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4. Enacting Indeterminacy: performance strategies and actor training

Around 1920, Tairov bemoaned the loss of vitality of the theatre, both mainstream and experimental, in terms that still resonate:

Joy and youth have renounced the theatre, because, instead of wonderful flights into the fantastic region of the impossible, it struggles weakly in the snares of naturalistic banality or, wingless, drags itself about among the anemic, decadent conventions of formalism. (41)

Like Marowitz at the end of the 20th century, Tairov put the principal blame on the state of acting: “The theatre has lost the art and mastery of the actor.” According to Tairov, the only performance discipline that had earned its right to the stage, “through school, work, and a tireless striving for perfection” (70), despite its own issues with traditionalism, was the ballet. On the other hand, while realism was rife with diletantism and lacking in form, formalism lacked soul: Meyerhold’s “external approach to the creation of scenic form . . . had inevitably led to the mechanization of the actor, to the destruction of his creative ego” (Tairov 50). Tairov therefore proposed to synthesize the best qualities of naturalism and formalism into “form saturated with creative emotion - *emotional form*” (52). Since it had different priorities, his theatre avoided rather than solved the issue of non-naturalistic *spoken* drama. Moreover, the precise nature of the ‘emotional gesture’ - and how to achieve it - is never revealed. The only thing perfectly clear from Tairov’s account is that it took three months to put the first fruitful discoveries into action, and six years (52-53) to begin to master the “theatre of emotionally-saturated form” (65). Tairov is nevertheless of great interest to us in our present inquiry, and not only because of his dissatisfaction with the naturalist-formalist, interior/exterior polarity that still looms in our current thinking about performance. His vision of an organic fusion of “the various scenic arts” that would require “a new *master-actor*, who commands all the resources of his many-faceted art with equal ease” (54) is still as pertinent to the contemporary alternative theatre as it was in 1921.

I. The Master-Actor

Tairov's vision of the master-actor is basically reiterated by Gao and Schechner, as well as by Benedetti, who asserts: "Since acting is becoming through doing, the actor's task is as much athletic as it is interpretive" (78), and concludes "that movement training in the broadest sense (and thus encompassing vocal training) is the most important single aspect of a young actor's development" (77). Suzuki and Grotowski are among the few teachers to develop a comprehensive program aimed at "creating a unifying physicality and coherent acting process," to borrow Allain's words (187), that enables its practitioners to approach a variety of theatrical material with "the whole body 'speaking'" (159). Their strength, as well as perhaps their limitation, lies in their uniqueness, focussed around the individualistic visions of their masters, and thus "positing one model rather than a prescription" (Allain). They are thus able to draw upon and integrate a variety of influences into a distinctive aesthetic. Again, Allain's description of Suzuki's methodology applies equally well to Grotowski:

Cross-cultural experimentation and quotation are validated by a unified group and a single-minded vision that is communicated clearly between director and performers through a daily body practice, over which are layered textual and interpretive choices. . . . This allows them to explore world texts in the broadest sense . . . without creating a syncretic muddy soup. (187)

The results are powerful, idiosyncratic, and easily identified with their respective schools. At the same time, the fundamental skills taught by Grotowski and Suzuki can often be applied elsewhere as well, such as to Robert Wilson's formally driven and physically demanding work (*cf.* Halperin-Royer 332).

i. Authenticity and Spontaneity

Outside of such dedicated programs, however, the practical evolution of a *master-actor* remains elusive. While drama institutions supposedly spawn well-rounded performers, providing instruction in vocal (and sometimes, musical) training, movement, clowning and fight-choreography, as well as in the Stanislavskian method, they have

utterly failed to develop the *creative potential* of such skills in the actor.¹ One issue is the relative brevity of such programs; the more they try to accomplish, the more superficially they are forced to treat each aspect of their curriculum. Allain concurs: “It is for us to find training approaches and even systems that endure beyond the far too brief three years of training we might encounter at drama school or at university” (191). But an even more pervasive problem is the lack of preparation an actor receives for experiencing, and responding to, the world as an artist. Great theatre almost always deals with the profound and unsettling issues of being human. The performers of such plays must develop a curious, flexible and persistent attitude towards questions of existence that reaches beyond the personal and societal norms of daily life. She doesn’t have to - in fact, *shouldn’t* - have all the answers, but must be able to engage authentically with the questions in a multitude of often mutually contradictory ways. Otherwise, all her skills at emotional simulation are just so much virtuosic window-dressing. The spectator’s perceptive faculties are much more sensitive than we give him credit for; he intuits immediately when, no matter how beautifully articulated her lines are, the actor has no idea what they mean. The actor cannot afford to relax into the role of the paint, the brush, or even the hand, but must become part of the eye that perceives the world and the mind that is painting the picture.

