

**The Hypertextual Experience:
Digital Narratives, Spectator, Performance**

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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates how the dynamics of hypertext fiction can inform an understanding of spectatorial practices provoked by contemporary performance and installation work. It develops the notion of the 'hypertextual experience' to encapsulate the particular qualities of active user engagement instigated by the unstable aesthetic environments common to digital and non-digital artworks. The significance and application of this term will be refined through an examination of different works in each of the study's six chapters. Those discussed are as follows:

Performances: *Susurrus*, by David Leddy; *Love Letters Straight from the Heart* and *Make Better Please*, by Uninvited Guests; *The Waves*, by Katie Mitchell; *House/ Lights* and *Route 1 & 9*, by the Wooster Group; *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Discover the West*, by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

Digital works: *Afternoon* (1987) by Michael Joyce; *Victory Garden* (1992) by Stuart Moulthrop; *TOC* by Steve Tomasula; *The Princess Murderer* by Deena Larsen.

Installations: *H.G.* and *Mozart's House*, by Robert Wilson; *Listening Post*, by Mark Hanson and Ben Rubin.

In developing and discussing the hypertextual experience the thesis uses a number of conceptual frameworks and draws on philosophical perspectives and digital theory. A central part of the study employs an adaptation of possible worlds theory that has been recently developed by digital theorists for examining hypertext fiction. I extend this application to installation and performance and explore the implications of framing a spectator's experience in terms of a hypertextual structure which foregrounds its performative operations and its engagement with machinic processes.

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THE HYPERTEXTUAL EXPERIENCE: DIGITAL NARRATIVES, SPECTATOR, PERFORMANCE

Introduction

The aim of this study is to develop the concept of a 'hypertextual experience' which can encapsulate and offer insights into the understanding of the behaviour of both the hypertext fiction reader and the performance or installation spectator. The thesis seeks to establish a common ground between experiences of contemporary performance and installation work and of the digital form of hypertext fiction. It proposes that there are certain modes of spectator and reader reception that are provoked by transitory juxtapositions of textual material, particular to types of digital works and performative environments. I am contending that dynamic narrative material, in certain digital, performance and installation forms, can provoke modes of encounter that may be identified by specific shared qualities: I propose to characterise these common qualities as 'hypertextual' because they are revealed, with significant clarity, through the operations of hypertext and to address the questions they raise and qualities they reveal through an examination of a number of artworks.

A concern of the thesis is with performance and installation works that have an explicit interest in exploring the operation of fragmented narratives. The way in which the spectator relates to these narratives, immersing themselves within them, or switching attention from one to another, is influenced by structural operations which demand varying qualities of engagement. In considering the spectatorial practices provoked by complex narrative and structural arrangements in the performative environment, the model provided by hypertext fiction becomes relevant, because the development of this

form has revealed new possibilities for artistic production and reception. The methods by which the hypertext fiction reader participates, through activating the hyperlinks and engaging with the textual elements, are able to illustrate specific reading practices that are pertinent to the examination of the spectator's response to performance and installation works which similarly explore and experiment with narrative and structure. This thesis will demonstrate, therefore, how the study of modes of reader engagement with hypertext fictions can enhance our understanding of the spectators' response to performance and installation works, and particularly to those whose operations have an affinity with the plural and precarious worlds of narratives lodged in the computer environment.

Two primary texts will be used to underpin my central arguments and will be referred to throughout the thesis; *Afternoon* (1990) by Michael Joyce and *Victory Garden* (1992) by Stuart Moulthrop. These early works of hypertext fiction, which, as Ensslin has argued, have now become canonical (Ensslin 2007), will be used to illustrate how the form brought about new modes of reading which problematised the categories of production and reception with regard to digital narratives. I will go on to examine the more recent digital work of Steve Tomasula, Deena Larsen and geniwate(sic), Mark Hanson and Ben Rubin, in order to consider the operation of the reader/ artwork encounter in several different forms of digital environment. Alongside this I will analyse a selection of performance productions and installations by David Leddy, Uninvited Guests, Katie Mitchell, the Wooster Group, Robert Wilson and Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. These divergent works have in common an employment of complex and fragmented narrative structures and also a capacity to foreground the activity of their

spectators in a distinctive manner, and I will identify specific modes of the spectatorial practices that they instigate as operating hypertextually.

Through the close examination of these works of performance, installation and hypertext fiction, I will show how possibilities for extending our understanding of the processes involved in spectating are exposed through a growing comprehension of, and engagement with, the dynamics of digital writing technologies. More specifically, in establishing what conditions need to be in place for the hypertextual experience to be generated, I will explore the range of nuanced responses that are provoked by particular conditions common to certain digital and performance environments. The study will demonstrate what these various responses reveal about the mutable dynamics that develop in the course of an aesthetic encounter and the significance of this to a wider understanding of the dynamics between the spectator and the live or digital artwork.

The context of this thesis is a culture in which hypertextual operations are prevalent throughout the infrastructure of contemporary information networks. The evolution of digital hypertext, since its introduction in 1965, illustrates a transition from early experimentation to contemporary integration. Today hypertext mark-up language, which Christophe Collard describes as: 'the root algorithm of the digital revolution' (Collard 2010), has become the *lingua franca* for human communication. Digital epistemologist and author of *Victory Garden*, Stuart Moulthrop, elaborates: 'hypertext, or at least information retrieval from hypertextual networks [is] a regular experience for hundreds of millions' (Moulthrop 2005).

Moulthrop has identified three phases in the development of hypertext. The first concerned initial digital experiments in non-sequential writing made possible by the development of computer networks, the second saw the introduction of the personal computer and the publishing of the early hypertext fictions. The third phase is defined as the era, starting from the turn of the 21st century, in which sophisticated graphic interfaces, multimedia applications and the accessibility of the internet, offer a new kind of reading experience that focuses more on the exploration and exploitation of the technology, than on radical approaches to reading and writing *per se*. 'The arrival of the World Wide Web opened a third phase, characterized less by wild experimentation and utopian ideas than refinement of existing technologies [and] with hypertext as reality, not novelty'(Moulthrop 2005).

In the background of this study is this well-established 'third phase' of hypertextual culture in which encounters with hypertextual systems, and associated accessible multimedia content, are no longer a novelty, but a ubiquitous aspect of ordinary life. It is timely, therefore, to look back at the different phases of the development of hypertext, in order to understand more fully how digital operations have come to gradually shape and reveal specific modes of aesthetic communication. It is against this context that the concept of a hypertextual experience, distinguished by its association with digital processes and cultural practices, is able to emerge. This study focuses on the literary application of hypertext, hypertext fiction, and proposes that modes of production and reception, which are illustrated within literary digital works, are able to elucidate the emergence of new kinds of meaning transfer, generated across a range of forms. While these aesthetic hypertextual practices resonate with the wider

culture of mediated communication, generated through the pervasiveness of third phase hypertext systems, they also respond to the culture of contemporary performance and installation work, in which there has been a growing concern with the role of the active spectator in recent years (Ranciere 2011, Bennett 1998). Immersive theatre, participatory performance, interactive installation, online performance, net art and digital literature are amongst the forms that are confronting contemporary questions about the operations of artistic production and reception, and engaging directly with questions concerning the nature of reading and writing.

Jean-François Lyotard described reading as a 'site of invention', concerned with more than the extraction of the author's content (Lyotard in Readings 1991: xv). This focus on the active and generative quality of a reading practice is resonant with the processes involved in reading hypertext fiction, in which the digital structure is designed to provoke creative activity as a requirement of engagement. A project of the thesis is to show how these qualities of invention and activity on the part of the reader may also characterise the response of the spectator of those performance and installation works that I identify as operating hypertextually. A work operating in this way will position its spectator/ reader centrally to its processes and the dynamic quality of their engagement will make a discernible difference to the aesthetic event produced. The consequence of this is that in an environment whose processes operate hypertextually, spectators or readers come to perceive the aesthetic event as being one that instigates a creative process in which they are implicated through their receptive response.

The hypertextual experience emerges from the conjoining of a certain type of aesthetic structure with a practice of engagement. It may be lodged in a hypertext fiction, or in a performance or installation work, but will always be triggered by certain juxtapositions and relationships between constituent textual and structural elements and processes. It is not, therefore, formally attached to, or limited by, the digital environment. In taking this approach I am bringing to the 'born-digital' concept of hypertext (Emerson in Macchiano 2011) the perspective of a performance scholar. Among the theoretical studies of digital textuality that I am using to secure my position is the work of Katherine Hayles who has asserted, in her discussion of the hypertextuality of artists books, that the concept of a hypertext need not be constrained or contained by the computer environment. 'If we restrict the term hypertext to digital media we lose the opportunity to understand how a rhetorical form mutates when it is instantiated in different media' (Hayles 2002: 31). Within performance scholarship several theorists have established that hypertextual structure may be employed for identifying particular dynamics within theatrical and digital performance contexts (see O'Grady in Pitches and Popat 2011: 172, Dixon 2007: 483-509 and Shani in Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006: 207-213), as well as for providing a template for the documentation and analysis of certain performance processes (Dixon 1999). Of particular significance to aspects of this study are the writings of both Gabriella Giannachi and Freda Chapple which, in different ways, identify a relationship between hypertext and performance and elucidate the significance of hypertextual operations to the experiences of viewers of digital works and performance. In her 2004 book, *Virtual Theatres- an Introduction*, Giannachi asserts that hypertext is 'a new performative medium'(Giannachi 2004:19).and identifies 'hypertextualities' (ibid.) across a range of installations, internet and CDROM based art works, including

net art by the art collective, Jodi, Jeffrey Shaw's interactive installation, *The Legible City* (1988-91) and the performance company Forced Entertainment's CD-ROM and internet projects, *Frozen Palaces*(1997), *Nightwalks*(1998) and *Paradise*(1998). She categorises these works as 'virtual theatre', a title that indicates the implicit theatricality of interactive technology, and argues that a viewer or reader experiencing the hypertextual practice demanded by these works will always operate performatively. This is because their necessarily active practice of engaging with each work, by clicking on hyperlinks or other interactive means, actually brings it into being. The reader is thus invited to 'move beyond the world of the interface and penetrate into the realm of the work of art' (Giannachi 2004:13). Giannachi establishes that the hypertextual reader occupies a double role as they become responsible both for completing the work of art through their participation and at the same time engaging with it from a viewer's external perspective. Consequently, their experience is both that of co-creator *and* also of external witness to the event they are co-creating.

It is this interplay of presence and absence interlocking the viewer into the experience of the work of art, or, better, into the experience of themselves experiencing the work of art, that constitutes the most dynamic and fundamental characteristic of hypertextual practice (Giannachi 2004:42).

For Giannachi the active experience of hypertext fiction defines its performativity, consequently, in the hypertextual environment, the separation of the reader from the work of art begins to disintegrate: 'the functions of the reader and the writer become intertwined' (Giannachi 2004:15). It is her commentary on the significance of the performativity of the hypertextual that is of particular importance in

considering the relationship between performance and hypertext, and this will be considered further in Chapter 6.

While Giannachi asserts the hypertextuality of artworks that have some digital and interactive aspect, Freda Chapple identifies that the response of an audience to a performance work, which is complex and multi linear, but not necessarily digital or participatory, can also display qualities of the hypertextual. Her commentary on Opera North's 2001 opera *The Forest Murmurs*, directed by Tim Hopkins, argues that the work operated hypertextually because its constituent elements were structured in a way that provoked the audience to make connections between them. The work was constructed from fragments of text, poetry and music from the German Romantic tradition. As such it lacked a single author, composer or narrative, but rather it presented an interplay of diverse materials including song, cinema, theatre and instrumental music. She argues that without either a digital interface for the audience to operate, or instructions for how to 'read' the work, the different elements of the performance 'became hyperlinks which the audience had to activate in their minds by making connections to the unseen text behind the intermedial text'(Chapple in Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006: 97). She suggests that the audience's non-participatory experience was of imaginatively wandering through a 'forest' of intermedial texts in a manner analogous with the reading of 'hyperfiction' (ibid.).

Activating the *hyperlinks* (original italics) encourages a digital reading of the opera that is similar to the reading of *hyperfiction* (original italics), where the reader chooses which individual pathway to take through the presented fiction'(ibid.).

Whereas Giannachi's study elaborates how the reader's or viewer's activity, in relation to digital technology, operates as a significant marker of hypertextuality (Giannachi 2004: 13), Chapple uses the term more broadly to identify hypertextual operations among a non-participatory audience of a performance that was not predominantly digital (Chapple in Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006: 99). This application of the notion of the hypertextual does not prioritise explicit spectator activities, but instead seeks to elucidate a particular mode of audience engagement that comes about in response to material that is fragmentary and non-linear. Chapple's analysis suggests that the hypertextual experience is not only to be associated with a certain type of explicit physical participation or digital context. It also it may be identified in situations where the modes of presentation provoke an individual to make specific decisions about their practice of engagement, which may or may not involve a particular mode of physical interaction, but which will be fundamental in determining the nature of their aesthetic experience. In establishing the significance and centrality of this mode of active spectatorial practice, Jacques Rancière's commentary on the 'emancipated spectator' (Rancière 2011) of theatre is relevant. He challenges the cultural and hierarchical divide between performing and spectating, asserting that emancipation begins when we understand that 'viewing is also an action' (Rancière 2011: 13) and that as the spectator: 'observes, selects, compares, interprets ... she participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way' (ibid.). Rancière's explication of the 'action' involved in viewing allows the focus to move away from a concern with physical, or more specifically haptic, interactivity, and towards a wider consideration of the spectator/ reader's engagement as a process which is fundamentally to do with their individual perceptual and responsive processes, whether or not these are expressed in a specific physical manner.

The performance and installation works that I consider in this thesis have been selected because they provoke questions about the role of the spectator through employing different techniques to involve and implicate them in their narratives and creative processes; these questions reflect those being asked by hypertext fiction of its readers. Frequently the works make use of various modes of address and incorporate different forms of fragmented textual material and media in creating complex and unstable environments. Although the works are divergent, a shared characteristic is that they all require their spectators to explore different registers of engagement through a reflexive process that is both creative and productive. Some of the works do this by engaging their spectator in a level of participation and some do it by presenting material that requires the spectator to alternate their attentional focus in various ways between different facets of the work as they view it. All of them foreground the significance of the positioning of the spectator in terms of the fluctuations and instabilities of the works. I will explore how a spectatorial practice, that involves shifting between different registers of engagement, emerges as a motif of the hypertextual experience across a range of artistic practices.

One thematic concern of the thesis will be with how the operation of the works considered respond to the agency of the spectator/ reader. Janet Murray describes agency as the 'satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices' (Murray 1998:126). In exploring this 'power' I will look at aspects of digital theory, particularly that of Marie Laure Ryan (1991, 1999, 2001, 2012) and Espen Aarseth (1997), which have a concern with how the reader's activities are

positioned in terms of dynamic textual operations. These will be considered alongside the examination of hypertext fictions, installation works and performances, which in different ways provoke their spectator/ reader to generate effects through their practice of engagement. The hypertext fiction reader who creates an individual pathway through a digital environment; the spectator, who chooses where and how to focus their attention; the viewer of an installation who must determine how to traverse the work; the participant, who inputs into a performance through their action; all these are operating with 'agency' and in a productive manner. Furthermore, to use Rancière's term, their individual actions 'refashion' (ibid.) the work they encounter.

Hypertext fiction provides a model for the ways in which such practices of engagement occur because it formally incorporates the reader's activity of reading into its operational processes. It does this through its digital facilities, primarily the hyperlink, which gives the reader an enhanced access to the textual operations; different theorists have interpreted the significance of this access in various ways. George Landow was among the first hypertext critics who claimed it extended the reader's creative engagement with the textual material and gave them an authorial function. In allowing the reader to manipulate the text, hypertext radically overturns traditions concerning reading and writing and this facility, according to Landow, awards the reader unprecedented involvement with the construction of the text (Landow 1997: 5). More recent theorists, including David Miall, have argued that hypertextual structure in fact restricts the reader's engagement with the narrative world. Far from freeing the reader from the author's control, it locks them into a fixed relationship with a text where all possibilities for reading are constrained by the limited choices available through the hyperlinks (Miall 2004). The implications of the various interpretations of the influence

that hypertext fiction has on reading are significant to the study of spectator response because they disturb assumptions about the categories of production and reception and suggest, and reveal, new possible modes of aesthetic encounter. What is clear from the divergent responses of theorists to hypertext fiction is that the form provokes operations in the dynamics of textual relationships that cannot be easily subsumed into existing discursive structures. A central premise of the study is that hypertext fiction, in radicalising the relationship between the author and reader, discloses certain operations concerned with the production and reception of textual material that have implications for other kinds of artistic exchange. Both the reader's response to hypertext fiction, and the author's role within it, indicate that we may be able to identify specific operational modes that do not function clearly as either production or reception, but rather involve an oscillation between these categories.

My principal proposition is that there are synergies between the different forms of hypertext fiction, performance and installation, which are the result of them sharing certain features that specifically provoke the hypertextual experience. The study demonstrates the operation and relevance of these synergies by showing how a hypertextual experience may come about in certain circumstances and illustrating how this process may inform the wider study of reading and spectating.

In order to establish this project I firstly need to examine the development of hypertext, which will elucidate my use of the key term, hypertextual experience. I will identify a quality of reader/ spectator response associated with certain hypertextual properties and will justify the application of the term hypertextual experience to both performance, installation and hypertext fiction. This introduction will go on to present the contextual background of the study and discuss three significant areas of concern to

the whole thesis which will each briefly introduce aspects of the hypertextual experience. This will be followed by a summary of the qualities of the hypertextual experience. I will then go on to elaborate the methodologies I will be using in the study in order to reason about and analyse the hypertextual experience and will introduce my use of Lyotard's notion of the 'figural' followed by a brief outline of my application of possible worlds theory as a conceptual framework. The conclusion of this Introduction will be followed by a breakdown of the contents of Chapters 1 to 6. The remainder of the Introduction therefore will be organised as follows:

- The development of hypertext
- Engaging with the ergodic artwork
- The post neutral environment and the hypertextual experience
- Impossible narratives in performance and hypertext fiction
- Qualities of the hypertextual experience in summary
 - Narrative engagement: ergodic practices
 - Actualization
 - The individual experience
 - A compromised agency
 - Temporal and medial materiality
 - The unstable performative
- Methodological strategies:
 - Theorising the hypertextual experience, Lyotard and the figural.
 - Possible worlds theory and the hypertextual experience
- Conclusion
- Chapter summaries

The development of hypertext

In developing my hypothesis, that the notion of hypertextuality can be extracted from its digital provenance and usefully applied to performance, it is relevant to consider that

although the term, hypertext, is firmly embedded in the evolution of computing, the concept of a network of textual fragments which could be linked in different ways, was theorised before it was realised in the digital form, by the pioneering American inventor and engineer, Vannevar Bush. In the 1940s Bush established the idea that the organisation of information would be revolutionised if a machine could be built that could organise data in a non-linear manner. In his seminal essay, *As We May Think*, he proposed a machine for storing and linking information which he called the *Memex* (Bush 1945). Although his design was never developed, his ideas were adopted and progressed years later by pioneer of information technology, Ted Nelson, who developed the information network project, *Xanadu*, in 1960 and published the first hypertexts five years later. He invented the term, hypertext, to refer to interconnected text organised as a collection of nodes of information which could be linked together in multiple pathways:

By 'hypertext' I mean non-sequential writing -- text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways (Nelson 1981).

Hypertext today is the accepted generic term for a linked computer based text and it is also the concept which underlies the structure of the World Wide Web. Specifically, the term indicates a networked digital structure which produces a radical reorganisation of the hierarchical linear relationship of author → text → reader that has been established and refined through the history of writing, and particularly through the history of the printed text. The hyperlink is the predominant digital device that enables the reader to move away from the role of reading material in a prescribed sequence and towards a role in which the action of clicking, at a specific point, enables

them to enter the text via the cursor and, to variable extents, manipulate the work. The hyperlink awards the reader a certain level of management over their relationship with the text because when the digital interface presents a choice of hyperlinks, it is the reader's action, to click one link or another, which will trigger the production of the next page. At its most fundamental level a hypertext fiction allows its reader some limited control over the sequencing of textual information and while this may seem a minimal allowance, it is one that influences the construction and duration of the textual event for that reader. Contemporary 'third phase' hypertext permits more than the manipulation of text; images, sound, film and graphics are all able to be organised through digital programming, however the hyperlink remains the predominant mechanism for enabling access to the multimedia resources of the contemporary digital environment.

The implications of hypertextual structure for the function of the author and reader are various and complex and will be explored, particularly in Chapter 1. A key characteristic that should be observed in this initial outline is that the spaces of reading and writing shift in a hypertextual environment and the reader is required to adopt a mode of engagement in terms of an unstable textual terrain, which involves them in productive and creative processes as well as receptive ones. For the purposes of this study and to exemplify the hypertextual experience I will focus on the operation of selected works of hypertext fiction that illustrate a particular literary application of hypertext including text based works and more recent multimedia work. However, before considering this range of applications of hypertext, it is relevant to look at the history of literary hypertext fiction.

In the 1980s the possibilities that digital hypertext offered to literature started to be explored by creative writers interested in extending experimental narratives to the domain of the computer. Hypertext fiction was developed through the pioneering work of writers including Michael Joyce, Stuart Moulthrop and Shelley Jackson and first published by the American company *Eastgate Systems* in Massachusetts. While experiments in non-sequential narrative were well established in the practices of experimental literature, for example in the work of William Burroughs and Julio Cortazar, the advent of computing and digital programming enabled texts to be manipulated to an extent that had been impossible in the printed media. Hypertext allowed fictional text to be easily organised into discrete fragments, also called lexia, chunks, nodes and pages, which could be read in different orders through using the computer's interactive mechanisms. Writers were able to incorporate multiple narrative strands into their work which could be digitally connected to each other in a specific manner and navigated by the reader.

Hypertext fictions, then, combine literary narratives with the digital form. They embody a hybridity which sees these two constituent elements, the narrative and the digital structure, each provoking different kinds of relationships with the reader. For example, the literary content of Michael Joyce's *Afternoon* concerns a father's search for his missing son. To engage with this narrative, which is lodged in hundreds of fragments of text, the reader must negotiate a route through the digitally hyperlinked structure. I am proposing that a significant quality of the hypertextual experience comes about when the reader encounters both these elements simultaneously and therefore has to negotiate between the demands of structure, which requires a direct physical engagement with the hyperlinks, and those of the narrative, which invites a psychological immersion.

The simultaneity of this experience relates to the spectatorial practice demanded by certain types of performance and installation works which also require different qualities of response to different structural and narrative aspects. I have selected, for this study, contemporary performance and installation works in which the actions of the spectators can be identified with particular experiences of the readers of hypertext fictions.

In elaborating how developments in digital textualities may influence our thinking about performance and installation work, it is relevant to draw on aspects of the large body of theory that has been produced in response to developments in hypertext fiction. The first wave of hypertext theory sought to establish the new digital form as a realisation of post-structuralist speculation about the 'ideal text', a concept developed by Roland Barthes in *S/Z* (1970) which resonates with other theories of non-linear, reflexive, textual structures expounded by Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Michel Foucault (see Landow 1992 and subsequently 1997 and 2006). Landow made ambitious claims for the form, arguing that it articulated post-structural theory through its reorganisation of conventional production and reception hierarchies, brought about through the interactive protocols of the digital code (Landow 2006: 10-11). For Landow, the structure of hypertext, with its interconnecting links and plurality of narrative options, allowed the reader to resist following an author imposed linear narrative, and to radically position themselves and their own interests as the organising principle of the hypertext.

All hypertext systems permit the individual reader to choose his or her own center of investigation and experience. What this principle means in

practice is that the reader is not locked into any kind of particular organization or hierarchy (Landow 2006:58).

Advocates, who included Bolter, Robert Coover and Mark Bernstein, were quick to construe that the device of the hyperlink gave the reader a control over the ordering of the constituent text segments and this control was characterised as being an authorial one. The reader was able to insert their presence formally into the text using the cursor and operate in a manner which was felt to be analogous to that of the author: 'There is no longer one author but two, as reader joins the author in the making of the text' (Bolter 1992: 37). Bolter argued that hypertext provided the digital structure for subverting the protocols of a centuries old tradition of asserting and protecting the status of the author as sole originator and custodian of the text. This cultural *status quo* had been particularly maintained through the traditions of the printed text. Now hypertext offered an alternative and, within the culture of postmodernity, that alternative appeared to respond to the observations of critical theorists concerned with the demise of those meta-narratives that gave rise to the neutral conditions observed by Ermarth. Landow, in his discussion of the 'convergence of contemporary critical theory and technology' (Landow 1997), observed that both hypertext and literary theorists had reached a consensus that: 'we must abandon conceptual systems founded upon ideas of center, margin, hierarchy, and linearity and replace them with ones of multi-linearity, nodes, links and networks' (Landow 1992: 2). Bolter similarly suggested that hypertext was: 'a vindication of postmodern theory' (Bolter 24: 1992). He claimed: 'through hypertext the bastions of traditional text: linearity, logocentricity, patriarchy and authority, could be subverted' (ibid.).

These early pioneers of hypertext were a small group of American academics working as authors, scholars and software designers who had a stake in the development and promotion of the new form. The *Eastgate Systems* publishing company, was, and is, a tightly controlled and self-proclaimed authority on hypertext. However, while the rhetoric lauded hypertext as a radical new form, offering unprecedented freedoms to the reader, these early works of hypertext fiction failed to instigate the revolution in reading that had been predicted and failed to attract a general readership outside specialist communities.

The early hypertext fictions were published on CD-ROMs, in a manner very similar to a book's publication. As new digital theorists started to observe, the access and flexibility the works afforded their readers was significantly more limited than had been suggested. In due course the claims of the early theorists started to be seriously challenged by a more diverse range of theorists and writers who countered the ambitions of the first wave of theory, as Alice Bell summarises:

the first wave of hypertext theory over generalised the structural, poetic and aesthetic capabilities of hypertext. A reliance on post-structuralist abstraction, anecdotal descriptions and an overestimation of the reader's role within the text led to a critical stalemate from which few analyses of individual works were born (Bell 2010: 185).

Second wave theorists, who included Moulthrop, drew attention to the fact that the choices given to the reader through the hyperlinks were circumscribed by the author. Therefore, far from the author's power being reduced, their presence was in evidence not only in the text itself but in the interstitial gaps of the textual network where the hypertext links resided.

The text gestures toward openness: 'what options can you imagine?' but then it forecloses: some options are available but not others, and someone clearly has done the defining. The author persists as an un-dead presence in the literary machine (Moulthrop 1991).

It was the complexities and confusions around the first generation hypertext fictions that prevented them becoming popular, according to Steven Johnson. Many readers found the creative opportunities that the *Storyspace* works offered, to be misleading. Moreover the distinctive combination of literary text and digital code did not inspire other writers as expected, because it made the task of writing so difficult to undertake (Johnson 2013: 5).

As the World Wide Web developed, along with more accessible and less-expensive hardware and software, it became possible to incorporate sound, graphics, film and images in hypertext fiction and this facility attracted writers and artists interested in creating multimedia works. Furthermore the terminology around the form changed, with terms like digital novel, new media writing, literary hypertext, hyperfiction, and many more, becoming associated with work that combined literary writing with the digital features. In many instances it became difficult to categorise works which overlapped between the literary form and the ludic one: an example of such a hybrid work is Deena Larsen and geniwate's *The Princess Murderer* (2003), which will be discussed in Chapter 6. Other works, like the popular children's piece, *Inanimate Alice*, by Kate Pullinger (2005), drew on digital film techniques as much as on the literary tropes of the hypertextual environment. As Raine Koskimaa said: 'there is a grey area where literary hypertexts clearly give way to works which may be classified as games or interactive cinema' (Koskimaa 2007).

Although hypertext fiction has not attained the popularity that was first envisaged by its pioneers, it has not disappeared so much as diversified into various forms, known by different names. Contemporary hypertext based literary works employ multimedia resources which allow them to challenge and reinvent traditional artistic categories. Paul La Farge, the author of the 2012 'immersive text', *Luminous Aeroplanes*, a work that is published both as a book and as a hypertext, recognises that contemporary hypertext fiction has an important role in responding to contemporary **digital culture**.

So much of what we do is hyperlinked and mediated by screens that it feels important to find a way to reflect on that condition, and in fiction, literature, has long afforded us the possibility of reflection. Just as the novel taught us how to be individuals, 300 years ago, by giving us a space in which to be alone, but not too alone — a space in which to be alone with a book — so hypertext fiction may let us try on new, non-linear identities, without dissolving us entirely into the web. It may give us room to concentrate on dispersion, to focus on distraction, and in that way, possibly, to get a sense of what we are becoming before the current sweeps us away (La Farge 2011).

The sense that hypertext fiction is not only reflecting a transitory state in contemporary culture, but is itself also in a process of rapid evolution, is expressed in much current theory. Even during the time of preparing this thesis the culture of hypertext fiction has changed and the publication of several 'digital novels', including Tomasula's *TOC* (2010), which will be examined in Chapter 3, suggests that the form is again gaining popularity and that it is time for some of the claims of early hypertext theorists to be revisited in the light of recent cultural and technological developments. Licia Calvi observes: 'It would be honest and certainly also wiser to consider hypertext fiction as a transition state towards something really new and revolutionary' (Calvi 2004: 167).

However, against the context of the exaggerated claims about early hypertext fiction's radical potential, the subsequent criticism of 'second wave' digital theorists, my decision to make extensive use of two early hypertexts in this study needs elaborating. *Victory Garden* and *Afternoon* come from the first period of hypertext writing and when Janet Murray refers to them as 'incunabula works' (Murray 1998: 60), she is indicating that they retain a significant evidence of the form they developed from, in this case the experimental print literature of the mid twentieth century.

Both works are replete with the characteristics of experimental writing as is evidenced, for example, by their explorations of multi-linear narratives and their foregrounding of intertextual operations. At the same time the works demonstrate a reflexive awareness of the facility of code to either amplify or undermine the literary features. These hypertext fictions embody a kind of hybridity common to incunabula forms in that they foreground, in an explicit manner, the relationship between the experimental writing they developed from and the digital environment that they are located within. There is, in these pre multi-modal works, a precision of operation and rawness in the presentation of text and code, which is unmediated by a use of sound, image and graphics of the type common in contemporary work. As such the work reveals very clearly a number of practices which illustrate new possibilities in the reader/ text relationship of the post-neutral environment, specifically the work's employment of multi-linear formulations and their incorporation of extensive facilities for reader link selection. In many ways their experimental nature is more extreme than that of more recent digital narratives; as Ensslin explains: 'very few new media narratives now follow the radical anti-linear principles of early hypertext fiction' (Ensslin 2010: 162).

The audaciousness with which these hypertext fictions embarked upon the project of problematising the author/ reader relationship is a quality that distinguishes them. They embody a sense of experimentation, that relates to the experimentation common to the performance and installation practices discussed here, which similarly deal with fragmented narratives and expose problematic dynamics between spectators and works. Furthermore, these early works prompted wide-spread theoretical writing through which advanced ideas, particularly those concerning the relationship of the reader to the work, were expounded, challenged and reconfigured. This academic activity created a rich field of discourse which can help develop the understanding of the dynamic relationships operating in artistic works both within and beyond the digital environment. The concept of the hypertextual experience therefore is informed by this extensive early research in the digital field. The separate qualities which are associated with the experience are not in themselves new phenomena. However I am arguing that aspects of participation, negotiation with different facets of a work and reader creativity, are exposed with a particular clarity through the operations of hypertext. In exploring the hypertextual experience this digital research provides a valuable resource that can help address the important issues concerning spectatorial practice, which are currently of concern across performance studies.

Engaging with the ergodic artwork

Espen Aarseth introduced the term, ergodic, derived from the Greek words for work (*ergon*) and path (*hodos*), to describe the 'non-trivial effort required [by certain literature] to allow the reader to traverse the text' (Aarseth 1997: 1-2). The concept of

ergodic literature, which Aarseth primarily, but not exclusively, associated with the digital text, helps identify works which possess structural elements whose operation depends on a specific thoughtful agency, something beyond, for example, the turning of pages. It is a term that has been adopted in ludic theory as well as in the study of digital narratives. I propose that it is fundamental in identifying the operations of the hypertextual experience in performance because it indicates that a specific form of either perceptual and/or physical effort is required from the spectator by certain ergodic elements of the work. An ergodic functionality draws attention to the conjoining of the reader or spectator with a work of art, but does not restrict itself to a particular interactive act, such as clicking on a hyperlink. Therefore it becomes valuable in identifying common qualities shared by both digital and non-digital forms as Aarseth acknowledges (Aarseth 1997: 9-10).

In this study it is important to distinguish my use of the term, ergodic, from the more generic term, interactive. The concept of interactivity has been an implied characteristic of computer mediated communication from the outset and in terms of hypertext, interactivity is predominantly understood as being vested in the hyperlink. However I would suggest that its wide application throughout contemporary culture has caused it to become ubiquitous and consequently this limits its descriptive value in the discussion of the intricacies of our relationships with words, objects, and technologies. As Aarseth comments, the overuse of the word interactive has dulled its prescriptive meaning, so that it: 'connotes various vague ideas of computer screens, user freedom and personalised media, while denoting nothing' (Aarseth 97: 46). While interactivity may allude to general notions of participation, play and an involvement in the generation of effects, it lacks the specificity of the term ergodic, which focuses on the effort made by

the reader, and on the 'pay-off' of this effort in terms of the individual experience generated. The term ergodic, therefore, can be used to identify the quality of engagement undertaken by the hypertext reader and in my application, by the spectator. It is of particular use here, because the focus is on the experiential aspects of performance, installation and hypertext fiction to a greater extent than on the processes of interactivity *per se*.

The term interactivity, however, remains of interest to this study because of how it has been associated with theatre. Both performance and digital theorists have positioned theatre as a proto-interactive form, citing its liveness and facility for responding to the participation of its spectators as evidence for this (see Laurel 1993: 16 -22, Murray 1998: 43, 126 -7, Popat, in Pitches and Popat 2011: 120 , Dixon 2007: 559-562). These studies have identified interactive capacity as a significant shared characteristic of performance and digital environments.

Susan Bennett's 1998 book, *Theatre Audiences – a Theory of Production and Reception*, is an important foundational text for contemporary spectator studies because it foregrounds the active and interactive role of the audience and recognises that an individual spectator has a relationship of 'co-creation' (Bennett 1998: 85) with a performance. In discussing the dynamics of production and reception she incorporates theories of reading, particularly reader-response theory, into the heart of the debate about the role of the theatre spectator. She adopts, from Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory, the concept of the 'horizon of expectations' and uses it to elaborate how the spectator imports their own cultural codes into the experience of a performance in a manner which influences their perception of the event(Bennett 1998 49-54). Writing at

the end of the twentieth century she observed a developing cultural concern with the significance of an audience's creative function. She explains that this was being brought about as a result of the increased popularity of dramatic techniques that did not use pre-existing text and hence that prioritised the spectator's relationship to the live performance, rather than their relationship to an extant dramatic script (Bennett 1998:19) . Non-traditional theatre was more able to respond to the input of the audience because it had 'recreated a flexible actor/ audience relationship and a participatory spectator /actor' (Bennett 1998:19).

This cultural shift towards an interest in increased audience involvement is evident in contemporary immersive theatre which exemplifies the complexity surrounding a 'flexible actor /audience relationship' (ibid.). Josephine Machon's study of immersive theatre discusses how multiple modes of participation may be generated by artwork that is 'physical, sensual and participatory' (Machon 2013: xv). Machon illustrates how the experiential nature of immersive theatre involves individuals in making significant decisions which directly influence the work generated.

This creative agency, involving processual interaction through the experience, shapes the unique journey for each participating individual. The decision making processes also result in a variety of interpretations during and following the event, which underlines the uniqueness of each experience for every individual (Machon 2013:68)

It is evident therefore that Aarseth's term ergodic, which identifies the non-trivial response as its distinguishing feature, is applicable to this mode of work even though it may have no digital quality. In fact, for Machon, the immersive experience can articulate a resistance to screen based digital culture. She argues that the increasing popularity of immersive work has come about in response to: 'technologically driven

forms of communication, so predominant in work and socialising today, [that] mean that opportunities for sentient human interaction have been greatly reduced' (Machon 2013:25).

Machon identifies that one of the first uses of the term immersive in contemporary practice was in 1995 in reference to Robert Wilson's *H.G.*, a large scale work sited in the historic London prison, The Clink, and related loosely to H.G. Wells' short story, *The Time Machine*. This is among the works that will be discussed in Chapter 3 and one of its significant features, which relates both to its immersive and ergodic status, is that the spectator must find a personal pathway through the piece. This quality of physical negotiation, which is also a characteristic common to hypertext fiction, is a distinguishing feature of much immersive theatre.

Another significant example is provided by John Krizanc's influential political thriller, *Tamara*, a play designed for performance in large houses in which actors perform simultaneous scenes in separate rooms and spectators choose which rooms and characters to visit. This work, which concerns the life of Polish artist Tamara de Lempicka (1898-1980), was premiered in 1982 and performed continuously during the 1980s and 1990s in the US and internationally. Of a similar status in the UK is the company Punchdrunk which has become widely known over the past 15 years for performance events which invite spectators to specific locations and task them with exploring the site and the performance presented within it. The most recent production, *The Drowned Man- a Hollywood Fable*, directed by Felix Barrett, was presented in a four storey former Royal Mail sorting office in London in 2014.

Inevitably, the result of this large scale approach is that each individual sees a different show depending on the route they take through the performance. While these works

share a capacity to immerse the spectator, they also introduce many different limits and rules which differently shape how the spectator is able to engage with the work and again this feature is common to hypertext fictions. Punchdrunk, for example, insist that spectators wear identical masks which they are provided with on entry to the performance site. These erase the individuality of the spectators, a powerful technique that at once positions them as masked performers and also returns to them the anonymity they would experience as spectators in conventional darkened auditoria. David Leddy's park based production, *Susurrus*, which will be examined in Chapter 1, similarly limits and shapes its spectators' experience, but in this case by requiring them to read maps and follow instructions, delivered on a head set, as they navigate the work. It can be seen that the precise design of the spectators' mode of ergodic activity can be recognised as a hallmark of much contemporary immersive work.

Another common quality between the dissimilar ergodic experiences of these performances, and others like them, concerns a level of tension in the relationship between the narratives and the ergodic activities required of the spectators. This issue is examined by Aarseth in his discussion of a similar structural predicament posed by hypertext fiction. Aarseth recognises that hypertext fiction, which combines an ergodic structure demanding a 'non-trivial effort', with narratives which require a more traditional noematic engagement or 'trivial' effort, raises complex and conflicting questions for the reader or analyst (Aarseth 1997: 95).. In discussing Joyce's *Afternoon* he observes the separate demands of ergodics and narratives:

Unresolved here, and what makes *Afternoon* special as the most accomplished of its kind, is the conflict between narration and ergodics, between narrative and game. This is a border conflict ... to make sense of the text the reader must produce a narrative version of it, but the ergodic experience marks this version with the reader's signature, the proof that *Afternoon* does not contain a narrative of its own (ibid.).

This study locates itself within this conflict as it explores how a poetics of digital hypertext fiction can be productively employed in an examination of performance work that similarly juxtaposes narrative and ergodics. Assisted by Aarseth's concept I can identify that the hypertextual experience is characterized by two distinct qualities common to the performance and installation work under discussion and to hypertext fiction. Firstly there are the ergodic elements which demand that the reader/ spectator engages with the material in a 'non trivial' manner, that they expend a personal effort, and in so doing mark their experience with their own 'signature' (ibid.) in a creative and productive process. Secondly there are the narrative elements which require that an author's narrative is perceived and allowed to shape the experience and that the reader/ spectator is positioned to receive and immerse themselves in it as they would in a conventional novel or play.

The particular complexity that hypertext fiction shares with performance and installation work in this study comes about because the works contain both ergodic and non-ergodic elements. The narrative provokes a certain kind of reader/ spectator engagement and the structure provokes another; consequently the reader/ spectator has to shift registers as they engage with the work. This oscillation between functions lies at the heart of the hypertextual experience and is played out in different works according to how the reader/ spectator is positioned in terms of the work and what they are required to do to effectuate it.

The hypertextual experience can be characterised as involving a mode of negotiation between narrative and ergodics and consequently by a forceful focus on the specificity of the individual position in terms of the different narrative and structural devices encountered. It is an experience that is coloured by a dynamic between opposing forces which make different demands and by the strategies the reader/ spectator adopts to respond to them. It is firmly centred on the personal and particular experience and ultimately not dependent on any exact set of circumstances, but rather on the plurality and dynamism of constituent texts. A hypertextual experience will be produced when fragments of textual material are positioned in such a way as to provoke the reader/ spectator into making choices between them; through so doing they produce a personal version of the artwork encountered. Of relevance is the focus on the personal experience rather than the collective one. It should be noted here that the hypertextual experience is one that is generally dependent on the dynamic between the individual and the aesthetic object, rather than the group experience. For this reason, this study will use the term 'spectator' rather than the collective noun 'audience' to reflect and draw attention to this shift in focus from the group to the individual experience. I do distinguish between the individual 'reader' of a hypertext and the individual 'spectator' of the performance or installation work. While there are commonalities between the two roles, the distinction between them is appropriate here, and therefore I will not generally make use of the terms 'user' or 'participant' because they do not reflect the differences between engagement practices demanded by the different forms. I am establishing the hypertextual experience not as something that overrides or erases distinctions between aesthetic experiences, but rather as a quality that can be identified in different forms. However because I am drawing parallels between hypertext fiction

and performance and installation I frequently use the coupled noun reader/ spectator. This study will identify conceptual strategies employed by the reader caught up in the experience of negotiating and re-negotiating their relationship to the different facets of hypertext they encounter as they experience a work, then it will explore these strategies further through the performance and installation works. I am seeking to unfasten the term hypertext from its digital genesis so that it can be applied more widely and by coupling it with the word 'experience' I am identifying in the neologism a quality that is personal, transitory and encompasses a spectrum of responses.

The post-neutral environment and the hypertextual experience

The forms of performance and installation work examined in this study include site specific and theatre based work, participatory and non-participatory performance, digital and non-digital installation works, a multi-modal novel and first generation hypertext fiction. This diversity is purposeful because I am aiming to show that the hypertextual experience is not dependent on the operation of a particular material form, but is something that will tend to be provoked under textual circumstances that may arise in different conditions. There are similarities of operation between all the works discussed which stem from a predisposition to problematise conditions of neutrality, both through a focus on the materiality of the medium and through particular interrogations of the operations of fictional temporalities. In identifying these works as post neutral, I acknowledge and extend Elizabeth Ermarth's discussion of neutral and post neutral conditions in her analysis of the operation of historical temporalities in postmodern fiction. She identifies:

the tradition of regarding time as a neutral, homogenous medium extending infinitely and 'in' which mutual relevance can be measured, has been maintained by modernist culture, but ... became subject to increasing interrogation through postmodern artistic practice (Ermarth 1998: 356).

Ermarth foregrounds a cultural tradition of treating significant universal conditions as if they were neutral and consistent and calls for 'new acts of attention' (Ermarth 1998: 363) to the condition of temporality in fiction. The hypertextual experience is one which, as noted, disturbs conventions of linear sequence and in so doing draws attention to the operation of time in a manner that requires the reader/ spectator to consider their local and particular understanding of temporality alongside the fictional times evoked. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, but it is significant to point out at this stage that the simple act of changing the sequence in which the constituent textual fragments of a hypertext fiction are viewed has the capacity to undermine the representation of time.

In this study I am interested in the problematisation of neutral temporality but also, by extension, in the tendency of hypertext fiction to draw attention to the materiality of its medium in a manner which forecloses the cultural tradition of treating materials of artistic and textual dissemination as if they were neutral. Hayles has established the significance of the material form of the textual medium to the aesthetic experience. Materiality in Hayles' application: 'emerges from interactions between the physical properties and a work's artistic strategies' (Hayles 2002: 33). She proposes that the digital text emphatically draws the reader's attention to the connections between the material qualities of its instantiation and its content. Similarly, I suggest, the

performance and installation works discussed here tend to make visible their own materiality to their spectators.

Jay Bolter's early writings on hypertext fiction discuss the transparency of neutral traditions. Like Ermarth and Hayles, he identifies the significance of the manner in which the properties of the aesthetic artwork are brought to the attention of the reader:

In the age of print, the ideal was in general to make a text transparent, so that the reader looked through the text to the world beyond. In digital rhetoric transparency need not be the only virtue. The reader can be made to focus on the verbal patterns, on the text as a texture of elements. The text can be transparent or opaque, and it can oscillate between transparency and opacity, between asking the reader to look through the text to the 'world beyond' and asking her to look at the text itself as a formal structure (Bolter 2001: 185).

A significant idea here is that the hypertext fiction reader oscillates between an engagement with the materiality, or 'texture', of the text and an immersion in its fictional content, as they encounter, alternately, the narrative and structural facets of the work. Although hypertext fiction operates in a post-neutral environment, which foregrounds its material operations, it can still make use of the conventions of neutrality when it conveys the 'transparency' of the text.

In reading an episode the reader may succeed in looking through the text to the imagined world. But whenever she comes to a link, she must look at the text as a series of possibilities that she as a reader can activate (Bolter 2001: 185).

One common feature of all the post-neutral works under discussion in this study is, therefore, that they are structured to enable both these practices of 'looking at' and 'looking through' (ibid.). One of the reasons for this is that they are constituted from multiple fragments of narrative texts, configured, to a greater or lesser extent, in

transitory unpredictable formulations. The result of this is that the attention of the reader/ spectator alternates between 'looking through' the structure to the content of the texts and 'looking at' the fragmented structure itself, which tends to interrupt or forestall narrative immersion.

A fragmentary structure is particularly evident in *Afternoon* and *Victory Garden*, but I will also identify how works as diverse in approach as those of the Wooster Group, David Leddy and Katie Mitchell all present their material to spectators in a form which draws attention to structural fragmentation. Consequently the project for the reader/ spectator in all these works is to engage with the textual fragments, whose connectivity may be unstable, in an environment where formal protocols of neutral linear temporality or sequence are systemically undermined.

This study will illustrate how hypertext fiction reveals operational strategies that enable us to consider some types of performance and installation work from a new perspective, a facility of the digital form that Hayles identifies in relation to the printed text: 'digital media has given us an opportunity we have not had for the last several hundred years: the chance to see print with new eyes' (Hayles 2004: 77). In considering how to extend this 'opportunity' to performance and installation work, Alice O'Grady's argument concerning the relevance of the internet to an analysis of audience participation is significant. O'Grady suggests that the structural operations of the internet provide a useful reference point when considering how to reason about a type of performance work which aims to incorporate its spectator and to establish a creative role for them in the matrix of the production. She explains:

By prioritizing audience involvement, one is making a statement about the very nature of meaning making. To offer open frameworks that allow for audience intervention and collaboration, performance itself becomes a vehicle for co-authorship. It begins to function as a challenge to hierarchical structures and reflects the increased instances of horizontally organised systems as characterised by the Internet (O'Grady in Pitches and Popat 2011: 172)

The fact that the digital environment draws attention to new kinds of non-traditional structures, prompts us to interrogate existing hierarchies and rules within the sphere of artistic production and reception. For O'Grady, participatory theatre, like the internet, allows us to change and challenge our understanding of the 'playing space' (ibid.) and to ask: "By whose rules are we playing?" and "To what extent are those rules open to negotiation?" (ibid.). She asserts that the development of new technologies teaches us to explore the parameters of our existence in new and interesting ways: 'We can go further than ever before in asking how rule bound we want our playing spaces to be' (ibid.).

The impossible narratives of performance and hypertext fiction

In rejecting linear narrative form and replacing it with a fragmented and networked textual structure, the *Storyspace* hypertext fictions demonstrate a structural predisposition to provoke disappointment by giving the reader experiences that are inevitably characterised by incompleteness, indeterminacy and disorientation. Critics of the form have argued that readers find hypertext fiction frustrating because they are confronted with a situation in which any expectations of reading, concerning narrative completion and coherence, are unlikely to be met in the usual manner (Bell 2010, Bootz 2005, Johnson 2013). Although the requirement that they choose between reading

options implicates them in the creative process, it also continuously reminds them that there are alternative narratives in the text to the one they are reading which they cannot retrieve. 'Each decision [the reader makes] will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible, and you may never know the exact results of your choices; that is, exactly what you missed' (Aarseth 1997: 3).

The hypertext reader is never able to obtain a complete knowledge of the object that they are reading because the text withholds itself from its reader allowing only certain access on certain terms. There is a quality of 'impossibility' that clings, particularly to the first generation hypertext fictions, that is marked by a reflexive awareness that conventional completion and closure cannot be achieved, as is revealed by Joyce's statement in the introduction to *Afternoon*. 'When the story no longer progresses, or when it cycles, or when you tire of the paths, the experience of reading it ends' (Joyce 1990). This, interestingly, conveys no sense of the reader emancipation which was supposed to result from reading hypertext.

Joyce's statement indicates that *Afternoon* positions the reader in such a way that they must confront the fact that the processes they employ in reading are not likely to be effective in the post-neutral environment, and that the experience generated will be frail, partial and marked by the fact that the work can never be fully comprehended or even read. It reveals that the gap between the ambitions of hypertext and the actuality of an individual reading experience is extreme, a disjunction that is also apparent in Michael Riffaterre's discussion of the motivations of hypertext which he reminds us are driven by:

a concerted effort to approximate the sum total of the ideas, of the descriptive and narrative sign-systems, of the thematic material the text has appropriated to its own purposes, and, finally the text's own social, cultural and historical backgrounds (Riffaterre 1994: 786).

As Joyce's introductory remark shows, such ambitions are always bound to fail in terms of the particular reader's experience because the expanse of ideas, themes and purposes that a hypertext may contain are locked into the digital structure in a manner that cannot be communicated, other than in fragmented and somewhat arbitrary sequences. This fundamental disparity between the goals and actuality of hypertext applies to the general hypertextual condition of the World Wide Web and, at the more specific level that I am dealing with here, to an individual work of hypertext fiction that typically will allude to an ideal narrative experience which in practice cannot be communicated to the reader. In this area hypertext is like any other representational form: the contemplation of the problems of representation, as established by Plato with his parable of the shadows on the wall of the cave (Plato 2003: 240-248) have been a preoccupation of artistic production for centuries. I would suggest however that the gap between the 'ideal', suggested by the aesthetic work, and its singular representation in a particular reading, is emphasised in hypertext fiction. It is because this gap is systemically sustained and ostentatiously unnavigable that we may identify that hypertext operates in an arena of the impossible, characterised by the fact that both the processes of reading and writing will inevitably fall short of what is indicated by the form. This condition is acknowledged by the digital theorist Philippe Bootz, who discusses the disjunction between the author's work and the reader's reading in hypertext fiction and describes the 'aesthetics of frustration' (Bootz 2005) that characterise the experience of reading, as the reader tries and fails to access the author's complete project and text; this argument will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

In her book which considers the poetics of failure in late twentieth and early twenty first century performance work, Sara Jane Bailes discusses the validity of strategies realised in performance in response to what she sees as a preoccupation with the inevitable failure of representational modes. She identifies a specific concern with a process of continuance through failure in the work of significant post-modern performance companies including Forced Entertainment, Goat Island and Elevator Repair Service. Citing Samuel Beckett's famous line from *Worstward Ho*: 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (Beckett 1984: 1), she locates a certain philosophy regarding the value of creating performance in situations where that very process of making is bound to fail.

Her argument describes a position which is of use to the consideration of the hypertextual experience, which similarly projects an acute awareness of the inevitability of the concept of failure in representational work. Her enquiry identifies a growing concern with interrogating the processes of the failure of representation as a productive methodology:

The turn inwards to confront the demanding tasks of representation, upon which performance as a cultural institution, is founded has not so much weakened the event. Instead I will argue it has expanded the vernacular of performance (Bailes 2011: 2).

Bailes identifies that the focus on failure runs counter to ideas of progress and achievement common to dominant historical narratives, and permits an incisive and honest response to be articulated and explored in the aesthetic works where practices of failure are invested. She states:

In the composed articulation of the structure of the attempt and the hazardous provisional openings indexed by attempts that fail, performance offers the possibility to reach into the impossible idea of a journey without an end, an event without foreclosure, and to practice the suggestions and permutations that arise instead (Bailes 2011: 201).

If performance practice foregrounds and demonstrates the practice of failure, I would suggest that hypertext fiction engages its reader even more directly with the strategies provoked by failure. This is because it positions its reader not as witness to a performed failure, in the manner of the spectators of the non-participatory performance that Bailes studies, but as participant: they must enact the impossibility of reading, which is embedded in the digital code, through their ergodic reading of the text.

I am contending that the use of early hypertext fiction to explore the nature of the spectator encounter with performance is appropriate partly because it engages the reader experientially with 'difficulty, doubt and indeterminacy' (ibid.) in a manner that reflects and responds to the particular condition and concerns of the performance and installation work examples I have selected. The implications of this are that hypertext fiction can operate as a laboratory for the study of the reader/ spectator response because of, not despite, its engagement with narratives that are unpredictable and impossible to complete. In hypertext fiction the impossibility of representation is inscribed in an actual manner, in the cycles and repetitions of the reader experience that Joyce alludes to.

Through the strategies exposed in hypertext, reading and spectating become acts not only of receiving, interpreting and responding to a project, but of engaging with whatever happens when the narratives founder in a state of incompleteness and when the

operation of code frustrates the normative processes of reception employed. I suggest that both early hypertext fiction and certain performance and installation work employs various procedures to explore and foreground representational failure as it interrogates its own impossibility.

However, impossibility, as encountered in the hypertextual experience, is not, characteristically, underpinned by a feeling of loss or nostalgia in the way that failure in the productions explored by Bailes tends to invoke these sentiments. Rather, in this relatively new form, it involves a more robust playing out, and importantly making the reader play out, an impossibility as they confront an aesthetic terrain that can only be navigated through a process analogous to that identified by Bailes of: 'embarking on an impossible idea of a journey without an end, and event without foreclosure' (ibid.). Hypertext fiction invokes the spirit of Beckett's: 'fail again, fail better' as it positions the reader to enact the story of the impossibility of representation; a story that cannot be completed, but can reveal modes of active reception which are not easily defined as reading or spectating because they involve a wider range of responses than can be contained in those categories. As the defining characteristics of conventional text collapse in the digital environment, novel practices of engagement emerge and the reader strategically repositions themselves in terms of the realities of the hypertextual experience. This will be further explored in Chapters 4 and 5 which consider the work of The Wooster Group and *Uninvited Guests* as well as *Victory Garden* and *Afternoon*. These chapters discuss the modes of operation that are triggered by the spectator's engagement with the uncertainty and incompleteness of the narratives in the works. I identify practices in both the hypertext fictions and performances that are resonant with the postmodern theatrical processes that, as Bailes outlines:

began to examine representational failure through repetition, the incorporation of process, accident and mistakes on stage, and the disappointed outcome as a methodology in performance making in innovative ways that pushed the formal boundaries of the live art event (Bailes 2011: xvii).

In extending Bailes exploration I focus specifically on the various strategies, including play, invention, performance, selective choice and associative linking, which are provoked when the spectator engages with work that positions itself in terms of the failure of representation and impossibility.

There are, in the short history of hypertext fiction, various accounts of reading processes that have attempted to treat hypertext as a print narrative; these have set out to make a linear sense of the text and produce from it a conventional understanding of narrative. Ryan has observed that these position: 'the reader's conceptualisation as an attempt to overcome the fragmented appearance of the text and to restore some kind of coherence (Ryan 2001: 223-224).

A notable example of this kind of process is documented by the theorist Jane Yellowlees Douglass in which she precisely details and analyses her reading of *Afternoon* in order to demonstrate how the central mystery of the story can be discovered (Yellowlees Douglas 2000: 136-137), and consequently how she believes the reading experience can conclude satisfactorily. This suggests that a meeting place for radical writing and conventional reading can be found within the tradition of literary analysis. However, this thesis is asking if there is not another more urgent project to be addressed concerning the identification and study of reading practices that are provoked by radical textualities. This is not concerned with finding a way to manage conventional reading practices in

hypertext fiction for the purpose of achieving a satisfactory outcome, but rather to be able to articulate reading and spectatorial practices that emerge from the encounter with the impossible. I am proposing that certain works of hypertext fiction, installation work and performance may identify a shift in contemporary practice partly through the way in which they present and engage their spectator/ reader with a poetics of impossibility. I am interested therefore in how the hypertextual experience enhances the dimensions of the reader/ spectator's role and the sense of their position and engagement with a work.

