 163). The goal was not to represent such a community on stage, but to live as such a community – an idea that Aronson suggests came primarily from Beck and

³⁴ ‘True,’ Solomon admits ‘the production was not uniformly well acted, the text was not always easy to hear, and much of the imagery is bald and downright hokey’ (Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 60); but these superficial ‘failures’ cover over a more fundamental ‘failure’ that is the absence of an audience suitable to hear and feel what the Living are saying and doing.

³⁵ Here, Solomon is specifically discussing the presentation of *Utopia* in February 1996 ‘at a second space owned by the Vineyard Theater’ in New York (Solomon in Harding and Rosenthal 2006: 60).

Malina's early mentor, Paul Goodman (Aronson 2000: 53). And just as Beck and Malina made an effort to relinquish a directorial role in relation to the Living Theatre's productions, it seems that there may well also have been a hierarchy they needed to dismantle in the company's communal life: 'Judith and I make a real effort to disappear into the community, to blend into it. We wither away little by little, as we want the state to do' (Beck in Biner 1972: 164). At the very least, they surely achieved the organization of an anti-oedipal, or non-nuclear family that resisted the conventional triangulation of 'mommy-daddy-me' – the triangle of relations which psychoanalysis positions as the origin of desire.

The theme of community, a 'people', or 'the masses' and particularly the notion of a community for art as absent or 'missing' is also important for Deleuze and Guattari, most notably in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* but also in *A Thousand Plateaus* and Deleuze's 'One Less Manifesto'. The phrase itself: 'The people are missing' comes from the painter Paul Klee, and relates to his concern to create a work of art that escapes from the strata and territories of the earth to the 'deterritorialized, or rather deterritorializing, Cosmos' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 337). In order to do this, Deleuze and Guattari argue, Klee needs, but lacks, 'the forces of a people' (ibid.). Writing in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari argued that

...The relation of artists to the people has changed significantly: the artist has ceased to be the One-Alone withdrawn into him- or herself, but has also ceased to address the people, to invoke the people as a constituted force. Never has the artist been more in need of a people, while stating more firmly that the people is lacking... (ibid., 346).

This talk of a people has nothing to do with 'popular or populist artists' – who address their work to those who operate as the 'majority' in society (ibid.). Popular theatre, Deleuze likewise argues in 'One Less Manifesto', 'summons majority rule', which does not mean the power of the many over the few (otherwise flies would rule the world), but the constitution as 'minorities' of all those who deviate from the standard measure of the system of representation: 'Man – white, Christian, average-male-adult-inhabitant of contemporary American or European cities' (Deleuze 1997: 253).

The theme of community is also addressed via their concept of 'becoming-minor'.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, madness operates between a reactionary and revolutionary pole, where the former veers towards a fascism in which the schizophrenic declares “I am a superior race”, and the latter towards a becoming-minor in which she states “I am an inferior race” (ibid., 235). Subsequently, in ‘One Less Manifesto’, Deleuze wrote of the power of Bene’s theatre to create a “minority consciousness” in its audiences, in a manner that resonates with this revolutionary pole of schizophrenia. In turn, we might note that this idea of becoming-minor is clearly stated in a more recent piece of street theatre by the Living Theatre, *Not in My Name* (1994) which closes with the cast singing text ‘based on lines from Eugene Debs: “While there is a lower class, I am in it... While there is a criminal element, I am of it...”’ (in Solomon 2006: 66). Here, the performers, like the schizophrenic, declare a solidarity with groups that deviate from the standard measure and are overruled by the ‘majority’. But for Deleuze, everyone has the potential to exceed or escape imposed identities in favour of enlisting in becoming or perpetual variation. And it is here, Deleuze says, that theatre can ‘surge forward with a specific, political function’ – not to represent a community but to create ‘a minority consciousness as a universal becoming’ (Deleuze 1997: 253-255). In this way, Deleuze suggests the possibility of a universal community created through performance, though one that is premised upon differential presence as a power to vary that we all have in common, rather than as *differences* that keep us apart. ‘The more we attain this form of minority consciousness,’ he argues ‘the less isolated we feel’ (ibid., 256).

Perhaps the Living Theatre’s greatest ‘failure’ emerges in the tension between their interest in opening performance to its (non-external) outside or the unknown through participation, improvisation and so forth, and the specific political goal they wanted to assign to performance as a revolutionary activity; the tension between the production of the new, that is by definition unpredictable and the desire to take control of creative processes in order to enact a particular outcome. This is no more apparent than in their documented responses to occasions when the audience ‘mis-behave’: for instance, at a performance at Berkeley on February 20th 1969. Following a day of clashes between student protesters and riot police, the audience for *Paradise Now* only wanted to dance, rather than to participate on the terms laid out by the company. Malina says ‘They were all doing their thing on stage, in the aisles, in the balcony. One by one exhausted actors staggered into the dressing rooms panting... “We can’t get through to them”. “They don’t hear us”’. The company’s statements of prohibitions are ‘crowded

out by the big party' and the play 'ends at the Fifth Rung' (Beck and Malina in Mantegna et al 1970: 72).

Discussing the work of the exile period, Beck and Malina describe their desired relationship to the audience as follows:

...We raise questions and we expect from the audience that together maybe we can find the answers. The answers are found together. That is, if we perform a ceremony, the solution of which can only be found in communication with each other, then what we want from the audience and ourselves is to reach that point at which the solution is found. We know it can only happen with absolute communion (Beck and Malina in Mantegna et al 1970: 24).

As Innes has remarked, such statements bare the traces of the Living Theatre's engagement with Grotowski, who argued that the 'relationship of perceptual, direct, 'live' communion between actor and spectator' was the essential condition of theatre (Grotowski 1968: 32). However, Beck and Malina also seem to equate this communion with the discovery of a *single* answer to a political question, or with the arrival at an ultimate solution understood as the product of an absolute unity between performers and audience. For Deleuze, in contrast, problems always have multiple solutions, which are the effects of difference rather than identity. Indeed, he theorised all kinds of human and inhuman bodies as 'responses to the complicating or "problematizing" force of life' (Colebrook 2002: 1). For example, Deleuze suggests that 'an organism is nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differentiated organs, such as the eye which solves a light "problem"' (Deleuze 1994: 211). But a photosynthesising plant or a camera are also solutions to the problem of light; as Colebrook summarises 'For Deleuze a "problem" is not a simple question that needs to find an answer; a problem is something that disrupts life and thinking, producing movements and responses' (Colebrook 2002b: xxxiv).

According to this definition, May '68 was certainly a 'problem' which disrupted the Living Theatre's thinking via the 'Parisian revolutionary kids' or *enragés* who connected with the company at the Avignon Festival that year. This was certainly a meeting of multiple solutions to the political problems of the time. For instance, Beck

reports that there were many among them who argued with the company ‘about Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, anarchism, various revolutionary viewpoints and... the whole question of violence-non-violence was a very rough one’ (Beck in Schechner et al 1969: 33). And yet, despite this disagreement, this absence of communion, Malina notes some kind of success at another level when she says that the *enragés* ‘can play *Paradise Now* like no other audience’. Although Beck argues that this was because they ‘understood the thing... and went with it’, we could also suggest that it is precisely because the Parisian ‘kids’ *did not* accept the message of the performance, that the conditions for a genuinely creative encounter were established. As the Becks themselves acknowledge in the same interview,

influence and influencing are such a mysterious mystique of a process... You do your work, and you try to make it as effective and affecting as possible; but there is something wrong about measuring the effect... Ultimately, effectiveness for us is potential effectiveness (Beck and Malina in Mantegna et al 1970: 72).

Affirming this mystery of relation, Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to shoot arrows, but not to assign them ‘a target or “aim”’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 378). This is not to say that performances cannot fail, or that in declining to assign a ‘target’ to their action, they are somehow without function or purpose; rather, for Deleuze, the *real* event is always a missed encounter rather than a moment of coincidence. As John Mullarkey argues: ‘We keep missing the event. Or rather, the event is in this constant missing, about to happen or having happened, but never happening’ (Mullarkey 2009: 144). The differential presence of the Deleuzian event is not ‘absolute communion’ but perpetual non-coincidence, where people fail to *meet* one another and yet are perpetually altered by one another.

As Irving Goh has discussed, the implicit idea of community in Deleuze and Guattari does not take the form of a ‘rigid or closed structure’ (Goh 2007: 221), but a grouping of heterogeneous elements that contains within it what Goh calls a force of ‘anti-community’ such that community is reconceived as groups that ‘affirm and exercise the freedom to come together or break away’ (ibid., 223). The community is not self-present but differentially present, perpetually deviating from, rather than reproducing, itself. As Goh puts it, it is ‘always already a question of... a community-to-

come that renders any representation of it as a cutting off of itself from the flow or passage' of an other, future community (ibid., 226); or as Deleuze and Guattari put it, 'an ambulant people of relayers... rather than a model society' (Deleuze and Guattari in Goh 2007: 226). And it is this kind of community, we could argue, that the Living Theatre invoke in performance and continue to pursue in their self-deviation as a company.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sought to rehabilitate aspects of the practice of the Living Theatre from a dominant narrative of 'failure', reframing them as pioneers of methods such as audience participation and collective creation, and arguing that their ambition in relation to these methods is irreducible to some simple pursuit of undifferentiated presence (as authenticity or communion). Aided by the Deleuzian concepts of ontological participation, immanence, production/creation and 'the people to come', we have demonstrated that the concepts of presence created by the Living Theatre are more complex than existing literature has suggested. And more broadly, we have begun to introduce the arguments in favour of conceiving presence as differential, but also, specifically, as a non-representational relation.

In the course of this opening chapter, we have emphasized the company's underlying concern to foster the creative participation of differential parts in the production of a whole – both in terms of an audience who are allowed to change the nature of a performance, and in terms of a company who collectively author a self-differing performance without the imposition of an overarching, transcendent vision. Rather than reiterating the persistent criticism of the company's artistic, metaphysical and political naivety, the chapter has positioned the Living Theatre as exemplary experimenters in relation to the problem of how to make oneself a theatre of immanence and production rather than representation and enactment, and as a company who create 'real fictions' or 'fictional realities' rather than either representations or self-present acts.

Finally, we drew from Deleuze and Guattari's writing around the relationship between art and 'the people' in order to align the Living Theatre with the concept of 'differential community' defined as a collective experience of differential presence, or

as a name for the nature of the community invoked by differential presence. The point here was to propose that the role of the theatre of differential presence is not to represent an existing community, but to summon forth a minor community that has difference rather than identity in common. Since the Living Theatre themselves have not provided us with ample examples of how this differential community might be produced in performance, we will return to this topic, particularly towards the end of Chapter Four.

For now though, we will move forward conceptually (although backwards chronologically) in order to address differential presence in the work of Antonin Artaud. Although perhaps even more in need of recuperation from the limits of deconstructive perspectives, Artaud's work will allow the opportunity to extend and deepen our analysis of the implications of differential presence for our conception of the relations between mind and body, thought and language, difference and authorship.

Chapter Two

How Do You Make Yourself A Theatre Without Organs?

Differential presence in Artaud

Introduction

The second chapter of this thesis will begin to flesh out the concept of differential presence that has been outlined so far, by way of a conjunction of Deleuze's work with that of the French actor, playwright, poet and theorist Antonin Artaud (1896-1948). Given the sheer scope of the Living Theatre's practical experiments, the opening chapter allowed us to generate a broad map of the variety of ways in which differential presence might be manifested in performance. Despite the acknowledged flaws in aspects of the company's thinking and the specific 'contents' of individual works, the Living Theatre were shown to have engaged with four key processes – discussed under the headings of participation, immanence, production and community – each of which contributed a distinct facet of understanding to the concept of differential presence rather than self-presence. With this wide-ranging exploration in place, we are now in a position to go into more detail and complexity regarding the nature of differential presence.

Artaud is, of course, best known for *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), the book that collects a number of important texts outlining his conception of theatre, including the first and second manifestos for 'The Theatre of Cruelty'. Although this chapter will draw from these better-known texts, it will largely focus on the radio play *To have done with the judgment of god*, as well as discussing Artaud's 'translation' of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky', which he worked on during the summer of 1943 (Sontag 1976: 447). *To have done with the judgment of god* was recorded in 1947, a year after Artaud finally returned to Paris having been in psychiatric institutions for the past nine years, but was never publically broadcast before his death in 1948 (at least not in the way that Artaud had hoped) (Schumacher 1989: 188). Although it has become commonplace to argue that Artaud failed to achieve in practice what he set out to do in theory – or, to make manifest his manifestos – this chapter will argue that *To have done with the judgment of god* exemplifies differential presence in performance, or what I shall also call 'the theatre

without organs'. This hybrid concept uses the concept of 'the body without organs' as a tool to come at the theorisation of differential presence in theatre from a new direction. As is well known, the phrase itself comes from the final section of *To have done with the judgment of god*, in which Artaud declares that

When you have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and restored him to his true liberty. Then you will teach him how to dance wrong side out... and this wrong side out will be his real place (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 570-71).

This image was then taken up and significantly developed by Deleuze and Guattari, in ways we shall discuss in depth in what follows.

Beyond this concept, Deleuze frequently refers to Artaud, both in his sole-authored works and the collaborations with Guattari. However, in contrast to the general tendency within Artaud Studies, the emphasis is *not* on Artaud's theatre writing. In fact, Deleuze engages in very little detailed discussion of Artaud's theatre, bar the odd paragraph interspersed with more in-depth treatments of Artaud's conception of thought, use of language, and his schizophrenic symptoms. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's engagement with Artaud could be perceived to reflect the fact that Artaud's writing on theatre 'constitutes only a fraction of his total output,' which comprises poetry, letters, novels, essays, notebooks and scripts (Scheer 2004: 3). In contrast, Adrian Morfee claims that Artaud's 'ideas on theatre have been the centre of enquiry for nine out of every ten scholarly publications on his writings over the past thirty years' – an emphasis which he argues is 'totally out of proportion' with the amount of attention paid to theatre by Artaud himself (Morfee 2005: 5). However, this chapter will demonstrate that, even if they are not explicitly concerned with theatre, all of Artaud's writings have implications for how we understand the theatre. And in the same way, it departs from the premise that Deleuze's writings on Artaud, whilst not foregrounding theatre, can still inform our understanding of Artaud's theatre, particularly with regard to presence.

Like the previous one, this chapter is made up of five main sections. The first section will explore two different 'schools' of thought in the secondary literature on

Artaud, contextualising this chapter in relation to both the dominant deconstructive critique of his work and to the more affirmative, existing work on Artaud from a Deleuzian perspective. Next, we will provide some theoretical context for the concept of the ‘theatre without organs’ that will be developed here, by addressing the notion of the body without organs from which it derives. Here, we will argue that the body without organs constitutes an aspiration towards differential presence, rather than an appeal to simple, or metaphysical presence without difference, as Derrida has suggested. From this theoretical basis, the short third section will give a brief outline of how one might make oneself a theatre without organs, before going on in the longer fourth section to address Artaud’s work as a specific case study for the use of language and voice within such a theatre. Here, we will see how Artaud uses a ‘destratified voice’ to performatively construct differential presence in relation to other bodies rather than passively suffering the wounding power of words or submitting the voice to the stratifying power of phonemes and signification. Finally, the fifth section will develop a response to the question of Artaud’s relation to his audience through language, presenting an alternative account to Jon Erickson’s argument that Artaud’s use of language appeals to ‘the immediacy of a purely physical response’ that hopes to establish and maintain self-presence between audience and speaker by bypassing thought (Erickson 1985: 285). In contrast, we will emphasise Artaud’s break with any mind/body duality, his desire to address the mind in the flesh and to force his audience to truly think (rather than having their existing worldview confirmed), in a manner that resonates with Deleuze’s notion of ‘the encounter’. Here we will examine both Artaud and Deleuze’s concepts of thought in order to generate a further definition of differential presence, not as an instance of ‘immediate (re)cognition’ between self-present bodies (Erickson 1985: 285), but as an event of genuine thought, which both Deleuze and Artaud define as a creation rather than a representation.

1. Contexts: Artaud with Deleuze, not Derrida

So, let us begin with the question of context. In choosing to address Artaud now, and specifically in choosing to address him in relation to the concept of ‘presence’ in performance now, we are first confronted with what seems to have become the dominant understanding of his work: namely, Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of Artaud’s position as one in which presence and representation are opposed. To

summarise, the theoretical gesture of deconstruction is characterised by the location of a (often unacknowledged) binary opposition in a given text – for example, the opposition of presence/absence, or presence/representation. The critique then claims to expose how one half of the dualism is ‘always already’ penetrated by the other. There can be no absolute purity beyond these differences, deconstruction argues.

In ‘The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation’ (1978), Derrida’s deconstruction on Artaud’s concept of the theatre of cruelty, invites us to conclude that fidelity to Artaud is impossible, because he aspires to create contradictions in the form of *self-identical* and *immediate* theatrical representations (Derrida 1997: 56). The theatre of cruelty, Derrida argues, constitutes the

inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a *re*-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent. The present offers itself as such, appears, presents itself, opens the stage of time or the time of the stage only by harbouring its own intestine difference, and only in the interior fold of its original repetition, in representation (ibid., 57).

In this way, Derrida equates the ‘intestine difference’ of the present with representation. ‘Pure presence as pure difference’, Derrida argues, is not presence at all. Presence requires representation in order to appear, or as Derrida puts it: ‘Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated’ (ibid., 58). One example of Artaud’s pursuit of self-presence for Derrida emerges in his aim to replace actors enslaved to the reproduction and repetition of an author’s text, with the presentation of the living actor. As such, while Derrida initially admires Artaud’s critique of the binary oppositions undermining representational theatre, he ultimately argues that Artaud wants to escape from differences into the absence of difference.

In his critique of the metaphysical tradition, Derrida argues that Western philosophy is only able to make truth-claims on behalf of its representations by positing an originary or grounding self-presence. As Jeffrey Bell has discussed, one example of ‘such a presupposed, unquestioned presence’ is

the self-presence of our thought within the sounds which express these thoughts. It is the plenitude of this sound, the physicality and self-presence of hearing ourselves speak, which is the unquestioned self-presence one presupposes in understanding truth as the self-identity and coincidence of the world and our thoughts regarding the world (Bell 2006: 262n.).

The notion of truth, that is, depends in part upon the assumption that we can say what we think.

Echoing this perspective, theatre theorist Jon Erickson (1985) has since defined Artaud's poetic works as concerned to discover a language of self-presence, a voice that speaks the speaker and the world as they are and communicates those self-present meanings directly to an audience. In his essay, Erickson discusses the phenomenon of "sound poetry": a category of poetic practice that he associates with practitioners from Dadaist Hugo Ball to contemporary poet Steve McCaffrey, and contrasts with what he calls "sound-text poetry," which he links to figures such as Gertrude Stein. It is clear that Erickson wants to demonstrate the greater value and conceptual sophistication of the latter over the former. "Sound-text poetry", he says, dramatizes the arbitrariness of signification (Erickson 1985: 281), whereas sound poetry, 'operates through a denial of signification toward an ideal of the unification of expression and indication' (ibid., 279). Quoting McCaffrey's call for words to be liberated from a substitutive role, Erickson insists that sound poetry pursues a 'language of presence, as opposed to a language of signification' in which words *are* the thing rather than its mere stand-in (ibid., 280)³⁶. He also identifies 'Artaud's cries' in works such as *To have done with the judgment of god* with sound poetry and argues that both want to reduce the potential for difference between language and meaning, or words and things by re-establishing a natural rather than cultural relation between them. As culturally determined signification, language is understood to keep us apart from the world. In this regard, Erickson implies a direct connection between Artaud's relation to language and the Dadaist reaction against the so-called "prison house of language". As Erickson explains,

³⁶ Erickson quotes the following remark from McCaffrey: "Sound the event not the servant of semantics becomes a possible antidote to the paradox of sign. That a thing need not be a this standing for that but immediately a that and so free of the implications of the metaphysics of linguistic absence" (McCaffrey in Erickson 1985: 280).

Dada understands language as a wall that separates people from one another, ‘words from things, consciousness from presence’ and as such language must be torn down and destroyed (ibid., 284).

Against this divisive language, Erickson argues, Artaud is pressing for an originary, adamic language or *ursprache* ‘that names an object or being in its essence, which means the signifier is one with the signified and their relationship is not arbitrarily fixed’ (ibid., 280). That is, the concept of an adamic language assumes a thing or being has a self-identical essence that words can name, and in so doing allow us to be at one with the truth of the world. In pursuit of this natural connection between words and things, Erickson argues, this language of presence issues from an undivided body, bypassing the mind, and as such is claimed to be ‘*more true* for the human condition’ than signification (ibid. – emphasis added). Signifying language is understood to falsify the experiences of the body, which are, in turn, taken to be ‘more true’ than those of a body ‘distracted by any cognitive split’ (ibid.). Erickson argues that Artaud is against signifying language as that which separates consciousness from presence – understood as ‘the simultaneity between consciousness and an object of attention’ (Power 2008: 3). For Artaud, Erickson argues that this language of presence originates purely in the body rather than in the mind since Artaud conceives the signifying language of the mind as that which breaks the natural presence of the body to itself and its objects.

The remaining sections of this chapter will attempt to examine Deleuze’s account of Artaud in order to offer an alternative perspective on his work, and specifically his work with and on language, from these two, interrelated positions. As the general introduction to this thesis has already proposed, Deleuze’s broad, poststructuralist project to construct a philosophy that thinks differential presence or difference ‘in itself’ (rather than as the mere difference between two presences) is compatible with Derrida’s. However, although presence does always differ from itself for Deleuze as well as Derrida, it is not only mediated by linguistic difference for Deleuze. The emergence of difference need not be understood as the return of a repressed and feared writing that ‘erases the presence of the self-same within speech’ (Derrida 1976: 270). Rather, there are different ways of thinking difference: not just as the ‘death’ that full presence must necessarily harbour within itself, but as ‘a free and present variation’ that registers itself with audiences as affect, operating beneath the

threshold of representation (Deleuze 1997: 253). In this sense, this chapter will suggest that Artaud's non-representational theatre seeks to affirm a new kind of presence *as* difference, rather than aiming to transcend difference in order to reach the self-identical presence of Western metaphysics. The desire to break free from 'conflictual, official and institutionalized representation' (ibid.), we will argue, need not immediately be equated with a 'transcendentalist agenda' (Vanden Heuvel 1991: 44). The reality that performance makes available to the spectator in this event of 'differential presence' is not an other-worldly, transcendent realm that is self-identical insofar as it occupies a space and time outside of representation. Rather, the differential presence constructed by what this chapter will call the 'theatre without organs' gives us access to the real as difference in itself, as an immanent, 'perpetual variation' from which representational differences are merely derived.

There is nothing new, at least within Artaud Studies if not within Performance Studies at large, in setting up a connection between Artaud and Deleuze. Catherine Dale, Ed Scheer and Jeffrey Bell amongst others have already explored the Deleuzian elements of Artaud's oeuvre³⁷. Indeed, Artaud Studies has – if you like – been through this conduit and come out the other side, with theorists like Jane Goodall and Umberto Artioli both arguing that Deleuze's project is distinct from Artaud's in a number of crucial ways. Goodall, for example, accepts that Deleuze and Guattari are close to Artaud 'in their quest for a return to some kind of chora of subjectivity, "the Body without Organs"', and in their fascination with becoming, metamorphosis and contagion as processes which rupture paradigmatic understanding'. However, she ultimately insists that

they hardly qualify as gnostic revolutionaries. Their campaign against stratification is not the same as the aim of Artaudian theatre: '...to make manifest and to plant in us ineradicably the idea of a perpetual conflict and of a seizure in which life is rent at every

³⁷ There are a number of Deleuze Studies scholars who have already explored the relationship between Deleuze and Artaud, including Catherine Dale (2001a; 2001b; 2002), Ronald Bogue (2003) and Jeffrey A. Bell (2006). Within Artaud Studies, Deleuze is discussed by Scheer in Cull (2009), Butler in Scheer (2000), and by Artioli, Scheer and briefly by Goodall in Scheer (2004). However, the Deleuze-Artaud conjunction has not been addressed at length in Performance Studies, that is, with a particular emphasis on its implications for theatre and performance. Milton Loayza (2000) does invoke Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between Chronos and Aion in his essay on Artaud's theatre, however I hope that this chapter adds something new to this existing body of work by providing an in-depth discussion of Deleuze's work specifically on Artaud, and what it means for our understanding of Artaud's theatrical work, particularly with regard to the debates around presence.

moment, in which the whole of creation rises up and sets itself against our condition as constituted beings' (Goodall in Scheer 2004: 75).

Likewise, whilst Artioli describes Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) as 'unthinkable without Artaud's oeuvre', he also frames the book as dissolving the 'persistent dualism' of Artaud's thinking with its positive notion of desire (Artioli in Scheer 2004: 145). Further, Artioli questions Deleuze's description of Artaud as having achieved a "wonderful breakthrough" which 'knocked down the wall [of the signifier]' (Deleuze 2004: 240). Instead, Artioli suggests: 'If you put the two projects together, Artaud's revolt, far from attaining the miracle of the breakthrough, resonates with the devastating cry of setback' (Artioli in Scheer 2004: 147).

And no doubt some of these concerns – particularly regarding Deleuze and Guattari's arguable romanticisation of Artaud's suffering – are valid. After all, Deleuze is well known for his description of his particular approach to the history of philosophy as 'a sort of buggery or... immaculate conception,' producing a child that would be the author's 'offspring, yet monstrous' (Deleuze 1995: 6). This chapter will not take quite such a violent approach, so much as emphasise the Deleuzian aspects of Artaud's thought and the Artaudian aspects of Deleuze's, in order to develop the notion of differential presence in performance. In turn, it seems important to note that Gnosticism is only *one* influence, amongst others, on Artaud's thinking and that its overemphasis can lead to troubling conclusions such as Serge Hutin's claim that 'For Artaud as for the Gnostics, true liberation meant nothing less than an escape from the tyranny of the sensible world' (Hutin in Goodall 1994: 3). But as a number of the following sections of this chapter point out, Artaud specifically rejects such a mind/matter binary in other aspects of his thought. It is the transcendent judgment of the sensible that is tyrannical and must be escaped, not the sensible itself.

In what follows, it will be argued that a theatre without organs would not involve the pursuit of an adamic language through which actors might immediately and truthfully express themselves and the world, so much as the attempt to 'speak difference' with what we will term 'a destratified voice'. This concept translates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the disorganization necessary to reach the body without organs to the specific body of the voice as a means to rethink the relationship

between language and the appearance of difference. The destratified voice allows difference to make its presence felt in what Deleuze calls a ‘fundamental encounter’ that forces new, embodied thoughts upon us. Adding to the definitions generated in the first chapter, differential presence now names an encounter with difference or perpetual variation as that which exceeds the representational consciousness of a subject, forcing thought through rupture rather than communicating meanings through sameness. In this way, the destratified voice of the theatre without organs becomes the correlative language practice to the philosophy of difference, a way of speaking in the theatre that *produces* bodies rather than representing them.

2. What is the body without organs?

In order to introduce the concept of the theatre without organs as a site of the production of differential presence, we first need to look at the Deleuzian notion of the body without organs from which it derives. Since, if it is the body as conceived by the mind/body binary which is at the origin of the language of presence according to Erickson’s perspective, then the language of differential presence emerges from the body without organs understood as both an embodied experience and an ontological principle. First, we will look at how Deleuze defines the body without organs, and its relation to other key concepts such as ‘the strata’ or ‘stratification’, ‘judgment’ and ‘becoming’, before going on to emphasise the distinction between Derrida and Deleuze’s interpretations of the relationship between the body without organs, presence and difference.

The concept of the body without organs first appears in Deleuze’s work in *The Logic of Sense* (1969), in which he proposes that it corresponds to Artaud’s triumphant composition of a novel usage of language. As a ‘new dimension of the schizophrenic body’, Deleuze argues that the body without organs does not achieve self-identical expression with its cries, but rather feels the ‘problem’ of language through its suffering; ‘namely, the schizophrenic problem of suffering, of death, and of life’ (Deleuze 2004: 30-32). Deleuze suggests that the specifically schizophrenic experience of an absence of distinction between ‘things’ and ‘propositions’ draws attention to an ontological capacity of language to *act on* bodies rather than merely represent them (ibid., 31). Language is not a separate kind or level of being that transcends bodies, the

schizophrenic senses; but how then might language be used as a response to this ‘problem’? In his discovery of the body without organs as, in part, a relation to language, Artaud breaks free from passively suffering the wounds that ‘words without sense’ inflict upon the schizophrenic body. Having made himself a body without organs, he is not sheltered from language but actively uses it as ‘words without articulation’, as words that become ‘illegible and even unpronounceable, as it transforms them into so many active howls in one continuous breath’ (ibid., 33). In other words, the solution at first seems to be about simply redirecting the force of language; shifting from occupying the position of one to whom things are done with words, to the one who uses language to act.

Moreover, by the time we reach the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* – the body without organs (now called the BwO for short) has become a central concept for Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology. Here they distinguish between different types of BwOs, that we can find once we have ‘sufficiently dismantled our self’, and what they call ‘the totality of all BwOs’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 151, 157). Like the distinction between specific becomings and the fundamental becoming they affirm, the totality of BwOs has less to do with ‘the body’ as such, or the schizophrenic body in particular, and more to do with ontology. According to Deleuze and Guattari, once the self is taken apart, what we reach is ‘nonstratified, unformed, intense matter’ or ‘energy’. The BwO is this primary ‘glacial reality’ on which organisms and subjects form – nothing but these flows of energy, of difference in itself (ibid., 153). This energy is elusive: ‘It’s not so much that it pre-exists or comes ready-made,’ Deleuze and Guattari argue,

although in certain respects it is pre-existent. At any rate, you make one, you can’t desire without making one. And it awaits you; it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation, already accomplished the moment you undertake it, unaccomplished as long as you don’t’ (ibid., 149).

As such, the BwO can be defined multiply. According to their commentators, it is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to elsewhere as a plane of consistency, ‘a static plane of immanent creation which Deleuze and Guattari pit against God’s transcendentalism’ (Dale 2001b: 136n), and it is what Colebrook defines as ‘the totality or plane of ...

prehuman, prelinguistic and profound differences' which Western thought has tended to consider as deviations or distractions from existing categories of representation (Colebrook 2002: 16).

To make yourself a BwO (that is, in turn, to position oneself on the totality of all BwOs and to experience this prelinguistic difference) involves a process of disorganization or 'destratification' – the destruction of stratification as 'a phenomenon of...sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labour from the BwO, imposes upon it forms...and hierarchized organizations' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 159). Such instances of stratification block our way to the BwO and, as such, must be removed or undone in order for the BwO to be made. In Plateau Six, Deleuze and Guattari focus on what they call 'the three great strata...that most directly bind us': the organism, signifiante and subjectification; although the indication is that there are many, many more besides (ibid.). Each strata attaches to a different aspect of life: the organism to the body, signifiante to the 'soul' (or unconscious) and subjectification to the conscious (ibid., 160). The strata then come to mediate our relationship to life, operating like a utilitarian logic or a transcendental point of view that passes moral judgment on differences from their respective representational categories:

You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – otherwise you're just deprived. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one... otherwise you're just a tramp (ibid., 159).

In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that as much as we need to liberate the creativity of the body from the limits of the organism as form, we also need to 'tear the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration' and to tear the unconscious 'away from signifiante and interpretation to make it a veritable production' (ibid., 160).

In the same Plateau, Deleuze and Guattari also associate the organism as a stratum on the BwO with 'the judgment of God' – again, borrowing a phrase from Artaud. The judgment of God, they argue,

is precisely the operation of He who makes...an organization of the organs called the organism, because He cannot bear the BwO...The organism is already that, the judgment of God, from which medical doctors benefit and on which they base their power (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 159).

Indeed, the judgment of God is equated with the stratification of the BwO. The judgment of God is all the strata, or phenomena of sedimentation, that operate on the intense matter of the BwO put together: 'For many a strata, and not only an organism, is necessary to make the judgment of God' (ibid., 159). In the later essay 'To Have Done with Judgment', Deleuze elaborates upon this idea of judgment as an oppressive and stultifying force operating 'at the level of the body' (Deleuze 1998: 130):

...Judgement implies a veritable organization of the bodies through which it acts: organs are both judges and judged, and the judgement of God is nothing other than the power to organize to infinity...The way to escape judgement is to make yourself a body without organs, to find your body without organs (ibid., 131).

In contrast to the organism, God cannot exercise his judgment on the BwO: a body traversed by the 'imperceptible forces' of 'combat', or what Deleuze calls 'nonorganic vitality' (ibid., 131). Combat, Deleuze states, is not to be confused with war; rather, it 'is a powerful, nonorganic vitality that supplements force with force, and enriches whatever it takes hold of' (ibid., 133). This living power, which 'happens' or passes over the BwO, places forces in relation to one another with positive effects. Something new is made.

In this sense, the dismantling of the strata is only one part of a two-stage process, of which the second phase is an event of becoming: a circulation of intensities, a transmission of forces, and a transformation of bodies by one another that can only happen once notions of 'the subject' and representational relations have been done away with. At this point, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between different types of BwOs: such as the BwO of the masochist, who constructs himself as a body without organs in order to participate in a becoming-horse. At this point, we might begin to perceive connections between the BwOs as they appear in *A Thousand Plateaus* and the

schizophrenic body as it appears in *The Logic of Sense*. We have already discussed Deleuze's argument that Artaud's language issues from a schizophrenic experience of the body, as that which is perpetually penetrated by other bodies, since it has no frontier of sense to distinguish between 'self' and 'other'. What is new in *A Thousand Plateaus* is the articulation of the ontological realm with which the body without organs is associated. The BwO is not associated with the depths of nonsense threatening to disrupt the surface of sense, but with 'the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire here defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 154 – emphasis original). In turn, whereas *The Logic of Sense* emphasises the suffering involved in the schizophrenic experience of the body, *A Thousand Plateaus* allies the schizophrenic experience with the attempted becomings of artistic, sexual, and drug-related experiments, to which Deleuze and Guattari assign creative potential. Having broken down the 'incorporeal frontier' of sense or what Deleuze and Guattari reconceive as the strata inhabiting the BwO, we no longer experience ourselves as a signifying subject (man) in relation to a signified object (horse). Through becomings, there is a presence of difference to difference, the perception or affection of one body by another, without the need to pass through processes of imitation or representation.