The emulation of the familiar, the dogma of “plausible behaviour” (Marowitz 6), is realism’s greatest fallacy, and its ultimate disservice to art. Marowitz charges:

According to Method doctrines, there is a tacit assumption that if the actor can color the character with his own feelings, create a viable ‘identification,’ that correspondence will see him through. The idea that he may be obliged to discover an inner core radically different from his own, and consequently much less accessible to emotional approximations, rarely occurs to him. As a result, most performances merely point up the disparity between the size and scope of the play’s intentions and the

¹ Directors and playwrights, who provide the material to be embodied by the actor, are similarly undernourished by a reactionary diet of realist techniques. The only students that occasionally escape this aesthetic confinement are the designers, who then desperately labour to make the many tedious productions of old chestnuts (and their offspring) appear cutting-edge. However, the rule seems to be that the scope of creative freedom increases only in proportion to the physical distance of the design from the actor, who remains ensconced in his little sphere of normalcy, or else balks severely at the affront of an attempted intervention by the designer.

meagreness of the actor trying to achieve them. It is the shallowness of the actor's rehearsal experience, the modesty of his goals, which accounts for this artistic malnutrition. (16)

Tairov's initial frustrations, around 1914, with trying to break the naturalistic mold are also instructive: "I had almost no actors capable of perceiving and fulfilling those new creative and technical tasks," he complains. "Those young people who set out with joyful willingness to meet my requirements proved to be completely unprepared raw material" (63). Conversely, actors "with years of experience and so-called 'technique'," he continues,

were so foreign to the very spirit of our work and so handicapped by their "experience" that in spite of a sincere desire to take part in work which was unusual for them, and even having achieved something or other in rehearsals, they invariably "rode their own [hobby]² horses" during performances and smashed to smithereens everything they had achieved. (64)

These struggles sound only too familiar to the director who has attempted anything even modestly unusual, and who would conclude with Tairov: "It was impossible to find such actors on the outside, because work in all the existing theatres was carried on according to completely different systems. This meant that we would have to *create* our own actors" (64). Gao would agree with this assessment; he wrote his most popular work, *The Other Shore* (1986, 1990), as a training piece for the "new actor," whose mission it would be to "revive drama in all its functions as a performing art" ("Shore" 42).³ Gao's expectations of his performers are just as all-encompassing as Tairov's:

[T]heir skills should include singing, the martial arts, stylized movements and delivering dialogues. They should also be able to perform Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, Aristophanes, Racine, Lao She, Cao Yu, Guo Moruo, Goethe, Brecht, Pirandello, Beckett, and even mimes and musicals. ("Shore" 43)

His aesthetic and anti-naturalistic aims echo Tairov's: "The play seeks to set up the performance on the premise of non-reality, and to fully mobilize the imagination of the actors before evoking abstraction through emotion" (*ibid.*). Gao also resembles Marowitz in his appeal to the actor's intuition and spontaneity: *The Other Shore* "demands that the

² Kuhlke translates this idiomatic expression as "rode their own pet horses."

³ from "Some Suggestions on Producing *The Other Shore*."

actors abandon completely the kind of performance dependent upon logic and semantic thinking. The liveliest performances are exactly those which are intuitive, improvisational, and on the spur of the moment” (43). As previously mentioned, the first minutes of *The Other Shore* appear improvisational,⁴ but the complex choreography described in the text will actually need to be rehearsed in great detail in order to present *appearance* of spontaneous play rather than mere chaos in performance. The same is true of the fragmentary, rhythmic dialogue that follows. Nevertheless, there needs to remain occasion for the unexpected in the performance. This intrinsic openness must be built into the preparation of the actor: The purpose of rehearsals ought not to be the complete elimination of uncertainty in the acting score, but rather the evolution of a performance strategy of freedom-within-structure. To achieve this, a heightened self-awareness in the actor becomes not only an aesthetic choice, but also a practical necessity.