Qualities of the hypertextual experience in summary

The context and foundational concerns of the study, as detailed above, establish several distinctive qualities of the hypertextual experience. The first three chapters of the thesis will elaborate how these qualities emerge in the works studied, through the spectatorial and reading practices that are provoked, and show how the hypertextual model is able to provide a new means of reasoning about the experience of performance, installation and digital narratives. The following summary identifies six key concepts and themes that are significant within the thesis. The brief introductions to each of these establish how they relate to the hypertextual experience and how they will be illustrated through the works analysed in the chapters.

- **Narrative engagement: ergodic practices**

Aarseth identifies that the ergodic and narrative elements of hypertext fiction each require different orders of response (Aarseth 1997:95). In considering how

this influences the hypertextual experience, this study will examine in Chapter 1 how the spectator/ reader becomes actively involved in negotiating between the differing viewing requirements of the ergodic and narrative elements of Michael Joyce's hypertext fiction, *Afternoon* and David Leddy's park based immersive performance, *Susurrus*. Just as the reader of *Afternoon* negotiates the separate demands of the hyperlinks and the narratives, so too the spectator of *Susurrus* must respond ergodically to the requirements to read a map and follow instructions, at the same time as engaging imaginatively with the work's multiple narratives. The hypertextual experience is provoked by the juxtaposition of ergodic and narrative elements. The negotiation of a hypertextual work will always involve choice and conceptual labour, and often a physical response, as the reader/ spectator oscillates between different registers of engagement triggered by the work.

- **Actualization**

As a result of their ergodic negotiation and conceptual endeavours, the reader/ spectator's active response may be identified as also a productive and creative one. This notion emerges specifically from Raine Koskimaa's study of Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, in which he discusses how the reader brings the text *into being* through the specific action of their reading, which he describes as a process of 'actualization'(Koskimaa 2000). Using the examples of Katie Mitchell's *The Waves* and Ben Rubin and Mark Hansen's *Listening Post*, in Chapter 2 I show how performance and installation works that produce the hypertextual experience similarly instigate a situation in which the spectator's act of spectating *actualizes* the work. This demonstrates that what the aesthetic

event constitutes depends on specific decisions made by the spectator during the process of their engagement.

- **The individual experience**

The hypertextual experience, as developed through this thesis, concerns the relationship between the individual reader/ spectator and the work of art. This dynamic is clear in the operations of hypertext fiction where the work can only be realised through a one-to-one communication between the text and the reader. The mode of operation that this process establishes also distinguishes the hypertextual experience in performance or installation work. Although these works may be configured to be watched by a group, they are, significantly, designed to provoke individually distinctive experiences through the modes of engagement they instigate. This trait is explored and developed in Chapters 3 and 5, particularly with reference to Nicholas Ridout's essay on the concept of 'mis-spectating' (Ridout 2012) and the related discussion of Katie Mitchell's production, *The Waves*, and also in relation to the work of The Wooster Group. A quality of the hypertextual experience therefore is that it primarily concerns a personal dynamic. The thesis focuses on the personal, in hypertext fiction, performance and installation, arguing a synergy between the ways in which individuals respond and engage in efficacious decision making activities in all the artworks discussed.

- **A compromised agency**

The reader/ spectator is awarded a degree of agency in a system that operates hypertextually. However the exercise of that agency is conducted within

systemic limits which complicate the notion that the hypertextual experience may be associated with empowerment and a freedom of choice. The concept of a compromised agency is developed through the consideration of Uninvited Guests productions in Chapter 4. I argue that this company's work demonstrates that while the hypertextual process gives the reader/ spectator agency, it also implicates them in such a way that prevents them retaining an external perspective on the work, as they are no longer able to embody the role of observer. The hypertextual experience gives the spectator choice and involves them in the productive process, but it also foregrounds the problem of agency and the issues it raises.

- **Temporal and medial materiality**

The hypertextual experience operates in a post-neutral context. Using Ermarth's discussions of temporality in post-neutral literature (Ermarth 1998) and Hayles' argument concerning the significance of the materiality of digital media (Hayles 2002), I show in Chapter 3 that both the materiality of the medium and the mutable operations of time are apprehended by the reader/ spectator engaged in hypertextual processes. Robert Wilson's immersive installations are used, alongside Steve Tomasula's digital novel *TOC*, to consider how the viewer is positioned to confront temporal instabilities. These works utilise very different media, but each gives its spectator/ reader a level of control over the sequence in which they experience the work and consequently draw attention to the juxtaposition of their real time experience and the fictional times represented in the works' narratives. A characteristic of the hypertextual experience is that complex qualities of temporalities, and of the materiality of the media employed,

become significant in the creation of the aesthetic experience, rather than being treated as if they were neutral (Ermarth 1998:356). The reader/ spectator's reflexive response to the materiality and temporal condition of the work is provoked by the hypertextual experience.

- **The unstable performative**

The hypertextual environment is endemically unstable because of the different operational elements and machinic processes that constitute it, as will be demonstrated in the discussion of Rubin and Hansen's installation, *The Listening Post*. A significant element of the experience of this work concerns how the reader/ spectator's activity of engagement is positioned in terms of this instability. The unstable hypertextual environment presents the reader/ spectator with certain choices, but also, necessarily, withholds aspects of its operations in each individual encounter: the act of selecting one option automatically de-selects another. The hypertextual experience therefore will always be coloured by the knowledge that there are aesthetic possibilities that are out of reach and impossible to complete. The instability of the hypertextual environment and its effects is a key theme of the thesis that is built up through the chapters. In the final chapter this instability is specifically examined in terms of J.L. Austin's treatise on performativity. The chapter uses Deena Larsen and geniwate's hypertext fiction, *The Princess Murderer*, to demonstrate how the practices of engagement instigated by hypertextual instability have both a performative *and* a performance quality. The examination of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Discover the West* by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, also demonstrates how ambiguities and instabilities in a work will instigate both

performance and performative processes that are characteristic of the hypertextual experience.

Methodological strategies

In establishing the qualities and operations of the hypertextual experience in specific works, Lyotard's commentaries on reading, as developed initially in *Discourse/Figure* (2011), provides several concepts that are employed throughout the thesis in the analysis of reader/spectator behaviours. These are specifically of relevance in Chapters 3 and 6 where his concept of the figural and of the performative quality of reading are explored. The thesis argues that an appropriate conceptual framework for considering the hypertextual experience may be found through applying a contemporary adaptation of possible worlds theory. Consequently, in Chapters 4 and 5, possible worlds theory is employed in the consideration of how the spectator of Uninvited Guests' productions and those of The Wooster Group navigate the worlds provoked by these works. These two central methodologies are introduced below.

Theorising the hypertextual experience - Lyotard and the figural

In considering how the hypertextual experience is provoked by dynamic textual material the study locates itself theoretically in terms of several postmodern critical perspectives, but most significantly the early writings of Jean Francois Lyotard. His work identifies an emergent role for the reader whose activity is recognised as exceeding the capacity of the text to contain or anticipate their reading of it. Lyotard's theories of the 'event' and the 'figural' formally position reading as a radical activity which demands from the

reader an acutely creative capacity, not for extracting the author's meaning (Readings 1991: xv) but for perceiving events as they occur through the process of their readings.

Lyotard sets out that the task for the reader is to:

become sensitive to their quality as actual events, to become competent at listening to their sound underneath silence or noise, to become open to the 'it happens that' rather than to the 'what happens' [and this] requires at the very least a high degree of refinement in the perception of small differences (Lyotard 1988: 18).

His theory identifies active qualities of creativity and invention as constituent elements of a radicalised reading practice. This mode of reading, as Lyotard describes it, relates closely to the hypertextual experience, as it concerns itself with aesthetic operations beyond the normative channels of structured conceptual thought represented by the texts, and abstract concepts, which are rooted in logocentric culture.

Lyotard's 1971 book *Discourse/Figure* is different in tone from his more famous later works on postmodernism, however it establishes a number of key ideas, which recur throughout his writings, concerning the active and creative processes involved in aesthetic practice, and in the positioning of the experiential sensation of art over the interpretation of meaning. *Discourse/Figure* considers a number of philosophical methodologies and artistic practices including phenomenology, psychoanalysis, structuralism, poetry and semiotics; what is relevant to this study is its concern with the establishment of the presence of the figural in aesthetic works. In locating the operation of the figural, Lyotard identifies qualities that emerge from an aesthetic work which do not operate as readable meanings and so exceed the capacity of the discourse. As Kiff Bamford states: 'The figural is the transgression of signification which shows that

alternatives to established forms of discourse – not only language and critical philosophy but also visual methods – are possible’ (Bamford 2012: 21).

Lyotard initially discussed the operations of the figural in terms of visual work, arguing that certain qualities emerge when looking at a painting, qualities which he refers to as its ‘depth’ or ‘thickness’ (*epaisseur*), which cannot be related through the discursive act of ‘reading’ the work (Lyotard 2011: 3). It is his extension of the concept of the figural to text, and his notion that the figure and the discourse are present and mutually implicated in textual operation, while being ultimately incommensurable, that is of particular interest.

The figural, I suggest, may be identified in the hypertextual experience and is a useful concept in considering the nature of this experience which cannot be reduced to a reading, as will be discussed in relation to works studied. My argument is that the digital processes of hypertext are able to foreground certain textual and experiential operations that are conventionally concealed. Consequently hypertext fiction, a form of writing whose operation subverts neutral concepts of temporality and materiality, has the capacity to activate aspects of the figural in text. Hypertext fiction breaks down language’s meta-textuality through its interactive and networked structure which formally introduces the reader into the body of the text. It is characterised by its moments of uncertainty and ambiguity arising through the digital operation of its material elements, its hyperlinks, which may obfuscate or extend the readable meaning of words, and by its failure to communicate its complete project. These elements of hesitancy, impossibility or failure in hypertext fiction, create the condition in which the operation of the figural becomes apparent. The language becomes more able to open

itself to non-discursive elements and consequently to open itself to the possibility of the figural. The figural helps us to recognise textual experiences which cannot be explained or contained by the text itself. In considering the hypertextual experience, through the lens provided by *Discourse/Figure*, it is apparent that its occurrence depends on events that come about when certain preconditions are met within a text. These may be to do with relationships between constituent fragments of textual material or operational protocols, concerning the positioning of the fragments. Lyotard's writings demonstrate how the figural may emerge from text that is in this indeterminate state where different meanings can be provoked by the dynamic juxtaposition of textual material. For Bamford: 'it is not a case of applying the figural as a theory, not even a concept, but as a mode of operating whose task is to unsettle presumptions with regard to that which is presented as fixed or as a totality' (Bamford 2012: 166).

Lyotard's position as a philosopher is widely associated with his work on postmodernity; his writings have been used extensively in the academy particularly during the 1980s when postmodernism was a major preoccupation in critical theory. While his key works, relating to the set of debates and cultural practices around this area, are very well known, other works are less so; indeed *Discourse/Figure* was not published in English in full in a single volume until 2011. Several Lyotardian concepts, which are raised in *Discourse/Figure*, and which also feature in later works, will inform the development of arguments through the chapters - significantly his notion of the 'event', 'invention' and his work on performativity which will be explored in Chapter 6. Lyotard's writing enacts the operation of his concepts throughout *Discourse/Figure* and this performative quality is useful in looking at the operations of performativity in hypertext fiction, performance and installation work.

Discourse/Figure is an interesting and complex book which, in keeping with its theme, resists categorisation. Its language is expressive and the quality of writing changes in tone and expression as it explores, but does not resolve, the concerns of figural expression. My use of Lyotard is informed by Bamford's 2012 monograph, *Lyotard and the Figural in Performance, Art and Writing*, which identifies the figural as a neglected aspect of Lyotard's work, particularly in the English speaking communities, but also asserts its significance. Bamford identifies that Lyotard's use of text is one which: 'remains alert to that which escapes the structures of language' (Bamford 2012: 171). The concept of the figural paves the way for the recognition of the hypertextual experience as a meeting of the reader/ spectator and text/ production in a specific kind of circumstance and it gives a means of acknowledging the quality and validity of that which is unstable and impermanent and which cannot be contained in existing categories of meaning.

Possible worlds theory and the hypertextual experience

The hypertextual experience demands a particular type of conceptual framework in order to reason and theorise about its operations. In addressing this I will draw on the historic, but recently reinvigorated perspective of possible worlds theory, in a manner which is substantially informed by the theory's application to digital texts. This theory was developed originally from the work of 18th century metaphysician, Gottfried Leibniz, who suggested that God conceived of infinite possible worlds before choosing the best of them as the actual world for us to inhabit (Ronen 1994: 5). Consequently the

idea was generated that our reality is composed from a multiplicity of distinct possible worlds which might have been or which, possibly, could be alternatives to our own. Contemporary philosophers and logicians have used the notion of a plurality of alternative worlds and explored it through different disciplines; in the 1970s Leibniz' concept became associated with two key schools of thought, relating to the fictional worlds of narrative. The semiotic, or modal fictional, view of possible worlds theory considers that literary fiction creates abstract story-worlds which can be imagined by authors and readers. Alternatively the school of modal realism advocates that we are surrounded by innumerable possible worlds which have the same status to one another but what is 'actual' depends on the perspective of the person inhabiting a world (Ryan 2012). Both these interpretations of possible worlds theory provide tools and a language that respond to the hypertextual experience and specifically to the experiential, immersive and imaginative qualities of the works discussed in this thesis. Moreover they provide a means of reasoning about performances and installations in which different individuals may have different, but equally valid, experiences.

Of particular significance to this thesis is the fact that over the last decade digital theorists including Marie Laure Ryan, Alice Bell and Raine Koskimaa have appropriated possible worlds theory in examining how narrative worlds are created through the readers' interaction with fictional works located in the digital environment. As discussed, hypertext fiction provokes an ergodic process of reading and it is this, that they suggest, produces different narrative worlds, depending on the nature of the reader's active engagement with the digital interface. The notion of multiple possible worlds responds to a textual environment that contains innumerable narrative possibilities that become actual through the reader's actions. As Alice Bell argues:

'Possible Worlds Theory ... is able to accommodate the multi-linear hypertext fiction structure rather than attempting to manipulate it into a pseudo-linear format' (Bell 2010: 26).

I propose that the particular characteristics of hypertext fiction that resonate with possible worlds theory are also characteristics that can be identified in certain performance and installation works. These include fragmented structures and the co-presence of plural narratives alongside ergodic levels of agency offered to the reader/spectator. The significance of possible worlds theory here is that it can be mapped onto the hypertextual experience and provide a means of understanding and reasoning about the different experiences that individual readers have of the works and the dynamics that emerge from spectatorial and reading practices. Possible worlds theory foregrounds the active and central role of the reader/spectator in the production of immersive, narrative, worlds and this is partly because it responds reflexively to the multiple-ness of the event, that is the fact that the hypertextual environment contains many possible experiences that require activation by the reader/spectator. The theory provides a systematic way of considering the worlds that are generated by the experience of narrative both in hypertext fiction and certain types of performance and installation work. This is because it initiates a process of regarding reading and spectating in a way that legitimises the participant's performative act and formally recognises that certain performance practices are contingent not on the spectator as abstract concept, but far more specifically on the particular individuals present at any one time. It provides a conceptual framework which matches and responds to the characteristics of the hypertextual experience and I will demonstrate this in the discussion of the work of Uninvited Guests and the Wooster Group in Chapter 4 and 5.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis is on the development of the concept of the hypertextual experience in order to enhance the understanding of spectatorial practices across a range of aesthetic events. It will show that modes of reader engagement, which have come about through the advancement of hypertext fiction, reveal and clarify certain processes of production and reception that consequently can be recognised outside the digital environment. Through the study of these we can come to a greater understanding of the range of dynamics in operation between spectators and the works of art with which they engage.

The hypertextual experience can be identified by certain common operational characteristics and the first three chapters demonstrate these through focusing, in turn, on the distinctive operations of narratives and digital codes, the machinic structures and the hypertextual processes of temporality. The works I have chosen to illustrate these processes demonstrate that the hypertextual experience is not limited to the digital environment, or to participatory work. Rather it may be identified in a variety of forms which commonly require their spectators and readers to respond actively to unstable aesthetic environments.

Possible worlds theory provides an optimal conceptual framework to reason about these processes because it responds to the specific and individual practices of engagement instigated by the hypertextual experience. Chapters 4 and 5 will show how

performances by Uninvited Guests and the Wooster Group operate hypertextually and how these operations can be understood in terms of possible worlds theory.

A distinctive feature of the hypertextual experience is that it is productive: the aesthetic event instigates a creative process through the active engagement of the spectator. The final chapter will focus on the performative nature of work that produces the hypertextual experience and will interrogate how performance and performativity are intermingled in aesthetic processes which actually cause things to happen as a result of their dynamic exchanges.

This study recognises the work being done at the intersection of cognitive science and theories of theatre spectatorship by scholars including Bruce McConagie (2011), Josephine Machon(2013), Susan Broadhurst (2007,2012), Nicola Shaughnessy(2013) and others. However in theorising about spectating practices I have chosen not to draw on the science of perception, but have concentrated on practices of reading and engagement emerging from the study of digital narratives, and on showing how these enable us to recognise and understand modes of spectator behaviour. This study draws on hypertext fiction from different stages of the form's development and related digital theory. However it seeks to offer an alternative view to those theorists who have suggested that the form either enables the reader to take creative control of the text (Landow 1992, 1997, Bolter 1992) or that it entraps the reader in an authored and heavily controlled textual network (Miall 2006, 2004, 2012, Bell 2010). Rather, by drawing from both these outlooks, the study identifies that the value of considering hypertext fiction in relation to performance and installation works is the very fact that, as the conflicting theories illustrate, its operations problematise the acts of production

and reception and demands their reconsideration. For the reader, an encounter with hypertext fiction presents certain impossibilities because reading cannot be conducted in a conventional manner. Through re-configuring the operations of reading in order to negotiate the digital text, nascent practices of engagement emerge and it is from these that we can identify the hypertextual experience and isolate its processes.

The works I discuss in the chapters disclose conditions in which creative control is unstable and oscillates between the producers and receivers of the work, and is sometimes held by the structure of the work itself. This instability characterises the hypertextual experience and the object of this study is to determine the origins of this experience and explore what it can reveal about the activities of aesthetic engagement.

Chapter summaries:

Chapter 1

The mutual operation of the narrative and structure is examined in terms of hypertext fiction. I explore how this dynamic is used by Michael Joyce in *Afternoon* and Stuart Moulthrop in *Victory Garden* to generate specific modes of reading practice. David Leddy's *Susurrus* is proposed as an example of a performance which provokes the hypertextual experience and the operation of this is demonstrated through an analysis of the spectator's participatory experience of this work.

Chapter 2

This chapter uses Andreas Broeckmann's notion of the 'machinic' to examine the operation of aesthetic processes in Katie Mitchell's *The Waves* and Ben Rubin and Mark

Hansen's *Listening Post*. This analysis demonstrates how the authorial role may be eclipsed in the hypertextual experience by machinic dynamics. The way in which the reading process 'actualizes' the work in the case of hypertext fiction, is adopted and applied to the performance and installation works. The chapter establishes the significance of the individual spectator, over the concept of the 'collective audience' in performance work that operates hypertextually.

Chapter 3

A common feature of hypertext fictions, as exemplified in *Afternoon*, is that they allow the reader some control over the sequence in which they read. This chapter explores how sequential control affords the reader/ spectator influence over the determination of the operation of fictional time. Through looking at installation works by Robert Wilson and the digital novel *TOC*, by Steve Tomasula, hypertextual processes are disclosed by which the spectator/ reader incorporates their own time with the fictional time of the work, through their practices of engagement.

Chapter 4

Participatory performance works by Uninvited Guests form the focus for this chapter. Here the concern is with the nature of the spectator's contribution to this company's explicitly participatory performances which are explored in relation to the hypertextual experience. Possible worlds theory, as adopted by digital theorists in the analysis of hypertext fiction, provides a conceptual framework for considering the spectatorial experience of two of the company's productions.

Chapter 5

A different aspect of possible worlds theory is used here to consider the spectators' experience of two productions by the Wooster Group. Here the focus is on how the structure of the work, particularly its fragmentary nature, provokes a particular kind of response which operates hypertextually. *Victory Garden* provides a parallel example of how the fragmented text may be employed to position the reader in a hypertext fiction.

Chapter 6

J.L. Austin's concept of performativity is used to elaborate how the reader/ spectator's experience may be considered to be a creatively productive one. Deena Larsen and geniwate's *The Princess Murderer* and Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* are used to consider how the reader's process of reading may be foregrounded and manipulated by the digital system in order to produce a certain text. The concept of spectating as performance is considered in terms of the responses elicited by Guillermo Gomez Pena and Coco Fusco's performance, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*.

Chapter 1

Narratives, codes, structure – negotiating a practice of engagement in hypertext fiction and performance

The emerging new media technologies are not important in themselves, or as alternatives to older media, but should be studied for what they can tell us about the principles and evolution of human communication (Aarseth 1997: 17).

The formal structure of any hypertext fiction actively provokes the reader to continually shift register as they read, because the work is formed from both narratives and digitally coded elements that, when encountered, require a different order of response. Espen Aarseth has suggested that it is the particular antagonistic positioning of literary and digital structural components in hypertext fiction; ‘the conflict between narration and ergodics (Aarseth 1997: 95), which marks the form out as a special case of textual hybrid. In this initial chapter I establish how the experience that is generated for the reader by the dynamic between the narratives and the digital structures can inform an understanding of the spectator/ performance dialectic in certain performance works that display properties which relate to this hypertextual model.

Afternoon (1990), by Michael Joyce and *Victory Garden* (1992), by Stuart Moulthrop, are both works which exemplify the predicament that lies at the heart of the relationship between digital code and literary narrative in a hypertext fiction. Specifically this concerns *how* the reader responds to the separate and often contradictory demands of the narratives, which require an imaginative engagement, and the code, which requires participation with the structural form, and *how* they negotiate a personal reading practice within the hybrid and contested territory. The performance work considered is

David Leddy's 2009 site-related play *Susurrus*, which, in an analogous manner, presents its spectators with a complex literary narrative and a set of structural navigational tools with which they must engage in order to experience the work. The choice of these works is apposite because they each share common features in having strong literary foundations, yet also requiring explicit participation. Furthermore certain operations in the hypertext fictions elucidate related operations in the performance and clarify why we may consider the performance to operate hypertextually.

In these three works the reader/ spectator is engaged proactively with managing their activity through ergodic processes, which leads them into, as well as away from, the immersive worlds of various narratives. As the dynamic between the narratives and structural form is played out the effect on the reader/ spectator is twofold. Firstly, narrative engagement is periodically confounded by the 'interruptions' of the structural form. In the case of the hypertext fictions, these interruptions are embedded in the digital code and constituted specifically by the need for the reader to interact with the hyperlinks in order to progress the story. Each interaction, the necessary ergodic clicking on a hyperlink, will disrupt the narrative flow either partially or completely, depending on the outcome of the interaction. In the case of *Susurrus*, where the spectators navigate a garden while listening to the performance on headphones, the need to follow directions, make choices and operate the sound equipment, similarly interrupts narrative flow. Secondly, in each of these works, any focussed interactive exchange, or meta-reading, in which the reader actively engages with the structure and its ramifications on their experience, will be coloured by the force of the narratives which will tend to immerse them, just as would a strong narrative content in any other context.

In hypertext fiction the reader has to negotiate between these operations of narrative and code within the works. The influence that this particular dynamic has on the experience of reading has been an ongoing concern of commentators on digital fiction since its development in the 1980s. This is notably evidenced in the work of Yellowlees Douglas (2000), Aarseth (1997), Ryan (2001, 2006) and Maill (1999, 2004, 2005). An incentive of the chapter is to establish how the hypertextual experience emerges specifically from the synchronous engagement with narratives and with the specific structural devices or digital codes operating in participatory performance or hypertext fiction. The three works chosen demonstrate the mutual operation of code and narratives and how spectator/ reader activity is influenced by processes which can be construed as sometimes conflicting and sometimes symbiotic. Evidence of symbiosis between narrative and structural devices is seen in different ways in each of the works when they position the spectator/ reader so that the nature of their participation reflects the themes of their narratives. There is a quality of 'enacted response' which emerges when the structure of a work provokes a particular mode of corporeal activity that relates directly to some aspect of the fictional worlds encountered. This is a motif of the hypertextual experience that demonstrates a specific way in which participation can involve the spectator/ reader in a creative and generative activity. Similarly, the anamorphic figure, familiar from fine art, also functions as a primary concept through which the corporeal response to structure and the psychological response to narrative may be considered within *Afternoon*, *Susurrus* and *Victory Garden*. Instances where structure and narrative operate together to produce particular effects evidence how the experience generated cannot accurately be identified as either reading or spectating, but instead starts to appear as a manipulation of, or reflexive commentary on, these activities rather than being determined, or limited, by them.

Theoretical debate about the reader's relationship to hypertext over the past 35 years has frequently positioned itself in terms of post-structuralist theory (Landow 2006: 2-6, Gaggi 1998:103). One significant idea emerging from the complexities and contradictions of the debates concerning how the reading experience is influenced by the juxtaposition of narrative and code is that of intertextuality. Roland Barthes' and Julia Kristeva's descriptions of this concept (Barthes 1993:146, Kristeva 1986:37), elucidate how intertextuality has informed the understanding of hypertextuality, and how the conditions differ significantly.

In comparing the operation of narratives and code in hypertext fiction and performance, a similarity of function can be established between the dramatic cue and the hyperlink. As Nancy Kaplan and Stuart Moulthrop have outlined, when a portion of textual material is inscribed as either a hyperlink or a cue it develops an additional function to its semantic one and becomes a portal to adjacent text (Kaplan and Moulthrop 2000). The implication that this has for the original text is that, through being perforated either by cues or hyperlinks, it undergoes a structural and semantic transformation. What emerges from a consideration of the operation of these related devices is that they introduce processes that are pivotal to an understanding of the hypertextual experience. As they open up possibilities for responses that exceed what the unlinked or un-cued text could offer, they also introduce a level of instability to the work which comes to influence the reader/spectator's relationship to the original text.

The concern of this chapter is to identify particular aspects of the hypertextual experience that stem from the encounter with narrative and code and to use these,

along with the writings of both digital and literary commentators, to theorise about the spectator's experience in the participatory performance.

***Afternoon*, by Michael Joyce: positioning the reader**

Afternoon is about the problem of its own reading (Bolter 1992: 127).

Michael Joyce's iconic work, described by The New York Times as: 'the granddaddy of full-length hypertext fictions' (Coover 1992) is one of the most analysed of digital narratives and also one of the most controversial. Its publication in 1990 prompted extensive critical debate which sought to use the work to exemplify theories about the operation of the new form of hypertext. *Afternoon* made full use of the linking possibilities opened up by hypertext mark-up language, but it also continued to operate in the tradition of the printed experimental literature of the late twentieth century and consequently its significance as an early hybrid work is marked.

Afternoon appears on the reader's screen as a digital version of a printed text with individual pages of black typewritten text on a white background. There are no graphics and basic operating instructions feature at the top and bottom of each page. Included here, under a tab marked 'history', is the *Storyspace* programme's device for recording the reader's individual progress through the textual network as an ordered list of the titles of the 'pages', also called 'writing spaces', 'lexia' or 'nodes', visited.

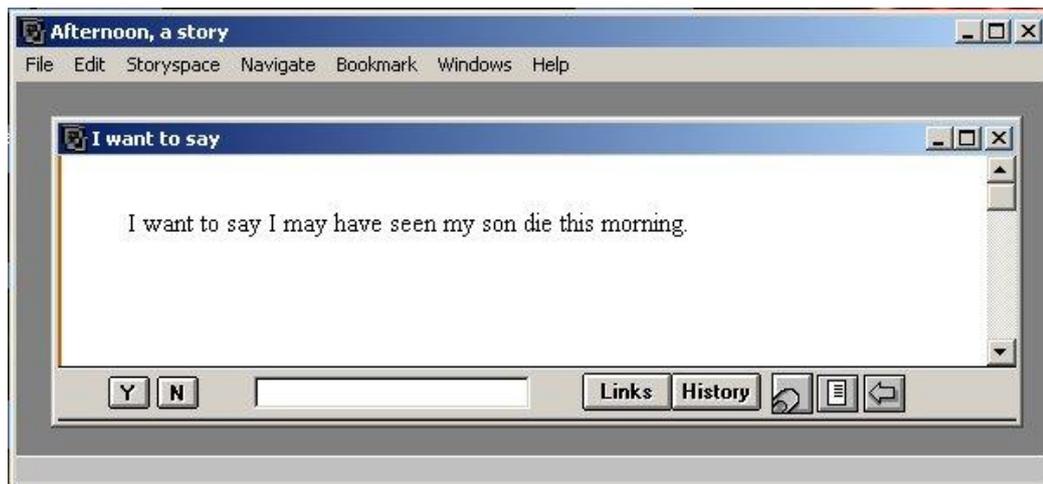


Figure 1: Joyce (1990): a 'page' of *Afternoon* entitled (I want to say)

The narratives of *Afternoon* are generated from a focal event in which the central character, Peter, witnesses the aftermath of a car accident and becomes increasingly convinced that it has involved his ex-wife Lisa and young son Andy. The content of the work relates events of the 'afternoon' following the accident as Peter tries to establish what has happened. As he frantically searches for his family, memories are recalled and through these the reader learns about his relationships, motivations and about the other people in his life. The narrative fragments concerning the events of the 'afternoon' and the recollections of the past are all linked digitally, via hyperlinks, and symbolically, through the rhetorical figures of literature, to the mystery of the car accident.

Afternoon is composed from 539 pages and 905 links. The pages are typically of less than 100 words and may be of as little as one. By clicking 'return' the reader will call up the 'next' page in an unfolding narrative, in much the same linear manner as she would if turning a page in a book. These unfolding narratives are known as the 'default' narratives and there are many of them that run through the work as strands of stories. For example, there are default narratives that tell of Peter's attempts to locate his family after driving past the aftermath of the car crash, of the breakdown of his and Lisa's marriage, and of several actual or possible love affairs. As reading progresses, a default

narrative may engage the reader and compel them to read progressively in search of conclusion, or explanation. The three following pages are taken from a default narrative and illustrate how the story progresses for the reader who clicks 'return' after reading each of them:

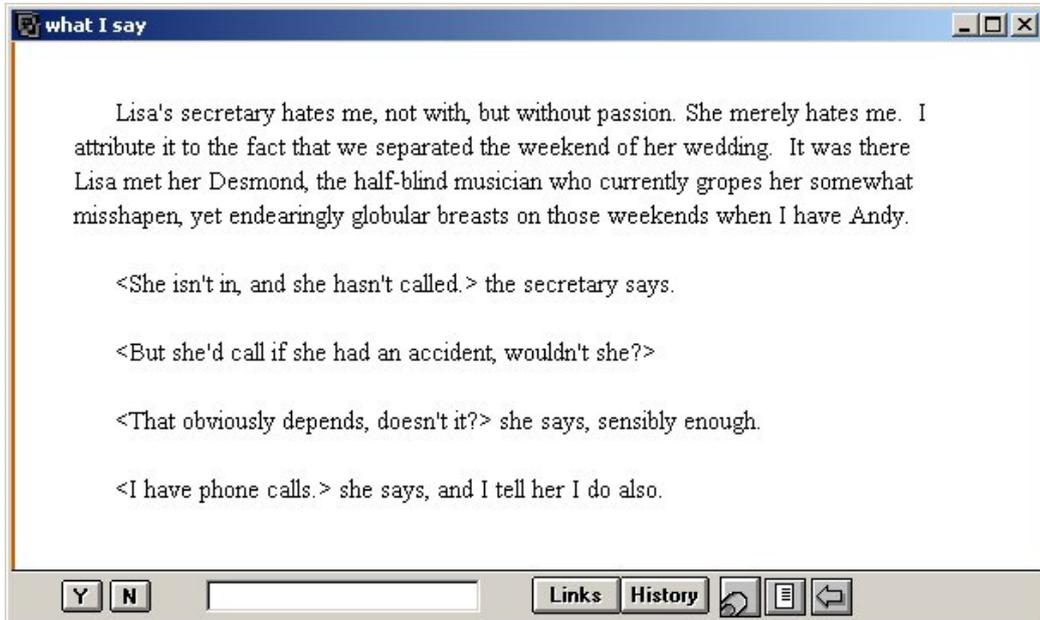


Figure 2: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (what I say)

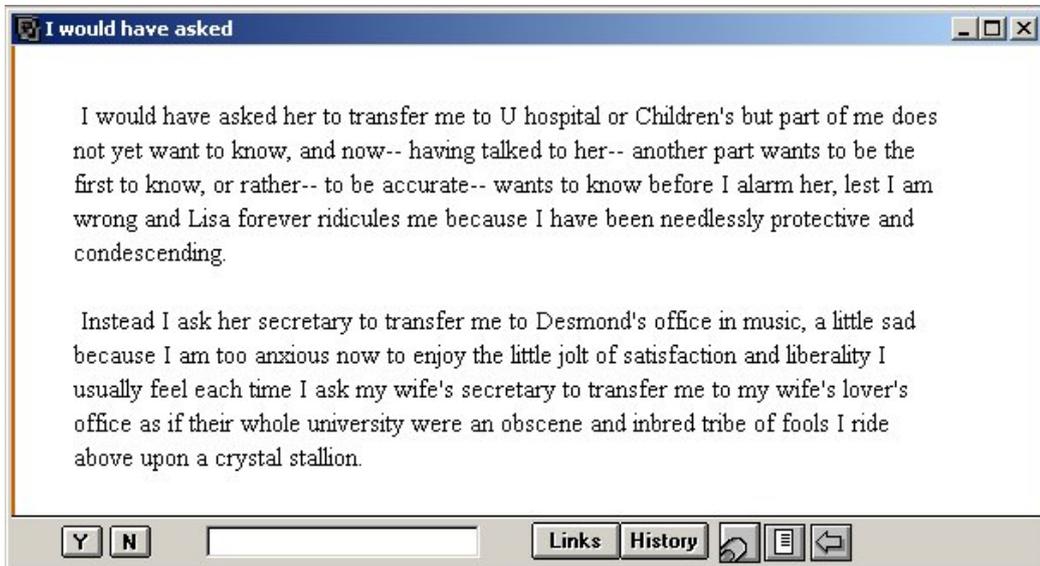


Figure 3: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (I would have asked)

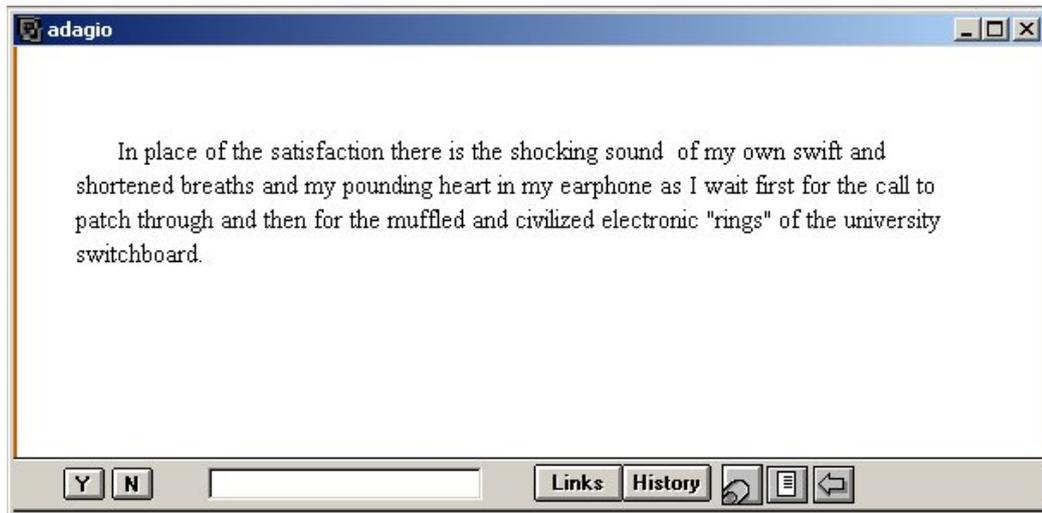


Figure 4: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (adagio)

As an alternative to reading via the 'default' the reader may choose to interact with the multi-linear network of narratives that comprise the work. This is accessible to them through particular words that also function as hyperlinks and which activate different pages, all of which are structured in a similar manner with a default narrative and hyperlinks. The reader may either click on words which operate as hyperlinks or click the button called 'Links' which brings up a menu listing all the words on the page that are hyperlinked, along with details of the pages and pathways they can access.

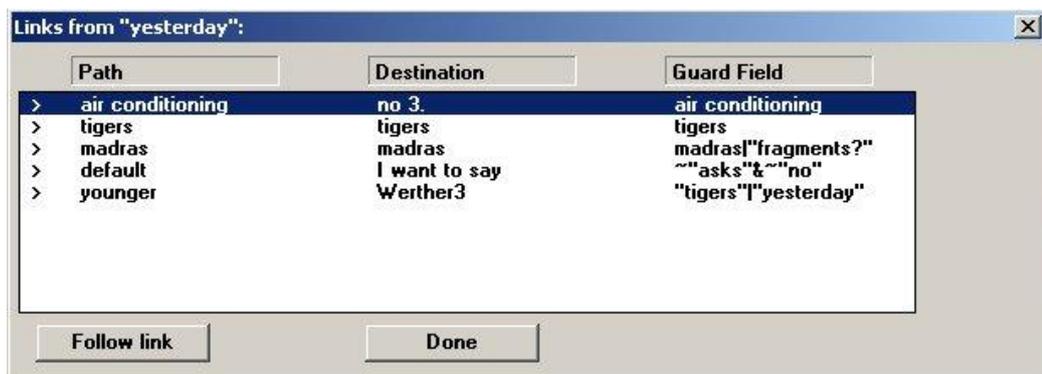


Figure 5: Joyce (1990): links menu from *Afternoon* (yesterday)

As well as encountering the various strands of narratives the reader will find pages that appear to deviate from any of the narrative strands and contain, instead, ambiguous statements, comments on the form, and quotations from theoretical texts or personal advice to them on their reading progress.

The narrative network of *Afternoon* establishes a 'textual territory' (Gaggi 1998: 123) from which the reader will construe meanings; but they will do this without the help of any particular structural signposting to indicate either how their reading is progressing, or when the story is complete. Their navigation of the text is partially controlled by the author's coding which involves the inscription of 'conditions' that *Storyspace* software refers to as guard fields. These are used to selectively enable some links and disable others (see Bernstein 2014a). For example a conditional link may be programmed to allow certain hyperlinks to become active only when a reader has read a particular sequence of pages. This process allows the author to determine precisely how the pages are linked and how the hyperlinks operate. Lughì elaborates: 'the reader's freedom is heavily conditioned and determined by the author whose *space of activity* [my italics] lies at the level of the deep text' (Lughì in Calvi 2004: 163).

Afternoon is unusual among hypertext fictions because of its use of hidden hyperlinks. The reader cannot select links as they read, but must either deliberately look up the 'Links menu', depend on the default option to carry them through the text, or click on words at random until one 'yields' and a new page appears. Joyce explains this technique in the 'instructions for reading' published with the *Afternoon* CD-ROM.

There is no indication of which words yield ...; ... The lack of clear signals is not an attempt to vex you, but rather an invitation to read inquisitively, playfully or at depth. Click on words that interest or invite you (Joyce: 1990).

The technique is controversial for a form that prioritises reader choice because it actually undermines the reader's attempt to read strategically by making it unclear to

them what options are available. Ted Nelson, the pioneer of hypertext, was critical of the approach seeing it as contrary to the principles of the form:

The purpose of computers is human freedom, and so the purpose of hypertext is overview and understanding; and this, by the way, is why I disapprove of any hypertext (like Michael Joyce's *Afternoon*) that does not show you the inter-connective structure (in Aarseth 1997: 82).

For the reader of *Afternoon* the easiest option, and most familiar reading practice to adopt, is to follow the default narrative, however, typically, after a certain number of pages, this process is frustrated by the default failing to progress, or looping back to a previously visited page. The reader is consequently encouraged to search for the hidden links in order to progress the reading. Digital theorist, Jill Walker, describes her experiential encounter with the nodes, an alternative term for hypertext pages, of *Afternoon*: 'suddenly my eager pressings of the return button only result in one of those irritating digital beeps, and will lead me nowhere. From this last node ('I call') I can only move on by actively clicking a word' (Walker 1999).

The significance of this moment and others like it is that it exemplifies a clash of narrative and code. The structure of hidden digital mechanisms actively frustrates the reader's progress through the narrative, causing them to abandon conventions of reading and locate an alternative strategy in order to proceed. It is likely that this new strategy will involve searching, experimentation, invention and play until an alternative method of progress is found, or the reading abandoned. In this way the work formally brings about certain practices of engagement which are significantly different from those experienced when reading a printed text. Independently of its narrative content, the

hypertextual structure itself provokes behaviours, emotions and intellectual responses and these co-exist with the range of responses that the narratives inspire.

There are sections of the work where the digitally coded structure and the narratives operate symbiotically producing an effect that exceeds what could be managed in a printed text. For instance, the cluster of pages concerned with Peter's unsuccessful phone calls to try and find Lisa and Andy after seeing the crash are designed so that the hyperlinks provoke a certain mode of reading. These pages are short in length, inconclusive in content and their links take the reader into various small loops of page sequences, which they must find their way out of by clicking randomly to locate a successful connection. Thus the digital structure of the work is sympathetic to the content of the narrative and brings about a physical mode of reading which reflects this content. A reader engaging with this area of the work will be likely to find their response to it mimicking Peter's experience, as the narrative and the digital structure each reflect a common concern of being frustrated by technology in an effort to find information, as Bolter points out:

The reader of '*afternoon- a story*' engages in a struggle for meaning analogous to that of the characters of the story. Just as Peter engages in frantic calls to try and find out about his wife [sic] and son, so the reader struggles with the electronic text to resolve the same question (Bolter in Gaggi 1997: 125).

The effect of this technique is to involve the reader corporeally so that their act of reading becomes an enactment that amplifies their psychological involvement with narrative. What is evidenced in *Afternoon* is that the juxtapositions of code and narrative operate oppositionally at times and at times symbiotically, but frequently shaping the reader's experience by making particular demands of them so that their conventional

non-ergodic reading is subsumed by a specific corporeal activity which is sensitive to the narrative content. The reader of hypertext fiction is liable to be positioned so that they have to negotiate the differing requirements of the structural digital code and the narrative. This is the predicament of hypertext fiction reading; the reader will always have to do more than conventional reading and become, in a different and more active manner, both resourceful and inventive in the navigation of the text. This style of enacted reading in hypertext fiction can elucidate a particular kind of spectatorial response in participatory performance in which the dramatic text, and the structural mechanisms concerned with the delivery of that text, trigger a physical response which similarly involves the reader enacting an element of narrative.

In approaching this analogy between hypertext fiction and performance it is relevant to initially consider another way in which the hypertext reader may be specifically positioned by the narrative content of the work. The concept of the anamorphic figure has been found to be useful in the theorising of the reader's response to hypertext because it concerns the encryption of a requirement for a specific viewing position within the work of art (Readings 2006: 20). Anamorphosis, from the Greek to re-form, is a term that originates in fine art where it refers to the process by which a distorted visual figure within a painting becomes identifiable only when viewed in a certain manner or from a certain position. A frequently cited example of this is Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), in which a skull in the foreground of the painting can only be seen when the viewer positions themselves at an oblique angle to the painting. Anamorphosis destabilises paradigms of perspective as it confounds the assumed point of view and enables an alternative one. Lyotard elaborates: 'The play of two imbricated spaces forms

the principle of the anamorphic picture: what is recognizable in one space is not recognizable in the other' (Lyotard 2011: 378).



Figure 6: Hans Holbein: The Ambassadors (1533)
National Gallery, London.

The effort that is required of the viewer by the anamorphic figure in fine art is ergodic and may be compared to the effort required by the reader of hypertext fiction to physically interact in order to produce the narrative. Rita Raley has observed the particular significance of the anamorphic figure for hypertext:

The exemplary illustrative device for digital practice is the anamorphic, a visual trick of perspective based on hidden codes and structures of signification. ... Anamorphosis has been important for hypertext critics because of its reliance on visual perception, labour, and the active production of the text (Raley 2001).

The anamorphic figure draws attention to the operation of the code/ narrative pairing in the creation of an experience. In hypertext fiction the anamorphic process may be identified when a reader is required to progress through a certain sequence of pages in order to experience a narrative event: if they navigate through a different sequence,

their understanding of the narrative event will also be different. For example consider this page:

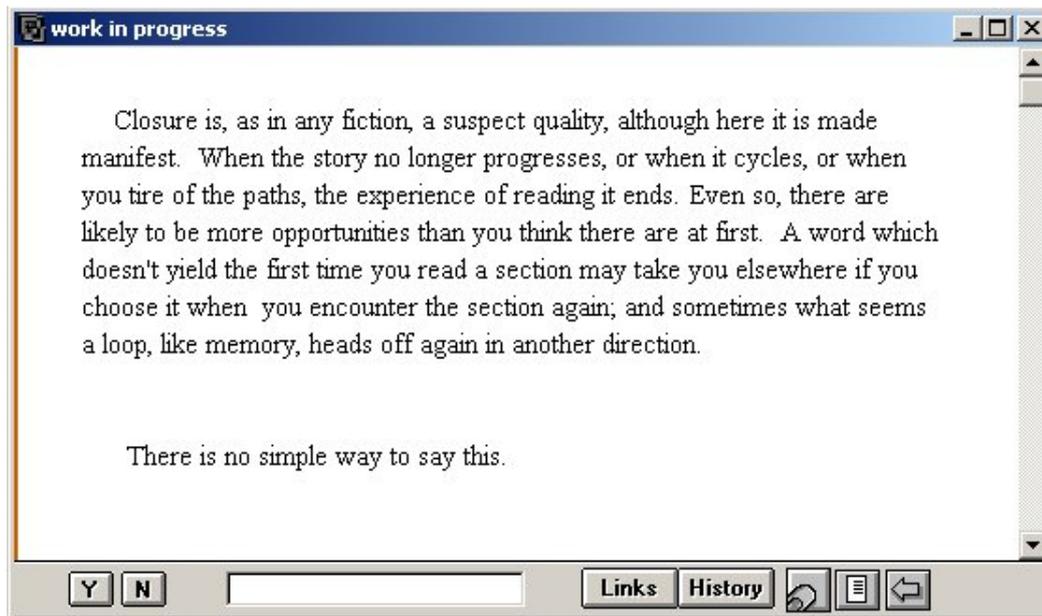


Figure 7: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (work in progress)

If this is read after previous pages concerning the characteristics of hypertext, it functions as a technical explanation and reflexive commentary on the form. If, however, if it is read after a series of pages detailing Peter and Lisa's deteriorating relationship, it operates metaphorically and becomes, at least in part, about that relationship. The digital structure of the hypertext enables a shifting of perspectives on the work through the interactive manipulation of hyperlinks. For the reader this means that their *way* of viewing will make a difference to *what the work is*. The significance of the personal perspective on the work is a trope that is common to hypertext fiction and to participatory performance; in both cases the mutability of the participants' perspectives on the work complicates their engagement with its narratives.

The activity of the hypertext fiction reader consequently involves both interpretation, as they engage with and respond to the author's narrative, and also discovery because they have to find a way, sometimes *the only way*, to make sense of the text. This concept

of discovery lies at the heart of anamorphosis: the reader of a hypertext is drawn into and through the work as they search for, and find, narrative meanings. Just as Holbein's skull becomes meaningful when it is viewed from the correct angle, so too the pages of *Afternoon* acquire particular meanings according to how they are approached. The anamorphic process gives the reader the impression that they have successfully made a discovery, and gained a correct perspective. It is perhaps an example of the ergodic function at its clearest; the text is presented as a puzzle, in which the discovery of the narrative will reward the reader with a sense of the work as a made object, completed by their reading of it. However it is this very quality of anamorphosis, its capacity to privilege one reading and exclude other possibilities, which makes both Aarseth and Raley reject the notion that hypertext fiction can be described as fully anamorphic.

Aarseth suggests that *Afternoon* is not, in fact, anamorphic because: 'there is no clear final state of resolution in which all is revealed' (Aarseth 1997: 181) and proposes rather that hypertext fiction as a form is in a continual state of metamorphosis. This view is echoed by Raley who suggests that the structure of hypertext works actively against the anamorphic tendency: 'The anamorphic does not just fail; it is withheld and sabotaged' (Raley 2001: 17).

I would argue however that while *Afternoon* certainly resists any sense of denouement, at a micro-operational level there is evidence of anamorphic incidents which clearly facilitate resolved 'correct' viewpoints and significantly reject incorrect ones. While the narrative avoids closure and resolution, Joyce does make sure that the reader is equipped with certain details about the fictional family's relationships; enough to ensure our investment and immersion in the story. Through the use of conditional links

he has made certain reading sequences possible and others impossible: the code and narrative work together to promote certain views and not others. Within the context of a network of possibilities these micro-anamorphic moments appear as personal, bespoke, narrative formulations, discovered individually by readers on their customised narrative journeys.

While the reader of *Afternoon* is engaged creatively with a text comprised of multiple possibilities, what she actually experiences is a sequence of calculated perspectives on the work, produced anamorphically within the interactive micro-organisation of the hypertext fiction. This is because codes and protocols within the systemic organisation of the work are designed to both promote certain sequences of reading and restrict others through the operation of conditional links. The anamorphic figure elucidates this process and demonstrates how hypertext exerts a control over the reader at the same time as allowing them a meaningful interactive relationship with the work. While the form of hypertext fiction cannot be said to be universally anamorphic, for the reasons outlined by Raley and Aarseth, there are anamorphic processes functioning at a micro-operational level that have the effect of continuously nudging the reader into certain pre-set positions in relation to the text.

It is evident therefore that the juxtaposition of narrative and code may, as discussed above, cause the reader to enact an aspect of the narrative, and furthermore that anamorphosis can demonstrate how the reader's point of view can be specifically controlled in an apparently open and flexible context. Both these are tropes of the hypertextual experience which can also be identified in participatory performance and

used to reason about the spectatorial practices that are brought about through specific modes of ergodic engagement.

Navigating David Leddy's *Susurrus* – the spectator's anamorphic and enacted response

'susurrus: a murmuring; a whisper; a rustling' (Chambers Dictionary 1999:1480)

The outdoor setting of David Leddy's 2007 production, *Susurrus*, operates as a terrain which the spectator must explore by walking around it on specific routes as they hear the narrative delivered through an audio device and headphones. The production was premiered at the Glasgow Botanic Gardens and has since been presented in public parks around the world. In this analysis I will be referring to my experience of the piece at Oxford Botanical Gardens in 2010. The narrative, which is recorded in the style of a radio play, is a domestic mystery that develops into a tragedy about an opera singer and his relationships with his music and his family and colleagues. The story is told by the characters of the son and daughter of the opera singer, Moth and Helena, a friend, 'the Singer', and 'the Researcher' who functions as the narrator and 'tour guide'. The different voices address the spectator directly on the soundtrack, each giving different versions of the key events in the life of the opera singer and father of the family, Robin Goodfellow. Interweaved into the narrative are consistent references to, and quotations from, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Along with details of Robin's family and musical life there are hints of the misunderstandings and accusations of incest and abuse that lead to his eventual suicide in the woods.



Figure 8: A viewer experiencing *Susurrus*.
Photograph: David Leddy

Music plays a key role in the performance and much of the narrative focuses on a production of Benjamin Britten's 1960 opera of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which, we are told, Goodfellow performed. The Researcher's voice on the 'audio guide' accompanies the spectator's real journey through the garden and introduces the fictional story through the separate scenes which are designed to be heard in different locations described on a map. Between the scenes the spectator is allowed time to wander and the dramatic text anticipates that in these gaps they will be distracted by their environment; the Researcher's addresses to the spectator acknowledge, indirectly, the situation and setting that the spectator is experiencing:

RESEARCHER: What out of hearing? Gone? No sound, no word ... if you've arrived at location 2, skip forward to track two. If you're still walking, pause your player now and skip forward when you arrive (Leddy 2009: 20).

Although there is no direct reference made in the recording to the actual environment of the production, the spectator is continually reassured that they can pause the soundtrack and 'take their time'. Consequently there is an implication that the spectator

may either follow the instructions that are delivered or deviate from them to a greater or lesser extent. The linear route, as indicated by the map, operates like a default narrative of hypertext fiction; the spectator can follow it or investigate alternatives to the directed route as they explore the location. At the Oxford Botanical Garden the connection between the physical landscape and both the story of the characters and the underlying context of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sometimes seemed explicit and clear, for example in the references to plants and birds. However at other times the connection between text and context was more obscure and in these moments I become aware of my own process of looking for connections between my physical experience and aural experiences.

A notable quality of the play is that it is constructed from fragments of short monologues rather than dialogue and also from pieces of music; furthermore the narrative moves forwards and backwards in fictional time. Frequently the text draws attention to the problems of its own telling in relation to time, as is illustrated by Helena's early speech:

HELENA: I don't even know where to begin. The beginning? Where's that?
Is the beginning my beginning, or is the beginning his beginning? Maybe.
Sometimes (Leddy 2009: 15).

The play-text has a hypertextual quality in its fragmented construction, its temporal ambiguity and its lack of forward momentum. In this analysis I am equating the structural rules and protocols of the performance with the digital code's function in a hypertext fiction; the structure of the performance comes from the setting and the rules of engagement which are delivered via headphones, map, the literal pathways followed and the protocols of the garden. In order to be activated this performance, like a hypertext fiction, requires a response from its participants.

hear, I become particularly aware of the trees in the garden in Oxford and note their movement as I listen to the soundtrack; I sense that I am being actively prompted to seek out a perspective that will anthropomorphically enhance the narrative:

ROBIN/ MOTH: I love that sound, the sound of the wind in the trees. When I was a child I thought the trees could breathe that they were sighing. Trees do breathe in a way, maybe they are sighing after all. Sigh and gasp. Maybe. Sometimes (Leddy 2009: 34).

The fact that the phrase 'sigh and gasp' has been used previously in the play (Leddy 2009: 20) to describe a moment of intimacy between Moth and his father in the woods, emphasises another level of meaning through its direct association with my physical experience of the environment. There is a clear distance between my actual sensation of the trees in the Oxford Botanical Garden and the description of sounds made by the fictional trees of the story. The structure that brings these two elements together also positions me as a connection point between the actual and the imaginary. This pushing together of an actual sensation with an imaginary one is similar to the concept of the hypertext reader corporeally enacting a narrative event: both works position structural and narrative elements together to enhance the experience. This relates also to an incident identified by Jennifer Parker-Starbuck in her discussion of Dries Verhoeven's *Life Streaming* at the 2010 London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) in which the floor was deliberately flooded after spectators communicated individually, via 'Skype', with performers 5000 miles away. Parker-Starbuck explains how, in her conversation with a young man in Indonesia, they discussed the 2004 tsunami and chatted about their lives and shared experiences of loss and fear before the warm water flowed into the space:

here the water, unexpectedly washing over our feet, adds a material reality, at first perhaps an overly simplified gesture, but one that brings some urgency to our shared connections (Parker-Starbuck 2011a: 67).

In *Susurrus* the narrative, and the structural protocols operate symbiotically in the manner of the narrative and code in hypertext fiction. As a participant I am given the information to position myself, using my visual and kinaesthetic senses, so that I see and experience the environment in a certain way. Consequently, and in accordance with the rules of anamorphosis, I discover the 'correct' way of seeing the landscape to make it complement the narrative experience. My memory of this piece includes a vivid recollection of the trees swaying, a perspective remotely engineered for me by the production in order to emphasise the narrative and foreground the symbiotic relationship between the fictional and the actual environment. The manipulation of the relationship between the activity of the spectator and the narratives is a quality of the hypertextual experience that is evidenced in the production. In both *Susurrus* and *Afternoon* the juxtaposition of the narrative text with the spectator/reader interaction with the structure, brings about a certain loss of distinction between the imaginary story and the actual experience of navigating a terrain.

Intertextuality/ hypertextuality – operational conflict and symbiosis

Early digital theory claimed that hypertext embodied the post-structuralist concept of intertextuality. Although, the proposed affinity between hypertext and post-structuralist theory has been widely criticised for being overemphasised (Bell 2010: 185), it is germane to this study to consider the 'first wave' position on intertextuality,

primarily because the texts being considered here are works that make emphatic use of the tropes of literature. This is particularly apparent in *Susurrus* which uses a literary text to inform both the content and the structural design of the play.