Pre-empting the logic of his deconstruction of the theatre of cruelty, in 'La Parole Soufflée' (1965) Derrida argues that Artaud's concept of the body without organs constitutes an appeal to simple, or metaphysical presence without difference. For Artaud, Derrida says, it is the division of the body into organs which introduces difference into the body and 'opens the lack through which the body becomes absent from itself' (Derrida in Bell 2006:157). In turn, given their appropriation of the concept of the body without organs, Bell has recently questioned whether Deleuze and Guattari, along with Artaud

long for a lost homeland, a deeply buried purity and freedom which has since been covered over by layers of impurities (in this case, organs) which only serve to hinder the freedom necessary for thought and creativity. If this is how Artaud is to be read, it is evident, then, that his longing is a metaphysical longing, a striving to regain a lost presence (Bell 2006: 156).

If this is how Deleuze and Guattari are to be read, then they too would fall foul of deconstructive critique.

But as Bell goes on to emphasise, the enemy of the BwO is not the organs for Deleuze and Guattari (as what divides and differentiates an otherwise unified body), but the organism as the ‘*organic* organization of the organs’ (ibid., 158 – emphasis added). The organism inserts itself into the BwO in order to prescribe to bodies a distinct and restricted function, molar identity, or specific, fixed strata. For Deleuze and Guattari,

The BwO is not undifferentiated, but has its own inner differentiation, its composed and positioned “true organs”, and it is in this manner, then, that Deleuze and Guattari can read Artaud’s call for a BwO as not being a call for a One in opposition to the multiple’ (ibid., 159)

– or for presence as opposed to difference, monism as opposed to dualism. In this sense, the concept of the BwO plays a central role in Deleuze’s effort to re-think the process of creation (whether as thought, art or nature) without the need to posit a transcendent, organizing Law, or what Artaud called ‘the judgment of God,’ which controls the creative process from a position outside of it. Conjoining Artaud with Spinoza, the BwO constitutes a refusal of any distinction between worldly products and a transcendent producer, between organizing mind and organized matter, in favour of a univocal notion of being as a processuality ‘immanent in whatever manifests it’ (Deleuze 1990: 16). To make yourself a body without organs is both to find and to construct that immanent processuality as it is manifested in the processes of writing, performing, thinking, living.

3. The theatre without organs & Artaud’s *To have done with the judgment of god*

Given this conception of the BwO, what is a *theatre* without organs (or TwO) and how does it operate in the world? What are the specifically theatrical ‘strata’ that we need to dismantle in order to construct such a theatre and what kinds of new connections between bodies might such a destratified theatre allow? It is at this point,

before we move on to address Artaud's *To have done with the judgment of god* as a specific case study of the TwO, that Deleuze's essay 'One Less Manifesto' is of particular help: to bridge the gap between philosophy and performance, or ontology and theatrical practice. In this essay, as we saw in the thesis' Introduction, Deleuze develops a concept of a theatre of 'perpetual variation', a theatre that subtracts the organizing elements of theatrical representation – such as plot, character and dialogue – in order to 'release a new potentiality of theatre, an always unbalanced, nonrepresentative force' (Deleuze 1997: 242). Immediately, this proposed theatre presents itself as in alliance with the body without organs, which is involved in a similarly subtractive process when it dismantles the strata as the 'phenomenon of sedimentation' that impose organization and stasis on an otherwise mobile, material energy (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 159). In both cases, it is a question of taking away that which attempts to fix the moving and homogenise the differing; a matter of undoing the effects of an organizing force that forms speed and subjectifies affect.

'Only affects and no subject, only speeds and not form' (Deleuze 1997: 249) – this describes the TwO, as much as the BwO. If the BwO is a plane or surface which, once we have leapt onto it, allows us to perceive ourselves and the world, not as discrete subjects and objects, but as mutually transformative processes of becoming, then the TwO is equally an *already-existing*, and yet also *waiting-to-be-constructed* plane, produced by performance-makers and their 'audiences'. In the TwO, all elements of theatricality become the 'material for variation' (ibid., 246): the variation of costume 'that falls off and is put back on' (ibid., 248); the variation of gesture in which no gesture is repeated 'without obtaining different characteristics of time' (ibid., 249); and the variation of language – which will be the focus of our case study. In the TwO, the 'phonological, syntactical, semantical and even stylistical' (ibid., 244) elements of language are all intensified through 'methods of stammering, whispering' and mumbling (ibid., 247).

And yet, of course, if the TwO forms an alliance with Deleuze's theatre of perpetual variation, then it is also connected to Artaud's infamous '*Theatre of cruelty*' (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 577). Artaud wrote the first manifesto for such a theatre in 1932, in which he argues that theatre's essence lies in its power to overwhelm the false distinction between truth and illusion, presence and representation, in a manner that resonates with Deleuze. Theatre is not about 'make-believe' for Artaud, but the 'truly

illusive’ (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 101); it is not a ‘hollow gesture’ that copies an originary reality, but a real image that takes hold of its spectators (ibid., 104). Artaud reiterates this univocal perspective in the essay ‘Theatre and Cruelty’ when he states that ‘the audience will believe in the illusion of theatre on condition they *really take it for a dream*, not for a servile imitation of reality’ (ibid., 109 – emphasis original). As we noted in the first chapter of this thesis, one way that Artaud suggests we might release the real power of theatre’s images to affect audiences – or, theatre’s ‘cruelty’ – is by undoing the spatial ‘stratification’ of the auditorium³⁸. And like the becoming that takes place on the BwO, Artaud conceives of the cruelty unleashed by the destratified space as a force that ‘connects things together’ in ‘a wholly magic act’ of ‘constant creation’ rather than reproduction (ibid., 107).

Our case study for the development of the concept of the TwO and its relation to differential presence will focus on the role of language in Artaud’s radio play and in his ‘translation’ of the poem ‘Jabberwocky’ by Lewis Carroll. In contrast to the elaborate scenic and theatrical effects required by his first dramatic text, *The Spurt of Blood* (1925)³⁹, *To have done with the judgment of god* eliminates every aspect of theatre except the voice. Likewise, we might note that it is the variation of language that receives the greatest amount of attention in Deleuze’s ‘One Less Manifesto’. In both cases, it is important to emphasise the attention paid to language as a means to counter-balance the tendency to conceive the pursuit of non-representational theatre (whether as the theatre without organs, a subtractive theatre of perpetual variation, or the theatre of cruelty) as one that reinstates a dichotomy between language and body (or thought and affect), and falls down heavily in favour of the presence of the latter over the alienating power of the former. All three theatres may well be anti-textual, as Martin Puchner (2002) implies, but only if by ‘text’ we mean a self-identical script the truth of which must be faithfully reproduced in performance, or a homogenising force that serves to fix

³⁸ In the first manifesto for the Theatre of cruelty, Artaud proclaims: ‘We intend to do away with stage and auditorium, replacing them by a kind of single, undivided locale without any partitions of any kind and this will become the very scene of the action. Direct contact will be established between the audience and the show, between actors and audience, from the very fact that the audience is seated in the centre of the action, is encircled and furrowed by it’ (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 104).

³⁹ At one point, the stage directions of *The Spurt of Blood* call for: ‘*Silence. Noise like a huge wheel spinning, blowing out wind. A hurricane comes between them. At that moment two stars collide, and a succession of limbs of flesh fall. Then feet, hands, scalps, masks, colonnades, porticoes, temples and alembics, falling slower and slower as if through space, then three scorpions one after the other and finally a frog, and a scarab which lands with heart-breaking nauseating slowness*’ (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 18). And later demand that ‘*At a given moment a huge hand seizes the WHORE’s hair which catches fire*’ (19). From such examples it is not difficult to imagine why the play remained unperformed in Artaud’s lifetime (see Cohn 1979).

the creativity and variability that Deleuze argues is immanent to language. But they are by no means anti-literary or uninterested in speech as a theatrical element; on the contrary, ‘One Less Manifesto’ argues that ‘A public reading of poems by Ghérasim Luca is a complete and marvellous theatrical event’ (Deleuze 1997: 247)⁴⁰. Correlatively, Artaud describes the purely vocal theatre of *To have done with the judgment of god* as ‘providing a small-scale model for what I want to do in the *Theatre of cruelty*’ (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 577). In this way, although Artaud’s polemics sometimes suggest otherwise, it is important to acknowledge that the theatre of cruelty is not conceived in terms of the exclusion of words. ‘There is no question of abolishing speech in theatre,’ Artaud states; rather, Deleuze and Artaud share the notion that language ought to be handled as the ‘concrete’ entity that it is (ibid., 123). It is not language itself that is rejected, so much as the codified ways in which it is used.

Since the story of Artaud’s censored broadcast, *To have done with the judgment of god* is well known we will not rehearse it here, suffice to say that the occasion of the ban acts as a good example of Deleuze’s argument that the strata are perpetually recasting themselves in the BwO.⁴¹ In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, *To have done with the judgment of god* constitutes an experiment towards making oneself a body without organs that is perceived as a threat to those State bodies that exert political and aesthetic control in order to protect the strata. The starting point for the radio play was a series of short texts, written by Artaud, and then performed by Roger Blin, Maria Casarès, Paule Thévenin and Artaud; interrupted by rhythmic passages played on xylophones and drums, ‘beating and exchanges’ between Blin and Artaud, and the latter’s ‘cry in the stairwell’.

It is with this performance of language, we will now go on to suggest, that we see a genuine instance of Artaud’s TwO performing its philosophy of differential presence. In the next section we will introduce the concept of the destratified voice as

⁴⁰ Ghérasim Luca (1913-1994) was a Romanian poet, however he wrote the majority of his poetry in French. Deleuze refers to his work on a number of occasions: not only in ‘One Less Manifesto’, but also in *A Thousand Plateaus* and in the essay ‘He Stuttered’ in *Essays Critical and Clinical*.

⁴¹ As Schumacher (2002) reports, the radio programme was recorded between 22-29 November 1947 by Artaud and his collaborators. Originally commissioned by Fernand Pouey, the programme was censored by Wladimir Porché, the director-general of the radio station on the day before it was scheduled for broadcast: 2 February 1948. As Marc Dachy (1995) tells us in a short, introductory essay in the cover notes of the recording, the broadcast had two private hearings for Artaud’s friends and colleagues. The first was held on 5 February 1948, in the hope of changing Porché’s mind about the ban. Those who attended – including Jean-Louis Barrault and Roger Vitrac – passed a favourable verdict on the recording, but the ban was maintained, resulting in Pouey’s resignation. The second private hearing was held on 23 February 1948 ‘in a disused cinema’ (Dachy 1995).

one element of the TwO, or the performing body without organs. In the first instance, we will look at some examples of this voice at work in Artaud's radio play, before going into more detail regarding Deleuze's discussions of Artaud's use of language and voice in *The Logic of Sense* and then, in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Finally, we will note the connections between Artaud and Deleuze's arguments as to *how* language ought to be used in order to allow difference to be heard.

4. The TwO cries out in a destratified voice:

Language and differential presence

As a theatre without organs, *To have done with the judgment of god* performs its philosophical work in its construction of a 'destratified voice'. In the case of the voice, destratification involves putting elements like intonation, diction, pitch, and meaning into variation. For example, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the BwO resists the 'torture' of organization partly by way of a particular relation to the phonological aspect of language: 'In order to resist using words composed of articulated phonetic units, it utters only gasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sound' (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 9). In this respect, the phoneme is like an 'organ' of language that the destratified voice would rather be without.

In *To have done with the judgment of god*, this phonological variation can be most obviously heard in the passages of glossolalia that erupt from the text, and in Artaud's distant, resonating cries from the stairwell. Whereas the stratified voice speaks 'perfectly and soberly' (Deleuze 1997: 247), Artaud's destratified voice speaks too high and too fast to act as the servant of communication. In turn, having torn the voice away from the task of signification, Artaud can then use his voice to enter into a series of becomings. There is a becoming-woman of the voice, for instance, when it becomes impossible to identify the sex of the speaker according to the traditional representational categories of 'man' and 'woman' – the distinction that Deleuze and Guattari call one of 'the great binary aggregates'. There is a becoming-animal of the voice, insofar as we are alerted to uses of the human voice that can be comprehended directly by a listener (whether that listener is also the speaker, or another body) without the mediation of a linguistic system of differences. Likewise in the passages where he performs a dialogue

with himself, Artaud uses his voice to enact the ‘inclusive disjunctions’ that Deleuze associates with the schizophrenic: he is mad *and* sane, patient *and* analyst.

Alternatively, moving beyond the radio play, we might look to the example of Artaud’s little-known ‘translation’ of Carroll’s ‘Jabberwocky’, which Deleuze discusses in *The Logic of Sense*. Deleuze says:

...Beginning with the last word of the second line, from the third line onward, a sliding is produced, and even a creative, central collapse, causing us to be *in another world* and *in an entirely different language*. With horror, we recognize it easily: it is the language of schizophrenia’ (Deleuze 2004a: 29).

He argues that, in his ‘Jabberwocky’, Artaud’s use of language is symptomatic of his specifically schizophrenic experience of language and its relation to bodies, which is qualitatively different from Carroll’s. Carroll’s language, Deleuze argues, is organized on the surface in the form of what he calls two ‘series’: the signifying series and the signified series. What separates these ‘physical bodies’ [signified series] and ‘sonorous words’ [signifying series] is what Deleuze calls an ‘incorporeal frontier’ or, simply, ‘sense’ (ibid., 34). In Artaud’s schizophrenic language, Deleuze argues, ‘there are no longer any series at all; the two series have disappeared’ (ibid.). In other words, there is no organization that creates a frontier between signifier and signified. In the absence of surface and series in Artaud’s text, Deleuze says, nonsense ‘absorbs and engulfs all sense’ (ibid.). In his version of ‘Jabberwocky’, Deleuze argues that Artaud is confined to the depths of nonsense (or non-meaning) on account of his schizophrenic relation to language, while Carroll can move between the surface of sense (or meaning) and the depths of nonsense, which comes prior to sense and always threatens to engulf it. Surface and depths are distinct, but not opposed, Deleuze argues; rather, the former comes in as the ‘secondary organization’ of the latter – making sense of nonsense (a realm in which there is no distinction between signifier and signified) through the construction of series. As such, Deleuze states, ‘Even at the surface, we can always find schizoid fragments, since its function is precisely to organize and display elements which have risen from the depth’ (ibid., 34). The surface of sense makes the world denote, manifest and signify. ‘In this collapse of surface,’ – that is, the experience of the schizophrenic as Deleuze defines it – ‘the entire world loses its meaning. It maintains

perhaps a certain amount of *denotation*, but this is experienced as empty. It maintains a certain power of *manifestation*, but this is experienced as indifferent. And it maintains a certain *signification*, experienced as ‘false’ (ibid., 31).

Just as the language of schizophrenia lacks the distinction of signifying and signified series, Deleuze states that the schizophrenic body does not experience a distinction between ‘things’ and ‘propositions’ (ibid.). As such, Deleuze argues, ‘body-sieve’, ‘fragmented body’, and ‘dissociated body’ are ‘the three primary dimensions of the schizophrenic body’ (ibid.). For Deleuze, it seems, bodily experience is directly connected to language usage. Artaud has a qualitatively different experience of the relation between language and the body from Carroll and hence uses language differently. Carroll’s language is ‘emitted at the surface’, at which the incorporeal frontier of sense ‘shelters sonorous language from any confusion with the physical body’ (ibid., 34). Artaud’s language, in contrast, is ‘carved into the depth of bodies’ (ibid., 29) – not all bodies but the schizophrenic bodies of his world, which Deleuze describes as ‘no longer anything but depth’ (ibid., 31). The body is no longer sheltered from confusion with language, nor with other bodies. We’ve seen how in his 1985 article, Erickson argues that Artaud aspires to a language of presence that issues from a pure, undivided body. In contrast, Deleuze says that Artaud’s language issues from a body that, as ‘depth’, has no surface to maintain a distinction between ‘itself’ and other bodies. As Deleuze says: ‘A tree, a column, a flower, or a cane grow inside the body; other bodies always penetrate our body and coexist with its parts’ (ibid., 31).

Without the distinction between language and body, Deleuze proposes, ‘the only duality left’ for the schizophrenic ‘is that between the actions and the passions of the body’ (ibid., 34). In turn, he associates the actions and passions of the body with two different relations to language available to the schizophrenic. On the one hand, the schizophrenic can experience language in the form of what Deleuze calls ‘words without sense’. In this scenario, ‘The word no longer expresses an attribute of the state of affairs; its fragments merge with unbearable sonorous qualities, invade the body where they form a mixture and a new state of affairs, as if they themselves were a noisy, poisonous food and canned excrement’ (ibid., 32). Through this invasion, Deleuze claims, words without sense have the capacity to wound the schizophrenic body. Alternatively, he suggests, the schizophrenic can actively use language in the form of what he calls ‘words without articulation’. In this case,

It is a question of transforming the word into an action by rendering it without articulation... One could say the vowel, once reduced to the soft sign, renders the consonants indissociable from one another, by palatising them. It leaves them illegible and even unpronounceable, as it transforms them into so many active howls in one continuous breath' (ibid., 33).

Rather than passively suffering wounding words, the schizophrenic actively transforms words into actions by subtracting the difference between the phonetic elements. For Deleuze, Artaud exemplifies this latter active relation to language with his transformation of words into 'a fusion of consonants' (ibid., 33).

Deleuze calls these words breath-words (*mots-souffles*) and howl-words (*mots-cris*) and describes them as a 'triumph' for the schizophrenic (ibid., 32). They are not triumphant because they are meaningful, for Deleuze, since he insists that 'words without articulation' are 'no less beneath sense and far from the surface' (ibid., 33). Rather, they are triumphant because they signal a break with the schizophrenic's suffering from words as wounding, and a move toward the schizophrenic's use of language to act. Deleuze proposes that this language of breath-words and howl-words corresponds to Artaud's concept of the body without organs, which he refers to as a 'new dimension of the schizophrenic body' (ibid., 32), in contrast to the dimensions of the 'body-sieve', 'fragmented body', and 'dissociated body'. Deleuze concludes this series of *The Logic of Sense* with the claim that he 'would not give a page of Artaud for all of Carroll' and argues that 'Artaud is alone in having been an absolute depth in literature, and in having discovered *the vital body and the prodigious language of this body*' (ibid., 35). This 'vital body' is the body without organs, and its language is that of breath-words and howl-words. Deleuze concurs with Artaud's own observation that he discovered this new dimension of the schizophrenic body and its language 'through suffering' (ibid.). Carroll, in contrast, never 'felt the real problem of language in depth – namely, the schizophrenic problem of suffering, of death, and of life' (ibid., 30).

'Contrary to popular belief,' Deleuzian commentator Catherine Dale insists, there is 'nothing sloppy' or vague about these cries of the destratified voice. Rather, she says, 'The unlanguage of howls and syncopated rhythms requires utter diligence and

determination' (Dale 2002: 92). Such a position is reinforced by the 1994 film about Artaud directed by Gérard Mordillat and Jérôme Prieur, which draws from accounts by Artaud's friends, including Thevenin, to attest to the picture of Artaud as the obsessive director who relentlessly rehearsed his readers to make sure they were getting the pronunciation of his words 'right'. But this 'rightness' has nothing to do with the pursuit of a language of presence to truthfully present the self, since, as Dale notes, Artaud 'disapproves of thinking of oneself as a being, as an innate being who is then able to represent/reproduce oneself' (ibid., 89). Rather, perhaps, getting it 'right' concerns the struggle to construct a destratified voice in the first place, to break with the habitual use of the voice as an organ of communication, and to reconfigure the relationships between lips, tongue, palate, breath and vocal chords in order to produce as yet unheard sounds.

The concept of the destratified voice can also be contextualised with reference to the theory of language that Deleuze and Guattari later articulate in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they argue – contra linguistics – that language's variability comes from within itself rather than, merely, from external circumstances. Language is not a homogeneous system that acts as theme to the variations performed in instances in speech; rather, they argue, 'it is the variation itself that is systematic' in language (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 93). And it is this immanent difference of language that Artaud's destratified voice allows us to apprehend – for instance, in the fluctuations of pitch in his particular brand of *Sprechgesang*, as one procedure 'in which several voices seem to issue from the same mouth' (ibid., 97). In this way, the voice is neither the phenomenological medium that allows the presence of self-consciousness to itself, nor is it the mere 'simulation' of presence as Derrida contends in *Speech and Phenomena* – the response to the threat of the difference that language is said to introduce into self-presence (Derrida 1973: 15). Rather, the destratified voice embraces the potential 'to be a foreigner, *but* in one's own tongue', or to perform the difference in one's own voice, in a gesture that, for Deleuze and Guattari, expresses a solidarity with those minorities who 'work over' a foreign language from within (Deleuze 1997: 247). Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, placing the voice in variation is revolutionary, insofar as it both goes against the political enterprise to impose a homogeneous system of language on speakers that they claim is coupled with the study of linguistics (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 101), and has the capacity to bring forth perpetual variation as the 'the essential element of the real beneath the everyday' (ibid., 110).

Although Artaud's polemics sometimes suggest otherwise, it is important to acknowledge that the theatre of cruelty is not conceived in terms of the exclusion of dialogue. For both Deleuze and Artaud, 'There is no question of abolishing speech in theatre'; rather, language ought to be handled as the 'concrete' entity that it is (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 123). It is not language itself that is the problem, so much as the conventional way in which it is used. In *The Theatre and Its Double* for example, Artaud praises the capacity of altered *intonation* or pronunciation to access the 'music' underlying the conventional meanings of words. There is much to be said, he declares,

about the power of words to create their own music according to the way they are pronounced, distinct from their actual meaning and even running counter to that meaning – to create an undercurrent of impressions, connections and affinities beneath language (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 93).

What seems worth noting here is the way in which Artaud alludes to a duality of the present as surface and undercurrent in a manner that seems to resonate with Deleuze's distinction between the realms of sense and nonsense, or between the 'everyday' and the 'real' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 110). By varying pronunciation, theatrical speech can expose the difference within words that Artaud conceives in terms of an immanent, autonomous musicality.

Of course, *To have done with the judgment of god* is not solely composed of howls and cries, but nor is it that the more articulated words are more or less truthful representations of a prior presence. Rather, as Adrian Morfee has proposed, the final phase of Artaud's working life might be characterised as a search for a non-representational and 'non-alienating form of writing' in which a perpetually differing self might be created. Morfee argues that, in his late texts, 'what Artaud desires is not observational consciousness that treats his life as something distinct from what he is, but to feel life itself, to be aware of himself existing' (Morfee 2005: 177). From Morfee's perspective, this will always be a fated ambition insofar as awareness, or any kind of presence with life is understood to necessarily involve mediation, distancing or the introduction of difference as representation. Artaud is setting himself an impossible task, Morfee argues, when he aspires to engage in writing as a ceaseless

process of undetermined self-creation, rather than as an act that binds the self to a fixed representation that betrays or alienates that creativity. In contrast, a Deleuzian perspective allows us to suggest that the ‘life itself’ to which Artaud desires to become present is already self-differing rather than self-identical, and that this differential presence is not somehow beyond our experience altogether – only beyond the limits of representational consciousness.

5. The Two creates differential presence: Artaud and the audience

For Deleuze, as we have seen, difference is that which presents itself to affect and sensation alone. In the fifth section of this chapter, we will now explore how the theatre without organs might be understood to put us in the presence of difference in a manner that brings together the projects of theatre and philosophy, by examining Deleuze’s idea of difference as that which ‘forces thought’. However, before we articulate differential presence in this way, we will analyse the way in which Erickson invites us to conceive of Artaud’s relationship to his audience in terms of thought and ‘meaning’.

Erickson’s critique frames Artaud’s concept of presence as not only self-identical expression, but as necessarily ‘*immediate* (re)cognition’ (Erickson 1985: 285 – emphasis added). Immediacy implies spatio-temporal relations of sameness insofar as it is associated with the instantaneous on the one hand, and with the unmediated or direct on the other. Artaud, Erickson claims, hopes to create a language of instantaneousness, through bypassing the mind in favour of establishing contact between bodies. Thought, and by extension the mind, is associated with delay; intellectualization introduces unnecessary pauses in the reception process.

Sound poetry or Artaud’s cries attempt to overcome this temporal gap by denigrating the value of symbolic meaning, the cognition of which takes place in consciousness, and by appealing to the immediacy of a purely physical response (an action of the unconscious). This is an attempt at maintaining presence, which resides in immediacy, and of avoiding slippages of presence that result in individual self-consciousness and alienation from the scene. No one should stop to think (ibid.).

Erickson is making a number of points here. In the first instance, he seems to equate thinking with consciousness and suggests that, for Artaud, what is valuable in the performance of language is not meaning, but an unthinking, simple presence of the body to the word. But Artaud is not just concerned to banish temporal difference, Erickson argues, he also wants to achieve an unmediated or direct language which speaks to its audience without the mediation of concepts. Bypassing consciousness, it seems, kills two birds with one stone. As such, Erickson suggests that Artaud's concept of presence involves an immediate, unconscious, bodily response to language as sound rather than symbol. This is opposed to 'thinking', understood as that which imposes breaks in presence and distortions of meaning. In contrast, Erickson's own position naturalises a temporal gap between expression and comprehension as a condition of consciousness. In this way, he points out the contradiction inherent in the notion of "immediate (re)cognition", arguing that 'meaning' can never be unmediated or instantaneous:

Consciousness of language is a belated consciousness. Meaning is never comprehended instantaneously, but always a fraction of a moment later...
In a symbolic system "immediate (re)cognition" is self-contradictory
(Erickson 1985: 285).

Meaning is always delayed and therefore differentiated. And as such, if there is an immediacy or 'presence' between speaker and audience, it cannot be 'meaningful'. Or, vice versa, if the performance of language is 'meaningful' for the audience, it is because there has been a break in presence.

Erickson goes on to propose that, in seeking both self-identical expression and immediate recognition, intonational language takes two key risks. First, the language of presence aspires to a 'universal, emotive language' that can only be unambiguous in the expression of strong emotion, and, as such, lacks the capacity to express 'nuance' – understood as a specific, but minor or subtle inflection of meaning. It wants to be definite and particular, but intonational language, Erickson argues, can only achieve the self-identity of expression to which it aspires by limiting the range of meanings of its expressions. Erickson claims:

...The language of presence can only operate on the level of strong emotion if it is to be discerned or experienced unambiguously. Can there be any hope of finding *nuance* here, below the level of thought (which is essentially linguistic)? (ibid., 282)

In this way, Erickson suggests that subtlety of meaning is specific to the realm of consciousness. Since the language of presence directs itself toward the unthinking body it has to shout loudly and clearly to be understood. In turn, Erickson contends that the language of presence 'is not devoid of signification, it is just widening and making less definite what is being signified' (ibid., 288). Intonational language aspires to the elimination of the ambiguity it associates with the process of signification. In its failure, it signifies only the extremes of the general, rather than the nuance of the particular.

Secondly, the language of presence, as Erickson defines it, risks *hermeticism*. From one perspective, he argues, this is because the language of presence is more concerned with the performer's experience than that of the audience (ibid.). From another, it is because the language of presence seeks to break away from the conventional relations between signifier and signified that form the basis of social communication. In doing so it risks constructing its own 'prison-house', not of language but of nonsense. Drawing from the example of Artaud's contemporary Hugo Ball, Erickson argues

This solitary fortress in which one seeks an inner presence, this incomprehensible sphere can be a prison as well, though its purpose may be to free one from the constraints of language in society. This struggle, this tension, finally led Ball into a state of monastic silence (ibid., 285).

Incomprehensibility separates us from one another, Erickson implies, as much as the representational language sound poetry seeks to escape.

In the main, Erickson's essay seems to associate Artaud with an opposition of thinking and presence; thought is that which interrupts presence as an immediacy of expression and meaning. At one point, however, Erickson discusses Artaud's notion of presence, not in relation to the performance of language, but in the context of thought itself. For Artaud, Erickson argues, consciousness is that which intervenes to separate

him from his own thought; and yet, without consciousness he risks losing his thoughts. This leaves Artaud in a double-bind: ‘Artaud wishes to be totally conscious, by not being so he suspects that someone is stealing his thoughts, but any attempt to be fully self-conscious while thinking arrests the thought process, so that in a sense he steals it from himself’ (ibid., 286). For Artaud, Erickson suggests, ‘The thought process’ is both unconscious and in motion. Consciousness, in contrast, involves the arrest of motion - as a process of capture in relation to the thought process, attempting to prevent its escape.

But surely then, presence cannot be opposed to thought *per se* if presence is a problem *for* thought. Rather, it becomes clear that we need to distinguish between *conscious* and *unconscious* as two levels at which thought might be understood to take place. In turn, we might suggest that what Artaud wants is to conceive presence not as opposed to thinking, but *presence as the unconscious movement of thought*, and that we can draw from Deleuze to shed further light on this idea. Artaud does not want to make a mindless theatre in which no one stops to think, but he does want to reconsider our notion of the ‘mind’ and of thinking. Again, it is a question of destratification. As Dale notes, ‘Artaud does not reject the mind, he denounces it as an organ of the organized body and as an interpreter of meaning’ (Dale 2002: 91). Deleuze provides such an alternate account of thought: not as the recognition of existing meanings but as an embodied, creative process borne of the encounter. Armed with these Deleuzian ideas we can not only address Artaud’s linguistic aspirations in his radio work, *To have done with the judgment of god*, but his broader ambition to create a theatre – of gestures as well as words – that *makes us think* and in so doing affirms the ontological force of difference in itself, which cannot be ‘understood’ but can be sensed.

Thus, to construct oneself a theatre without organs is to learn to *think*, as well as to speak, differently. In *To have done with the judgment of god*, Artaud suggests that man thinks as he is made. As Dale argues, Artaud ‘throws both mind and body into consternation accusing man of thinking along the organized lines of the organism, that is, of thinking in the same way as he is constructed and vice versa’ (Dale 2002: 87). Likewise, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that he and Artaud agree on the idea that to think – genuinely – is to create; to make something new in contact with the world rather than to approach it with preconceived ideas. And it is this creative nature of thought that makes it difficult, for all of us, to really think. However, it also this

difficult thought – that Deleuze calls ‘thought without image’ – that is privileged as the only thought that can approach difference in itself.

Deleuze addresses the nature of thought throughout his oeuvre, but both in *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze proposes an affinity between his and Artaud’s understanding of that nature. In both cases, the key Artaud text for Deleuze seems to be the *Correspondence avec Jacques Riviere* (1923-24) in which he and Guattari definitively take ‘Artaud’s side’ against Riviere – the ‘man of the State’ who attempts to re-bind Artaud’s errant thought to targets and aims (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 378). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that Riviere misunderstood Artaud; indeed, he declares, ‘Rarely has there been such misunderstanding’ (Deleuze 1994: 147). And whereas Riviere takes thinking for granted, Deleuze argues, as an innate function that already exists and must merely be put to work, Artaud

knows that thinking is not innate, but must be engendered in thought. He knows that the problem is not to direct or methodically apply a thought which pre-exists in principle and in nature, but to bring into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other work, all the rest is arbitrary, mere decoration) (ibid.).

For Deleuze ‘To think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender “thinking” in thought’ (ibid.). Artaud, he argues, shares this definition of thought, but he also has direct experience of the difficulties of engendering thought as creation. In the *Correspondence*, as Deleuze narrates,

Artaud said that the problem (for him) was not to orientate his thought, or to perfect the expression of what he thought, or to acquire application and method or to perfect his poems, but simply to manage to think something (ibid.).

This problem is not unique to Artaud, Deleuze suggests; rather, Artaud’s particular experience shows up ‘difficulties in principle, concerning and affecting the essence of what it means to think’ (ibid.). The nature of thought as creation means that it is difficult, for all of us, to genuinely think.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze goes on to argue that Artaud's interrogation of his experience of the inability to think provides us with a 'revelation of a thought without image' which he contrasts with what he calls 'the dogmatic image of thought' (ibid.). With Artaud, Deleuze argues, thought is forced to think its own 'natural 'powerlessness'', but he adds that this 'fracture' or 'collapse' essential to thought is indistinguishable from its 'greatest power' (ibid.). In other words, Artaud's experience of thought's inability to hold itself together as itself, although the cause of suffering for Artaud, actually demonstrates the power of thought as the ceaseless production of itself as difference. After Artaud, Deleuze proposes, the dogmatic image of thought can no longer stand. Deleuze and Guattari return to this idea in *A Thousand Plateaus*, suggesting that Artaud's letters to Riviere reveal thought's essence as its 'own incapacity to take on form' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 378). It is not a question, Deleuze says, of 'opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia, but rather of remembering that schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought' (Deleuze 1994: 148). We need not approach Artaud's schizophrenia as an example of errant or deviant thought, rather it shows us the creative power of all genuine thought.

In stark contrast to Erickson, for whom, as we've seen, thought is 'essentially linguistic' (Erickson 1985: 282), Deleuze argues that language does not define or condition the process of thought. Thought does not begin with the categories of language but with 'something in the world' that presents itself to sensation: difference. Thought is not the product of language but of what Deleuze calls a 'fundamental encounter' (Deleuze 1994: 139). Here, he makes a clear distinction between what he calls 'objects of recognition' and those of *encounter*. Objects of recognition, Deleuze argues, 'do not disturb thought' insofar as they provide thought with 'an image of itself'; they reaffirm for thought, in other words, what it already thinks it knows. For Deleuze, instances of recognition do not involve genuine thought. We only 'truly think' when we have difficulty in recognizing something (ibid., 138). Such things produce encounters as the forcing of thought, or as Deleuze puts it:

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of

affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that *it can only be sensed*. In this sense it is opposed to recognition (ibid., 139 – first emphasis original, second emphasis added).

The object of encounter, then, presents itself to affect or sensation alone, rather than to conscious thought or recognition. Indeed, the encounter ‘defies consciousness, recognition and representation’ (Bogue 1989: 78). Conceived in terms of its power to be affected, Deleuze also argues that the body can think in ways from which consciousness would do well to learn. Deleuze is not arguing that sensation is able to recognize nuance, as constituted by small degrees of difference between meanings. Rather, he argues that difference in itself is that which ‘can only be sensed’, since consciousness works with identities.

At times, Artaud’s account of theatrical meaning might seem to promote the ‘dogmatic image of thought’ rather than a ‘thought without image’. For instance, in a discussion of what he calls ‘undebased mime plays’ in “‘Mise en scène’ and Metaphysics”, Artaud seems to assign the elements of theatre a substitutive role. Artaud explains: ‘...I mean straightforward mime where gestures, instead of standing for words or sentences as in European mime...*stand for* ideas, attitudes of mind, aspects of nature in a tangible, potent way...’ (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 94 – emphasis added). So long as theatre operates as a substitute for something else – be it words or ideas, the break between the absent represented (ideas) and the present representative (gesture) remains. In the same fashion, there is in Artaud’s writings a lingering desire to be understood and to dictate audience response, that could be seen to stand in tension with a Deleuzian reading of Artaud’s theatre as an encounter which forces (definitively *creative*) thought. For instance, in a 1947 letter to Fernand Pouey, Artaud explicitly rejects an understanding of *To have done with the judgment of god* as ‘a work that is chaotic and disconnected... in which the wandering sensibility of the listener must also take at random what suits him’ (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 576). In turn, Artaud describes the broadcast as: ‘a search for a language which the humblest road-mender or coal seller would have understood, a language which conveyed by means of *bodily transmission* the highest metaphysical truths’ (ibid., 583).

Such appeals to understanding and ‘truth’ here might well be taken to imply a desire to banish difference along the lines of Erickson’s reading of Artaud. However, Deleuze encourages us to notice Artaud’s divergence from such a reading in three different ways. Firstly, he allows us to conceive Artaud as aspiring to create a theatre as an object of encounter rather than recognition, as forcing thought rather than communicating meanings. With regard to the issue of theatre as substitute, it is important to note Artaud’s account of the *nature* of these ideas for which theatre stands in. These ideas, Artaud suggests, do not *pre-exist* their expression, and as such theatre creates rather than represents them, in much the same way as does the Deleuzian encounter. From these examples we can see that it is not that he wants to divorce theatre from ‘meaning’ *per se*, so much as create new meanings beyond those that already exist and can be represented. For instance, in “Theatre and Poetry” Artaud declares his commitment to freeing objects from their conventional associations or what he refers to as their ‘immediate meaning’. Artaud proposes that objects in the theatre

...are cut off from their immediate meaning, and endeavour, indeed, to create a true language based on the sign, rather than based on the word. That is where the notion of symbolism based on the changing of meanings comes in. Things will be stripped of their immediate meaning and will be given a new one (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 119).

Rather than thinking of the symbol as that which represents existing meanings, Artaud conceives symbolism as the creation of new meaning. This is a function Artaud associates with *poetry*: theatre becomes poetic, Artaud argues, when it seizes its capacity to shake our understandings of the relations between things. Similarly, in the first manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud argues that ‘Through poetry, theatre contrasts *pictures of the unformulated* with the crude visualization of what exists’ (ibid., 105 – original emphasis) – a process he associates with cinema. Contemporary society, he complains, ‘has made us forget the slightest idea of serious theatre which upsets all our preconceptions’ (ibid., 108). Once distilled to its essence, we must not ask whether theatricality can define thought, Artaud argues, ‘...but whether it *makes us think*’ (ibid., 122 – original emphasis).

Secondly, Deleuze’s concept of the encounter with that which can only be sensed also allows us to return with fresh eyes to Artaud’s references to ‘bodily

transmission' and his concept of 'the Flesh'. Indeed, Deleuze himself creates a concept of 'the flesh' in *The Logic of Sense*, where he talks about the inscription of difference or of 'the depths' in the flesh (Deleuze 1990: 161). Likewise, in 'Theatre and Cruelty' (1933), Artaud argues: 'One cannot separate body and mind, nor the senses from the intellect, particularly in a field where the unending repeated jading of our organs calls for sudden shocks to revive our understanding' (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 109). Here, the body, or what Artaud also names 'Flesh', is located at the very source of genuine thought, as distinct from the kind of habitual thinking involved in the interpretation of the psychological theatre that Artaud rejects. Specifically, he argues that society has become unaccustomed to a theatre of presence as the forcing of thought, largely on account of 'the damage wrought by psychological theatre, derived from Racine' (ibid., 108). Likewise, in 'Situation of the Flesh' (1925), Artaud assigns a particular definition to the notion of flesh beyond a common-sense understanding:

For me the word Flesh means above all *apprehension*, hair standing on end, flesh laid bare with all the intellectual profundity of this spectacle of pure flesh and all its consequences for the senses, that is for the sentiments. And sentiment means presentiment, that is, direct understanding, communication turned inside out and illumined from within. There is a mind in the flesh, but a mind as quick as lightning. And yet the excitement of the flesh partakes of the high substance of the mind. And yet whosoever says flesh also says sensibility. Sensibility, that is, assimilation, but the ultimate, secret, profound, absolute assimilation of my own pain, and consequently the solitary and unique knowledge of that pain (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 111).

For Deleuze too, the presence of difference or perpetual variation has an electric quality: 'It is like lightning coming from somewhere else and announcing something else – a sudden emergence of creative, unexpected and subrepresentative variation' (Deleuze 1997: 252). Using the destratified voice, differential presence is characterised by the 'sudden shock when thought realises itself in the body' (Dale 2002: 91); it is a moment of performance that addresses an acephalic 'mind in the flesh'.

Thirdly, we can also suggest that Deleuze's conception of 'the language of schizophrenia' in *The Logic of Sense* might be productively read alongside Artaud's

concepts of language as operating as *incantation* and *vibration* in relation to its audience. Conventionally, ‘incantation’ is associated with the idea of the spell, chant or mantra: a set of words which, when recited in a ritual context, have some kind of magical effect. In the context of sound poetry, Erickson suggests, incantation refers to an ideal of language as

...summoning forth the power of presence within every fiber and organ, and nerve of the human being, uniting the spiritual with the physical, tapping into the dormant and primal creative energies, and emanating outward toward the listener; it is a sounding of one’s human space and the establishing of a resonating field, creating a *harmonious sub- or pre-linguistic communication between poet and auditor* (Erickson 1985: 280 – emphasis added).

However, this notion of incantation is not the only way to understand Artaud’s aims with respect to the performance of language. Particularly problematic, perhaps, is the implication that Artaud aspired to a ‘harmonious’ relation to his audience. On the contrary, we might suggest, incantation for Artaud involves a rupture, which in turn indicates the meeting of difference (as itself, with itself) rather than identities. For example, we might note the violent terms in which Artaud articulates the impact of incantation in the following quotation from “‘Mise en scène” and Metaphysics”:

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey. That is to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its *full, physical shock potential*, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflections in a completely tangible manner and restore their *shattering power* and really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one might almost say alimentary, sources, against its origins as a hunted beast, and finally to consider language in the form of *Incantation* (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 97 – first and second emphasis added, third italics original).

Here, Artaud emphasizes the way in which a particular usage of language might provide access to the ontological, or what he refers to as the ‘metaphysical’. Incantation, Artaud

argues, constitutes a break with the tradition of employing language as merely the tool for representing an already existing reality, in favour of exposing the power of language to act upon, and create the real. This experience is both ‘shocking’ and ‘shattering’, rather than ‘harmonious’ for the audience because they are forced to physically encounter the novelty of that which has been incanted. Incantation acts upon the bodies of its audience, we might propose, in a comparable fashion to the way in which words act upon the body of the schizophrenic as Deleuze figures it. With Deleuze, making metaphysics out of language, means the affirmation of difference in itself through Incantation.

And yet, it would be a mistake to over-emphasise the importance of ‘shock’ to Artaud as a mode of relation to his audience. Or rather, perhaps we need to distinguish between the ‘shattering power’ of an encounter with difference as ontological force and shock as a conscious reaction to a different opinion to one’s own. As is well known, Artaud’s broadcast *To have done with the judgment of god* was banned precisely for fear that it would *shock* the French public. Indeed, Morfee notes that it is typical to find in Artaud’s late writing ‘the infantile delight in naming lower bodily fluids and processes’ (Morfee 2005: 126) which, Morfee argues, tends to undermine rather than aid Artaud’s thought. However, for all the talk of ‘caca’, farts and sperm in the radio play, one might argue that Artaud places a greater value on the concept of ‘vibration’, a more subtle mode of audience response which in fact needs to be protected from being overwhelmed by the shocking or scandalous in order to function. The concept of vibration appears several times in Artaud’s oeuvre. In a 1948 letter to Wladimir Porché, the director of the radio station that banned Artaud’s radio work, he writes:

I wanted a fresh work, one that would make contact with certain
organic points of life,
a work in which one’s whole nervous system
illuminated as if by a miner’s cap-lamp
with vibrations,
consonances
which invite

man
TO EMERGE
WITH

his body
to follow in the sky this new, unusual, and radiant Epiphany.
But the glory of the body is possible
only if
nothing
in the spoken text
happens to shock
happens to damage
this sort of desire for glory (Artaud in Sontag 1976: 579).

Here Artaud expresses his ambition to create a work that causes the audience's nervous systems to vibrate, leading to a renewed understanding of their bodies. However, he also makes clear that any conscious, 'shocked' response to the text will get in the way of this more intuitive reaction. Equally, although Artaud is often accused of positing a mind/body distinction, the concept of vibration seems more concerned to contrast habitual responses ('shock') with the emergence of the new ('Epiphany').

Twenty years prior to these letters, Artaud had employed the concept of vibration in a short theoretical text concerned with his film project, *The Shell and the clergyman* (1928). Here, during a short-lived period of preference for the cinema over the theatre, Artaud argues that cinematic images are uniquely endowed with a magical rather than representational quality with 'the characteristics of the very vibration, the profound, unconscious source of thought' (Artaud in Schumacher 1989: 53). Cinematic images vibrate, Artaud suggests, and as such they are connected to thought as that which is produced by vibration. In turn, we might read these remarks back into Artaud's letter to Porché: if vibration is the unconscious source of thought, then Artaud wanted *To have done with the judgment of god* to make us think, to vibrate us in order that we might conceive our bodies anew. For Artaud, this impact of vibration lies outwith the powers of explanation and knowing. In *The Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud argues that there is no point, 'trying to give exact reasons...why the nervous system after a certain time is in tune with the vibrations of the subtlest music and is eventually somehow lastingly modified by it' (ibid., 115). Unknowable perhaps – and yet, combining Artaud's sense of the impact of vibration with Deleuze's theorisation of thought as creative encounter does provide some kind of explanation. Like Deleuze, Artaud's concept of vibration traverses the mind/body distinction in order to think the nature of

the presence between thinking bodies: not as pure presence, but as the differential presence that forces thought. As Dyson suggests,

Between presence and representation is the interval between matter itself and our conscious perception of matter, and in that interval all the artificial divisions that go into constructing and representing matter as a series of independent objects cast in an infinitely divisible space and existing in a perpetuity of instants are set in place (Dyson in Scheer 2000: 87).

Differential presence involves an embodied encounter with destratified matter, or matter in itself, which makes us think through an unconscious or intuitive vibration.

A further matter that arises here is the question of Artaud's relation to the categories of intention and necessity, of artistic practice and the practice of mental health patients. With *intonation*, *incantation* and *vibration*, Artaud seems to be actively pursuing a new usage of language in performance, contrary, perhaps, to Deleuze's emphasis on the schizophrenic origins of his approach. Indeed, *The Logic of Sense* caused something of a controversy when it was published, insofar as Deleuze was seen by some to be annexing 'Artaud's writing to the realm of the schizophrenic' (Morfee 2005, 108) and thus denying him artistic control or credit for his work. For example, Paule Thévenin – Artaud's friend and collaborator – railed against Deleuze's reading of Artaud in an article called 'Entendre/Voir/Lire'⁴². Here, as Jeffrey Attebury (2000) reports, Thévenin objects to Deleuze's use of existing clinical terminology to categorise Artaud's work, which she suggests makes him complicit with the violence done to Artaud by the medical profession. 'Straight away,' Thévenin argues, 'Deleuze falls into the major trap of identifying Artaud as a schizophrenic' (Thévenin in Attebury 2000, 716)⁴³. As Attebury notes,

Whether or not Deleuze here uses the term schizophrenia in a manner that

⁴² Thévenin republished her essay in 1993 as part of a collection of writings on Artaud entitled *Antonin Artaud, ce désespéré qui vous parle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil). As Jeffrey Attebury (2000) reports, the collection's introduction includes an apology of sorts to Deleuze from Thévenin, which Attebury reads as an acknowledgement of the inherent difficulty of reading Artaud. Here, Thévenin refers to her early critique of Deleuze as "a little bit exaggerated" (Thévenin in Scheer 2004a, 27).

⁴³ This is my own rough translation of a quotation that Attebury gives in the original French: "D'emblee, Gilles Deleuze, tombant dans le piège majeur, identifie Antonin Artaud a la schizophrénie" (Thévenin 1993: 200).

is in strict accordance with clinical practice, he clearly has recourse to the language of psychoanalysis as a means of explicating Artaud's texts, a strategy that would appear to make Artaud's writing into a case study (ibid.).

In contrast, Thévenin argues 'that Artaud's work must be understood on its own terms, that his language presents a consistent challenge to any analysis of it according to a codified system, especially that of psychoanalysis' (Attebury 2000: 716). This chapter cannot hope to do justice to this issue here, but for now it seems important simply to register Artaud's careful consideration of how one might *consciously* effect an *unconscious* vibration, or create an encounter, in one's audience or oneself. Contra Erickson's argument that Artaud's use of language, like sound poetry, is more concerned with the experience of the performer than that of the audience, Artaud's response to Porché's ban evidences his primary concern with what language can do – as intonation, incantation and vibration – to and for those who hear it.

Conclusion

In this second chapter, we have provided an exposition of three key concepts emerging in the encounter between Artaud and Deleuze: the body without organs, the theatre without organs, and the destratified voice, as well as furthering our understanding of what the experience of differential presence might involve. The chapter proposed that *To have done with the judgment of god* constitutes an instance of a theatre without organs that uses the destratified voice in a pursuit of differential presence – as a nonrepresentative encounter with difference that forces new thoughts upon us. Drawing from various works by Deleuze including *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense*, *A Thousand Plateaus* and 'One Less Manifesto', we have conceived differential presence as an encounter with difference or perpetual variation as that which exceeds the representational consciousness of a subject, forcing thought through rupture rather than communicating meanings through sameness. Contra the dismissal of Artaud's project as paradoxical or impossible, the chapter has suggested that his non-representational theatre seeks to affirm a new kind of presence *as* difference, rather than aiming to transcend difference in order to reach the self-identical presence of Western metaphysics.

And yet, this very idea of *creating* an encounter with difference is perhaps problematic if the encounter is something that happens ‘to’ us, or that forces thought ‘upon’ us, in an apparently accidental and unpredictable fashion. How can anyone be said to ‘create’ an encounter if the encounter is, by definition, a force of creation without need for the transcendent control of a creator? What is needed is a different attitude to the role of the artist, as one who does not claim to create the encounter so much as to create the conditions for the encounter, as one who makes space and time for creation by erasing himself as artist. We will now suggest that one can find such an attitude in the work of Allan Kaprow, particularly in his ‘Activities’, which will be the focus of our next chapter.

Chapter Three

Differential presence as ‘affect’ & ‘becoming-imperceptible’ in Allan Kaprow’s *Activities*

Introduction

At the end of the last chapter, we noted the potential paradox of the concept of ‘creating an encounter’, given that its inherently unpredictable and unknowable nature can be seen to present a challenge to notions of authorship and intentionality. Likewise, in the first chapter, we pointed to the tension that arises on account of the Living Theatre’s attempts to attach participation to an explicit macropolitical agenda or goal. Following on from such ideas, this chapter will re-approach these questions from a new angle via the work of the American artist and theorist Allan Kaprow (1927-2006), best known for his coinage of the term ‘Happening,’ understood as ‘a new art form that couldn’t be confused with paintings, poetry, architecture, music, dance, or plays’ (Kaprow 2003: xxvii). However, rather than focus on such canonical works as *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, we will draw attention to the works Kaprow referred to as ‘Activities’ rather than ‘Happenings’, and specifically on the Activities and writings related to them that he created in the early to mid 1970s⁴⁴. This choice of focus is a response to the radical indeterminacy of the Activities and their Deleuzian project to go beyond undoing the categories of genre or art-form in favour of creating fleeting moments of ‘nonart’ as that which operates beneath the art/life distinction. In what follows, we will be examining Kaprow’s Activities in terms of Deleuze’s concept of ‘affect’ rather than signification, and ultimately as experiments in the ‘becoming-

⁴⁴ There is conflicting evidence as to exactly when Kaprow began to use the term ‘Activity’ and when the first Activity might be said to have taken place, but it seems to have been around 1968-69. That is, there is terminological confusion over whether certain events such as *Runner* (1968) and *Charity* (1969) should be called ‘Activities’ or ‘Happenings’. Kaprow’s own essay, “The Education of the Un-Artist, Part II” (1972) provides a score for both works which categorises them as Activities (Kaprow 2003: 115, 122). However, in the recent and very comprehensive catalogue *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, which draws heavily on the Kaprow papers in the Getty Archive, both *Runner* and *Charity* are listed as Happenings (Meyer-Hermann 2008: 197 & 207). This source also suggests that several of Kaprow’s early Activities remained unrealized, and that the first actually presented Activity was an event entitled *Moon Sounds*, realized in December 1969 at the wedding of Heidi and Richard Blau – son of the eminent performance theorist, Herbert Blau (ibid., 210 – NB. Heidi Blau is incorrectly named ‘Helga’ in this book). In correspondence with the author, Herbert Blau has said of *Moon Sounds*: ‘It was a marvellous affair that started at our house in Silver Lake, went out onto the desert landscape between Cal Arts & the Livermore atomic energy research headquarters, and ended with a dinner back at the house’.

imperceptible’ of the work of art, of the artist, and of the participant – in which becoming-imperceptible will be associated with differential presence, rather than with absence. Through Deleuze’s theorisations of affect and becoming-imperceptible, and Kaprow’s account of the Activities, differential presence can now be understood as the direct, embodied and transformative experience of participating in the real as a constantly changing ‘whole’.

Between the late sixties and 2001, Kaprow scored and enacted more than a hundred Activities⁴⁵. However, he continued to make new ‘Happenings’ until around 1970, and indeed continued to reinvent past ‘Environments’ and Happenings *alongside* creating new Activities for the rest of his career. As such, it is not the case that there is a discrete ‘Activities phase’ that necessarily constitutes a development from the Happenings. Indeed, the first essay in which Kaprow uses the term ‘Activity’ – “Pinpointing Happenings” from 1967 – confirms not only a practical, but a conceptual overlap between the Activities and Happenings. Here, Kaprow attempts to describe and define what he calls an ‘Activity Happening’ or ‘Activity type Happening’ as a subcategory of Happenings. An ‘Activity Happening,’ he says, is

directly involved in the everyday world, ignores theatres and audiences, is *more active than meditative*, and is close in spirit to physical sports...fairs...and political demonstrations. It also partakes of the unconscious daily rituals of the supermarket... The Activity Happening selects and combines situations to be *participated in, rather than watched or just thought about* (ibid., 87 – emphasis added).

Of course, since Kaprow made this remark, ‘sports... fairs... and political demonstrations’ (and to a lesser extent supermarket rituals) have become staple examples of what constitutes ‘performance,’ at least for US Performance Studies as influenced by Richard Schechner’s ‘broad spectrum’ definition. Nevertheless, this remark helpfully highlights three aspects of the Activity process that remain central to how Kaprow approached its creation: the *selection* of situations (or actions), the *combination* of those actions into a new configuration, and the invitation to an audience

⁴⁵ According to the timelines published in *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, the last, new Activity Kaprow created before his death was entitled *Postal Regulations* and was realized in June-July 2001 (Leddy and Meyer-Hermann 2008: 330).

to actively *participate* in those actions rather than contemplate them. But we must wait until the trio of essays entitled ‘The Education of the Un-Artist’ to understand more about the specifics of Kaprow’s aims in relation to the participants in the Activities. Even then, though, unlike the term ‘Happening,’ which Kaprow seemed to be perpetually defining in various manifesto-like articles, we will never get a corresponding definition of the Activity. Instead, Kaprow inserts examples of his Activity scores into essays that introduce a plethora of new terms and values such as ‘nonart’, ‘lifelike art’, ‘play’, ‘experiment’, ‘participation performance’ and so forth⁴⁶.

And yet, despite this practical and conceptual overlap, there is some sense in which the Activities could be seen to address some of the problems that Kaprow came to associate with the Happenings of the 1960s. That is, although he had initially been pleased with the way in which the Happenings could not be recognised according to art’s existing, formal categories, Kaprow sensed that, as their popularity grew, both his own Happenings and those of others were becoming increasingly determined by the same set of ‘unquestioned beliefs’ about the identity of art that restricted the experimentalism of the conventional arts: ‘belief in objects that can be possessed; belief in eternity; belief in control and skill; belief in creativity; belief in publicity and fame; belief in marketability’ (ibid., xxviii). But rather than reject the form altogether, Kaprow tried to eliminate these beliefs from his later Happenings ‘...By doing events only once, by not sending out announcements, by shifting event sites from artists’ lofts and underground galleries to remote landscapes’ (ibid.). In a bid to protect his experiments from their own ‘success’, Kaprow took his Happenings away from the art-world as site and away from its demands for publicity and reproduction.

But even this was not enough for Kaprow. The Happenings’ ‘biggest problem’, Kaprow retrospectively argued, ‘was the presence of audiences,’ this being the major cause of his subsequent critique of them as ‘just another version of vanguard theatre’ (ibid). And it is this desire to eliminate a ‘conventional’ audience that is at the heart of the distinction between the Happening and the Activity. However, many of the

⁴⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that Kaprow, although very active practically, does not seem to have published any writing in 1969 – the year in which, according to Leddy’s chronology, Kaprow makes the transition to calling his works ‘Activities’ rather than ‘Happenings’ (Leddy and Meyer-Hermann 2008: 210). Correlatively, we might speculate that this missing definition constitutes a recognition of a distinction between the theoretical and the practical – that Kaprow wanted to maintain a separation between nonart as an idea, and the Activity as an event. As we’ll go on to suggest, the concept of nonart could be seen as a limit to which the Activities aspired, but perhaps rarely achieved.

Activities still involve acts of observation – of one participant by another, or by participants of themselves. Thus, Kaprow’s hostility to the idea of a conventional audience cannot simply be reduced to a hostility toward the traditional primacy accorded to vision in our relation to works of art and performance. What Kaprow has in mind, when he refers to the problem of the audience, is that a conventional audience at that time tended to have little or no impact on how the nature of the work unfolded in time, that is, on the individuality of the work of art as a complex and self-different event. There is a different kind of looking – or ‘attention’ – that takes place, Kaprow suggests, when the audience is in the midst of doing and when they are responsible for what is done. Clearly, this is not a matter of “all or nothing”, but of a *continuum of participation* of which Kaprow wanted to explore the outer limits – when the role of the artist in constituting the nature of the work has been reduced to a minimum, and the role of the participants has been increased as much as possible.

In the transition from one to the other, Kaprow began to make what he called ‘performer-only’ Happenings, such as *Calling* (1965) and *Self-Service* (1967). However, this label was arguably aspirational rather than descriptive. For instance, we might note the large, if impromptu audience that gathered to watch the aspects of *Calling* that took place in New York’s Grand Central Station⁴⁷. In contrast, *Self-Service* bears a much closer relation to the Activities, on account of the subtlety, or we might say the ‘becoming-imperceptible’ of some of the actions offered to the participants. For Kaprow, *Self-Service* marked something of a break with his earlier Happenings which he describes as having had ‘far more dramatic and deliberate imagery’ in contrast to the ‘cohesion and casualness, an in-and-out-of-your-daily-lifeness’ of *Self-Service* (Kaprow 1968: 153). Some actions remain spectacular; for instance, it would be hard not to notice the enactment of the instruction: ‘People tie tarpaper around many cars in supermarket lot’. Others however, although also enacted in public, would be easier to miss, such as the following instruction: ‘Many shoppers begin to whistle in aisles of [a] supermarket. After a few minutes they go back to their shopping’ (Kaprow in Kelley 2004: 109). At this point Kaprow is raising a number of questions: What is the relation between everyday activities and aesthetic experience? How can art become more democratic without becoming banal or conventional? How can genuine participation

⁴⁷ There is an attention-seeking, spectacular quality - completely absent from the Activities - to Kaprow’s decision to have the cloth-wrapped bodies of participants dropped off at Grand Central and propped up against its information booth. Looking like dead bodies or packages awaiting collection, the mummified participants call out to other volunteers, before unwrapping themselves and leaving the station.

occur, and what then is the relationship between the artists' aims and the interests or experiences of the participants? These are the questions that become increasingly important for Kaprow in his development of the concept of 'nonart' and of the practice of the Activity – both of which, we will argue, constitute forms of thinking differential presence as the becoming-imperceptible of the work of art, artist and "audience" through the notion of participation.

In order to provide a general picture of what the Activities were like, we might follow Jeff Kelley in distinguishing between those events that took place in an educational context (which were mostly the US Activities enacted by small groups of students), and those that were commissioned by galleries or art festivals (which were mostly the European Activities, enacted by invited and volunteer participants from the host cities) (Kelley 2004: 161). Alternatively, the Activities might be understood to operate between two poles, at one of which inhuman materials take centre stage while people function as attentive workmen (such as *Level* from 1970 and *Durations* from 1976). At the other pole, the specific conventions of human behaviour are of primary concern (such as *Take Off* from 1974, or *Maneuvers* and *Satisfaction*, from 1976). At the former pole, and in this sense they are reminiscent of some of the Happenings, the actions Kaprow proposes often involve processes of building, physically demanding labour and the materials of construction; for example, in *Tracts*, *Sweet Wall* (both 1970) and *Scales* (1971). At the latter pole, participants are often grouped into mixed-sex couples who enact various forms of exchange and contact with one another – sometimes just using their bodies, and at other times supplementing the relationship with technologies such as telephones, microphones, cameras and tape recorders (ibid., 190). In between these two poles, there are the bodily-experiment works like *Meters* (1972), *Highs*, *Basic Thermal Units* (both 1973), *Affect* (1974) and *Air Condition* (1975). These involve inhuman materials like light, ice and water, but no construction or manual labour. Likewise, although they invite participants to enact forms of contact and exchange, there is no real concern with behavioural conventions or body language.

What these Activities have in common, however – in addition to their 'intimate scale' (ibid., 180), the absence of non-participant viewers, and the fact that they all begin with a plan written by Kaprow – is their focus on relationality; hence their pertinence to a discussion of differential presence as a fundamentally relational concept. The concept of differential presence asserts the primacy of relationality, refusing any

essential being or fixed nature to the ‘things’ that appear from it. Likewise, the Activities invite us to attend to relationality, whether the foregrounded relation is one between human bodies and inhuman matter, of a human body to itself or to other humans, or to the inhuman force of change to which, as we’ll see, both Kaprow and Deleuze accord ontological priority. In this way, the Activities further the experimentation with participation that we located in the Living Theatre by generating works which not only involve participatory *elements* in the midst of an otherwise observed theatre, but are *defined throughout* by the nature of participants’ responses to a score, or set of instructions, provided by the artist. At the same time, Kaprow’s work allows us to reconceive the way in which differential presence can be understood to involve contact with the real, beyond the representations of a subject. This contact or presence will be theorised by Kaprow as a blurring of the boundaries between art and life, and finally as the ambition to make participatory art which provides participants with ‘a sense of the whole’. Participatory art, in other words, facilitates an awareness and experience of ontological participation beyond any subject/object distinction.

Crucially, as this chapter’s focal Deleuzian concepts of ‘affect’ and ‘becoming-imperceptible’ will make clear, this is an experience that involves change and transformation for both the human and inhuman bodies that take part. This is why it constitutes an experience of differential presence, or what Kaprow will variously conceive as ‘lifelike art’, ‘experienced insight’, or ‘becoming “the whole”’, rather than self-presence. Further, we will emphasise that such presence does *not* involve a dissolution of the material self in order to become the adequate vessel for the passage of a dematerialised thought – as Peter Hallward (2006) has suggested in his discussion of the notion of ‘becoming-imperceptible’. Rather, differential presence involves a heightened awareness of our capacity to affect and be affected by other material bodies, and an experience of ‘growing in the midst of things’ rather than being irrevocably separated from them (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 280).

Where Kaprow takes us in a new direction from the previous two chapters is in his radical rethinking of what ‘art’ is, or, what constitutes an aesthetic experience – a direction that was particularly influenced by his encounter with *Art as Experience* (1934) by John Dewey, who defined the aesthetic in terms of the complete participation of organism and environment (Zepke in Cull 2009: 117). For critics like Christopher Innes this also happens with the Living Theatre with regard to their use of improvisation

(which, as we've noted, Innes sees as antithetical to art), just as there are those who see works such as Artaud's 'Jabberwocky' as a schizophrenic symptom avoiding the intentionality or sense of purpose associated with the production of art. Nevertheless, it will be proposed that – as part of his experimentation with differential presence – Kaprow goes the furthest to explore the relationship between art and life in a manner that presents a challenge to the more restricted, even institutionalised, notion of art that Deleuze (and Guattari) sometimes put forward. Hence, this further question must also be tackled: Does 'art' itself (or what Kaprow will call 'Art art' or 'artlike art') present a blockage to the artist's or participants' experience of differential presence? And, if so, under what new conditions might affect and becoming-imperceptible occur? It is here, potentially, that we might find a democratisation of differential presence – not as the basis for 'revolution' or wholesale social change, but as a micropolitical strategy that draws the "audience's" attention to its capacity to change and be changed by worldly processes.

This chapter is composed of three main parts. The first part addresses the question of what Deleuze's concept of 'affect' might contribute to our understanding of differential presence in the Activities. Here, we begin by contextualising a Deleuzian theorisation of the Activities by way of a critique of interpretations of Kaprow's work as signification and metaphor by Annette Leddy (2008) and Richard Schechner (1968). In the second part, we move on from the concept of 'affect' to the notion of 'becoming-imperceptible', which will be defined as a kind of limit-experience of differential presence, or as what we will also discuss as an 'ontological participation' made available by Kaprow's participatory (non)art. Here, the theoretical context for the discussion is primarily Stephen Zepke's article, 'Becoming a Citizen of the World: Deleuze between Allan Kaprow and Adrian Piper' (2009), which not only deals thoroughly with the relation between Deleuze and Kaprow, but also raises important questions regarding the nature of differential presence as 'becoming-imperceptible'. At this point, we will also expose the connections between Zepke's critique of Kaprow and Hallward's 2006 critique of Deleuze, before developing an alternative reading of both. In the case of both parts, the existing context provides a foil for the arguments of this chapter: in the first instance, with the contrast between reading the work of art as a signifying or metaphorical object, and conceiving it as affective process or metamorphosis; in the second, with regard to the relative emphasis on the conceptual and the material in Kaprow and Deleuze, and in the distinction between a dialectical

thinking in terms of presence/absence and the Deleuzian notion of becoming as a different kind of presence. In the third and final part of the chapter, we shall to address some of the problems raised by Kaprow's Activities for the notion of differential presence, particularly questioning the extent to which becoming-imperceptible and nonart might be understood to be 'ideal' and looking at the reasons why Kaprow could be seen to have failed to achieve such experiences in his actual practice.

1. Contra the Activity as metaphor: differential presence as 'affect' and 'experienced insight'

placing a block of ice and bale of straw
near each other somewhere
ice melting slowly
reducing bale, straw by straw
(keeping pace with the ice)
until nothing remains. (Kaprow 2008: 46)

This is Kaprow's score for *Level* (1970), an Activity dedicated to his wife, Vaughan Rachel, which art historian, Annette Leddy interprets biographically, transforming it into a symbol of Kaprow and Rachel's relationship.

Because of the dedication and the pairing of the objects, it is tempting to see *Level* as a portrait of Kaprow's marriage, then in its fourteenth year. If so, it is a grim one, worthy of Robert Frost, in which marriage is a levelling process that reduces both people "until nothing remains" (Leddy and Meyer-Hermann 2008: 46).

Ice is not just ice here, Leddy proposes, nor straw simply straw. Rather, the block and the bale are metaphorical stand-ins for Kaprow and his wife. Equally, Leddy suggests that in works like *Warm-Ups* and *Basic Thermal Units* 'melting ice is a metaphor for overcoming emotional distance' (ibid., 45) and that *Affect* was created 'as a piece about a disharmonious relationship' (ibid., 49).