Intertextuality, identified by Roland Barthes as an abstract concept of the relatedness of all writings, posits every text as a potential site of encounter for all the texts previously read by the reader and all the texts previously read by the author (Barthes 1993: 146-7). Consequently a reader's experience of a text is generated, not just by the author's 'transcendental ego' (Worton and Still 1990:17), but by the interaction of multiple external texts which come together in a single work. Barthes' theory suggests that intertextuality articulates the deconstruction of the role of the author at a fundamental level because the author does not create texts, but utilises them in writing, just as the reader utilises them in reading; thus the text both precedes and exceeds the author. In his iconic essay, *The Death of the Author*, 1967, Barthes identifies the intertextual condition of writing:

The text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author – God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture (Barthes 1993: 146).

This notion of the text as a multi-dimensional space is elaborated by Julia Kristeva, another pioneer of the concept of intertextuality, as is seen in this description:

The word's status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)... each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read ... any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another (Kristeva 1986: 37).

Characterised as a concept that problematised assumptions about the distinctiveness of a literary narrative, intertextuality was claimed by early hypertext theorists to be embodied in the new digitally linked texts. Their argument was that the structure of hypertext, with its interconnected textual fragments, *actually* facilitated the encounter between divergent texts in the way that the theories of intertextuality had proposed. Furthermore the operation of hypertext raised questions about the roles of the reader and writer and the status of the text in a manner that reflected the debates about these issues triggered by the concept of intertextuality. For Landow hypertext was itself a: 'fundamentally intertextual system [which] has the capacity to emphasize intertextuality in a way that page bound text in books cannot' (Landow 1997: 55). His viewpoint was echoed by Daniel Chandler who identified 'hypertextuality' as a sub-type of intertextuality because: 'it can take the reader directly to other texts and [...] disrupts the conventional linearity of texts' (Chandler 2003: 9). *Afternoon*, for Landow, was an inherently intertextual work whose links systematically triggered multiple pathways of narratives in a process, he believed, that emphasised the mutability of the text and its capacity to meld itself to the creative choices of the reader in an unprecedented manner: 'All the chief practical, cultural, and educational characteristics of this medium derive from the fact that linking creates new kinds of connectivity and reader choice' (Landow 1998: 154).

An intertextual quality has also been identified in hypertext by Mark Bernstein, who was one of the original developers of Eastgate System's *Storyspace* programming software. In tracing the history of the form, he observes that hypertext was initially seen simply as a mechanism for annotating a text. He suggests that it was only following the literary

experiments of the TINAC (*Textuality, Intertextuality, Narrative and Consciousness*)

group of American writers in 1985 that it started to be realised that hyperlinks:

could serve as exquisite literary connections, explicitly opening the text to the readerly interactions and interventions that are explicitly (albeit tactically) part of all serious reading (Bernstein in Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan 2004: 167).

In identifying hypertext as intertextual, these early theorists saw the hyperlink as a radical form of grammar. It could be positioned as the latest logical development on a trajectory featuring a progression of rhetorical devices which increasingly foregrounded the open intertextuality of language. Such devices also included quotations, metaphors, footnotes, synecdoche and variable typography and graphics, all tropes which could be used, not only to indicate to the reader the existence of a world of texts beyond the particular text being read, but to legitimise their incorporation of such extra-textual material in the process of reading. In a consideration of the significance of intertextuality to hypertext fiction, it is significant to observe that, as an operation of reading, intertextuality may be seen to function in different ways in different situations. While all language may be said to be inherently intertextual, Worton and Still have argued that certain texts foreground the fact that their textual systems relate to pre-existing textual systems by using devices, such as those listed above. These inscribe an 'obligatory intertext' (Worton and Still 1990: 11) which may be used to direct readers to other texts in a very specific manner and bring about a different mode of engagement informed and shaped by an awareness of the significance of other texts to their reading process.

Rhetorical devices such as quotations:

alert the reader to the existence of an already-read, to intertexts which may or may not be locatable. More significantly they function as textual strategies, as tropological events, as metaphors. The use of italics or

inverted commas certainly signals a repetition and a ceding of authorial copyright; it also points to an obligatory intertext, to a conscious manipulation of what Barthes calls the circular memory of reading, thereby acting as a blocking mechanism which [temporarily at least] restricts the reader's free aleatory intertextual reading of the text (Worton and Still, 1990: 10-11).

The notion of an obligatory intertext indicates that the author, in drawing attention to a certain external text, will at the same time dismiss possible others. It is clear that both without, and prior to, the use of any digital linking device, authors of narrative texts routinely deploy stratagems designed to specifically direct the readers' associations between the original and external texts. The intention and consequences of a range of rhetorical devices pointing to an obligatory intertext demonstrates striking similarities to a network of hyperlinks, however I would suggest that coded devices are dissimilar to literary ones in their constitution. This distinction is important as we consider how they function when encountered by the reader. Hyperlinks are a product of digital structural code while quotations, metaphors and other tropes indicating an obligatory intertext, are the product of narrative content. Consequently if, as Landow suggests, hypertext is an intertextual system, it is one that functions under very different rules and is of a different order to the condition of intertextuality identified by post-structuralists as part of the operation of reading.

Hypertext fiction, as a form which combines narrative language, that is inherently intertextual, with digital linking mechanisms, presents a complex situation to the reader whose reading process will engage with both the hypertextual features through digital code and will also operate at an intertextual level through their engagement with the narrative. Furthermore, following Worton and Still's concept, the reader will encounter tropes which direct them to obligatory intertexts alongside hyperlinks which, through

employing the digital structure, manifest jumps to new sections of text. The co-presence of hypertext links and explicit references to obligatory intertexts is evident throughout *Afternoon*, particularly in the many pages which are made up of references, metaphors and quotations from other sources and which direct the reader implicitly away from the constituent narratives, just as the hidden hyperlinks transport them digitally to other internal narratives located on pages in the network.

The experience of reading *Afternoon* may be characterised as an engagement with a complex enmeshing of intertextual connections and structural linking mechanisms. This manner of engagement is not unique to the digital environment, as can be seen in *Susurrus* where the production's structural protocols, with the map, permitted pathways and user instructions, endow it with a hypertextual quality that functions in a manner similar to a hypertext fiction, through giving the spectator access to an experience which can only be activated by their actual participation and following of rules. Alongside this physical manifestation of digital hypertextuality we can consider the operation of an intertextuality which in *Susurrus* comes about partly through elements which are explicitly focussed towards an obligatory intertext: the play continuously references Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which consequently provides a presence that ghosts the production in all its aspects. Within the narrative of *Susurrus* references to the Shakespeare play can be found in the names of the key characters: Helena; Moth and Robin Goodfellow; in the fact that the chief narrator is an 'Indian boy' and that the central incident of the story concerns forbidden love in the woods. Furthermore there are numerous quotes from the play and references to, and excerpts from, the Britten opera which all function to: 'alert the reader to the existence of an already read' (Worton and Still 1990: 10-11). Most

obviously, perhaps, the obligatory intertext is indicated through the use of the actual location, a garden, which functions as a metonym for the woodland setting of Shakespeare's play and through which the spectator must find their way in the manner of the characters who find themselves lost in the woods in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The spectator's experience of *Susurrus* is the product of the play by Leddy, but also of the absent play by Shakespeare, which we see in glimpses through the narrative and which we are continuously directed to remember. In the 'Introduction' to the play script Leddy states: 'I wanted to use *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but didn't want to actually tell Shakespeare's stories or use his characters' (Leddy 2009: 7).

Both *Afternoon* and *Susurrus* incorporate literary devices which indicate obligatory intertexts, but they also both use structural devices, hypertext links and protocols and instructions for participation, that provoke an ergodic response. Reader and spectator alike must make specific physical moves in order to experience the works. Consequently there is a dynamic between the narrative and structural elements which has to be negotiated. It is how the reader and spectator undertake this negotiation, between the structural and narrative elements, that is the concern here and specifically if the clarity of the operation in the hypertext fiction can inform an understanding of the process in the performance.

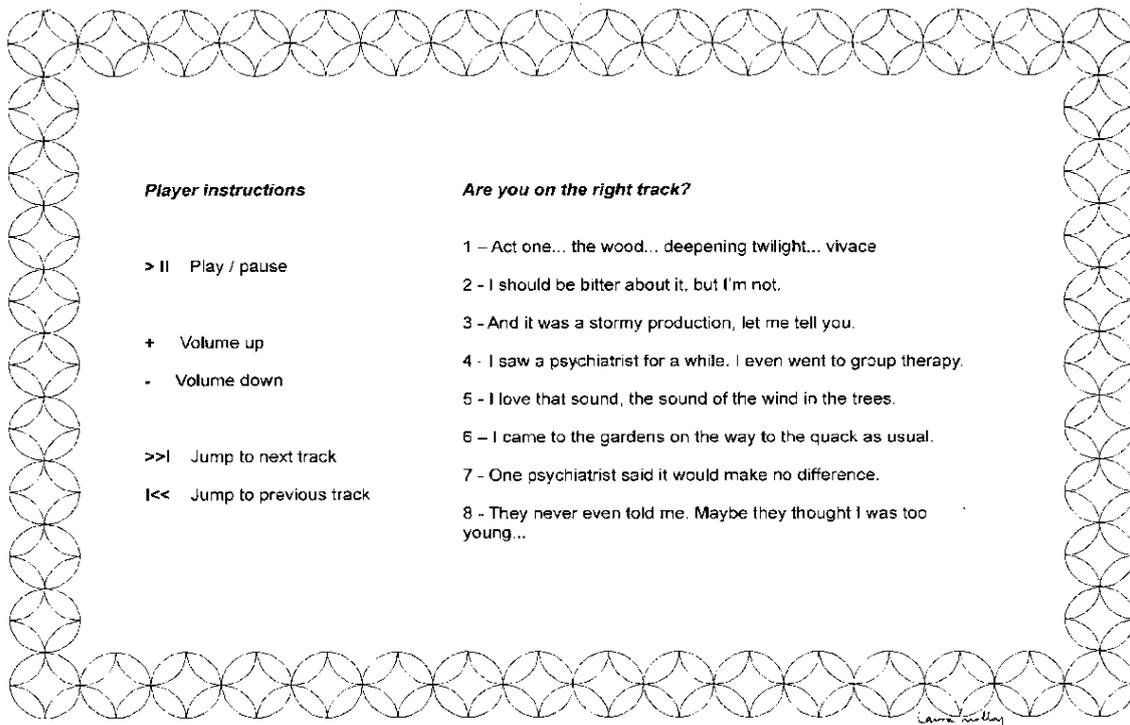


Figure 10: Copy of user instructions issued at the production of *Susurrus* in Oxford (2010). Artwork: Laura Molloy.

Landow's assertion, that hyperlinks themselves generate an intertextual operation, does not explain how the implicit intertextuality of the language used in hypertext fiction relates to the reader's experience of the interactive text. This inconsistency has prompted second wave digital theorists (see Aarseth 1997: 95, Miall 2006 and 2012) to suggest that there is a difficulty in this relationship between digital structure and narrative which is revealed in hypertext fiction. This difficulty can be illustrated by directly comparing the operations of intertextuality and hypertextuality. Barthes constructs the act of reading as an encounter with innumerable textual associations because all texts are 'made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation' (Barthes 1993:148). In describing the 'birth of the reader' (ibid.) he sets out a creative reading process through which the reader is surrounded by innumerable texts from which they can make meaning. He envisioned in his essay *S/Z* an 'ideal text' that gave the reader access to a: 'galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds' and he specified that for this text: 'the

codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, [they] are indeterminable' (Barthes 2002: 5-6). However this empowering concept is not accurately reflected in the experience of engaging with the linking devices in a hypertext fiction. Here reading possibilities are precisely programmed by the author, not primarily through their choice of words, but through the design of the digital code, which determines the operation of the hyperlinks enabling them to delimit the reading experience.

Although Landow claimed Barthes' ideal text precisely matched the 'open ended perpetually unfinished textuality' (Landow 1992: 3) of hypertext, I would suggest that while such a textual concept may be indicted by the theoretical commentaries on the structure of hypertext, it is not manifested in the programmed work of hypertext fiction where the choices available to the reader are carefully plotted and restricted. To accept Landow's, Chandler's and Bernstein's arguments that hypertext is an intertextual system suggests that hypertext is capable of inscribing a condition whose very operation resists inscription. A fundamental quality of intertextuality is that it is a condition that is always in progress, continually changing, resistant to codification and continually working beyond the limits of the inscribed text. While hypertext fictions may be complex assemblages of text which contain multiple possibilities for reading, they are neither unmappable, structurally unlimited, nor infinitely flexible because of the prescriptive linking system that underpins all readings. Were hypertext to be an intertextual system it would need to be able to demonstrate a capacity to operate without such limits. The fact that *Afternoon* is designed to include multiple restraints on a reader's progress through its use of 'conditional links' means that only certain routes through the network are made possible and the concept of limitation is fundamental to the experience of the work.

Afternoon may be more accurately described as having *intra*-textual structures because its hyperlinks refer only to certain other pages within a self-contained text system. While it can be stated that the language used in *Afternoon* is inherently intertextual, and also that it indicates an obligatory intertext, the hypertextual structure itself is not, as Landow has argued, a 'fundamentally intertextual system' (Landow 1992: 10) because of the presence of *intra*-textual structures. There are in fact three systemic textual linking operations at work in a hypertext fiction; the intertext, the obligatory intertext and the *intra*-text. A fundamental issue for the hypertextual experience concerns the mutual operations of these systems in any reading or spectating process, and the ways in which they affect one another. David Miall suggests that in the development of hypertext fiction a preoccupation with the operation of digital code in the first decades of electronic writing has led to a situation in which the complex response to literature, its tropes and its figures, has been overlooked. He elaborates:

hyperfictions, whatever computational or game-like processes they contain, are also narratives. Whatever the medium, readers bring to narrative a range of expectations and capacities drawn from their experience with the various forms of narrative (plot, character, focalization et cetera), as well as experience of their own stories in life. They are also likely to bring a rich understanding of poetic language ranging from early childhood verbal play to the work of Dickens. It seems unlikely that this experience is left behind when the reader enters the hyperfictional world (Miall: 2004)

Despite the extent of digital theory produced in response to the development of hypertext he states that there have been: 'relatively few systematic accounts of how a reader negotiates the text and experiences the flows and disruptions of reading as these unfold in relation to a specific hyperfiction' (Miall: 2004). He argues that hypertext

fiction, far from opening up the text to the reader, serves to restrict the reader's intertextual engagement and consequently the literary functionality of the work.

The computer framework thus places more limitations on writing (and reading) than does conventional printed text. The infinite possibilities of response by each reader are limited to a few links prepared by the hypertext designer. The choice of multiple pathways through hypertextual space provides only an illusion of reader emancipation. (Miall 1999: 32)

This argument suggests that hyperlinks can contaminate the literary operations of a hypertext fiction. The risk for the hypertext fiction reader therefore is that the inherent intertextuality of a work may be weakened, or rendered ineffective, by the presence of the *intra*-text, because their engagement with the hyperlinks will prevent them from responding to the 'infinite possibilities' (ibid.) of the text.

Another quality of hypertext fiction that has been identified as restricting the processes of ordinary reading concerns its structural formulation which, in the case of *Afternoon*, prevents the reader having an overview of the entire text, as they would if the medium of production was a printed book. In this respect hypertext fiction operates in a similar manner to a live, unfolding performance work, which the spectator may not be able to identify as a tangible, finite or complete object during the process of viewing it. Consequently the reader of *Afternoon* is not able to establish how long the work is, or how much of it they have read or where a certain page is positioned in the work. Furthermore the reader's ability to read in an unorthodox manner, for instance to skim or read in the 'wrong' order as one may do with books, is compromised. Barthes identified a process of 'tmesis' to refer to the free movement of the reader of printed text when they switch their attention around the text from fragment to fragment, or forward and backward, according to personal inclination - a process, he pointed out,

that the author is unable to influence (in Aarseth 1997: 78). However this kind of reading is impossible with a hypertext fiction because, as Aarseth identifies, the reader does not have the oversight or control of the body of text that is necessary for this to happen: 'hypertext punishes tmesis by controlling the text's fragmentation and pathways and by forcing the reader to pay attention to the strategic links. (Aarseth 1997: 78). The reader of hypertext fiction cannot read without inscribing their activity and investing personally in the emergence of the text through the moves that they make. This process is mirrored in *Susurrus*, where similarly the spectator's mode of reception is physicalised in a performative manner through their movements and action around the garden.

At the heart of the hypertextual experience is a conflict between the different textual systems in operation, none of which can completely control the reader/ spectator experience. Just as we have seen how the intertexts and the intra-text have different degrees of influence on the hypertext fiction reader, so too do they on the performance spectator. During the course of their engagement a spectator may get immersed in a narrative, with all its intertextual associations, but sometimes the work's operational procedures, functioning as an intra-text, will interrupt these immersive processes and demand the spectator's ergodic response to its operations. These alternating dictats and allowances therefore operate as different forces which must be negotiated throughout an engagement with a work. The processes by which a spectator/ reader undertakes this negotiation prompt specific practices of engagement which characterise the hypertextual experience.

Matthew Kirschenbaum recognises the significance of the readers' engagement with the different components of hypertext fiction in the reading of *Afternoon*. He identifies such

hypertextual reading as 'material negotiation' (Kirschenbaum 2008: 165), a concept he develops from Jerome McGann's description of text as: 'not a material thing but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) when certain communicative exchanges are being practiced' (McGann 1991: 3). Kirschenbaum in his discussion of *Afternoon* further draws attention to the precarious dynamic between the reader's activities and the textual environment designed by the author:

The text possesses faculties that seem to work to discourage any sense of normative, stable interaction with the narrative. *Afternoon* thus walks a fine line: though it depends on the reader's active engagement, that engagement is achieved by way of exquisite control – or craft – by the author (M. Kirschenbaum 2008: 165).

To develop this further I would argue that the hypertextual experience comes about through the reader's response to the state of tension between the textual and intra-textual elements put in place by the author. The hypertextual environment, then, is not one that simply invites the reader/spectator's active engagement, but more particularly one that requires that they become involved in a 'material negotiation' of the facets of the works. The narratives with their intertextual operations and the structural design of the work operating as the intra-text, both operate as forces within the work that must be negotiated by the reader/spectator through the course of their encounter.

It is the nature of this negotiation that raises further questions here, because if we adopt Miall's perspective, the implication is that the structural features of the work will always contaminate the functionality of the narrative and rob the experience of depth and complexity. However I would suggest that Miall's outline oversimplifies a complex relationship between the various inter and intra-textual elements. Rather than one system consistently dominating another, it is the playing of these two systems against

one another that defines the hypertextual experience and this play may be channelled by the author to create particular effects, as Kirschembaum indicates. There is a tension in *Susurrus* between intra-text and intertext, that is, between the signal to respond actively to the structure and the signal to position oneself psychologically in terms of the various narratives being presented. However rather than this tension compromising the spectator's experience of the narrative, as Miall's argument would imply, it is used to enhance the experience by requiring the spectator to actively engage with the two textual systems involved in the piece which are shown to reflect and reinforce one another.

This can be illustrated in a moment in *Susurrus* when the spectator is instructed to move to 'Location Four': at this point the audio tape refers to Lysander and Hermia's flight through the magical forest. As the spectator walks through the wooded garden to find the next significant location, they are inevitably taking on an action that reflects the fictional narrative. So rather than one of the semantic systems becoming contaminated by the operation of the other, in this instance, a symbiosis between the intra-textuality and intertextuality is evident through which the spectator may develop a heightened awareness of the two textual systems at work in the piece. This is reminiscent of the process of enacting, discussed in relation to *Afternoon*, and I have identified it as a hypertextual experience because it stems from a multiple engagement with different modes which have the capacity to either contaminate or enhance one another's operation depending on how they are managed.

The machinery of representation, in operation in hypertext fiction and in the participatory theatre under consideration here, continually puts into process narrative

procedures that cannot be completed in terms of any unified system. As a result of this, the reader/ spectator's relationship to the text is continually shifting as they undertake a material negotiation between the intertexts and the intra-texts; it is through this shifting process that the hypertextual experience emerges.

The material negotiation of Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*

'Every interactive fiction depends on a fiction of interaction'
(Moulthrop 1995: 60).

The effects upon the reader of an author's creative manipulation of the intra-text and intertexts are also illustrated in Stuart Moulthrop's hypertext fiction, *Victory Garden*, 1992, which positions the reader at the centre of a narrative network comprising 993 pages and more than 2804 links. Like *Susurrus*, the work, which concerns the impact of the first Gulf War on a group of friends, lovers and families, provides the reader with several map-like diagrams at the outset which illustrate the structure of the work. These identify several of the constituent 'story paths' and suggest connections between them, however they are insufficiently detailed to operate effectively as guides. Instead they give the reader a partial knowledge of the structure of the work. Although this information is scanty, it does serve to illustrate that there are certain boundaries and different divisions within the work and in this respect the approach differs from that of *Afternoon*.

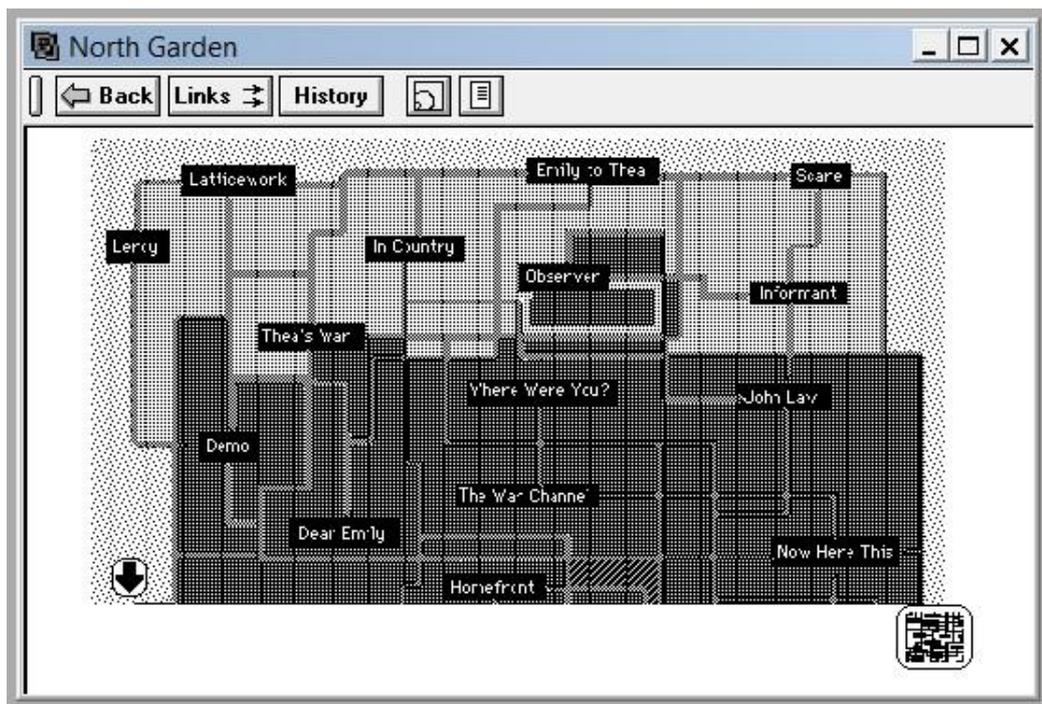
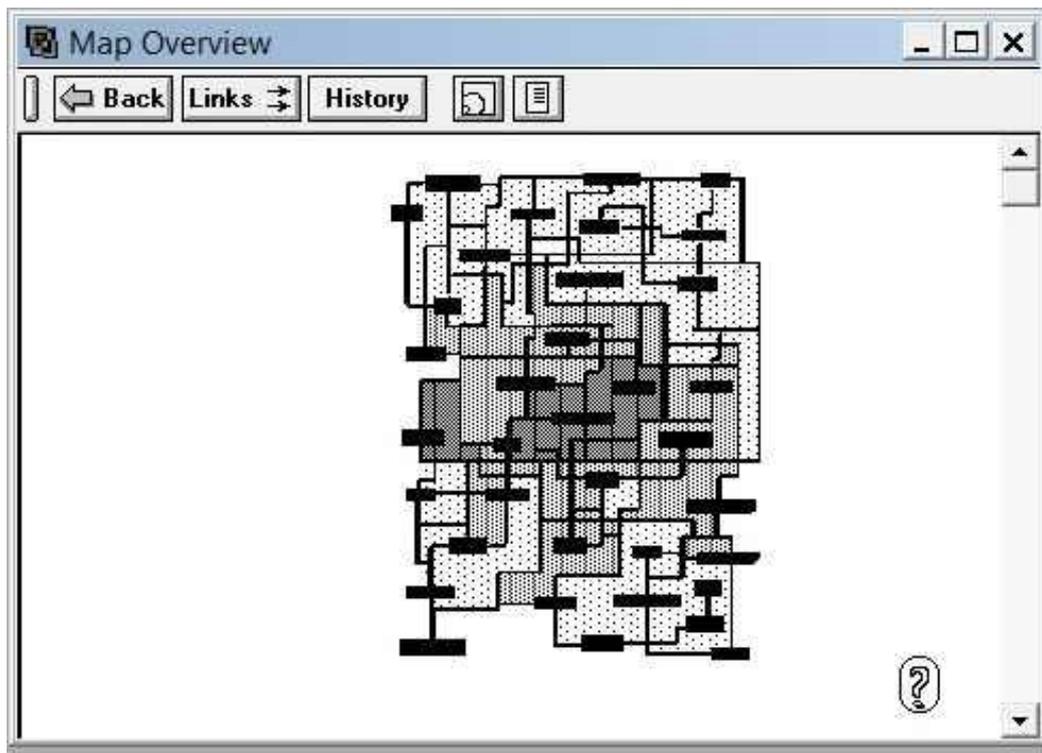


Figure 11: Moulthrop (1992): *Victory Garden* Maps

The characters of *Victory Garden* are all US citizens based at, or connected to, the fictional Tara University in Texas. Emily Runbird is a graduate student who is commissioned to serve in a postal depot in the Gulf. Many of the narrative strands relate to Emily's war experiences as well as to her relationship with her sister Veronica, an opponent of the war, and to her troubled love affair with her former tutor, Boris

Urquhart. Emily's letters home feature in these narrative strands and convey the fluctuations between boredom and apprehension that constitute daily life in the war zone. But, as her letter to her friend Thea shows, she expresses a confidence that she is in no danger and that nothing will happen to her.

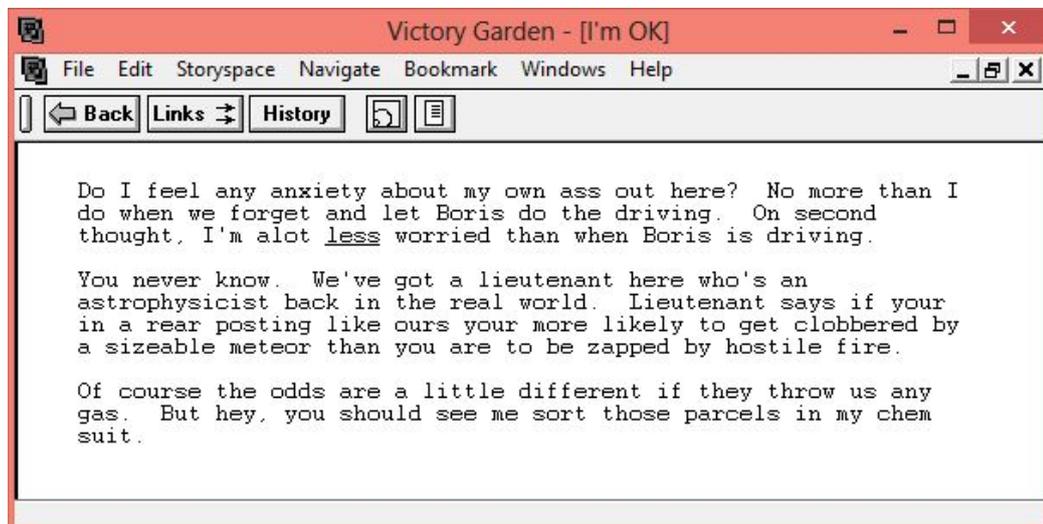


Figure 12: Moulthrop (1992): *Victory Garden* (I'm OK)

But something does happen, because among the pages concerning her life in the Gulf is an entirely blank page with no text. This page, which appears as a black rather than white space, can be accessed from various other pages. It is titled as a single full stop, [.] , and preceded, via several routes, by a description of a bomb strike on the depot. The absence of words on this page indicates a presence of something that cannot be expressed through textual means.

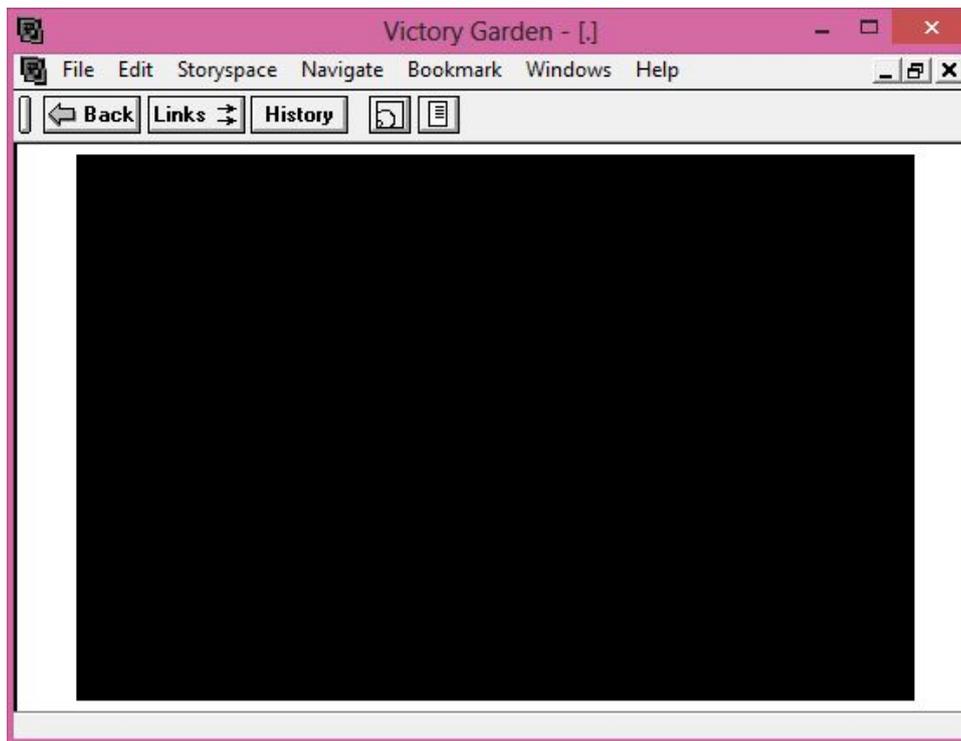


Figure 13: Moulthrop (1992): Victory Garden (.)

Confronted by this text-less page with no apparent hyperlinks, the reader can only click randomly, in the hope of accessing a hidden link by chance. Alternatively she may click the 'back button' and retrace her route and try and avoid the blank page by finding an alternative pathway through the work. Thus the reader is abruptly detached from her involvement with the author's words and brought forcibly into contact with the operation of the code. This technique foregrounds the fact that the narrative is operating at the limits of text. With the absence of words the only active elements at this point are the code and the reader as she attempts to access the intra-text in order to locate a mechanism for progressing her reading. The silence of the author at this point exposes the articulation of the system itself. The lack of text creates a gap which the reader must fill with their activity of searching for a way to make sense of the cessation of textual activity by linking the page again to the world of the narrative.

From the reader's point of view this textual event may appear to be a systemic malfunction, but is, in fact, the author's creative programming of code designed to provoke a specific corporeal reader response. This apparent 'breakdown', or cessation of narrative progress, with its resultant focus on the reader's interaction, foregrounds both the unstable relationship between the text and its reader in hypertext fiction and the complex fluctuations between code and narrative. It also illustrates to the reader the fact that there is a structure beneath the surface of the text which has significant control over the narrative experience.

The appearance of the blank page is not explicitly elucidated in the work's narrative. However, because of its juxtaposition with pages describing a military attack, and a hidden link to a page inscribed with one word 'peace', it does suggest the occurrence of a narrative event of significance. Confronted by a screen which emphatically proclaims a sudden absence of text, the reader is likely to interpret this absence symbolically as indicating Emily's sudden absence from the story through her death in the attack. The positioning of the blank screen as an abrupt non-statement suggests a cessation of language and, because of its context, of life. It conveys that an event has occurred of such magnitude that its impact exceeds the representational matrix offered by the author. There are no words to express what has occurred and in this moment of extremis the coded digital structure communicates the significance of this absence.

However the blank screen does not signify the end of the story because, as persistent clicking reveals, the reader is still able to interact and, with persistence, to navigate away from the page, for there is a hidden link that can be found. The reader, whose reading process is distilled and re-presented through the action of the cursor, thus becomes

performatively involved in the process of progressing beyond this page through an engagement with the intra-text. The involvement is corporeal; clicking to find an invisible link is the obvious physical response to the blank screen, it is an exchange that operates in a space that may be described as a liminal zone between the coded operations and the narrative. As the narrative disappears into blankness and the reader enters into this interactive exchange, the quality of her interaction develops a significance which re-calls and re-enforces the narrative. For the reader's attempt to find connecting links in a unfriendly digital environment is a frustrating search for meaning that mirrors the fictional search undertaken by characters in *Victory Garden* as they attempt to discover Emily's fate. Again we see the reader implicated through a process of enactment. This time, however, it is different from *Afternoon*, because rather than mirroring the experience of the single protagonist looking for his family, which is specific and clear, this process is at once more general and more personal. It is more personal because the device, appearing as a blank and unresponsive page on the reader's computer, implicates the reader and the reader's personal interaction with their own machine, in the narrative events. It is more general because the event provokes in the reader a feeling of being excluded and not privy to the information available. Furthermore, it is Moulthrop's rejection of text as a means of creating the effect that is significant – the blank page is positioned in a manner which facilitates a corporeal response, in the absence of language. Moulthrop uses the narrative/ code juxtaposition to create an experience that operates as a fictional/real hybrid where the reader is made to actually feel the emotions being explored through the narrative. The effects he achieves through his use of the digital code exceed what the language alone could elicit. John Cayley identifies that in hypertext fiction of this kind the code is not simply something that goes on behind the screen: 'mediation can no longer be characterised

as subsidiary or peripheral; it becomes text rather than paratext' (Cayley 2002). The structural protocols of the systems are thus not only central to the formulation of the work but to the specific engagement of the reader, and are a mechanism by which a reading can bring about a substantial corporeal and psychological involvement in the meaning making processes of the work. The author is involved in using code and narrative for creating an actual experience, not simply the impression of one. An important aspect of the hypertextual experience is that it does not settle into provoking either the ergodic or the imaginative response, but oscillates across the two, drawing from each to different extents. The experience then across the narrative/ code divide is distinguished by its instabilities, and its refusal to be completed in terms of any single external system.

The theory surrounding hypertext fiction implies, that through hypertext fictions' use of structural devices, the reader will access a more creatively active role in the work than they would were they engaged in a more sedentary receptive process (Bolter 1992: 32, Landow 1997: 13 - 34). The hypertext fiction reader is required to respond to codes in specific ways; there are elements of discovery, invention and play, provoked by the form which reflect spectatorial practices typical of participatory performance which similarly seeks an active spectator involvement. However, among the work of digital theorists, there are also frequent assertions made that the reader will want to conduct their reading and organise their response in a manner circumscribed by conventions emerging from the culture of the printed book (Aarseth 1997, Hayles 2002, Yellowlees Douglas 2000) Despite the experimental nature of the form, the reader is assumed to be motivated by conventional 'print-centric' desires; primarily those for a linear and completed narrative. Aarseth implies that within the digital environment of hypertext

fiction, the reader remains in fact driven to, above all, locate a linear narrative, with the appropriate development and closure. Consequently, when the embedded code makes such an experience difficult to obtain, he characterises the reading process as deeply unsatisfactory. The reader is: 'forced to swim against the tide' (Aarseth 1997: 80). He adds that they are 'caught imprisoned by the repeating circular paths and his [sic] own impotent choices' (Aarseth 1997: 91). He describes the reading of *Afternoon* as an alternating sequence of 'aporias', which prevent the reader from making sense of the narrative because they lack access to a particular part and epiphanies: 'sudden revelations that make sense of the whole' (Aarseth 1997: 92). It is significant that he cites an often quoted analysis of a reading of *Afternoon* by Jane Yellowlees Douglas (Yellowlees Douglas 2000: 64-71) who compiled a precise account of her systematic trawl through *Afternoon*, through which, after four attempts, she eventually discovered a key page which revealed, what was to her, the secret of the story, the disclosure of what happened in the car accident (Aarseth 1997: 92). He describes this as a 'model reading' (ibid.) because she not only solved the mystery but she resolved the relationship of reader to text through producing a narrative version of the work and thus achieved epiphany and closure (Aarseth 1997: 94). He concludes that, because *Afternoon* has structural mechanisms that thwart narrative progression, it: 'bears down on a reader patience and sense of progress' (Aarseth 1997: 93).

Although Aarseth recognises the dissolution of the reader's role into many different types of activity, ranging from: 'mere observing' to the rearranging and adding of elements (Aarseth 1997: 167), his assertions about the reader seem to indicate that they are only inspired in their reading by a desire to complete, or to discover, the narrative embedded by the author. In comparing hypertext fiction and certain performance

practices, there is evidence that, particularly in participatory work, the spectator's commitment to the authored linear narrative may be weaker and more complex than Aarseth's analysis would suggest. For example, the focus on author's narrative is deliberately undermined in *Susurrus* where the use of the location, and of *Midsummer Night's Dream* as an obligatory intertext, means that while the piece is about Leddy's narrative, it is also about Shakespeare's and about one's own experience of the garden, and the complexity and multiplicity of the experience is emphatically provoked. Indeed the site related nature of the work emphasizes and encourages the spectator to discover the significance of their own experience of the garden to the emergence of the work. This performance therefore demonstrates that engagement with narratives may be far more diverse and multifarious than is indicated by Aarseth's commentaries on the reader's response. The hypertextual experience problematizes roles of production and reception and particularly the conventional hierarchical patterns associated with these activities. Therefore to characterise the spectator/ reader's role, unquestioningly, as a hunt for a 'correct' interpretation fails to take into account the changes that come about to the act of reception in the hypertextual environment. The assumptions that Aarseth *et al* are making, notably that the reader's desire for a certain kind of linear coherence remains the same in the post neutral environment of hypertext as it is in the neutral environment of printed text, need further challenging.

Jacques Rancière, in considering the process of the transfer of meaning in theatre, considers performance itself as: 'an autonomous thing between the idea of the artists and the sensation or comprehension of the spectator' (Rancière 2011: 14). In establishing the 'emancipation of the spectator' it is necessary, he claims, for a performance to be recognised not as the body of authored work transmitted from artists

to spectators, but rather as a thing that is: 'owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect' (Rancière 2011: 15).

From this perspective it becomes possible to see how a hypertextual structure can model the kind of experience that Rancière identifies with theatre because it can demonstrate how a work of art, be it a performance or hypertext fiction, can have an autonomy that operates independently of its producer and its receiver. The experience of such a work will not be characterized by the reader/ spectator puzzling out a 'correct' interpretation of the author's narrative, in the manner outlined by the digital theorists, but rather by them actively engaging with the work and using it to create their own impression. In his essay Rancière reflects on a notional idiom that requires spectators to become narrators and translators as they 'appropriate the story and make it their own story' (Rancière 2011: 22). He states:

The emancipation of the spectator might begin with the realisation that viewing actively transforms and interprets its objects; what she sees, feels and understands from the performance is not necessarily what the artist thinks she must (Rancière 2011:14).

The experience I am outlining in hypertext fiction and performance responds to and extends aspects of the theatrical illustration provided by Rancière. The model of hypertext allows creative aesthetic process to be considered in a precise manner, in terms of the dynamics between the internal structures and narrative elements of the works.

The performance and hypertext fictions in this chapter demonstrate how the author's narrative may operate as one force among others at work in the piece, but not always the predominant one. The experiential nature of the works allow the activity of the spectator/ reader to play a key part in the shaping of the event. The hypertextual experience is one that remains open, rather than being contained by a narrative. Consequently it is subject to changes that may happen moment to moment depending on the activity of the spectator/ reader and the structural formulation of the work as well as the textual operations.

Christopher Keep's commentary on hypertext fiction recognises that it has the capacity to open up a response to narrative in a way that exceeds concepts of totality and completion on which print based literature depends:

It [hypertextuality] demands, in short, a new body, one which finds its pleasures not in the satisfaction of completion and enclosure nor in the stately assurances of the *Cartesian cogito* (original italics), but in the possibilities of connectivity and openness (Keep in Ryan 1999: 171).

Victory Garden is a deeply reflexive work which draws attention to its own interconnectedness with other texts through a complex interplay between different operations of intertextuality and of conditional hyperlinks. Its use of multiple narrative fragments actively works to prevent the reader from focusing on a main narrative strand and provokes them to make their own associations from the material provided. The work includes references to, and quotations from, a diverse range of textual material ranging from personal letters, to transcriptions from television news reports, to song lyrics, to academic prose and technical descriptions. It is this rich variety of allusions to diverse external sources which allow it to evoke, so precisely, a time and culture in

recent US history. The text invites the reader to make imaginative connections between the proffered references and their own knowledge and memories in an intertextual manner, while the hyperlinks are fashioned to digitally connect the material through a stratified network. The complex relationship between open intertextuality and hypertextuality is evident throughout this work, and clearly illustrated in the pages concerning the university lecturer, Boris Urquhart, at a time when his political views and radical approaches to teaching are detrimentally influencing his professional reputation. The following page may be accessed from a default narrative strand which establishes that Urquhart's tardy appearance at class has irritated his students, particularly the eponymous Victor Garden. A group of them have arrived for a seminar with Urquhart, but in his absence another lecturer, Macarthur, attempts to lead a discussion of Jorge Luis Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths*:

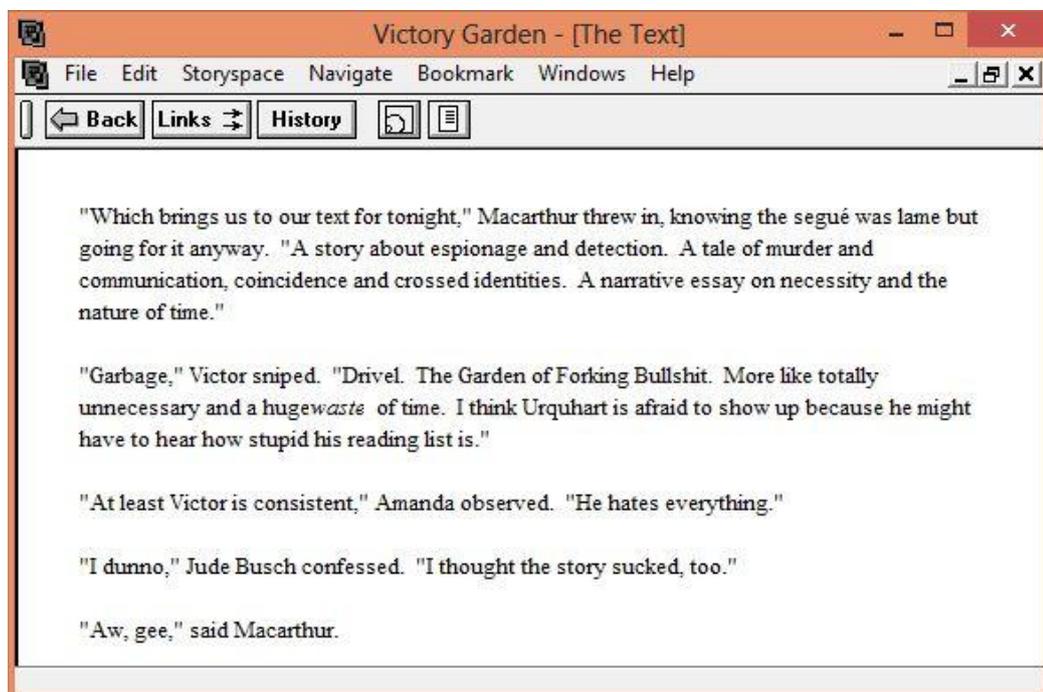


Figure 14: Moulthrop (1992): *Victory Garden* (the text)

This text illustrates a playfulness about the double manipulation of obligatory intertextuality and hyperlinks which is characteristic of *Victory Garden*. Here the Borges' short story is clearly referenced, but not, as might be expected, hyperlinked, and the

significance of the story to the work can only be inferred. In adjoining pages, references to other texts on Boris's reading list are supported by hyperlinks in the manner that was, perhaps, envisaged by Landow and has become normal practice for linking textual material on the Internet. The reader consequently becomes aware of the fact that associations between texts are being manipulated via the code, and key decisions made about what is and is not linked; furthermore the absence of hyperlinks becomes as articulate as their presence. It becomes apparent that operating at the level of the deep text is an eloquent commentary on the way in which hypertextuality and intertextuality function together.

Linkages – the crafting of textual systems through the parallel operations of hyperlinks and dramatic cues

In his comparison of hypertext fiction and printed narrative Miall states: 'In hypertext fiction, by contrast, the author is a trickster, a stage manager whose presence we sense in every link,' (Miall 1998). In this metaphorical re-location of the author to the mechanism beyond the text, it is significant that he draws attention to the theatrical role of the stage manager, who in theatre takes charge of the management of the dramatic cues in a script. In focussing on parallels between theatre and hypertext fiction the cue is a device of particular significance, because its structural function bears a similarity to that of the hyperlink. In the discussion above the intra-text has been associated with the operation of digital code in hypertext fiction, and specifically with the hyperlink; to extend this function to performance the notion of an intra-text may be associated with the operation of dramatic cues. The hyperlink in hypertext fiction is the mechanism that connects different sections of textual material and allows access between them; in a

similar manner the cue in theatre is the device that provides a connection point between the multiple texts that make up a performance. In addition to their technical functions, hyperlinks and cues both exist in the context of their host text as part of the narrative. Kaplan and Moulthrop pointed out the similarity of dual function between the hyperlink and the cue.

In a stage script, a cue is a term with double meaning: it is both a line of dialogue and a 'private' signal to the actors about an action. Links in hypertext function in the same way (Kaplan and Moulthrop 2000).

Theatre's composite form is a product of its multiple texts, by which I include the dramatic script and also sound, video, choreography, lighting and other performance texts. These are juxtaposed and activated by the operation of cues which, as Kaplan and Moulthrop indicate, may be words or lines, or alternatively technical effects or actions delivered by the performers. Cues function in the same manner as hyperlinks; when the cue is reached through the progressive unfolding of the performance, its activation triggers a new textual event, thus the live connectivity between adjacent texts in theatre is organised through cues. Their presence in a text is an indicator of multi-dimensionality and enables the form to shift between different modes; the cues function as chiasmata, joining the texts at significant points and allowing information to flow between them. Cues are marked in a script and their placement makes explicit how a performance operates. Their intra-textual function is that they link and facilitate the connections between all the materials involved in the operation of the self-contained system that is a particular theatre event. Just as the intra-text in hypertext fiction shapes the experience of the reader, so too the intra-text in theatre, seen through the operation of the dramatic cues, shapes the experience of the spectator beyond and outside the operations of the narrative.

The activation of the cues indicates a live connectivity in the theatre in a similar manner to the way in which the reader's clicking on hyperlinks in a hypertext fiction illustrates a fundamental quality of its liveness, inasmuch as each reading is a live event triggered through activation of the digital code. Liveness in *Susurrus* is made apparent through the live activation of the cues by spectators, rather than the presence of performers, because the play is heard as a recording controlled by each spectator. Therefore the performance relies on the spectator responding to certain cues presented to them via the headphones or map; their responses to the cues generally involves a physical action. The audio-narrative guides its spectator through the experiences of the four characters and elicits responses to cues as they occur; for example, the spectator is instructed to press 'pause' on the headsets on the cue of the music finishing, or to follow a certain path when they reach a point indicated on the map. The production would not be able function without the compliance of the spectator in responding to the cues, as is evident from the opening:

Welcome wanderer! Please use the map you have been given to find your way from one place to the next. You have begun at location number one. You are listening to track number one. Later you will move to location two and so on and so forth etcetera et al and the like ... Goodbye. I'll be thinking of you (Leddy 2009: 15).

The spectator's control of the cues in *Susurrus* is unusual. In non-participatory performance this dimension of interaction with the spectator would not be a feature and the cues would be managed by the production team. However, this particular aspect of *Susurrus* enables a direct comparison to be made with *Afternoon* which also, like any other hypertext fiction, requires the reader to activate the links. In each case the cues and links are embedded in the narratives, but in distinctly different ways; in *Afternoon*,

as discussed above, the hyperlinks are mostly unmarked and therefore cannot be distinguished from the narrative in the general course of reading until they are activated. At certain points in *Afternoon* the reader is directly addressed and called to action by a specific cue; this is seen in the opening screen when they are required to click 'Y' or 'N' to forward the action. For the most part navigation is done through an intuitive engagement with the 'words that yield' (Joyce 1990).

In *Susurrus* the cues are delivered as part of the narrator's address over the headphones to the 'listener' and are woven into the substance of the text delivered, as this quotation from the end of Scene 3 illustrates:

It's time to fly this place and move to location four. When you get there listen to track four. And here's some music for the voyage.
MUSIC – Britten's Midsummer Night's Dream, 'My Gentle Robin'
(Leddy 2009: 30)

At the moment of hearing this the spectator may refer to the map which shows the ways to go, either directly to Location 4, or indirectly via a greenhouse.

In both *Susurrus* and *Afternoon* the reader engages with the intra-text via the cues or links, however through the action of doing so they enter into the complex operations of intertextuality running through the works. In the case of *Susurrus*, as the reference above shows, the play, as it cues the spectator to move on, also draws on an assumed cultural knowledge of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and points the spectator to an obligatory intertext. This is done through the use of the phrase 'it's time to fly this place', which is a quotation from Hermia's speech: 'Lysander and myself will fly this place' (Shakespeare 1978: 200), and through the use of the Britten opera.

The operation of dramatic cues and hyperlinks may also demonstrate the fragility of the author's work because their presence introduces an additional level of meaning to the host text which can compromise it. Cues and links create gaps in the text through which another text may be accessed; Miall cites Harpold in his discussion of how hyperlinks introduce unpredictability and uncertainty into a text. Thus the link is a rupture, 'a point of singularity where everything that came "before" is changed in ways that cannot be predicted prior to that rupture' (Harpold 1994 in Miall 1998).

Cues and hyperlinks therefore have the capacity to undermine the texts they reside in because as they create new narrative possibilities they erase the original function of the text. In discussing the operation of links Stuart Moulthrop compares their function to the dramatic cue:

In a direct analogy with theatre: a stage cue means one thing to the spectator and another to the fellow playing Polonius, waiting in the wings to make his entrance. ... Hypertext ... isn't just a disordered or deficient deployment of type ...It brings a new way of understanding the operations of writing (Moulthrop in Simanowski 2000).

Links and cues in the works discussed cause a physical response. In understanding the nature and impact of this response, the hypertextual model is useful as it allows us to identify the experiences produced which operate outside purview of reading or spectating, but may be considered as hypertextual.

Cues in a conventional theatre production may be highly meaningful to the production team of actors, but unnoticeable to the spectator. The invisible hyperlinks of *Afternoon* operate in a similar way, although here the reader will shift between the states of

perceiving or not perceiving their double meaning. If links are not activated, they will remain as unnoticeable to the reader, just as cues are to the conventional spectator. However, once clicked, hyperlinks may change the understanding of the previous text as they take the reader along the path of a new narrative. Links therefore can be destabilising elements which disturb a text's identity and relationship to its past.

This capacity of the cue to limit the spectator's interpretation of a text can illustrate Miall's argument about the hyperlink limiting the reader's response to the text, because the cue potentially restrains the operation of intertextuality in a performance text. This tendency can be illustrated from my own experience of *Susurrus*: as I walk through the garden the voice on the headphones tells me to fast forward to the next track when I reach the 'lily pond'. This not only stops me from wandering around the garden but also causes the lily pond to develop a new and particular meaning; it becomes the place where the narrative will be triggered, the place which gives access to a certain story and this new status may compromise its previous significance because by becoming a cue it loses identity as it acquires a new function.

The cue and the hyperlink are both points of transition. They have about them a quality which is reminiscent of Marc Auge's notion of 'non-places' (Auge 1995). The cue/ link could be said to become a 'non place' because it is has become partially disassociated from its original meaning; its new function is to facilitate passage, like a terminus within a text. The cue/ link is positioned within the place of the text as an invitation into another place. It therefore has the capacity to change the reader's rootedness to the main text and instil both a sense of discovery and sense of loss as the reader/ spectator follows the indicated route through the text. The placing and manipulating of the cues and links

alongside the narrative provide a way for the author to craft different textual systems together and elicit specific responses.

Conclusion

The multiple aesthetic operations of the hypertextual experience are brought about by the juxtaposition of structural mechanisms and narratives in digital and performance works. This chapter has shown how hypertext fiction creates a particular predicament for the reader because its constituent digital and literary elements each demand different orders of response. The works discussed demonstrate how this textual hybrid produces certain practices of reading which emerge when the reader encounters a conflict between narrative and ergodics. In these situations the reader must negotiate between the demands for immersive engagement from the literary elements and the demands for participatory action from the structural elements as they read. The reader's response to the text is always influenced by the author's manipulation of the digital code which functions as an intra-textual structure to bring about certain practices of reading. Enacting aspects of the narrative, responding to anamorphic devices in the text and exploring the multi dimensionality of the text's juxtaposed narratives, are among practices provoked in *Afternoon* and *Victory Garden*.

David Leddy's *Susurrus* demonstrates that the practices of engagement revealed through the hypertextual processes are also to be found in performance work which similarly juxtaposes literary text with active user participation, and consequently it can be established that the hypertextual experience can be produced not only in hypertext

fiction, but also in performance. The hypertextual model therefore provides a way of considering the effects of spectator participation in terms of the protocols of ergodic operation. It allows aspects of digital theory generated over the past 30 years in relation to interactive digital environments, to illustrate how narratives can operate in complex and multiple ways in environments outside the digital domain. I have argued that the experience of such hypertextual works need not be dominated by a search for a single authored narrative, but may be one in which the possibilities of connectivity and openness are revealed through diverse narrative operations which directly incorporate an individual reading or spectatorial practice. How the viewer responds to a hypertextual work, either of a digital or performance nature, is likely to involve a material negotiation of the different elements. I have shown how the nature of this negotiation starts to describe a specific practice of engagement and furthermore a process of the reader/spectator becoming aware of the operation of the various structural and narrative forces within a work and of their own function in relation to these operations.

This process relates to Rancière's challenge, articulated in *The Emancipated Spectator*, of the cultural positioning of spectators as passive viewers in opposition to active actors. He claims that it is through understanding the performance event in terms of the operation of its internal structures, and of the dynamics of its relationships, that the spectator may be conceived of as an active participant: 'making links between what she sees: to a host of other things on others stages, in other kinds of place' (Rancière 2011: 13). Rancière's conception of the role of the spectator rejects the notion of the audience as a body, who are collectively moved by an artistic motive or cause. Rather he positions spectating as an individual's particular activity in response to the performance.

Spectators operate as independent beings who must craft a singular experience of the performance as: 'individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts and signs that confront or surround them' (Rancière 2011: 16).

The hypertextual experience is similarly an individual experience and as evidenced in the operation of the hypertext fictions and *Susurrus*, one which requires the spectator/reader to find their way, through a textual terrain. Their way, however, is not an unrestricted way; the aleatory experience envisaged by early hypertext theorists is not manifested in the works of hypertext fiction or performance. Rather their way is to negotiate a path in terms of the various forces that they confront *en route*. These forces are manifested partly through the parallel operations of hyperlinks and cues.

The comparison between performance and hypertext fiction is assisted by the similarity of function of hyperlinks and dramatic cues, and following on from the consideration of the functionality of the intra-text I have suggested that both cues and links can restrain and change the meaning of their host text through their operation. However the strategic deployment of cues and links may also extend and amplify the text, and as illustrated in *Susurrus*, this may occur when the active response to a cue reflects the content of the narrative. The hypertextual experience, as realised in hypertext fiction and performance, illustrates that while narratives and structural codes may operate as opposing forces in a work, they can also be configured to provoke a response that may exceed what either can do in isolation and reveal new possibilities for reading and spectating.