There is a similar emphasis on representation over direct, material presence in Richard Schechner's 1968 interview with Kaprow, which focuses on *Fluids* (1967) – an earlier Happening also involving ice. Kaprow describes *Fluids*, matter-of-factly, as

a single event done in many places over a three-day period. It consists simply in building huge, blank, rectangular ice structures 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and eight feet high. The structures are built by people who decide to meet a truck carrying 650 ice blocks per structure. They set this thing up using rock salt as a binder – which hastens melting and fuses the blocks together (Kaprow in Schechner 1968: 154).

Schechner, however, insists that Kaprow cannot be unaware of the parodic nature of *Fluids* in relation to America, 'a terribly property-conscious country with people who want to own everything' (Schechner 1968: 154). Preempting Leddy's interpretations, Schechner reads Kaprow's *Fluids* as a gesture that runs 'against the American grain' and as 'a suggestive metaphor for all kinds of monumental things which really do disintegrate slowly the moment we've created them' (ibid.). While Kaprow does not attempt to reject these connotations of *Fluids*, he responds to Schechner's reading by emphasising both multiplicity – there are many other allusions in the work beyond parody – and the asignifying blankness of the ice structures. Kaprow suggests:

If you were crossing the city you might suddenly be confronted by these mute and meaningless blank structures which have been left to melt. Obviously what's taking place is a mystery of sorts; using common material (at considerable expense) to make quasi-architectural structures which seem out of place amid a semi-tropical city setting. The structures indicate no significance. In fact, their very blankness and their rapid deterioration proclaims the opposite of significance (Kaprow in Schechner 1968: 154).

The melting structures do not stay the same as themselves for long enough, Kaprow suggests, to function as signification; the structures are not symbolic objects but combinations of material processes that change in response to other processes: the process of ice responding to that of rock salt, ice to sun, skin to ice, binding to melting, and so on.

In turn, the melting of the structures is not a metaphor for the processual nature of all monuments so much as an engagement with ice and salt as materials that make the perpetual metamorphosis of architecture visible to human perception, in contrast to the slower pace of change performed by stone or marble, which tends to obscure such changes. As Kaprow himself puts it, with the use of ephemeral materials,

Change, governing both reality and art, has extended...from the expression of an idea arrested in a painting, to a work in which the usually slow mutations wrought by nature are quickened and literally made part of the experience of it; they manifest the very processes of creation-decay-creation almost as one watches (Kaprow 1966: 169).

As ephemera, art then offers us the chance to see reality at a different speed; the imperceptible changes of nature's 'slow mutations' are rendered perceptible. That is, even at this early point in his career, Kaprow affirms his philosophical position as one that conceives reality as 'constant metamorphosis', and argues that it is this conception that lies 'at the root' of his work (ibid.). Like Deleuze, Kaprow conceives the real in terms of an ontology of change. While the emphasis here is still on witnessing change as something 'one watches', it still plants the seed for Kaprow's later conception of the Activities as an opportunity to affectively participate in change, as the fundamental basis of both art and life. Change and the fleeting need not be represented as the Impressionists did (whilst still making lasting works of art), or as metaphor as Schechner suggests. Rather, Kaprow argues, 'If change is to be lived and felt deeply, then the art work must be free to articulate this on levels beyond the conceptual' (ibid.); in other words, as affect. Alternatively we might also wish to note that, in their discussions of Franz Kafka and Francis Bacon, Deleuze and Guattari argue that metaphors do not function as mere representations, but as genuine expressions of transformation, becoming or metamorphosis⁴⁸.

At the same time, these metaphorical readings of Kaprow's late Happenings and early Activities erase the potential impact of the work from a participatory rather than

⁴⁸ In Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari call upon us to 'Kill metaphor' since the conventional understanding of the metaphor posits an ontological distinction between the self-present world and the images of it produced by artists (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 70). In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that when artists create images they are producing actuality through metamorphosis.

spectatorial perspective. Indeed, this ‘tyranny of the signifier’ (as Deleuze and Guattari call it) could be argued to encapsulate why participation, and the removal of spectatorship, becomes so important for Kaprow. The Happening *Fluids*, insofar as it is staged in the city, can still be encountered as an image; it more readily lends itself to symbolic readings. The *Activity Level*, on the other hand, exists primarily as something to be done and experienced immanently, rather than to be seen from the outside; and it is this participatory aspect of the work that Leddy seems to ignore in choosing to focus on the Activity as poetic text or symbolic image. What matters is what happens to us as we reduce the bale straw by straw, trying to match our own rhythm of action with that of the ice as it perceives the heat of the sun.

Works of art can always be retrospectively understood to signify certain ideas. For instance, initially, there is an emphasis on signification similar to Schechner and Leddy’s in Kelley’s account of the Activity – *Sweet Wall* (1970), which was enacted ‘within sight of the Berlin wall’ and involved building a wall out of cinder blocks with bread and jam as the mortar. Kelley states that ‘The political symbolism of constructing and knocking over a mock wall so close to the Cold War’s most concrete expression of the Iron Curtain was, of course, evident to all’. However, he also acknowledges that although Kaprow ‘was fully aware of the political implications’ of *Sweet Wall*, he was in fact ‘more interested in the actual process of laying out, layering up, mortaring together, sighting, pushing over, and then cleaning up the concrete blocks, which, by then, were smeared with sticky jam and wadded with dirty, wet bread’ (Kelley 2004: 163). Representational implications are not denied, but it is important to note that Kaprow himself explicitly argues against any simple distinction between form and content in order to avoid producing works of art that will ‘remain only an illustration of a thought’ rather than providing participants with what he calls an ‘experienced insight’ (Kaprow 1992: 25), an experience akin to what Deleuze theorises as ‘affect’ (as we’ll see).

That is, Kaprow’s interest in the asignifying powers of art can be productively read alongside Deleuze’s notion of affect and that this conjunction adds a new dimension to the concept of differential presence. Critically, although the Deleuzian emphasis on art as affect counters the refusal of self-presence that characterises metaphorical interpretation, it does not constitute a return to some kind of literalism, in which presence involves a self-same object that ‘is what it is’ for a subject, neither more

nor less. Rather Deleuzian affect is an aspect of differential presence that involves the metamorphosis of bodies in contact with one another.

As Felicity Coleman has discussed, ‘Deleuze’s conception of affect develops through his entire oeuvre’, from his earliest work on Hume – *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953) – through to last collaboration with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1991) (Coleman in Parr 2005: 12). This conception is highly influenced by Spinoza, to whom Deleuze dedicated two complete books and whom he frequently hails as one of the most important figures in the history of philosophy – ‘the Christ of philosophers... the infinite becoming-philosopher’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 60)⁴⁹. As Massumi notes, affect ‘is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion’ or personal feeling (Massumi 2002b: 28); but here, affect is defined as the perpetual variation of what Spinoza calls our ‘force of existing’ or ‘power of acting’, in the form of an ‘increase-diminution-increase-diminution’ of power between the two poles of sadness and joy. Deleuze makes clear that affect is not a ‘thing’, so much as a lived passage or transition: ‘I would not say that the affects *signal* the decreases or increases of power, I would say that the affects *are* the decreases [sadnesses] and increases [joys] of lived power’ (Deleuze 1978: n.p. – emphasis added).

So affect is our changing force of existing – but what does this mean? For Spinoza, it means what a body can do, what it is capable of, what is in its power. And, in turn, Spinoza defines the project of thinking affect as ‘Ethics’, going against the conventional understanding of ethics as ‘systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour’ (Fieser 2006: n.p.). Neither Spinoza nor Deleuze is concerned with such prescriptions of right and wrong in general and for all, so much as with what is good or bad for a particular body, as what increases or decreases its power respectively. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari state:

Spinoza asks: What can a body do?...We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into compositions with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it

⁴⁹ Deleuze’s two books on Spinoza are *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968) and the more accessible, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970).

in composing a more powerful body' (Deleuze and Guattari 1989: 256-7).

In this sense, ethics differs both from morality and physiology, since the former is concerned with questions of 'duty,' while the latter defines bodies in terms of putatively valueless organs, functions and general characteristics. In turn, the concept of affect defines an ethico-aesthetic practice – as Bogue suggests: 'A human's affective powers...are so numerous that it is only through an extended experimentation that we can come to know what a human body is capable of' (Bogue 1989: 133).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop their theory of affect in order to create a new concept of self: a mode of 'non-personal individuation', or what they also call a 'haecceity'. In the first instance, this is a new way of thinking what an individual or individuality might be, beyond the concept of 'a person' and towards the notion of the unique process or singular event. 'Individuation doesn't have to be personal,' Deleuze argues (Deleuze 1995: 141); it might be conceived relationally. In turn, a haecceity is defined by its affects and by the optimal and 'pessimal' limits of its power to act (a horse at the summit of its power, in contrast to a horse being whipped because it has fallen in the street). Affect or becoming,

far from simply making the subject pass from one individuality to another, involves it in another type of individuation altogether, at once singular and impersonal, from which persons derive when the existent is separated from what it can do (Zourabichvili in Patton 1996: 206).

With this concept, Deleuze points to the duality of affect as that which both 'carries away' or undoes the subject, at the same time as it produces a new form of individuality. The affect 'is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel' (Deleuze and Guattari 1989: 240). Or as Deleuze puts it in *Negotiations*, 'Affects aren't feelings, they're becomings that spill over beyond whoever lives through them (thereby becoming someone else)' (Deleuze 1995: 137). Affective force does not belong to, nor is it exerted by, a pre-existing subject; rather, every individuality presupposes, refers to, and is animated by 'singular relations of forces' (Deleuze and Guattari 1989: 207). The variable power to affect and be affected is the very life of things.

Affect is relevant to discussions of presence since it provides new ways of conceiving individuation. It allows us to conceive of the presence of individuality beyond the traditional notions of subject and object which impose false separations between intersecting and reciprocally-determining forces, and fail to comprehend the possibility of an individuality or presence of a specific composition of relations. In this way, the Deleuzian shift from the subject/object distinction to non-individuated (or processual) affect encourages an immanent analysis, which insists that we cannot understand such artistic creations by observing them from the outside, only by allowing them to work upon us as they worked upon and for those who made them. This shift is also pertinent to Kaprow because it does not just concern how critics write about art, but how audiences experience and participate in it. In the first instance then, differential presence as affect might be understood to involve this event of ‘composition’ – when one body’s changing force of existing enters into composition with the affects of another body. And indeed, some of Kaprow’s Activities – like the aptly titled *Affect* (1974) – could be conceived as performing just the kind of ‘extended experimentation’ Bogue describes: testing what transformations might happen when a particular human body enters into composition with the nonhuman body of ice, or a lightbulb in a *hot water-skin-electric fan-unfamiliar territory* assemblage. But while Deleuze has little interest in subjective feelings, in this Activity Kaprow foregrounds the relation between sensation and emotion: asking participants to tape record their ‘feelings’ about each other whilst undertaking the bodily experiments. Indeed, Kaprow described his own concerns in *Affect* as being to do with

what relations, if any, our physical sensations of coldness, dryness etc. may have with the corresponding emotional states we call “cold” or “dry”. It is also about the complexes of these qualities in any human situation (Kaprow 1975a: n.p.).

This complexity, beyond the conventional opposition of objective sensation and subjective feeling, is what Deleuze calls affect. A sense of ‘coldness’, for instance, is neither a quality belonging to the object, nor a feeling belonging to a subject, but a ‘supraindividual’ force that emerges in the event of contact between bodies and passes through them.

But the affective dimension of differential presence is also theorised by Kaprow as what he calls the ‘experienced insight’: an event of embodied thinking by the participant in the act of doing, which is not the same as the recognition of some underlying metaphorical meaning of the Activity determined in advance by the artist. Experience, Kaprow believes, ‘is physical, not intellectual. An experience is thought which has been “incorporated”, on a muscular, neural, even cellular level, into the body’ (Kaprow 1992: 26). Having long since dispensed with the accommodation of a traditional audience, what matters for Kaprow in the Activities, is the ‘direct, physical involvement’ of those who choose to do it: ‘Meaning is experienced in the body, and the mind is set into play by the body’s sensations’ (Kaprow 1986: n.p.). This is not to say that the Activities do not involve observation or watching, on the contrary, many of them invite participants to act as an audience to one another’s actions. But Kaprow insists that

...watching and listening in the midst of doing is very distinct from the specialized observations of a physically passive audience (only the mind is awake for a traditional audience, at best; and it has no responsibility for the actual work. It can only judge) (ibid.).

For Kaprow, such active presence in and attention to one’s embodied relation to a work, (rather than the ‘detached observation’ of a work) has an explicitly political value. Indeed, in a text from 1994, Kaprow calls participation ‘the most...democratic contribution of the late avant-garde’ (Kaprow 1994: 52). This is not simply because of physical presence, but because this presence allows the participants to genuinely collaborate in and contribute to the nature of the event that takes place. Such works do not illustrate a preconceived set of concepts, an approach to art making that Kaprow dismisses as ‘not a worthwhile activity’ (Kaprow 1968: 156). That is, although, as Kaprow notes, the form of his works is always ‘simple and clear’, the actual experience of the event ‘is uncertain and unforeseeable, which is why I do it, and its point is never clear to me, even after I’ve done it’. Kaprow describes his strategy as being to provide ‘as much open uncertainty in an experience as possible’(Kaprow 1991: n.p.).

Kaprow uses the concept of the feedback loop to differentiate between the modes of communication that defined what he calls ‘Art art’, and nonart (or lifelike art) respectively:

For each kind of art, the conveyance itself is the message... Artlike art sends its message on a one-way street: from the artist to us. Lifelike art's message is sent on a feedback loop: from the artist to us (including machines, animals, nature) and around again to the artist. You can't "talk back" to, and thus change, an artlike artwork; but "conversation" is the very means of lifelike art, which is *always changing*' (Kaprow 2003: 204 – emphasis added).

The experiential 'message' of the Activity, 'conveyed by a process of events that has no definite outline', is repeated back to the artist but with a difference, like Chinese whispers (ibid.). That is, while Kaprow dislikes the changes in meaning that an institutional context imposes upon lifelike art, he embraces those that come from the nature of the event itself through its open method of conveyance. In this sense, the genuinely participatory nature of the Activity constitutes another strategy for avoiding convention and encouraging the emergence of the new. Genuine participation, for Kaprow, is not just giving members of an otherwise conventional audience small tasks to do within a performance or environment – the nature of which is already determined. Indeed Kaprow criticises his own earlier Happenings on this account, arguing that

Tasks on the order of sweeping or reading words remain relatively mindless as long as their context is a loose theatrical event prepared in advance for an uninformed audience (ibid., 185).

Rather, genuine participation is this conversational process through which an audience is actively 'collaborating in the art making and meaning making process' (Kaprow 1994: 52).

But the Activities are also democratic in the sense that they can be done by untrained or non-specialist bodies. To some extent, the actions the participant is invited to perform for the Activity are familiar: blowing one's nose, opening a door, or taking a pulse. However, the actions' everydayness is also something that Kaprow has to counter-act in order to allow 'experienced insight' rather than mere routine to occur. That is, he develops a range of practical strategies in order to prevent the participants, including Kaprow himself, from slipping into routine behaviour, and experiencing the

Activity as life, rather than art-life or life-art. Again, Kaprow employs the concept of ‘feedback’; this time, in relation to what he calls ‘feedback devices’ which play an important part in altering how participants attend to the actions they are performing. For instance, in a ‘sketch for a possible breathing piece’ (1979), Kaprow refers to a loudspeaker, a mirror, and a tape recorder used in the sketch as ‘feedback devices’ which produce ‘displacements of ordinary emphasis’ (Kaprow 2003: 198). The Activity repeats everyday actions, like looking at ourselves in a mirror, but employs feedback devices as a means to draw attention to the ordinarily unattended (‘fleeting mist on glass’), and away from the obvious (the recognition of our selves in terms of the reflected image).

Alterations of speed are another method that Kaprow used for preventing the Activities from slipping into conventional behaviour. For instance, in *Rates of Exchange* (1975), Kaprow approached the handshake as an example of a routine that could be forced to break down. As Kelley suggests, ‘If you slow down the motion of a handshake enough it becomes impossible to shake hands; some other exchange takes place’ (Kelley 2004: 195). What this experiment exposes is that the identity of the action ‘to shake hands’ only functions at a particular relation between speed and slowness; at another relation, the action becomes imperceptible as shaking hands, and becomes something else which, in turn, can be experienced by the participants as some other kind of contact. Kaprow had been interested in speed as a factor relating to thresholds of perception as far back as *18 Happenings* – in which, at one point, ‘(light fades imperceptibly over a long period of time...)', and at another, there are sounds ‘barely remaining long enough to be heard clearly’ (Kaprow in Kirby 1965: 58). The Activities take this interest further by involving the entire body in attempts to slow down ‘walking’ – to give another example from *Rates* – until it reaches a point of transformation.

2. The Activity as ‘Zen Conceptualism’: Zepke’s critique of Kaprow

Although there is considerably less secondary literature linking Deleuze and Kaprow than Deleuze and Artaud, it is important to mention that this is still not the first discussion to connect the two: Andre Lepecki, for instance, makes the briefest of allusions to Deleuze in his publication following his ‘redoing’ of *18 Happenings in 6*

*Parts*⁵⁰. However, part two of this chapter will focus on Stephen Zepke's much more sustained engagement with Kaprow, which begins by celebrating what he perceives to be the Deleuzian nature of Kaprow's Happenings and early Activities as self-determining composition, before he ultimately breaks with Kaprow in favour of the more explicitly political work of Adrian Piper. This second part of the chapter will be broken down into a series of subsections, the first of which will provide an exposition of Zepke's essay. The second section will indicate the connections between Zepke's objections to the late Kaprow and Peter Hallward's recent critique of Deleuze in his book, *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (2006). Finally, the third section consists of a series of critical responses to Zepke, alongside the development of a definition of becoming-imperceptible as differential presence rather than as self-annihilation or destruction. In particular, we will to expose the resonance between Deleuze's notion of becoming-imperceptible as an undoing of the subject/object relation which enables us to experience ourselves as 'in the midst of things' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 280), and Kaprow's aspiration for the Activities to function as a training in undoing subjective discreteness in favour of an immanent participation in the real as a changing 'whole'.

Zepke's complex essay opens with the argument that between his early Happenings and late Happenings, Kaprow makes a shift akin to Deleuze's move from 'expressionism' to 'constructivism' between *The Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus*. Just as Deleuze can be seen to have a changing understanding of the relationship between the realms he calls the 'actual' and the 'virtual', Kaprow experiments with new relations between 'the virtual (score) and the actual (performance)' or Happening (Zepke in Cull 2009: 114). Deleuze uses the term 'virtual' in a way that differs from its usage in notions of 'virtual reality' in performance theory. Borrowing his terms from Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), Deleuze's ontological use of the virtual is proposed as an alternative to the possible/real distinction. The possible, Deleuze argues, prevents us from understanding life's creation of differences because it is retrospectively constructed from the real 'like a sterile double' (Deleuze 1988: 98). Whereas the real is understood to be limited to reproducing the image of the possible that it realizes, the

⁵⁰ In relation to his redoing of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, Lepecki writes: '...All instructions and scores, all choreographic details so carefully annotated by Kaprow, were to be approached (precisely) as being "rigorous yet anexact" instructions. That this apparently paradoxical formula is also the one used by Gilles Deleuze to describe the dynamics of organic life, I took as being more than mere coincidence' (Lepecki 2007: 48).

virtual is actualized in processes of divergence and creativity. The virtual is conceived as a kind of reservoir or source of pure difference that can be called upon to explain the emergence of novelty in actuality. In short, Deleuze says, ‘The characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated’ (ibid., 74); the virtual is dependent on the actual to exert its creative force, just as the actual is dependent on the virtual in order for the material world to involve the production of the new, rather than the reproduction of the same.

However, Zepke argues that if Deleuze’s earlier work still gives the impression that the actual and the virtual are somehow two distinct dimensions that need to be reconciled or to communicate, then by *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari are insisting upon the immanence of the creative production of difference, or ‘desire’, *in* the social (Deleuze 1995: 144). As Zepke explains, quoting Deleuze’s remarks on this shift in *Negotiations*,

This is a move from an ‘expressionism’ by which the ‘actor’ actualizes, or ‘dramatizes’ the virtual realm, to a ‘constructivism’ of the virtual in the ‘act’. This was, Deleuze says, a shift from the ‘theatre’ to the ‘factory’, a shift from the *dramatization* of becoming *by* the social, to the *production* of becoming *in* the social (Zepke in Cull 2009: 109 – original emphasis).

Rather than merely pointing to a more fundamental source of change or creativity elsewhere (a distinct virtual realm), social actions are seen to produce their own transformative encounters.

Likewise, Zepke contends, whereas in Kaprow’s early Happenings the ‘virtual score’ was dramatized or *expressed by* the event, in the later Happenings, the ‘score’ was produced or *constructed in* the event in a manner that can be seen to be adopting, but also extending the compositional strategies that Kaprow learnt from John Cage⁵¹. Kaprow develops from allowing a distinct score to operate in a transcendent relation to its actualization as performance (as that which organizes matter from a position outside of it), to the production of works in which the score is immanent to and inseparable

⁵¹ As Zepke notes, ‘Kaprow attended Cage’s “Experimental Composition” class at the New School for Social Research in New York that ran from 1957 to 1958’ (Zepke in Cull 2009: 115).

from its actualization⁵². It is not just the virtual score that contains the power of creation, which a performance merely expresses; rather, in a move towards what Zepke calls a ‘self-determining’ compositional process (ibid., 117), the actual Happening is itself creative insofar as it scored in a manner that allows it to unfold in unpredictable and novel ways, with each response to an instruction changing the conditions for the next response and so on. For Zepke, this shift concerns the changing relation of Kaprow’s works to life. As Kaprow’s work develops, he argues,

it tries to find more effective mechanisms by which the score of ‘events’ can not only be actualized in life, but could *directly construct new ways of living*. In this way both Kaprow and Deleuze move towards encompassing the virtual and the actual within a single plan(e) of composition, a plan(e) that overcomes the subjective form of experience in favour of a process that constructs a living plane of immanence (ibid. – emphasis added).

With the later Happenings, it is not just about actualising a score ‘in’ life, or transferring it from the realm of the virtual to the actual, but about the production of a new reality or ‘life’ in the event of performance. The later Happenings and early Activities, Zepke argues, do not simply use life as their setting but actively intervene in its virtual conditions, working to transform subjectivity as ‘the foundational structure of experience’ (ibid., 110). These artworks are not objects for a subject, but transformative events that change life by undoing the very notion of the subject. This is arguably where the politics of Kaprow’s practice lies for Zepke, insofar as these events

not only sought to introduce something new into life, but were aimed against the normalized subjectivity of human being itself... The event

⁵² Here, Zepke establishes a connection between Kaprow’s notion of ‘score’ and Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term ‘plane’, in such expressions as the ‘plane of immanence’ or ‘plane of organization’. In this sense, Zepke is not using the term ‘score’ entirely literally, since Kaprow continued, throughout his career, to write down programs of instructions for his works *prior to* actually doing the Happening or Activity. What changes is the extent to which the actual events differ from what is written and the nature of what is written in the score/program. The score for *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, for instance, is notoriously detailed: with stickmen drawings by Kaprow of the poses that the performers should adopt at various points. As we have already footnoted, following Lepecki, Kaprow was interested in the apparent paradox that even supremely detailed instructions could produce indeterminate results. Perhaps what Zepke is indicating is that as Kaprow’s work develops, he becomes increasingly willing to allow ‘what happens’ to be determined by the event itself, rather than by the score – at first through his openness to chance interruptions, and then through his pursuit of genuine participation.

transforms the *conditions* of experience and in so doing constructs a new form of subjectivity, and a new kind of art' (ibid. – emphasis original).

But there seems to be a tension here for Zepke, and he ultimately rejects Kaprow, for three main, interrelated reasons: firstly, on account of a perceived 'conceptualism' or focus on meditation rather than action in Kaprow's late Activities; secondly, because of what Zepke calls Kaprow's wish to place the experience of the Activities 'against art of any sort' (ibid: 118 – emphasis original); and finally, because he sees the first two developments as constitutive of Kaprow's divergence from Deleuze and Guattari (which can only be a bad thing from Zepke's point of view). Zepke praises the Activities: *Meters* and *Entr-acte* (both 1972) because of their openness to 'aleatory events' and *7 Kinds of Sympathy* (1976), because of its constructive rather than expressive mode of composition⁵³. But he then rejects the Activities: *Scales* (1971) and *Time Pieces* (1973) because they 'take on the character of "work"' in ways that he argues 'can no longer be called "art" or "aesthetics"' (Zepke in Cull 2009: 119). 'In both cases,' Zepke claims, 'the "work" is a means of attaining a meditational awareness that emerges from, but at the same time transforms, the most banal forms of life' (ibid.). What Zepke seems to object to in this, is what he sees as the increasing emphasis by Kaprow (indicated by these two earlier Activities, but particularly problematic in Kaprow's work from around 1978) on a conceptual, rather than actual transformation of life. In his conception of the later Activities as 'Performing Life', Zepke argues, 'Kaprow offers a process of self-reflective meditation on everyday actions and experiences that does not construct new counter-actualisations, but simply promises a mystical transcendence of life'. In other words, no real rebirth occurs for these Activities' participants; banal life or 'the subjective form of experience' may be conceptually evacuated or superficially coloured through a transcendent experience, but ultimately it is left untouched (ibid.,121).

In part, Zepke's reading here is based on the knowledge that Kaprow had begun to practice Zen Buddhism in 1978, and he supportively quotes Kelley's suggestion that,

⁵³ In *7 Kinds of Sympathy*, Zepke argues 'The virtual events determined by the score (A/B watches, copies, scratches, etc.) are open to an infinite number of potential actualisations, while each actualisation determines the plane of composition on which the virtual sections will be actualised... This compositional process is aleatory and self-determining; the score and its actualisation are necessarily inseparable and reciprocally determining' (Zepke in Cull 2009: 117).

after this time, Kaprow's work offers 'secular, operational analogues to the koan' (Kelley 2004: 204). According to Zepke, the koan

was a study form developed mainly within the Rinzai school of Zen... and aimed at intuitive flashes of insight or 'satori': 'cosmic triggers' in which the perspective of the individual ego was overcome and the interconnectedness of the world appeared in its living vitality (Zepke in Cull 2009: 120).

Zepke then goes on to argue that this constitutes a break with Deleuze:

This mystical style of knowledge as self-overcoming, achieved through performance is, Kaprow claims, 'an introduction to right living' (2003, 225). But it is increasingly uncertain that this still bears any resemblance to what Deleuze and Guattari call 'counter-actualization', let alone what they call art (ibid.).

Some readers of Deleuze (like Hallward) would beg to differ. Deleuze, for them, *is* a mystic. Yet for now we can note that Zepke's reading is also partly based on his understanding of Kaprow's relation to Duchamp and the gesture of the Ready-made. It is Kaprow's 'absolute fear of recuperation' by the art market or its institutions, Zepke claims, which leads him to position the experiences of the Activities against or outside of art (ibid., 119). The critique of everyday life is overwhelmed by Kaprow's obsession with fully collapsing art into that mode of life. He argues that from the early 70s, Kaprow reconceives his work, not as art, but as 'Performing Life' which 'is not an aesthetic process, and nor does it produce art; instead, it is an entirely conceptual decision that turns an everyday action such as shaking hands or speaking on the telephone into a performance' (ibid.). In this way, Kaprow is taking advantage of the impact of Duchamp's readymade in a move that relies upon the participant's ability to apply 'the art-bracket' to any aspect of life whatever. Here, Zepke argues, Kaprow gives 'an interesting Zen twist to Conceptual Art's emphasis on intellectual processes as the essence of art [but] nevertheless dematerialises the art-life dialectic by dissolving the first in the second through turning it into a state of mind' (ibid., 120). Art is merely a state of mind conditioned by a conceptual framing device, divorced altogether from the creation of affects.

3. Transcendence, escape and apoliticism: connecting Zepke's critique of Kaprow and Hallward's critique of 'becoming-imperceptible'

This chapter will counter some of these arguments. But first, this second subsection begins from the observation that the transcendence, escape and apoliticism that Zepke attaches to the late Kaprow, are the very things of which Deleuze stands accused in Peter Hallward's critique, *Out of this World* (2006). That is, Zepke's image of Kaprow as concerned with a 'mystical' process of 'self-overcoming' resonates strongly with Hallward's argument in general, but particularly with his claim that the concept of becoming-imperceptible demonstrates that Deleuze's key concern is the question of how we can 'rid ourselves of ourselves' (Deleuze in Hallward 2006: 4). For Zepke, the late Activities constitute a withdrawal of art from the social, and from the task of changing it, in favour of a 'search for a private and meditative awareness transcending the conditions of ordinary perception' (ibid., 122). Likewise, for Hallward, Deleuze's thought encourages us to abandon all hope of political agency in favour of becoming an imperceptible subject who passively waits for the creative force of the virtual to pass through her, correlatively inviting philosophy to become as abstract and unworldly as possible. The primary problem of all this for Hallward, as for Zepke, is political.

More than a hundred and fifty years after Marx urged us to change rather than contemplate the world, Deleuze, like so many of his philosophical contemporaries, effectively recommends instead that we settle for the alternative choice (Hallward 2006: 7).

Essentially, Zepke suggests that Kaprow's Activities do the same. We should note here, then, that this is a challenge to Deleuze and Kaprow being a resource for political art (as the Living Theatre hoped, but failed to be).

To expand on Hallward's argument for a moment, the opening contention is that Deleuze 'assumes that the most creative medium of our being is a form of abstract, immediate or dematerialised thought' (ibid., 2). Dematerialised, Hallward says, because Deleuze invokes a separation between thinking and the world. Genuine thinking as

creation can only be 'out of this world', since any connection to reality constitutes a distortion of its pure form.

...To claim that purely creative thought becomes abstract or immaterial is not to say that such thought is then simply empty or 'non-extended', so much as *liberated from any constituent relation to anything external to itself*... A thinking that proceeds independently of any reference to or mediation through a world or reality external to itself will prove to be our most adequate means of expressing an absolutely creative being or force (Hallward 2006: 2 – original emphasis).

For Hallward, Deleuze creates a hierarchy between the virtual and actual, where the former is conceived as the source of creativity and difference, and the latter is often conceived – almost Platonically – as an inadequate manifestation of this greater vitality elsewhere. As Hallward puts it, creativity is valued over creation:

Creativity is what there is and it creates all that there can be... Every biological or social configuration is a creation, and so is every sensation, statement or concept... The merely relative differences that may exist or arise between created things stem from a deeper, more fundamental power of creative *differing* (ibid.,1 – original emphasis).

Art is a favoured activity in Deleuze because it is understood as creation, as that which creates in the form of affects and percepts. But nevertheless, even art – as it is discussed in *What is Philosophy?* – is dependent on Life as creative differing. Life does not *need* art in the same way. Likewise, the credit for actualisation as the production of differences goes to the virtual, whilst all too often the process itself is understood to involve compromise or limitation in contrast to the purity and autonomy of the virtual realm. For example, Hallward argues that according to Deleuze's thought we must assume that the power or creativity of a created thing 'is limited by its material organisation, its situation, its actual capacities and relations with other creatures' (ibid., 2). As such, Hallward goes on to contend,

the main task facing any such creature is to loosen and then dissolve these limitations in order to become a more adequate or immaterial vehicle for that virtual creating which alone individuates it. In other words, the main task facing a creature capable of thought is to learn how to think... What matters is... the redemptive re-orientation of any particular creature towards its own dissolution (ibid., 2-3).

Hallward describes his position as one that deviates from the 'conventional take' on Deleuze as a materialist philosopher, arguing instead 'that Deleuze's philosophy is best described as an exercise in creative *indiscernment*, an effort to subtract the dynamics of creation from the mediation of the created' (ibid., 3). Creativity has an identity or true presence that is distorted in actuality: a distortion or differentiation which Deleuze's philosophy attempts to repair by issuing calls to subtraction or distillation. And this is how Hallward sees 'becoming-imperceptible': as a call to dissolution.

The concept of becoming-imperceptible features primarily in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which Deleuze and Guattari frame it as the final and most valuable form of becoming, after 'becoming-woman' (which is said to 'come first') and 'becoming animal':

If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 279).

There are different kinds of becomings then, or what May calls different 'species of the genus becoming'; however, they have in common the affirmation of, or return to difference in itself. But whereas May seems to suggest that becomings begin with becoming-woman because our 'sexual roles' are 'perhaps our most fixed stable identity' (May 2003: 151), we could argue the opposite: that we have to work up to the radicality of becoming-imperceptible because it challenges us to decompose, and to perpetually decompose, all kinds of categorical distinctions – whatever separates us from everything else (not just gender or species distinctions). In this respect, becoming-imperceptible involves a 'becoming everybody/everything' in which 'one makes a

world...in which it is *the* world that becomes' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 279). It is to 'world with' our surroundings; a mode of participation that extends the logic of becoming to the whole world.

But Hallward latches onto this concept as evidence of Deleuze's prioritisation of virtual creativity over actual creation.

Any particular creature can re-orient itself in line with the virtual creating that it expresses through a series of transformations or 'becomings' directed towards what Deleuze presents as their exclusive telos: their becoming imperceptible. The value of any particular becoming (woman, animal, molecule...) varies with the degree to which it carries us beyond the limits of perception, meaning and form... Only by becoming imperceptible can an actual individual become fully adequate to the virtual creating to which its very being attests... To use a metaphor adapted from Deleuze's reading of Beckett, the imperceptible subject of such a life comes to float like a cork, helpless but serene, upon a tempestuous ocean of pure movement (Hallward 2006: 3).

If we follow this summary, Deleuze seems to be saying that in order to become our selves ('to become what one is') – or by implication, to achieve what we have been calling differential presence – we need to absent ourselves altogether. We only achieve our full power of existing when we *disappear* into the virtual creating which is the condition for our subjectivity. Hallward accepts that the advocacy of becoming-imperceptible as the telos of life is not exactly the same as the advocacy of 'annihilation pure and simple', but he still insists that the pivotal question for Deleuze, he says, is 'can we rid ourselves of ourselves?' (Deleuze in Hallward 2006: 4). Likewise, he says, for Deleuze's take on the artist. Deleuze likes Beckett, Hallward argues, because 'Beckett knows that in order "to create [...] one has to lose one's identity, one has to disappear, to become unknown"' (Hallward 2006: 3).

And there is a cold, anti-humanism in Deleuze that will not pander to the ego's impulse to self-preservation. Deleuze and Guattari *do* suggest that this becoming involves a process of subtraction, elimination, reduction, or even suppression,

repeatedly invoking the idea of reducing oneself to ‘an abstract line’ or a ‘trait’ as a prerequisite for locating ‘one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits’, including what Deleuze calls the ‘impersonality of the creator’, or what we might also call the worldly, yet inhuman power of change.

One is then like grass: one has made the world, everybody/everything, into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping in between things and growing in the midst of things (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 280).

But this break with subjectivity need not be evoked as such a lonely, absencing process; becoming-imperceptible might equally be interpreted as a question of *participation* – as adding to yourself, rather than subtracting from yourself, or as the subtraction of that which prevents us from becoming other. Whereas Hallward arguably still thinks in terms of a dialectic between being (presence) and the void (absence) – Deleuze allows us to think in terms of presence as becoming, as affect, and ultimately, as becoming-imperceptible. Such a process is not about annihilation or becoming-invisible, nor is it apolitical for Deleuze.

4. Contra Zepke: nonart, ‘becoming “the whole”’, attention and the democratisation of art

So, how might one respond further to these critiques explicitly of Kaprow and Deleuze, and implicitly of the notion of differential presence? In this final subsection, we will draw from both Deleuze and Kaprow to demonstrate why Zepke misconstrues the Activities, as well as drawing from Kaprow’s theorisation of them as training towards ‘becoming “the whole”’ (Kaprow 2003: 217) to enrich our alternative interpretation of becoming-imperceptible contra Hallward’s dematerialist argument. The critique of Zepke is based on four main points. Firstly, we will to argue against the idea that Kaprow ultimately wants to place the Activity against ‘art of *any* sort’ (Zepke in Cull 2009: 118 – emphasis added). Secondly, we shall follow Kelley in suggesting that Kaprow is interested in Zen as a route to immanence rather than transcendence (or, in Soto, rather than Rinzai Zen). Thirdly, it will be proposed that Kaprow’s concept of

‘Performing Life’ to which Zepke refers is a research process towards the creation of Activities rather than an Activity itself, a distinction which allows us to re-emphasise the becoming-imperceptible of art and life as an ‘experienced insight’ rather than the result of a conceptual decision. And finally, we will revisit Zepke’s concern that it becomes ‘increasingly uncertain’ the extent to which Kaprow’s later Activities bear ‘any resemblance to what Deleuze and Guattari... call art’ (ibid., 120). First this section shall point to the variation within what Deleuze and Guattari call art, and secondly to argue that the way in which Kaprow deviates from the arguably restrictive and romantic definition of art given in their later work is a largely positive move. In each case, we revisit Zepke’s critique not just for the sake of argument, but because Kaprow and Deleuze are political, rather than mystical, for us.

So first, as we have seen, Zepke argues that Kaprow’s Zen Conceptualism is partly the product of his ‘absolute fear of recuperation’ by the art world and his desire to position the Activities ‘against art of any sort’ (ibid.). And certainly, Kaprow was deeply suspicious of ‘Art’ as a market and a set of powerful institutions. However, he writes with rigour and balance, not about the evils of gallerists, but about the covert pressure to conform exerted on artists as that which makes persistent experimentation so difficult. To begin with, Kaprow argues, there are conventions that come from the artist herself, which can only be overcome through a process he calls ‘un-arding’. ‘Artists of the world, drop out!’ Kaprow demands echoing the Communist manifesto, ‘You have nothing to lose but your professions!’ (Kaprow 2003: 109) In part, Kaprow suggests, the restrictions of identity are imposed upon the artist through language, indeed he argues that ‘static words, particularly names’ do more than ‘customs’ to slow down or otherwise restrict the social change effected by ‘nonverbal forces’ (ibid., 125). Kaprow argues that the very application of the name ‘artist’ to someone weighs them down with the ‘profession’s accumulated attributes and meanings...An artist obeys certain inherited limits on perception, which govern how reality is acted on and construed’⁵⁴. But just as ‘adjustment to the new state of affairs is slowed down by keeping an old name’, Kaprow suggests that ‘new names may assist social change’; as such, Kaprow suggests, we might replace the name artist with ‘player’ as a way of ‘altering a fixed

⁵⁴ Kaprow makes the same argument regarding performance when he differentiates between the ‘performer’ who acts out a written script and the person who performs everyday routines. Being a ‘performer’, Kaprow argues, ‘involves responsibility for what the word performer may mean and what being a performer may entail’ (Kaprow 2003: 187).

identity’, freeing up the person to move elsewhere according to what he calls a ‘principle of mobility’ (ibid.,126).

By shifting operations ‘away from where the arts customarily congregate,’ the un-artist, in becoming ‘an account executive, an ecologist, a stunt rider,’ could adopt ‘an attitude of deliberate playfulness toward all professionalizing activities well beyond art’.

Thus, the un-artist is one who changes jobs. (Kelley 2004: 158)

As Kelley states, in contrast to the ‘programmed behaviour’ imposed upon people by their professions, Kaprow conceived of the becoming-imperceptible of the un-artist as ‘slipping between and among various professional categories’ in a process he called ‘signal scrambling’ (ibid.).

But the primary issue is that the Activities have a far more complex relation to art than Zepke implies, such that we must move beyond a simple vocabulary of ‘art’ and ‘life’, in favour of using Kaprow’s own rich terminology. Although it was a matter of concern for him throughout his career, it is in the Activities period that Kaprow most directly takes on the question of art’s identity. What is art and what is not art cannot be easily established he suggests, particularly in the three-part essay ‘The Education of the Un-Artist’ (1971-74); rather, there are a whole gamut of objects and practices that are not what they appear to be. There is not only ‘art’ and what Kaprow calls ‘nonart’ (or ‘lifelike art’, or ‘un-art’), but also ‘Art art’ (or ‘artlike art’) and ‘Art art in the guise of nonart’ or ‘quasi nonart’ (Kaprow 2003: 101)⁵⁵. To further complicate this process of identification we are also told that nonart ‘exists only fleetingly’ and can at any moment become ‘a type of art’ (ibid., 98). As such, Kaprow’s response to the question: “What is art?” will be constituted not only by an awareness of complex formations beyond the simple distinction between ‘art’ and its other (‘life’), but also by the ontology of change that, as we have seen, he shares with Deleuze – a worldview in which establishing fixed definitions and identifying stable beings are merely attempts to paper over the cracks of a constantly shifting, self-transforming reality.

⁵⁵ Although Kaprow’s vocabulary changes as his writing progresses, he does seem to use the terms nonart, un-art and lifelike art almost interchangeably, as we will also do. While in “The Real Experiment” (1983) Kaprow refers to the distinction between *artlike* and *lifelike art* exclusively, in the earlier three part essay, “The Education of the Un-Artist” he argues that un-artist must produce lifelike nonart.

As far back as his *Environments* and early *Happenings*, Kaprow had sought to make works of art with ‘a maximum ambiguity of identity (what is it?)’ (Kaprow 1992: 24). And, as we mentioned at the start, what he initially liked about the *Happenings* was their non-recognisability according to the existing formal categories conventionally applied to art:

Coming into the *Happenings* of the late fifties, I was certain the goal was to “do” an art that was distinct from any known genre (or any combination of genres). It seemed important to develop something that was not another type of painting, literature, music, dance, theatre, opera’ (Kaprow 2003: 195).

Kaprow conceives artistic conventions as a set of traits that allow us to recognise an event (as theatre, as dance) and trigger a conventional mode of relation to that event. In contrast, he sought to create unknown forms of event to which we must invent new ways of relating. And, of course, artistic conventions had also been a concern for the formalist modernism of Clement Greenberg that had been dominant in the American art-world since the fifties. As Kelley reports

...Formalism advocated the systematic elimination of any and all artistic conventions not essential to the viability of a given medium (mostly painting). Storytelling, for example, or political subject matter would be peeled away from the surfaces of modern art, revealing the deeper existential tensions to the object itself (Kelley in Kaprow 2003: xv).

But whereas modernism was concerned with removing inessential conventions relative to each medium, Kaprow set out to ‘systematically eliminate precisely those conventions that were essential to the professional identity of art’ per se (ibid., xvii); namely, ‘Art art’. Kaprow is not against any kind of art. Rather, he is questioning and critical of convention both in life and in art, because it is convention that actively blocks the mode of presence as affect and becoming-imperceptible that Kaprow sought to establish in the *Activities*. When we enter into routine behaviour – whether in an art context or a social context – we are not attending to our embodied participation in the world as change. As nonart or lifelike art, the *Activities* aim to interrupt routine

responses by occupying a threshold that is the becoming-life of art and the becoming-art of life.

Artistic habits and everyday routines both pose problems for the Activity as Kaprow foresees it in “Pinpointing Happenings”: Kaprow describes the Activity type Happenings as ‘risky’ – because it is easy for them to fall into either art or life, rather than residing in the ‘paradoxical position of being art-life or life-art’. Activities fall into the category of art when habit leads the Happeners ‘to depend on certain favoured situations and to perfect them in the manner of conventional artists’ (Kaprow 2003: 87). Activities fall into the category of life when Happeners choices ‘become so indistinguishable from daily events that participation degenerates into routine and indifference’ (ibid., 88). Elsewhere, Kaprow states that

Unless the identity... of what the artist does oscillates between ordinary, recognizable activity and the “resonance” of that activity in the larger human context, the activity itself reduces to conventional behaviour. Or if it is framed as art by a gallery, it reduces to conventional art. Thus toothbrushing, *as we normally do it*, offers no roads back to the real world either (Kaprow 1986: 222 – emphasis added).

We will say more on this when we reassess Zepke’s characterisation of “Performing Life”, but for now let us move on to the second response to Zepke regarding Kaprow’s relationship to Zen. Here we need to we follow Kelley, who differentiates the worldliness of what he calls the ‘American Zen’, disseminated to Kaprow by Cage, from the transcendentalism of other forms of Zen⁵⁶. ‘Cage wanted to be in the world as a witness;’ Kelley argues, ‘he was not an enthusiast for transcendence’ (Kelley 2004: 200). Likewise, Kelley proposes that Kaprow was more interested in the notion of ‘heightened awareness’ associated with the Soto school of Zen, rather than the ‘sudden enlightenment of the Rinzai’ (ibid.). And while Zepke notes Kaprow’s interest in the koan developed by the Rinzai school, Kelley nuances this position by arguing that

⁵⁶ Zepke himself quotes Kelley a number of times in his essay, recognising his expertise on Kaprow’s relationship to Zen. However, he still seems to associate Zen in general with mysticism and transcendence rather than immanence and the political.

To Kaprow, their key feature was that any answers were *worked out in experience, not just in the head*, and were thus different for each devotee. In this sense, koans were very like his works...’ (ibid., 204 – emphasis added)⁵⁷.

As such, the Activities are only akin to the koan insofar as they were both concerned, not with escaping the world, but with participating in it and attending to it more fully as bodies with unique or individual powers to affect and be affected.

Contra Zepke’s argument, Kaprow is very clear that the goal of the Activities (as nonart or lifelike art) is immanent rather than transcendent.

The purpose of lifelike art was therapeutic: to reintegrate the piecemeal reality we take for granted. Not just intellectually, but directly, as experience – in *this* moment, in *this* house, at *this* kitchen sink’ (Kaprow 2003: 206 – emphasis added).

It does not hold out a ‘promise of perfection in some other realm’, he insists, but demonstrates ‘a way of living meaningfully in this one’ (ibid., 218). Living meaningfully, for Kaprow, means rediscovering a ‘sense of the whole’; indeed, it ultimately involves becoming the whole by letting go of the self as discrete subject, just like Deleuze’s notion of becoming-imperceptible. For Kaprow, the aim of the Activities is a form of ‘self-knowledge’, not as a strengthening of self-present identity, but as ‘the passage of the separate self to the egoless self. Lifelike art in which nothing is separate is a training in letting go of the separate self’ (ibid., 217). But at the same time, while Kaprow states that this embodied self-knowledge ‘is where you start on the way to becoming “the whole”’, he is careful to add that this process might equally take ‘the form of social action or personal transformation’ (ibid.). Immanent participation in the whole does not necessarily involve an escape from the public into the private, or the social into the personal, as Zepke suggests. Indeed, given the ontology of change and

⁵⁷ The koan is a Zen form of study that involves the student being given a ‘problem with no logical solution’ such as a paradoxical statement or question. Kaprow wasn’t interested in the koan because of the Rinzai school belief in it as a means to produce ‘instant enlightenment’. Rather, Kelley suggests, Kaprow appreciated Zen for its emphasis on practice, on ‘paying attention to what we are doing’ rather than trying, purely intellectually, to make sense of what we do from a transcendent point of view (Kelley 2004: 204).

becoming that Kaprow shares with Deleuze, surely such rigid distinctions between realms cannot apply.

Passing now to the third response, we must question Zepke's implication that Kaprow's later Activities are equivalent to the notion of "Performing Life", and, in turn, his argument that "Performing Life" is 'an entirely conceptual decision' rather than an aesthetic, affective process (Zepke in Cull 2009: 119). On the contrary, Kaprow is less interested in the conceptual decision to see life as art, or the idea that anything can be made into art, than he is in what we might call the becoming-Life of art as nonart. Or rather, he appreciates the need to move on in the thinking of the relation between art and life, beyond the linguistic gesture of a subject through which 'nonart can be art after the appropriate ceremonial announcement' (Kaprow 2003: 128). There is nothing radical for Kaprow in the idea that art is whatever an artist, or art-conscious person, says it is, or whatever is placed into a gallery⁵⁸. Rather than being a conceptual decision, 'Performing Life' is an aspect of the process of what Kaprow calls 'un-artisting': a new mode of research and development in the preparation of works, distinct from the conventional idea of the artist at work in her studio – especially if the studio is a place detached from daily routines of eating and sleeping and so forth. Kaprow's concept of 'performing everyday life' names a research process that the un-artist engages in before creating an Activity. Such performance involves a particular kind of *attention* or framing which transforms that to which is attended - the routine or everyday. Attention exposes the artificiality of what appears natural, Kaprow argues, or increases the perceptibility of those aspects of life that have become 'almost too familiar to grasp' (ibid., 188, 190). Imperceptibility, Kaprow suggests, can be the product of perceptual habits. For example, Kaprow discusses brushing his teeth as an act that 'had become routinized, nonconscious behaviour in comparison to his 'first efforts to do it as a child'. Kaprow reports:

I began to suspect that 99 percent of my daily life was just as routinized and unnoticed: that my mind was always *somewhere else*; and that the

⁵⁸ Part of the problem, or limitation with Duchamp's gesture for Kaprow, is that by insisting on using the gallery it excludes 'most of life' on account of size if nothing else. One might be able to put a urinal on show, but one cannot exhibit the LA freeway at rush hour, Kaprow complains (Kaprow 2003: 207). Kaprow sees Duchamp as taking nonart and setting it in a 'conventional art context' or what he also calls 'an art-identifying frame' which 'confers "art value" or "art discourse" upon the nonart object, idea, or event'. Despite the forceful effect of Duchamp's initial gesture, Kaprow argues the Readymade strategy later became 'trivialised, as more and more nonart was put on exhibit by other artists' (ibid., 219).

thousand signals my body was sending me each minute were ignored’
(ibid., 221 – emphasis added).

Here, Kaprow alludes to the human capacity to experience thought as disembodied and to fail to perceive the thinking presence of the body. As Kaprow indicates when he refers to ‘the thousand signals’ sent by the body, the artist’s affective presence to the ‘here and now’ rather than ‘somewhere else’ does not involve an overcoming of difference per se, although it does reject the artificial distinction between mind and body. Rather, through attention, we gain a heightened awareness of the complexity or self-difference of our body’s perpetual variation in relation to its surroundings. The becoming-perceptible of the imperceptible (the ‘unnoticed’ and ‘ignored’) need not involve drugs or other extreme forms of experimentation, as Deleuze and Guattari sometimes imply. The transformation of perception, that Deleuze and Guattari theorise in terms of jumping from the ‘plane of organisation’ to one of immanence, might equally happen through attending to rather than evacuating the body as affect, as ‘the variation that occurs when bodies collide or come into contact’ (Colman in Parr 2005: 11): tongue-teeth-water-paste-brush-arm.

But is not a question of conceiving toothbrushing, for instance, as art – Kaprow is more interested in the act of brushing your teeth in itself, than in how we define it. Nor does Kaprow simply stop here: ‘performing everyday life’ is a research process, which is not the same as an Activity. In this sense, Zepke’s reading seems to confuse two distinct aspects of Kaprow’s practice in this period: his pre-Activity research process (that he describes as ‘performing life’), and the Activities themselves. As the essay “Participation Performance” (1977) makes clear, Kaprow does not conceive of performing everyday life through attention as an end in itself. Or rather, although performing everyday life will have its own pleasures and insights, Kaprow goes on to suggest that a ‘prescribed set of moves’ (or what Kaprow also calls *lifelike performance* or an *Activity*) might be ‘drawn from’ such everyday routines as ‘the ways people use the telephone’ (Kaprow 2003: 188). The normal, familiar routine is experienced as unknown and strange through observation as part of a preceding period of research or study, but then this action must be treated in a particular way in order to become an Activity, that is neither too much like ‘Art art’ (rather than nonart or lifelike art) or too much like routine life (rather than Life, or lived change).

Finally, in this fourth part of our response to Zepke, let us consider his uncertainty regarding the resemblance of Kaprow's Activities to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of art. According to Kaprow, the framing effect of the museum can dampen the effects of avant-garde lifelike art, but left in its proper 'real life circumstances' the value of lifelike art, Kaprow says, is that it refers us 'again and again', not to its origins in art history, but to its sources in 'the real world' (Kaprow 2003: 205). This, presumably, is the aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's and Kaprow's respective theories of art of which Zepke is thinking when he posits a clear break between them. But in numerous works, such as *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari clearly pursue a radical notion of the relation between art and life. Indeed, Zepke himself acknowledges that in parts of their work Deleuze and Guattari avoid the separation of the realms of actuality and creativity, or art and Life, by 'turning art into a natural "living" process' (Zepke 2009: 114), as likely to be performed by nonhuman animals – like the Australian rainforest bird, the *Scenopoetes dentirostris* or Stagemaker bird – as by human artists. Here, they call the Stagemaker 'a complete artist' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 184), approaching human art as but one part of the much wider phenomenon of 'organic creativity' in which all living beings might be said to 'have art' (Bogue 2003c: 65-9). Conventionally, animal creativity is differentiated from aesthetic activity - for example, birdsong from music – with recourse to an opposition 'of the functional and the aesthetic, of activities that are purposive means and those that are self-sufficient ends' (ibid., 70). Instead Deleuze and Guattari's perspective realigns this relation between the functional and the aesthetic, suggesting that a work of art, such as birdsong, can both serve a purpose and have a life of its own.

In relation to this naturalization of art, does Kaprow's position really constitute a divergence from Deleuze's thought? Perhaps not – whilst at the same time, it could be argued that when Kaprow does deviate from aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's later aesthetics, it is all to the good. For example, in contrast to Kaprow's lifelong commitment to participation, Deleuze and Guattari often seem to construct an experiential hierarchy between the artist and the viewer. For instance, *What is Philosophy?* positions the artist as a romantic hero – 'a seer, a becomer' who 'goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived', and then must find a way to preserve his experience through the materiality of art (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 171). Artists, they say (echoing Artaud),

are athletes – not athletes who train their bodies and cultivate the lived (...) but bizarre athletes of the “fasting artist” type, or the “great Swimmer” who does not know how to swim. It is not an organic or muscular athleticism but its inorganic double, “an affective Athleticism”, an athleticism of becoming that reveals only forces that are not its own (ibid.,172).

What the artist sees, Deleuze and Guattari call ‘Life in the living or the Living in the lived’: an encounter with ‘something in life that is too much for anyone’, but is also ‘the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived’ (ibid., 172-73). This inhuman excess of Life, it seems, has the potential to have both a destructive and therapeutic effect. Artists are the ‘presenters of affects’ who not only create them in their work, but also ‘give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound’ (ibid., 175).

Nonetheless, we perhaps have to question whether Deleuze and Guattari sometimes privilege the artist’s experience at the expense of the experiences of ‘ordinary’ people, which were so important to Kaprow in the Activities. Certainly, it seems that Deleuze is a more aristocratic, rather than democratic thinker, insofar as he wishes to preserve an elite class of artists who are charged with the role of allowing everybody else to perceive the imperceptible affects and becomings underlying all things. Kaprow, in this sense, may well break with Deleuze as Zepke suggests, but only insofar as he goes further than Deleuze through his egalitarian commitment to participation. In this model, the artist is conceived less as a hero, and more as a ‘necessary evil’ who merely serves as the catalyst for the more important matter of how the Activity takes off.

In this sense, the concept of becoming-imperceptible not only relates to the participants’ experience of the Activities as lived change, but to Kaprow’s own attempts to challenge the separation of ‘the artist’ as subject from everybody else and thus also the audience as passive consumer. In “The Real Experiment”, for instance, Kaprow insists on the importance of what he calls ‘artistic submergence’ (Kaprow 2003: 211). It is in the nature of lifelike art, he says:

to reduce and eliminate the fame associated with rock stars, socialites, and short-term politicians. If you view the world as a unity, with all things connected, including yourself and your work, then being celebrated with the exaggerated attention and flattery that go with stardom almost invariably leads to self-importance, *separation*, and, in time, *isolation*' (ibid., 212 – emphasis added).

The becoming-imperceptible of the artist does not just involve a withdrawal from fame, but from conventional notions of authorship. Admittedly Kaprow's degree of involvement in, or direction of, the enactment of the Activities varies (as we will discuss in the third and final part of this chapter). However, in *Easy* (1972) for example, a work devised for CalArts students where Kaprow did plan the actions to be done, the work can hardly be said to 'belong' to him as author. As Kelley describes, Kaprow

supplied only the text and suggested a tract of land upon which to carry out the plan, letting his students choose their stones, how to wet them, where to drop them, where upstream and downstream were located and so forth... Almost all the decisions were left to others. He simply offered an idea of something to do...' (Kelley 2004: 168).

In turn, the eighteen Activity booklets that Kaprow produced between 1973 and 1979 might also be understood as attempts by the artist to become-imperceptible. The hope was that by creating illustrated manuals of a set of actions, anyone anywhere could have access to, and enact an Activity without the need for Kaprow's physical presence. He insisted that the booklets were not documents of the Activity but a set of visual instructions in which the photographs are carefully staged to be clear, while also being sufficiently open or un-nuanced. They are designed to show you *what* to do but not *how* to do it – nor in turn, how to feel about what you are doing. But, disappointingly for Kaprow, the booklets 'tended to function as stylistic templates that corrupted the enactments of the works' and by the end of the 70s 'he had come to regard their production as a misguided strategy' (Kelley 2004: 189).

So, despite his democratising ambitions, Kaprow remains the director of the Activities: he scores them, introduces them and leads the reflective discussion about them after the event. And from one perspective we might say that these relations of

democratisation and guidance are not opposed; the former requires the latter. That is, Kaprow recognised early on that the Activities' participants needed guidance in their new task; the democratic nature of the Activity was unfamiliar such that it could not be taken up without some degree of supported preparation and reflection. However, in the final part of this chapter we will look at a number of problems that arose in the actual performance of some of the Activities during the seventies, and also at the reality of Kaprow's relationship to 'Art art' and the art-world, beyond the rhetoric of nonart and becoming-imperceptible.

5. 'Success' and 'failure' in the Activities

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari cite John Cage's definition of the experimental: "not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success or failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown" (Cage in Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 371n.). If, by definition, experimental art has no predetermined outcome, Cage suggests, there is no standard in relation to which the actual resulting event or process can be judged to have succeeded or failed. But, nevertheless, perhaps we can judge the extent to which such art is genuinely experimental or undetermined, and, in Kaprow's case, the extent to which participants' 'experienced insights' can still be valued if they divert from Kaprow's own ontology. Is there a tension between Kaprow's avowed commitment to a democratic relation to participants and his own specific aims for lifelike art such that it would lead participants to differential presence as 'a sense of the whole' or lived change? Are there limits to the extent to which a participant's response can differ from the artist's aims, beyond which point a work might be said to have 'failed' or to have 'gone wrong'? Further, let us now explore the extent to which one ought to understand the concept of nonart as an ideal to which the Activities aspired, rather than as a condition Kaprow's art might actually be said to have achieved.

One potential 'failure' comes in the form of rebellion among the participants. For instance, in *Take Off* (1974), an Activity undertaken by nine people in Genova, Italy, only one group of three (which included Kaprow) actually carried out the written plan to its completion with the other two groups rebelling against Kaprow's instructions

in one way or another⁵⁹ (Piltzer et al. 1975: 90). James T. Hindman (1979) suggests that this is something Kaprow attempts to control through the careful supervision of each stage of the process of realizing an Activity. Kaprow is omnipresent in his work, Hindman argues,

to make sure that the events are actually performed with some degree of honesty and involvement, rather than destructively or indifferently. Although each scenario can be developed with full freedom and flexibility, Kaprow foresees an “optimum” performance as one that occurs with thoroughness and commitment, in a genuine spirit of inquiry, within the structure he has proposed (Hindman 1979: 102).

Another way that things can ‘go wrong’, is on account of a tension or discrepancy between Kaprow’s aims and the felt impact of his interventions – however ‘imperceptible’ he hoped they might have been. For example, Ester Carla de Miro’s participant account of *Take Off*, reports that on reading the program of actions, it was clear to her that ‘there was an inherent ambiguity in his plan because, although it offered four possibilities’ (to make a bed, to unmake a bed, to dress and to undress)

in reality there were only two: One is unable to make a bed without having first taken the bedding off and one cannot dress without having first undressed. The plan with its apparent neutrality indirectly forces the actions (and consequently the relationships that would result from them) toward a kind of intimate communication... Kaprow designed the piece with the hope that it would create an openness between the participants, and the apparent neutrality was a screen behind which he had hidden his intentions (de Miro in Piltzer et al 1975: 91).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ According to the article, two women put together in the first group met each other the day before the Activity and became friends. They objected to the invitation to deceive one another built into Kaprow’s instructions and ‘decided it was an authoritative imposition that sought to destroy their relationship’. The man who was the third in the group wanted to continue to follow the rules of the Activity, so during a group lunch the women ‘symbolically killed him with a pistol and photographed the action’ (Piltzer et al 1975: 90).

⁶⁰ Ester Carla de Miro was the Italian translator of the plan for *Take Off* as well as one of the Activities’ participants. Her extended account of *Take Off* is massively valuable as a readily accessible document of participant experience.

Kaprow confirms such a perception, stating:

At the bottom of this plan was a desire on my part for some kind of contact. For me the value of this piece would be the contact or communication which is not described in the plan (Kaprow in Piltzer et al 1975: 94).

As de Miro notes, the language of Kaprow's plans could not have been much further from the representation of intimacy; on the contrary he deliberately adopts a pseudo-scientific objectivity in his scores, labelling participants 'A and B' as if they were trial subjects. In this sense, Kaprow seems to acknowledge that intimacy is not something that he can make happen, in that he deliberately erases any trace of his own ambition that the Activities might allow 'the most direct possible relationships' (ibid., 91). However, while other Activity programs might have been experienced as more genuinely 'open', *Take Off* was clearly interpreted by some as indirectly manipulative.

As we have already briefly noted, another strategy that Kaprow employs in a bid to make the Activities 'successful' is the preparation of participants. This raises interesting questions with regard to the way in which text and language function in relation to the Activities. For instance, in his account of a 1979 Activity, *7 Kinds of Sympathy*, Kaprow justifies here the need for explanatory notes, which were given to the participants along with the score for the Activity:

The notes accompanying the program intentionally pointed out guidelines to interpretation. It is worthwhile mentioning this aspect of the preparation for participating. An unfamiliar genre like this one *does not speak for itself*. Explaining, reading, thinking, doing, feeling, reviewing, and thinking again are commingled' (Kaprow 2003: 167 – emphasis added).

What does this say about participants' capacity (or Kaprow's faith in the participants' capacity) to relate to the unknown? On the one hand, we might argue that the need for a textual supplement undermines any belief in the affective power of the Activities themselves, as Hindman notes: Kaprow's decision to provide participants with an 'interpretive introduction' carries 'the danger of establishing expectations for

participants’, but nevertheless ‘Kaprow feels that something concrete on the possible nature of the experience is necessary, since normal social “contracts” for interaction are suspended’ (Hindman 1979: 98). Nevertheless Hindman concludes that ‘The work must speak for itself, anyway, despite Kaprow’s intrusion, because of the unique experience facing each participant’ (ibid.).

For Kaprow, an Activity’s accompanying notes served the purpose of sensitizing participants to the experiences involved in the Activity, but not to prescribe in advance the kinds of experiences they were to have (Kaprow 2003: 168). Indeed, in his essay “Participation Performance” (1977) Kaprow implicitly describes his “ideal” participant through a contrast with those who participate in ‘communal performances like July 4th parades’. Whereas the former all know how to participate in the event on the basis of learned social conventions, Kaprow’s ideal participants have in common ‘a shared openness to novelty, to being sensitized, to flexibility of stance rather than to possessing a body of hard information and well-rehearsed moves’ (ibid., 183). There is a different kind of ‘readiness’ here. However, we could question the validity of Kaprow’s opposition, which is arguably based on a somewhat caricatured description of the parade. The implication is that we cannot have an experienced insight into a 4th July parade, and indeed, if we behave in the same way in an Activity as we might in a parade, then we will be getting participation ‘wrong’. If Kaprow does indeed have an ontology of change, it must be that all forms of life participate in it; nothing is excluded. As such, why does (and indeed how can) Kaprow still hold that a participant is more likely to have an experienced insight during one of his Activities, rather than in a parade?

There are also reasons to believe that Kaprow found it difficult to leave Art art, the pressures of ‘the art world’, its institutions and conventions altogether – his stated ambition. As such, we might also argue that Zepke too easily assumes that one actually *can* escape art altogether, given that Kaprow’s writing and making document both the conceptual and practical difficulties of the flight from the constraints and conventions of artistic identity. For example, in “The Education of the Un-Artist, Part I” (1971), Kaprow rather oddly argues that nonart depends on the art world for its sense of purpose:

Nonart's advocates, according to this description, are those who consistently, or at one time or other, have chosen to operate outside the pale of art establishments – that is, in their heads or in the daily or natural domain. At all times, however, they have informed the art establishment of their activities, to set in motion the uncertainties without which their acts would have no meaning' (Kaprow 2003: 98).

The meaning of nonart, he suggests here, is the uncertainty it provokes in the art world establishment, who are forced to reconsider what art is in the light of these new actions. The concept of nonart, it seems, depends on pre-existing concept of art to position itself against. This goes against other writings elsewhere, in which it is the experiences of an Activity's participants that are valued – and require no art-world verification. Although, later, Kaprow also bemoans the practical dimension to this residual attachment to art: '...In trying to escape from the art context, I find that 99% of the time, I am on the inside...' (Kaprow 1998: 99).

On the one hand, this failure is put down to the elusive nature of the nonart event as Kaprow conceives it. Nonart, Kaprow says, 'is whatever has not yet been accepted as art but has caught the artist's attention with that possibility in mind'. In other words, it is, for Kaprow, that to which an artist attends but cannot be recognised as art on the basis of their existing concepts; it 'exists only fleetingly... Indeed, the moment any such example is offered publicly, it automatically becomes a type of art' (Kaprow 2003: 98). As such, Kaprow declares nonart 'almost impossible' (Kaprow 1971: 100) and to be something that 'will probably obtain only once in each artist's life' (Kaprow 2003: 75). But on the other, we might question whether Kaprow tried hard enough, in practical terms, to remove himself and his work from the art-world context, which he saw as a restrictive influence on his pursuit of affective presence. Although Kaprow went much further than most to 'leave art', one might argue that by continuing to allow galleries to frame the Activities, it was Kaprow himself who restricted the becomings that could take place within in them. After all, most of the European Activities were commissioned by galleries, and in the case of *Take Off*, the program was exhibited in the sponsoring gallery to which the public were also invited to meet Kaprow and the participants following the event (Kaprow in Piltzer et al 1975: 89). Indeed some of Kaprow's colleagues at CalArts are said to have challenged him on his professed goal to drop out of art,

especially since it was patently obvious that he remained gainfully employed, both as a professor and as a commissioned artist... Some felt that if Kaprow really wanted to drop out of the art world, he should stop accepting commissions from its galleries and institutions (Kelley 2004: 180).

A further risk of this lingering contextualisation of the Activity as art is that the participants find themselves struggling to break with conventions of relation. Arguably this is what one participant of *Take Off* - Gerald Piltzer - experienced, as documented in his tape recording made as part of the Activity:

I usually don't have any feelings while making a bed. I don't think about it but now I have to think because Allan told me to... This bed isn't a bed anymore. It's just a process in a Happening... (Piltzer 1975: 90)

The certainty with which Piltzer identifies the process of making the bed as art and his reinforcement of 'Allan' as the 'author' of the work indicates the difficulty of actually experiencing a dissolution of the distinction between the usual situations of life and unusual situations of art. And no doubt, in "The Education of the Un-Artist, Part II" (1972), Kaprow does conceive of the context in which he is working as a post-Duchampian universe, in which the 'art-conscious' have the capacity to identify life as art. The 'art-conscious' carry the art bracket ready-made in their heads for instant application anywhere' (Kaprow 2003: 110) in such a way that 'All snow shovels in hardware stores imitate Duchamp's in a museum' (ibid., 111). After the Readymade, 'sophisticates' are willing to identify almost anything as art, even without the gallery as ground. In this sense, it seems that life's imitation of art has less to do with something that the objects or actions do, and more to do with ways of seeing; a 'seeing as' (art-like) by an art historically informed audience.