Chapter 2

Machinic aesthetics and the generation of the hypertextual experience

For the spectator of a performance or installation work, the hypertextual experience is provoked by an aesthetic operation which is dependent on multiple dynamic components and which involves and implicates them in its processes. In artworks that operate in this manner the spectator will encounter a combination of performative elements whose effects rely on certain juxtapositions between properties, relationships and indeed their own activities. One way of considering this mutual and complex operation is in terms of the machinic processes at work in the aesthetic environment and the spectatorial practices they provoke. In this chapter I will consider the 2006 theatre production, *The Waves*, by the director Katie Mitchell, and *Listening Post* (2002-2009), a digital installation work by Ben Rubin and Mark Hansen, and propose that these formally divergent works both exemplify machinic processes due to certain characteristic modes of operation. Although one is a theatrical adaptation of a novel and the other a digital installation using text harvested from social media sites, each presents a technologically complex situation which demands that each spectator becomes actively selective as they process the material they are confronted with. Each production uses a combination of digital and human activity; *The Waves* uses cameras, projection and performance, *Listening Post* uses screens and language, and they each organize the delivery of these different components in a manner which generates different qualities of encounter for their individual spectators.

The machinic processes in these two works may be identified, then, as provoking hypertextual experiences because they each confront their spectators with an array of material components which have to be negotiated. It is the mode of negotiation adopted by each individual spectator that determines *what the work is*. Specifically each individual who attends either *The Waves* or *Listening Post* must adopt a practice of spectating that involves them in particular decisions which will result in their singular experience of the work. Consequently a quality of both these works is that their machinic nature eclipses the authorial role because the creative impetuses are not lodged in one authoritative source, but distributed throughout the machinic processes of the work, and the spectators themselves are part of these processes.

The motivation of this chapter is to further clarify the conditions and operations that need to be in place to provoke the hypertextual experience. My specific concern here is with each works' constitutional formulation which includes properties and processes which exhibit machinic qualities as they come into operation. My argument is informed by Andreas Broeckmann's 2005 discussion of machinic aesthetics in performance. Broeckmann interprets the term 'machine' broadly to include digital and technological apparatuses, but also to embrace other means used for constructing and transmitting information in the 'field of action and interaction' (Broeckmann 2005) that is contemporary digital culture.

The notion of the 'machine' that I use refers not to machines as technological apparatuses, but as any kind of productive assemblage of forces, be they technological, biological, social, semiotic or other. The notion of the 'machinic' is an operative term that makes it possible to describe open formulations which do not require systemic structures, but hold the potential for manifold realisations (Broeckmann 2005: 8).

He goes on to elaborate the quality of the machinic and it is through this quality that it becomes apparent how the concept may be relevant to the operation of aesthetic processes in *The Waves* and *Listening Post*. These two works are dependent upon the protocols and dynamics of components and forces whose mutual operations exceed the remit and control of any singular authoritative source. The 'machinic' then is a quality of such formulations; it describes an open productive process arising from specific non-teleological relations between the constituent parts of the aesthetic works, works that in Broeckmann's conceptualisation, may be characterised as 'machines'.

My application of the 'machinic' also references the use of the term by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who in *A Thousand Plateaus* identify the working relationships between heterogeneous elements of an assemblage, which may encompass organic and mechanical parts (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 88-91). They further specify that it is the interplay between separate elements that can distinguish the machinic and they describe these constituent elements as belonging to 'deteritorialised constellations' (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 357). The application of this concept identifies that it is through the shifting dynamics between the elements that the machinic comes into being (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 64). The distinction between the mutable and abstract qualities of 'the machinic' and the material and directed operations of 'the machine' are elaborated by Massumi in his analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's identification of the terms.

The mechanical refers to a structural interrelating of discrete parts working harmoniously together to produce work ... by machinic Deleuze and Guattari mean functioning immanently and pragmatically, by contagion rather than by comparison, unsubordinated either to the laws of resemblance or efficiency. Living bodies and technological apparatuses are machinic when they are in becoming ... mechanical when they are functioning in a state of stable equilibrium (Massumi 1992: 192).

This explication has implications for the understanding of the spectator's function as they encounter a structure whose systemic organisation operates according to the aesthetics of the machinic. Both *The Waves* and *Listening Post* demonstrate machinic traits as integral aspects of their operations and both have specific ergodic requirements of their spectators as a result of the internal processes inherent in the works.

In performance and digital work the machinic may be associated with a state of production which comes about through multiple components operating alongside one another in a manner which prevents any particular force, for instance the authorial voice, dominating the experience. For example, in theatre we may see videos and performances operating alongside one another in a shared environment, or alternatively in digital work, text and digital code may exhibit a similar relationship through their juxtaposition. Such operations may be associated with Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term 'contagion' (in Massumi 1992). Machinic processes in performance and installation work are realized when component parts intervene with one another's operation in a contagious manner. These interventions may be symbiotic, or even antagonistic: they will be a visible and characterizing feature of the operations of the work. Consequently a machinic process will tend to resist harmonious operations which work towards a condition of neutrality and rather will draw attention to their own materiality. Furthermore a machinic process in operation does not resolve into a final

authored and unified product, but is always pending and incomplete. This process may also be conceptualized as a state of 'becoming', a state that Deleuze and Guattari associate with the machinic. Deleuze identified this concept: 'Becoming is never finished; in fact, it is unfinishable. It is always in motion, always changing, always on its way, always vital: a source of life' (Deleuze 1997: 2).

In his discussion of Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, Koskimaa describes operations which may be identified as machinic, because they involve ongoing and unfinishable processes which come about in response to the reader's reading of the work. His outline helps identify how the spectator's experience of a machinic process in the performance and installation works considered here is characterised by their being drawn into a process of generating a text themselves, rather than of interpreting something written and structured in a particular order by the author. He describes *Victory Garden* as: 'a machine, or a system, which produces different stories[...] The details and story fragments cannot be integrated to any whole, or interpreted from the viewpoint of some big picture, because there is no big picture' (Koskimaa 2000).

In the form of hypertext fiction, the author's role is problematized because, unlike the author of a book or a play, they cannot anticipate which pages of the work will be accessed by the reader, or in what order. Therefore the author's role is not directly connected to the reading function and their control over what the reader reads is compromised. Rather, machinic processes, which will include the programming of the code and the reader's choice of links, along with other variables, will intervene to determine the particular text produced through a reading of a work.

Koskimaa identifies how the different experiences each reader has of *Victory Garden* will reflect their personal reading route through its hypertextual structure. He specifies that the readers' interpretations of the work: 'are not primarily products of different interpretive conventions, but of a more fundamental order: they are interpretations of *different works* [my italics]' (Koskimaa 2000). Readers do not have different interpretations of a single authored work, as they would if they were reading a book, because each individual is enacting their experience of the work and that experience is what constitutes the work. The fact that *Victory Garden* is designed to be read in multiple different orders means that there is no fixed version of it: each reader-generated experience is as legitimate as any other. The practices of reading, that Koskimaa identifies, are provoked by the machinic structure of the hypertext fiction. He identifies a tangible process by which: 'any single reading is just one possible actualization' (Koskimaa 2000). This description is useful because it identifies how a reader brings a work into existence through their individual reading of it and I am contending that the concept of actualization relates to a mode of engagement which is transferable to the spectatorial practices provoked by the two works discussed in this chapter.

In considering the slippage between the terms mechanical and machinic it is relevant to observe how both terms relate to the operations of hypertext fiction and are significant to the reader's experience. As Hayles says in *Writing Machines*: texts that use 'machinery' as part of their production process are able to reveal the importance of their material form to the reader who engages with them because the texts can: 'bring into view the machinery that gives their verbal constructions a physical reality' (Hayles 2002: 26). It is therefore a quality of the hypertextual experience that a reader's attention is

drawn to both the mechanical apparatus and machinic processes that are involved in the aesthetic production.

In the theatrical and installation forms being considered here it is the mutual operation of different elements, which include not only the machinery of computers, but also complex multi-faceted narratives, visuals, sound material and importantly the spectators themselves, which determine the machinic nature of the works. In *The Waves*, director Katie Mitchell's adaptation of the Virginia Woolf 1931 novel of the same name, theatre, film and film-making process are juxtaposed in a way that illustrates how the spectator may be drawn into an engagement with the materiality of the work through an individual viewing practice provoked by the modes of presentation employed. The performance involves the live creation of a film of *The Waves* which is filmed and performed by the actors and projected above the stage. The production as a whole is a machinic system which operates to a logic influenced by the particular combination of elements and dynamics within it, and is not dependent on one element consistently more than any other. In the media-rich environment of the production, the performance depends on the operation of the video, computer and sound technology, not by technicians but by the performers. Consequently their roles are nuanced because they alternate between acting as the characters of the Woolf story and operating the technology that is needed for creating the film. Furthermore a significant force at work in the performance are the spectators, whose focus will shift register between the mimetic representation of the film and the reality of the technical activities in a generally unpredictable manner. This is because, through its juxtapositions of film, live performance and non-acting activities, the production conveys an ambiguity as to where the spectators attention should be concentrated and what aspects of the on stage

presentation constitute the actual performance. This resistance of a unified point of resolution illustrates a machinic process which prevents any particular component becoming dominant. The ambiguity emerges from a carefully designed theatrical process and is intentionally passed to the spectator who consequently has to make decisions about what elements to physically and psychologically focus on, and what to miss, and how to imaginatively relate to the narratives and other elements that make up the performance. Individual spectators are drawn into the machinic process and thereby become reflexively aware of their own creative practice of viewing in terms of the demands that the various semantic modes employed make of them.

Of significance to this chapter is the dynamic between the human and the machine in the production/ reception relationship. Using the writings of Philippe Bootz and other digital theorists, I consider arguments that machinic processes disrupt the reader/ author relationship and reduce the role of the author to that of 'co-author with the machine itself' (Bootz 2005). The argument pre-supposes that a formal relationship between the author and reader, based on traditional hierarchies, is the ideal *modus operandi* in digital works. Indeed, as Bootz argues and as the digital and performance works examined show, such relationships cannot be maintained in an aesthetic environment that operates machinically. However I suggest that machinic processes do allow, and indeed promote, non-traditional spectatorial and authorial practices which relate more closely to hypertextual operations and which re-position the spectators and authors as contributing elements of a creative process rather than separately responsible for either production or reception.

The agency that a digital system may be endowed with is illustrated by the installation, *Listening Post*, because its textual content is determined through the operations of a digital programme. This machinic structure combines human and digital agencies in a manner which raises questions about the roles of production and reception, and my discussion is informed by Philip Auslander's critique in which he contends that the computer *is* a performer. The machine/ human dynamic in this work foregrounds the concepts of performance and agency and demonstrates how, if the machine takes on a performance role, so too the spectator's role changes as they are positioned in terms of that performance. *Listening Post* draws attention to the materiality of a system in which spectator agency, technical dynamics and narrative instabilities may all play a part. Importantly, the role of the system itself will exceed the contribution of any constituent element, as Broeckmann explains:

The aesthetics of the machinic suggested here is a form of aesthetical experience that is effected by such machinic structures in which neither artistic intention, nor formal or controllable generative structures, but an amalgamation of material conditions, human interaction, processual restrictions, and technical instabilities play the decisive role (Broeckmann 2005).

I have chosen examples of works whose qualities articulate the machinic. In different ways the experiences they generate are based on processes which cannot be completely controlled by authorial figures because some aspects of that control are devolved to the systems themselves. In order to appreciate the aesthetics of the machinic we have to 'think through the machine in artistic practice' (ibid.).

Aesthetic experiences are shot through, perforated and articulated by the machinations of machines, apparatuses which are the exoskeletons of our perceptions and expressions. The apparent functional abstractions of digital machines, and their application and development by artists, provide the concepts for addressing the machinic [also] in relation to non-digital art (Broeckmann 2005).

Machinic processes enable the identification of certain configurations of the audience/performer relationship that lead to the hypertextual experience. One of the qualities of both *The Waves* and *Listening Post* is that by triggering innovative spectatorial practices they draw attention to certain operations that are conventionally obscured, or assumed to be unquestionable. The capacity for changes in spectator behaviour to change and challenge an understanding of theatre is the subject of Nicholas Ridout's essay, *Mis-spectatorship, or, redistributing the sensible* (2012). His commentary on the practice of theatre spectating problematizes the characterisation of the theatre audience as a collective, consensual body and suggests that the role of the individual spectator, or 'mis-spectator', may be usefully examined. The relevance of his article is that it indicates the significance of the individual spectator. This emphasis reflects one that is inherent in the hypertextual experience which is necessarily predicated on the experience of an individual rather than a group audience. This focus away from the group aesthetic is significant and helps to secure the concentration on the individual experience that characterises the examination of the various case studies in this chapter and throughout this thesis.

The 'split sensation' of Katie Mitchell's *The Waves*

Katie Mitchell's production of *The Waves* (2006) is an emphatically multi-modal approach to Virginia Woolf's avant-garde novel. Like several of the other theatre productions being considered in this thesis, *The Waves* is based on a literary text, in this case a modernist classic, which uses a fragmented narrative structure constructed from the interior monologues of six characters. The stories of this fictional group of friends, which cover half a century, are interspersed with descriptions of the coast at different times of the day and year. Woolf's experimental work, which she referred to as a 'playpoem' (Fussell 1980: 275) is written in a style which shifts between poetry and prose and which uses few conventional structuring devices. Molly Abel Travis has argued that Woolf's novel operates hypertextually partly because of the way in which the character's lives, from childhood to middle age, are interwoven as: '...monads connected in a loose web' (Abel Travis 1998: 99).

Mitchell's adaptation of *The Waves* draws attention to the materiality of the production by presenting a film which is visibly created live, in front of the spectators, by performers who both act and operate cameras, create sound effects and manipulate hundreds of props and technical devices. For its sound-score the production uses the 'Foley' technique, a method for making specific audio effects using props and microphones, which is primarily used in film and radio. A related approach is used in the creating of the film as props and costumes are specifically employed to generate close up scenes which are filmed and projected onto a screen at the back of the stage at the same time as the performers read the text into microphones. For example, at one point the spectators see a pane of glass positioned in front of a seated performer which is then sprayed with water as another performer crumples a plastic bag in front of a microphone. The camera, which is operated by a performer, focuses on the performer's

face behind the glass and the image projected on the screen is of a woman gazing through a window on a rainy day as the effect of rain falling on a window pane is heard. Thus, the spectators see the image and sound being created simultaneously with the projected film.



Figure 15: Images from The Waves.
Photographs: Stephen Cummiskey.

The Waves, which is designed for conventional theatre auditoria with a seated audience, exposes the reality of its making process in the foreground of the stage area, while the resultant film is displayed on the upstage screen. The various fragmented narratives of the book are predominantly associated with the film on the screen, while the technical aspects of the production are revealed in the business on stage which goes into creating the filmic images. In foregrounding the technical operations, which would conventionally remain invisible through being operated from off-stage, the production reveals the significance of the processes at work in creating the narrative illusion. In identifying the machinic in operation in certain contemporary performance work, Broeckmann comments on the way that the dynamic between live performance and increasingly pre-programmed technological operations are presented to the spectator. He observes that the performers are often positioned so that they are: 'competing, or in dialogue, with a programmed machine that imposes, or responds to, specific actions'

(Broeckmann 2005). He adds: 'Many artists exploring this field are consciously playing with this relationship, and attempting to use the dialogue for an exciting work, tense with the struggle between human and machine in an open, unstable system' (ibid.).

The machinic structure of *The Waves* extends and includes the spectators in this 'struggle', by presenting material which requires them to respond to its diversity. The work is structured so that neither the film nor the stage business dominates. Rather, the production draws on both film and live performance conventions in constructing a hybrid production that provokes a particular mode of hybrid response from its spectator. This is because the actual making processes, which are foregrounded in the stage area and are both live, real and conducted by the performers out of character, demand a different quality of attention from the mimetic representations of the actors in character on screen.

In processing the live and filmed material the spectator of *The Waves* has to therefore shift modes of viewing as they watch the performers, who sometimes appear as characters from the narratives and sometimes as technicians engaged with real activities. There is often a tension between these distinct functions executed by the performers. An example of this is seen in a moment when the performer, Kristin Hutchinson, plunges her head into a tank of water on stage. This is presented as a moment of real physical duress as the woman's head is under water. A camera films the moment and an image projected on the screen shows a woman, swimming or drowning, distanced from the reality of the stage and contextualized within the film. Thus, through the juxtaposition of the technical operations and the film, each machinic processes, the spectator realises concurrently both the material reality of the situation in which a

woman's head is plunged under water in front of them and also the fantasy of the narrative presented as a film. Here the simultaneous presentation of the actual and the fabrication provokes the spectator to engage with the problematic divide between the two states. The predicament of this relationship being passed onto and enacted by the spectator is a quality of the hypertextual experience which reflects aspects of the experience of David Leddy's *Susurrus*.

In *The Waves* instability of focal viewpoints in the production draws attention to the relationship between process and product, and furthermore it problematises the distinction between those concepts as it provokes a continual slippage between them. While the film images are presented as the product of an explicit process, they are not distinguished by any sense of finality and completion because their production is concurrent with this making process, and this emphasizes their fragility and live-ness. Rather than having the quality of permanence that may be associated with conventional film, these projected images are as ephemeral and frail as the live action on stage that produces them. Thus, any notion of resolution that could be associated with the projected image of the woman gazing through a rainy window, for example, is undermined by the explicitly visible business of constructing that image with a pane of glass and a water spray.

The complexity of the material presented in *The Waves* prevents spectators assuming a passive or 'default' audience role, what Nicholas Ridout refers to as a 'consensus around value' (Ridout 2012: 173), because they have to make choices about how to view in a manner that is fundamentally ergodic. As Parker-Starbuck comments: 'This work requires that the audience works – the objects on stage, bodies and all, are always in

motion, and following the action is a complicated task, requiring a focus on both the stage and the filmic images produced' (Parker-Starbuck 2011b: 127). The spectator is implicated therefore, as part of a machinic process, with individual responsibilities for specifically and creatively responding to the materials in front of them. What they experience depends on what they choose to look at from the range of activity on stage and how they choose to position themselves, cognitively, in terms of the mode of presentation. The spectator's role in the machinic process is to 'actualize' the work in a similar manner to the way in which Koskimaa identified the reader of *Victory Garden* as actualizing the narratives of that hypertext fiction (Koskimaa 2000).

In a documentary on Mitchell's approach to working with multimedia the performer, Hattie Morahan, a member of *The Waves* cast, articulates the effect of this process on the spectator:

It's certainly a very different experience from conventional theatre. There's a lot to take in, there's a lot to look at. The people who have really taken to it have loved the fact that there is choice and you could come back again and again; you almost create your own evening, you create your own journey. You can choose to follow one person, you can choose solely to watch the film, you can create whatever experience you want. It's all there for you (Morahan 2011).

The spectator's immersion in either the film, or the staged making process, continuously alternates; as the work progresses the spectator experiences an internal physical process produced by the shifting modes of their attention between the different fragments of performance material in a manner that mimics the experience not only of hypertext, but of the reading of the fragmentary narratives of the original book. Woolf's novel *The Waves* concerns a complex interplay of narratives which continuously shift between the different characters, telling their own stories as interior monologues, and

of an alternate third person narrative that interrupts these monologues with descriptive passages about the coastal environment(Woolf 2012). In the production this complexity is passed onto the spectator and made explicit.

The structure of *The Waves* also offers the opportunity for narratives to emerge through the tensions played out between the different facets of the work that are juxtaposed through the techniques used. This is most clearly identified when the meaning of a scene projected on the screen is revealed as being complex and unresolved by the action on stage. In one scene the image on the screen is of an elegant dinner party with guests being served by formally dressed waiters. The business on stage however reveals that the performers playing the part of the waiters only have their arms costumed because that is the only part of their bodies that is needed for the film, the rest of their bodies appear to belong to the world on stage. Therefore while the film portrays an apparently complete image, the on-stage, real-life activities show a hybrid performer with parts of their body 'in character' and parts 'out of character'. The presentation of this fragmented body undermines the mediated scene projected above. The machinic processes at work are exposed, and through the contradicting nature of these two related elements a sense of the fragility of the narratives is conveyed.

In the production of *The Waves* the spectators are invited to concern themselves with responding to disparate and sometimes conflicting material that cannot be sorted out simply into elements of process and elements of product. Although the piece has no overt participatory element, it is useful to observe that, as Broeckmann describes, a machinic system in performance does not rely on any such explicit interactivity, but rather on its own structural conditions: 'The 'performance' of such a system is not

immediately dependent on the involvement of an external actor, or responses from an audience, though it may be dependent on externally set parameters and conditions' (Broeckmann 2005).

Consequently the problem of how to relate to the fragmented narrative that is raised in the original novel, becomes an issue of spectating, as the complex process of viewing the disparate constituent parts of the performance inscribes itself on the spectator's experience. Lyn Gardner commented: 'The *Waves* is about the very act of creativity itself, the tools we use to make art and the self we sacrifice to do it' (Gardner 2006). In requiring the spectator to witness and respond to its structural anomalies, the production operates at a direct and personal level. It is in this requirement for a personal involvement and investment that we may identify how the hypertextual experience is provoked by machinic processes. The operation of film and live action alongside one another produces a form which cannot be satisfactorily identified as either film or theatre; the resultant hybrid exposes and problematises the experience of viewing both these forms as it produces an alternative spectatorial mode. Gardner continues: 'It feels shockingly intimate and oddly dispassionate, and neither film nor live action alone could come anywhere close to achieving this curious and disconcerting split sensation' (ibid.).

Just as Woolf's original novel requires the reader to engage with fragments of life stories and confront their own reading process as they do so, without the help of formal chapters, so too the production provokes the spectator to become reflexively involved in the personal process of viewing as they respond to the real processes and filmic fantasies that are presented, and this is a hypertextual process.

The detailed complexity of *The Waves* is controlled by its director in a manner that does not prioritise a specific point of view, but orchestrates multiple possible points of view in creating the performance environment. The work makes available to the individual spectators viewing possibilities through which they can each discover the fragmented complexity of the Woolf novel and build personal interpretations of the narratives from those fragments. Through this process the material used in making the performance, the video, technical apparatus, texts, props, costumes, human actions, mimetic performances, lighting, spatial arrangements and many other elements, are formally and forcefully brought to our attention.

The deliberate foregrounding of the material condition of a performance is a common practice in theatre, particularly in work which positions itself outside the naturalistic tradition and the conditions of neutrality. While naturalistic theatre generally seeks to make the materiality of its trappings and structure disappear in its illusion of reality, all the theatre in this study draws attention to its own materiality. As Hayles has defined it, materiality is not located simply in a physical artefact, but in the dynamic interplay between the resources within that work and its reader. It: 'emerges from interactions between the physical properties and a work's artistic strategies' (Hayles 2002: 33). Materiality may be considered to relate to a *process of* production, rather than product. The spectators' focus on the materiality of *The Waves* is connected to the machinic processes we see in operation which are always in a dynamic state of process. This state relates to Deleuze's concept of 'becoming', a quality that he and Guattari consider characteristic of the machinic (Deleuze 1997: 2). Both the spectator's focus on the work's materiality and their involvement with a process of 'actualization' (Koskimaa 2000) are analogous to the situation in a reading of hypertext.

In writing about early hypertext, Rita Raley has observed that for the reader, hypertext is formulated to both utilise machinic processes and remind the reader that it is doing so: 'the machinic component of the text cannot be disregarded or distilled' (Raley 2013). Similarly, Anne-Marie Boisvert comments in the same article: 'in the reading of hypertext, the necessary, if not enforced relationship with the machine can't be long forgotten' (in Raley 2001). The machinic operations, which are distinguished through their combinations of multiple different processes, emerge in both hypertext fiction and performance. The hypertextual experience of *The Waves* comes about because its machinic processes demand an ergodic response. This response confounds the conventional theatrical operations of production and reception by involving the spectator in the machinic processes in a generative manner.

***The Listening Post* – machinic operations/ digital agency**

The hypertext fiction author's space of creativity is always influenced by digital protocols of the computer programme that may curtail their activity, just as they curtail reader activity. The protocols of the computer's digital system shapes the writing and inevitably prescribes the author's remit as it enables the interactive structures to operate. The authorial control of a hypertext fiction is, as we have seen, distributed among different constituent elements and it is through the mutual operations of these elements that the machinic processes are revealed. A concern held by theorists considering the environment of hypertext fiction, which is emphatically machinic, is the extent to which the computer dominates both the authorial and reading processes. In exploring the

function of the author of digital narratives, Christopher Keep argues that any discussion about the relationship between author and reader needs to consider, in particular, the function of the digital programme itself and: 'the importance of the computer's relative autonomy in the process of collaboration' (Keep 1999: 173). He suggests that the electronic texts produced on reader's screens are subject to systemic control which exceeds human agency in the reading and writing processes:

More than the sum total of their reader's desires [...electronic texts...] are active forms which obey their own programming code. Moreover their database structures and navigational tools largely determine the exact nature of the degree of interaction which the reader will be allowed, the kind of links he or she may traverse or create, and how he or she will do so (Keep 1999: 173).

This indicates that the machine's level of control over the collaborative relationship between reader and author is considerable. Ultimately, the author cannot enforce a reading sequence, nor can a reader have complete control over choosing a reading sequence, because between the input by the author and output of text as published on screen machinic processes intervene: the digital domain is both complex, changeable and able to influence any process instigated by reader or author. Keep emphasizes its facility for contaminating the reading process:

Straddling the lines between culture and nature, the hypertext assumes a viral form: in the very act of answering to the readers' decisions, the hypertext quietly imposes its own 'feverish' logic (Keep 1999: 172).

Theories developed by Philippe Bootz and Andrew Stern (in Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, 2004: 168-169) explore more specifically how processes in the digital hypertext system limit the influence of the author over the operation of writing processes. They show that this limitation comes about precisely because the author shares control of the narrative

sequencing with the computer system itself, which has been programmed to generate text sequences in a certain way and which may operate independently from the author's activities. For Bootz, the part played by the computer causes a problem in the transfer of meaning which is unresolvable. He locates in the role of the 'machine' a number of physical/ technical processes which, he argues, come between the author and reader and affects the passage of information between them. He suggests that between the author's act of writing the 'text of inscription' (Bootz 2005) and the reader's act of reading the 'text of visualisation' (ibid.), there is a process of 'adaptive generation' (ibid.), by which the digital system intervenes and manages the encoded material operating as an interface between the reader and author.

At a technical level, author and reader are only users of the computer. Notably, the author does not manage, in his engagement, the totality of the rules that are used by the computer while running. ... We can say that the author is author of the program and data, but only co-author of the physical process that appear to the reader while the machine is running (Bootz 2005).

Bootz identifies a powerful role for the machinic system in this practice of writing and reading. For him, the processes carried out by the computer between the author and reader act as a restriction, or block, to any direct communication between the two. There is a discrepancy, between what the author writes and what the reader reads which is filled by the computer. Because computer code operates differently to human language (Cramer 2005: 1) and is not generally able to fully express language's distinctive qualities, the system is always destined to fail to communicate the 'author's project' (Bootz 2005).

taking into account the relative failure of expression in the system ... adaptive generation is a representation of failure of communication. By using it, the author is expressing that some of his intentions cannot be realized (Bootz 2005).

Bootz's argument implicitly compares the digital system to the book and effectively states that the digitally based narrative cannot operate like a book because machinic processes intervene and reduce the power of the author over proceedings. In considering these various concerns about the powerful influence of the digital system on reading and writing processes it is relevant to consider Hayles' views on one specific difference between the computer and the book which is particularly relevant to the way in which data is managed and presented in *Listening Post*. Hayles states that the book, as a material object, is stable and as such the text it contains will not, normally, change between readings. A computer, however, enables an easy recombination of its data through its programming function. This 'recombinant flux' (Hayles 2008: 58) lends a digital programme a specific type of agency which accords with the notion of the machinic. The computer is able to manage a quantity and complexity of information that a human writer could not. Its primary function and capacity in hypertext fiction in general, and, as I shall show, *Listening Post* in particular, is to recombine data, and in this machinic quality its capacity significantly differs from that of a book.

Because the computer's real agency as well as the illusion of its agency is much stronger than with the book, the computer can function as a partner in creating intermediating dynamics in a way that a book cannot (Hayles 2008: 58).

While Bootz's observations focus on how traditional author/ reader relationships cannot be sustained in the digital environment, Hayles is concerned with innovative processes of reception and production that are made possible because of the 'recombinant' (ibid.)

facilities of the computer. The machinic environments that Hayles alludes too are characterised by their capacity to re-order and re-combine data and it is this capacity that is exploited in *Listening Post*.

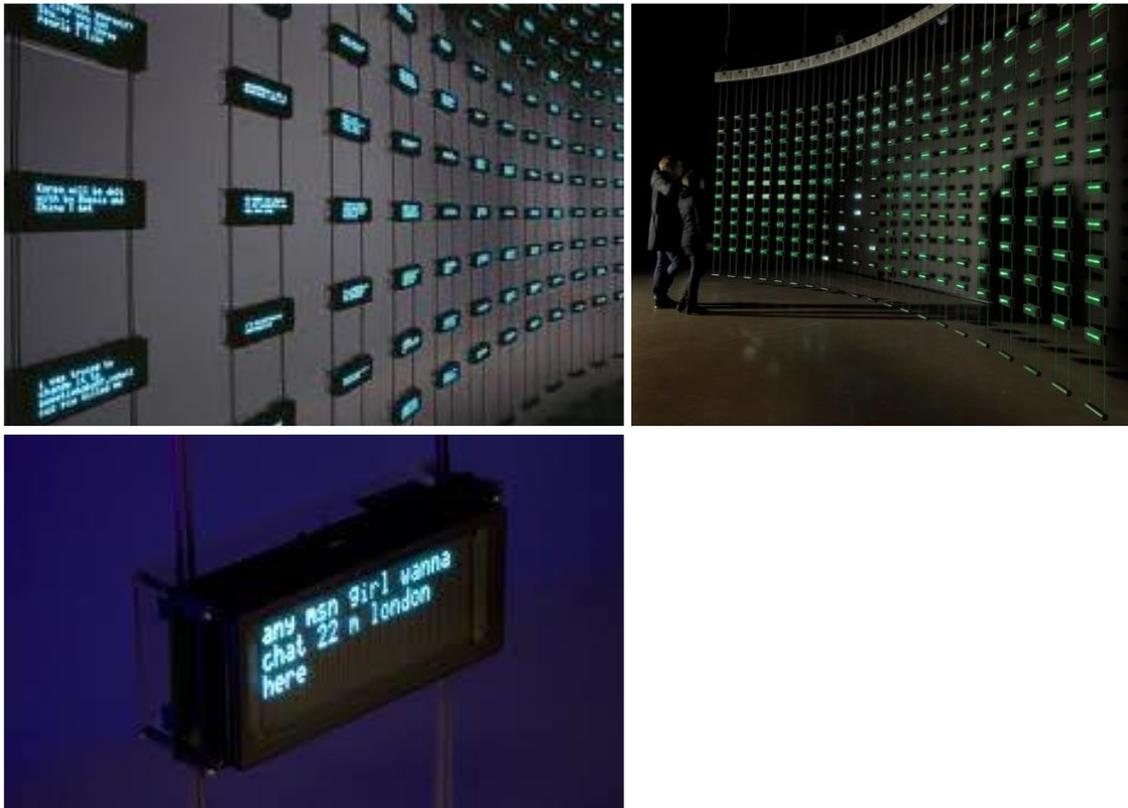


Figure 16: Different perspectives on *Listening Post*.
Photographs: Ben Rubin

This collaboration between Ben Rubin, a digital artist, and Mark Hansen, a statistician, makes use of live samples of conversations drawn from internet chat spaces which are presented on 231 small digital screens arranged in an arc around its 'audience'. Words appear on the screens according to protocols which determine their size, the configuration of the texts and the duration of their appearance. Sometimes the words flow across the display in waves, at other times they appear as split seconds of illumination on individual screens. As they are presented the words and phrases are heard, delivered from a speaker in a computer generated voice. The installation is

structured in an emphatically theatrical manner with the work presented in 'six acts' - each with a distinct internal and sequential logic and its own accompanying music.

One of the 'acts' involves sentences starting with the words 'I am' appearing on the screens one by one; as the act progresses the speed of presentation of the words increases as does the length of the phrases (see below).

I am	I am operating apps	I am not repeating
I am bi	I am freezing	I am fully awake sir
I am off	I am going	I'm in Pennsylvania
I am 18 m	I am stumpy	I am comfortable with my
I am tired	I'm from Latvia	assertion
I am nice	I am here	I am a professional killer
I am 26	I am hot girl	dear
I am hot	I am doing fine	I'm still used to windows
I am 14		I am proud of not being
		British

Figure 17: Sample of text from *Listening Post* by Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin

Another act involves a sample of words appearing across all the screens that were selected on the basis of their being among the 200 least frequently occurring words identified in the space of two hours. Sometimes the words appear to have no shared subject and sometimes it is possible to see in the phrases a recurring reference to an item of news or current affairs.

Listening Post presents a real time capture of words from the internet traffic and consequently Hansen and Rubin do not know in advance what will appear on the screens. The selection of words is made by the computer; the 'author's' role here involves designing the programme that can collect a huge amount of data from internet traffic and present it in a way that captures the live moment according to the rules and logic of each 'act'. Ben Rubin states: 'We wanted to sweep up as many chats as we could

to the point at which we could feel that the sample we were getting was representative' (Rubin 2009).

In *Listening Post* the quantity and complexity of the data processing is so extensive that it exceeds what could have been undertaken by human agency alone and consequently the work illustrates the capacity of the computer to contribute to vital creative processes, essentially to re-write human experiences, with a level of autonomous agency. For Peter Eeley the articulacy and power of the work emerges from the way in which epic proportions of data are presented, not in the manner of a computer work, but as a sculptural form.

At a stroke *Listening Post* fulfils the promise of most Internet-based art, affecting a simultaneous collapse and expansion of time and space with implications ranging from notions of private and public space to individual thought and its role in group dynamics - and it advances all of this within a form that finally allows net art to compete with the more sensuous pleasures we associate with sculpture (Eeley 2003).

By categorising the work alongside sculpture, Eeley articulates the work's stature and atmosphere which was evident when I viewed the piece at London Science Museum in 2009, where visitors were keen to step out of the busy museum and spend time with it and appreciate its 'sensuous pleasures' (ibid.). However, I would suggest that the piece operates as a work of theatre rather than as a sculpture. In its spatial and structural organisation, as outlined above, *Listening Post* positions the viewer as an 'audience' in terms of its own proscenium presentation. In concordance with this, visitors at the Science Museum tended to enter the dimly lit space of the work quietly, stand or sit as though in a theatre, and leave in one of the pauses between the work's 'acts'. Reinforcing this theatrical atmosphere, ushers were on duty warning those of us with

children that they had no control over the live content of the installation and that language might appear on the screen which we would find inappropriate.

In his discussion of the work, Philip Auslander shares Eeley's concern for establishing the work's formal genre categorisation and draws on Brenda Laurel's well established analogy between the theatre and the computer (Laurel 1993: 16-22) in arguing that the work is neither sculpture nor installation but a performance (Auslander 2005: 5). Furthermore, he suggests that the *Listening Post* computer itself is a performer. His argument is based on the observation that the level of digital agency involved in *Listening Post* evidences skills which are comparable to those of a 'technical performer' and in defining this latter term he draws on musicologist Christopher Small's description of orchestral musicians as having technical, rather than interpretative, performance skills because they cede their interpretative agency to the conductor (Small 1998: 69-70). Auslander states: 'In functional terms, the differences between the *Listening Post* computer and Small's symphonic musicians are not great; the computer is a performer in the same sense that they are' (Auslander 2005: 6). He argues that examples of technical performance exist throughout the history of the performance arts and can be identified because the work produced operates quantitatively rather than qualitatively:

The *Listening Post* computer causes the quantitatively measurable effects that constitute the content of the piece by mining and displaying data from Internet sites, it possesses technical performance skills ... the *Listening Post* computer is a performer comparable to certain kinds of human performers (Auslander 2005: 6).

Auslander's classification of *Listening Post's* computer as a performer is founded on both the machine's quantitative technical skill and its agency in 'performing' the work. It is an identification that relies on an interpretation of the complexities of the term

'performance' both as an activity that embraces authentic actions by performers that produce effects, and the practice of performing an author's work, which involves acting in a more representational sense. In considering this idea I would draw attention to the fact that the word 'agency' comes from the Latin *agentem* meaning 'one who acts' (Harper 2013) and consequently it is fitting that the agency displayed by the *Listening Post's* computer involves the plural and nuanced elements of the performance concept. The computer's agency comprises both authentic autonomous acts themselves and also the presentation of an illusion of autonomous actions which are concerned with an 'acting out' of pre-scribed textual instructions.

It is relevant that, in considering their status, Hayles credits computers with: 'real agency as well as the illusion of its agency' (ibid.). I would suggest that this complex doubling of real and illusory qualities of agency is apparent in *Listening Post*; the work is a hybrid form which comprises actual and performed computer agency in a complex manner. This is a presentational position that I discussed in terms of *The Waves* where, similarly, the performers undertake both real acts, in their operating of the technology, and illusive representational acting.

Listening Post has been programmed to present a performance in a manner that reflects the process of acting. The computer, like a human actor, is responding to a pre-scribed text, in this case a digital code, and this process positions its spectator to respond in a manner influenced by theatrical conventions. Thus the 'performance' by the *Listening Post* computer prompts the spectator to comply with the conceit and enter into a mimetic contract with the work through which they undertake a 'willing suspension of disbelief' (Coleridge 2013) for the duration of the work. At the heart of the reception of

this work is the triggering of an established and embedded response to a theatrical presentation which allows the spectator to engage with an appreciation of the computer's real agency at the same time as admiring the skill and novelty of the performance itself.

The machinic process exhibited here combines the performance of texts, written by unknown authors using social networking spaces on the internet, and the reality of certain technical processes of presentation. This causes the spectator to respond to, and enmesh themselves in, these different modes of address. Thus the complexities of the machinic system provoke an active response and within this aspects of the hypertextual experience may be identified as being one in which the spectator must adapt their mode of viewing in response to the ambiguous performance material. This material is lodged in a liminal zone that does not accord fully with the real or the fictional, but rather with a kind of performance which elides and embraces both these terms.

The theatrical nature of the 'performance' of *Listening Post* is also enhanced by in the fact that it uses live data. Auslander identifies that temporal simultaneity, the basis on which broadcast television can be categorized as live, is the fundamental indicator of liveness. 'Our current conception of liveness emphasizes a temporal relationship of simultaneity more than a physical relationship of co-presence' (Auslander 2005: 6).

I would add that *Listening Post* has a precise relationship with time that lends verisimilitude to its performance. The work is not only time based, in that it uses real time data, but also it is time sensitive. The content of its data will vary over time as the internet moves away from text-based interfaces towards different formats to those

currently popular and in consequence the data available for the work will reduce. *Listening Post's* creators have acknowledged that at some stage it will no longer be able to operate as a live work (Rubin 2012). At this point it will either stop, or operate as a museum piece presenting past data as a snapshot of a particular time in history. Just as a conventional live performance depends on its live context, so too *Listening Post* depends on its live context and although its duration may be spread over years, rather than the more usual hours for a performance, it will nonetheless be time limited and unable to function as designed when its data feed runs out.

Auslander identifies that the categorisation of *Listening Post* as a non-human performer contributes to a process of redefinition of artistic processes in the digital age:

artistic performance is not an exclusively human activity. The on-going process of defining the concepts of performance and performer therefore needs to take machine performance into account (ibid.).

In *Listening Post* the machinic processes provoke a reconsideration of various roles which do not accord with conventional definitions. For example, this is a text based piece, but the artists responsible, Hansen and Rubin, are not writers producing text, but are operating purely at the level of digital code. Furthermore the actual writers whose words are being used are internet users and their identity and function will change with every moment the piece is in operation, moreover they have no knowledge that their text is being published. There is instability between all the roles involved in the generation of the piece which is reflected in the commentators' difficulties in determining if it is an installation, sculpture or live performance, and also their concern to do just that. Just as categories of performer, reader and writer have been problematised in the hypertextual experiences provoked by the previous works

discussed, so too these categories seem unstable and unsatisfactory here. The machinic operation produces a confusion and reconsideration of role definitions which is passed onto the spectator and which colours their experience as it prompts them to reflect on their own role in relation to the work.

Listening Post's incorporation of time sensitive real life content may be seen to relate to contemporary theatre work, particularly site related performance, which often requires its spectator to engage with real life framed in a theatrical context. Auslander uses the pertinent example of the Budapest company Squat Theatre, that in the 1970s production *Pig Child Fire!* positioned its audience in a shop front looking out onto a street, as if onto a stage, where the real life activities within the visible portion of the street became incorporated into the performance. When real events happened in the street, for example the arrival of police officers, they were automatically reframed as the performance event (Gussow 1977). The important assumption of this technique, as evidenced by Squat Theatre and *Listening Post*, is that the act of framing will itself produce, or 'actualize' (Koskimaa 2000) the event. The spectator's creative role in both these cases involves recognizing and incorporating the events, which are presented in the frame provided by the work, into their experience. This focus on framing emphasizes 'point of view' as the significant element of the aesthetic event; it is, as Brenda Laurel describes: 'a manifestation of a spectator's relationship to the represented world' (Laurel 1993: 205). The emphasis on these 'manifestations', through processes of actualization or framing devices, is a feature of the hypertextual experience demonstrated by the works discussed in this chapter.

Listening Post digitally frames content for its spectators, who are themselves framed through the scenic design of the work. The highly structured and processed nature of the management of these framing exercises has the effect of drawing their attention to the problem of the event's generation and consequently foregrounding and questioning the assumptions of the conventional audience/ performance relationship. The work, with its adoption of the mores of conventional theatre practice, contrasts the actual presence of the spectator with the fleeting and mediated presentation of the words culled from social media sites. It is the spectator's careful positioning, the design, the use of music, lighting and 'front of house' staff, which creates the performance out of the ephemera and accident of the found text. Like a work of theatre, *Listening Post* foregrounds its own impermanence and its liveness.

The fact that the spectator is unable to see the complete work marks the experience with a trait of impossibility, a feature of the hypertextual experience that is discussed in the Introduction. The spectator of *Listening Post* sees only a small and temporary portion of the durational work and each spectator's experience of the work will be unique. There is no sense that there exists a definitive version of the work that could be accessed if one had the time or skill, and there is no straightforward transfer of meaning from 'author' to 'reader'. This means that without any imposed authority, and furthermore without any interactive interface, each spectator's temporary and transitory experience will be the point at which the work is defined. This is an important aspect of the work that is similar to a hypertext fiction which also does not exist as a product, but rather as a production process, in which the text is only actualized (Koskimaa 2000) in the experience of a particular reader. The significance of this is that the spectator of *Listening Post* becomes aware that their experience of the work is

individual to them: it is impossible for them to experience the whole work, but this does not mean that their viewing is inadequate or incomplete, rather the work itself legitimizes the personal and particular experience as being what the work is, and each person's spectatorial practice is a method of actualizing the work.

While *Listening Post* references several of the conceits of theatre, it is formulated to make it impossible for spectators to 'share their experience' in the style of a theatre audience, because each spectator will have a different experience of the work depending on how and when they view it. In this respect the work prioritises the individual reception over any concept of a group experience. *Listening Post's* position initially foregrounds theatrical practice, then works to disrupt the idea of consensus and the role of the passive audience, through prioritizing the significance of the spectator's personal and 'unshared' experience. Individual spectators will see things differently to one another and in this respect its operations are similar to those of *The Waves*; both works trigger an 'actualization process', which provokes a reflexive consciousness of the process of viewing.

In this uncertain territory, where the hypertextual experience is manifested, the spectator's role increases in significance, even without any formal participatory function, because they are a vital part of what Broeckmann describes as: 'the amalgamation of material conditions, human interaction, processual restrictions, and technical instabilities' (Broeckmann 2005) on which the operation of the work depends. As a consequence of this enhancement of the spectator's individual role in works that exhibit machinic processes, the notion of the importance of the collective audience experience becomes diminished.

Identifying spectatorial practices in the machinic environment

The cultural expectations of the 'expert' collective audience are discussed in Nicholas Ridout's essay, *Mis-spectatorship, or, redistributing the sensible*, in which he examines the conventions of audience response through his commentary on 'mis-spectating'. This is a concept which responds to Rancière's notion of the 'emancipated spectator' (Rancière 2011). Ridout proposes that the active response of the mis-spectator, by which he means the non-expert audience member who is uninformed by the cultural conditioning that reinforces conventional spectatorial habits, may disturb the conventions of collective viewing and prompt a re-examination of the mores of theatre.

For a measure of in-expertise may be crucial to an interruption of the consensus around value to which experts, both performance makers and spectators, routinely contribute, a consensus in which we agree only to see and hear what we already know (Ridout 2012: 173).

Ridout outlines how the theatre spectator, who does not abide by the conventions of viewing, can provoke a reconsideration of the form by making visible elements which are ignored, or obscured, by the consensus between performers and audiences that characterise theatre. He supports his thesis with the illustration from Marcel Proust's *La Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-27), in which the young narrator visits a theatre and is shocked by the audience's response which, to him, as a prototypical 'mis-spectator', is inappropriate in both its complacency and enthusiasms. Ridout's concept of mis-spectating operates in a similar manner to the spectatorial practices provoked by machinic processes; both are able to expose aesthetic operations that are traditionally concealed. Such practices disturb conventions of production and reception because they

emerge from individual responses to complex stimuli, rather than a collective response.

Ridout develops his thesis:

the mis-spectator interrupts the machinery of the theatre, by making present to himself ... some of the things that the machinery of theatre normally works to obscure, or rather, which the machinery, in collaboration with the 'expert spectatorship' colludes in rendering absent (Ridout 2012: 173).

He elaborates by stating that the mis-spectator's response may be valuable if it is able to challenge a certain complacency concerning the collective role of the audience: 'If the mis-spectator makes any meaning it is by disrupting the consensus which masquerades as collectivity in the folklore of the institution of the theatre' (Ridout 2012: 182). This notion of mis-spectatorship draws attention to the value of an individual spectatorial practice that can operate outside the conventions of theatrical reception.

An example of such a practice being provoked by the machinic processes of the work is apparent in *The Waves*, when it foregrounds the technical operation of the work. This problematises conventional collective viewing habits in two ways. Firstly, the spectators are exposed to processes that are usually obscured in theatre when the performers operate the technology, and therefore they have to decide *how* to relate to the separate presentations of acting and non-acting. Secondly, the spectators have to choose to focus on one element or another, because it becomes impossible to watch everything. The spectator has to practice spectating in a new way as they form an individual response to the components of the work.

The Waves is presented in a manner that deliberately provokes each spectator to make individual decisions about how they will respond to the separate components of the

work. In this situation the spectator is operating in a manner more like the reader of hypertext fiction than the conventional theatre audience member, even though there is no interactive interface. Through examining the nature of this hypertext experience we discover spectatorial practices that emerge when a theatre audience stops operating as a collective.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified how machinic processes provoke non-conventional spectatorial behaviours. Using Broeckmann's theory of the machinic and his argument that: 'Aesthetic experiences are shot through, perforated and articulated by the machinations of machines,' (Broeckmann 2005) I have illustrated how machinic processes influence the spectator/ work dynamic in *The Waves* and *Listening Post*. The examination of these key works has also been informed by aspects of digital theory; of relevance has been Koskimaa's explication of the reader's response to Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, which he suggests involves a process of actualising a work through individual engagement. I have shown how this process may also be used in identifying what happens to the spectator in the works considered here that embody machinic processes.

The predominance of the role of the machine itself in the artistic process has been shown to be a concern of digital theorists Philippe Bootz and Christopher Keep. However, their argument that the digital programme operates autonomously to restrict the author's work does not, I suggest, acknowledge sufficiently how the conventional

processes of production and reception are challenged and changed in the machinic environment. This is demonstrated in Hansen and Rubin's *Listening Post*, which problematises notions of writing text, authorial control and agency. Furthermore it raises questions about the role of the spectator and demonstrates how their 'actualising' process influences what the work is.

In his discussion of machinic operations in artworks, Broeckmann states: 'The aesthetic of the machinic is an experience that hinges on machine based processes which are beyond human control' (Broeckmann 2005). In the works examined the role of the author, or any single authoritative control, is eclipsed by machinic processes which involve multiple independent components operating alongside one another, presenting various options for viewing and provoking various spectatorial practices. I have identified that the result of an encounter with such a machinic environment is that it provokes a hypertextual experience. In this context this experience may be further identified with the spectator being positioned so they have to make individual decisions as part of their viewing process, knowing that they cannot access the complete work presented, and knowing that their role must be a creative one in which they construct their own experience. In a machinic environment the relationship between the author figure and the spectator is significantly influenced by the processes of the multiple facets of the work. Machinic processes provoke a level of spectatorial experience that operates hypertextually through the spectator's actualization of the works. For the spectator the aspects of the hypertextual experience that are revealed involve choice, and a responsibility for contribution to the aesthetic experience through the decisions that they make during the course of their experience.

Chapter 3

Sequence and the operation of temporalities in the hypertextual experience

I can very well tell a story without specifying the place where it happens, and whether the place is more or less distant than the place where I am telling it; nevertheless, it is almost impossible not to locate the story in time with respect to my narrating act since I must necessarily tell my story in present past or future tense (Genette 1980: 215).

This chapter considers the implications of the sequence of engagement for the hypertextual experience. It argues that when a reader/ spectator is given even a limited level of control over the sequence in which they read a text, or view different constituent elements of an installation or performance work, they are able to engage with the temporalities of the work in a radical manner as their own actions affect the ordering of narrative events and hence the construction of fictional time. I will initially consider reader-generated sequential processes through an examination of temporal constructions in hypertext fiction. Through being able to influence the sequence in which pages are accessed, and also the duration of narrative, the hypertext reader's own experience of time is conjoined with fictional temporalities. This particular juxtaposition of real and fictional time is a characteristic of the hypertextual experience; by considering the dynamic event in which the reader's own time of reading is linked into the narratives' fictional time, it becomes apparent how the experience of temporalities in hypertext fiction operates in a manner that is significantly different to the corresponding experience provoked by printed fiction or dramatic texts. As Joyce recognised: 'Hypertext ... more consciously than other texts implicates the reader in writing at least its sequences by her choices' (Joyce 1996: 131).

The operation of temporalities in hypertext fiction is complex: the works considered in this thesis may all be read in various sequences, and these are determined according to the hyperlinks that the reader activates. However this variability of sequence does not mean that the hypertext fictions are asynchronous. All the hypertext fictions contain progressive narrative sections conveying particular temporalities, which are important to the comprehension of the work. In this chapter I use Joyce's *Afternoon* to explicate the temporal operations of hypertext fiction. This canonical work foregrounds the fact that temporalities can be prescribed both by the author, who writes the stories which involve character's lives unfolding 'in' fictional time, and by the reader, who has some control over determining the sequence in which the time sensitive stories, that make up the work, are accessed.

The hypertextual experience involves an engagement with different temporal forces: those emerging from the works' constituent narratives, which are organised according to their own temporal logic, and those generated by the sequence of reading that is determined by the reader and which inevitably, and legitimately, introduce their personal time into the reality of the work. In hypertext fiction this is done through the sequence in which they click on the hyperlinks. This mutual operation of temporal forces has significant implications for our understanding of hypertextual dynamics. Significantly it implies that the hypertextual experience involves the reader/ spectator coming to understand temporality as a quality, or material, which may be influenced through their engagement with it.

In a hypertext, hyperlinks operate as points at which the reader becomes aware of their own presence and significance to the work and consequently of the operations of

different temporalities in the process of a reading. This is because when they select and click on a link the effect is to suspend fictional time for a moment as they consider their relationship to the text and how they should proceed. For David Miall: 'the link mechanism segments time according to mechanical rules, multiplying isolated moments of experience' (Miall 2012: 210). He elaborates how the temporal structure of hypertext fiction incorporates the reader.

The recurring requirement to choose among hypertext links imposes a template of self-awareness over the act of reading. This also forms part of the temporal structure of hypertext reading. In the suspension of reading the reader is returned to the self: unless choice is arbitrary, each act of choice helps define the self as it pauses to choose (Miall 2012: 206).

Hypertext reading brings about intermittent ruptures in the fictional time of the work as the reader's attention switches from the content of the narrative to the digital interface as they contemplate their own operation of the work. Miall views the particular experience of temporality that hypertext provokes as problematic; while reading from print 'constitutes a temporal unfolding' (Miall 2012: 204) in hypertext the 'need to choose one from several links may disrupt the reader's own unfolding dynamic of reading or forestall its development' (Miall 2012: 205). There is a significant distinction between the operations of temporalities in printed and digital texts. However, the disruptions that Miall identifies as disadvantaging the hypertext reader, actually distinguishes a particular kind of engagement or reading practice. If this practice is considered outside the purview of the culture of the printed text it emerges as a process which engages with temporality as a material that may be manipulated, either by the reader, the author or the machinic processes of the work.

This unstable dynamic between temporalities that hypertext fiction reveals is also characteristic of certain kinds of installation work that, concurrently, invite the spectator to determine the sequence in which they engage with the work and also refer, through their structure, to the significance of particular temporal sequences that are in operation. In the chapter I will consider two digital works and two non-digital installation works that all engage with time as a subject, as well as foregrounding the reader/spectator's own experience of temporalities as part of the work. These illustrate how the management of sequential engagement in these works can lead to a wider and more diverse engagement with temporal dynamics than is possible through reading printed fiction or from watching naturalistic or classical theatre, in which certain neutral conventions concerning fictional temporalities, which derive from Aristotelian unities as first established in *The Poetics* (Aristotle 2013: 15-27) and then adopted by Neo-Classical theory (Castelvetto in Preminger and Brogan 1993), are assumed. The enhanced engagement with temporality, which I argue is experienced in these works, is a result of the construction of fictional time being exposed and problematised, rather than being assumed as a stable condition.

Elizabeth Ermarth, whose writings from the 1990s onwards have foregrounded the fictionality of neutral temporality in the novel, argues that fictional time is a construct whose artificiality has traditionally been ignored by readers. She identifies a paradigmatic shift away from temporal neutrality in postmodern novels and draws attention to the significance of language sequences in the formulation of temporal relationships in postmodern writings.

If time is no longer a neutral medium, a place of exchange between self-identical objects and subjects and 'in' which language functions, then the language sequence - especially in the expanded theoretical sense of discourse - becomes the only site where temporality can be located (Ermarth 1992: 140).

Hypertext fiction exhibits post-neutral temporality because its structure exposes the operation of its fictional constructions of time. This happens in various ways: in addition to the operation of hyperlinks, the design of the hypertext fictions in this study typically comprise separate narrative strands, each with its own temporal logic, that coexist in the network as possible alternative reading paths. The multiple possibilities available allow the reader to determine different narrative sequences, and hence variable temporal relationships. These sequences of reading will differ from reader to reader, as people read in different orders, and consequently the sort of assumptions that one reader may make about the operation of fictional time in a hypertext fiction cannot necessarily be made by another reader as they will each confront the multi-sequential possibilities posed by the form in different ways. The hypertext fiction reader is not free to select any sequence they like. The author will employ the rules of conditionality, as discussed in Chapter 1, to programme the code in a way which will permit some sequences and forbid others. The temporal progression of narratives in hypertext fiction will be a product of both the author's design and the active and partially selective reading by each particular reader. The overall operation of time in any reading experience will be necessarily unstable and indeterminate: it will not accord with any *a priori* temporality.

In her analysis of postmodern literature Ermarth calls for 'new acts of attention' (Ermarth 1998: 363) to the function of time in fiction. The digital works discussed in this

chapter demonstrate how the experience of narratives and hyperlinks can draw attention to temporality as something the reader can influence and must attend to in a proactive manner in order to experience the works. In reading Michael Joyce's *Afternoon* the reader becomes aware that the sequence in which they access the pages has the capacity to change the narrative. *Afternoon* illustrates how the mutable nature of fictional time in hypertext fiction promotes a particular attention to its operations in the way that Ermarth envisages. My initial exploration of temporality in *Afternoon* exemplifies the significance of sequence to the spectator experience and lays the ground for further examinations of the operation of temporalities in the 2009 digital fiction, *TOC*, by Steve Tomasula. *TOC* reveals how digital multi-modality can be exploited to present alternate time zones in different sequences to the reader. It promotes an explicit reading practice, which has to be learned by the reader, and which enables its operation to function as a reflexive study of the operation of real and fictional time.