How, then, can nonart be possible? How can Kaprow make something that cannot be identified as art, when even the most mundane of objects installed in everyday places can be seen, at least by an elite, as art? The answer is because nonart is not a definitional gesture, for Kaprow, but a fleeting moment of affective experience.

The becoming-art of brushing one's teeth, for instance, does not occur by making a decision to identify the action as art, but by attending to it differently. It is because nonart is not just negatively defined as anything that cannot be recognised as art – indeed, post-Duchamp, there is arguably nothing that cannot be seen as art – that it becomes real (albeit very difficult) rather than ideal. Although it remains conceptually 'unclear', Kaprow gives nonart a precise, physical and durational definition as a particular kind of presence – understood by Kaprow as experienced insight or 'becoming "the whole"', or via Deleuze as affect or becoming-imperceptible – that can happen, momentarily, when one physically occupies the threshold between art and life. This is not to say that the event cannot be recognised as art – it can. Kaprow can only do a certain amount to attempt to prevent this from happening – for instance, by becoming-imperceptible as the artist-creator. The rest is up to the participants – as the audience becoming non-audience – who must take as much responsibility as Kaprow for the nature of the events that occur.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have added further conceptual facets to the theory of differential presence, re-defining this new notion of presence in terms of Deleuze's concepts of affect and becoming-imperceptible and Kaprow's concepts of 'experienced insight', nonart, 'becoming "the whole"', and attention. In each case, the chapter has resisted existing critiques of both Deleuze and Kaprow that would class this new type of presence as a kind of absence, transcendence or escape – a classification that goes hand in hand with an accusation of mysticism or a lack of political commitment to changing the actual world. On the contrary, the chapter has argued, Kaprow and Deleuze share a concern to theorize the practice of participating in actuality beyond the subject/object, or self/other distinction, in a manner that promotes an ethico-political sense of taking part in "the whole", in which participants are seen to change actually and be changed by their contact with other processes in the world. However, we have also suggested that Kaprow's Activities, or at least his ambitions for them, go further than some parts of Deleuze's thought in terms of extending this politics of participation to the realm of art, towards what the chapter referred to as the 'democratisation of differential presence'. It is not just artists who can become-imperceptible; it is not just the work of art that can offer the experience of differential presence.

But as we move onto the fourth and final chapter of this thesis, there is still a key aspect to differential presence that we have not yet addressed, at least not in full. That aspect is time: there is a specific temporality of differential presence that we can understand, it will be suggested, through the Deleuzo-Bergsonian concept of ‘duration’ and the practice of the American company, Goat Island, as one that has consistently examined the durational aspects of presence in performance. We touched on this aspect earlier in this chapter in the discussion of the Happening *Fluids* and the *Activity Level*, in which it was indicated that ice and stone have differing speeds of change and that human bodies might explore altering their own rhythms of action in an encounter with those of inhuman bodies. In what follows, we employ concepts from Deleuze’s engagement with Henri Bergson to give greater theoretical weight to these observations, but we will also see how – for Goat Island – we do not need to move outside of the space of art altogether in order to access differential presence.

Whereas the Living Theatre suggested that we need to leave the theatre for the street, and Kaprow calls upon us to escape the gallery (and the parade), Goat Island propose that the space, time and bodies of ‘black-box’ contemporary performance (as well as those of ‘the ordinary’) are already multiple if we use them and attend to them appropriately. From this perspective, the participatory project might be seen as founded on a false problem in which the theatre is viewed as a self-same space of representation and transcendent control (and only that), rather than as that which – seen differently – can also be experienced as a differential site of creation and affect. With their emphasis on the multiple nature of the present, Goat Island also remind us of the extent to which the critique of self-presence, or the theorization of differential presence, has always been a political as well as a metaphysical project; or, correlatively, the extent to which the homogenisation or exclusion of difference has ethical as well as philosophical implications.

Chapter Four

The temporality and ethics of differential presence in Goat Island

Introduction

Founded in 1987, Goat Island is a collaborative, Chicago-based performance group, directed by Lin Hixson and formed of the core members: Matthew Goulish, Bryan Saner, Karen Christopher, Mark Jeffrey and Litó Walkey. During their twenty years of creating work, the company earned both respect and fascination in the field of performance for their commitment to the affective potential of intricate choreographies performed by non-expert bodies, and the capacity of a slow, genuinely collaborative research and creation process, that starts from a state of not knowing, to generate new thoughts and unexpected sensations. In 2006, Goat Island announced that their ninth performance, *The Lastmaker* (2007), would be the last work that they would create as a company, before individual members went on to pursue new projects and collaborations – such as Goulish and Hixson’s new initiative: *Every house has a door*.

The connection between Goat Island and Deleuze has already been explored in the writings of founding member, Matthew Goulish, as well as in the work of performance scholars such as the company's UK archivist Stephen J. Bottoms, and David Williams. All three have exposed some of the Deleuzian aspects of Goat Island in a range of important observations⁶¹. For instance, in writing about the process of creating the company’s eighth performance – *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy* (2004) – Goulish evokes notions of ‘stuttering’ in performance and a ‘zone of indiscernibility’ between human and animal that clearly evidence an engagement with Deleuze’s thought. Likewise his earlier monograph, *39 microlectures: in proximity of performance* (2000), draws on the concepts of

⁶¹ See Bottoms, Stephen J. (1998) “The Tangled Flora of Goat Island: Rhizome, Repetition, Reality”, *Theatre Journal* Vol. 50, No. 4 (December 1998), pp.421-446, and Williams, David (2005) “L’ombre de ton chien: on dogs and goats and meanwhile”, available at *Art Surgery*, <http://www.artsurgery.org/contributors.html>, accessed 19/7/08. See also an early text I wrote in collaboration with Matthew Goulish: Cull, Laura and Goulish, Matthew (2007) “A Dialogue on Becoming”, in *Theatres of Thought: Theatre, Performance and Philosophy*, edited by Daniel Watt and Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

‘deterritorialization’, the machinic, and differential repetition⁶². As, Bottoms has noted, it is not that Goat Island have ‘consciously sought to translate Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas into the performance context’ (Bottoms 1998: 434) but nevertheless their approach to the creation of performance – as collaboration, as becoming – registers their affinity to the values of Deleuze's ontology.

There can be no doubt, then, that Goat Island as a company have been influenced by Deleuze, but more recently (and of much interest, as we will see, for our thesis) they have also been influenced by the thought of Henri Bergson who, perhaps above all, shaped Deleuze’s philosophy of time⁶³. Specifically, this chapter will suggest that we can not only find evidence for a long-standing engagement by Goat Island with Deleuze’s thought in general, but for a particular engagement with the Deleuzo-Bergsonian notion of time as duration, becoming and a multiplicity of presents that would throw a final light (that is both philosophical and political) on presence as differential. Again, this is particularly evident in Goulish’s writing. For instance, the Deleuzo-Bergsonian concept of duration as difference in kind takes centre stage in Goulish’s recent paper ‘The time of the ordinary’ (2008), just as the idea of time as ceaseless change or becoming (rather than a container of such change) is foregrounded in Goulish’s contribution to the collaborative essay, ‘A Dialogue on Becoming’ (2007). In the latter, Goulish writes:

Memory exists in each perception, because each moment, however small, has duration. A change transpires in each moment. Memory in a sense coheres a moment as a moment, as we might remember its start a certain way at its end, in order to make it one thing, a moment. We perceive duration through change; we perceive change through movement. A moment, then, is moving. Because it is moving, it is always becoming. It will never become what it is becoming (Goulish in Watt and Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2007: 61).

⁶² There are countless other examples of Deleuzianism in Goulish that we could have drawn upon here. For instance, we could suggest that it is no coincidence that the company draw on Matheson’s *The Incredible Shrinking Man* for their performance, *The Sea & Poison*; a resource central to Deleuze’s exposition of the concept of becoming-imperceptible.

⁶³ There are a number of Deleuze scholars who assert this view, such as Elizabeth Grosz and Todd May, who notes that ‘Deleuze’s treatment of time borrows heavily from the work of Henri Bergson’ (May 2003: 145).

Finally, we might also note that the most recent text published by company director, Lin Hixson, who not only foregrounds Bergson's time-philosophy, but also points to the implications of these ideas for re-thinking presence in performance. Of *The Lastmaker*, Hixson writes:

You sit on one side of the performance. I sit on the other. When I look across the room and see you watching the performers sing songs around the dining room table, I know your heart beats at a different rate than mine. This tells me we will die at different times. Knowing this I wave good-bye to you... My duration encompasses and discloses yours. Your duration encompasses and discloses mine (Hixson 2008: 52).

This text by Hixson perhaps constitutes the most direct acknowledgement of the company's interest in the Deleuzo-Bergsonian idea of the present as constituted by the co-existence of multiple durations; that is, in the idea that there is no single 'here and now', but several different and self-differing actualities. However, the purpose of this chapter is not simply to point out that Goat Island are interested in Deleuze and in Bergson. Rather, in this chapter, we will be focussing on Goat Island's work in order to examine the specifically temporal aspect of 'differential presence'. If the metaphysics of presence, and its critique, equate presence with the "now" and with "liveness" or immediacy, then how is time conceived within the theorisation of differential presence and how might it appear in practice?

This shift in focus to the relation between differential presence and time, in contrast to the rethinking of language, thought and 'the self' in previous chapters, is by no means arbitrary. As this thesis has remarked elsewhere, differential presence does not present itself to consciousness and recognition. Or as May puts it:

Difference in itself is founding for identity but does not appear as such (as difference in itself) within those identities. It is not phenomenologically accessible. Thus, a search for difference in itself must abandon the project of investigating directly the givens of experience and turn toward a more hidden realm. Deleuze discovers that realm in the nature of time (May 2003: 145).

Although we will be problematising any notion of time as a realm beyond experience as such (as May alludes to here), his account does helpfully summarise the move that Deleuze makes from difference to time. Time is a central concern for Deleuze's thought and receives in-depth treatments in many of his works, including: *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, *Bergsonism*, *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense* and the *Cinema* books⁶⁴. In each case, Deleuze turns toward time in order to articulate pure difference or difference in itself.

Thus, the search for differential presence has also led us to time – a realm which, of course, has also long been of concern to Performance Studies, given that its object is a time-based art, a durational art involving the encounter between living, moving bodies. Indeed, the value of 'performance' as a distinct category from 'theatre' has often been asserted – directly or indirectly – with reference to its 'presentness' or occupation of the very 'here and now' that 'theatre' is perceived to ignore in favour of representing fictional time. As Adrian Heathfield writes,

From its beginnings... performance has consistently replaced or qualified the material object with a temporal act. Performance's birth within and against theatrical form is equally rooted in an engagement with the time of enactment and its disruptive potential in relation to fictive or narrative time' (Heathfield 2004: 8).

Such remarks as this point back to the origins of the distinction between the categories of 'theatre' and 'performance' and to the temporalities of what were perceived, by some, to be their contrasting modes of operation: of representation and presence respectively. For example, it points back to Josette Féral's notion of performance as that which 'escapes all illusion and representation' insofar as it 'tells of nothing and imitates no one'; and consequently, of performance as that which has 'neither past nor future' but simply 'takes place' (Féral in Murray 1997: 296). For Féral, performance occupies

⁶⁴ It is partly for this reason that we have devoted a chapter to the temporal aspect of differential presence, while there is no such chapter devoted to its spatiality. However, the chapter will question the dichotomy between the time's creativity and inert space that one can find in aspects of Bergson's early work.

‘a continuous present – that of the immediacy of things, of an action taking place’ (ibid., 292)⁶⁵.

However, partly because of the interdisciplinary nature of their approach, Goat Island force us to go beyond the binary opposition between the immediacy of ‘performance’ and the illusion of presentness in ‘theatre’. They have more to say about performance than, simply, it being an art of the present. For example, recent literature on the company has repeatedly emphasised their ‘slow-time aesthetic’: they are well known for taking at least two years to create a performance work, and for creating performances the pace of which appears considerably decelerated in relation to other forms of contemporary culture⁶⁶. For Heathfield, for instance, Goat Island’s slowness is part of a broader contemporary tendency in performance to want to ‘slow things down, to examine gesture, relation, [and] meaning production not only *as* a process, but *at* a significantly slower speed’ in relation to ‘the demands so prevalent in contemporary culture for instantaneous relationships between art and meaning, intention and realisation, desire and fulfilment’ (Heathfield 2004: 10 – original emphasis). Likewise, in his account of the company’s penultimate performance, Philip Stanier proposes that

The time invested in the performance by the company, is matched by the demands of time and contemplation made by the piece upon its audience. This demand of consideration, for the conceptual repair of the performance, is paid back by the discovery of time and inspiration within the piece. The contemplation of *September roses* leads to an expansion of the experience of its duration, and a spiralling production of possible meanings (Stanier 2004: n.p.)

However, while these and other commentators on Goat Island’s work have suggested that their performance involves a direct presentation of time, that it invokes a heightened attention to time or constitutes a giving of time, there are arguably few who provide a clear account of *what the nature of that time is*, beyond the indication that it is

⁶⁵ In fact, the concept of presence in Féral’s important 1982 article is more complex than I have suggested in these brief remarks, or as others have summarized (see Power). For instance, she talks about the performance of gestures in Vito Acconci’s practice as rendering Derrida’s *différance* perceptible in a manner that suggests that hers is by no means a binary logic (292).

⁶⁶ For some general commentaries on Goat Island and ‘slowness’, see Stanier, Phillip (2004) ‘Process, Repair and the Obligations of Performance’, Bailes, Sara-Jane (2007) ‘Some Slow-Going’, or Christopher, Karen (2006) ‘Waiting, Wondering, Wavering and Wanting: The Performance of Silence’.

somehow different from ‘clock-time’, ‘real time’, ‘narrative time’ and so forth. For example, Hans-Thies Lehmann has argued that one defining aspect of ‘postdramatic theatre’ (a category of contemporary theatre in which he includes Goat Island) is a durational aesthetic characterized by ‘the intention of utilizing the specificity of theatre as a mode of presentation to turn *time as such* into an object of the aesthetic experience’ (Lehmann 2006: 156). Contemporary theatre prolongs time, he suggests, by extending the length of a ‘work’ and putting performers in slow motion. But I want to propose that part of the productivity of this intersection of Goat Island’s work with the Deleuzo-Bergsonian philosophy of time is that it allows us to say more about the *nature* of this ‘time as such’ that performance might be claimed to present to experience. In what follows, I will suggest that Goat Island use slowness and repetition to reveal time as difference, to construct differential presence as an affective encounter with time’s multiplicity. I will argue that they show us that there is no such thing as ‘*the*’ present but a ‘multiplicity of presents, each with a correlatively different past and future’ (Mullarkey 1999: 54).

Finally, this chapter makes good on the promise to return to the political by taking the discussion of the temporality of differential presence beyond the realm of metaphysics, and into the realm of ethics and politics – a realm which is undoubtedly of concern to Goat Island, even if they do not frame their work in relation to a specific socio-political agenda in the same way as the Living Theatre (or precisely *because* they do not). By employing the strategies of slowness and waiting, repetition and imitation in relation to their sources – strategies that we will explore in full in what follows – Goat Island do not “raid the archive” in irresponsible acts of appropriation that are only justifiable if we conceive the past as dead and gone, as unreal. Rather, we will suggest, they engage in a process of mutual interference in which the speeds of *other presents* are invited to interfere with the actuality of the performance as much as the performance interferes with the actualities of their sources.

In this way, we will argue that an analysis of differential presence in Goat Island’s work contributes a new voice to the “Actualist” side of recent debates in Deleuze Studies and, as such, deviates from Hallward’s unsympathetic interpretation of Deleuze, which we partially examined in the last chapter. Rather than ‘virtualise’ other actualities in a manner that segregates them to an other-worldly realm beyond politics, Goat Island perform the multiplicity of presence – as the durations of human and inhuman others

and ‘the past’ – in a way that makes demands upon us: for attention, patience and respect. This chapter will argue that differential presence in Goat Island is an instance of *felt time* in which time’s own differential presence as change or novelty is rendered perceptible (despite May). Goat Island’s particular strategies of slowness and waiting, repetition and imitation give us access to this differential presence of time, but only to the extent that our perception changes in the encounter with the performance as much as the performance changes in its encounter with our perception. Or as Goulish puts it in ‘The time of the ordinary’: ‘attention to matter constitutes action upon matter, to engage another Bergsonian formulation... “we are really present in everything we perceive”’(Goulish 2008: n.p.)⁶⁷. The very title of Goulish’s paper indicates his concern to firmly locate duration (and as such, differential presence) in the realm of the accessible: classing duration not as the virtual condition ‘beyond the state of experience’ (Deleuze 1988: 27) but as ‘overlooked’ or unnoticed, and performance as the very enactment of duration’s ‘multiplicity’. Or again, as Goulish himself writes: ‘I simply, but hopefully not simplistically, propose that performance figures in our dialogue as a set of practices that enact, or reenact, or articulate duration’s multiplicity as live or as lived’ (Goulish in Cull 2009: 132)⁶⁸. In this way, for Goat Island (contra Kaprow) both spectatorship and theatrical space can be redeemed, since they were always already differential or multiple in the first place, if attended to properly.

But before we go on to address the specific ways in which differential presence as felt time appears in Goat Island, we need to develop a more thorough outline of Deleuze’s philosophy of time. In the first instance, we will rehearse the more common account of this philosophy, which focusses on Deleuze’s deconstruction of presence/the present according to the virtual/actual distinction. However, we will then go on to explore a critique and alternative to this account emerging out of recent Deleuze Studies, which replaces a simple dualism of virtual and actual with the concept of multiple, co-existing presents or actualities. The motivation for examining this debate is partly a

⁶⁷ Here, Goulish is quoting Bergson, H. (1977) *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 259

⁶⁸ Throughout his work, and particularly in *Bergsonism*, Deleuze uses the term ‘multiplicity’ in a particular way that differs from the standard philosophical distinction between the One and the Multiple. In *Bergsonism*, for example, Deleuze distinguishes between two types of multiplicity - quantitative (or discrete) and qualitative (or continuous) - of which the former is spatial and homogeneous (eg. a flock of sheep or clock-time) and the latter is temporal and heterogeneous (eg. a “complex feeling” or dissolving sugar). What matters for us here is that for Bergson, Deleuze argues, ‘duration was not simply the indivisible, nor was it the nonmeasurable. Rather, it was that which divided only by changing in kind’ (Deleuze 1988: 40). In other words, duration can be divided into individual moments, but this is a form of abstraction that alters the nature of the qualitative multiplicity as a continuous unfolding of difference.

sense that Goat Island's own approach to time and presence is closer to this latter position. That is, ironically, although Goat Island are explicitly engaged with Deleuze's philosophy (in a way that the other practitioners discussed in this thesis are not), they might also be seen to exemplify a break with, or divergence from (one orthodox reading of) Deleuze – particularly in the case of Goulish's recent writings. In this way, the motivation also concerns this project as a whole – and the relationship between the concept of differential presence we have tried to develop, and Deleuze's philosophy. This recent account could be interpreted in two ways: either as a critique of Deleuze himself (or at least aspects of Deleuze) and/or as a critique of a particular *interpretation* of Deleuze (that emphasises those aspects over others)⁶⁹. Particularly if we follow the former interpretation, it is important to explore this debate as a means to question the extent to which the theorisation of differential presence must go beyond Deleuze, must look to other theoretical frameworks, especially in relation to both the problem of ethics and the question of how performance can do philosophy on its own terms.

The chapter is divided into six main sections. As we've just indicated, the first section introduces the key ideas of Deleuze's philosophy of time as it is most commonly understood. The second section then critically reapproaches these ideas – particularly the concept of difference's 'virtuality' – and suggests an alliance of attitude between Goulish's writing on 'the ordinary' and contemporary philosopher John Mullarkey's notion of 'Actualism'. The following four sections then each address a different aspect

⁶⁹ We have noted here that this critique of Deleuze could be interpreted in a number of ways: as a critique of Deleuze's oeuvre as a whole; as a critique of aspects of Deleuze's oeuvre; or, as a critique of the aspects of Deleuzianism or Deleuzian commentary that place the greatest emphasis on the notion of the actual as mere by-product of a virtual realm of difference. As such, it is worth maintaining an awareness of the alternately nuanced ways in which Deleuze frames notions like the virtual across the various works in which they appear. That is, the concept of the virtual is a multifaceted one, that Deleuze deals with differently in a number of works: in the early texts *Bergsonism* (1966) and *Difference and Repetition* (1968), and in the later texts 'One Less Manifesto' (1979) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). In the earlier works, virtuality is a name given to a mode of existence that is unrepresentable and real, despite being neither 'actual' nor 'possible'. But it also concerns a specific conception of time and the relations between past, present and future. In particular though, the emphasis of the early works is on what might be said to *condition* movement, multiplicity or variation, rather than on those processes as *complete in themselves*; the emphasis is on the virtual as that which conditions effects such as becomings. In *Difference and Repetition* for example, Deleuze makes a distinction between 'differentiation' and 'differenciation', where the former refers to the actualization of the virtual, and the latter to the power of the virtual to differ from itself, a power upon which actualization or differenciation is said to depend (Deleuze 1994: 207). And, in an arguably Platonic fashion, it is the latter process that receives the most attention, and is accorded more profundity. In contrast, in *Kafka*, 'One Less Manifesto' and *A Thousand Plateaus*, there is considerably more concern with the material process of differentiation whether Deleuze is discussing Bene's stammerings and whisperings as actualizations of the virtual within language, or the 'the performances of Lolito, an eater of bottles, earthenware, porcelains, iron, and even bicycles' who 'makes his jaw enter into composition with the iron in such a way that he himself becomes the jaw of a molecular dog' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 247).

of how this revised conception of the temporality of differential presence might be understood to be explored in Goat Island's work. In section three, we will address their use of slowness and waiting as a means to offer an experience of felt time. In section four, we consider the politics of the company's use of differential repetition and imitation as ways to explore the actual durations of others. Related to this previous section, the fifth part of the chapter goes further into the way in which Goat Island reconceive the notion of 'character' in performance and the modes of relation that are set up between the performers and the primarily historical figures that belong to their archival, source materials. Finally, the sixth section is concerned with how these various strategies and processes come to bear on Goat Island's approach to structuring a final, 'finished' performance, and is followed by some concluding remarks on the ethics of duration's multiplicity which will lead us into the conclusion of the thesis as a whole.

1. The deconstruction of presence in Deleuzo-Bergsonian philosophies of time:

The virtual/actual distinction

As we have already seen in the previous chapters, single or simple presence qua Being is undone in Deleuze's thought. And his philosophy of time plays a crucial part in this undoing – not only of presence as Being, but presence as the self-same present or “here and now” to which performance theories of presence so often refer⁷⁰. When we think about time, we tend to start by thinking in terms of ‘things’ or ‘selves’ that *then* go through time, to put being before becoming. But for Deleuze, becoming (time) comes before any being (‘thing’ or ‘self’). For example, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze follows the early Greek thinker Heraclitus in arguing that present reality does not have ‘being’, that ‘there is no being beyond becoming, nothing beyond multiplicity; neither multiplicity nor becoming are appearances or illusions’ (Deleuze 1983: 23-4). Whereas for Heraclitus' rival Parmenides it is only what is *unchanging* that is truly real, only that which does not become different from itself that can be genuinely said to exist (Turetsky 1998: 11), for Heraclitus and Deleuze what there is *is* becoming: ceaseless change, perpetual variation or difference. For Parmenides, change is appearance, not

⁷⁰ Cormac Power's book, *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre* (2008) helpfully collects and recounts many of these celebrations of theatre and performance's 'Nowness'. For instance, he cites Thornton Wilder's 1941 claim that “On the stage it is always now” (Wilder in Power 2008: 4) and Andy Lavender's more recent argument that “Theatre has always traded in nowness, and at various points in its history has developed new ways in which to heighten the spectator's awareness of the present moment” (Lavender in Power 2008: 4).

reality, and time itself is unreal; for Deleuze, as we shall see, time is no mere ‘receptacle of being’ (Boundas in Patton 1996: 93) – it is the real itself, the power that constitutes life as becoming.

Likewise, Goat Island have long thought of performer presence in terms of becoming, and of performance as a process in which the performer experiences him/her ‘self’ as a series of transitions rather than as a discrete ‘self’ engaged in the act of presenting that ‘self’, or representing ‘the other’. Beyond the presence/representation binary, Matthew Goulish suggests that in performance

a performer is not a single entity. Instead of a unit, a performer is an identity in motion in a particular direction. A performer is a becoming... Myself BECOMING an illustration in a figure skating manual / Myself BECOMING The Creature from the Black Lagoon / (...) Myself BECOMING a microphone stand’ (Goulish 2000: 79).

As we will go onto explore in more depth in due course, Deleuze’s concept of becoming is not concerned with the unfolding of being (the becoming of some thing) or the development of an already determined identity. Rather, becomings involve the unpredictable transformation of one’s own becoming in encounters with others, and specifically of one’s time in encounters with others’ durations. For Deleuze, ‘things’ (like performances or performers or spectators) emerge as an effect of the flow of time (Colebrook 2002: 41). And we will see this encounter between divergent becomings not only in the event of Goat Island’s *performances* – when the audience encounter a work’s multiple durations – but also in the company’s slow and careful, research and rehearsal *processes*, during which Goat Island as individualities (or as individual compositions of relations) allow their becomings to be transformed by their sources and by each other⁷¹.

However, although Deleuze’s philosophy of time is influenced by Heraclitus and also by Nietzsche, it is particularly shaped by his encounter with the thought of Henri Bergson – and it is this influence and relationship that we will be focussing on

⁷¹ We are using the term ‘individualities’ here to make a distinction between Deleuze’s relational notion of individuality (as discussed in Chapter Three) and the concept of the discrete individual with a self-present identity. As Paul Patton has discussed, through notions such as affect and multiplicity Deleuze’s thought provides us with ‘a concept of individuality which does not conform to the logic of identity’ (Patton 2000: 10).

here. Going against the hostility to Bergson and vitalism that characterised the intellectual climate of his times, Deleuze framed Bergson's philosophy as making 'the greatest contribution to a philosophy of difference' (Deleuze 1999: 42), the modernity of which lies in its emphasis on 'the durational character of life' (Ansell-Pearson 1999: 21). We must, Bergson insisted, think in terms of duration. Crucially though, Deleuze also takes from Bergson the idea that time 'is invention or it is nothing at all' (Bergson 1911: 361); the idea that time is always qualitatively differing from itself; or finally, that time can be equated with change and creativity and placed in opposition to the 'essentially inert and uncreative' nature of space⁷². For Bergson, Deleuze argues

Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity. There are no differences in kind except in duration – while space is nothing other than the location, the environment, the totality of differences in degree (Deleuze 1988: 32).

In this scenario, 'every moment brings with it something "radically new"' (Mullarkey 1999: 9-10). And in this regard, we can make an immediate connection to Goat Island in terms of their open rather than controlling approach to the creative process which, although by no means entirely unique to them as a company, still goes further than most in its embrace of time as inventive, undetermined change. 'We have discovered a performance by making it', the company's website announces⁷³.

And it is this distinction (between space and time, matter and memory, the inorganic and the living) that leads Deleuze to his deconstruction of presence/the present according to the conceptual pairing of the virtual/actual. As was discussed earlier, Deleuze characterizes the virtual, in contrast to 'the possible', as a realm of difference that conditions the production of the new in the actual world. However, Deleuze also defines the virtual in terms of time: as pure (rather than personal) memory

⁷² As John Mullarkey has pointed out, Bergson's account of the nature of spatiality and its relation to time changes across his oeuvre beyond this straightforwardly negative depiction of space as pure homogeneity which is primarily put forward by Bergson in *Time and Free Will* (Mullarkey 1999: 12-13). However, it is outwith the scope of the thesis to explore the nuances of Bergson's thinking, suffice to note that Deleuze presents a particular and partial account of Bergsonism that should not be taken as identical with Bergson's philosophy per se (as Deleuzians often tend to do).

⁷³ Of course, one could also argue that even this idea of discovering a performance by making it marks a degree of effort to determine the future in contrast to the moment of the company's inauguration. At this point it was not certain that it would be a 'performance' that would emerge from their collaborative process.

or as the persistence of the past as that which conditions the production of the present and makes it pass. And this concept of virtuality has a great many implications for common sense notions of time. For instance, it dismantles the binary between the presence of the present and the absence of the past, inviting us to think instead of the becoming of the present and the virtual presence of the past. Likewise, as Constantin Boundas suggests, the Deleuzo-Bergsonian theory of time insists that

the present can no longer be thought of as becoming past after a new present has come to replace it, nor can the past be thought of as being constituted after it has ceased to be present...We are indeed asked to think that the entire past preserves itself and, therefore co-exists with every present (Boundas in Patton 1996: 93-4).

In this counter-intuitive theory that invites us to abandon almost all of our current associations with the term 'past' as a tense, Deleuze and Bergson propose that it is not that the past has been present and then passes, but rather that 'the present is constituted as past at the same time that it is constituted as present' in a kind of simultaneous doubling of reality as both virtual and actual (*ibid.*). The presence of the present, then, is differential rather than self-identical.

2. The multiplication of presence in 'Actualism': a critique of the virtual

Perhaps one of the most lively areas of debate in recent Deleuze Studies concerns the nature of the relation between virtual and actual in Deleuze's thought. Does Deleuze place a greater value on the virtual over the actual, or on 'creation' rather than 'creature' (to translate the question into Hallward's terms)? While Keith Ansell-Pearson is comfortable to call Deleuze's thought 'a materialism of the immaterial' or, 'a materialism of the virtual' (Ansell-Pearson 1999: 413), Hallward – as we have seen in the last chapter – accuses Deleuze of producing an ascetic philosophy of unworldly, pure creativity with no genuine connection to the actual world of material creatures. To recount, Hallward argues that Deleuze 'assumes that the most creative medium of our being is a form of abstract, immediate or dematerialised thought' (Hallward 2006: 2) and, as such, that Deleuze encourages us to escape as far as possible from ourselves and active engagement in the material world in order to merely contemplate presence as

creative differing. And, certainly, Deleuze does develop the methodological concept of ‘transcendental empiricism’ as a method that attempts to go beyond the experience of actual ‘things and states of things’ to the unrepresentable, virtual tendencies of which they are understood to be products. Whereas actual things differ from each other in degree, tendencies differ in kind. Transcendental empiricism undoes the ‘mixtures’ given to experience, revealing the pure tendencies of space and duration.

In turn, this notion of the virtual as that which conditions the actual has been taken up and foregrounded by a number of Deleuzian commentators, including Brian Massumi, Manuel de Landa and Keith Ansell Pearson. However, another contemporary philosopher – John Mullarkey – has argued that Massumi et al represent a larger ‘Virtualist’ tendency within Deleuze Studies to denigrate the actual in favour of the virtual, creating a hierarchy between the two concepts on the basis of the idea that actual forms are ‘ontologically dependent upon a ground that is not their own’ (Mullarkey 2004: 470)⁷⁴. In these readings, he suggests, ‘the actual is normally aligned...with the merely possible, the molar, the spatial, the phenomenological, and the psychological, while the virtual alone has privileged access to reality, that is, to ontology’ (ibid.). Whereas Deleuze and Bergson’s original struggle was to convince skeptical empiricists of the reality of a virtual realm of difference, duration and affect, Mullarkey seems to suggest that the balance has now swung too far the other way – such that only the virtual is considered real and fundamental, while actual forms are treated as mere by-products that must be forgotten or relinquished in order to access the processes understood to bring them about.

In contrast, Mullarkey argues that it is the notion of a realm of virtuality that is the psychological by-product derived from the reality of actuality (not the other way round)⁷⁵. And in turn, he proposes what he calls ‘Actualism’, based on other aspects of Bergson’s work in which the virtual is understood, not as *grounding*, but as itself

⁷⁴ Amongst the works of Deleuzian Virtualism, Mullarkey cites Manuel de Landa’s *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (2002) and Keith Ansell Pearson’s *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual* (2001) (Mullarkey 2004: 488).

⁷⁵ However, it would be a mistake to think that Mullarkey is simply reversing the virtual/actual hierarchy here – dismissing the virtual as a ‘merely’ psychological phenomenon rather than an ontological reality. Although it is beyond the remit of this project to discuss such a position in full, Mullarkey’s view is essentially that the virtual is ‘a function of the actual’ but one that has ‘real effects on the actual rather than being merely epiphenomenal’ or illusory; both psychology and actuality are ontological. The actual is not a self-identical presence that needs a hidden power of virtual difference to render it creative and, as such, real. The actual was always already real as differential presence without the need for the concept of the virtual as ‘the pure difference ontologically subtending our actual world’ (Mullarkey 2004: 471).

grounded by ‘a play of actualities’ (ibid., 471). He argues that ‘the actual is always already actualised somewhere, to some point of view’; whereas the virtual is but ‘a perspectival image seen from... an interacting set of actual positions’ (ibid., 469). What may appear ‘virtual’ from one perspective is actual from another; what is ‘beyond experience’ clearly depends on the notion of actual experience we begin with. In what we might call “the virtualist Deleuze” the virtual is conceived as some kind of hidden potential or force that explains the phenomenon of actualization. Mullarkey, however, wants to relativise the perspective from which this perception of an ‘ontological hinterworld’ derives (ibid., 471). It is not, he argues,

that there is one type of actual perception with the virtual existing beyond and around it (as a reservoir of difference) but rather that there are numerous different forms of actualities that *virtualize* their mutual differences such that a lowest common denominator is abstracted or spatialized – termed disparagingly ‘the actual’ or ‘the perception of *the* present’ or simply ‘presence’ – whilst those differences are consigned to a halo surrounding that single actuality and called ‘the virtual’ or the ‘memory of the past’ (ibid., 474-5 – emphasis original).

And here is where the concept of Actualism becomes central not only to the concerns of this chapter but to an objective of this thesis as a whole: to deconstruct simple presence (and a single present) but with recourse to difference as multiplication rather than representation. In this way, Actualism suggests that there is not just ‘one type of presence everywhere’ in relation to which everything else is either past or future, but multiple presents that can be perceived through an ‘enlarged’ perception that Deleuze, following Bergson, associates with the artist as well as the mystic (ibid., 487).

One such artist who approaches performance in terms of this enlarged perception is Goulish himself. Significantly he does this at the same time as trying to bring the virtual back down to earth:

If I might analyze what I am attempting, I could call it a modest Americanization of Deleuze; in a sense, trying to align his thinking with a writing approach one might recognize more in the tradition

of American than European philosophy, by which I mean *one that springs from the lived, the everyday, the ordinary* (as found in Thoreau, Whitehead and Cavell) (Goulish 2007b – emphasis added).

Similarly, Mullarkey positions his own essay as an attempt to ‘stem any exaggeration’ not only of the conceptual importance of the virtual for Deleuzo-Bergsonian thought, but also of its ethical or moral value. In the first instance, as Mullarkey notes, there has been a tendency in recent Deleuze Studies to set up a Manichean distinction between the ‘good’ virtual (molecular, rhizome etc.) versus the ‘bad’ actual (molar, tree etc.). But if the actual is ‘bad’ (at worst) or merely less worthy of attention than the virtual, then this clearly has implications for how we act in actuality, for our ethics and politics⁷⁶. In contrast, Goulish’s writing provides a valuable correlate in Performance Studies to Mullarkey’s Actualist philosophy, most explicitly perhaps in his series of three lectures on the topic of the ordinary – which we might also call ‘the actual’⁷⁷. In “The strain of the ordinary” (2007a), for example, Goulish associates the ordinary with ‘that which can be overlooked’ and with a school of American writing (exemplified by Gertrude Stein amongst others) that refuses to overlook this ordinary. Following an exploration of this writing, Goulish suggests a shift in perception through which ‘what we call *the ordinary*’ can be seen ‘as the object invested with attention that multiplies it’. Here, Goulish is clear that he does not want ‘to value the ordinary over the extraordinary’ so much as attend to the extraordinary within the ordinary; to develop a mode of attention, of careful and concentrated sensing, that allows us to encounter the ordinary in all its complexity (akin to Kaprow’s process of “Performing Life”) (Goulish 2007a: n.p.). Likewise, in “The time of the ordinary”, Goulish undoes the strict opposition between Bergson’s examples of the ticking clock and the dissolving sugar as demonstrations of two kinds of time, proposing that actual experience is always more

⁷⁶ As Mullarkey acknowledges, his Actualist critique of the ethical and political implications of the prioritization of the virtual over the actual to some extent reflect the feminist critiques of Deleuze put forward by theorists like Luce Irigaray and Alice Jardine. As he puts it, ‘we could point initially to the feminist critique of Deleuze’s key notion of ‘becoming woman’ as one attempt to rehabilitate the actual, by pointing out the need to regard fully the molar being of individual women, as political agents or as biological mothers, beyond any indifferent flow of pure ‘atoms of womanhood’ heading towards imperceptibility’. For an essay connecting this feminist critique to aspects of Goat Island, see my own article – co-authored with Matthew Goulish – “A dialogue on becoming”.

⁷⁷ There are three works making up Goulish’s series of talks on the theme of the ordinary: 1) “The Disappearance of Latitudinarianism” which was originally presented as a paper at the Openport Symposium *The Disappearance of Latitude – Live Presence & Realtime in Contemporary Practice* hosted by Link’s Hall, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, on February 23, 2007; 2) “The strain of the ordinary”, which was presented at the *Performing Literatures* conference at University of Leeds, July 1, 2007; and, 3) the final work, entitled “The time of the ordinary” which was presented at *Performance Studies International #14* conference in Copenhagen in August 2008.

complex than the example, which Goulish describes as a heuristic device existing in a sort of ‘virtual Kansas’ (Goulish 2008: n.p.).

Secondly though, and perhaps more crucially, the Actualist project is underpinned by an ethical demand to acknowledge the reality of multiple actualities (not just a single ‘actual’), rather than ‘virtualizing’ these actualities as the differential ground to a single, dominant actuality or presence. It may be that Virtualism seemingly celebrates this virtual as the creative engine behind the actual, but nevertheless, Mullarkey suggests, this celebration masks a form of oppression or a denial of the reality of otherness or differential presence⁷⁸. As such, beyond merely deconstructing presence according to the virtual/actual distinction, we need to acknowledge the presence of multiple actualities, even when those actualities are invisible or imperceptible to ‘us’. That is, regardless of the limits of our specific perspective, these multiple actualities ‘are always actual in and for themselves’ (Mullarkey 2003: 481). Presence is a *plurality* of presents, or a multiplicity of inhuman as well as human ways of being in time. Therefore, the approach to the temporality of presence that Actualism promotes is one that is less anthropocentric than either the metaphysics of presence (as deconstructed by Bergson, Derrida and Deleuze) or Virtualism, but also less ‘past-ist’ than the latter, given its support for the development of an enlarged perception to encounter the thickness of the present (as presents, plural)⁷⁹. And it is our contention that there are few better contemporary examples of this approach at work in performance, or of a response to this call to enlarge perception (and with that, our understand of what is involved in ‘spectatorship’ or what goes on in theatrical space), than Goat Island. In what follows, we will attempt to explain why.

⁷⁸ It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves here that this ‘otherness’ can equally be what we conventionally consider to be a part of ‘ourselves’, not just the otherness of another person or individuality. For instance, Mullarkey discusses the example of the tendency to ‘virtualize’ parts of one’s self – such as the unconscious, the body or memory – from the perspective of consciousness. Rather than appropriate the difference of these parts as ‘mine’ or label their reality as ‘virtual’, Actualism encourages us to conceive of each part as its own actual world, with its own actuality, which may or may not be visible to other parts such as conscious thought, but can be felt or intuited (Mullarkey 2003: 479).

⁷⁹ Mullarkey suggests that ‘One way to capture the two dominant approaches to time in contemporary Continental philosophy is by depicting them as either futurist or pastist. Where (the early) Heidegger demotes the present in favour of the future, Deleuze attacks it from its flank of the past. In both cases, though, any depth that might be thought to belong to other broader presents, to thick presents, is stolen for the future or past’ (Mullarkey 2003: 487). In this sense, this final chapter is pointing to a consideration of differential presence *beyond Deleuze*, and partly developed by Matthew Goulish whose perspective – particularly in recent writing – is arguably closer to Bergson and Mullarkey than Deleuze, to the extent that we are willing to label the current orthodoxy on Deleuze as more ‘Virtualist’ than ‘Actualist’.

3. Slowness and waiting: Differential presence as *felt* time

The first strategy or distinctive characteristic of Goat Island's work that we will address is their use of slowness and waiting. As we noted in the chapter introduction, Goat Island are well known for performances which insist upon slowing down audiences; performances which alter the speed of the audience through the temporality of the performance's unfolding, forcing the audience to wait for something to happen and, indeed, to feel slow actions and small gestures as 'somethings' rather than 'nothings'. Of course, this chapter is by no means alone in suggesting that Goat Island's performances impose a recalibration of time upon their audiences. However, we hope to draw from the Deleuzo-Bergsonian notion of the present's multiplicity in order to offer something new to this observation with an emphasis on why – philosophically, aesthetically, ethically, politically – such a recalibration might matter.

As company member Karen Christopher explains,

Slowness is part of our process and is a reaction against speed. Collaboration is a slow process and devising is a slow process for us. On top of this, we are manipulating the viewers' sense of time by going at other than usual paces and using improbable time signatures. A quick understanding of circumstances or ideas often misses depth and complication, so slowness is also away of allowing complexity into the work (Christopher in Stanier 2004: n.p.).

In part, this embrace of slowness in performance can be attributed to Hixson's earlier experiences of the work of Pina Bausch and Tadeusz Kantor, 'which she read as actively resisting (albeit in very different ways) the contemporary cultural pressure to communicate or entertain quickly' (Bottoms 1998: 442). Correlatively, a Goat Island dance sequence will often allow a single minute gesture to take up an unexpectedly extended period of time. For example, in the company's fifth performance *How Dear to Me The Hour When Daylight Dies* (1996),

Matthew Goulish spends upwards of 10 minutes standing and rubbing the back of one hand with the fingers of his other hand... leaving the

audience with time to watch seemingly very little for – in theatrical/performance terms – a long time (Mitchell in Goat Island 1999a: n.p.).

In this sense, the company are willing to risk boredom, but from the position of conceiving boredom as an affect that can immediately precede an optimum audience state of what we might call a kind of passive alertness; when we have stopped trying so hard to understand *why* what is happening is happening or to make sense of what is being done, and concentrate on attending to what is happening – in itself (which is always not ‘itself’ or one at the same time) and on ourselves in the process of perceiving the performance. Rather than allowing us to see the gesture as a representation of an existing idea, the slowness of the ‘hand-dance’ both forces us to look more closely and to listen to our own duration as it is figured by our impatience – an experience which, for Deleuze and Bergson, creates new concepts.

Goat Island are particularly interested in the notion of waiting, in the performers’ waiting and making the audience wait in a manner that, for Sara Jane Bailes, ‘enfolds the performer and spectator into the same condition of (unfulfilled) expectancy’ (Bailes 2007: 39). However, one might also address the process of waiting in Goat Island through Bergson’s well-known example of waiting for sugar to dissolve in water, which Deleuze takes up both in the essay, “Bergson” (1956) and the book, *Bergsonism*. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson writes,

If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy-nilly, wait until the sugar melts. This little fact is big with meaning. For here the time I have to wait is not that mathematical time which would apply equally well to the entire history of the material world, even if that history were spread out instantaneously in space. It coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something *thought*, it is something *lived*. It is no longer a relation, it is an absolute (Bergson 1911: 10).

The one who waits does not merely contemplate, but lives the difference between his/her own rhythm and that of the sugar – which is taking too long (in the waiter’s

actuality) to dissolve into the water. From this experience, Deleuze emphasizes, we can see that the sugar need not only be approached in terms of its spatial organization, or its difference in location from other things: the glass, another lump of sugar and so forth. Considered in terms of space the sugar differs from other things in degree, but as Deleuze stresses

it also has a duration, a rhythm of duration, a way of being in time that is at least partially revealed in the process of its dissolving and that shows how this sugar differs in kind not only from other things, but first and foremost from itself (Deleuze 1988: 32).

As we've mentioned, Goulish also takes up this example of the dissolving sugar and Bergson's contrasting example of the ticking clock in 'The time of the ordinary'. As Goulish describes, for Bergson, the clock leads us to misunderstand time by describing it in spatial terms, since

the clock attempts to measure changes in duration according to differences of degree (two minutes is sixty seconds more than one minute) rather than kind (what was a recognizable cube-shaped lump of sugar after one minute has become after two minutes a globular form one-quarter the original size, as three-quarters of it is now in liquid suspension in the hot tea, transforming the contents from "tea" to "tea with sugar," this difference in kind being of course the point) (Goulish 2008: n.p.)⁸⁰.

But the example of the melting sugar is not just about the sugar, but about the one who waits, and it is in this sense that it relates to performance and particularly to the question of audience reception. As Deleuze argues

Bergson's famous formulation, "I must wait until the sugar dissolves" has a still broader meaning than is given to it by its context. It signifies that my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for

⁸⁰ Bergson's original example was about sugar dissolving in water, since sugared water was a popular drink in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Goulish's (mis)quotation of the example – in which water becomes tea – is not so much a mistake as a translation of Bergson's observations into a more ordinary, contemporary example.

example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from mine (...)’ (Deleuze 1988: 32).

The affect of becoming-impatient is what alerts us not only to our own duration, but to its difference in kind from the many other durations pulsing within the real. There is an inherently performative dimension to all this, insofar as Bergson and Deleuze focus on the act of witnessing as that which triggers the exposure of both my own and other durations. However, as Ansell-Pearson notes, the relationship between the philosopher and the sugar dissolving is not that of spectator to spectacle, but rather ‘a special kind of complicity’ – a coexistence of multiple durations in the event of attending to life’s way of being in time (Ansell-Pearson 1999: 29). In this way, while we have moved on from the literally participatory performance of Kaprow, Goat Island are still concerned with ontological participation reconceived as taking part in the plurality of rhythms making up the actual.

The very first of Goat Island’s works, *Soldier, Child, Tortured Man* (1987) asks after the difference of the performer in a comparable fashion. We do not have to wait for the performer to melt of course, but we do have to wait for her/him to become exhausted, to reach the point when s/he is physically unable to perform a further repetition of a choreographic sequence. In early interviews Hixson explains this use of physical exertion in performance as derived from the company’s fascination with ‘that which was not illusionary, like the body getting tired or the involuntary breathing of a performer after running’ (Hixson 1990: 18). However, this use of exhaustion can be alternatively read, through Deleuze, as allowing the performer’s way of being in time to define the temporal structure of the performance. It is not about the self-presence of a real body versus the representational illusion of acting, but about the difference of the body from itself as revealed in the process of becoming-exhausted. For instance, in an interview with Irene Tsatsos, Goulis recalls how the structure of *Soldier* was altered in response to the performers’ levels of physical fitness:

The physical training for *Soldier* was constructed around five permutations of movement that were stated and then repeated with variations... Lin [Hixson] tried to construct it so that by the end we were so tired that we couldn’t do a sixth repetition. As we got in better shape, we didn’t tire so easily. Lin made the piece more

difficult. She put the hardest stuff at the end. So we really are exhausted by the end (Goulis in Tsatsos 1991: 67).

This interest in the difference of the performer as exhaustion is also evident in the later work, *It's Shifting Hank* (1993); although, in this piece, the emphasis is not just on the specificity of human duration in general, but on the performers' individual ways of being in time. It is important that they are allowed to tire 'one by one' rather than all at the same time.

Likewise, Goat Island approaches the notion of multiple co-existing durations with typical lightness and humour in their sixth performance, *The Sea & Poison* (1998), in which Goulis uses the top of his head as a stage, and as a place to attempt to grow a bean in a performance of becoming-earth. Here, Goulis shows the bean plant as a process of perception (in relation to heat, light, water, nutrients, music) rather than as an object – using his head as the site of the encounter between his human and the bean's inhuman duration. Reflecting on the act in a subsequent essay, Goulis asks:

For example, what is earth? A terrain, not a territory. A place where a bean might grow. Therefore if I become a place where a bean might grow, might I not become the earth? What do I need? Soil, water, light, music, and a bean. He places these ingredients atop his head and waits. A man sits near him and composes a letter. Instead of becoming the earth, he has become a houseplant. An exhausted couple begins dancing to his music, which has generated a dancelike environment. He wants a drink and yells for one. He has forgotten his quest to become the earth. He has discovered the difference between the earth and the human: distractability. The earth remembers; the human forgets. If I did the performance perfectly, would the bean grow? (Goulis in Goat Island 1999b: n.p.)

If the act is a deliberate failure on one level (the bean does not grow); then it is a success on another – alerting the audience to the commitment necessary to attend to the duration of the earth. We might also say that the act exposes the way in which the power to be distracted, like the power to become exhausted, is part of the human's way of being in time – distraction affects the character, performer and audience. Even the

slowest performance experiments have found it necessary to move faster than the growing bean in order to ‘keep’ their audience, or sometimes, when performance is allowed to unfold well beyond conventional temporal limits the audience is invited to come and go according to their own capacity to tolerate its duration⁸¹. It is all a question of balance: how long is too long (to wait)? How long is long enough for something to happen while seemingly nothing is happening?

In certain sequences in a Goat Island performance, differential presence as felt time or the lived experience of differential rhythms comes to the fore as the audience experiences the ‘painful affects’ not only of impatience or boredom, but also of confusion. In their early work, for example, the company could be seen to force a set of questions on the audience through their performances of strenuous, untrained effort or what Tsatsos calls ‘rigorous athletics’⁸². For instance, *It’s Shifting, Hank*, involved a sequence in which

all four performers crawled backwards on their forearms and toes and they did this until they collapsed in puddles of sweat on the floor. One by one they failed to continue and ended up being dragged out of the way by the survivors who then carried on crawling. The crawling went on for a long period of time and the strain it caused on the performers’ bodies was both visible and audible. The rubbing of the bony part of the forearm on the floor caused the skin to peel back and the elbows were bloody by the end of this sequence (Christopher in Goat Island 1999a: n.p.).

In this sense, it is partly the duration of the action that renders it inexplicable, leading the audience to wonder: ‘How long is this going to go on? Why do they keep on doing this even though it hurts them?’ The thoughts that this sequences forces, registers the recalibration of time for the audience by the performance. It reveals a relationship between time and logic – an expectation that things will only last for a ‘reasonable’ length of time.

⁸¹ Here, I am thinking of works like Robert Wilson’s *KA Mountain* and of durational performances by Forced Entertainment.

⁸² In 1991, interviewer Irene Tsatsos asked Goat Island if ‘rigorous athletics’ were the company’s ‘trademark’. Matthew Goulish replied: ‘I’m not so sure physicality is a trademark. I think it’s a kind of response to dance where you can see the effort but not the pain. But when an audience sees an untrained effort, it’s more affecting that seeing a trained or hidden effort’ (Tsatsos 1991: 67).

In the earlier chapter on Artaud, we explored the idea of differential presence as a fundamental encounter that forces thought. Now, we can develop this idea by noting that, for Bergson, thinking must be about time, about accelerating or decelerating, and as such sympathizing with or participating in the movement and ‘the very life of things’ (Bergson 2007: 43). In other words, we might suggest that differential presence, in Goat Island, constitutes *a feeling of time that forces thought*; an affect or becoming-other that reveals the nature of time as multiplicity and the production of novelty. As time unfolds, change occurs; even when, seemingly, “nothing” is happening. Indeed, it is perhaps precisely *when* nothing or very little seems to be happening – as in the uses of slowness and waiting in Goat Island – that time’s production of difference or novelty becomes most apparent to us.

While Goat Island’s later performances abandon the connections to the tradition of heroic, endurance performance established by some earlier works, waiting remains important. Indeed, it was perhaps of greatest concern to them during their penultimate performance *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy...* Here, it is clear that Goat Island are not only concerned with the waiting of the audience, but with the performers’ waiting; and equally, as Christopher explains, they are not interested in *representing* waiting, as much as in occupying a particular mode of embodied attention:

The tiny hairs on my face are ecstatic. They straighten out from my face and waver in the air around my head. I’m listening. I’m trying not to project a sense of something. My gaze is not direct and my body not in a loud posture that states: I am waiting, I am wanting, I am showing...’ (Christopher in Goat Island 2006: n.p.).

Such uses of waiting or apparent stillness have the effect of attracting the audience’s attention to movement going on on another level from that of conventional choreography. Similarly, for example, when performer Lito Walkey stands on one leg for a specific duration, accompanied by James Taylor’s “Sweet Baby James”, what appears is not the body as a solid and static thing, but the body as part of a world in perpetual motion. In attempting to be still, what becomes perceptible are the rhythmic shudders and vibrations of muscle tension; something *is* happening after all. The

performance's duration has made something happen to us that allows us to perceive happenings where we saw nothing (but stillness) before. In Deleuzian terms, this change to the spectator involves jumping from one 'threshold of perception' to another, since 'there is always a perception finer than yours, a perception of your imperceptible'; 'there is always a threshold capable of grasping what eludes another: the eagle's eye...' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 287, 281).

Alternatively, we might follow the view of fellow performer, Bryan Saner, who equates these frequent moments of stillness and silence in *September Roses*, not with absence or the void, but with a kind of waiting that establishes a connection between that which has been separated or broken apart: 'We have always considered our standing still and silence as repair. It is not nothing. It is a careful, patient listening before action. The stillness is related to the concept of serving people; of waiting' (Saner in Goat Island 2006: n.p.). Hixson also alludes to this association of waiting and repairing damage, arguing that in contemporary culture:

you have to be moving in order that your worth as a person is appreciated. You have to be in motion, you have to prove your productivity as a person, and that's very scary for those that are not in motion. For someone who is ill, or doesn't have money, or is not in motion in this capitalistic way: those people are cut off the chart now, in terms of being even considered a part of our culture... Repair has to do with stillness... People have to stop for a moment... and wait (Hixson in Goat Island 2006: n.p.).

In these writings, Hixson also intuits a relation between becoming and waiting:

Becoming someone else feels to me like an active state, but I know that there's something about that that involves waiting as well. And I think it has to do with being able to see the other – by being able to be attentive, and hold the other with yourself, or in yourself... These are the things that are circling around in my mind (ibid.).

Movement at a speed determined by the needs of capitalism is not the only movement. As the sugar example suggests: seeming immobility is not the absence of movement,

but rather movement at a different speed. For Deleuze and Bergson, every thing is moving, and clearly what Hixson is critiquing is not movement itself but the capitalist attempt to establish one, homogeneous rhythm and speed as universal, to segregate the (valuable) moving and the (useless) still from one's own perspective. The ethical dimension of this Deleuzo-Bergsonian theory of time is that it impresses upon us the need to develop the patience and the modes of attention necessary to affirm the reality of durations other than our own.

With both of these temporal strategies – slowness and waiting – Goat Island encourage what we might call a kind of ‘participatory spectatorship’. Though for some, it’s ‘stretching common sense’ to say that watching a performance (or looking at a painting) counts as a kind of participation (Kelley in Kaprow 2003: xviii); for others, like Goat Island, the rhetoric of those who insist on literal, audience participation is based on a false distinction between passive spectatorship and active participation⁸³. Spectatorship has never been passive in the first place, Goat Island suggest; rather, the act of paying attention to the multiple durations of performance is, in itself, a way of taking part in those different ways of being in time.

4. Repetition and imitation as becoming:

Respecting the actualities of others (when philosophy meets politics)

Now, I want to move on to explore the role of what might (commonsensically) be called repetition and imitation in Goat Island's work: two themes that initially seem “non-Deleuzian” in their emphasis on the reproduction of sameness. However, Deleuze not only wants to rethink time or becoming as the ‘groundless ground’ of all identity; he wants to rethink repetition and apparent mimesis as a ‘species of becoming’ (Mullarkey 1999: 137). For Deleuze, what repetition repeats is difference not identity, not least because there could be no identical repetitions except outside of time. In a similar vein,

⁸³ This is akin to the view put forward by Jacques Ranciere in his book, *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009). Here, Ranciere argues against the association of spectatorship with passivity, and with the idea of being seduced by an appearance without perceiving its real conditions or the mechanisms of its production. The spectator does not need ‘emancipating’, Ranciere suggests; since spectatorship is already a process of active storytelling, interpretation and translation. Spectatorship, for us, is also an active process, but less in terms of narrative or story and more in terms of the becomings induced by the encounter with multiple, differing durations.

Goat Island do not just repeat the archive but allow its different actualities to enliven the company's own becoming.

For many, Goat Island's choreographies are notable for their use of repetition as much for their uses of slowness and waiting: the recurring development of intricate and precise 'dances' based on repeated gestures, jumps, phrases, lifts and so forth. In 39 *microlectures*, Goulish's reporting of an anecdote reveals his Deleuzian sympathies:

A few years ago, a producer whose name was Rollo made a special trip to see a performance of Goat Island's piece *It's Shifting, Hank*. Afterwards he wanted to give us his reaction, and I was elected to talk to him. I can summarize the conversation now as follows: Rollo said: What is the reason for all this repetition? And I said: What repetition? (Goulish 2000: 33)

For Goulish, what Deleuze would call 'bare, material or unproductive repetition' is all a matter of perception; for instance, of the difference of perception between what he calls the 'informed' or 'ecstatic' viewer. 'As John Cage said in his "Lecture on Nothing",' Goulish notes "Repetition is only repetition if we feel that we own it" (ibid.). This is the relation to dance of the informed viewer who feels able to recognize when a dancer repeats a step, on the basis of a sense of ownership of choreographic language. Goulish's ecstatic viewer, in contrast, 'is ignorant of dance and claims no ownership of its language' and, as such, observes only the differences of steps that the informed viewer subsumes within the recognition of the same.

Goulish goes on to suggest that this distinction extends to performer as well as audience, where the ecstatic performer is one for whom 'no difference between two moments is insignificant' (ibid., 34), or better (perhaps) every moment is different – since Deleuze wants to take us beyond the perception of difference as not-sameness; beyond, for instance, the not-sameness of two dance steps. Likewise, Lehmann explicitly acknowledges Deleuze's influence when he argues that 'even in the theatre, there is no such thing as true repetition. The very position in time of the repeated is different from that of the original. We always see something different in what we have

seen before' (Lehmann 2006: 157)⁸⁴. The production of difference, rather than the reproduction of the same, has always been at work in the theatre, for Lehmann and Goat Island, even in its most classical formations. In turn, Lehmann suggests – and this seems highly pertinent to Goat Island's repetitive choreographies – repetition, like stillness, can draw our attention to 'the little differences' (ibid.). Again, Lehmann is drawing from Deleuze here who wrote of the power of repetition to foreground difference in relation to the work of Andy Warhol – specifically his screen-print paintings and the "Death and Disaster" series (Zepke 2005: 32). As Goat Island dance, this attention to the difference of repetition does not just occur as an entire sequence is repeated, but in the repetition of a gesture by different company members, in which the 'same' movement is transformed in the context of a different body.

Although less apparent than the use of (differential) repetition, Goat Island's choreographies are also characterized by a use of imitation or what Goulish has called 'choreographic appropriation'⁸⁵. Again, however, their specific approach to and understanding of imitation is closer to what Deleuze calls becoming rather than copying, insofar as it is an imitation that transforms the imitator as s/he encounters a different duration. For Deleuze and Guattari, all imitations involve what they call 'becomings' – whether we are talking about a painter's "representation" of a bird or the so-called "mimicry" of the wasp by the orchid in nature. 'Imitation self-destructs,' they argue 'since the imitator unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates. One imitates only if one fails, when one fails' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 305). Deleuze and Guattari also argue that 'We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are' (ibid., 238), and in this sense, they propose that imitation or representation are not the (only) way we encounter the difference of 'the other'.

A key example of this comes in the company's seventh performance, *It's an Earthquake in My Heart* (2001) in which Goulish performs an imitation of Dominique Mercy – 'a French dancer in Pina Bausch's company' (Goulish 2000b: 7). Goulish's account of the process of developing this imitation is interesting because it suggests the

⁸⁴ Lehmann cites *Difference and Repetition* in a footnote to this statement. See pp. 197n.

⁸⁵ In fact, in his essay "Memory is this", Goulish tells us that Hixson 'appropriated the idea of choreographic appropriation' having watched *The Last Performance* by Jerome Bel and company in which the performers all imitate the same solo by the German choreographer and dancer, Susanne Linke (Goulish 2000: 6).

way in which one type of repetition can undo another – how imitation might undo habit and make way for becoming. For instance, Goulish’s attempt to imitate Mercy – by repeatedly watching a video of him dancing and attempting to copy it – shows how imitation might constitute a way to unlearn (or forget, or escape from) one way of moving, and to learn (or remember) another. Through imitation, Goulish opens himself up to a feeling of the ‘foreignness’ or ‘wrongness’ of moving when one attempts to take on the speed, rhythm or way of being in time of another body. Conventionally, the term ‘appropriation’ connotes an element of absorption, possession or incorporation, in which the difference of the thing appropriated is subsumed within the identity of that which appropriates. However, Goulish notes that in his case, appropriation is about leaving the difference of the source intact: it is precisely when he can perform a movement that feels *wrong* that he is ‘getting it right’ – when he is entering into composition with Mercy, becoming-Mercy (ibid., 8). To appropriate Deleuze and Guattari’s words, it could be said that Goulish imitates Mercy, reproducing his image in a signifying fashion⁸⁶. But it is the speed and rhythm of Mercy’s gestures that Goulish tries to cultivate in his own body, following the logic that if the body is an outcome of its movements, and the self an effect of its becoming in and as time, then by taking on the movement of an other (as closely as possible) we might transform our own style of living.

5. Beyond ‘mere’ imitation: manifestation, hybridization and the affective body

This use of imitation or becoming extends beyond the process of developing choreographies, and features as a central strategy in Goat Island’s creative process as a whole. Indeed, Goulish says that ‘about 80%’ of what they do in a Goat Island performance ‘is about imitating something or someone’, in a manner that he suggests is ‘a lot like... what children do. They see a movie that they really like then they go home and re-enact parts of it’ (Goulish in Sayre 1997: n.p.). Goat Island, in turn, imitate historical figures: the female pilot Amelia Earhart, Mike Walker – the Vietnam War veteran who was once America’s fattest man, the philosopher and writer Simone Weil, and the comedians Larry Grayson and Lenny Bruce. But they also imitate characters from films: Mr Memory from *The 39 Steps*, Scott Carey from *The Incredible Shrinking*

⁸⁶ See *A Thousand Plateaus*, the original sentence reads: ‘it could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 10).

Man. In each case, Goat Island move away, not only from the dominant understanding of theatrical ‘character’ as determined by ‘notions of roundness, depth and interiority’ (Wallis and Shepard 2004: 179), but also any stereotypically postmodern approach in which imitation or appropriation are used to point to the necessarily fictional or representational status of the performance. Rather, we might suggest that to play a character in Goat Island is to enter into a becoming with one’s sources, to perceive and respect the different ‘world’ of another person, but also to attempt to explore and cultivate a different duration in an encounter with that ‘world’. We will now propose that this approach to character operates on three levels that we might nominate ‘manifestation’, ‘hybridization’, and ‘the affective body’. Each term indicates a slightly different approach to the affirmation of time as becoming as that which precedes the discrete identities of self and other, or performer and character.

What we will term ‘manifestation’ is a surface effect of the company’s commitment to preserving the difference of their sources rather than forming them through interpretation. By manifestation we mean to suggest a sense of difference between speaker and voice, loosely akin to that of the possessed spiritualist. As Christopher describes, ‘Each of the voices we incorporate needs to be heard on its own terms and not written over by some attitude of our own’ (Christopher in Bottoms and Goulsh 2007: 83). Likewise, as Bottoms reports, ‘Hixson speaks of the need to “embrace the sources sincerely,” looking to learn from and so move with them, rather than interpreting them from a fixed point (Bottoms 1998: 436). The Many are protected from an over-determination by the One; difference from an assimilation into identity. That is, manifestation works through the resistance to nuance or expressive intonation added to the source from the outside. Diderot famously conceived the actor as one who accurately imitates the exterior signs of emotion so perfectly that the audience cannot tell that he is not actually feeling them (Shepard and Wallis 2004: 225). With Goat Island, as Deleuze says of Bene, ‘the actor ceases to be an actor’ in order to become a surface over which a series of gestures and words pass. This is not to say that the performer is not doing anything, on the contrary she is attending to subtracting her ‘self’ – as outside observer – in order to allow the audience to encounter the source in all its difference from itself. Manifestation is not about Karen Christopher becoming an empty vessel that allows the real Mike Walker to appear; it is about affirming and protecting the difference immanent to Mike Walker’s words from any secondary organization as representation.

Next comes 'hybridization'. In "The Incredible Shrinking Man Essay and Board Game: A Collaborative Publication Project" (1999), Saner introduces the notion of hybridity, which he defines as the splicing of one's existing ideas with a new way of thinking that comes from an 'other'. Hybridization, he suggests, is what happens when audiences confront Goat Island's performances, but it is also what occurs

within the company as members collaborate together on a daily basis in rehearsals. The ideas that we work with are almost always hybrids. We combine our thinking with the thoughts of others, creating a hybrid vigour that is in a sense more resistant and hardy (Saner in Goat Island 1999b: 19).

For Deleuze and Guattari, hybridization is thought in terms of becomings, be it becoming-animal, molecular or imperceptible. They cite the example of Vladimir Slepian, who writes a story about a man who enters into a becoming-dog by wearing shoes on his hands. In turn, the mouth must be used to tie the laces on the second hand. Do not become a barking, molar dog, they say – "real" animals are trapped in and defined by their forms as much as human subjects. But do bark; since, by barking, 'if it is done with enough feeling, with enough necessity and composition, you emit a molecular dog' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 275). In a becoming-dog, the dog must become something else as much as I. In turn we might say that putting character into variation involves the character becoming the actor as much as the actor becoming the character; Mike Walker becoming Karen Christopher as much as the other way round. For example, during her repetition of a character's speaking and moving, Christopher says that she never attempts to

cause the audience to cease to see me in front of them. Yet it is not enough to say that we are "simply playing ourselves"... It is a specific thing I do when I complicate myself with more than one voice. Like a series of transparencies sliding over each other, we are trying to enact a kind of simultaneity of being (Christopher in Bottoms and Goulish 2007: 84).