The structural manipulations of reading sequence, which characterise the experience of the hypertext fictions, can illustrate temporal operations that were manifested in two installations by Robert Wilson. These positioned the spectator so they could either view the works in an implied order, or decide for themselves the sequence and duration in which they engaged with the separate elements that made up each of the works. *Mozart's Birthplace* (2006) and *HG* (1995), which were immersive installations, operated in a manner that was structurally analogous to hypertext fictions. The works both utilised elements of narrative which had their own fictional temporalities, but these were located within a structure which did not precisely prescribe an order of viewing in that they included 'suggested routes', to be followed, or easily ignored. Both also used specific techniques to implicate their viewer's own time into the experience. In their use

of narratives and their approach to structuring the experience as a series of tableaux, the installations operated in a hypertextual and post-neutral manner, but they also expressed elements of theatricality. Bayley remarked on this quality in relation to *HG*: ‘*HG* plunders theatre's box of tricks without technically being theatre. [Although there is] no storyline, no script and no actual characters ... the experience of *HG* is fundamentally theatrical;’ (Bayley 1995).

Of particular relevance and prominence in all the works discussed in this chapter is the mutual operation of fictional time and the personal time of the viewer or reader. Analysis of digital work has drawn attention to what artists Vaupotič and Bovcon refer to as: ‘the complex ways in which the new media object entails and actively structures its own temporality’ (Vaupotič and Bovcon 2008: 503). This has long been recognised as having a significance to the study of temporalities beyond digitally based work and in the areas of performance and fine art, and different typologies of temporality have been identified to assist the consideration of different temporal constructs (see Gibbons 2012, Benford and Giannachi 2008, Vaupotič and Bovcon 2008). The issues at stake concern the significance of sequence as a determining factor in the experience and also the effect of the juxtapositions between the temporalities of the narratives and the reader’s or viewer’s ‘own time’, a term which I will use to refer to the reader’s actual world temporal experience as they engage with the work. ‘Own time’ here may be distinguished from ‘clock time’ (Benford and Giannachi: 2008) in that it specifically refers to a personal and therefore subjective perception of time influenced by context. In this analysis I am interested in the reader or viewer’s own time in as much as it constitutes part of the experience of a work of hypertext fiction or installation. The subjectivity of own time is succinctly expressed in a phrase from *TOC* as the: ‘the clock-less time of

surgery waiting rooms' (Tomasula 2006). In this work it is through the deliberate foregrounding of the reader's own time with the fictional temporalities of the work, that the hypertextual experience emerges. The reader or viewer engaging with a work in which temporalities are foregrounded and complex becomes aware of the juxtapositions between their own time and the times of the artwork as qualities that need apprehending and considering, rather than being assumed to be constant.

In the post-neutral environments of hypertext fiction and installation, certain properties of reading/ spectating, which had previously been concealed by the protocols of neutral temporality, are revealed. Lyotard's notion of the figure, as outlined in *Discourse/ Figure*, (Lyotard 2011), can assist an understanding of these properties which particularly concern facets of the reader's relationship to a work and which operate outside the discursive conventions of literary or dramatic narrative. In the discussion of Wilson's, Joyce's and Tomasula's works, I will argue that figural elements of textual operations, that cannot be conceived of in terms of the discourse, and whose existence has been concealed by the condition of neutrality, may be disclosed by the hypertextual experience. Lyotard describes the figural as the 'transgression of signification' (in Bamford 2012: 21). Bill Readings elaborates that the concept: 'disrupts the rules of representation because it 'is the resistant or irreconcilable trace of a space or time that is radically incommensurable with that of discursive meaning' (Readings 1991: 24).

The hypertextual facility for endowing the reader with the power to select aspects of their sequence of reading, necessarily involves them in managing the juxtaposition between the temporalities they engage with and their own time. In this post-neutral environment, the confluence of reader and work reveals figural elements in the work

that the authored text cannot account for, but which come into view through the hypertextual operation. A significant element in this operation is the fact that it can be read in various sequences and therefore the context of each page, that is the pages that preceded and succeeded it, will alter between readings making it likely that signification will arise from proximal relations which were not necessarily author imposed. The figural emerges through temporal juxtapositions that the reader produces through their reading. Lyotard's 'figure' can be employed as a means of considering that which is realised through the playing of the juxtaposed temporalities in the works. The significance of this to the hypertextual experience is that these processes show how the operations of hypertext unlock temporality so it may be apprehended and manipulated through the activities of production and reception.

Readings out of time in hypertext fiction

Any hypertext fiction that is able to be read in different sequences of varying durations will signal a problematic relationship with chronology, causality and linearity. Narrative events in hypertext fiction cannot be fixed into an externally organised temporal system that delimits past, present and future. This is because hypertext, constructed as it is from a network of nodes and links, structurally prohibits the representation of time as a uni-linear unfolding sequence, progressing according to a universally determined framework. The reader of a hypertext fiction will therefore be deterred from determining causal or chronological sequences in the unfolding of narrative events. Furthermore their attention will be drawn to the operation and artificiality of fictional time as they negotiate their relationship with the text through the hyperlinks.

Ermarth's observations on the qualities of the 'neutral time of modernity' (Ermarth 1998: 366) illustrate some of the issues that affect how time may be represented and understood, which are relevant to an examination of the temporal qualities of hypertext fiction. In *Time and Neutrality: Media of Modernity in a Postmodern World* (Ermarth 1998), she suggests that fictional time is an artificial construct that has become naturalised through historic tradition. It is a concept: 'used uncritically in ways that universalise what is only a particular construction of temporality' (Ermarth 1998: 356). The tradition of regarding time as a: 'neutral, homogenous medium extending infinitely and "in" which mutual relevance can be measured' (ibid.) is a convention, she asserts, which was maintained by modernist culture, but which became subject to increasing interrogation through postmodern artistic practice. Ermarth states that the most significant feature of conventional temporal construction in literature is its neutrality (Ermarth 1998: 362), because it is this particular characteristic that causes time to disappear from the spectrum of qualities seen as mutable. Fictional time is traditionally perceived as a phenomenon which need not be considered because it is a consistent and: 'natural common denominator, a single system of measurement for the things contained *in* it. [It is a] sort of metaphysical ether' (Ermarth 1998: 357). Consequently any treatment which draws attention to its significance in the reading process, or the process of spectating, is likely to disrupt the fabric of narrative coherence in a fundamental manner and compromise other qualities that depend on this coherence.

Although it is a pioneering work of hypertext fiction, one of the characteristic features of Michael Joyce's early hypertext fiction, *Afternoon*, that is particularly obvious in today's culture of multi-modal digital works, is that it retains many of the pre-digital

features of the modern novel. Notably its appearance is rather like a printed book and various narrative sequences may be accessed by the reader using the 'default' option, whose operational mode reflects the turning of pages in a book. Hayles comments on the 'print-centric' nature of early hypertext works: 'first generation works left mostly untouched the unconscious assumptions that readers of books had absorbed through centuries of print.' (Hayles 2002: 37). In this respect *Afternoon* is a typical incunabula work, retaining in its operations characteristics of the form it developed from, alongside its incorporation of new technologies. This hybrid quality prompts the reader to engage partially with the familiar novelistic aspects of narrative, for instance with the mystery story concerning the car accident as outlined in Chapter 1, but also, necessarily, with the hyperlinks which disrupt their print-centric reading practices and shifts their focus between the connected narratives contained in the work. In presenting his story, Joyce treats chronology in a very particular manner, which exploits this hybridity, by enabling the reader to access sequences of narrative where time is treated as if it were neutral, within the hypertextual structure which draws attention to the artificiality of the temporal construction.

This quality is explored by Jill Walker, in her article *Piecing Together and Tearing Apart* (Walker 1999), which outlines the relationship of hypertext to several theories of narratology concerning story chronology. She suggests that, with hypertext fiction, it would be easy to assume that 'achrony', or narrative events with no temporal reference, would be the norm (Walker 1999). This, she explains, would avoid readers becoming confused by chronological events being read out of sequence; the reader's experience would therefore be outside, and unhindered by, the restraints of chronology.

However, she identifies that, in *Afternoon*, time is emphatically and strategically positioned. This can be seen in the title of the piece which initially alerts the reader to the relevance of time and is reinforced by the regular references within the pages to *when* events are happening. We read, for example, that the car accident happens in the morning, Peter goes on to have a lunch meeting at noon with his boss, Wert, after that he makes a series of phone calls and leaves timed messages. During the Afternoon he visits the accident site, later he calls Lolly at work but realises he won't get through to her because it is now after five o'clock (Joyce 1990).

Walker observes that these temporal markers are: 'stabilising elements which more or less situate the when, where and who of the event or situation being narrated and assist the reader [in orientating] herself within the lexia' (Walker 1999). These references to time give the reader some sense of local chronological organisation. Furthermore this sense of temporal coherence is assisted by the use of conditional linking mechanisms which permit the reader to follow certain narrative pathways and not others. Joyce has crafted various routes through his work which make temporal sense of the narrative. Within the hypertext the reader is able to sort out, in her own mind, the chronological or causal sequence of some narrative events. Memorable temporal markers help her to locate particular events within the story accessed, as this page, entitled 'yesterday' illustrates:

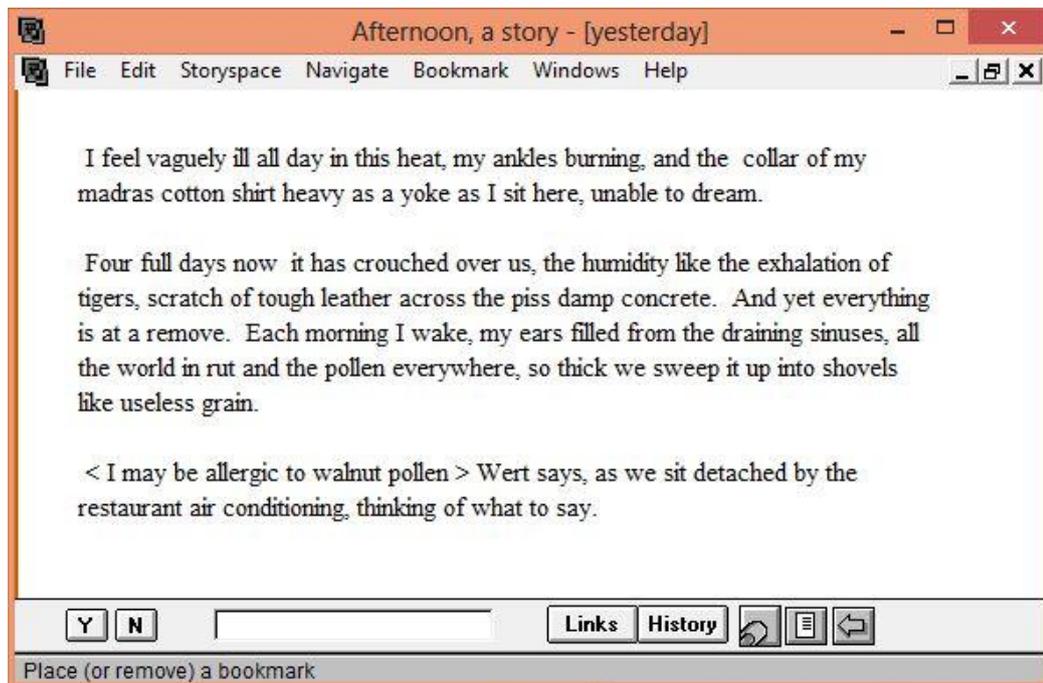


Figure 18: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (yesterday)

This passage clarifies a recent past for the characters; the reader learns, because of the use of the present tense, that before the *now* of the meal with Wert, there have been four days of humidity and high pollen count. The page provides a small pocket of delimited time within which certain, but not all, events within a reading may start to relate to each other. Essentially, Joyce uses temporal references to relate narrative events to one another according to sequences activated by the reader within the network of hypertext fiction, exemplifying what Ermarth has described as: ‘time that is a dimension of events, not a medium for them’ (Ermarth 1998: 363). Temporal markers cannot homogenise into a universal neutral time because the hypertext cannot function to give them a fixed position within its organisation. However as the reader interacts with *Afternoon* the process of her reading will bring sequences into being and enable temporal relationships to establish themselves in terms of one another. The particular temporal relationships established will vary from reader to reader and from reading to reading, according to the page accessed. *Afternoon* fosters dimensional relationships between events and, I would suggest, *starts* to invite readers to assume a condition of

neutral time. The temporal markers are clearly used by Joyce to help delineate a story which readers can both desire and discover as Yellowlees Douglas discusses (Yellowlees Douglas 2000: 57-59). However Joyce sets up, in opposition to this drift towards an assumption of neutral time, both structural and content driven devices that expose the conceit.

One particular technique for doing this is the frequent use of repetitive loops of pages. After following a narrative sequence the reader will click on a link that will take her back to a page already visited. As she progresses along the same path again she will find herself trapped in the loop and will have to experiment with different kinds of actions, such as clicking on different links or using the back key, to escape the cycle. This kind of rhetorical technique reminds the reader not only of the structure of the piece, in the manner of a *verfremdungseffekt*, but also, of the different temporal modes in operation including, perhaps, her own time, which may become forcefully apparent as she reads the same repeated pattern of pages, while trying to reconnect with the narrative.

For Miall this operation has the effect of trapping the reader: 'Like the protagonist of a Gothic novel, the reader is immersed in a dreamlike world whose laws of operation are obscure, confounding agency' (Miall 2012: 206). The ludic quality of Joyce's technique is clear here, but unlike a traditional game in which the rules are generally established, the reader is not able to anticipate what will happen next in *Afternoon*. This is also the case when a reader finds that a link word takes her back to a previous page, but this time, if she tries to follow the same path, she will find different words are now linked that will lead her in different directions and towards different conclusions about temporal relationships; this is the programming of the conditional links in operation.

Another technique that problematizes the notion of fictional time in hypertext fiction involves the use of very similar phrases on different pages. Compare, for example, the opening page of the piece 'begin' with another very similar page, tellingly entitled 'false beginning':

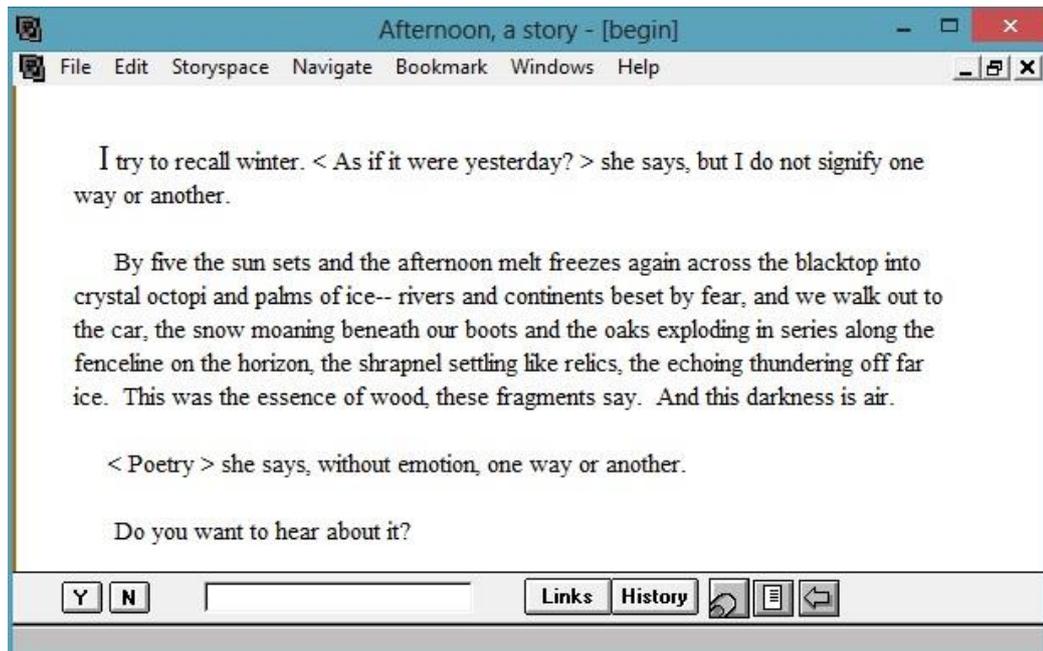


Figure 19: Joyce(1990): *Afternoon* (begin)

and:

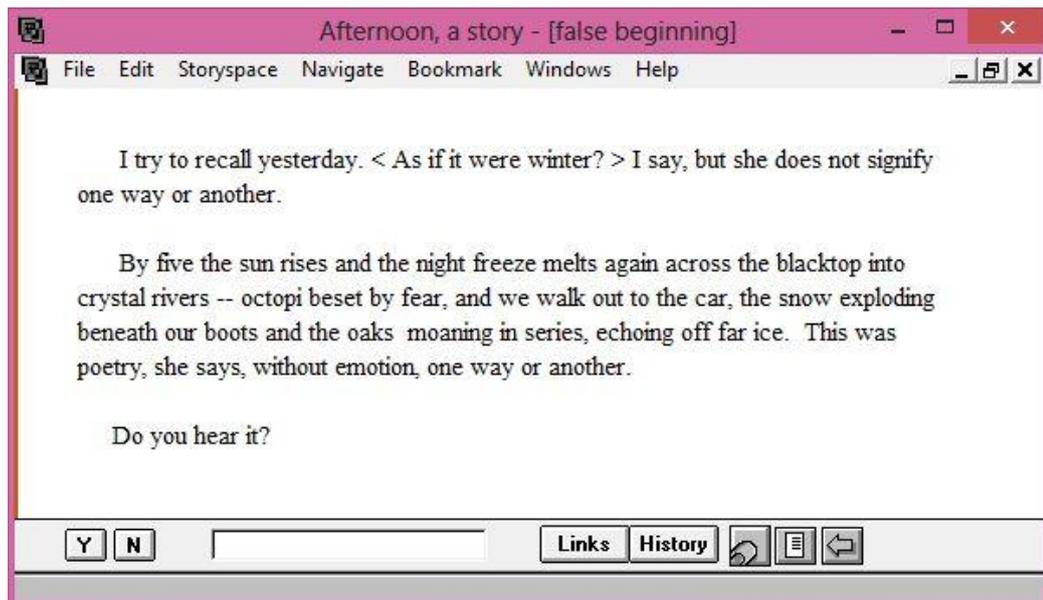


Figure 20: Joyce (1990): *Afternoon* (false beginning)

The two pages identify different times of day – and yet their similarity is likely to cause temporal disorientation if they are both accessed at different points in the course of a reading.

In *Afternoon* therefore, as the reader's relationship with time fluctuates, so too does the kind of attention she gives to it; specifically, rather than overlooking time and unquestioningly treating it as a medium *in* which things happen, the reader will relate to it as itself a thing *that happens* and as such liable to change in ways that cannot be anticipated. The narrative, with its temporal markers, invites some engagement with chronology, but this is compromised by the structure and operation of the hypertext which draws attention to the falsity of neutral temporality. While the literary tropes within *Afternoon* introduce narrative chronologies, the hypertextual structure stops the literary narrative unfolding in neutral time with all its concomitant implications. In *Afternoon* the narratives are positioned as a temporal collage and the reader experience is one of oscillating between the different temporalities: their own time and the distinct fictive temporalities of the story sequences with which they engage. An individual reading of *Afternoon* may be characterised as generating a sequence of narrative events that will progress until it is forestalled, either by the reader's action or by the structure of the hypertext itself, at which point the reader will shift to another temporal mode. Consequently each of the narratives that unfold during a reading will have its own individual start, end, duration, and thus temporality. Furthermore, as the reader comes to understand their engagement with different temporalities, each individual narrative sequence will be contaminated by the knowledge or possibility of an alternative kind of temporal engagement. Thus, as the reader encounters this page:

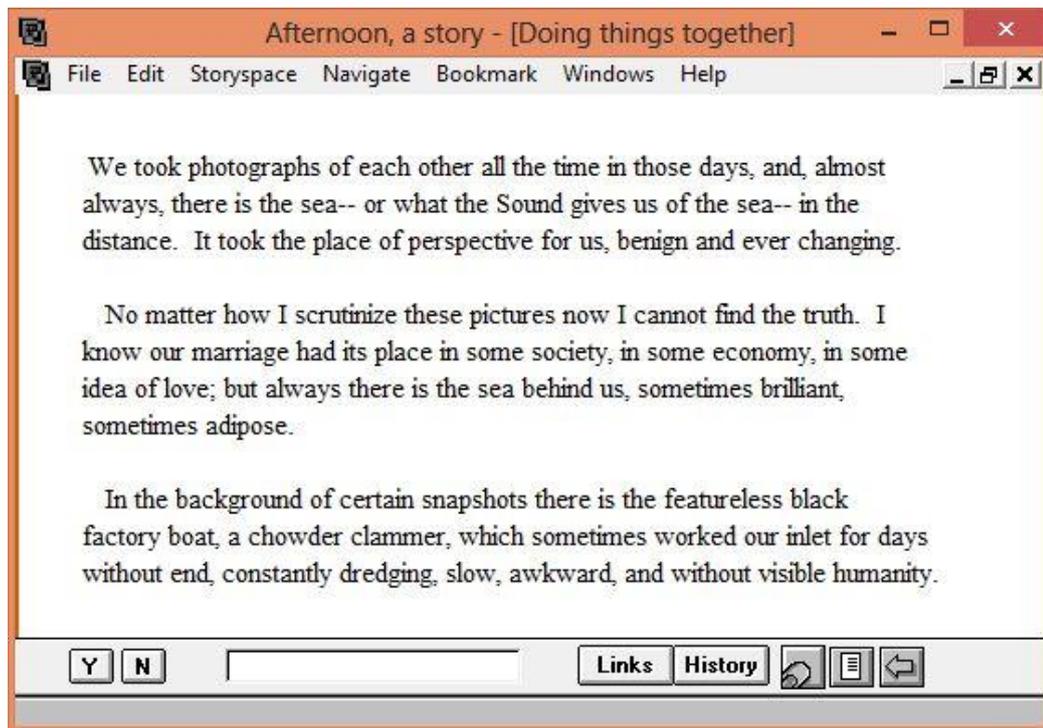


Figure 21: Joyce: *Afternoon* (Doing things together)

she will understand that the reference to 'those days' may allude to a time she has read about on previous pages, or alternatively to a time she has no knowledge of because it is documented in pages that she has not accessed.

The fictionality of neutral temporality is foregrounded in *Afternoon* and this process reveals to the reader that, as Ermarth comments: 'such an idea of temporality is a convention and collective act of faith, not a condition of nature' (Ermarth 1992: 30). When reading proceeds without neutral temporal criteria, constituent stories cannot be contextualised in terms of any universal representational system, rather they are contextualised in terms of one another. In the hypertextual environment temporality is not absent from the narrative experience, but its status has become problematised because it has become visible, something that readers must apprehend and grapple with as part of a reading process. They are no longer able to ignore it.

A similar technique for problematising the viewer experience of time is apparent in the installation work of Robert Wilson in which the treatment of temporality operates hypertextually.

Mozart's Birthplace – juxtaposing temporalities for the museum visitor

In 2006 Robert Wilson was invited to contribute to the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Salzburg, by producing an installation within the composer's birthplace. The project was distinctive in that it involved an artwork being created around, and as part of, a functioning museum: Wilson's work, which comprised light, sound and objects, was installed alongside the artefacts and exhibits of this major tourist attraction. The museum's collection is concerned with Mozart's life, and includes musical instruments, paintings and paraphernalia of domestic life in Eighteenth century Salzburg. *Mozart's Birthplace* is designed to immerse the viewer in the composer's life allowing them to explore the rooms and experience the feeling of going back in time (Salzburg International Mozarteum Foundation 2006).



Figure 22: The Birth Room: seagulls and portholes containing 'fantasy objects'. Photograph: Lesley Leslie-Spinks

Wilson's work operated as interventions into various rooms of the house. In some rooms there was an obvious thematic connection between the artwork and the room, for example in Mozart's bedroom there was a bed on which lay a white porcelain model of Mozart bathed in blue neon light. But in other rooms the link was more tenuous: in the 'Birth Room' a flock of birds were suspended from the ceiling and inserted in the walls were portholes, containing what the brochure referred to as 'fantasy objects': a stuffed rabbit, a collection of buttons and modern toys. In another room were mechanically animated cut outs of 18th century figures and outside the building words from a poem written by Mozart to his mother: 'Madame Mutter! Ich esse gerne Butter' (*Madam Mother I like to eat butter*), were written in neon tubes.



Figure 23: Mechanically animated cut-outs of 18th century figures.
Photograph: Lesley Leslie-Spinks

Wilson's installation included many contemporary objects which had playful or humorous connotations. The effect of their abrupt juxtaposition with the historic artefacts was to present the viewer with a vision of the contemporary world alongside the historic one, and to prompt them to engage with two temporal zones as they explored the space. The installation emphatically drew the viewer's own time into the work by including them in the exhibition as a point of contrast with the artefacts. In the

'Living Room' seven newly constructed chairs were positioned alongside original family portraits of the Mozart's and viewers were invited to: 'take a seat and become part of the family' (Worseg 2006: 14). The viewers, either seated or observing others, experienced a juxtaposition of contemporary and historic temporalities. The effect was to provoke a reflexive engagement with the viewing process itself and to foreground the fact that impressions of historic time are enmeshed with the experiences of present time.



Figure 24: Chairs by Robert Wilson alongside portraits of the Mozart family.
Photograph: Lesley Leslie-Spinks

His approach relates to the process outlined by Alexander Stille in his discussion of an Egyptologist's commentary on the preservation of the Great Sphinx of Giza: 'What we are trying to freeze is actually the present, which offers a highly distorted, fragmentary

version of the past' (in Kirschenbaum 2008: 1). In a documentary about the installation

Wilson commented:

When constructing a space like this not only do we have things that are historical but we also have things that are counterpoints to the history that maybe help us to hear and to see better (Wilson 2009)

Wilson identifies that a certain kind of juxtaposition of materials from different periods produces an effect that enhances the sensory experience of the work. In *Mozart's Birthplace* the historic and contemporary are brought into relief and operate, as two independent narratives, in a manner similar to narratives co-existing within a hypertext network. The fact that the objects that Wilson uses are not explained, means that they do not conceptually merge with the museum objects into a rational display of things relating to one another in a comprehensive manner. Rather, there is a dissonance between the contemporaneity of Wilson's objects, for example the neon lights and plastic toys, and the historic exhibits; musical scores, costumes and instruments. Thus two different temporalities are presented as separate narrative strands and yet their juxtaposition at certain points releases an impression that cannot be fully explained by either strand. The hypertextual quality of this work relates to its plural narrative strands and incongruous juxtapositions. This structural composition, which is reminiscent of hypertext fiction, draws attention to the sensation of the moment of viewing in which the spectator must negotiate the play of the different temporalities in operation. The particular conjoining of the historic and the contemporary, the public and the personal, may be further explored through Lyotard's notion of 'discourse' and 'figure', as outlined in the introduction of this chapter, which articulates an approach for considering how sensation and perception operates for the viewer or reader in the process of

experiencing an artwork or text. I am suggesting that this approach is particularly appropriate to post-neutral works that provoke the hypertextual experience.

Lyotard introduces the concept of the figural in a passage that asserts that it is impossible to describe the experience of looking at a painting as a 'reading'. He argues, with reference to a description of a painting by Paul Claudel, that the meanings contained in the picture cannot be read as if it were a text, rather the work operated figurally:

the given is not a text, it possesses an inherent thickness, or rather a difference, which is not to be read, but rather seen; and this difference, and the immobile mobility that reveals it, are what continually fall into oblivion in the process of signification (Lyotard 2011: 3).

Lyotard argues that two different modes of understanding may be instigated by the operations of literature and art, the first relates to the *discourse*, which is the matrixed textual space of semiotics, and the second to the *figure*, an un-representable quality derived from the notion of a visual figure and yet existing within any text. Importantly the *figure* generates understandings that cannot be accounted for by a textual system and hence it disrupts the rules of representation. *Discourse* may be identified with those systems that are embedded within the protocols of writing and are consequently invisible, but which function as the machinery of representation. What Ermarth refers to as 'the neutral temporality of modernity' (Ermarth 1998) is such a *discourse* which enables time to be represented without being apprehended. Lyotard identifies that there is always something operating in addition to this kind of systemic representation which is present within the text and which colours it. The *figure* is: 'something of another kind that is lodged within discourse and lends it its expressivity' (in Readings 1991: 15).

I would argue that in both *Afternoon* and *Mozart's Birthplace* the awareness of the loss of neutrality, as it comes about through reading or viewing, activates an awareness of the quality that Lyotard names the figural. In the Wilson work, the temporal situation of the historic artefacts and the actual *own time* experiences of the viewer are both foregrounded by the material of the installation. However the juxtaposition of the temporalities does not resolve in terms of any discourse around either Mozart or Wilson. For the viewer the unexplained element of the works on display, and the fact that sometimes there seems to be a relationship between the installation and the museum, but at other times not, and furthermore that this in-coherence seems to be an element celebrated in the work, results in the experience becoming charged with a quality of indeterminacy. What is revealed through the experience of *Mozart's Birthplace* may be said to operate figurally because it does not, and cannot, fit into any existing discourse. To use Lyotard's words, the figural is a presence in the text which may be said to be: 'vibrating until it disjoins' (Lyotard 2011: 52).

Mozart's Birthplace, in its positioning of two different temporalities, prompts significations which operate sensorially, through humour, visual juxtapositions and rhythm, and do not rely on an interpretation in terms of any particular narrative. The installation results in the experience of the museum shifting from being one dominated by the act of interpretation to one dominated by sensation – a figural response. I suggest that what is identified through the figural is a quality common to post neutral systems which operate hypertextually. Significations that are not fixed into a meta-textual neutrality, may emerge to communicate with the senses without necessarily operating discursively or appealing to the intellect. This focus on the significance of sensorial

quality of the work is a quality of the hypertextual experience. Furthermore, the fact that the viewer is partially responsible for their sequence of viewing the work, positions them so they have an element of control over the activation of the experience.

The museum and hypertext fiction offer some illuminating parallel areas for consideration. Both models contain significant elements of 'discourse'. The museum is a repository of facts and textual information that are organised in a formal manner and become available to the viewer through their interaction with its materials. Similarly hypertext is a digitally coded system which, as we have seen, makes available its information according to certain protocols. However both *Afternoon* and the Wilson installation treat their host 'organisations' in a manner that enables the reader/ viewer, through their sequential experience, to engage with figural qualities which in both cases operate beyond the discursive systems.

The implication that discourse and figure can be identified as opposing forces within a text or artwork is not supported by Lyotard; for him the figural and the discursive are not oppositional but incommensurable, they coexist within the text but the relationship between them is resistant to being conceptualised. As discussed by Bill Readings in his commentary on Lyotard, (Readings 1991: 20) the *discourse* evokes the system of meaning and the *figure* indicates that there are significations in operation beyond those that can be identified through a system of meaning. The figural necessarily resists conceptualisation within the system, because it comprises that very thing within the text that eludes the categorisation that positioning it in opposition to the discursive would lend it. Readings describes it as: 'the resistant or irreconcilable trace of a space or time that is radically incommensurable with the discursive meaning' (Readings 1991: xxxi).

Kiff Bamford in his 2012 book, *Lyotard and the 'Figural' in Performance, Art and Writing*, has shown how the figural can be identified in operation within an artwork through elements of uncertainty in the representation. In his response to Lyotard's critique of anamorphosis in Holbein's painting, *The Ambassadors*, (discussed in Chapter 1) he said: 'this is an example of the figural at work: it cannot be seen, but by introducing hesitancy into the usual flow of representation, its construction is shown.' (Bamford 2012: 165). The hyperlink is the primary device for introducing hesitancy to *Afternoon* and it is through the operation of the hyperlinks that the figural becomes perceptible in that work. By a similar process of reasoning the discordant juxtapositions between objects that feature in Wilson's work similarly prompt a moment of hesitancy in which the figural may be identified. Just as the juxtaposition of the contemporary with the historic produced a personal experience of two temporalities in counterpoint in *Mozart's Birthplace*, similar effects from the mixing of time references abound in *HG*.

***HG* – connections and disconnections**

Wilson and Hans Peter Kuhn created *H.G.* in 1995 for The Clink, a historic disused jail in South London. This vast underground space became an installation through which the viewer moved from room to room, encountering tableaux that ranged from the domestic; a Victorian dining room, to the spectacular; a vast ruined chapel whose crumbling columns rose to an over- arching sky full of arrows in flight. In *H.G.* the existence of an *a priori* text was enigmatically hinted at in the title. *H.G.* are the initials of the author H.G. Wells whose 1895 short story, *The Time Machine*, seemed to be

alluded to in the imagery and acoustic score of the installation. However it would be wrong to say that this short story was comprehensively inscribed in the work, nor is it suggested that this narrative could be discovered through a particular close reading of the piece. There were references to the 'time traveller' whose machine takes him from his London home of 1895 forward in time to the future civilisation of the 'Eloi' and the 'Morlocks' and yet there were also images and sounds whose content did not reference the story and yet were emphatically presented as being of utmost significance. These included a ward full of hospital beds, a large collection of shoes arranged in pairs, a radio broadcast from World War 2, a glimpse of a rainforest, the sound of a train and many others. The literary text was present in the installation, but in such a fragmented manner that it could not control the meaning of the piece or even dominate an interpretation. Rather, the installation prompted the viewer to make connections between their own time and the various fictional temporalities within which they immersed themselves in The Clink. This came about because the work's operations were not contained in a definite temporal frame. The foregrounding of temporal fluidity was instigated by an attendant, in modern dress, who greeted viewers on the day I visited the installation with the announcement: 'The year is 1895 and something has just happened.'



Figure 25: A tableaux from *HG*.
Photograph: Lesley Leslie-Spinks.

The impression that something had happened prior to our arrival was reinforced throughout the work. The first tableaux was a Victorian dining room which had been abandoned mid-meal, an accurate depiction of the opening chapter of *The Time Machine* (Wells 2011). As we explored the dark prison other abandoned scenes were illuminated, illustrating frozen moments from different eras, always giving the impression that our arrival was too late and the main event had been missed, sometimes by seconds, sometimes by centuries. Sound effects, by Hans Peter Kuhn, including music and distant voices, changed in intensity according to our position and movement as we choose our routes through the tableaux, travelling through times. The visual, auditory and kinaesthetic impact of the work created an immersive experience which sometimes referred to and sometimes detracted from the Wells text. In press interviews at the time Wilson refused to clarify what the piece was about. 'I'm not sure it's about H.G.Wells' he commented, 'I think it's about Hamlet's Ghost' (O' Mahoney: 1995). More informative than this carefully managed media mystique, is the comment made about

his and Kuhn's working practice in the same interview: 'We make work so that the spectator can put it together in his own head' (ibid.).

In refusing either a connection with, or disconnection from, a key text, the piece legitimises many readings and moreover many experiences of temporalities which are not bound to a particular narrative. The temporalities suggested by each tableaux emerge alongside the viewer's experience of their own time as they explored the territory of the work. Here again the comparison with hypertext is evident; the visual and aural fragments that constitute *H.G.* function like separate pages of a hypertext, to be assembled by the user. Ermarth has discussed how the disappearance of neutral temporality causes a new focus on the *time of reading* and consequently an awareness of relationship between this and the fictional time of the work. She refers to the: 'play between alternate semantic systems' as producing a 'rhythmic time' (1992: 68) and this condition, I would suggest, is analogous to that of the Wilson installations in which the complexity of juxtaposed semantic/ temporal systems foreground the viewer's act of engaging with them.

In both the installation and hypertext fiction the act of reading/ spectating pushes together the real time experiences of the spectator and the fictional times of the narrative, and in producing the experience both fictional and real temporal systems maybe of significance. The instigator of this process is the sequence in which the work is accessed by each individual viewer; it is this that establishes the unique nature of the rhythmic play between the act of viewing and the work itself. The U.S. performance practitioner, Richard Foreman, observed in a review of the earlier Wilson piece, *The Life*

and *Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969) that Wilson does not set out to manipulate the audience into a specific response. His work demonstrates:

a non-manipulative aesthetic which would see art create a 'field' situation within which the spectator can examine himself (as perceptor) in relation to the 'discoveries' the artist has made within his medium, then presented to the spectator with maximum lucidity (Foreman in Brecht 2007: 425).

In *HG* the concept of time travel was transferred from being an aspect of narrative content to becoming an experiential quality created through provoking the viewer to reflect on their own experience of time as they explored a vast and disorientating location in which different evocations of fictional and historic temporalities were depicted. The viewer's ability to select the sequence and duration of their viewing gave them a distinct level of involvement in the creation of the temporal constructions at work in their experience of the event. The viewer's encounters with fictional time, alongside their own time, in the Wilson installations and hypertext fiction, disrupt notions of linearity and neutral temporality. Through considering the significance of the sequence of viewing to the management of the temporal operation of the work, it becomes apparent how, without the formal capacity to change the work through an explicitly interactive process, the particular quality of the viewer's temporal engagement influences what the work conveys.

***TOC* - a multi-modal contemplation of the operation of time**

Upon a time, in a tense that marked the reader's comfortable distance from it, a calamity befell the good people of X (Tomasula: 2009).

The opening of Steve Tomasula's 2009 new media novel, *TOC*, alerts the reader to its pre-occupation with time. The work comprises two main narratives, one of which, cited

above, is set in the mythic time of a faux classic legend, the other is contemporary. As indicated in the quotation, a key concern of the work is with the positioning of the reader in terms of the fictional time zones of the stories. Its use of the past tense to separate the reader by a 'comfortable distance' (ibid.) from the narrative is belied by its array of multi-modal devices that draw the reader directly into the particular rhythms and time zones of the work.

TOC incorporates images, film, animation and graphics, music and spoken word to involve the reader's senses in its multi-modal operation. The piece starts with an image of a galaxy against which is heard the story of Chronos and Logos, twins in a far off time and place, whose births occurred as their mother was on board a ship and crossing time zones. As the image zooms from outer space to an island in a blue ocean, the reader hears how disagreements about who was the older twin developed from boyhood feuds into adult battles. The story of the twins' power struggle is heard against an atmospheric sound track featuring period dance band music, the chanting of the canonical hours of the Catholic Church's Divine Office and sounds of the sea. Eventually the reader is invited to vote for either Chronos or Logos by 'dropping' a virtual pebble into one of two marked boxes that appear on the screen. The pebble triggers an animation of a piano roll with which the reader may interact at any point to stop the music and start a new series of stories. The 'Logos box' stories, which concern legends about time, are presented as text inside an image of a glass bell jar. The 'Chronos box' leads to a monologue, heard alongside filmic images, about a contemporary woman who has become pregnant by her brother while her dying husband, the victim of a road accident, is kept alive by a life support machine.

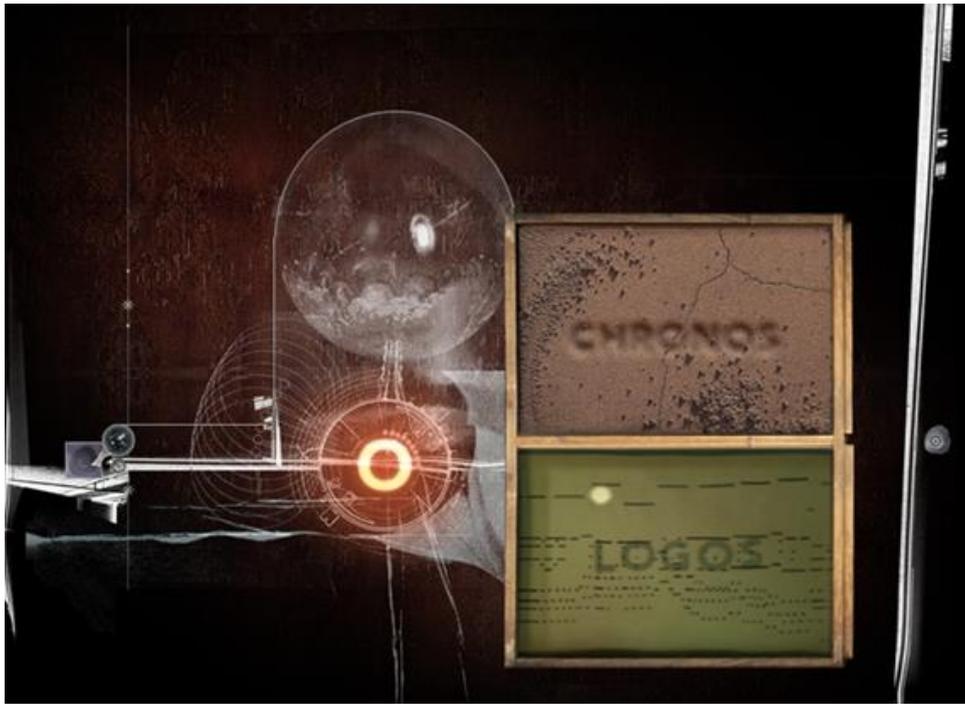


Figure 26: *TOC* – showing the 'Chronos' and 'Logos' boxes into which the reader may throw a virtual pebble. Photograph: Steve Tomasula

While *Afternoon* employs a basic use of text and code to create a complex semantic/digital experience that relies both on the reader's inventive imagination and their active participation for completion, the multi-modal nature of *TOC* equips it to operate at a different level. Its visually and aurally rich array of images and sounds, particularly relating to the theme of clockwork, immerses the reader sensorially in an experience that is more like a film than the novel that it describes itself as.

The reader's initial performative act of dropping a virtual pebble into a chosen box effects a crossing for them between the temporality outside the narrative and those temporalities within. It is relevant that the form of the cursor, the reader's representation within the work, changes at different points in response to the content. It appears variously as a pebble, arrow and clockwork pointer, and this gives a particular emphasis to the reader's presence and significance. Alison Gibbons remarks, in identifying the reflexive quality of the reader's participation:

the interactive performance involves a split displacement whereby the reader is both self-consciously aware of his/her own physical interaction and immersed through re-embodiment (Gibbons: 2012).

This split displacement, which Ensslin has also referred to as a 'double situatedness' (Ensslin 2010: 158), is a feature of the hypertextual experience that is foregrounded in this work. Gibbons indicates that the reader takes on a performance role as they become as part of the work, but also that they remain distant from it as they operate it from their keyboard. However I would suggest that *TOC* prioritises the immersive experience and the linear coherence of its separate narratives over reader interaction with content. Its design invites an immersive engagement with its portrayals of time, particularly through its use of powerful multi-modal resources. For example, graphics, text and filmic images constantly and slowly move and cross-fade, often, as it were, advancing towards the viewer. This effect creates an 'attentional zoom' (Carstensen 2007: 13-32) and gives the feeling of being physically pulled into another time and space as you look at the screen. The effect is enhanced by the use of sounds and music as well as the use of the technique of showing scrolling text to coincide with the sound of the words being spoken. Against this background the reader's interaction takes on a secondary role and becomes quite insignificant. The narratives themselves, once triggered by the reader, are conventionally linear and self-contained in style: they tell stories that are not designed in fragments that can be ordered in different ways according to the reader's interaction, as *Afternoon's* are. So although the piece offers various novel interfaces that suggest interactive opportunities, the reader has relatively little ability to control, in any detailed way, the sequence in which they access the content of the piece. Instead the interactive possibilities are limited to hyperlinks which allow them to choose between different, but complete, stories. Within the work, the reader's interactions tend to lock

them into narrative sequences that are pre-determined and that allow little room for either digital manipulation or imaginative interpretation. These narrative sequences use the resources of both language and multi-modality to position the reader precisely in terms of their fictive temporalities. Within the multi-modal environment of *TOC* there is evidence of the operation of 'rhythmic time' (Ermarth1992: 68). This comes about partly because of the two main parallel narratives which have distinct temporalities and that the reader can move between. However another aspect of *TOC* reveals a tension between the reader's own time and the temporalities of the narratives, and this is the actual operation of the work. *TOC* is a complex work and takes some time for the reader to learn to operate it and this process involves both repetition and stalling on the reader's part; processes that bring the reader's own time into sharp contrast with the fictional temporalities of the work. While Joyce builds into *Afternoon* devices of looped sequences and repetitions as features of the work that are specifically designed to draw attention to the reader's own time, in *TOC*, similar processes are experienced as a part of learning the work and, I would suggest, they operate as an important aspect of the experience of it. Inevitably the experience of reading *TOC* becomes one of discovery, through a process of trial and error, as the reader learns how to operate the interface, demonstrating what Philippe Bootz has referred to as: 'The aesthetics of frustration' (Bootz 2005). This process is one that involves learning how to relate one's own time to the fictional temporalities and to develop a practical understanding of the rhythmic relationship between the two. As the reader discovers an appropriate rhythm for managing their reading of the work they come to immerse themselves with narratives about characters who have similarly had to engage with temporality as a material substance, as their stories each involve attempts to manipulate time; the twins through

their interpretations of the significance of their birth day and the woman through the management of her husband's death and her unborn child's development.

Gibbons has commented on the prominence of 'process time' in this work stating: 'process time effectively overrides discourse time; certainly, it renders discourse time less significant' (Gibbons 2012). Process time, involving the reader's interaction, is typically slow and repetitive initially, then as the reader learns the interface, it speeds up considerably. However as the pattern of process time shifts it has a significant influence on perceived time. Hayles observes that: 'perceived time is emergent rather than given, constantly modulating according to which processes and locations are dominant at a given instant' (Hayles 2008: 80). A distinctive feature of *TOC* is the depiction of the many time zones and references to the operation and measurements of time. Here the sound, including language and music, movement and visuals create a multi-sensory experience of narratives concerning the complexities of time.

Conclusion

Hayles' discussion of the materiality of text is useful in considering the processes I have identified, by which a reader/ viewer develops a growing realisation that fictional time may be recognised as a property that can be apprehended and manipulated. Just as an awareness of the materiality of text opens up new possibilities for the use of textual media (Hayles 2002: 19), so too an awareness of the materiality of time operates in a similar way. As time becomes material in *Afternoon*, the personal rhythm of the reading process evidences the reader's real temporality and it is this that Joyce manipulates

through his 'gothic' loops and repeated phrases' (Miall 2012: 210). In *Mozart's Birthplace* the time a viewer takes to see the work, and the sequence in which they engage with its different components, similarly becomes a significant and legitimate aspect of the experience. This is also the case in *HG* in which the various temporalities portrayed are juxtaposed with the viewer's own time as they explore the work in the disorientating darkness of the Clink.

In all these cases the loss of temporal neutrality provokes an awareness of the materiality of time. The 'rhythmic time' (Ermarth1992: 68) that is established between the reader/ spectator and the work becomes one of the properties manifested in their hypertextual experience that is apparent as the significance of sequential order is exposed.

In *TOC* the reader's own time is foregrounded through the process of learning the interface. As this process speeds up, the fictional temporalities start to eclipse the real ones as the reader gets immersed in the encounter. *TOC* targets the reader's senses and an important aspect of the multi-modal experience is the sense of rhythm and cadence which come from the use of animations and sound and determines the pace of delivery of the text. As a reader one engages visually and aurally with the narrative as well as cognitively with the narrative content. In this sensorial aspect of the work, the figural becomes apparent in a manner that is analogous to that described by Lyotard in his discussion of the poetry of French symbolist, Stephane Mallarme, which employs the formal properties of typography in the graphic layout of the work. Lyotard suggests that the poetry is not primarily experienced as discursive or representational, but that the

'plastic' property of the words provokes an engagement with the figural within the work.

He says Mallarmé's poetry:

...robs articulated language absolutely of its prosaic function of communication; and reveals in it a power which exceeds communication: the power to be seen and not simply read or heard; the power to figure and not merely to signify. (Lyotard in Readings 1991: 27)

Lodged within *TOC*, particularly as a product of its multi-modality, are figural elements through which different kinds of sensations and perceptions are provoked which refuse containment by the constituent discourse. This manifestation of the figural comes about partly through the loss of temporal neutrality within the hypertextual structure of the work. The operation of plural temporalities brings about singular experiences for the viewers of *TOC*, as I have shown to be the case in all the works examined here.

A characteristic of the hypertextual experience is the mutual operation of 'own' and fictional time: each temporality being able to influence, either by contaminating or enhancing, the experience of the other. The hypertextual experience comes about when the reader/ viewer is provoked to engage with the work in a way which frequently involves a personal and actual contribution to a productive process of generation. Sequence emerges as a key determinant for the level of control that the reader has over their experience of a work: it is the sequence of viewing that enables the realisation of certain temporalities. Temporality is material to the hypertextual experience, and the significance of sequence is that it enables juxtapositions of the reader's own time and the fictional time of the work in individual and inventive ways. The sequence however, is not determined by either the reader/ spectator nor by the embedded digital code; it

is the various elements working together, the machinic process, that produces the significant effect.

Chapter 4

Possible worlds theory and the hypertextuality of participation

Theatre is the enactment of possible worlds. It is performed in a middle space owned by neither author nor reader ... It is a space for negotiation (Grumet in Prendergast 2004).

In order to examine the hypertextual experience, and to reason about its processes, a conceptual framework is needed that responds to its singular operations. The theory of possible worlds provides such a framework because it encapsulates a way of understanding the significance of the individual experience to the generation of the aesthetic event. It does this particularly effectively because its conceptual structure precisely matches the intricate processes of hypertextual operations. The performance, installation and hypertextual fictions considered so far all foreground modes of positioning the reader/ spectator so that their active engagement leads to them individually generating narrative events. It is through the conjoining of the formally structured, but unstable, work of art, with the active and considered response of the spectator that the hypertextual experience is produced. Possible worlds theory not only elaborates the hypertextual experience with regard to the position of the spectator, but also provides a way of understanding and reasoning about the simultaneity of multiple aesthetic operations that are linked together in the machinic processes of an artwork. In this chapter and Chapter 5 I will extend the use of possible worlds theory from its recent employment in the consideration of digital narratives, into a wider application in relation to hypertextual events in performance.

Possible worlds theory is an established philosophical perspective that has been employed by digital theorists including Marie-Laure Ryan, Alice Bell and Raine Koskimaa

in examining how narrative worlds are created through the readers' interaction with hypertext fictions. They have asserted that it provides a systematic approach to considering the immersive worlds that are produced by the reader's participation in narratives located in the digital environment. I propose that their particular application of possible worlds theory is transferable to performance and that it can provide resources for reasoning about what happens when a performance production demands and depends on explicit participation by individuals in the generation of its narratives, in a manner analogous to hypertext fiction. Possible worlds theory can be used to elaborate the hypertextual experience because its conceptual organisation can encapsulate the operations of hypertext and consequently it provides a sympathetic way of responding to the fragmentary aesthetic events considered in this thesis. The theory acknowledges the centrality of the role of the spectator or reader and validates their generative function in determining the experience of the work in terms of a conceptual framework based on multiple worlds. It therefore provides a fundamental methodology for reflecting on the hypertextual experience and mapping its nuanced modes of reception, including enactment, actualization, and anamorphic response, so that they can be considered in terms of worlds emerging from the experience of the works.

All narratives may be said to require a creative and imaginative interpretation from their recipients in order to operate. However, participatory performance, in a similar manner to hypertext fiction, additionally demands a specific physical effort by spectators in order for the work to be realised. In this chapter I will show how possible worlds theory responds to the particular characteristics of the hypertextual experience produced by the direct agency of the spectator in explicitly participatory performance. I will focus on

my own experiences of two productions by Uninvited Guests, and also those of recent critics, and consider the issues that emerge when a production is created from narrative content produced from an amalgam of sources that originate from both spectators and artists.

Uninvited Guests' 2011 production, *Love Letters Straight from Your Heart*, is a work of art created from its spectators' experiences of love. Memories of love: first, lost, tragic, joyful, are requested from people prior to the performance through the production's publicity and ticket booking processes; they are asked to email song dedications to the company for anonymous use in the performance. The production's promotional video explains this use of 'user generated content'.

The script and playlist for every show are unique. The audience are invited to request songs and write dedications to people they love. All the words you hear were written by people in this room (Uninvited Guests 2011).

As the performance unfolds the song dedications are read out by the performers and gradually, as the music is played, the spectators are invited to respond to them through a series of participatory performative actions and contributions. *Love Letters* enacts the private worlds of individual spectators by taking their personal stories and real world experiences and formally incorporating them into the performance text which is shared by the group of people in attendance at any one evening; each different performance therefore features a different combination of contributed narratives.

In *Love Letters* the participating spectator is ergodically involved in the effort of producing the narratives of the work, both through their contribution of personal anecdotes and through their performative actions during the piece. Agency is realised

through these particular spectatorial practices which lead to the emergence of an original performance text at every performance of the production. An issue for the analysis of the production is how to reason about the creative and generative processes that produce it, in a manner which responds sufficiently to the particular nature of participation and the dynamic between the spectator and the work.

Alice Bell, whose possible worlds analysis of Michael Joyce's *Afternoon*, will be considered in the chapter, believes that possible worlds theory lends itself to the analysis of the plural, contradictory and user-activated narratives of hypertext fiction. This is because it is: 'fundamentally concerned with the relationship between different worlds – both real and imaginary – and their respective constituents' (Bell 2010: 68). It is possible to isolate qualities of hypertextuality in the operation of Uninvited Guests' work and therefore I am arguing that Bell's rationale for using possible worlds theory in connection with hypertext fiction is also applicable to participatory performance, because the two forms share common characteristics. These may be summarised as follows, in both hypertext fiction and participatory performance:

- active interaction of the individual reader/ participant is required for the production of narratives;
- the reader/ participant is continuously aware that alternatives to their experience of the work are possible, and that these alternatives can lead the work to manifest itself in different ways;
- the work has characteristics of indeterminacy and plurality, yet this systemic flexibility operates within a precisely pre-scribed, operationally robust, model;
- the act of participation involves a material and tactile mode of operation executed by each individual;
- the personal experiences of each participant are relevant to the experience created.

With reference to these characteristics, the project of this chapter is to establish the ways in which possible worlds theory, as employed by digital theorists, can be used to

elucidate the diverse experiences of production and reception that characterise Uninvited Guests' work. This application, which has drawn from two major schools of possible worlds theory, is of particular relevance to participatory theatre because of the way in which it considers, and problematises, the interplay between the 'real' world of the spectator and the 'fictional' world of the narrative. Furthermore it raises questions about the spectator's experiential and imaginative practices of engagement, which need to be considered if we are to gain an understanding of the hypertextual experience in this context. To contextualise these questions I will initially outline my own experience of a performance of the production *Love Letters Straight from your Heart* before exploring different uses of possible worlds theory and considering how they may be applied to the experiences generated through Uninvited Guests' *Make Better Please* and *Joyce's Afternoon*.

***Love Letters Straight from your Heart* - many worlds, one production**

As the spectators enter the auditorium for the performance of *Love Letters* we are given a glass of wine each and invited to sit around a long table covered with a red tablecloth. The atmosphere, music and lighting is romantic and slightly festive: 'In here it's always Valentines,' says performer Richard Dufty. The intimate mood develops as the performance adopts the format of a radio request show with 'DJs', Dufty and company founder, Jessica Hoffman, seated at opposite ends of the table taking turns, in a sometimes competitive manner, to play songs and read out the anonymous dedications. These are heartfelt and the songs emotive, and it is interesting to look at the faces of the people round the table to try and guess the identity of the person whose dedication

it is and hence who is the originator of the narrative. Between the songs the performers prompt, cajole and at times directly instruct the spectators to respond in an appropriately romantic manner to the music and stories through certain actions – these range from gazing into a stranger’s eyes for the duration of a song early on in the performance, to slow dancing with the person sitting next to you at the end of the evening. Our contributions are called for continuously, and as we are seated around a table, and visible to one another, there is no way we can avoid becoming involved in these processes. Furthermore not only is there no auditorium to retreat to, but our essential role as supportive witnesses is frequently emphasised by the performers. In the moments when we are not directly involved, we are positioned to testify to events and implicit in this is an understanding that our presence is significant and essential; significantly more so than is usual in theatre.



Figure 27: Uninvited Guests - Love Letters Straight from Your Heart
Photograph: Murdo Macleod

While the ‘dedications’ are unique to each performance, the structure of the piece is not. It is crafted skilfully and precisely to frame the content - whatever that content might be. At the performance I attended at Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham, the majority of the spectators were made up of girls from a nearby boarding school. The

content of their contributions did not focus on romantic memories, rather it was generally concerned with children's feelings for their absent parents and themes of separation and homesickness surfaced insistently and continuously adding an unexpected focus to an event that seemed to be designed for stories of romantic love.

When the responsibility for narrative generation is passed from the performance makers to the spectators there will always be a likelihood of unexpected content. The formal structure of *Love Letters* establishes a stable framework against which the various narratives provided by the spectators can be incorporated without either dominating or compromising the identity of the production. Again we see a structural similarity to hypertext fiction which also en-frames narratives within a robust containing structure. The piece effectuates a meeting place for the separate 'real' worlds of individuals. The machinic nature of the production, its structure and interactive strategies, function to manage the dynamic between these different narrative elements and find a balance between them, that produces a unique experience for the group of people present. Yet it also draws attention to, and problematizes, the relationship between the reality of people's actual lives and the fictive theatricality of the event. In doing this it foregrounds the dynamic between different modes of narrative operation in a manner which also distinguishes a hypertextual practice. While possible worlds theory can, and has been, used in the analysis of many different varieties of writing from non-fiction to naturalistic drama, I believe it has a particular affinity to work which operates hypertextually. This is because this kind of aesthetic event explicitly draws together different active and interactive processes that generate different kinds of experience according to the individuals involved; the hypertextual qualities of *Love Letters* lend themselves to a possible worlds analysis.

Umberto Eco was among theorists who pioneered the use of possible worlds in the analysis of fiction, as detailed through a number of key essays and articles, predominantly *The Role of the Reader* (1984). He identifies that the theory is particularly appropriate for considering fictional works which can be regarded symbolically as 'constellations' of possible worlds, existing as alternatives to the readers 'own actual world' (in Ronen 1994: 60). A reader's engagement with a fiction therefore involves them exploring the possible worlds of the unfolding narrative, or fabula, and drawing on their own life experience, as well as their reading experience, in order to complete the incomplete text:

The reader is invited to fill up various empty phrastic spaces.... At the level of narrative structures the reader makes forecasts concerning the future course of the fabula (Eco 1984: 214)

Applications of possible worlds theory to theatre have drawn on the work of semioticians, principally of Eco and also of Kier Elam (Elam 2002), who describes an approach to considering naturalistic and classical drama in terms of the theory, and their work is discussed in Chapter 5. The digital theorists who have applied possible worlds theory to hypertext fiction, have, however, developed an alternative approach to studying interactive fictional texts which is informed partly by the work of the semioticians but also, importantly, by philosophical applications of the theory used in modal logic.

Possible worlds theory was adopted by modal philosophers to explain relative values of truth statements by measuring them against a modal system; rather than evaluating utterances as true or false, they could be evaluated relative to their possible worlds, so

something true in one possible world might not be in another. The modal philosopher, David Lewis, developed an application of possible worlds theory which prioritised the significance of the individual's position in terms of the object of contemplation. This emphasis was also adopted by Eco in the development of his theory. However from the perspective of Lewis's 'modal realism' it is the individual's point of view that actually converts a possible world into an actual world; this is described as the concrete application of possible worlds theory (Menzel 2013). Eco's and Elam's approach, and as will be introduced, that of Nicholas Rescher's 'modal fictionalism', are abstract appropriations of possible worlds theory (ibid.). They elaborate how the individual draws on their own experience to imaginatively embellish the symbolic world created by a fictional text. Digital theorists have been influenced by both the abstract and concrete schools of thought in developing their own methodology (Nolan 2011) and Marie Laure Ryan has argued that both variations of the theory are necessary to appropriately reflect the complex situation of the participating reader (Ryan 1991: 21). While the abstract approach identifies how one can focus on a symbolic world evoked by a fiction and develop it within the imagination, Lewis's concrete theory reveals accurately how one can actually immerse oneself, using the interactive interface, and re-centre oneself in another world. Such a manoeuvre, I would suggest, also reflects the actual process that is required of the spectator of participatory theatre. This concrete application of possible worlds theory therefore accords with a very different process to that undertaken by a reader of a printed fiction, or the audience of conventional drama, who may imagine alternative versions of the author's story, but those imagined versions will remain abstract and un-realised in any concrete terms. Raine Koskimaa establishes the significance of this distinction in his description of the reading of hypertext fiction as a world creating process (Koskimaa 2000). He identifies that while the fictional book,

through generating various possible worlds as alternatives to the real world will 'always *implicitly* (my italics) construct a modal system' (Koskimaa in Bell 2010: 25), hypertext fiction, with its networked structure which delivers actual pages of text in response to reader interaction, makes such worlds explicit by literalising alternative possibilities. While reading a printed fictional text the reader may only *imagine* that a narrative event could happen in different ways to that outlined by the author; but in a hypertext fiction, sequences of narrative events are *produced* by the reader's interaction with the hyperlinks. In hypertext fiction: 'instead of simply imagining that this or that event might have happened in several ways resulting in potentially very different consequences, some events really do happen in more than one way' (Koskimaa in Bell 2011: 70). Consequently dissimilar readings of one hypertext fiction can be viewed as different worlds, actualized by different reader interactions.

In a similar way *Love Letters* presents its spectators with multiple possibilities. Like a hypertext fiction the production requires a proactive response from its spectators, as co-creators, and it is this which generates what the performance becomes. In the course of the performance the 'dedications' submitted by the spectators become actualized as a unique performance text produced by, and for, the event, as do the participatory actions; dancing, drinking and talking, produced by the spectators around the table. The different iterations of the production can be viewed as different worlds generated by the structure. Possible worlds theory provides a way of validating the individual creative experience of this performance and of considering its world creating agency as a property manifested in the bodies and minds of the spectators as they engage with the performance's interactive and narrative devices, through a process which is fundamentally concrete and experiential.

In *Love Letters* each performance becomes about the management of the meeting between the worlds of the spectators, manifested in the narratives they import, and the machinic process of the piece. The production illustrates how, through the action of the spectator, a possible world is brought into existence. This process is analogous to that of hypertext fiction: the argument from digital theorists, that a single hypertext fiction can generate readings in which each page may be a 'representation of a different possible world' (Ryan 2001: 222), can be extended to the consideration of participatory performance because both share a capacity for creating multiple performative experiences for their spectators/ readers which, in terms of possible worlds theory, operate as different worlds. Elizabeth Klaver, in discussing the use of possible worlds theory across disciplines, said that the link between the disciplines that can be considered using the theory lies in the: 'ontological fiat, or performative, that brings a possible world into existence, however that existence may be defined' (Klaver 2010: 45).

One particular aspect of the hypertextual quality of the performance and digital works being considered here is that they cannot be adequately represented by a pre-existing text; there is no definitive document of the *Uninvited Guests* production, or Joyce's *Afternoon*, such as a novel or a dramatic script, that exists prior to, and apart from, the experience of the works. In both cases the performance, or hypertext fiction, is *brought about* through a creative exchange between the artists and the recipients. Throughout this process all concerned remain aware that other alternative experiences to the one they are experiencing are possible and immanent. But they are also aware of the significance of their own role in the creative process.

As a mode of analysis possible worlds theory has allowed recent studies of hypertext fiction to focus precisely on the reader experience, a focus which was lacking in much 'first wave' theory (Bell 2010: 12). As Stuart Moulthrop observes in an article written in response to Bell's book on possible worlds theory (Bell 2010), her application is one that particularly attends to the experience of the reader:

Her second-wave concept [of possible worlds theory applied to hypertext fiction] re-asserts the meaning, identity, and most important, the active involvement of readers in the increasingly important context of digital text. [It] directly addresses the predicament of readers, however confined or coerced into their niches, trying to make sense of difficult and 'slippery' texts (Moulthrop 2011: 3).

The implications of this application of possible worlds theory being extended to performance are that it provides a means of understanding the hypertextual processes by which the actions of the recipient of the work may be considered determinants of what the work is. This is particularly significant in works where the roles of the artist and spectator are unstable and where, as mentioned, there is no anterior document to determine a 'correct version' of the performance. In *Love Letters* the incorporation of the spectators' worlds into the work happens in a very literal manner. Viewing *Love Letters* through the conceptual framework provided by possible worlds theory provides a structure for understanding the seismic shifting of creative responsibility that moves through the work between artists and spectators as being brought about through 'world creating processes' (Koskimaa 2000).

In identifying common mechanisms and strategies for actualising possible worlds in performance and hypertext fiction I will now consider in more detail the concrete and abstract approaches which are associated with the modal realist and modal fictional

interpretations of possible worlds theory. My argument is that these two applications of the theory, as used in the analysis of hypertext fiction, may inform a strategy for considering performance work, and my project is to further apply this particular usage of possible worlds theory to performance in order to consider in detail the implications of spectator participation in the creative generation of performance experiences.

Theoretical backgrounds – the hypertextual application of possible worlds theory

In the 1970s and 1980s the philosopher David Lewis used possible worlds theory in developing his work on modal realism. He proposed that there exist innumerable worlds which are as real as one another. The difference between a possible world and an actual world for Lewis is fundamentally concerned with the perspective of the person inhabiting it. The term actual, as in 'actual world', operates *indexically* to reference the context in which a statement occurs (Bell 2010: 21). An actual world is an entity that may be labelled so by the person who exists within and speaks *from* it, and so articulates their own personal perspective: ' "actual" is indexical like "I" or "here" or "now": it depends for its reference on the circumstances of utterance, to wit the world where the utterance is located' (Lewis in Stalnaker 2003: 67) Thus Lewis' explanation of the terms actual world and possible world establishes the significance of the point of view, the lived experience, of the person occupying their actual world.

Our actual world is only one world among others. We call it alone actual not because it differs in kind from all the rest but because it is the world we inhabit. The inhabitants of other worlds may truly call their own worlds actual, if they mean by actual what we do (Lewis in van Inwagen 2011: 297).

For Lewis the status of all worlds is relative and whether they are actual or possible depends on the position from which they are viewed. He insists that all possible worlds exist as real alternatives to one another and are able to become actual worlds through the agency of the person speaking from them. Consequently the relative statuses of actual and possible worlds will change as the 'circumstances of utterance' (Bell 2010: 21) of their inhabitants change.

In Lewis's indexical theory, every possible world is real, and every possible world can be actual, but these two terms, so often used interchangeably, are not synonymous. 'To be actual' means: 'to exist in the world from which I speak' (Ryan 1991: 18).

Lewis's theory is controversial among possible world theorists, as well as more generally, because it maintains that there really exist innumerable possible worlds and denies the privileged ontological status of the actual world (Ryan 1991: 18). Unlike Eco and the semioticians, Lewis is not proposing possible worlds as imaginative constructs that might emerge from linguistic or semiotic process or that we might engage with as abstract entities. Lewis has referred to such theories as 'ersatz modal realism' (Klaver 2010: 50) and commented: 'I emphatically do not identify possible worlds in any way with respectable linguistic entities; I take them to be respectable entities in their own right. When I profess realism about possible worlds, I mean to be taken literally' (Lewis 2013: 85). Furthermore, and as a consequence of this, Lewis' theory denies the existence of one real actual world having a privileged status in relation to other possible worlds. In his modal universe there is no *a priori* original world that serves as a reference or model for others: 'Our actual world is only one world among others' (Lewis in van Inwagen 2011: 297).

Elizabeth Klaver has observed that the application of Lewis' theory to a theatrical performance operates in a very different way to the abstract approach because it does not sanction the notion of a privileged real world perspective existing outside the system of possible worlds. This refusal to recognise a difference in status between different possible worlds means that Lewis' theory does not allow a differentiation between the imaginary world of a performance and the real world of the audience in terms of any assumed difference of status. Neither the world of the spectator, nor of a performer nor even a character in a play may be considered more or less authentic than the other. Rather they function as equivalent alternatives to one another, different possibilities whose actuality depends on the circumstances of viewing. For Klaver the application of Lewis' modal realism to theatre means that:

A play in performance under these rules is just as existentially real as the real world. In fact, following Lewis, the fabula, the performance, and the real world of the audience would not differ at all in manner of existing; the only difference would lie in such things as where they exist and what stuff they have in them (Klaver 2010: 50).

Lewis' position is therefore contrary to those of semioticians who have applied possible worlds theory to theatre, and used it as a means of analysing the drama as a separate entity to the real world, because his system denies external processes associated with the viewer's engagement with fictional worlds. From this perspective his theory positions itself oppositionally to the basic principles of the analysis of fiction. Of relevance to this debate is the challenge to Lewis' modal realism from Nicholas Rescher who advocated modal fictionalism as an alternative application of possible worlds theory. His abstract theory challenges the notion of the actual existence of possible worlds. He states: 'only actual things or states of affairs can unqualifiedly be said to exist, not those that are possible but unrealised' (Rescher 1979: 168). He proposed that

possible worlds should be regarded not as: 'absolutely existing entities but as constructs of the mind' (Rescher in Ryan 1991: 19).

Un-actualized possibilities can be conceived, entertained, hypothesised, assumed and so on, that is to say they can exist – or subsist if one prefers - not of course unqualifiedly in themselves but in a relativized manner, as the objects of certain intellectual processes. (Rescher 1979: 168).

Unlike Lewis, he distinguished possible worlds from the actual world that has an: 'objective foundation in the existential order [which is] independent of minds' (in Ryan 1991:19). His modal fictionalism equates actuality with reality, and asserts the exclusive status of the real world. His starting point for the use of the possible worlds theory is rooted in the actual world; possible worlds for him are abstract concepts that may be used for analytical purposes to 'make sense of the world we live in' (ibid.).

Marie-Laure Ryan has become a key figure in the debate about possible worlds theory and its application to fiction and digital theory. While she has sympathy with Rescher's insistence on the difference between real and fictional worlds, she nonetheless credits Lewis's theory for what she believes is its accurate portrayal of the experience of entering into 'another world'.

Rescher's position may account for what we know objectively about fictional worlds, but the indexical theory of David Lewis offers a much more accurate explanation of the way we relate to these worlds. We become immersed in a fiction, the characters become real for us, and the world they live in momentarily takes the place of the actual world (Ryan 1991: 21).

Despite their apparent incompatibility, Ryan argues that a compromise can be found between the abstract and concrete possible worlds theories (Ryan 1991: 23), and that they can be used together to allow a double perspective on the 'textual universe' (ibid.).

Ryan's application allows the consideration of a situation in which a reader/ spectator can both regard the narrative/ performance text as an external created thing, from the perspective of the 'actual world', but also immerse themselves, with fictional characters and situations, in the world generated by the text. She observes that it is possible to re-centre oneself in a fictional world and also step away from it and view it from an external perspective. For Ryan, this fictional re-centering presupposes modal systems positioned as alternative worlds to one another. The first system is our native system with the real world at its centre. The created fiction provides a passage to the next world projected by that fiction. She explains:

...consciousness relocates itself into another world and, taking advantage of the indexical definition of actuality, reorganises the entire universe of being around this virtual reality. I call this move re-centering, and I regard it as constitutive of the fictional mode of reading ... it takes re-centering to experience them [fictional worlds] as actual – an experience that forms the basic condition of immersive reading (Ryan 2001: 103).

The application of Lewis' theory to *Love Letters* necessitates the recognition of the equivalent status of all the possible worlds generated by all the people involved in any production. Each contribution, whether by a performer or a spectator, is positioned as a legitimate possibility for a reading of the performance. The actual world of the production depends on the perspective from which the spectator views the piece and no single perspective has priority over another. Rather, through the process of re-centring, the spectators immerse themselves in the world that is organised around the moment of performance. Furthermore the system lends itself to a participatory performance of which there is no original version or text existing as anterior to the performance and that could be used as a reference point in analysis. I would suggest

therefore that Lewis' system is sympathetic to the state of affairs in *Uninvited Guests* work, particularly in view of its hypertextual qualities.

In hypertext fiction the reader is immersed both imaginatively *and* physically in the work: physically through their participation in its structural processes through the hyperlinks, and imaginatively in its narratives. In a similar manner the spectator of participatory performance becomes immersed as their actions contribute to the creation of the event: according to Ryan, modal realism enables the consideration of this process as a shifting of the spectator's point of view which converts possible worlds to actual worlds (Ryan, 2001: 101). This manoeuvre, however, happens alongside the spectator experiencing imaginative immersion in the narratives of the work, a process which resonates more specifically with the modal fictional application of possible worlds theory. Therefore both interpretations of possible worlds theory help a consideration of the complex positioning of the reader/ spectator in hypertext fiction and performance works.

Ryan's application of possible worlds theory is indebted to Lewis' theory because the operational structure she describes illustrates the workings of modal realism and reflects the notion of a multiplicity of alternative possible worlds, any of which may be 'actual' in the perceptions of their inhabitants. However, like Rescher, Ryan does not suggest that the worlds generated by a text are real, although she suggests that they have to function *as* real in terms of the textual universe and she acknowledges the need for the readers to *imagine* that the fiction is real, in the manner of children playing a make believe game. She explains that when children enter into the game they do so through use of pretence: 'let's pretend these buckets full of sand are cakes' (Ryan 1991:

23). For the duration of the game they will cognitively position themselves in the centre of the world of the fiction they have made and re-negotiate their perspective on the world in terms of this adopted point of view:

In fiction: we know that the textual universe as a whole is an imaginary alternative to our system of reality; but for the duration of the game, as we step into it, we behave as if the actual world of the textual universe were the actual world (Ryan 1991: 23).

Our capacity to do this when encountering fiction is significant. It is linked to the principle of the 'willing suspension of disbelief' (Coleridge 2013 [1837]) which is operational in theatre as it is in other forms which present narrative worlds. The acceptance of this principle is evidenced in participatory work which requires spectators to enter the world of the performance and play a part in it.

However a different issue arises for forms which are constitutionally complex and unstable and consequently demand that their recipients continuously re-position themselves, cognitively and physically, in terms of this instability. Ryan's application of possible worlds theory draws from both modal fictionalism and modal realism and allows the recognition of a situation in which a reader can not only regard the narrative as an external created thing, from the perspective of the real world, but also immerse themselves, with fictional characters and situations, in the world generated by the text. She observes that it is possible to 're-center' oneself in a fictional world but also to step away from it and view it from an external perspective, thus acknowledging the complexity of points of view that the reader might have in regard to a fiction. For Ryan, this fictional re-centering presupposes modal systems positioned as alternative worlds to one another. She explains:

As inhabitants of the one and only actual world, we realize that the textual universe is created by the text, but as players in a fictional game, we agree to regard it as pre-existing to it, as being merely reflected in the narrator's declarations. Contemplated from without, the textual universe is populated by characters whose properties are those and only those specified by the text; contemplated from within, it is populated by ontologically complete human beings who would have existed and experienced certain events if nobody had undertaken the task of telling their story (Ryan 1991: 23).

As Ryan recognises, when we become physically involved, in her example through playing, our engagement will implicate us and we will present the pretence through our performative action within the constructed world. The notion of re-centring as a physical, as well as imaginative, repositioning can be exemplified in play, as Ryan has illustrated (Ryan 2001: 106), in performative interaction, and also in a reader's digital interaction with a hypertext fiction. George Landow has observed, using similar terminology that the structure of hypertext allows the reader to continuously re-centre themselves within the text through the facility of the hyperlink. He argues that it is the reader's re-centering movement through the text which determines what their experience of the digital world is, and not the author's strategic positioning of the reader in terms of *their* text.

All hypertext systems permit the individual reader to choose his or her own center of investigation and experience. What this principle means in practice is that the reader is not locked into any kind of particular organization or hierarchy (Landow 1992: 13).

Ryan's approach, incorporating concrete and abstract applications of possible worlds theory and drawing on the concept of re-centering, has been adopted chiefly by digital theorists to examine hypertext fiction (see Bell 2010). I am proposing that it also

provides a way of considering the genre of participatory performance work which, like hypertext fiction, includes both narratives and elements of explicit participation.

Ryan's conceptual framework distinguishes between the actual world, or real life, and the textual actual world which is generated by a work of fiction. In the actual world, the concept of possible worlds refers to alternatives to the native system of reality which may be presented by the fantasies and speculations of the inhabitants of the actual world. Similarly a textual actual world is created by a fictional text and textual possible worlds are alternatives to this generated by the fictional characters' mental processes. (Ryan in Bell 2010: 25). This notion of combining properties from the actual and textual worlds can be exemplified in Uninvited Guests' 2012 production *Make Better Please* where the world making process is similarly both physical and imaginative. A situation is brought about in the performance in which the actual world of the spectator is invested in the textual actual world and in order for the fictional world of the performance to function, the spectator has to operate in terms of both worlds.

I am proposing that possible worlds theory can be employed in an analysis of Uninvited Guest's *Make Better Please*, to unpack the complex shifts in the spectator/ performance dynamic that are set in motion by this production. Specifically, this application of possible worlds theory is appropriate because the work is predicated on the spectator's personal contribution to, what may be termed, the Textual Actual World projected by the production.

Moving between the worlds of *Make Better Please*

Make Better Please, like *Love Letters*, involves extensive spectator interaction. The input of the spectators shapes the content of the performance, which broadly concerns the impact and influence of high profile political figures and events, as reported in the media, on the lives of ordinary people. As we enter the performance space for *Make Better Please* we are invited to join the performers to drink tea and read newspapers. The spectators sit around tables in small groups with a performer at each table and the groups are given paper and pencils to make notes as they leaf through the day's papers, drink and chat. Prompted by the performers they discuss the items they have found most troubling and eventually someone from each table is asked to stand and tell, and then perform, their chosen 'bad news' story to everyone. As the stories are shared the performers intervene, selecting events from the stories which are incorporated into small scenes.

The performers, Paul Clarke, Richard Dufty, Lewis Gibson and Jessica Hoffman, continuously request the input of spectators, sometimes as co-performers, at other times to function collectively as a panel to which the characters responsible for the 'bad news' are answerable. 'I am Boris Johnson is there anything you want to ask me?' asked Dufty at the performance at Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham. This provoked some tentative questions from the audience. When he 'became' David Cameron, the questioning became more pressing and angry.

As the cast took turns to impersonate figures from the selected news stories, loud rock music, drums and sound, lighting and smoke effects, were incorporated into the

portrayals, which took on a ritualistic quality, with us seated closely round the action, involved as witnesses and collaborators in a pagan style ceremony to rid the world of its evil. It became increasingly apparent that our narrative contributions had generated another highly stylised world within the performance-

The intensity of the drama, which on the night I viewed it focussed particularly on recently reported atrocities in Syria, built to a point where Dufty stripped and replaced his trousers and shirt with a bizarre costume sculpted from newsprint into a grass skirt and phallus. Transformed, he started to speak in tongues, then strutted and shrieked, abasing himself as he took on all of the wrongs of the world, absorbing them into his body like a shaman. At one point he demanded that everyone throw their tea over him - and we complied as though taking part in some kind of ritual to exorcise evil spirits. At the end of the performance the spectators were instructed to follow the performers out of the building and to watch them setting fire to the papers on which we had written the notes about the newspaper stories at the start of the evening. In the final moments of the performance we witnessed these going up in smoke.



Figure 28: Uninvited Guests - Make Better Please
Photograph: Hannah Still

With its dramatic portrayals, special effects, music and costumes, *Make Better Please* was at times positioned as a supremely theatrical performance, but at other times, for instance in the moments of small group discussions, the performers demonstrated genuine interest in the minutiae of individual people's concerns, in a manner that belied the extravagant theatricality. On a practical level, the activities we became engaged with: eating; chatting to neighbours; making notes; as well as role play, could have distracted us from an immersive engagement with the mimetic presentation, as we became involved in this actual world business. However, rather than doing this, these activities introduced different modes of engagement, which lent depth and complexity to our contribution to the narratives of the complex multi-layered dramatic event, as well as demonstrating the many different kinds of relationships that can be established between the performance and its spectators. The use of these various modes of participation fashioned a structure that accommodated the Actual Worlds of the spectators within the Textual Possible Worlds of the production. While some

'interactive' theatre provokes its audience to alternate between two modes of either passive spectating or participatory performance, *Make Better Please* provoked a reception that was nuanced at the same time as being unstable, and which engendered various differing modes of engagement that could not easily be categorised as either spectating or performing but rather an operation of ongoing performative activity. The participatory strategies employed in the production ensured that the content of each performance was unpredictable, yet always also able to be retained within an overall 'authored' structure, as Costa elaborates:

Where the control comes with *Love Letters* and *Make Better Please* is in their meticulous construction. In each case, the Guests have built a very precise architecture, and then invited audiences in to do the decorating. Some nights the walls will be splatted with red and black paint; some nights they'll be swathed in pastel-coloured silks (Costa 2012a).

The conceit of *Make Better Please* lends itself to an analysis using possible worlds theory. Its composition can be conceptualised as a juxtaposition of multiple worlds through its foregrounding of world events and their representations in a variety of the day's newspapers. Furthermore it draws attention to the individual actual worlds of spectators when the performers directly ask them to contribute their views on, and interpretations of, the news stories. Like *Love Letters* this is a production that changes with each performance depending on the material contributed by the spectators. There is no complete previously written script, but rather the performance is made in the 'here and now' of the shared space of performers and spectators. The *mise en scene* of the production emphasises a lack of the traditional hierarchy between the world of the performance and the world of the spectators and consequently conveys an impression of the spectators as co-creators and collaborators with the performers. There is a sense

of openness and complicity in the atmosphere which, particularly at the outset, actively problematizes any notion of a fictional/ real divide.

The material that the spectators read, which comes from different newspapers published on the day of performance, signals from the outset a concern of the production about the way in which the actual world is represented. Representation is established as a problem: newspapers that purport to represent reality, politicians who falsely claim to represent the people, are held up as fundamentally responsible for that which is wrong with the world. By giving the spectators agency through the various interactive strategies employed, the production involves them in actively addressing the problems that they have identified from our newspaper readings. The gentle urgency of the show's title *Make Better Please* reflects a genuine intention on the part of the company, not towards any specific political target, but rather that the experience of the show will encourage people to think about what they can do to improve the state of the world. 'The hope, is that people will be inspired to think about how they relate to the world, how you (sic) might make a difference' (Dufty in Costa 2012a). This interest in the production having a real impact on people's lives is echoed in the critic Matt Trueman's comments on the work's cathartic properties:

Essentially, *Make Better Please* is a purely cathartic cycle that, in the process, changes the way you look at the world. It starts civil and every day, with a tea party or round-table discussion, but slowly brings itself – and us – to the boil. It builds from round-table to role-play, from role-play to ritual and from ritual to release (Trueman 2012).

Trueman implies that there is a progressive quality to the spectator's - and performers – experience of the show. I would suggest that this is not triggered by the narratives, but by the interactive strategies and devices used in the production, which function to

position and reposition the audience in relation to the piece. At times a spectator, or spectators, will become the central focus around whom the performance gravitates. At other times the spectators are distanced and positioned as onlookers to the action. This continual repositioning of the spectator/ performance relationship relates to Ryan and Landow's notion of re-centring and has the hypertextual quality of a reader continually renegotiating their relationship to a hypertext fiction as they read and interact with it.

The way spectators are moved between differing states of immersion is a particular quality of Uninvited Guest's work and the company's productions frequently depend on individuals responding to the *mise en scene* in a personal manner and entering into a specific and complex negotiation of their position in terms of the work. Dufty's comment on general theatre practice in this area draws attention to the focus of Uninvited Guests' particular approach.

We're always told that one of the essential qualities of theatre is its liveness, its immediacy; it's not like a film that just rolls on, even if all the audience leaves. But most theatre, even experimental theatre, feels like it's following the script, following the score, regardless. It's not particularly contingent on an audience, and certainly not contingent on you as an individual within that audience (Dufty in Costa 2012b).

The negotiation of the relationship with participants in the creation of the work lies at the heart of *Make Better Please*, whose operation is designed to draw the worlds of these spectators into the collaborative process, provoking them to commit to the process and then playing with that commitment.

Through the performance we come to realise that engagement with it requires a sophisticated set of sensibilities that can respond to the differing systems of reality

incorporated. For me, this process undermined the familiar protocols of theatre, requiring me to negotiate wave after wave of mixed messages about my relationship to the work and to continuously reposition myself, mentally and physically (there was a lot of moving around in the show) in terms of this evolving process. One moment, for example, the mode of engagement called for was that of witness to an extravagant ritualistic performance, as Dufty violently and repetitively hurled himself around the space, shrieking incantations as the music and lighting increased in volume and intensity. At this point I was external to the world of the performance, gazing in at the spectacle. However, then lighting, music, and the positions of the people around me changed and I suddenly felt like a voyeur, uncomfortable with just watching; then I became a participant in the performance, entering into its world and adopting it as my own. Sometimes I was addressed by a performer, demonstrating impeccable acting skills in their representation of a famous figure and consequently positioning me securely as a spectator in the conventional manner. However this security was undermined when I was addressed by a fellow participant who had become involved in the performance and whose emotional investment in the assumed reality of the situation was complete and disarming; because they were not acting, neither could I simply spectate, and rather found myself repositioned, again, in a shared actual world.

We come to see ourselves, through the world of *Make Better Please*, as both represented and representing; we are positioned and implicated through our actions, and increasingly find ourselves unable to identify the boundary between the real world and the fantasies enacted, between spectating and performance, unable to say how much we believe and how much is make believe. This ambiguity and instability is a quality of the hypertextual experience. The production, like a hypertext fiction, seeks for

and depends on our participation, but in both forms although we are aware that our contribution has an impact on the performance or reading, we have no way of knowing the extents or limits of that impact. Both forms can deliver misleading messages as to the significance of our involvement. James Frieze has coined the term ‘intrusive-hypothetical’ (IH) to describe performance work that plays out a crisis in audience participation through the: ‘intensely contradictory signals it makes to the spectator’ (Frieze 2013). He continues:

A braid of gentility and abrasiveness, IH invites us in and shuts us out, praises our attention and mocks our apathy. Tension between the visceral and the disembodied engages and distances us in a manner that is comic but unsettling (ibid.).

It is in this unsettled zone, where expectations of normative relationships between ourselves and an evolving artwork are confounded, that *Make Better Please* locates itself. Its experiments with the form of theatre are also experiments with the spectator and with the practice of spectating. The questions being asked, rhetorically, concern how stories are told and how meanings assert themselves in a context characterised by a slippage between production and reception. As Frieze indicates, the strategies used in the production to continuously reposition the spectator provoke a complex response which I suggest reflects the spectator’s imaginative and physical investment in the work. In response to a ‘blogger’ criticising the show for its naiveté and crassness Trueman responded:

If you watch *Make Better Please* purely with the head, then yes, there is something rather simplistic about it. Watch it with the second brain, the bundle of nerves wrapped around your stomach, and it’s a rollercoaster (Trueman 2012).

Make Better Please demands of its participants an ability to feel and think with their stomachs and their heads. To do this satisfactorily and to enter into the event in all its complexities requires ergodic skills. These will not have been honed through being a member of the audience in conventional theatre, but rather relate more closely to the ambiguous and multifarious negotiations of a dynamic hypertextual environment. *Make Better Please* positions us on its 'rollercoaster' ride in order to enable us to experience things from varying perspectives, to watch narratives emerge, not to develop into a unified impression, but into fragmented, changing and multiple actualities, any of which may be legitimate. Possible worlds theory provides tools and a language that reflects the experience of *Make Better Please*; through its lens the spectator's continual readjustment of position is configured as a constant changing of points of view as we move between actual worlds and possible worlds. If an experience of a performance demands a continual readjustment of our relationship to it, then it becomes difficult, and inaccurate, to sum up a position on the work as if from a unified perspective. Rather than becoming preoccupied with what a performance was *like* according to some presupposed benchmark, the more pertinent question concerns what the work *did* to us. Consequently possible worlds theory provides a way of reasoning about my various, and sometimes contradictory, responses to *Make Better Please*, allowing the experience to remain unsorted and personal. The continuous shifting of points of view that is required of the spectator of *Make Better Please* establishes it as a hypertextual experience; the structure of the performance launches an experiential process which responds to this unsettled and unpredictable theatre work. A challenging moment in *Make Better Please*, when my point of view on the fictional universe was abruptly altered, came towards the end of the show while we were seated around the performers having witnessed a series of extreme and troubling portrayals. We were each given, and

asked to wear, masks made from copies of photographs of ordinary people who had recently died. These had been taken from obituary pages in local and national newspapers and some of the people were known to the spectators and some not. The music increased in volume and a smoke machine and red lights enhanced the rock gig atmosphere as we were asked to whisper the name of the dead person on our mask to Gibson as he banged manically on a piano. Our act of naming the deceased was framed as a ritual to summon their 'good spirits' into the room to exorcise the evil from the world. Gazing at the performance through the eyes of a dead person I became aware of the ambiguity of my position; caught between being centred in the world of the performance as participant and performer and being external to it in my own actual world. This experience of being repositioned by the events of *Make Better Please* functioned as an emphatic reminder of how our point of view on the performance was vulnerable and subject to continuous change, according to continuing changing perspectives engineered by the production. In a discussion about the public response to the performance, Matt Trueman outlines how the production gives us a different way of seeing the figures and events of the news as:

no longer just names in newsprint. As such, you see the images quite differently. They're suddenly first person, films shot in POV. Not something that happened, but something somehow happening. You feel the echoes of fear and horror, the tremors of shame, and know they don't even come close. Eye contact becomes uncomfortable ... People do not know how to position themselves as an audience. (Trueman 2012).

Being able to 'not know' how to position ourselves is an important thing to discover: the ambiguous perspective is something that possible worlds theory facilitates partly because, in Ryan's adaptation, it encompasses both concrete and abstract possibilities emerging from the double application of modal realism and modal fictionalism. In *Make*

Better Please, it is through looking with different eyes, at different world views, that the complexity of an operational system, constructed for viewing from multiple perspectives, becomes apparent.

Possible worlds theory provides a conceptual framework that can be mapped onto the hypertextual experience of *Make Better Please*; it responds to a textual formulation that contains ambiguities and that can be realised in multiple different ways. The personal event produced through each individual's interaction with the production is validated, according to the theory, not as one of multiple interpretations of an authored text, but as, in Koskimaa's formulation, an 'actualization' of a world creating process (Koskimaa 2000).

Hypertextual re-positioning in *Afternoon*

Like *Make Better Please*, the hypertext fiction *Afternoon* is designed to present many possible worlds. Just as the performance will change from night to night, depending on the input of participants, so too *Afternoon* will alter with each reading as the textual possible worlds of the narrative are actualized through the reader's individual interaction with the hyperlinks, to create a textual actual world. The reader's process produces a story, which is logged by the digital programme in a 'drop down menu' so that they can see which pages they have read and what story they have constructed. Michael Joyce, in describing the work, called it: 'a story that changes every time you read it' (Joyce 1996: 32). The qualities of *Afternoon* that bring about the hypertextual experience have already been discussed in Chapter 1. However I am referring to the

work again here because Alice Bell's possible worlds analysis of it is particularly relevant in establishing how the theory can be applied to hypertextual operations in performance.

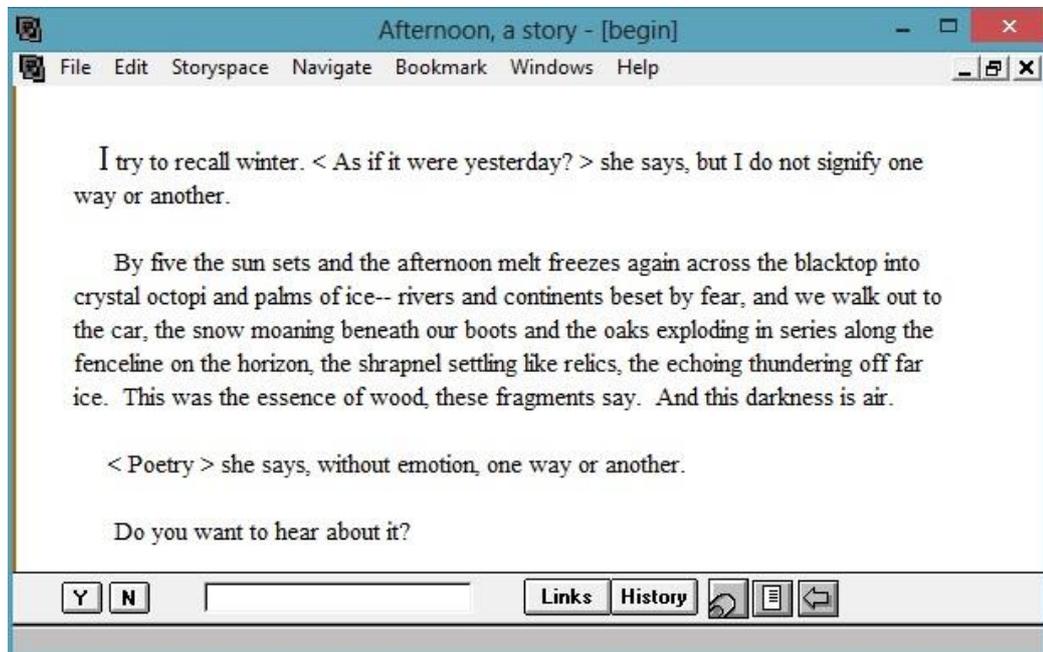


Figure 29: Joyce (1990): opening page of *Afternoon*

The image above shows the first page of *Afternoon*. There are 21 words on this page that are hidden hyperlinks and that, if clicked, lead the reader to new pages which each in turn lead onward to different narrative strands in the network. This initial page has a structural function that is similar to the opening of *Make Better Please* which also presents multiple possibilities: at the outset one can select stories from any of the newspapers as content material for the performance. The hypertext fiction and the performance production both require an active response from participants who are positioned as co-creators and it is this response which generates what the works become. In her description of the spectator interaction with *Uninvited Guests'* work, Maddy Costa equates the structure of the productions to that of a building:

There's no escaping the knowledge that the building itself, with its rigid walls and solid floors, doesn't change. It's the tension between that fixed core and the audience's mutability that makes these two pieces so fascinating (Costa 2012a).

A quality of the hypertextual experience, evident in both these hypertext and performance works, is this opposition, between the systemic constraint of the structure of the work and the freedoms afforded the spectator or reader in their engagement with it. As discussed in Chapter 1, hypertext fiction operates to a set of author-defined structural restrictions which limit the capacity for the reader to change the identity of the work through their reading of it. Although *Afternoon* can be read in multiple sequences and over any duration, its hyperlinks are designed to trigger only certain pathways through the work, thus enabling the network to retain an author designed identity, at the same time as allowing interactivity. Second wave digital theorists argue that the agency given the reader by the interactive digital text is in fact undermined by the form's structure; ironically this is the very structure that makes interactivity possible. Moulthrop, in discussing the vulnerability of the reader of hypertext, has suggested that possible worlds theory provides a methodology for considering this seemingly paradoxical position because it: 'directly addresses the predicament of readers, however confined or coerced into their niches, trying to make sense of difficult and "slippery" texts' (Moulthrop 2011: 3).

This chapter will now explore one aspect of this debate about the 'predicament' of the reader through the work of Bell. She has identified that in the hypertext fiction environment the status of the reader is changed as a result of their interactive reading and I am suggesting that the change she identifies has implications for an understanding of the status of the spectator. Bell identifies the role of the narrator and narratee in

hypertext fiction in a manner which becomes useful in understanding the relationship between the textual actual world and actual world. Following on from Ryan's notion of re-centering, Bell states that when a reader re-centres themselves in terms of a fictional system of reality they: 'Project themselves into the position of addressee' [later called the narratee], and: 'pretend to be part of an alternative system of reality and thus witness the narration within that system' (Bell 2010: 31). She adds that while the hypertext reader may not be formally part of the fictional domain, their interactive agency implicates them in the structure of the narrative; a communication channel is opened for them into the worlds of the fictional text so that the narratee is linked to the narrative events via the narrator in a direct and intimate manner (Bell 2010: 31 and 34). The difference between the narratee and a conventional reader is illustrated by looking at Bell's application of possible worlds theory to Joyce's *Afternoon*. The first page of the work ends in a question to which the reader must respond by clicking on 'Y' or 'N' in order to proceed (*see above*).

This performative action effects a shift in their status from reader to narratee; they enter into the textual universe and consequently become distanced from their previous position of an external reader (*ibid.*). If the reader clicks on 'Y' they encounter a page which unfolds the story further, if they click 'N' they get to a page titled 'no' which begins: 'I understand how you feel...' (Joyce 1990: 'no'), a second person address that seems initially to be a response to the 'N' click, that is to the reader responding that they do not 'want to hear about it' (*ibid.*), however then it goes on to continue the story but in a different direction to the 'Y' page. It is significant that it is the reader's act of interaction, regardless of whether it is a click on the 'Y' or 'N' option, which draws them into the textual world of the story and to their role as narratee to the narrator of

Afternoon. Here interaction is a *condition* of reading because the hypertext does not allow the reader to remain external to it. This shift into a zone within, rather than outside, the fiction is similar to the situation brought about in a participatory performance. Just as the reader of *Afternoon* makes a choice that is followed up by an action which projects them into the narrative, so too the spectator, when confronted with an essential decision to interact or not, will make a choice followed by an action. If the spectator goes on to contribute to the performance their action will effect a change in their status as they assume a performative function. Interestingly, just as the 'N' option carries with it performative implications for the reader who clicks it, even though their click indicated that they did not want to 'hear about it' (ibid.), so too a refusal to interact with a performance may itself constitute an action that inscribes the performance text and changes the status of the spectator by involving them, even as they refuse that involvement. Dominic Cavendish's comments on the emotional responses provoked among spectators of *Love Letters* illustrates this. In the example below a woman spectator reacted to a request for interaction by leaving; apparently upset by the nature of the experience, she exited the performance space in tears. Yet even this emphatic refusal to interact became part of the substance of the experience for Cavendish. He describes the significant moment when the spectators were asked to undertake a specific interaction with one another.

Without much warning, we were asked to look into the eyes of the person seated opposite us for the duration of the next song - and within about a minute the poor woman holding my gaze had started crying, scooped up her bags and fled. The power of music to stir unwanted memories? The trauma inflicted by an unwitting act of telepathy on my part? I'll never know. It was a real eye-opener, though, as to how dangerous it is to get audience-members to 'participate' without proper preparation (Cavendish 2009).

What is significant here is that both in this performance and in hypertext fiction, non-participation is not provided for as an option. For the performance spectator here the stakes were high because the design of the production made a discreet exit from the event impossible. The performance spectators were all involved in the production in the capacity of 'narratees'. Consequently the woman's decision to leave became a public act, a performance in itself, and significantly, a part of the performance experience for those watching. The scale and effect of this instance is far larger than for the solitary reader at their screen who attempts to refuse to comply with the rules of hypertext. Fundamentally the hypertext fiction reader's action is only witnessed by themselves. Yet in both these examples the salient point is that refusal by withdrawing from the action is impossible where every action influences the generation of the work. As narratees, both readers and spectators are implicated in what the work is. For the woman who fled *Love Letters*, the very act of refusing to participate inscribed the world of the performance. In terms of possible worlds theory it actualized a world creating process and further exemplified the tension between spectator agency and structure.

In *Make Better Please* there are many interactive strategies used that effect a change in status for the spectator from being external to the world of the performance to being internal to it or, by analogy, to being in the position of narratee. Most obviously these are when a spectator joins in the performance by enacting their news story. But I would suggest that other less obvious interactions, for example chatting and drinking tea in the performance space, donning a mask to represent a recently dead person, or throwing tea at the performer, similarly bring about a change in status, partly because they involve physical acts which mark the work and mark out the spectators' contributions.

Bell's application of possible worlds theory to Joyce's *Afternoon* identifies the textual possible world as a zone between the actual world (of the reader and author) and the textual actual world (of the characters of the fiction) which is shared by the narrator and narratee (Bell 2010: 34). The textual possible world is a complex zone because within it the narrator and narratee are 'speaking' and 'listening' from their separate native worlds and their exchange will be informed by this. Specifically the narratee is not privy to all the rules and content of the fictional world that is the narrator's domain. This change of status from reader to narratee is not necessarily, therefore, an empowering one. Any action the narratee takes here - and as discussed the action of clicking on one hyperlink or another will have implications for the reading experience and development of the narrative - is done from a position of relative ignorance of the world of the text. It is this factor that undermines the notion that a hypertext reader is in a strong position to choose their own narrative, because choice is compromised when there is little understanding of the context of that choice.

A similar situation is generated in participatory performance when the world of the performance incorporates the actual world of the spectator by inviting them into the performance through an interactive strategy. Like the hypertext reader the spectator will not be privileged with the knowledge of the extent, limits or structure of the performance, or of the implications of their participation. The potency of the idea of an overlap zone between the spectators' world and the performance world is attractive, partly because of the possibility it offers for the spectator to gain creative access to the performance. However rather than increasing their knowledge of the world of the performance, which being part of it might imply, the interactive manoeuvre only results in them having a limited and uninformed relationship with the textual world.

Furthermore the manoeuvre results in them losing their former external perspective on the work, a perspective enabled through the role of spectator.

The interactive structure of the performance facilitates the spectator's re-centering, but despite being immersed in the performance, and having the freedom to interact with it as narratee, the repositioning gives them no overview of the structure of the work, and no understanding of how their contributions might be used. They are in a textual possible world but cannot access the textual actual world which is the domain of the performance. Their position is compromised because their knowledge of the actual world and the material they have chosen to import into the performance through their interaction – for instance their newspaper story - cannot necessarily furnish them with information needed to become part of the work that they were previously observing. In this respect their situation is similar to that of the hypertext fiction reader, who is given opportunities to interact through hyperlinks, but not given information necessary to inform their interactive choices nor knowledge of how their contribution will affect their reading experience.

The specific case of *Make Better Please* illustrates that performer and spectator engage in a joint fantasy when they position themselves as narrator and narratee in the performance. Ryan describes this order of manoeuvre in fiction as a 'playful re-centering' and a 'reorganisation of the modal system around a new centre' (Ryan 1991:23). For her this kind of move into a created world illustrates the shift from modal fictionalism, in which the fictional world is viewed from the real world, to modal realism, in which the player immerses themselves in the fictional world. However, as identified by Bell, such manoeuvres can cause problems in the environment of a hypertext fiction

because on moving into the fictional world, while the narratee loses their external perspective on the text they do not gain, in return, an enhanced knowledge of the structure of the work that being immersed in it would imply. This is illustrated when the spectators of *Make Better Please*, having re-centred themselves in the world of the performance, may actually find themselves implicated in a world where their interactive exchanges with the performance become increasingly unpredictable. As discussed, these interactions, which start from a friendly sharing of information about the news of the day then develop into an embodied involvement in a pagan style ritual, indicate that different rules operate within the world of the performance and that the understandings and knowledge, imported by the spectators from the actual world, may no longer be relevant. The spectators may therefore be both unsure of their status in the performance and of the value of their contributions; nonetheless their participation implicates them in the work and consequently limits their ability to externally appraise the experience.

The critical reception of *Make Better Please* has drawn attention particularly to issues around the spectators' encounter with the piece. This implies that the notion of the production being a collaborative shared cathartic experience as Trueman has claimed (Trueman 2012) does not adequately characterise the actual involvement in *Make Better Please* for many of its spectators, which is in fact marked by a very real insecurity and awkwardness. This, I would suggest from my own experience, comes about through being in a situation in which we are neither fully part of the performance, but nor can we, having physically invested in the work, effectively separate ourselves from it. From the general position of being narratees to the performer's narrators, individual spectators are at different times drawn directly into a performance role while others

have a more passive role as witnesses. There are other times when, as I have shown, spectators are collectively required to undertake specific actions like the tea throwing or mask wearing. Consequently spectators are continuously required to re-evaluate their position in terms of the performance, which is a problematic procedure as Trueman comments: 'People don't know how to position themselves as an audience (Trueman 2102).

Truman and Frieze identify an issue concerning how the spectator positions themselves in terms of the piece, which I would suggest exemplifies a general concern of the hypertextual experience. The kind of work that provokes this experience generally involves the spectator/ reader in actively negotiating a position in terms of different elements of the work which require different modes of reception. The relationship between production and reception processes then are characteristically unstable, and the experience of negotiating these relationships is a hallmark of the hypertextual experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how possible worlds theory can be used to analyse the hypertextual experience that emerges from the complex participatory formulation of Uninvited Guests' productions *Love Letters* and *Make Better Please*. This application of the theory, which draws from modal realism and modal fictionalism, provides a framework which allows for a consideration of the particular sets of circumstances that arise when the real world participatory activity of the spectator becomes instrumental

in the generation of the textual world of the performance. I have demonstrated that the adaptation of possible worlds theory developed by digital theorists is transferable to participatory performance that operates hypertextually, and provides an essential way of reasoning about the immersive worlds generated through various spectatorial practices. In support of this use of the theory I have drawn attention to common features shared by both hypertext fiction and performance that are significant to a possible worlds analysis that provides a conceptual framework which reflects the intricate dynamics of both these hypertextual experiences.

In focussing on two productions by Uninvited Guests, the chapter has identified works that actually involve spectators in providing material narrative content for the generation of unique performances. The fact that the productions by the company change every time they are presented, in response to the input of spectators, demonstrates their hypertextual nature and in this respect their operation is reminiscent of Joyce's *Afternoon*, which similarly is a: 'story that changes every time you read it' (Joyce 1996: 32). Both these works reflect Lewis' perspective, which insists on the innumerable plurality of possible worlds: 'every way that a world could possibly be is a way that some world is' (Lewis 1986: 2).

The significance of these examples is that they provide clear illustrations of how the spectator's actual world experiences may become incorporated in the textual world of the productions. The discussion of these has demonstrated how both *Make Better Please* and *Love Letters* generate experiences that operate hypertextually, and how possible worlds theory responds particularly appropriately to the diversity of these experiences, that resist reduction into categories of production or reception.

A further examination of Joyce's *Afternoon* has shown how possible worlds theory can illustrate the predicament of the interacting reader. Bell's illustrative use of possible worlds theory, in her outline of the role of the narratee in terms of their status in the textual possible world, demonstrates some of the operational limits imposed on the reader (Bell 2010: 34). These are relevant to participatory performances where, in a similar way, the spectator is offered opportunities to interact with the work but, through this very interaction, is prevented from retaining an external perspective on the work and yet not given access to an internal perspective. Possible worlds theory reveals how the overlap between the spectator's actual world and the textual actual world of the performance, which is enabled through the participatory function, may weaken and disempower the spectator's position. The theory, as applied to hypertext, provides a way of appraising how the internal dynamics of a participatory performance specifically influence the individual experience. This application of possible worlds theory has therefore provided a reminder of the limits that may be built into an apparently aleatory structure, which demonstrates that the incorporation of a reader's or spectator's reality into a work does not give them control over it.

Possible worlds theory provides the optimal conceptual framework that responds to reader centred operations of hypertext fiction; this chapter has shown it also provides a way of understanding the complex dynamics of the hypertextual experience as revealed in participatory performance.

Chapter 5

Possible worlds theory – framing the hypertextual encounter in multimedia performance

The creation and structure of immersive worlds in two productions by the Wooster Group produce the hypertextual experience, not because of any physical and formal ‘participation’ by the spectators, but because of the way in which the works’ fragmented textual material is presented to them and the responses this provokes. Using examples from the Wooster Group and certain aspects of *Victory Garden*, by Stuart Moulthrop, to elucidate this process, this chapter considers the spectatorial practices that emerge from an encounter with a plurality of narrative fictions, in terms of possible worlds theory. The motivation of the chapter is to develop an expanded definition of the hypertextual experience to enable a new level of understanding of performances which employ diverse modes of address and which provoke complex and dissimilar receptive strategies among individual spectators. The use of possible worlds theory facilitates the formal consideration of the spectator experiences generated by the productions and Umberto Eco’s application of the theory will be employed to examine how the fusion of the spectator experience with the fictional terrain may be seen to operate. My central proposition is that the productions of the Wooster Group generate a dynamic interplay between constituent textual fragments and spectators in a manner that operates hypertextually and examples from *House/Lights* (1998) and *Route 1&9* (1981) illustrate this process.

The works in this chapter present their mediated textual material in a formulation which resists linear or hierarchical organisation. The spectator or reader engages with an

unstable and unpredictable textual territory which presents itself for exploration and which uses divergent modes of address to involve and implicate them in its fragmented narratives. Dramatic text, found materials, screen plays, videos, dances, improvised dialogue, telephone conversations and other textual fragments, all of which provoke different immersive states and different kinds of cognitive endeavours, are encountered during the Wooster Group's productions. The modes of presentation employed by the company produce an experience that may be characterised by the spectators' shifting registers of engagement as their attention alternates continuously between the diverse material. This distinctive process means that the spectator has to psychologically re-position herself in terms of the different modes of presentation in order to experience the event, even though it does not involve any element of formal physical participation. Mark Bernstein, a pioneer of hypertext software and founder of the hypertext fiction publisher *Eastgate systems*, has developed the term 'hyperdrama' (Bernstein 2009) to refer to performance work that is formally designed to provoke its spectators to continuously alternate their focus of attention between different facets of a work.

I don't believe hyperdrama depends on participation in the sense of participating in the action of affecting what occurs. What distinguishes hyperdrama from theater, it seems to me, is that hyperdrama demands selective attention: one can follow *this* but not *that* (Bernstein 2014b).

This mode of selective attention emerges as the spectator engages with the Wooster Group's performances and this chapter will refer to some of the many academic and journalistic commentaries on the company's work, as well as citing my own experience of productions, to evidence this process. Furthermore it will identify how an understanding of the use of fragmented textual material and hypertextual processes in

Victory Garden can elucidate the spectatorial practices provoked by the fluctuating performance environments of Wooster Group productions.

Chapter 4 established how applications of possible worlds theory could relate to participatory performance that provoked the hypertextual experience partly through involving the spectator in a level of physical activity. Here I establish how the hypertextual experience may also be identified in performance work which, although not involving physical participation, may nonetheless also be distinguished as ergodic because of the singular conceptual efforts that the spectator must make in order to engage with the work.

In identifying the nature of this effort in relation to the Wooster Group, Rancière's commentary on viewing as action is significant. He argues that the 'emancipation of the spectator' arises from the recognition and understanding of the role of viewing a performance as an active process. The acknowledgement that the spectator is involved in an individual and creative procedure can dismantle the structures of 'domination and subjugation' (Rancière 2011: 13) that are upheld by the characterisation of the dynamic relationship in theatre as a simple flow from artistic production to spectatorial reception. He specifies that the spectator: 'observes, selects, compares and interprets' (Rancière 2011: 13) as an individual process in response to the performers' work and it is through this process that she: 'composes her own poem with elements of the poem before her.' (ibid.).

By framing the Wooster Group's work as hypertextual, attention is drawn to the individual creative experience of the spectator. Possible worlds theory provides a

methodology for identifying and validating the singular, personal and creative processes that are typically provoked in the circumstances of the hypertextual experience. In Umberto Eco's formulation of the theory, which he applied particularly to the process of reading fiction, he described the narrative text as a: 'machine for producing possible worlds' (Eco 1984: 246) and he identified particular creative strategies that the reader employed as they engaged with the worlds of a narrative through a fictional text. These will be considered in terms of the Wooster Group's work and *Victory Garden* and of the processes which generate the hypertextual experience within these works.

The Wooster Group has pioneered a multi modal approach to making performance. In Jennifer Rowsell's definition, which I am employing here, a mode is 'a unit of expression and representation' (Rowsell 2013: 3) and in the company's work we see the operation of many juxtaposed and overlapping modes. The company is renowned for its use of multimedia alongside, and over-lapping with, live performance. In an article on contemporary opera, Michael and Linda Hutcheon identify the mutual operation of multi-media technology and multi-modal techniques in a manner which is useful in a consideration of the Wooster Group's work.

Live opera is both multi medial - the eye and the ear are addressed by different material media - and multi modal, engaging voice and music, but also language, gesture, visual architectural form, colour plus many other semiotic resources (Hutcheon 2009: 66).

The Wooster Group employs a diversity of technical, textual and performative sources which allows it to set in motion a multi-faceted syntax of reception for its spectators as they engage with the complex landscapes of their performances. The company foregrounds an interplay between the work's physical properties: its bodies; machines;

texts and spaces; and its thematic concerns. In the positioning of multiple texts it employs strategies which are strikingly similar to those employed in hypertextual practices, particularly in its use of narratives and its positioning of certain rhetorical and technological devices, which have the effect of involving the spectator in a creative and self-reflexive process that exceeds the receptive modes indicated by the dramatic form employed. These strategies, which frequently, as discussed, concern the positioning of fragments of textual material in ways that unsettle traditional hierarchies of theatre, also implicate the spectators in the emerging work as they watch.