A further hybridizing device used by the company is the notion of performance within the performance, which is used in *September Roses: Simone Weil as Paul Celan*. Simone Weil as Lillian Gish; and in *The Lastmaker: Larry Grayson as St Francis*. As Hixson explains, the ‘as’ constructs a diagonal connection between sources; hybrids are created which suggest relationships between the apparently unrelated, of difference to difference but not by way of resemblance. A diagonal structure need not be spoken – in *Daylight Dies*, Christopher speaks Mike Walker’s words while wearing Amelia Earhart’s white cotton flying helmet, such that ‘As Amelia disappears, Mike Walker appears and appears and appears’ (ibid., 85). Secondly, this specifically differential nature of Goat Island’s imitations is perhaps most evident in the hybrid or “double-figures” that emerge in the company’s most recent shows, such as the Larry Grayson-St Francis of Assisi figure performed by Mark Jeffrey in *The Lastmaker* (2007) or indeed Goulish’s rendering of Mr Memory – which is, in fact, an assemblage of multiple imitations, combining the character from Hitchcock’s *The 39 Steps* with the former Wooster Group actor Ron Vawter as Roy Cohn. As Bottoms recounts, Goulish performs the assemblage by ‘delivering some of Memory’s lines from the film using the speed-talking technique Vawter had used in the Wooster Group’s *L.S.D.*’ (Bottoms 1998: 438).

Finally, it is important to note exactly what aspects of their source-figures Goat Island choose to imitate; a choice that implies a particular understanding of individuality – who or what ‘Amelia Earhart’ is, ‘Mike Walker’ is and so forth. And here is where we turn to the third level: the focus on affect or ‘the affective body’ of the source rather than on psychology. Christopher, for instance, describes her process as follows:

When I play a character I play a series of gestures and sounds. I repeat certain positions and cadences and rhythms. I am not trying to repeat the person, only their motion and their sound (Christopher in Bottoms and Goulish 2007: 84).

In contrast to notions of acting as emotional identification, this is a task-based approach to performance that locates a value in the diligent repetition of the visible and audible qualities of something or someone else. There are a number of things we might note here. First, that Goat Island tend to create characters by watching and repeating other

performances rather than interpreting a script. Second, that this approach emphasises the *affective* aspect of language as sound rather than representation. Christopher does not conceive her ‘self’ as a tool for representing the truth or essence of an ‘other’, such as in the conventional approach to character which assumes and imposes stasis on both performer and person performed. Rather, through repetition, she affirms the difference underlying this distinction by entering into a becoming with a body that speaks and moves differently from her own.

Speaking of *Daylight Dies* – the performance in which these imitations of Earhart, Walker and Mr Memory appear – Goulish states: ‘I think that a big part of this performance is about the presence of people who are no longer alive’ and one might add, the presence or actuality of ‘the past’. This concern is particularly developed in the figure of Mr Memory from *The 39 Steps*, re-enacted by Goulish during the performance, and whom he describes as ‘a kind of personification or emblem of the past in the present in a human form’ (Goulish in Sayre 1997: n.p.). But what do we mean by the actuality of the past, or the co-existence of multiple presents? Are we suggesting that ‘the past’ is a present going on at a different speed? Are we really arguing that Amelia Earhart, for example, is not dead after all? Of course not. ‘Amelia Earhart’ – at least according to one understanding of what ‘Amelia Earhart’ means – died in 1939 (or to be precise, went missing July 2, 1937, and was declared dead January 5, 1939). And yet, much depends on who or what we think ‘Amelia Earhart’ is, on who or what we think any ‘one’ is. In the conventional account, Earhart is a self-present individual who was born and died, who had a life that began and ended at clearly demarcated points in time. This is Amelia Earhart defined as what Deleuze would call a ‘molar’ entity. In contrast, as chapter three introduced, Deleuze presents us with a rethinking of individuality or uniqueness as what he calls a ‘haecceity’, a ‘bloc of becomings’, or a ‘rhizome’, and which we might paraphrase as a set of relations: ways of being in time, ways of using a body, a voice. Likewise, Deleuze contrast the molar form of some thing, with its ‘micrological’ traits or details, such as the form of a face in contrast to a facial tic (Lawlor 2008: n.p.). It is these relations or traits that the Goat Island performer differentially repeats in the process of imitation. The traits of Amelia Earhart are extracted from her form and then used in a ‘different milieu,’ or ‘deterritorialized’ as Deleuze and Guattari would say, in order to produce new, alternative outcomes (ibid.). In this way, whereas molar forms can die or end, molecular becomings can live on by

inhabiting different molarities (such as a Goat Island performer). A tone of voice, a turn of phrase, a posture: all of them present, differently.

6. Goat Island becoming Goat Island

In this sixth section we shall add some brief remarks on how the company approach the final, or finished performance such that it preserves the self-different nature that all the preceding strategies discussed have sought to nurture. “What is it to play a character in a Goat Island piece?” Christopher asks in *Small Acts of Repair* (2007), noting that writing around Goat Island’s work tends to elide questions of ‘performance style’ in favour of discussions of ‘content and structure’. Perhaps the reason for this neglect is that the company don’t seem to have a ‘performance style’; that is, they make a point of avoiding virtuoso, or charismatic performance. As Goulish says, the work is performer-centred, but not necessarily presence-centred – where ‘presence’ is associated with a quality (some people having it, some not) that seduces audiences, and with the demonstration of actorly skill, or magnetism. Maybe – better, it is because they don’t seem to have *one* performance style but *several*, or, in other words, their performance style is one of multiplicity rather than homogeneity. Individual performers don’t have their ‘own’ style that they bring to character, nor is there a ‘house style’ that serves to unify the performers as belonging to the same, coherent theatrical universe. As such, Goat Island’s ‘performance style’ is not a coating added to the performance so much as a surface effect of a process that is the company’s relationship to their sources.

Goat Island can be seen to take their concern with repetition, imitation and copying to a ‘meta-level’ in *September Roses*, exploring the idea of performance as its own double. Here the ‘finished’ performance appears as that which might have been (and could still be) otherwise. As Bailes describes, *September Roses* was ‘performed in two parts/versions over two nights, using the same blocks of material, presented in a different sequence each night, with the addition of a section that is unique to each version’ (Bailes 2007: 38). The second night is not the ‘bad copy’ of the first; both nights are and are not the ‘final’ show, insofar as the very decision to structure the performance material in two different forms opens up the idea that the material could equally be structured in more than two, perhaps an infinite number of ways. The shift

from process to performance, in other words, is akin to what Deleuze (after Simondon) calls individuation: difference differentiating itself (Bogue 1989: 63). The arrival at a 'finished' performance puts a (temporary) stop to the generation of self-organizing forms by the creative process as 'metastable substance'. Listening to Goat Island talk about their working method confirms this anti-hylomorphic perspective (when the artist forms matter with an Idea): they speak of the performance as a living thing, as something that grows, as something that changes in unpredictable ways, becoming larger than them and extending beyond the limits of their ability to know, conceptualise or interpret it. 'We're very interested in getting to places we haven't been to before,' Hixson says, 'and if you had a theme you were starting with, it would always dominate, you wouldn't go on that journey. You'd just pick something out and put it with your theme...' (Hixson in Bottoms 1998: 433). Rather than organise material according to its perceived relevance or irrelevance to a transcendent theme, the company encourages the performance as metastable substance to do its own thing – that is, to differ from itself – for up to two years of rehearsal and development.

But it would be a mistake to think that the performance suddenly becomes the same as itself the minute that it is declared 'finished'. On the contrary, Goat Island work hard to keep the difference or multiplicity in the work in a manner that allows the audience to make something new with it in the event of performance. Speaking of their collaborative process, the company have often noted that it works better when one brings something 'incomplete' to rehearsal, when one brings the outline of an idea for an action or image, leaving space for its transformation by new perspectives. Likewise in performance, it becomes important to make a show with holes in it. Writing of *September Roses*, Karen Jürs-Munby proposes:

Like some of the fragile materials used – one-legged stools, cardboard tables and crutches in pieces – the structure of the performance text itself self-consciously announces that it, too, could be seen as in need of repair. It does not add up to an Aristotelian dramatic fictional whole but instead is full of holes. The onus is on the spectator/witness to help repair – perhaps by piecing together information seen over the two nights – or to help bear the trauma of living in a damaged world' (Jürs-Munby in Lehmann 2006: 12).

For Jürs-Munby, to say: ‘there’s a hole in this performance’ or that its beginning is missing could be experienced, on the one hand, as a kind of *photographic* gesture that ‘establishes a dialectic between presence and absence, between the presence of our experience of it and the absence of that to which it refers’ (Sayre 1989: 244). The gesture both alerts us to the present act of viewing (you are watching the performance) and implies an absence within that present (you are only watching an incomplete version of a full performance that happened elsewhere, in another time). But whereas Jürs-Munby’s reading of *Goat Island* is largely informed by a Lacanian position in which the difference of the performance from itself is conceived as lack or absence, *September Roses*’ missing beginning and ending might equally be seen to constitute a nod to process philosophy. That is, we might also approach these qualities of *September Roses* non-dialectically, noting that ‘beginnings’, ‘endings’ and the ‘finished’ make little sense within an ontology that asserts the primacy of becoming. The notion of becoming not only unsettles the distinction between subject and object, or self and other, but – by definition – the distinction between one discrete moment and another, between being (this) and *not* being (this) – when one ‘thing’ supposedly stops and another ‘thing’ starts.

Conclusion

Through slowness, waiting, repetition and imitation, *Goat Island*’s performance work acknowledges and responds to ‘the need to open ourselves affectively to the actuality of others’ (Mullarkey 2003: 488). So why is it important to feel time in this way; why does this temporal aspect of differential presence matter? In the first instance, the response to these questions can be *metaphysical*: that it matters that we perceive time in itself – as qualitative change, as a multiplicity of presents, rather than distorting it through the dominant philosophy of the same, and misleading concepts of repetition, imitation and a simple ‘here and now’. But there is another response that locates an *ethical* content within this metaphysics of time: an ethics of others, and specifically of other ways of being in time⁸⁷. As Colebrook notes,

⁸⁷ Contra Deleuze’s emphasis on Bergson’s specifically metaphysical contributions to the philosophy of difference, Mullarkey suggests that ‘Bergsonism may best be read as an ethics of alterity fleshed out in empirical concerns’ (Mullarkey 1999: 107).

Because we perceive the world from our own interested viewpoint we usually locate all other durations within our own... We perceive other persons as bodies, like ours and within our world; we don't perceive the different 'world' of the other, their own duration (Colebrook 2002: 47).

And this act of reducing the different, the novel, or other to the same can be construed as an act of repression. Likewise, in *Creative Evolution* Bergson suggests that an 'attention to life' – or an 'openness' to other durations – is what creates a hierarchy of species in nature. For Bergson, the lower form of life acts as if 'the general movement of life stopped at it instead of passing through it. It thinks only of itself, it lives only for itself' (Bergson 1911: 268).

In contrast to the self-absorption Bergson critiques, Goat Island's work neither relegates the different to a separate (virtual) sphere for which we have no responsibility, nor seeks to assimilate that difference into a self-present company, character or show. In a recent correspondence, Goulish stated: 'what I think was always most important about the copying was the idea of making oneself anew from the outside, through an encounter with another'. He also emphasised the way in which the internet as a research tool made the ethics of preserving the difference of the past and their sources all the more important:

Toward the end of the making of *The Lastmaker* Mark [Jeffrey] brought in the idea of copying the [Larry] Grayson monologue, and I think that was the first time we used YouTube as a research resource. That internet technology seemed to bring the past, or the distant, so much closer. If the sources of our copying had anything in common before, it was that they required a certain degree of pilgrimage, of travel and labor to bring them closer – to see the performance or find the video. I don't mean to glorify that effort, although *it certainly focused the attention*. The new nearness of the past and its easy repetition makes a different kind of study possible. I suppose the danger of that lies in the temptation to think everything of the past is available, or that what is available is the complete catalogue of the

past, or the far away, when that is not at all the case of course’
(Goulish 2009: n.p. – emphasis added).

As Goulish’s remarks suggest, such technology as YouTube may render perceptible some hitherto unseen movements and speeds of historical figures like Grayson, if they are attended to closely in all their micromovements.

Goat Island describe their own underlying philosophy as a belief that ‘everything is connected’ – a belief that allows them to avoid beginning with a ‘theme’ and to explore the architectural structure of the Hagia Sophia and the final shows of the comedian Lenny Bruce in the same performance. However, the temporal dimension of differential presence that we have addressed in this chapter brings to light the full significance of this statement: ‘everything is connected’; reminding us that this includes a connection between the differing actualities we tend to call ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’.

This respect for the differential actuality of the archive provides an alternative model of community to that of the Living Theatre. In the World of Art documentary about the company, Saner suggests that there is a connection between the use of historical source material and the creation of community in the event of performance. It is *because* Goat Island are re-enacting past events in the lives of real people (who are no longer alive) that they are ‘developing community with an audience’. In *Daylight Dies*, Saner suggests, this connection is facilitated by his role as a kind of ‘master of ceremonies’ who helps to set up a relation between the audience and the other performers. As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, this notion of performance as a site of community formation could be contextualised with reference to company’s like the Living Theatre. However, as was indicated at the start of this chapter, Goat Island make very few explicitly political claims for their work. Or rather, as is fitting to their embrace of multiplicity, when they do frame their work in this way they also emphasize that an explicitly political reading of a given performance is only one interpretation amongst others⁸⁸. We never hear Goat Island speak of ‘the people’, of ‘paradise’ or of

⁸⁸ For instance, Goat Island have always held work-in-progress showings and post-show discussions which give time to these other perspectives – in this case, to the thoughts of their audiences, rather than assuming that the company themselves “know best”. In turn, that these thoughts of others frequently then turn up in the company’s writing about their work suggests that genuine attention has been paid to the capacity of others - the audience - to make something new out of what they have seen or to be

‘revolution’ (as distinct, for Deleuze at least, from the ‘revolutionary’) as aspects of a ‘macro-political’ agenda. We do not hear them make an explicit critique of the present as if it were as a single entity, nor celebrate a paradisaical, unified utopia elsewhere. Rather, Goat Island might be seen to practice a ‘micro-politics’ of performance by involving themselves with the multiple presents around them and offering audiences the opportunity to follow suit.

Becoming revolutionary in this case is about enlarging one’s perception and focussing one’s attention – another word for which is ‘respect’: not as a subjective feeling but as an intuition or a reflective ‘*sympathy* with reality’ (Bergson 1946: 305 n.20). As such, the communal presence that Goat Island’s performances might be understood to develop is not a matter of simple ‘unification’ of the audience with each other, or with the performers. But nor can this community be understood along the lines of Brecht’s supposedly ideal audience of ‘thinking and smoking spectator[s]’, as individualised and distanced from their fellow spectator as from the show (Lehmann 2006: 156). That is, the temporality of this community cannot be conceived as a homogeneous shared time belonging to every audience member, nor as an entirely discontinuous time in which each one discretely occupies his or her own time. Rather, Goat Island offer the audience an experience of time as a multiplicity of presents, an opportunity to attend to the plurality of ways in which life moves, and so also the multiples of even seemingly simple, classical theatre. Beneath the organising power of narrative or the proscenium, theatrical space has always been teeming with differential presences if only we would notice them.

transformed by what they have felt. This is not mere lip-service to ‘participation’. It is another form of what Bergson calls ‘attention to life’.

Conclusion

1. The rehabilitation of presence through difference

This thesis has argued, firstly, that presence in performance can be newly conceived as an encounter with difference. Consequently, the idea of presence in contemporary performance theory need not only be understood, after Derrida, as an illusion, as an aspiration to identity, or as a fullness that is forever deferred by the play of difference. Secondly, the thesis has not solely been concerned with how concepts created by Deleuze contribute to the theorization of presence in performance. Instead, it has sought to place Deleuzian ideas alongside parallel concepts devised by artists. The resonance between practitioners' theorizations of presence and Deleuze's thought was particularly pronounced in Chapters Two and Four. Indeed, in the case of the former, we have seen how Deleuze's conception of the nature of thought itself was inspired by Artaud's account of his own difficulty with achieving genuine thought. In turn, this particular chapter has established connections between Deleuze's concept of 'fundamental encounter' and Artaud's ideas of the 'mind in the flesh' in order to define differential presence as an event of embodied, creative thinking.

This thesis has also insisted that difference is a kind of presence rather than a kind of absence. That is to say, we have seen how Deleuze's philosophy allows us to theorise the variety of ways in which difference might make itself felt in and as *experience* through his concepts of the forcing of thought, affect, becoming, and duration. The thesis has, therefore, refuted the view (forwarded by Badiou and Hallward) that Deleuze's idea of participating in the difference of the world necessarily involves a process of dematerialisation, or indeed, a distancing of oneself from the political project of changing the nature of the actual. Rather, we have argued that the pursuit of differential presence is, in itself, a political goal and specifically, a goal that must be achieved through 'micro-' rather than 'macro-' political means.

In the opening chapter, for example, we noted that where the Living Theatre go wrong is in superimposing a macropolitical agenda on a performance that was already political in its efforts to support the creative and immanent participation of the audience. Equally, in Chapter Two, we saw how Artaud's minor usage of the voice (or the

‘destratification’ of the voice) constitutes a revolutionary act for Deleuze, as a mode of vocal performance in solidarity with minorities who ‘work over’ a foreign language from the inside (Deleuze 1997: 247). In turn, Chapter Three provided the groundwork for thinking in terms of what we might now call a ‘politics of becoming’ rather than a politics of the subject. Here, that is, we argued that Kaprow’s Activities should not be conceived as apolitical meditations on the world, but as invitations to immanently participate in the differential nature of the material world, which is itself a political gesture. Whereas Badiou and Hallward want us to return to a politics of the (human) subject, our Deleuzian reading of Kaprow allows us to see breaking with subjectivity (or ‘becoming-imperceptible’) as a form of creative resistance to oppressive, organizing concepts – though, importantly, this resistance is not a secondary reaction to organization (or ‘stratification’), but a primary non-representative force that can be unleashed in performance. Finally, Chapter Four emphasized the ethico-political implications of Deleuze’s notion of the relativity of dominant speeds of perception and the concept of multiple presents rather than a single ‘Now’ in a manner that prepares the way for thinking in terms of a ‘politics of attention’ rather than representation. In their emphasis on slowness and waiting, we saw how the politics of Goat Island’s practice lies in their challenging of dominant temporal expectations, which places them in solidarity with those human and nonhuman animals that have a different way of being in time from the speed demanded by late capitalism.

In this respect, a core aspect particularly of the first three chapters of this thesis has been to rehabilitate the practices in question from existing interpretations that would imply a mis-fit between that practice and Deleuze’s philosophy of difference. In the first chapter we saw how Deleuze’s thought enabled us to rehabilitate elements of the somewhat discredited practice of The Living Theatre. By taking a broad sweep approach and addressing works from the company’s history across almost four decades, we emphasized the number and variety of Deleuzian approaches to performance that, in some cases, the company might be said to have pioneered, such as: participation, collective creation or immanent authorship, and the use of performance to generate a differential community, or ‘people to come’. In each case, a Deleuzian interpretation of their practice allowed us to distance the Living Theatre from a transcendent, self-identical notion of presence. This dissociation from transcendence was also of concern in Chapter Two in which we sought to distance Artaud from Derrida, and the determination of the theatre of cruelty as fundamentally impossible. Likewise, we made

use of Deleuze's own readings to demonstrate that Artaud is not an essentially binaristic thinker, but a reflective practitioner who developed concepts beyond the opposition of mind and body, or of self-presence and representation.

In the third chapter, we sought to rehabilitate Allan Kaprow's work both from metaphorical readings and from depoliticisation, again by refusing the mind/matter dualism and the distinction between thinking (as Zen meditation) and doing (performing actual change). Kaprow's ephemeral, material work does not need an interpreting subject standing outside of it in order for it to have 'meaning'. Rather, the chapter suggested that we need to rethink 'meaning' in terms of affect and becoming, as a transformation of the audience that takes place on the level of the body through participation. Finally, in Chapter Four, this project of recuperation was almost reversed in the sense that it was Deleuze, rather than Goat Island, who was the subject of a recuperative effort. In this case, we drew from both John Mullarkey's and Matthew Goulish's Actualist thought in order to retrieve Deleuze from the dominant Virtualist reading of his work. By emphasising the Bergsonian aspects of Deleuze's thought, we argued that there is not just 'one type of presence everywhere' (Mullarkey 2004: 487), in relation to which other actualities are categorized as virtual, but multiple, durational presents that can be perceived if performance recalibrates its audiences – as Goat Island do.

A further concern of this thesis has been to examine the specific practical methodologies developed by its chosen artists in pursuit of encounters with difference. On the one hand, then, we might conclude that the thesis provides a toolbox of creative strategies for making oneself a theatre without organs, a theatre of production or a theatre of differential presence. These methods have included the use of: improvisation, collective creation, participation, chance techniques, glossolalia, *Sprechgesang*, cries and howls, incantation, experimentation, ephemeral materials, unexpected speeds, nonart, heightened attention, waiting, repetition and imitation. And yet, this toolbox does not come with any guarantee of success; such methods cannot be assumed to 'work' everywhere and for all time. In part, this is because strategies always operate in a particular context, and the nature of the contexts (or 'strata'), which organize the material flows in the various realms of the social, change over time. To de-stratify the voice, for instance, may come to require an altogether different set of processes in the 22nd century. Equally, the thesis has shown that there is nothing intrinsically 'right' –

aesthetically, philosophically or politically – about improvised or participatory performance, just as there is nothing intrinsically ‘wrong’ with observed or directed theatre. Indeed, classical theatre – as we saw in Chapter Four – can itself be seen as multiple and differential.

To some extent, these ideas have been given public expression in *Deleuze and Performance*, the collection of essays I edited for Edinburgh University Press, published in June 2009. However, in future work I particularly look forward to exploring the implications of this research for performance practice, *in practice*. Clearly, there are a number of pitfalls that one might fall into with such an aim; not least, the risk of producing performances that merely serve to illustrate Deleuzian concepts and, in doing so, fail to *be* Deleuzian in a more profound sense. That said, and as I’ve just recounted, the thesis has placed particular emphasis on methodology and on affirming an experimental approach to practice that values ‘unknowing’ over the illustration of existing ideas, as well as creation and production over reproduction and representation. As such, I hope to move beyond the parameters and limits of this thesis in future work by taking up this practical approach in the hope of encountering new ideas that could *only* be forced through practice. Given Deleuze’s account of difference as that which can only be sensed, the sensory practice of devising and actualizing performance works seems particularly well suited to the further exploration of how differential presence might make itself felt.

2. Participation and Authorship

This thesis has also demonstrated the value of the concept of differential presence for theorizing participatory performance, rehabilitating the idea of ‘participation’ from transcendentalist associations with ‘absolute communion’ in the case of The Living Theatre, and with ‘Zen Conceptualism’ in the case of Zepke’s reading of Kaprow. We have shown that participation, understood as differential presence, is not about overcoming differences between people or dissolving art in routine life. Differential presence is neither, simply, the result of ‘breaking the touch barrier’ (Beck and Malina 1971a: 74), nor, merely, the by-product of ‘a state of mind’ (Zepke 2009: 120). Rather, in the conjunction of concepts from Deleuze and from the practitioners themselves, the respective chapters on the Living Theatre and on Kaprow

have shown how participation can be understood, ontologically, as a process that reveals the inadequacy of thinking in terms of any rigid distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’, or ‘part’ and whole’⁸⁹.

Ultimately, the thesis proposes that the only genuinely participatory projects are those that facilitate the emergence of relations of differential presence between participants and event, in a manner that affirms, rather than seeks to determine or control, the creative and unpredictable nature of these encounters. As differential presence, participation is understood to generate new ideas and sensations in the audience that the artist could never have imagined; but this can only happen when participants allow themselves to be caught up in a piece that really does have a life of its own, beyond the possibilities that any blueprint might envision. In this context, ‘failure’ – in the form of breakdown and collapse – is always a risk. At the same time, we have been led to the conclusion that ‘failure’ too is relative and perspectival, rather than absolute; one can only judge an experiment to have failed if one measures it in relation to a transcendent and predetermined goal.

This is not to say that the performance of differential presence is necessarily lawless, or to be entered into carelessly. On the contrary, we have seen how it is often the very presence of constraints, rules or instructions that promotes creativity. Faced with pure chaos or an infinite number of alternatives, participants may become paralysed, or lapse into clichéd ways of thinking and acting. But at the same time, the rules or instructions must always leave room for multiple responses and outcomes, as in the case of the scores of Kaprow’s Activities.

This theme was of particular concern in Chapters One and Three. In Chapter One, for example, the thesis noted that the Living Theatre often felt the need to steer audience participation back onto the political course that had been predetermined as the goal of works such as *Paradise Now*. Despite encouraging participation, we noted how the company’s score also encouraged actors to intervene if the performance ‘digresses from the revolutionary theme’ (The Living Theatre 1971: 45). Rather than seeing creative and therefore digressive participation *itself* as a political act, the thesis has noted that the Living Theatre associated the politics of theatre with the communication

⁸⁹ In this fashion, the thesis has connected theatrical presence to the philosophical notion of immanence rather than transcendence, in a way that points to the possibility of future research on the relation between presence in performance and other philosophies of immanence, such as that of Spinoza, or Michel Henry.

of revolutionary ideas. Likewise, Chapter Three argued that Kaprow's continuing attachment to the art world context (despite his ambitions to the contrary) ran the risk of predetermining and conventionalising the relation of the participants to the Activities and therefore blocking the emergence of presence as affect and becoming-imperceptible.

However, the theme of participation was also implicitly addressed in Chapter Two insofar as it proposes that Artaud's lingering desire for authorial control operates as a threat to differential presence. This argument then culminated in Chapter Four in a manner that now allows us to conclude that, in order for differential presence to flourish rather than be suppressed, we need to develop new approaches to authorship and new attitudes to the audience, along the lines of Goat Island's exemplary collaboration and openness. With respect to collaboration in the process of making performance, Goat Island's practice provides a more sustainable approach to undoing the transcendent author than the Living Theatre's strategy of collective creation. As the thesis has noted, Beck and Malina frequently felt compelled to re-assume directorial control when the sheer size of the company seemed to mitigate against arriving at any 'finished' work. In contrast, the example of Goat Island invites us to conclude that one ought not to underestimate the difficulty of immanent creation, particularly when it involves a group in which each one is necessarily, already 'several' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 3).

In this regard, we can surmise that the pursuit of differential presence, and the corresponding need to derail the desire to exert authorial control, must inform *every* stage of the process of creating performance for all participants. Differential presence occurs when, as audiences, we stop asking 'what does it mean?' and concentrate on paying attention to what a given performance does to us as affective bodies, and as bodies with particular ways of being in time. Differential presence occurs when, as practitioners, we approach performance as a way of thinking, rather than as a means to illustrate a preconceived set of concepts. Differential presence happens if we make room for the audience to genuinely collaborate in and contribute to the nature of the event that takes place, whether that collaboration involves literal, physical participation – as in the case of the Living Theatre and Kaprow – or what we have called 'participatory spectatorship', such as in the temporal recalibration of audiences performed by Goat Island.

3. From the non-representational to *re*-presentation

In this thesis, we have put forward a series of arguments regarding the theme of representation: in particular, we have returned to the debate on the relationship between presence and representation, and challenged the persistent orthodoxy that all relations we have to the world and to performance are necessarily mediated by representation. On the one hand, that is, this thesis has often foregrounded the idea of presence as a non-representational relation, meaning a process of encounter that does not involve the recognition of an object by a discrete subject, or the interpretation of things in terms of an underlying meaning. And on the other, we have insisted upon an affective reality of relation operating nonrepresentationally, and we have argued that our relation to ‘others’ or difference can be understood through Deleuze’s concept of becoming, which rethinks notions of imitation or mimesis from the point of view of a process ontology. As the thesis has repeatedly remarked, for Deleuze, difference comes before identity; what there is, is a temporal flow of becoming from which objects and subjects emerge, or over which strata are organized. Since these ‘things’ are always changing, the notion of mimesis itself must become a mobile concept. From this perspective, the thesis has constituted the event of performance as an event of transformation and creation, rather than representation and communication, in which both performers and audience can live change through their encounters with other bodies.

In Chapter Three on Allan Kaprow, for example, we focused on the way in which his Activities invite the audience to experiment with materials as processes, rather than interpret them as symbols. Likewise, this investigation has also defended the idea of a theatre without representation in its conception of a ‘theatre of production’ and a ‘theatre without organs’. But such a defence is perhaps easily misinterpreted – as an appeal to chaos, senselessness or meaninglessness; as an invitation to flee from actuality and politics; by some, as a call to transcend the mind and thought, and by others, as a call to take flight from the material body with all its limitations. Nevertheless, the call to undo subjectivity, as a secondary attempt to fix a more primary flux, need not necessarily lead to any of these conclusions. These may be the *risks* of differential presence, but they are not its inevitable effects. Rather, as we have noted, differential presence can allow both the liberation of thinking from the limitations of fixed and pre-existing concepts, and the emancipation of the body – including the voice – from habits

of usage and conventional modes of organization. Indeed, as we've seen, these projects are entirely intertwined.

But given these remarks, it might be asked whether this project leaves itself vulnerable to Derridean accusations that it merely reinstates a binary between presence and representation, rejecting the latter in favour of the former, albeit in the form of 'differential' rather than 'self-' presence. Here, much depends on the definition of representation in question – a factor that requires us to differentiate between Derrida's own thought (which we have already agreed has much in common with Deleuze's), a more generalized deconstructionist perspective (as put forward by Blau, Auslander and Power) and a more extreme brand of representationalism or linguistic idealism. If 'representation' is a synonym for difference (or the process of differing), then there is no debate; or rather, the debate shifts to an alternate set of concerns. Clearly, this thesis has confirmed the view that presence is itself differential rather than self-identical; and that the experience of presence in performance is not opposed to representation/difference, but is an encounter with that very process of differing. However, the thesis has also demonstrated that one of the central values of Deleuze's philosophy for the theorization of presence in performance lies in his extension of the analysis of the process of differing beyond the realm of meaning and chains of signifiers. As we have seen in Chapter Two in particular, Deleuze is not dis-interested in the process of differing as it appears in spoken and written language, but he is also interested in the operations of difference (or 'representation' if you will) in the realm of matter.

Yet at the same time, the thesis has also been concerned with rethinking representation rather than rejecting it, and with reconsidering presence as a mutually transformative encounter between the different, rather than as an instance of recognition, identification, communication, communion or coincidence between a subject and an object. From its Deleuzian perspective, this thesis has suggested that to represent some 'thing' is neither to imitate it, nor to embark upon a doomed project to be present to 'things themselves' (an enterprise guaranteed to fail on account of the mediation of a representing consciousness). Rather, we have drawn from Deleuze to propose that performance's production of images, texts, events and movements involves entering into a becoming which changes both the work and the world as *re*-presentation or differential repetition. For example, in Chapter One, we have argued that it is not so

much that the Living Theatre were concerned ‘to eliminate the *as if*’ in performance, as Blau suggested, so much as that they wanted to generate ‘real fictions’ or ‘fictional realities’. In this way, the chapter has shown how we might rethink representation as real creation, rather than as some second-order mode of being, forever detached from and inadequate to some ‘thing’ which is represented. The theory of differential presence begins from the Deleuzian premise that reality always differs from itself anyway, prior to the differential power of representation.

Throughout the thesis, we have also sought to rescue the concept of ‘the real’ from its construction as either inaccessible, or as linguistically constructed. In turn, the thesis has insisted that theatre’s bodies are not only mediated by the values embedded in systems of representation, but were always already differentiated in their own way – as what Deleuze variously conceives of as affect, becoming, duration and so forth. At no point has this claim been reducible to the idea that performance gives us access to truth, the essential identity of things, or a simple Now. Rather, it has been argued that performance provides the opportunity for encounters with difference in itself, a presence *with* or participation *in* difference that is not known so much as sensed.

4. The ubiquity of differential presence

For Martin Puchner, as the first chapter noted, it is precisely because theatre works with physical bodies that we delude ourselves that performance can show us how things really are. However, although they have been the focus here, this project has not aimed to situate theatre and performance as privileged forms of creative practice with regard to differential presence. The implication of this thesis is not that theatre offers encounters with difference, whereas painting or literature or film cannot. Nor have we intended to suggest that only specific types of non-representational performance or non-naturalistic theatre differ from themselves in ways that have the power to effect transformations in their audiences. On the contrary, this thesis has argued that to take Deleuze’s ontological claims seriously means committing to the idea that differential presence is at work in *all* forms of performance. But this is not to say that all performances are ‘the same’, or that theatre is just the same as cinema; rather, what is the same *is* their differences. To take up Deleuze’s ontology, as we have here, is not to reduce all forms of performance and art in general to a monotony or bare repetition,

because what is being repeated is difference rather than sameness. For us, differential presence is ubiquitous in performance, just as there is a univocity of difference in all aspects of life for Deleuze.

In turn, although the thesis has deliberately tried to use the most effective examples of practice to demonstrate the concept of differential presence, it has also emphasised the role of the audience, specifically the willingness of that audience to allow their mode of attention to be altered, as a condition for differential presence. Ultimately, then, it is the responsibility of both audience and performer to create opportunities for differential presence. As this project's four chapters have shown, we need to continue to experiment with strategies that enable us to have encounters with difference, rather than suppressing its emergence by perpetuating transcendent models of authorship or participation; reinforcing the stratification of the body (including the voice); allowing convention to maintain a clear distinction between art and life; or by consigning differential ways of being in time to the categories of 'the inaccessible', 'the past' or 'the worthless'. To experience differential presence, both performers and audience must pay attention to the non-representational thought processes of the affective body, as that which is always open to transformation through its contact with other bodies, both human and non-human. Far from being impossible or immaterial, differential presence operates on the level of experience as that which undoes fixed subjects and allows us to become, makes us think, and reveals other durations or ways of being in time. For this thesis, as for Deleuze, the affirmation of difference or the amplification of variation is the over-arching value, whether in relation to theatre, philosophy, or politics. Differential presence *matters* because it outlines alternative future experiences of self, language, thought and time.

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