In the Introduction I demonstrated that hypertext fiction operates in an arena of the impossible because its processes, which demand that the reader choose between different options, foreground the fact that a single reading cannot access the complete work or engage with all its narratives. Sara Jane Bailes has discussed a 'poetics of failure' in relation to the strategies adopted by performance companies in response to what she sees as a postmodern preoccupation with the inevitable failure of representational modes (Bailes 2011). This focus on the strategies taken up in response to 'failure' relates to spectatorial and reading practices in hypertextual environments, which come about partly because conventional practices of engagement cannot succeed. *House/ Lights* and *Route 1 & 9*, present 'impossible' situations for the spectators because the many different modes of address continuously instigate different kinds of relationship between the spectator and performance, none of which can be completed. This is because in the unstable performance environment, fragments of the mediated performance material will always disrupt one another's processes through the complex juxtapositions operating through the works; it is this condition of instability and interruption that demonstrates the hypertextual nature of the performance. The

process of engaging with the performances demands a developed spectatorial practice in the face of the impossibilities it presents and this manifests itself as an ongoing material negotiation with its different facets of the work. The company's performances, in a manner that is similar to Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, provoke a self-conscious engagement with different facets of the materiality of their processes and with their narratives. This is a quality of the hypertextual experience and I will show how aspects of the body of theory concerning possible worlds, which foreground the various imaginative endeavours of readers/ spectators, provide an appropriate conceptual framework for considering the productions.

Fragments/ textures/ worlds - encountering The Wooster Group

The Wooster Group, under the leadership of Elizabeth LeCompte, has been at the forefront of experimental contemporary theatre for the past 34 years. Its radical inscriptions of classic dramatic texts, explored through an on-going series of international productions, has won it a prominent position in the canon of contemporary experimental theatre practice and significantly in the academy, where its works have been scrutinised and theorised as primary exemplars of post-modern theatre practice (Klich and Scheer 2011: 46).

The Wooster Group emerged from a tradition of participatory theatre established in the United States in the late 1960s. LeCompte became a member of Richard Schechner's Performance Group in 1970 and working as both performer and assistant director engaged with his ritualistic and psychological methodology that explored, often through interactive praxis, an authentic social exchange between spectator and performance.

Consequently when she established the Wooster Group, LeCompte's development of her own performance aesthetic was informed by an understanding of the significance of the spectator's role (Quick 2007: 9). However her interest was not in exploring this role through participatory devices, but rather through a precise engineering of the changing facets of the performance/ spectator dynamic. The Wooster Group's work fundamentally concerns issues of reception, engagement with multiple information sources and the active and evolving dynamics between different elements of the performance, but these issues are played out and made evident to the spectators, without their physical involvement. Andrew Quick elaborates how the traditional separation between spectators and performances is often emphasised in LeCompte's productions:

there is no place for physical interaction between performer and viewer. The audience is always spatially separated from the scenic language that she constructs. This is particularly evident in the performance pieces ... where the dividing line between the spaces of spectating and performing is explicitly marked by a metal rail or framework (Quick 2007: 9).

In her correspondence with Arthur Miller concerning the Wooster Group's production of *LSD(...just the High Points)* (1984), which controversially made use of Miller's *The Crucible*, LeCompte reflects on her aim to stimulate audience members into an active consideration of the work and their relationship to it: 'I want to put the audience in a position of examining their own relation to this material as "witnesses" - witnesses to the play itself, as well as witnesses to the "story" of the play' (LeCompte in Reinelt and Roach 2007: 151).

From this it may be surmised that part of the Wooster Group spectator's function is to testify to certain participatory and interactive dynamics that are played out through the

composition of the work. The spectators do not interact, but through their engagement with the performances they come to understand, and respond to, the operation of a certain instability in the relationship between the modes of address used in the performances. These instabilities often draw attention to the performance's incompleteness and consequently indicate to the spectator that they must actively consider how to relate to this unfinished and unresolved material.

To clarify the significance of this point: a repeated motif, which is used in *House/Lights*, and also in several other Wooster Group productions, is of a performer who positions themselves behind a television monitor which displays on its screen the portion of their body that is hidden by the machine itself. The spectators see the image of a complete body that is clearly made up from an amalgamation of two separately operating modes of address, the live performer and their mediated image. Each mode is successful on its own terms and operable in the context of the performance, but through their juxtaposition the relationship between the two is exhibited as unstable, fragile and transitory.



Figure 30: Willem Dafoe and Sheena See in To You, the Birdie!
by the Wooster Group. Photograph: Mary Gearhart

What is presented to the spectator is a hybrid body, half mediated and half live. There is neither an attempt to conceal the junction between the bodies to create a perfect illusion of wholeness or to convey an impression that either of the constituent parts is superior to the other. Rather the fragments are pushed together in a manner which emphasises the interstitial gap between the worlds of the stage and of the film and consequently their separateness. The spectator is prompted to look for a possibility of coherence between the two modes, but this coherence is in a state which is configured out of dissonance. LeCompte addresses the importance of allowing separate elements to maintain their independence in her work.

Anything can co-exist together – without ... losing its own uniqueness - without being absorbed and regurgitated. They are separate and stay separate and at the same time inform one another - within the same work (Le Compte in Kaye 2007: 173).

An outcome of this style of composition is that the spectator is required to enter into the compositional process as they must make significant decisions about how to assimilate the work as part of their process of viewing it. This, I would suggest, prompts spectators towards a considered formulation of their relationship with the work, through which certain assumptions based on the conventions of theatrical reception may be undermined as they are positioned to reflect on alternative ways of relating to performance which operates in a 'post neutral' context. I am contending that hypertextual experience here is lodged in the dynamic of diverse juxtaposed elements, whose fluctuations provoke spectators to adjust their strategy of reception according to the mode of performance address, and not to any physical interactive device. In identifying LeCompte's approach to composition Quick explains how she would:

position the performer within a shifting array of frameworks in which autobiography, found materials documentary and fictional texts, improvised and reconstructed action sat with in what she has sometimes called an overarching 'architectonic' structure (Quick 2007: 9).

The implications of this technique for the spectator are considerable. There is no universal immersive state in the Wooster Group productions, rather, a diversity of different kinds of narrative technique is used that provokes continually changing immersive relationships with the spectator, depending both on *what* is viewed and *how* the viewing operates. The work's fragmented and fluctuating nature forces the spectator to consider their consequent changing relationship to it: the dynamic between their actual world and the worlds of the performance, therefore becomes paramount.

In its application to hypertext fiction, possible worlds theory provides a way of reasoning about the reader's singular practice of engagement which repositions itself continuously in response to the multiple and unstable elements of a work. Bell explains that the theory can 'be used to show how different readers can experience different events, different versions of events, or contradictory events in the same text' (Bell 2011: 69). The hypertextual qualities of the Wooster Group's work, specifically the use of multiple fragmented texts, lend themselves to a possible worlds analysis for similar reasons.

The two productions being discussed in this chapter, along with the vast majority of the company's output, make use of play texts from the dramatic canon; works that establish a 'mimetic contract' which triggers certain receptive strategies from spectators familiar with traditions of conventional mainstream theatre. LeCompte has even commented: 'so I'm really a classical director in the sense that – I do plays' (LeCompte 1993). It is important to establish this theatrical framework because I am suggesting that the

company's work, having set up an expectation of a dramatic experience through its use of the genre, then strategically subverts these expectations. The Wooster Group's approach to dramatic texts is not to produce versions of the plays, but rather, in keeping with their use of all text, to use them as a material, or as a found text.

It can be seen, therefore, that both the interactive/ participatory roots of the company, and its embedded connections with the traditions of theatre, have a vestigial presence in the work, in as much as neither influence emerges fully. The spectators do not physically interact with the performances, nor are they able to relate to the performances in the same way as they would to plays in which the 'neutral' conventions of dramatic practice are upheld. Rather they engage with concepts of 'interaction' and 'dramatic conventions' in a similar manner to the way in which they engage with the other materials of the production. Their viewing becomes, in response to the hypertextual quality of the performance, an action, that engages with the various levels of mediation exhibited.

The 1998 production *House/ Lights* incorporates Gertrude Stein's modernist reinterpretation of the Faust legend, *Dr Faustus Lights the Lights*, in which Faust sells his soul to the devil in return for the secret of making electric light, and Joseph Mawra's 1964 film *Olga's House of Shame*, a soft-porn movie renowned for its provocative violence and nudity. In *House/ Lights* both source texts are presented in textual fragments which are positioned alongside, or overlapping, one another, in formulations that work towards dismantling any preconceived notion of the respective cultural value of either text. For instance, sections of the play and film script are delivered alternately, and live actors speak into effects microphones, which erases any qualitative aural

distinction between the live actors and mediated voices on the film. Attention to this dynamic of equivalence is articulated in the title which draws on both the names of the Stein and Mawra works and also refers to auditorium house lights, whose illumination marks the separateness of the world of the audience from the world of the performance, a separation emphasised in this production by the use of barriers.



Figure 31: The Wooster Group House/ Lights.
Photograph: Paula Court

In addition to the narrative textual material of the play and the film, *House/ Lights* uses music, sound effects and dance routines, similarly sourced from disparate origins. All these constituent texts are fragmented, mediated and positioned in a manner that exhibits a dramaturgical resistance to any process of rationalisation towards a unified narrative: the flow of each of the discreet performance texts is systematically disrupted by other performance material as the work progresses. As Kaye explains: ‘a combination and juxtaposition of radically different elements serves to undermine any single reading that may be made of the piece’ (Kaye 2007: 124). In this respect the production’s use of fragments as source material reflects an aesthetic concern of Stein’s play, as Bowers (in Parker-Starbuck 2011b) observes:

Because Stein's theatre compositions do not proceed from a single fixed viewpoint, they empower us as spectator to enter and to leave the field wherever we will, free to choose our vantage points and to endow the landscape with multiple meaning or none at all beyond our experience of it (Bowers in Parker-Starbuck 2011b: 116).

In a discussion of the company's production *LSD (...just the high points)*, Rouse (2007) identifies how the Wooster Group drew on multiple fragments of text, with an awareness of their intertextual properties, and made them available to the spectator in a particular way that removed them from any *a priori* authority which may have suggested a particular receptive relationship. Consequently they avoided conveying the notion of a unified narrative and rather invited the spectator's involvement in the meaning making processes.

The performance selected its intertexts from a critical perspective but also restlessly surrendered this position of authority to the spectator to whom it offered its own activity as one of the strands in the developing intertextual discourse. This practice authorised the spectator to close the writing but also encouraged him or her instead to *re-enact* (my italics) the performance's own movement of self-discovery put onto the discourse's material plurality of historical and ideological significations (Rouse in Reinelt and Roach 2007: 151).

Rouse therefore identifies a creative and authoritative role for the spectator which involves them in assimilating and positioning their activity of spectating in terms of the performance's complex textual and intertextual landscape. This imaginative, inventive and organisational role for the spectator is brought about as a product of the composition of the performance text as a collage of found materials and is a technique also in evidence in *House/Lights*.

The Wooster Group treats dramatic texts as found material whose meaning becomes reliant on their local context within the performance and their own materiality, rather than on an assumed and unquestioned cultural status related to their origin. That is not to say that the texts' history and cultural status is ignored, rather it is presented as part of the material of the performance that is, along with other elements, available to the spectator for their use: thus *House/Lights* is *about* the story of Faust rather than *being itself* the story of Faust. In his discussion of *Route 1&9* Kaye describes the textual material as 'unsorted', a useful concept in indicating the active role required of the spectators as they witness any of the company's works:

The very fact that such material is recognisably 'found' material that it makes reference to 'other' histories and identities, aspects that the performance has not or cannot fully assimilate, leaves it in a sense unsorted, open to question in its relevance and consequence (Kaye 1994: 126).

In exploring a similar territory in relation to hypertext fiction, Marie Laure Ryan identifies a move in textual composition towards a use of found material. She acknowledges that while hypertextual technology did not invent the concept of 'text-as-resource' (Ryan 1999: 99), it has contributed to an approach to reading which focuses not on 'what *should* I do with texts', but 'what *can* I do with them' (ibid.).

We used to think of texts being made out of words and sentences; now under the conjoined influences of postmodern theory and electronic writing technologies, we think of texts being made out of text. ... thus offering *du texte* as a freely usable resource to the reader, rather than *un texte* structured as a logical argument aimed at persuasion (Ryan 1999: 100).

Ryan's concept of a text made out of text is resonant with the notion of the collage, a form constituted from fragments, whose significance to radical aesthetic practice is

recognised by Gregory Ulmer, who stated that collage was: 'The single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation to occur in our century' (Ulmer 1987: 84). It is significant that collage may be compared to both the formulation of hypertext fiction, with its use of fragments of narratives, and to the structure of Wooster Group productions. An important characteristic of collage, and of the related term montage, which refers more specifically to a filmic approach and therefore also has an emphatic temporal quality, is that fragments are taken from one context and re-contextualised in a new framework. This allows them to be doubly defined, both in terms of their original and of their new situation, a process which has a substantial influence on the experience of the viewer. In his discussion of the impact of collage, Ulmer cites Buck-Morss' analysis of the processes used: 'Aesthetic creation itself was not subjective invention so much as the objective discovery of the new within the given, immanently, through a regrouping of its elements' (Buck-Morss in Ulmer 1987: 98)

Thus, in considering *House/ Lights* as a collage or montage, we may see how the character of Faust, re-contextualised in terms of *Olga's House of Shame*, may be 're-discovered' by the viewer, through a process which involves them in making reference both to Faust as an icon of classical literature and Faust as re-contextualised in terms of a 1960s cult movie. The collage/ montage form enables textual fragments to be perceived as both old and new; they are, consequently, doubly available for the spectator whose experience is amplified because the semantic resources indicate a plurality of origins. The disjunction between the original source material and its current context, through not being explained or resolved in terms of a directorial strategy, or in LeCompte's words, without being 'absorbed and regurgitated' (ibid.), prompts the spectator to become involved in the creative process. Ulmer discusses how this

approach provokes the viewer into an active response and cites Bertolt Brecht's comment on this process with regard to montage: 'Montage does not reproduce the real but constructs an object or rather, mounts a process' (Brecht in Ulmer 1987: 86).

This notion of the fragmentary approach operating like a collage or montage to activate the role of the spectator reflects the situation with hypertext fiction in which, I would suggest, it is through their engagement with fragments that the reader operates. In both cases it is *how* the reader/ spectator relates to a body of work constructed from fragments that are positioned in time and space, that defines the hypertextual experience, rather than the fact that they physically trigger a hyperlink. In considering how this process operates, Eco's application of possible worlds theory becomes relevant.

Umberto Eco- the text as a lazy machine

Umberto Eco pioneered the use of possible worlds theory to articulate the ways in which the readers of a fictional work imagine and speculate about the events of the narrative. Eco was one of the first literary theorists who adopted the framework of modal logic as developed by Lewis *et al* and applied it to narrative semantics to enable him to use possible worlds theory in mapping the complexity of the reading process (Ryan 1991: 4). Building on the work of Lucia Vaina, who proposed the notion of a narrative world as constructed from a number of 'sub-worlds' created by the mental activities of the characters (Vaina 1977), he contended that a fictional narrative, or fabula, generated three kinds of possible worlds, which Elizabeth Klaver summarised as:

- 1) The possible world imagined and asserted by the author;
 - 2) The possible sub-worlds imagined by the characters of the fabula; and,
 - 3) The possible sub-worlds imagined by the 'Model Reader'
- (Eco in Klaver 2010: 46–47).

For Eco the reading process is one of exploration in which the possible worlds of the fiction may be explored from many points of view. His taxonomy acknowledges the aleatory and potentially ambiguous nature of the unfolding fictional text and the fact that the reader may take different routes or 'inferential walks' (Eco 1984: 214) through it. The reader's trajectory may therefore fluctuate between different possible worlds as they speculate about the fiction. Like other literary theorists he adopts the metaphor of travel to consider the reading process. He observes that readers imaginatively wander through possibilities raised by the fiction and make forecasts about the future course of the fabula according to narrative inferences in the text that contain: 'empty phrastic spaces' (Eco 1984: 214), which demand the creative contribution of the reader in order to be intelligible. Eco describes how the reader will: 'resort to various intertextual frames amongst which to take his *inferential walks* (original italics)' (ibid.). These, he explains, concern: 'individuals and properties belonging to different possible worlds imagined by the reader as possible outcomes of the fabula (Eco 1984: 218).

Eco goes on to suggest that every text can make the addressee: 'expect and predict the fulfilment of every unaccomplished sentence' (ibid.). Frequent and purposeful gaps in the text may prompt a reader's more sustained imaginative response: he describes the text as essentially: 'a lazy machine that demands the bold cooperation of the reader to fill in a whole series of gaps of unsaid or already said missing elements' (Eco 1985: 29).

Kier Elam, who has applied possible worlds theory to the analysis of naturalistic and classical drama, what he calls 'drama proper' (Elam 2002: 99), observes that there is significant variance between the way in which the spectator of theatre and the reader of a play construct a narrative world. He comments that while the play reader can imagine the dramatic context in a leisurely fashion: 'the spectator is bound to process simultaneous and successive acoustic and visual signals within strictly defined time limits' (Elam 2002: 99). The implication of this is that the world creating opportunities are greater for the reader than the spectator, who has their experience tightly controlled by the temporality of the live production and consequently has little 'leisure' for enterprises of the imagination. However, a performance experience that is not based on a single dramatic text, but rather involves a multi-linear composition of fragmentary textual material featuring a 'whole series of gaps' (Eco 1985: 29), lends itself more readily to possible worlds analysis, even though it is a time based work. In a similar manner a hypertext fiction, which is already constructed from multiple disparate narratives, is far more suited to the possible worlds model than is a conventional linear book.

To apply Eco's model one may say that, just as the reader of a book may be prompted to take an imaginary journey through the possible sub-worlds suggested by the narrative (Eco 1984: 216), so too the spectators of a Wooster Group production may be prompted to respond imaginatively and inventively to the performance text, particularly a text which operates ambiguously. In this way, and in accordance with Eco's argument, the spectator will draw on their own physical experiences of spectating and further, on their own lived experience, to create possible worlds that incorporate elements of the worlds of the performance texts with their actual world. In developing Eco's formulation of

possible worlds theory and applying it to the Wooster Group's work, I am suggesting that it begins to acknowledge each spectators' own viewpoint and provides a structure which accommodates these as contributions to the experience of the work.

House/ Lights offers the spectator opportunities to imaginatively engage with the 'intertextual frames' (Eco 1984: 214) of its performance text in many different ways, which will differ from spectator to spectator. While conventional theatre may encourage the 'audience' to forget their differences as they enter into the consensual shared experience of the drama, the structure and content of this company's work draws attention to the fact that there is no uniform experience to be had as each individual engages with the production in an individual manner. In addition to its complex use of texts, the production itself comprises multiple actual frames, through its use of television monitors and the variously lit portions of stage space, which all demand individual attention. Ben Brantley comments on the experience of being a spectator in his review in the *New York Times*.

Your senses no longer know what they are supposed to fasten on. Everything has become so fragmented that no single sight or sound is fixed. Human voices and mechanical hiccups are given equal weight. And people are never simply themselves. Why, at a given moment you can pick from five or six versions of that shiny eyed seductress who rules the stage... Should you watch her on all those television monitors, where her face keeps dividing, multiplying freezing and melting, and changing colour. Or should you just do what you usually do in the theatre and focus on - you should pardon the expression - the real thing. That is not as obvious a choice as you may think, since the flesh and blood woman (her name is Kate Valk and she may well be the most accomplished actress in NY) seems a little less complete, less fulfilled, than her video cast self (Brantley 2005).

Here Brantley articulates the effect of an attentional fragmentation produced by being presented with material which is ultimately 'unsorted' (Kaye 1994: 126). Confronted with narratives that announce multiple possibilities for reading, the spectator is faced

with deciding *how* they will view the work, a question which, as Brantley illustrates, becomes more important than the question of *what* the work means. The work's fragmented nature provokes the spectator to actively consider their relationship to it and in this process the dynamic between their world and the world of the performance is foregrounded. As Brantley's review reveals, the conventional practices of viewing theatre are quickly overturned when there is ongoing ambiguity about where the focus of attention should be, partly because the expected dynamic between the live and the mediated presentations are subverted. The resultant spectatorial experience, which I identify as having hypertextual qualities, is of a continual repositioning, or fragmentation, of attention in terms of the mutable worlds presented by the performance. A defining characteristic of the experience therefore is the negotiation of the network of possible worlds, immanent within the production.

For the spectator, this progressive process of engaging with the possible worlds actualized in the work involves a particular kind of active conceptual effort requiring a creative attention and invention as well as a reference to one's own actual world; it is a process, which, as stated above, resembles Eco's notion of 'inferential walks' (ibid.). However unlike Eco's taxonomy, this activity of spectating operates without consistent authorial guidance; the spectator's gaze is not steered on a progressive linear route through the work towards a final resolution, rather the spectator is provoked into a situation where they must choose for themselves how to direct their attention to the constituent facets of the performance. This spectatorial activity is one that emerges from the machinic processes of the work which involve the multiple operations of the constituent elements of the work that respond dynamically to one another. This complex *mise en scene* is specifically designed to put the spectator in a position where

they must make decisions about how to engage with the work. Brantley's review demonstrates the impact of being placed in a position where such decisions are contingent on the activity of viewing. It is a practice of engagement which operates ergodically in that it demands a particular 'non-trivial' effort from its spectator. This effort, I would suggest, calls for a sensitivity to the tensions and symbioses existing between the internal protocols of the work. Aarseth draws attention to the implications of the 'non-trivial' effort in his development of the concept of the ergodic artwork:

The ergodic work of art is one that in a material sense includes the rules for its own use; a work that has certain requirements built in that automatically distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful users (Aarseth 1997: 179).

While the Wooster Group's work may not employ rules in any overt sense, the ergodic processes it provokes require the spectator to actively consider their practice of spectating and adapt their practice to the spectacle before them, a process which requires effort and, to use Ermarth's phrase which she employs in discussing the requirements of post-neutral literature; 'new acts of attention' (Ermarth 1998: 363). It is particularly through its use of multimedia that the Wooster Group creates a situation that requires the spectator to individually and actively choose where and how to focus their gaze, and in this task it gives them little guidance. Matthew Causey observes the challenges that the group's work poses for its spectators, who are required to find a way of viewing the multiple frames of activity presented through the use of television monitors and performance spaces.

The fluctuation of framing devices is not only an actor's challenge, but also an issue for the spectator, whose choices for viewing are at least doubled, if not further multiplied. An interesting matrix of tension exists between the actor's alternate techniques for live and mediated representations and the audiences various perspectives on those images (Causey 2006: 45).

The process I am identifying concerns the generation of the hypertextual experience in a situation which requires the spectator to adjust their register of reception according to the various modes of mediated performance they are presented with. In *House/Lights* the hypertextual quality of the work with its gaps and 'aporias', to use Aarseth's term for moments of textual confusion in establishing the truth of a proposition (Aarseth 1998: 91), causes the reader to draw on their actual world experience in order to understand how to position themselves in terms of the possible worlds of the performance text. This process, as Eco's theory has illustrated, is a world creating process. In my development of this theory I am arguing that, like the reader, the spectator creates worlds which utilise the fragments of the production's texts and augments their embryonic narratives with additional material. Therefore the hypertextual experience generated by the engagement with various options for viewing may be conceptualised as a series of encounters with possible worlds.

For the spectator of *House/Lights*, who is faced with having to make decisions about what to attend to in the work, the experience also bears a resemblance to that described by Silvio Gaggi in his discussion of digital literature. He argues that it is the indeterminacy of hypertext fiction that causes reading it to become: 'an exercise in constructing a fictional world, in engaging in an interrogation with materials – textual segments viewed on a computer screen - that undeniably exist but do not in themselves point inevitably towards a fixed order or meaning' (Gaggi 1998: 125-6). Gaggi, who employs Roland Barthes term 'lexia' (Barthes 2002) to refer to the separate pages of a hypertext fiction work, continues:

Thus the narrative is not a clearly delineated path, but a textual space available for exploration. The reader's role is enhanced not only because the reader bears the responsibility for navigating the network but also because lexias, which can be organised in different ways, are often ambiguous; their meaning changes when their context - the other lexias surrounding them - changes (Gaggi 1998: 123).

So like Gaggi's hypertext fiction reader, the spectator of the Wooster Group's work has to develop a practice of engagement that responds to the indeterminacy of the 'space available for exploration' (ibid.) and through that response creates a world. A further examination of Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* will illustrate how this process of incorporating one's own world into the aesthetic experience may be elucidated through possible worlds theory.

Hypertextual reading as a world generating process

Possible worlds theory is able to illustrate the process through which an aesthetic production, both in hypertext fiction and performance, makes an emphatic use of the spectator's or reader's own reality. The tendency of a reader to implicate themselves in the meaning and resolution of a work of fiction as a result of the hypertextual indeterminacy of the narrative structure can be seen in Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*. This hypertext fiction combines, as has been illustrated, multiple narratives and although the presentation style is uniform, black text on a white background, in terms of their content they operate in various literary modes. Different pages present dialogue, description, quotations from other sources, letters, television and newspaper reports and other means of expressive delivery, including different forms of address to the reader. This diversity of semantic modes operating in the work has the effect of

causing the reader to continually adjust their register of reception as they encounter the different pages of the work.

To follow Eco's theory, the presentation of multiple fragments may prompt the reader/spectator to generate possible worlds, if, like the 'model reader' he envisaged, they draw from their own experience in order to make sense of the fragments of text they encounter. While, as Eco points out, this process is immanent in any novel or play because all language prompts the reader to fill in gaps in the meaning (Eco 1984:214) I would argue that in the case of constitutionally indeterminate work, like *Victory Garden*, the process is amplified because its gaps and aporias, along with the phrastic spaces, are significantly more apparent.

In *Victory Garden* there are a number of examples where Moulthrop uses the changing modes of the text to provoke the reader to operate creatively and to take responsibility for creating a world which includes and incorporates the actual experience of their reading. These include many reflexive allusions to the process of reading which function as continual reminders of the fictionality of the textual world and the reality of the reader's actual world. This is demonstrated in the following page from *Victory Garden* which is linked to the textual cluster concerning the routine activities of the first Gulf War and specifically to the experiences of Emily Runbird, who is stationed in an army postal depot just outside of the war zone. The page is apparently not connected to any of the various narratives about the war.



Figure 32: Moulthrop (1992): *Victory Garden* (Interrupt)

This page is prominent because its typeface, Courier, is different from the general typeface used for the work and also the grammar of the paragraph is incorrect, as if it has been poorly written in a rush. It appears in the style of an emergency computer error message, common in the 1990s; the appearance of the page emphasises its different mode of operation from the other pages.

The effect of this device may be either to cause the reader to imagine that the crisis in the fictional world has been reflected in an actual world computer malfunction, or that they have pressed the 'wrong key' and created a problem with their own machine. Alternatively they may simply assume that a digital device has been employed for artistic effect. Yet, however the reader rationalises the experience of this rogue page, its effect will have been to interrupt the textual world of the fiction; and to make them reflexively conscious of their own world. On reading the page, which is illustratively titled 'interrupt', the reader's consciousness will shift from the narrative of war to a heightened awareness of their own process and context of reading; they will effectively be re-positioned by the work. This example foregrounds the boundary between the

textual world of the fiction and the actual world. In terms of possible world theory this technique directly focuses attention on the relationship between the worlds and suggests that the link between them is fragile and liable to be compromised by the force of the narrative material. It is as if the effects of the fictional attack are felt literally in the world of the reader.

Eco's formulation of possible worlds theory articulates the way in which hypertextual structure works to involve the reader's actual world in the events of the narrative. The example above illustrates a moment in *Victory Garden* at which there is a touching point between the Textual World and the reader's Actual World created by using the reader's physical reaction as part of the narrative. This technique, which Ensslin has identified as a quality of a 'physio-cybertext' (Ensslin 2010), is also illustrated in *Breathing Wall*, by Kate Pullinger, Stefan Schemat and babel (sic), in which the reader's breath is incorporated in the work via an adapted microphone. In the case of *Victory Garden* the digital sub-system positions the reader in a similar relationship to the narrative of the war as the characters, who themselves are also watching events unfold on screens (in this case television screens) and experiencing the feeling of being locked out of the reality of the event. This strategy for producing a visceral response through a manipulation of the technology of mediation therefore reflects the content and concerns of the work: it is about a war that was extensively broadcast on television. Its televisual mediation is widely discussed by the characters in the story, several of whom are academics speculating on the war as an event produced for the media. *Victory Garden*, a narrative produced for screen viewing, reflects these concerns when it actively demonstrates the effect of the technology on the story and on the reader.

Gaggi's commentary on *Victory Garden* identifies the significance of the media to the narratives concerning the war and its electronic mediation: 'Televisions are often on in the novel, either the centre of attention themselves, or intruding on, interfering with, other activities. Always the reality of the war, the problematical nature of the "real" behind the media representation of it, is an issue' (Gaggi 1998: 127). He comments further on the importance of the medium to the reader's experience:

the electronic medium brings home in a very obvious way the fact that the reader, in imagining a shape and substance to the story, is not simply studying something that is there but is actively involved in constructing it (Gaggi 1998: 127).

For Eco the possible worlds which are a product of the reader's 'inferential walks' are formulated both from material in the text, and from extra information imported by the reader: '... a narrative world picks up pre-existing sets of properties ... from the "real" world, that is, from the world to which the reader is invited to refer as the world of reference' (Eco 1984: 221).

In the example above we see this idea in process as the world of the reader, in which the activity of reading is located, impinges on and informs the experience of the narrative. Therefore the multi linear and indeterminate hypertextual structure is amplified through the reader's own exploration and experiences, and their own actual worlds are legitimately incorporated in the textual worlds of the work. The structure itself prompts the reader to integrate their own 'autobiographical' narratives into the reading experience – possible worlds theory elucidates this process as the continual generation of worlds from the possibilities presented by the text, supplemented by the actualities of its reading. Furthermore, it provides a conceptual framework which reveals

how the reading practices that characterise the hypertextual experience involve the incorporation of the reader's Actual World, and contribute to the productive processes of the work. The textual material that comprises *Victory Garden* is organised so that it is continually re-arranged, in each particular reading, into multiple narratives.

The style of presentation of narrative material in the hypertext fiction may be related to operations in the Wooster Group's work, which similarly foreground the experiential process of engagement. Here, in a manner analogous to that which *Victory Garden* illustrates, the spectator's actual viewing process becomes part of their experience, thus incorporating their actual worlds into the worlds of the production. Alice Bell, whose ontological approach to possible worlds theory has informed its adoption as a methodology for considering digital texts, argues that the use of the theory in exploring hypertext fiction enables analysis to move away from a concern with determining definitive narrative outcomes and toward a mapping of: 'intricate ontological structures' (Bell, 2010: 26). Through analysing *House/ Lights* and *Victory Garden* it is evident that possible worlds theory can present an organisational strategy for narrative fiction which is not based on an author dominated hierarchy of given plots and sub-plots, but is rather derived from more diverse and less hierarchical sources. It allows for an equality of status to exist between conflicting narrative events and legitimises the various reader driven processes involved in acknowledging the significance of the actual world of their viewing, or reading, to the textual world of the work. Alice Bell argues: 'Possible Worlds Theory ... is able to accommodate the multi-linear hypertext fiction structure rather than attempting to manipulate it into a pseudo-linear format' (Bell 2010: 26).

The spectator of *House/ Lights*, like the reader of *Victory Garden*, is in a position where they have some degree of choice over what they see, but this choice is a very partial and uninformed one. Brantley illustrates the confusion and hints at the sense of powerlessness that this causes for the spectator with the comment: ‘your senses no longer know what they are supposed to fasten on’ (Brantley 2005). In a similar manner Moulthrop observes that, with the experience of reading hypertext fiction: ‘the text gestures toward openness: ‘what options can you imagine?’, but then it forecloses: ‘some options are available but not others’ (Moulthrop 1991). This position makes the reader/ spectator aware of the limitations and partiality of their own perceptual processes. In order to establish both the significance and particularity of this process I include below the following paragraph which is my own recollection of my experience of seeing the production of *House/ Lights* in 1998.

My attention alternates between the TV screens and the performed action on stage – one moment my focus is on the TV where I watch Olga running through the undergrowth, the next it switches to the live action as the performers hurtle around the stage. The lighting on the stage space is low and continually changing, partly because it is partially illuminated by a swinging giant tungsten bulb, and this makes it difficult to make out everything on stage. At a physical/ perceptual level my attentional focus shifts between the stage and the televisions, but every time I choose to look at one I am aware of turning away from the other, and of what I might miss. At a cognitive level I alternate between registers of engagement in response to the differing modes of delivery; this is not just between the screens and the live action, or between the music and the speech, but also between the different modes of address within the texts. For example the Modernist language of the Stein text engages my attention in a different way to the narration of the Mawra film. As I turn my attention to one aspect of the performance I ignore another - I consequently become aware of my limited capacity for perceiving all the various information that is flowing through the systemic operation of the production (Swift 1998).

My account of the experience of *House/ Lights* foregrounds my selective reading of it which is the result of the production providing little guidance as to which aspects of the textual material presented I should prioritise. The selective/ de-selective process I

engage with as I watch the performance is a personal one. I realise that I am guiding myself through the material of the performance and that my experience is likely to be different from my fellow spectators who, although we share the auditorium, will be selecting differently from the textual fragments presented and so experiencing a different performance. The process of watching *House/ Lights* makes me aware that having to choose which material to engage with illustrates my incapacity for processing all the textual information that comprises the production. This experience is analogous to that of the hypertext fiction reader whose reading can never absorb all the possibilities that the work offers. This is the element of 'impossibility' that identifies fragmentary work, and as discussed in the Introduction, it is the strategies we adopt in reading and spectating in the face of this impossibility that characterise aspects of the hypertextual experience.

In her discussion of Talan Memmott's digital text, *Lexia to Perplexia* (2000), a work that involves words and graphics moving across the screen at different speeds, Hayles notes that as the text becomes illegible, with its occluded sections, it reminds us that while the human mind may find it impossible to process the information proffered, the computer can.

Illegible texts hint at origins too remote to access and interfaces transforming too rapidly for us to grasp. The text announces its differences from the human body through this illegibility, reminding us that the computer is also a writer, and moreover a writer whose operations we cannot wholly grasp in all their semiotic complexity (Hayles 2002: 50 – 51).

This experience of Memmott's work reveals a machinic system that contains more information than one reader can grasp, and in this respect the situation echoes that of *House/ Lights* in which the mutual presence of so many performance texts similarly

cannot all be perceived by a single spectator. The reader and spectator are each confronted with an impossible task; it is impossible to read or spectate these works according to conventions of linear literary or theatrical models, therefore they must become inventive and selective in establishing their own relationship to the organisation of the work and find their own way of responding to its condition by creating a personal experience within the worlds of the text. In Sara Jane Bailes' discussion of the poetics of failure in performance (Bailes 2011), she argues that performances that confront the inevitable collapse of representational modes, provoke their spectators to discover productive ways to engage and respond in the face of failure and impossibility: 'performance offers the opportunity to reach into the impossible idea of a journey without end, an event without foreclosure, and to practice the suggestions and permutations that arise instead (Bailes 2011:201). The modes of engagement that are provoked by both digital and performance works that confront the impossibility of representation, orientate themselves around the negotiation of a personal and generative response. This is because the act of constructing a spectatorial or reading practice, in the face of the impossible task of engaging with a work whose formulation prohibits them from encountering its complete content, becomes itself a creative process. Reading and spectating in such an environment involves selection and invention in response to the possible worlds presented by the work. Ryan's argument for using possible worlds theory with hypertext fiction indicates why it is particularly appropriate for considering the practises that the spectator of the Wooster Group's work must engage with as they encounter the multiple texts of the work. She explains that a way to: 'deal with the fragmentation and occasional inconsistency of hypertext is the ... possible worlds approach. Every lexia is regarded as a representation of a different

possible world and every jump to a new lexia as a re-centering to another world' (Ryan 2001: 222).

In *House/ Lights* the act of witnessing the performance is dispersed among the spectators who create, from their disparate perceptions, a multiplicity of different events, each, to use Eco's formulation, with the status of a Possible World. This creative and inventive process is based on the singular strategies we find for watching and relating to the performance. As we perceive the impossibility of the task of engaging with the complete work, we see that impossibility is a theme of the work, articulated through its praxis, which extends from performers to spectators. As we create our worlds from the piece, a process which reflects Rancière's notion of the spectator who: 'composes her own poem with the elements of the poems before her' (Rancière 2011: 13), we are also aware that there are alternative experiences to be had from the work which we have not and cannot access.

Another theme of the work, which relates to the machinic structure of the production, concerns the relationship between the live performance and the film. In Act 1 this is particularly foregrounded: here our focus is initially on the television screens, which show an escape scene from *Olga's House of Shame*. When the scene moves to focus on Elaine being pursued through woodland, the performers start to mimic the chase live on stage. This juxtaposition of film and live action interrupts the spectator's focus on the film and draws attention to the liveness of the performance. The sequence provokes a receptive shift for the spectator from the world of the film to the 'here and now' of the performers' reality. In this respect it is faithful to the spirit of the play and to Stein's philosophy on art, as outlined in this comment from her *Lectures in America*. 'The

business of art is to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present and to completely express that complete and actual present' (Stein in Katz 2010). Furthermore the double presentation of related film material and live action operates as a commentary on the dynamic between live performance and mediated performance, played out in a way that draws the spectator's attention to the meeting of the filmic and live worlds and invites them to contemplate it.

If we are to assume that a reasonable working definition of interactivity is 'a work where the reader can physically change the discourse in a way that is interpretable and produces meaning' (Andersen 1990: 89), then it is possible to surmise that spectators will understand that the relationship between the live performers and the film is not interactive, because the film doesn't change in response to the performance, although the actor's response to the film may seem to be intended to project a facsimile of interactivity. In fact as the performers actively work as part of the machinic structure of the performance, through their physical response to the film, the sequences become articulate about the subject of interactivity, rather than being themselves interactive. The barrier between the world represented in the film and the live world of the performance is emphasised rather than being erased; the fragments of performance on the television monitors and on the stage operate alongside one another creating ambiguities and complexities in the *mise en scene*. What is presented is emphatically incomplete and also operates as a challenge to the spectator to engage with the juxtaposition of the mediated and the live.

In terms of Eco's possible worlds theory, the lack of clarity about the nature of the fictional world of the performance prompts the spectator to focus on their own position

in terms of the work, to become self-reflexive and resort to intertextual frames to make inferences about the world presented (Eco 1984: 214).

Another technique which again draws attention to the nature and effects of the multiple mediated processes of the production concerns the delivery of the text. The performers wear earphones through which they hear a recording of the text and they perform their own lines as they hear them. This technique, familiar from several of the company's productions, creates the impression of the enunciation of the text being a product of the instant of performance, rather than a repetition of a previously learned and rehearsed text. Kate Valk, who played the role of Faust in the production, describes how the task for the actor here is to say the words at the same time as hearing them delivered through the ear pieces, rather than before or afterwards – a technique that allows the artists to be 'in the moment with the material' (Quick 2007: 216-217). While the technique forces the actors to engage with the reality of their situation, the resultant sound of their speech, which is also electronically mediated, is significantly different from the sound of actors' voices using a naturalistic acting style. Again the performance provokes the spectators to consider the difference between the reality of their 'in the moment' utterances, and the appearance of reality conjured by naturalistic speech. Such techniques reveal assumptions that are made about engagement with performance and prompt a re-evaluation of the spectatorial position. In this re-evaluative process viewing as action comes to the fore as the spectator is provoked to engage with the unresolved elements of the spectacle before her as, in Rancière's words, she: 'participates in the performance by refashioning it' (Rancière 2011: 13).

The Wooster Group's work provokes different orders of relationships with their spectators, and we have seen how these may be configured as possible worlds in terms of my application of Eco's theory. In considering the effect on theatre spectators of different strategies of engaging them in the work, Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer's discussion of immersion in multimedia performance is relevant. They identify cognitive and sensory immersion as different modes of spectator engagement provoked by different kinds of performance material:

Cognitive immersion is an effect established through the presence of a fictional reality, whereas sensory immersion can be created through the corporeal and material dimension of performance. While the former requires the dislocation of materiality and involves immersion in an imagined space founded on patterns of textual information, the latter forges the material and virtual to create an embodied experience of pattern and presence within real space (Klich and Scheer 2011: 132).

The argument put forward considers both sensory immersion and cognitive immersion to involve the senses and the intellect but to differing extents. While sensory immersion recognises an enhancement of the spectator's immediate experience as an experiential product of the performance and corporeally engages and sensitises the spectator to the 'here and now' actuality of the work, cognitive immersion depends on an illusion of disembodiment. Such an illusion, according to Klich and Scheer, is more typical of dramatic work that presents a representation of reality to the audience through a mimetic technique and which invites the audience to suspend their disbelief and imaginatively project themselves into an alternative world.

When theatre becomes more presence than representation, more process than product, the site of immersion shifts. No longer is an imaginary world established into which the audience project themselves, but the focus is placed on their immediate reality and their physical presence within the space (Klich and Scheer 2011: 131).

Klich and Scheer identify the quest for sensory immersion as a major project of the 20th century avant-garde and in their discussion they cite examples of practice ranging from Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', to 1960s happenings, to Marina Abramovich's *Rhythm 0* (1974) to evidence the category. More recent performance work by companies and artists such as Punchdrunk and Adrian Howells also serve as exemplars of sensory immersion. However I would suggest that the oppositions that Klich and Scheer indicate between presence and representation and process and product are eclipsed in the work considered in this thesis which, largely through incorporating the worlds of the spectators, problematise such distinctions and instead suggest more complex possibilities for spectatorial practices that possible worlds theory elucidates.

Although Klich and Scheer recognise that the distinction between the two types of immersion is not absolute, their theory does not appear to account for single performance works which engage the spectators alternately, or concurrently, in both states of cognitive *and* sensory immersion. However, this is the condition that I would suggest is characteristic of the Wooster Group's productions: these provoke the spectators to become both cognitively and sensorially immersed as the performances themselves shift between different modes of narrative operation. Similarly an alternation between cognitive and sensory immersion may be said to describe the experience of hypertext fiction. In both *Route 1&9* and *House/ Lights* there are times when the narrative draws the spectators into a cognitively immersive state, presented alongside moments when the performed action exposes the 'here and now quality' of the production and the spectator becomes sensorially immersed in that.

The juxtaposition of immersive worlds in *Route 1&9*

The Wooster Group's production, *Route 1&9* can be used to illustrate how actual and textual worlds can overlap creating a double experience of the two states of cognitive and sensory immersion. *Route 1&9* is, in part, a reworking of Thornton Wilder's 1938 play *Our Town*, the modern classic depicting life in small town America. The production also draws extensively on other performance texts including a vaudeville act by black American comedian, Pigeat Markham, which is performed in blackface. In the production, scenes from *Our Town* are presented on television monitors above the stage in the style of television soap operas, a genre which emphatically provokes cognitive immersion, and this technique positions the spectators as television viewers inviting them to engage with the realism of the work. In contrast to this is a scene in which the actor Kate Valk, in blackface and playing the character 'Willie', makes a real telephone-call, amplified so the spectators can hear the conversation, to a local restaurant to order food to be delivered to the theatre. This scene also immerses the spectator, but here the quality of immersion may be characterised as sensory because the focus has shifted from the fictional to an immediate reality: the spectator becomes implicated as a witness to a real life event, which is also a performance device, involving an actual phone-call within the performance frame.

It is evident that The Wooster Group's use of plays and theatrical conventions establishes opportunities for the spectators to immerse themselves cognitively in the stories, characters and dynamics of fictional worlds, but these immersive episodes are frequently foreclosed by the presentation of alternative performance texts that provoke

a different level of sensory immersion. The fragmented structure of the work with its juxtapositions of different immersive worlds announces a position of instability for the spectator, who must continuously shift their mode of viewing between cognitive and sensory states. These different types of immersive experience consequently become distinctive features of their spectatorial experience and one that possible world theory can elucidate. Furthermore, as seen in the discussion of *Victory Garden*, it demonstrates the similarity of this viewing process to that experienced by the reader of hypertext fiction.

Following Marie Laure Ryan's formulation of possible worlds theory, outlined in Chapter 4, the experience of *Route 1&9* may be characterised by these shifts between a cognitively immersive experience of a textual possible world, in which the spectator imaginatively re-centres themselves into the fiction projected by the text of *Our Town*, and moments of sensory immersion in which the spectator does not need to re-centre themselves because the world presented on stage is one that they already inhabit, their native reality or actual world, which includes the real phone call to the restaurant. The quality of the spectator's immersion in this world is influenced by its juxtaposition or overlap with the textual worlds of the performance, the Pigmeeat Markham dances and the *Our Town* scenes. For example the fictional characterisations, including particularly the use of blackface by Valk as Willie, heightens and problematises the spectator's experience of her real telephone conversation. In this instance a culturally embedded tradition of racial prejudice, that has been explored in the safety of the mimetic zone of the performance, is abruptly exposed to real life and the actual world shared by performer, spectators and the restaurant employee who speaks on the telephone to a white actor adopting a stereotypical 'blackface' persona. The experience of cognitive

immersion and the spectator's complicit suspension of disbelief as they encounter the fictional texts of the performance influences the experience of their sensory immersion in the actual world of the production when it becomes disturbingly real to them.

While not provoking any explicit interaction, the work requires its spectators to consistently alter their points of view as they encounter a plurality of worlds. Although there are possibilities for the spectators to engage with the constituent performance texts in many different ways, there is also a precision in the choreography of the spectators' attention, evident in the structure of the work, which gives shape to the experience of it without forcing a particular reading of the textual material. In terms of possible worlds theory, *Route 1&9* exemplifies a more general tendency in the Wooster Group's work, which is to generate possible worlds which are not reconciled with any logical argument or dominant narrative position. Thus there is no clear authored textual world narrative that emerges at the end of performances and consequently the spectators are left to draw on their own resources, or in Eco's formulation, make inferential walks (Eco 1984: 218) through the piece and in so doing determine its meaning. This is a process by which the spectator becomes implicated in the worlds of the production. In *Route 1&9*, the production's structural facility for immersing and implicating the spectators in the live blackface scenes provokes a consideration of the racism that may still be active in their own worlds. This was demonstrated in the opera director, Peter Sellars' well-known response to *Route 1&9* as documented on ITV's *South Bank Show* in 1987. He observed the shock of his first experience of seeing the work: 'it was confusing, it was racially appalling. It had total disregard for the audience. It left one in a state of nausea mixed with catatonia' (Sellars 1987).

On a second viewing Sellars revised his opinion and decided that the piece, through providing no moral guidance, forced the spectators to consider their personal response to the racial stereotyping.

Route 1&9 cut right to the core of racism in a way that attacked white complacency ... What they did was make you aware of the residue of racism that still lurked in one's own mind and they just inflamed that a little bit and the amount of self-hatred and embarrassment that that aroused caused you to take it out on them (ibid.).

In his application of possible worlds theory, Eco assumes a narrative progression towards a resolved conclusion in which the worlds proposed by the narrative and completed by the reader are eventually subsumed by what becomes the actual world of the text in which all the possibilities and inconsistencies apparent at the start of the work are resolved. His taxonomy clarifies this hierarchy by naming the worlds created by the reader and the characters as 'possible sub-worlds imagined' (Eco in Klaver 2010: 46 -47) against the 'possible world asserted' by the author. Eco suggested that possible worlds reduce in number as a fiction progresses towards a conclusion which finally presents the world of the text that is the completed version of the fiction, as written by the author. This progression is explored by Elizabeth Klaver who, in her discussion of Eco's theories, states.

As the narrative progresses, the world of the fabula actualizes; the number of possible worlds becomes fewer as sub-worlds are yielded by characters and audience to narrative fact (Klaver 2010: 46).

However in both hypertext fiction and, as we see, The Wooster Group's productions this process of resolution is resisted through the structural formulation of the works. In the Wooster Group's work there is an active resistance to closing or resolving the narratives, as Kaye identifies:

The Group's compositions have worked against a sense of unity, wholeness or 'closure' not simply in the interweaving of radically distinct texts, but through practices and structures that produce and accelerate these differences (Kaye 2007: 169).

In terms of possible worlds theory, the procedural process outlined by Eco may be said to be inverted in the experience of watching a Wooster Group production. The spectator's viewing is not characterised by a feeling of gradual reduction as their possible worlds give way to a fully authored world, rather there is a sense of an opening out of a network of viable interpretations as the possible worlds of the work refuse to resolve and this process is consistent with the nature of the hypertextual experience.

The textual possible worlds of a Wooster Group production remain unconsolidated in terms of the performance itself and because of this lack of resolution retain an active status that they would not have had they been resolved and concluded. In this state it becomes problematic to categorise them within a fictional logic and there is a tendency for them to remain enmeshed in the worlds of the viewers, particularly when performance devices specifically problematise distinctions between the real and the fictional. As Sellars states, the spectator of *Route 1&9* recognises the racism portrayed and looks for a rationalisation for it in the performance, but it supplies none (Sellars: 1987). Therefore they try to find an explanation in the world outside the performance and the discomfort that comes from recognising racism as part of their personal experience of their actual world colours the experience of the work. The meaning ultimately rests with the spectator, whose viewing process has implicated them in rationalising the disturbing portrayals of the performance within their own lives: without participation, the worlds of the spectators have become part of the actualising

processes of the work. Possible world theory provides a means of reasoning about this hypertextual experience in which the spectator becomes formally incorporated with the generation of the work.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that performance is capable of producing a hypertextual experience where the work does not offer its spectator the opportunity to explicitly participate. It has identified that possible worlds theory can be appropriately applied to consider the individual processes that the spectator goes through when they encounter the indeterminate textual arenas produced by the Wooster Group's work. The discussion of *House/ Lights* and *Route 1&9* has focussed on the productions' fragmentary and multi-modal structures which are particularly significant in that they establish a connection between the works' operation and that of a hypertextual structure. I have identified that this fragmentary structure, which has been compared to a collage or montage, allows textual elements to operate in different ways according to their context within and beyond the immediate performance. The hypertextual experience comes about when the spectator, on being confronted with a fragmented and unstable structure, finds ways to engage and relate to the performance material through developing a singular spectatorial practice. Eco's adaptation of possible worlds theory provides a conceptual framework that enables an understanding and rationalisation of this process. His theory, which concerns the reader making 'inferences' about emerging narratives based on their own actual world experience and imaginatively constructing worlds based on those, may also be applied to the experience

of the performance spectator. Furthermore it can be used in the analysis of hypertext fiction and Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* provides an example of how the reader's Actual World can be drawn into a hypertextual experience of reading which elucidates analogous spectatorial processes in the performances.

The Wooster Group's *Route 1&9*, however, exposes the fact that Eco's theory is problematic when applied to narrative that resists the conventional linear structure. Eco contends that the world making processes, provoked by the reader's encounter with an incomplete fictional text, reduce during the course of reading as the reader gradually accepts the author's narrative (Klaver 2010: 46). However *Route 1& 9* inverts this principle because, rather than the narrative possibilities reducing as the work progresses, they open up as a result of the production offering no explanation for its content nor any formal narrative closure. This creates a situation in which the reader must draw on their own experience in order to actualize the possible worlds of the work, and this process is exemplified in the discussion of the allegedly racist thematic material in *Route 1& 9*.

Stuart Moulthrop's and the Wooster Group's work both provoke complex and non-traditional responses from their reader/ spectators that operate in the spectrum of the hypertextual. Their active engagement with the works is lodged at the heart of the hypertextual experience; possible worlds theory provides the means for understanding this activity of spectating or reading as being crucial to the aesthetic process.

Chapter 6

'Doing things' with Hypertext – the performative function of the hypertextual experience

The reader of Deena Larsen's and geniwate's 2003 hypertext fiction, *The Princess Murderer*, is told: 'with each click a princess dies' (Larsen and geniwate: 2003). With these words this literary work, which also contains elements of a game, foregrounds the capacity of the encoded digital environment to compel the reader to make things happen in the world of the fiction through their act of reading. The interface instruction is very clear: if the reader wants to find out what happens next in this graphic update of the legend of Bluebeard, they can click on any of the several hyperlinked icons; however this action will kill one of the princesses hiding in Bluebeard's castle and the murder will be recorded on a tabulated 'princess census' on the page. In its satirical commentary on the performativity of hypertext, *The Princess Murderer* positions the reader as a character; alternately as murderer, voyeur and police suspect. It exposes interactive reading as a process that actively produces narrative events and endows the reader with a performative function that becomes an obligatory aspect of their practice of engagement.

The Princess Murderer was made in response to the insistence of 'first wave' digital theorists that hypertext fiction empowered its readers by giving them an authorial function. Gaggi elaborates how this perceived shifting of function produced by the digital structure is described in first wave theory:

the distinction between reader and writer is attenuated, perhaps even dissolved entirely. The text is no longer a one-way communication system in which information and ideas proceed only from author to reader, but a communication system in which all participants can contribute to and affect the content and direction of the conversation (Gaggi 1998: 103).

Larsen and Geniwate wanted to illustrate an alternative argument, one that positioned the reader as vulnerable and demonstrated how their supposed 'agency', in navigating the textual world of the work, was heavily manipulated by the digital system (Geniwate 2005). Their work is designed in such a way that reading becomes an action which identifies the reader as 'murderer'; as their reading progresses it unavoidably produces a text which details a litany of sexual abuse and killings which are attributable to them. Just as the princesses become victims of the reader so too the reader becomes a victim of the digital system, which frames their active engagement as an inevitable production made manifest through the process of reading.

This chapter will show how the hypertextual experience operates as a performative process to produce tangible effects, or in the words of J.L. Austin, whose '*speech act theory*', outlined in his seminal work: *How to do Things with Words* (1962), will be utilised, to 'do things'. The significance of this is that, having identified the qualities of the hypertextual experience and demonstrated how they can be conceptualised using possible worlds theory, I can now demonstrate how the creative operations of the reader/ spectator are bound up with the concept of performativity. Hypertextual processes, across digital and non-digital forms, share a capacity to transform the reader/ spectator's act of engagement into an explicitly generative process. The performance and hypertext fiction works examined in this chapter demonstrate how these hypertextual processes create a condition in which individuals bring about actual world

changes through their spectatorial and reading practices, and also how receptive process can be transformed into productive process through acts of performance. The specific capacity of hypertextual systems to work performatively has been observed by Gabriella Giannachi.

Whether textual or intermedial, hypertextualities are fluid and open forms that allow the reader or spectator to move beyond the world of the interface and penetrate the realm of the work of art ... Hypertextualities introduce a performative dimension to the acts of reading and viewing. In order to be engaged with, hypertexts need to be acted upon, and reading a hypertext becomes equivalent to putting it into action. (Giannachi 2004:13).

The operation of performativity can be observed, in hypertext fiction because the interactive process of 'putting into action' (ibid.) is encoded in the digital system. Performativity is always immanent within such works because they are designed so that the activation of hyperlinks triggers the code and actually brings *about* the textual event. Consequently hypertext fictions exemplify performativity particularly clearly because their effects, that is, the text that is produced through the act of reading, can be accounted for exactly through the operations of the digital code, as is shown in the 'census' in *The Princess Murderer*.

Performativity, then, emerges as a significant trope of hypertext fiction and by looking at different methods employed in *The Princess Murderer* and also in Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, we can identify how hypertextual resources may be used to bring about specific actions and events. These processes will elucidate performative strategies manifested in the performance production considered in this chapter; Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's 1992 work, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*.

In Chapters 4 and 5, possible worlds theory demonstrated a way of reasoning about the capacity of performance and hypertext fiction to incorporate the worlds of the spectator or reader. In this chapter the 'actual world' activity of reading hypertext is considered as an event generating process; the production of the text by the reader is the 'thing done' whose status is evidenced through its inscription in the digital code. Thus the reader of *The Princess Murderer* produces an individual narrative which is documented by the digital programme; the variation in the number of murders attributed in the 'census' to the reader operates as a clear marker of the individual text produced through their creative reading process. The relevance of this is that it reveals a process that may also be recognised in live performance whereby the spectator's action of spectating, which here may be configured as 'reading' the performance, itself instigates a unique event. The establishment that something is done through a practice of engagement with either a text or performance, raises a number of issues about how the dynamics of the hypertextual experience operate. The two examples of hypertext fictions discussed in this chapter model how performativity functions in the digital environment, and that model can assist in understanding what happens in the hypertextual experience when it occurs in other forms. This positions the 'thing that happens' as the result of an inventive, or creative, process, which generates something that has not been there before. The approach enables an understanding of the impact *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* had on its many spectators across the world as they became involved in its creative processes. Of key significance here is how the performative processes are managed and manifested and the operations of hypertext are able to clarify this.

The performativity of hypertext fiction is largely enabled through the operations of the digital code. As we have seen the hypertext fiction author, in addition to crafting language, image and sound, operates at the level of the 'deep text' (Lughi in Calvi 2004: 163-4). Their programming of the code, that underpins the text, shapes the modes of interaction possible for the reader by animating the digital structure in a particular fashion. Consequently the code's algorithms prescribe the structure of the work and, in addition to allowing for data storage and transmission, bring about performative operations that change the digital environment as they respond to the stimuli provided by the reader. It is the power of digital code to shape the events of the text that has prompted both Katherine Hayles and Florian Cramer to draw attention to its performative function. Hayles claims that computer code embodies a new form of performativity. She argues: 'code that runs on a machine is performative in a much stronger sense than that attributed to language' (Hayles 2005: 50) and says that the reason for this is that it has the capacity to directly produce real-world changes; it 'can set off missiles or regulate air traffic; control medical equipment or generate PET scans; model turbulent flow or help design innovative architecture' (Hayles 2005: 48). While any code, digital or not, can be used to effect real world actions by responding to instructions, what Hayles' point usefully draws attention to is the capacity of digital code to actually generate changes, actions or events, through performative actions that are realised as part of the reader's process of engagement with hypertext.

Cramer further explains that the performative capacity of computer code both enables a work of digital text to *do* something through interaction and also formalises the structure of the work. He similarly recognises the clarity with which this process exemplifies the operation of performativity, in this case specifying literature located in

digital systems and remarks: 'computers and digital poetry might teach us to pay more attention to codes and control structures coded into all language' (Cramer 2001).

The fact that performativity in hypertext fiction is facilitated through the digital code gives clarity to its operation, but does not clarify who or what controls the performative operations. In fact the two hypertext fictions studied here put forward different perspectives on this matter: while the conceit of *The Princess Murderer* is designed to illustrate how the reader is manipulated by the coded machinic system, *Victory Garden* uses the code to foreground that it is the reader's performative action that determines the progress of the narrative. The regulation of the operation of performativity is ambiguous, though enmeshed in the works' machinic processes. The reader's response to this condition of ambiguity in the context of hypertext, provides a way of understanding how control of the narratives of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* continually oscillated between the artists and their spectators.

In Chapter 1, I established that hypertext fiction provoked the reader to enact the experiences of the fictional characters. In this chapter I will develop this concept to examine how the reader is, more formally, provoked to become mimetically involved in the artwork and to actually take on a performance role as directed by the narrative. In the three works considered in this chapter, models of performativity become enmeshed with the concept of performing itself. Performing and the performative are difficult partners, as Austin's writings reveal (Austin 2003 [1962]: 22). However, using Derrida's adaptation of Austin's performativity (Derrida 1988 [1972]: 17) it becomes possible to establish how the two functions may operate alongside one another in both hypertext fiction and performance. This can reveal not only how the spectator of performance

comes to adopt a performing role, which is a well-established tradition of participatory theatre, but how the act of ergodic reading in hypertext fiction may be considered to be 'performing'. This establishes further the importance of the relationship between hypertext fiction and performance by identifying that digital interaction has a quality of performance. This trait is recognised by Steve Dixon who has remarked how performance is a popular alternative to the term interaction in describing the engagement with a digital text: 'as users we enter into a performative relationship with the digital design: we perform the design as we would a musical instrument' (Dixon 2007: 13).

The operation of performativity reveals a complex relationship between the authored text, the narrative produced through the ergodic reading process and the actual world of the reader/ spectator. In hypertext fiction this complexity manifests itself as a disruption of the conventions of a reality/ fiction divide each time a reader's real life action of clicking becomes a part of the narrative. In a similar manner, in the performance work examined, a liminal area, where the real world of the audience and the world of the performance intermingle, may be identified and it is in this area that the operation of performativity becomes particularly evident.

Performativity, in all the works, identifies an operation that has an active effect beyond the receptive experience of reading. In considering this, Lyotard's arguments concerning the activity of reading are relevant in that he characterises reading as an inventive process concerned with more than the extraction of the author's content (Readings 1991: xv). He identifies that reading is a process by which something happens; he names this as the 'event' that happens, and claims it as a unique occurrence in terms of which

the relationship between the reader and text must be reconfigured (Maplas 2003: 101). Lyotard's writings enable an understanding that reading may be configured as a performative operation; furthermore the experience of reading that he outlines particularly articulates procedures that are evidenced in hypertext fiction and performance, which produce an active and changing relationship between the reader /spectator and the text and generate 'events' through processes of engagement. Maplas describes how Lyotard's notion of an event: 'challenges established genres of discourse and calls for all that has led up to it to be rethought' (Maplas 2003: 113).

My argument is that the operation of performativity in hypertext fiction can supply an appropriate model to use to consider a performance that is performatively constructed. In both the hypertext fictions and performance considered here, I can identify that something real is produced through the actions of the reader or spectator. This creative process is the quality of the hypertextual experience that is of interest. Questions concerning the control and/ or lack of control over this process are relevant as we look at how the dynamics of hypertext can inform our understanding of similar processes in performance. In order to do this it is first necessary to trace the background of the term 'performative' and explore the implications of its application to hypertext fiction and performance.

Performativity and hypertext fiction

Electronic texts present themselves in the medium of their dissolution. They are read where they are written; they are written as they are read, (Joyce 1996: 235)

J.L. Austin's posthumously published series of lectures *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) has been a major influence on studies of performativity in the area of performance studies (see Worthen 2003, Loxley 2007, Schechner 2013, Parker and Kosofsky-Sedgwick 1995). Theorists have used his pronouncements, as well as subsequent treatise by Derrida, Judith Butler *et al*, to explore the liminal zone between real life and the text in contemporary theatre practice and performance art. Austin's original assertion is that language is capable of causing actual changes to come about in the world through its utterance. This singular capacity has a particular significance to hypertext fiction and its relationship with performance.

In his formulation of the speech act, Austin separates out a sub-group of phrase types which he describes as 'performative', meaning that they are able to 'do things', as being significantly different to those phrases which are simply 'constative', meaning to 'say things'. Performatives are: 'utterances that accomplish, in their very enunciation, an action that generates effects' (Austin in Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick 1995: 3). A famous illustration are the words 'I thee wed' which, beyond describing an event, actually enacts a real thing, a marriage contract. Austin argues that: 'to utter [a performative statement] is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it' (Austin 2003: 93).

Qualities of Austinian performativity immediately relate to the form of digital hypertext, as can be seen in Hayles description of hypertext fiction: ‘The actual narrative comes into existence ... in conjunction with a specific reading’ (Hayles in Ryan 1999: 213). *Storyspace* hypertext fictions illustrate performativity particularly well because they are programmed to produce a log of the text that is actualized by the reader’s reading, in a small drop-down ‘history’ menu that lists titles of the pages visited by the reader in any one reading session. The log functions as evidence and documentation of the performativity of the hypertext fiction.



Figure 33: ‘History’ log in *Victory Garden* – documents the pages visited in the course of a reading

The distinctive nature of hypertext is expressed through its performative function, as Haneef describes: ‘Reading hypertext is a performative action that elides the traditional canons of origin, centre and finite dimensions of textuality’ (Haneef 2010: 189). Haneef argues that the performative reading of hypertext fiction enables the reader to extend

their role beyond reading and to take ownership of the text, creating something of it which exceeds authorial intention.

Lack of origin in hypertext represents its physicality as well as symbolizes the agency enacted by readers in the cyberspace to co-create 'performative narratives' defeating the diktats of the author. Readers, thus, become *wreaders* as they produce as well as consume, and their engagement with text defies teleological tenability (Haneef 2010: 201).

In the moment of reading, it is the particular nature of the reader's interaction which brings about the production of the text and neither this interaction, nor the resultant text, can necessarily be anticipated by the author. The performative nature of hypertext fiction then is evidenced by the reader's activation of pre-scribed codes at the level of the deep text, an operation that cannot be singularly controlled by either author, reader or code but rather requires that each plays a part in a manner analogous to the speech act as outlined by Austin. Against the teleologically problematic background of hypertext, the performative operation is revealed as the reader's activation of the code brings about the realisation of the text at the screen of their computer.

The operation of the digital code in hypertext, which is triggered by the reader, mirrors the operation of the legal, moral and social codes that, as Austin demonstrates, are enacted through the performativity of the 'locutionary act' (Austin 2003: 94). Just as the words 'I thee wed' make manifest a legal code that is the wedding contract, so too the action of the reader of hypertext fiction brings about the event that is the text. It is significant that because hypertext fiction, unlike a book, has no material form, the performative enactment is the only mode of realisation that exists for the work.

The implications of performativity to the reading process are made evident in the operation of Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*. This is a work replete with self-conscious references to its own operations and the delicate and unstable relationship between fictional events and the reader's real life are frequently foregrounded (see Chapter 1).

I want to draw attention to a moment where the reader's consciousness of their performative role in the reading of the work is particularly provoked by an interjection from the author, which both foregrounds and problematises the performativity of the text. The character Veronica Runbird is one of the group of friends and colleagues whose lives are turned around by the events of the 1990s Gulf War. Veronica, like the other characters in *Victory Garden*, is overwhelmed with media reports of the war, yet unable to access the information she needs about her sister who is serving as a soldier. Her frustration and confusion reflects that of the reader whose experience of the narrative accessed through the hyperlinks is, frequently, similarly confusing and incomplete. On the page, cited below, Veronica finds herself on her own, after an evening at the bar called the 'No', and remembering the experience of seeing her younger sister Emily off to war some time ago.

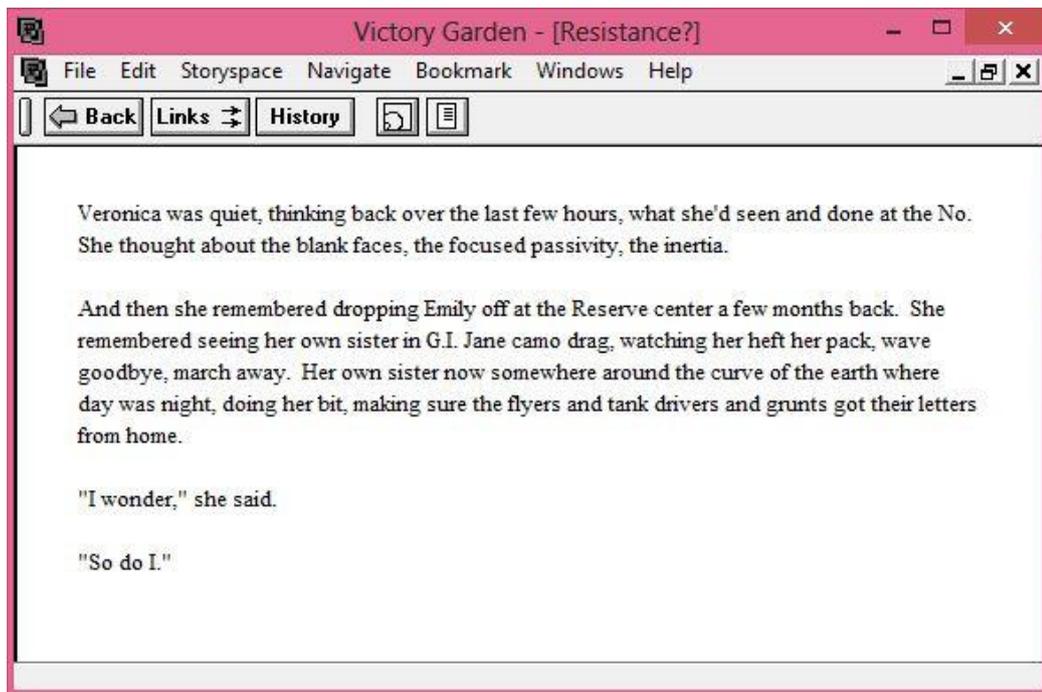


Figure 34: Moulthrop (1992): *Victory Garden* (resistance)

It is Veronica's concluding and ambiguous statement: 'I wonder', followed by the comment: 'So do I' which is of significance here. The 'So do I' is unattributed and because there are no clear contextual indications as to whose voice it is, the implication is that the statement comes from the narrator. This indicates the presence of the character's creator in the story and further implies that although they are present, and unusually vocal, they have a curious, but actually accurate, lack of control over what is happening. Both Veronica and the narrator are present and 'wondering', although it is not clear whether they are wondering about something that has happened or about something that may happen. The uncertainty of the moment draws the reader into the situation in an unusual way because it is only she, who has the ability to make a definite contribution, with her next click, that will move the narrative on from its ambiguous stalemate.

The device of 'So do I' calls attention, from the depth of the text, to an apparent gap, which functions as an aporia in the narrative, that requires the performative act of the

reader in order to be resolved. The narrator's faux abdication of responsibility pronounces that something will happen, as a result of the reader's reading, that neither they, nor the character, will be in a position to control. In fact the device also foregrounds the disempowerment of the reader whose action in terms of the text is itself limited by the digital code. Moulthrop's stepping away from authorial control at this point is not entirely disingenuous because although it is he who has scripted the work, he cannot predict precisely what the reader's next action will be. The reader, however, has only a limited choice of hyperlinks to select from at this point, and little information on which to base that selection; consequently their performative act will be poorly informed.

Moulthrop uses the awkwardness of this state of affairs to prompt an awareness of the difficulties he portrays his characters as experiencing. In *Victory Garden* he presents the Gulf war as a mediatised event that entrapped those involved with it in a network where information was apparently prolific, but real communication between people concerned was limited and circumscribed. In passing on this sense of individual helplessness, the author is using the capacities of hypertext fiction and performativity to convey the conditions of the fictional settling, but also to make the reader reflexively consider their own position in terms of the text.

The text that is produced by the reader's performative engagement with *Victory Garden*, documented in the *Storyspace* log, will be fractured and full of incomplete stories and as such is a commentary on the effects of war that Moulthrop was writing about. This operation evidences how, because of the inevitable performative nature of hypertext fiction, performativity itself becomes a tool that the author can use. However as this

example illustrates, the responsibility for the performative action is not vested in either the reader or author, who both have a limited capacity to control it; rather it is vested in the machinic operations of the work itself.

Another issue foregrounded through the reader's response to *Victory Garden* is the element of performance, which is implied through their interaction with the work. Rita Raley proposes that the operation of hypertext fiction should be conceived of as a performance and in this she is consciously embracing both the concept of performance as the actual operation of complex coded digital processes, and also the self-conscious operation of the programme by the user. She explains that her objective is:

to articulate a mode of understanding hypertext in terms of two components of performance: that of the user and that of the system. The latter suggests the processing done by the computer, which itself performs or is even performative, and the former suggests the performance of the user who operates as a *functioning mechanism* in the text, an idea whose genealogy includes performance art's situation and inclusion of the spectator within its boundaries, as well as the literary theorizations of the reader in terms of interaction, encounter, agonistic struggle, dialogue, and experience (Raley 2001).

In drawing attention to the closeness of the concepts of the reader's performance of hypertext, and of the system's own performative functionality, Raley highlights an area of particular concern which relates to the radiating meanings of the concept of performance. As Raley states, as well as exemplifying performativity, the activity of reading a hypertext fiction has, in itself, a quality of performance. The hypertextual experience, then, combines not only a performative operation, but also a quality of performance and it is through considering how these two elements can be braided together that we can develop an understanding of how the experience operates to involve the reader/ spectator in its functionality.

However the concept of Austinian performativity can cause particular difficulties when applied to the study of theatre and performance. Although it is fundamentally, in linguistics and philosophy, a technical description of a speech act, the word performative is also frequently taken to refer to the act of performance or more generally to a quality that something might possess by 'virtue of being a performance' (Loxley 2007: 140). There is an opposition between the two uses of the term: as a linguistic trope the word refers to an expression that can make, do or create something genuine and real; however when the term is associated with the act of performance it connotes a level of pretence, acting, or feigning that is fundamentally *not* real. Loxley identifies this dual application:

This doubled history of the term is sometimes the cause of problems, though, since neither of these two usages has yet managed to displace or entirely accommodate itself to the other. Their relation is instead best described as *asymptotic*: [original italics] an ever closer proximity without a final resolving convergence (Loxley 2007: 140).

The next analysis demonstrates how the co-existence of these two terms is significant in the operation of *The Princess Murderer* and the implications this has for the reader.

Click = kill: *The Princess Murderer*, a 'satire on interactivity'

The Princess Murderer is described by its authors as 'a game based narrative' and is a hypertext fiction which uses 'Flash' programming language. However, while it is substantially informed by ludic genres, not least in its fundamental conceit, in content and form it operates as a literary work. Written by Deena Larsen and geniwate the work

is based on the classic folktale of the wife murdering aristocrat, Bluebeard. In this version the narrative strands involve the rape and murder of successive princesses in a castle and also a contemporary murder enquiry; second person address is used continuously to implicate the reader directly in proceedings. The piece is reflexive and continuously refers to its own code and to the reader's relationship to that code and connects the reader's interaction with the text to its explicitly violent narrative:

You create an evil text to embed her in. The text dribbles from the engorged mouth of the monster. She curses you in assembly code (Larsen and geniwate 2003).

The reading interface is made up of a blue background with a centre pane where textual segments appear. Peripheral photographs and graphics function as hyperlinks and in response to the reader clicking on these, narrative text appears in the central area which is loosely but thematically linked to the graphics and images. There is also background music - a repeated riff which builds an atmosphere of tension around the work.

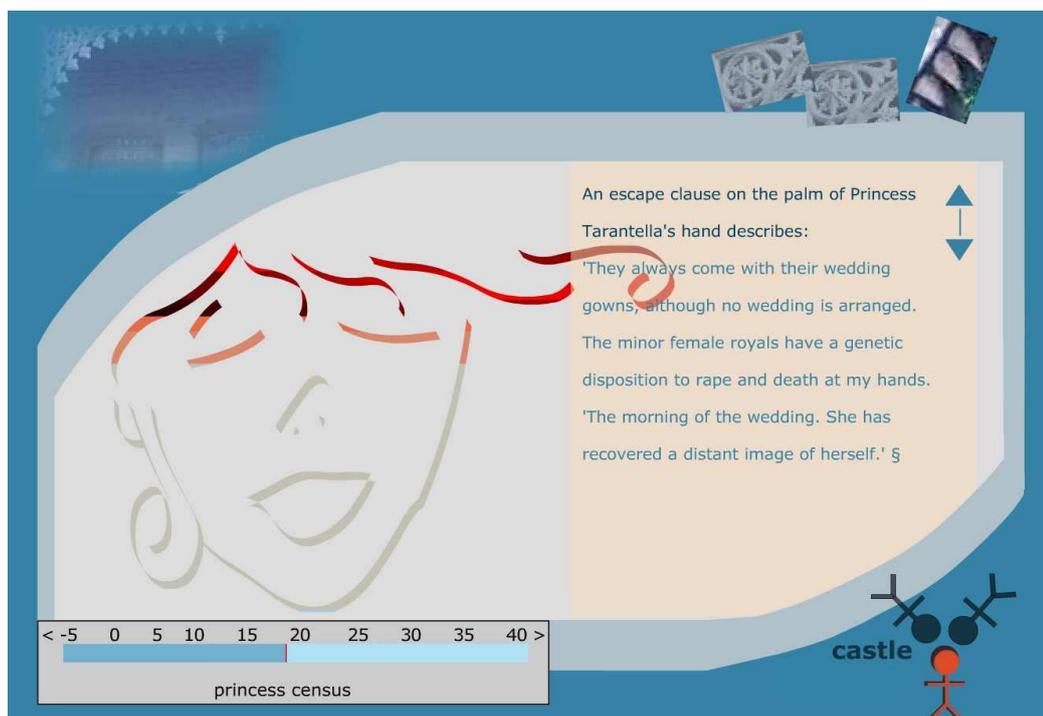


Figure 35: Larsen and geniwate: *The Princess Murderer*

The reader enters the story by clicking on one of three black stick figures and depending on which figure the reader activates they enter different narrative zones, either 'castle', 'signs' or 'escape'. The fact of the reader's implication as murderer in the narrative is initially foregrounded by the stick figures, which are soon associated with Bluebeard's victims and which turn blood red at the cursor's touch. More significantly there is at the bottom left hand side of the screen a tabulated 'princess census' which calculates the number of princesses alive at any time. The reader is informed:

With each click, a princess dies. Your clicks determine both the princesses' fate and your own identity. Your innocence drifts away with each sign you select (Larsen and geniwate 2003).

As the reader clicks through the narrative in the 'castle zone' they engage with a version of the Bluebeard story and as they do so the princess death score rises in a parody of an action video game. When the princesses are all dead the reader is signposted to another zone where their clicking can regenerate the victims. Consequently, as the reading progresses the princess gauge either increases or decreases and when it is full, or empty, the piece stops working until the reader resolves the situation by changing reading zones. The performative device puts the production and disposal of princesses in the hands of the reader and inscribes them as murderer. While the conceit seems initially playful, particularly given the work's cartoon like graphics and ludic references, this impression is unsettled by disturbingly detailed descriptive text concerning the sexual violence perpetrated on the princesses. Larsen and geniwate explain the intention behind combining game and narrative forms. 'We want the readers to straddle both worlds - to be aware that this is a game, this is a screen, and yet to enter into the play and world view of the characters' (Larsen and geniwate in Ensslin 2011).

The text is part folk tale, part pornographic story and part contemporary murder mystery, in which the reader is addressed as suspect, but it is also a voyage into the heart of the digital text where processes triggered by the reader are enmeshed and confused with the fictional violence done to the princesses. At a performative level the reading process of *The Princess Murderer* operates clearly as the reader is made aware of *what* their reading is doing. The killing of the princesses is the fictional event that is produced by the performative speech act as an action logged in the reader's unique census count. As the reading progresses, the narrative focuses on the reader's performative act of clicking, describing and elaborating their murderous role:

the conjunction between you and Bluebeard grows stronger. Your innocence drifts away with each sign you select and starting again won't change that: the princesses you slaughter convert to data on your conscience (Larsen and geniwate 2003).

The complex relationship that the reader has to the text is not only evident through the digital interface, but also through the language itself, which frequently switches tenses and problematizes the reader's ability to establish a consistent position for themselves in terms of the reflexive circling of narrative content and structural details, as this example illustrates:

Tattooed onto Daniella's stomach is the following: 'I never killed anyone because nothing is here but the text.' you shout at the photographs they keep feeding you (Larsen and geniwate 2003).

The work, as geniwate observes, prompts a confusion between data management and the development of the violent narrative:

the world we created simultaneously existed on two levels: a surface narrative about an insatiable Bluebeard and his ferocious princesses, and a semi-subliminal narrative about performative textuality and world-

creation. The act of writing code infested the act of writing narrative and vice-versa (geniwate in Picot 2003).

The Princess Murderer was created in order to demonstrate the extent to which reader choice could be manipulated by the digital system. Rather than enabling a level of freedom and an access to creativity, *The Princess Murderer* demonstrates how hyperlinks can steer the reading experience and limit the reader while purporting to offer them autonomy. In the digital environment the reader cannot do anything *other* than engage with a continuous succession of performative acts. The continuity of the performative engagement is a distinctive feature of its manifestation in the digital environment, where the need for the reader to engage with the code continuously reaffirms the performative condition. In *The Princess Murderer* the reader's responses trigger certain codes that inscribe their actions in the programme. Consequently they are not able to maintain a position as passive readers because they become personally embroiled in the drama of the narrative.

Furthermore the satirical nature of the work emerges as the reader's involvement develops: initially the impression is given that the reader has some kind of authoritative control over the lives of the princesses, but gradually it becomes apparent that the reader's activities are trapped by the work just as the princesses are trapped in Bluebeard's castle. The writers explain:

The Princess Murderer constrains readers as much as possible. [We] wanted to create this frustration of power and powerlessness as a response to early hypertext works that placed readers as co-authors merely because readers must participate in creating meaning and story. (Larsen and geniwate in Picot 2003)

The reader of *The Princess Murderer* is, through their active reading, positioned as a narratee, a liminal role that, as discussed in Chapter 4, falls between the acts of reading/writing and performing/spectating and consequently they are treated as both *character* and *reader* by the text. In this case the participatory action of reading, and particularly of clicking on hyperlinks, becomes itself a performance in role as murderer; this performance is a condition of reading. So, as the reader performatively produces the text, they also, self-consciously, perform it; these are incommensurable roles and yet become bound together in the hypertextual environment. The work reveals a special, but not unique, case of performativity in hypertext *because* the performative activity is doubled with a performance. The reader produces the text through their interaction and also plays a part in it, taking on the various murderous and redemptive roles prescribed by the narrative. Consequently, as the narrative graphically illustrates, they become involved in a process over which they have little control. Ultimately the reader is trapped by their performative act; only by performing the role as murderer and producing the evidence of their murders through clicking of the links can the text be navigated. The reader is variously referred to as perpetrator, victim or accomplice of Bluebeard; the text itself highlights the ambiguity of the position:

Who are you, perhaps you should let the characters tell you; on the other hand trust no one, that is the path to oblivion (Larsen and Geniwate 2003).

In terms of Austinian performativity, the 'thing' that *The Princess Murderer* does operates firstly at the fictive level: the reader enters the narrative through a performative act and in role kills and revives the princesses and creates an actual story from their interaction which is the real thing produced - a unique version of the work. However the performative act also functions in real life to establish a contract between

the work and its reader. This encoded contract involves the reader's going into role for the duration of the piece and acting accordingly in return for which the text will be produced. The reader confirms the contract through their interactive response in a manner that relates closely to the contract between theatre audience and performance. While the princesses are not real, the agreement to pretend that they are is, as is the violent and pornographic text that is produced by the reader's interaction with the work on their computer screen, a text that is particular to them and that they have actualized through a process over which they had little control. In the end the reader of *The Princess Murderer* is doubly culpable through their performative engagement and through their performance and the work illustrates how the codes of performance and performativity are enmeshed in the hypertextual experience.

The complexity surrounding the application of performativity to theatrical performance is famously anticipated by Austin who believed that a theatrical performance was one of a number of situations in which performativity could not operate. Austin argued that the efficacy of the performative utterance was dependent on the context of that utterance. If an utterance was delivered in a manner that was 'non serious' or in an 'infelicitous condition', it could not operate performatively, in fact it would operate as a parasite upon the language's normal use. One such infelicitous condition was theatre:

a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly - used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use — ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances (Austin 2003: 22).

It is immediately apparent that for any performance genre that foregrounds a complex relationship between the real and the fictional, Austin's qualification causes difficulties. This is because it seems to assume an easy division between felicitous and in-felicitous, and, to extrapolate from this, between acting and not acting; a kind of division which is not manifested in the theatre under discussion in this thesis. Although in his later essays he revisited this pronouncement and acknowledged that the conditions that problematised the operation of performativity were far more extensively found than he initially implied, Austin's original essay provoked a reaction from Derrida which challenged his distinction between felicitous and in-felicitous performatives. Derrida's argument is based largely on his theory on the 'iterability' of all signification; this involves the concept that all language is repetitious and therefore, he concludes, all speech acts will involve some level of citation (Derrida 1988: 17). Consequently the separation of speech acts into either felicitous or in-felicitous categories, according to their citational status, is undermined, since citation is common to all language.

Isn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, 'non-serious', *citation* on stage, in a poem or soliloquy is the determined modification of a general citationality ... without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative? Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or 'iterable' utterance, in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a 'citation'? (Derrida 1988: 17).

Using Derrida's amendment to Austin, it is apparent that the power of a speech act to change something in the real world need not be limited to certain contexts, consequently the concept may be usefully employed in considering work that explores the boundaries between real and fictional life in performance as well as in hypertext

fiction. Furthermore in Derrida's response to Austin's formulation of performativity, he extended the notion of the performative utterance to the iterable 'mark' (Derrida in Harpold 2003). The term 'mark' avoids the connotations of speech that 'utterance' holds and allows us to, as Miller explains: 'expand [Austin's] analysis to include all spoken and written signs, as well as all linguistic and non-linguistic signs (such as gestures or facial expressions)' (Miller 2001: 107). This expansion becomes useful as we consider the operation of performativity in the performance event, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, where few acts of writing or reading, in the conventional application of the terms, are involved.

***Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* – performance as instigation**

'Don't you realize,' said one English gentleman to the zoo guards in Covent Garden, 'that these poor people have no idea what is happening to them?' (Fusco 1994: 157)

The hypertextual model of the operation of performativity demonstrates how, through applying the twinned concepts of performance and performativity, the production *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco can be shown to produce the hypertextual experience. This international production was created in 1992 and toured to nine countries across the world. In considering this work, I will focus particularly on the analysis of the audience's response to the performance, as documented by Fusco and others, in material produced up to and including 2012. The extensive documentation of this work is a useful contribution to the discussion because it reveals the artists' reflections years after the event and exemplifies how the audience reaction may be considered in retrospect. It also shows how, through applying the

twinned concepts of performance and performativity, as developed through the discussion of the hypertext fiction, the role of the spectator is revealed as complex and changing and deeply responsible for the identification of the work and its efficacy.

Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West involved Gómez-Peña and Fusco presenting themselves as inhabitants of a recently discovered island in the Mexican Gulf; they dressed in faux 'native' costumes and exhibited themselves in a 12 foot cage for their spectators. The cage had guards, described as 'zoo keepers', responsible for crowd control, answering questions and for taking the artists to the toilet on leads. Spectators were allowed to feed and photograph the 'natives' and watch them carry out their routine daily activities including dancing, making 'voodoo' dolls and telling stories in a made up language. Spectators were not supposed to touch the 'specimens' but for a \$5 premium they could be shown genuine Amerindian male genitals. Incongruously Gómez-Peña and Fusco also watched television, played hip hop music and lifted weights (Fusco 1994: 145).



Figure 36: Gómez-Peña and Fusco: *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*
Photograph: Nancy Lytle

During its tour, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* was seen by approximately 150,000 people; it was not generally presented in theatres or galleries, but rather in public spaces for passers-by, whose engagement was therefore not influenced by the protocols of particular arts establishments. Also, there was no publicity to explain the rationale of the event, rather the work was accompanied by information on sign boards purporting to be genuine scientific and biological data concerning the exhibits and evidencing their authenticity. The year of the tour, 1992, was significant because it was the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas and the artists saw this as an opportunity to mark centuries of colonial exploitation of non-western peoples with an ironic re-enactment of the imperialist practice of displaying indigenous peoples in public. The performance, as Fusco explains, was developed with a specific political motive in mind: 'Our cage became the metaphor for our condition, linking the racism implicit in ethnographic paradigms of discovery with the exoticizing rhetoric of 'world beat' multiculturalism' (Fusco 1994: 145).

In Fusco's writings the production is framed as an 'experiment' (Fusco 2012) and positioned as the latest in a historic list of public displays of indigenous peoples stretching from 1493 when a Caribbean native was displayed for the first time at the Spanish court by Columbus. 'Had things changed, we wondered? How would we know, if not by unleashing those ghosts from a history that could be said to be ours?' (Fusco 1994: 145)

The artists had a clear motivation for positioning their work outside the customary cultural context; Fusco explains that they believed that they would be able to trigger an

un-censored response to the racist material which would make audiences confront their own attitudes about colonial exploitation.

we intended to create a surprise or 'uncanny' encounter, one in which audiences had to undergo their own process of reflection as to what they were seeing, aided only by written information and parodically didactic zoo guards. In such encounters with the unexpected, people's defence mechanisms are less likely to operate with their normal efficiency; caught off guard, their beliefs are more likely to rise to the surface (Fusco 1994: 148).

As Loxley discusses, they anticipated that as they adopted the roles of exotic savages the spectators would realise that they too were also being ironically cast in role, as the colonial exploiter, or voyeuristic bystander, and consequently would realise and perhaps take responsibility for their underlying prejudices and assumptions (Loxley 2007: 163). In fact the response was far more varied and unexpected. The reactions to the work by spectators have been described extensively in media coverage and include: poking fun and treating the performers as animals, feeding them bananas, trying to touch them, making 'monkey noises', shouting abuse, imitating and photographing them and lecturing other spectators (Johnson 1993). Furthermore Fusco's estimation is that 'over fifty percent' of the spectators (Fusco in Loxley 2007: 164), took the performance on face value and believed that they were looking at two 'original Amerindians' (ibid.). More disturbingly, she recorded, while some people raised objection to the ethics of the display, the majority appeared to accept the work uncritically. The unexpected response created un-anticipated criticisms and problems for the project. Academics accused the artists of misleading the public and museums who had initially supported the project became concerned that their endorsement would be interpreted as unethical. The 'zookeepers' found it difficult to handle the duplicity that was expected of them (Fusco 159). Fusco reported:

We have had to confront two unexpected realities in the course of developing this piece - 1) a substantial proportion of the public believed our fictional identities were real ones and: 2) a substantial number of intellectuals, artists and cultural bureaucrats have sought to deflect attention from the substance of our experiment to the 'moral implications' of our dissimulation, or in their words, our 'misinforming the public about who we are' (Fusco 1994: 143).

As the artists became aware that the public were not understanding or responding to the work in the way intended, they became increasingly interested in *how* spectators positioned themselves in terms of the work:

Trying to determine who really believes the fiction and who doesn't became less significant for us in the course of this performance than figuring out what the audience's sense of the rules of the game and what their role in it was (Fusco 1994: 158).

The relevance of this performance's reception to the discussion of performativity is that it demonstrates how the operation of the performative is dependent on a common framework of conventions or codes which are triggered by the performative utterance, or 'mark' (Derrida in Harpold 2003). In this case initial assumptions were made by the artists that the production would provoke a *recognition* of a shared culture of colonial exploitation, and that the irony of the production would produce *reflection*, even *contrition*, on the part of the spectators which would itself enact a political position. As Fusco explained, there was a definite intention for this performance to operate as an experiment, to do or reveal something by triggering specific cultural codes. However the audience response suggested that there were more complex codes in operation than were anticipated by the artistic agenda.

In *The Princess Murderer* the performative act of clicking enacted digital codes and brought about a tangible and measurable effect: the death, or resurrection, of a princess. It also triggered the establishment of a contract between reader and work which itself defined a performance role for the reader. The clarity with which this process was brought about was the product of the digital environment; the performative act activated digital codes that were embedded in the work, accessible and designed to operate as they did. The situation was less clear for the spectators of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* which operated in a very different manner. Here the work purposefully eschewed the context of gallery or theatre which would have framed the event in terms of certain cultural codes and provided clues to the spectator as to how to present their response. The artists deliberately provoked an ambiguity around their performance by refusing to produce any publicity explaining the event, and consequently the situation for the spectators was complex because they had no way of knowing how they should position themselves in terms of the work.

This was evident in the diversity of responses elicited from the spectators who variously treated it as comic, fun, political, an opportunity for role play, for abuse, or most surprising and troubling for the artists, as being what it purported to be, *real*. The spectators' responses operated performatively to produce an effect that was, in itself, an articulation of a political position in terms of the work. In her book, *English is Broken Here*, Fusco elaborates: 'The cage became a blank screen onto which audiences projected their fantasies of who and what we are' (Fusco 1994: 152). Media coverage of the performances often dwelt on celebrity spectators and here the focus was always on what the celebrity *did* in response to the work. Fusco's 2012 essay details how she believed that everyone who saw it seemed to be able to respond to the idea and 'pick it

up and run with it' (Fusco 2012). She identified a number of well-known arts and media personalities who attended and invariably performed their response. These included members of the company *DanceNoise*, who shouted at Gómez-Peña to expose himself. Of the various visiting artists, Barbara Kruger is described as 'charging out' after reading the sign boards outside the cage, Claus Oldenburg sat at a distance watching the crowd's reaction and Annie Sprinkle stood by the cage and allowed Fusco to massage her head, an action captured in the film made of the show (Fusco, and Heredia 1993). Other leading commentators' reactions included a *Washington Post* reporter objecting to the performance so violently that she was removed and representatives of a public art foundation taking it upon themselves to publically 'correct' mistaken impressions of the production by lecturing visitors. (Fusco 1994: 159).



Figure 37: Annie Sprinkle participating in Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West

- image from *The Couple in the Cage a Guatinaui Odyssey* by Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia 1993

The diversity of responses and general confusion caused by the event is reflected in the fact that the artists, and their spectators, were continuously accused of breaching moral, political, social, artistic and even health and safety codes (Fusco 2012). Such reactions

evidenced that the performativity of the work was operating, but in a divergent and complex manner.

Loxley, in his discussion of the performative nature of the work, identifies that the issue at stake was not the verisimilitude of the event but: 'a rather different issue of the various normative frameworks that this performance could offer its audience to structure their interaction with it'(Loxley 2007: 164). The performance provoked a situation in which, as Loxley indicates, the possibilities for the varied performative responses were multiple – far more extensive than the artists anticipated. Ironically the artists found themselves having, as the 'English gentleman' observed (see page 304): 'no idea of what was happening to them' (Fusco 1994: 157), not because they were innocent abused natives, but because their own agendas were not being completed by the spectators in the terms they had anticipated. Their capacity as artists to contain, or to shape, the spectators' performative responses was shown to be limited.

This position can be elucidated by comparing it with the situation in *Victory Garden* in which, although the author created the text and the coding of the work, he does not gain control over how it is actualized in any particular reading, because of its hypertextual nature. With *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, the artists' work functioned as a framework for the many spectatorial practices that operated performatively to produce an event, which consequently was continually changing in accordance with the spectator's various responses. In a number of other respects the performance also operated hypertextually. The performed actions in the cage included various set pieces, but how and when these were delivered was dependent, partly, on the activities of the spectators; the work's narrative therefore operated in a manner

similar to the narratives of hypertext fiction. The work permitted its spectators to take different positions on it because of the ambiguities and contradictory messages it projected; for the spectator 'taking' those positions was a performative act which created what the performance was at any particular moment. Again, this operation evidenced a similarity to hypertext fiction where reading is always a performative action, because the reader has to do something to create the text. Just as the hypertext fiction reader is not able to *not* respond performatively, as *The Princess Murderer* and *Victory Garden* examples show, similarly here the spectators were not able to *not* respond and every action, even walking away from the work, enacted a political position on it. In a manner similar to that of the hypertext fiction reader, the performance spectator's mode of response established their relationship to the work, and determined what the work became in the moment of spectating.

One of the characteristics of hypertext fiction is that it presents its reader with a text which requires their ongoing response in order to determine its narratives. In a similar manner *Two Amerindians Visit the West* presented a work to its spectators which could only be resolved through their performative response to it. However the performance was more complex than the hypertext fictions *because* it opened up such extensive possibilities for spectator responses and this was partly the result of the production operating outside the context of a cultural institution. With no external clues as to its meaning, spectators found it difficult to understand what spectatorial conventions they should respond to; this was because the artists made a point of not clarifying the position of the work, or the social, ethical or political codes it was engaging with, either through the performance setting or in its contemporaneous documentation. Just as the production initially refused to categorise itself, so too the spectators' responses were

diverse and difficult to categorise. As the show progressed the quality of the audience's reaction became increasingly the focus of its documentation and this was particularly the case with a video documentary, created in 1993 by Fusco, Gomez-Pena and Paula Heredia, entitled *The Couple in the Cage a Guatinaui Odyssey*. The video conveyed the mutual operation of the performative and performance response demonstrating how the artist's activities functioned to trigger diverse reactions. Elinor Fuchs commented:

The film's emphasis on the audience's reaction suggests that the onstage performance is only an instigation, a way of rendering another mode of identification – the audience's - visible, performed (Fuchs 2002: 287).

The international profile of the work, its documentation and on-going commentary about the controversy surrounding it, has served to establish its status as an iconic work of late 20 century site specific theatre. Fusco states:

I am frequently asked to talk about my experience with the work and often feel as though I live in its shadow, it's not something that I could ever re-perform. Students who weren't even alive when we were frolicking behind bars now write me to ask in wonder how we did it. I still believe the audience did 'it'. They made the performance weirder than anything I could ever have imagined (Fusco 2012).

The production's retrospective analysis identified that it was the instigative operation of *Two Amerindians Visit the West* that came to distinguish it. This manifested itself tangibly because the work presented ambiguities which the spectator responded to and their responses operated performatively, to do 'it' (ibid.), as Fusco outlines. The documentation reveals that these responses, ranging from the pronounced refusal to engage, to the production of spontaneous performances, all became articulate actions, events, which were triggered by the work and which, consequently, became what it was.

The notable difference in the performative function of the works considered in this chapter is the extent to which the response instigated is shaped by the artwork. While *The Princess Murderer*, as discussed, deliberately contained and constrained the reader's responses, through framing their activity in all senses of the word, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* presented many more possibilities for responses. It did this, albeit inadvertently according to the artists, by presenting multiple ambiguities in the performance to the extent of even refusing to clearly identify the piece as an artwork. In order to engage with the work the spectator had to make decisions about what it was, and when these decisions were demonstrated they operated as performative acts. The hypertextual model of performativity illustrates, therefore, how events are produced through the actions of the spectator/ reader. The work in this chapter demonstrates a braiding together of the incommensurable functions of performance and performativity as a particular quality of the hypertextual experience.

Lyotard's writings on the performativity of reading have recognised the problematic relationship between performance and reality in a way that is useful in considering the performed response of the spectators and readers. He identifies reading as: 'a matter of performance, not of truth' (Readings 1991: 58). He conceptualises the act of reading as a singular event which exceeds and is, significantly, independent of the text that led up to it. His notion of reading is that it: 'cannot be understood as the quickest possible extraction of meaning of a work' (Readings 1991: xv).

Both the hypertext fiction readers and the spectators of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* were involved with a 'reading' process through their engagement with

the artworks. In both these cases the readers and spectators accessed and utilised the materials provided by the artworks and their actions generated events that had not previously existed. The performative operations of the works enabled processes which reflect what Lyotard referred to as the: 'radical singularity of happening' (Readings 1991: xxiii). This process of production by the readers/ spectators was the event that was enabled by the work and here I am utilising Lyotard's specific application of the term 'event', outlined by Readings:

the event is the fact or case that something happens after which nothing will ever be the same again. The event disrupts the referential frame within which it might be represented or understood (Readings 1991: xxiii).

Readings' discussion of Lyotard's views of the performative text further identifies reading as 'a site of invention' (Readings 1991: 54) and in this respect again can be seen to reflect the process of the spectator's performative 'reading' of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*. Although the work assumed that certain cultural conventions concerning the contemporary and historical social and political position of Latino people would be acknowledged by the spectators, what happened was that the work, in provoking a performative response, caused new events to be generated in a process closer to invention than interpretation. The diversity of responses generated, demonstrated a response provoked by the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the event.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the hypertextual structure of *The Princess Murderer* and *Victory Garden* compel the reader to produce a textual event through their act of reading and choice of response to unstable aesthetic works: consequently the activation of performative processes is an ongoing condition of hypertext fiction. I have shown how this hypertextual operation of performativity can be used in exploring the spectatorial practices engendered by *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*. This work presented the spectator with material that had no conventional context to explain its operations and as a result of this spectators had to proactively determine a mode of response. As has been detailed, their divergent reactions manifested themselves as events, instigated by the performance and determined an unanticipated evolution for the production; rather than being primarily about the artist's political agenda it became about the spectatorial practices of the individuals as they encountered the work in cities across the world.

In both the performance and hypertext fiction works discussed the reader/ spectator's actions have operated in a generative manner. In the hypertext fictions this was because, in order to read the text, the reader had to engage with it by clicking on the hyperlinks continuously and consequently inscribing an exploratory and inventive action. The hypertextual experience therefore is an ongoing performative operation which comes about when an art work instigates an inventive and creative process on the part of the spectator/ reader.

The three works have demonstrated different impacts of performativity operating in a hypertextual context. *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* did not formally demand participation in the same manner as the hypertext fictions, however the interaction provoked by all the artworks is analogous because, like the hypertext fictions, the performance foregrounded the fact that the spectator's actions were an essential part of its processes. Therefore even if most of the spectators did not understand the political implications of the performance, as Fusco asserted, they did demonstrate an appreciation that its framing required a response from them and that that response was central and significant. There were, as discussed, opportunities for the spectators to make explicit their responses: for example by feeding the 'inmates'; paying to interact with them and interviewing their 'zoo keepers'. Through engaging with such activities, and through many more which were not anticipated, the spectators, like the hypertext fiction readers, became involved in performative actions that ultimately created the event. Performativity is the underlying condition of the hypertextual environment; through its operations the aesthetic experience is identified as one that inevitably instigates another event and this supplementary event is one in which the reader/ spectator always plays the central part.

Conclusion

Developments in digital fiction have brought about new understandings of the aesthetic strategies of production and reception. This thesis has shown how the hypertextual experience, which emerges in response to structural innovations in writing practices, encapsulates modes of engagement that can also be demonstrated in performance and installation work. The significance of the study of these hypertextual modes is that it provides a new way of understanding spectatorial practices that are instigated by work beyond the digital environment. Using examples chosen from Moulthrop and Joyce's early hypertext fiction, and Tomasula and Larsen and geniwate's more recent digital fiction, the thesis has illustrated how the fragmentary worlds of hypertext fiction formally incorporate the activity of reading into the aesthetic event. Hypertext reading has a creative and generative quality, and its processes reveal certain practices of ergodic engagement which relate to spectatorial practices in fragmentary textual environments across a variety of forms. By elaborating the hypertextual experience the study identifies ways in which the spectator's involvement in the productive processes of performance and installation can be considered and modelled through exploring the operations of production and reception that are revealed through hypertextual structures.

Writing about the audience in 1990 Herbert Blau stated: 'the question of participation remains the most experimental issue in performance' (Blau: 148). More than two decades later questions relating to active involvement of the spectator are being asked, with increasing urgency, through contemporary performance and installation work, particularly through work which seeks to reconfigure spectatorial dynamics and

challenge divisions between the categories of production and reception. Consequently the necessity for models and mechanisms to enable us to understand and reason about these processes is significant. The value of this study is, therefore, that it addresses this necessity through demonstrating how the dynamics of the hypertextual environment can benefit the understanding of performance and its spectators.

This study is informed both by philosophical ideas concerning reading and spectating and the work of selected digital theorists. It has demonstrated divergent viewpoints concerning the activities of digital reading expounded particularly by first and second wave theorists. In formulating the concept of the hypertextual experience I have considered Landow's argument, that hypertext permits the reader to take over an authorial position, and also Miall's view, that contends that reader creativity is thwarted by the structural operations of the networked structure. However I have maintained that while both positions can be evidenced in digital environments, their significance here is that they mutually illustrate how the hypertextual experience subverts conventions of aesthetic production and reception, and provokes nascent spectatorial practices.

In determining the nature of these practices, and of the hypertextual experience, the study has established how they incorporate a range of behaviours, which involve the reader/ spectator oscillating between different receptive and productive strategies as they engage with different aspects of fragmentary work. The nature of this ergodic response places the reader's activity at the centre of the aesthetic event and consequently it demands a conceptual framework which reflects this focus. Using the work of Ryan, Bell and Koskimaa I have shown how the use of possible worlds theory is

the optimum way of understanding and reasoning about the hypertextual experience because it responds to and elucidates its singular dynamics.

The thesis has presented its case by initially outlining the concept and context of the hypertextual experience in the Introduction, then describing and exemplifying its qualities in the first three chapters. Using examples from *Uninvited Guests* and the *Wooster Group*, Chapters 4 and 5 detail how possible worlds theory can be used to reason about the hypertextual experience in performance. Finally it has focussed in Chapter 6 on the distinctive performative aspect of the hypertextual experience which demonstrates how it operates as a generative process and positions the artwork as an entity which *instigates* the aesthetic event, rather than solely, itself, *constituting* the event.

Aesthetic work may be said to be provoking a hypertextual experience, when it presents certain ambiguities in its textual terrain. These may emerge from the dynamics between internal processes, particularly between structural and narrative components, which provoke the reader/ spectator to make certain decisions as to how to engage with it, and to become aware of the significance of those decisions. In so doing they will develop a practice of reading or spectating, which is distinguishable through its material negotiation of the works processes. Digital theorists have drawn attention to practices of engagement in the hypertextual environment and to the fundamental mechanisms that trigger them. I have demonstrated how these can inform parallel spectatorial practices through examining initially: David Leddy's *Susurrus*; Katie Mitchell's *The Waves* and Ben Rubin and Mark Hansen's *Listening Post*, alongside *Afternoon* and *Victory Garden*.

In Chapters 1 and 2 these works are used to identify a number of textual events as characteristic of the hypertextual experience. One that demonstrates the potency of the reader/ spectator's active response occurs when they are provoked to enact a narrative incident, or concern, through their ergodic response to a text or hypertext; this, as Bolter has identified, is a powerful way of demonstrating a mutual physical and cognitive effect of hypertext. Anamorphic figures, which are familiar from fine art, can also feature in the hypertextual environment and be used to provoke particular narrative experiences in a manner that resonates with operations in performance and installation work. Koskimaa has shown how hypertext fiction demonstrates a capacity for a work to be 'actualized' through the course of reading (Koskimaa 2000) and this operation is similarly evidenced in the performance and installation examples. The process shows how the spectator/ reader's engagement itself operates creatively, as texts or events are generated only through an individual's actualising of them.

The hypertextual experience demonstrates how the categories of production and reception do not sufficiently accommodate the aesthetic operations of the fragmentary narratives of digital and performance installation works. Hayles, Ermarth and Ridout have each proposed that the scope of the reader/ spectator's engagement with literature and art or theatre is limited, or obscured, by the neutral conditions of dominant cultural practices and their arguments are discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. Hypertext fiction is a post-neutral form that draws attention to properties that neutral forms conceal; the materiality of the media and structure, machinic processes and the fictionality of narrative constructions of time, are among the properties that hypertext

fiction foregrounds. It also foregrounds the role of the reader, who is not able to retain an anonymous position within a collective, but is implicated individually in its processes.

A common quality of the works examined is their concern with narrative operations. For the reader/ spectator engagement with the hypertextual experience demands a proactive exploration of the dialectic between structure and narrative; through this they establish their position in terms of the work. The reader/ spectator is formally made part of the work in the hypertextual environment; they are part of its machinic processes. This incorporation comes about sometimes through participation, but also through other means in work that does not involve explicit physical participation. In these cases the constitutional makeup of the performance or installation work provokes individual practices of engagement that are fundamental to their operations.

All the performance and installation works examined in this thesis feature fragmented texts that are unstable and resist resolution. Broeckmann's commentary on the machinic demonstrates how textual and performance environments may exhibit machinic processes in which the interplay between the components involved in the work characterises its operations. The dynamic between the spectator and the work is consequently also an unstable one that needs to be actively negotiated and it is the manner of that negotiation that has been the focus of Chapter 2. This study has examined the works of writers and directors who make use of strategies to provoke the spectator to confront textual or presentational ambiguities in particular ways. For instance, the works directed by both Katie Mitchell and Elizabeth LeCompte employ devices to provoke the spectator into finding a means of engaging with the simultaneous presentations of live and filmic material. Through encountering such strategies the

spectator comes to see themselves as a part of the unstable dynamics of the event. Their process of viewing is manipulated for specific ends, as determined through the directorial process. In the case of *The Waves*, the complex presentational style passes onto the spectators a sense of the fragmentary nature of the original Virginia Woolf novel.

The hypertextual experience foregrounds the material operation of the aesthetic work and also the temporal operation of the narratives. Chapter 3 examined how the sequence in which the reader/ spectator accesses work has an impact on the operation of fictional temporality. Being able to have some control over the sequence of access creates a situation in which the reader becomes conscious of, and engages with, both their own experience of time and the fictional temporalities represented the artwork. Multiple temporalities are emphasised both in *Afternoon* and the Wilson installations discussed in this chapter. In all these cases engagement determines experience as the spectator moves between historic, fictional and their 'own time', in aesthetic situations in which none of these temporalities is allowed to dominate. What is clear from my study is that this aspect of the hypertextual experience, like others discussed, provokes particular and identifiable responses, what Ermarth has called 'new acts of attention' (Ermarth 1998: 363). Through explicating these, using the range of analytical tools discussed, new understandings emerge of the significance of the ergodic spectatorial response in performance and installation work. Throughout the thesis I am arguing that the examination of hypertext fiction, as a form which reveals dynamics and active practices that have significance across aesthetic production, is timely and relevant.

Rancière's concluding statements in his essay, *The Emancipated Spectator* draw attention to what it is that the active spectator does, and focuses on their generative role, in a way that assists an understanding of the significance of their action. For Rancière, as discussed in Chapter 2, the spectator becomes narrator and translator as they: 'appropriate the story and make it their own story' (Rancière 2011: 22). He identifies the operations through which these emancipatory processes occur, as those which involve 'linking what one knows with what one does not know; being at once a performer deploying her skills and a spectator observing what these skills might produce in a new context among other spectators' (ibid).

The hypertextual experience encapsulates this manner of active engagement which positions the reader/ spectator as its focal point, and demonstrates how the aesthetic event emerges from that position. It consequently demands a conceptual framework that can give due prominence to the spectatorial practice it provokes. Possible worlds theory, in its recent application to hypertext fiction, provides a way of considering the hypertextual experience in performance and installation works, as well as in hypertext fiction, in a manner that foregrounds the actual experience of the spectators. The notion of possible and actual worlds can be used to explain and validate how the spectators utilise their 'actual world' as part of the experience of the artwork. Possible worlds theory has been used to enable digital theorists to consider how the reader's creative and generative experiences are central to the processes of hypertext fiction because, in Moulthrop's words, it:

re-asserts the meaning, identity, and most important, the active involvement of readers ...and... directly addresses the predicament of readers, however confined or coerced into their niches, trying to make sense of difficult and 'slippery' texts (Moulthrop 2011: 3).

I have extended this appropriation of possible worlds theory and shown how it can be applied to the hypertextual experience of performance.

As the reader becomes implicated in a hypertext fiction, through their participatory reading, they lose their external perspective on the work. In Chapter 4 Bell's discussion of possible worlds theory focusses on how the reader becomes the 'narratee' (Bell 2010: 31); she explains that although they are given access to the text by clicking on hyperlinks, they only gain a partial understanding of the 'textual world'. This process reveals a similar operation in performances which implicate the spectator in the world of the performance. This is illustrated through the discussion of the work of Uninvited Guests. Here the spectators' contributions draw them into the work, but although they gain some access and agency, their position, like that of Bell's narratee, is not equivalent to that of the artists; moreover they forfeit their role as an observer. It is apparent that the hypertextual experience, whether lodged in performance or in hypertext fiction, involves the reader losing an external perspective on the work as they become part of it. Uninvited Guests' work demonstrates how performance which projects a hypertextual experience, also curtails the role of the spectator. This is significant because amid the implications that action leads to the emancipation of the spectator/reader (Rancière 2011, Landow 2006, Bolter 2001), this study has shown that active and ergodic processes do not necessarily bring this about. This issue is further examined in Deena Larsen and geniwate's *The Princess Murderer* which foregrounds the predicament that the reader is put into through their action of reading. It demonstrates that agency in the hypertextual environment can be compromised by digital structures which implicate the reader and also constrain their activity.

The concept of performativity has been used to explain the generative quality of the hypertextual experience in Chapter 6. Performativity, in Austin's formulation (Austin 2003), encapsulates a process by which 'reading' becomes 'doing'. I have related this to the general condition of hypertext in which the reader's engagement operates as the 'locutionary' act that generates an effect. Loxley *et al* have observed the close connection between 'performativity' and 'performance'. Indeed *The Princess Murderer* illustrates how these two concepts become enmeshed in the hypertextual experience, by requiring the reader to take on a role as murderer as a condition of reading, and presenting a digital structure in which each click on a hyperlink 'kills' a princess. The performance/ performativity coupling is similarly evidenced in the final performance work considered, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, and Elinor Fuchs has describes how this work operates as an 'instigation' (Fuchs 2002: 287) for the spectator's own performative action.

Works that provoke the hypertextual experience have the capacity to forge new roles for their spectators and these will frequently involve them creatively in their processes. They also have the capacity to manipulate the agency that they facilitate. The works explored in this thesis have foregrounded this complex situation and revealed how the spectator/ reader individually oscillates between different kinds of roles, with different kinds of allowances, when they access the machinic processes of hypertextual operations. The predicament of the reader/ spectator, who is caught up in the unstable terrain of the hypertextual experience and has to develop new practices of engagement, comes about because the culturally defined positions of production and reception which relate to reading and writing, performing and spectating, are changed and challenged

through the textual operations of the digital environment. There is no consistent outcome of this challenge in terms of either emancipation, or constraint. This study has shown rather that the hypertextual experience in performance and installation is characterised by the reader/ spectator's experiential process of negotiating many forces operating in a work of art and positioning and re-positioning themselves in terms of these. The hypertextual experience therefore relates to an aesthetic territory where ergodic practices of reading or spectating operate performatively as part of the machinic processes of the artistic event. In the hypertextual experience the remit of the spectator is extended in response to the unstable and unpredictable textual environment and this study shows how spectatorial practices are revealed and how they can be reasoned about in terms of our knowledge of hypertext.

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