ii. Discipline and Provocation

Classically trained performers find themselves better prepared for working with experimental directors such as Robert Wilson than those familiar only with conventional modern techniques. Actor Willis Sparks muses: “If you’re not classically trained maybe you’re not as aware of your body as another actor . . . maybe you don’t go straight to the point of the scene. . . . One of the ways classical training helps is you are aware of your fingers, your toes” (qtd. in Halperin-Royer 332). Peter Webster, another actor in Wilson’s production of *Danton’s Death* (1992), evokes a startling image of the vulnerability and authenticity as well as the level of technique demanded of the performer:

I think what he’s asking is that you sandpaper yourself so thin that you’re still wood, you’re still steel, but whatever is inside you comes across. It has to be a high-powered bullet shot by a blind man that hits its mark unerringly. I’m using Zen but it’s exactly right. You have to have infinite technique to do it. (qtd. *ibid.*)

The reference to Zen, I believe, is not at all spurious. Tairov already observed that an actor, unlike a visual artist, cannot step back and assess his material from without, and so anticipated Gao’s formulation of the actor’s need for a *third eye*:

⁴ Cf. Quah 163.

The fact that the work of art he is creating cannot be separated from himself also presents considerable difficulties to the actor. . . . In order to compensate for this lack and not be condemned to blindness, he must develop in himself an inner second sight; he must create alongside his own creative ego a second ego, unseen but seeing. (Tairov 70)

The reader recalls Gao's extension of this doubling into the tripartite nature of acting:

The act of "acting" consists of transforming the psychological process that begins with the I of the actor, by way of which You, i.e. the body of the actor, present Him, i.e. the character. . . . The awareness of the inner eye helps the actor to establish markers that lead him as rapidly as possibly into his role. (*Wanderung* 63)

It is not unlikely that a similar split awareness is helping actors such as Sparks and Webster to master the challenges of performing Robert Wilson's work.

It is of crucial importance, both to the philosophical-aesthetic and to the practical-performative understanding of the theatre of indeterminacy, that the fracturing of the actor's role as described here, not unlike the fracturing of the ego-self as a postmodern condition, be seen as part of a necessary process of reconfiguration that also achieves a new, dynamic *unity* of purpose or agency. Cultural models of fragmentation, dissipation and decay are as much of a dead end for art as the teleological orientation of realist-humanism. As we shall see in the final chapter, this dilemma between a latent nihilism on one hand and an untenable absolutism on the other prompts the reconsideration of certain tenets of Buddhism that are closely related to those underlying *Dialogue and Rebuttal*. For now, let us emphasize the practical notion that a kind of meditational self-awareness, a simultaneous holding of several elements in mental balance, is necessary to the actor's task of spontaneous engagement.

Gao exhorts the actor to warm up like an athlete or fighter before the show, and be "ready to provoke as well as to receive his partners' reactions. Thus the performance must be fresh, regenerating, and improvisational, which is essentially different from gymnastic or musical performances" ("Shore" 44). This requisite *regeneration* of each performance goes beyond the small adjustments, shifts in tempo, mood and energy that are characteristic of most scripted performances. It brings to mind instead Schechner's

definition of the open-ended *acting score*: “The circle is never closed. The score always allows the performer the freedom to express himself spontaneously. To provide such liberty, that is the function of a score” (8). This notion comes of course via Grotowski, whom Schechner cites: “Spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves; what is elementary feeds what is constructed, and vice-versa, to become the real sources of a kind of acting that glows” (qtd. in Schechner 7).⁵

Like Gao, Marowitz emphasizes the need for provoking the actor: “The actor, like the character, needs to be *provoked* into behavior and to achieve this, an element of surprise is necessary.” Acting, he asserts, “is not the art of repetition, it is the art of provocation - being simultaneously stirred by internal impulses and external events. The actor must experience incitement to thought and instigation to action” (25-26). For Marowitz, this process is confined to the rehearsal hall, where the actor’s frequent confrontations with the unexpected train him to be spontaneous on stage:

To achieve this, the director must constantly surprise the actor by reorganizing the stimuli he encounters in the scene. . . . This needs to be done arbitrarily, illogically, unjustifiably - producing a reaction which the actor realizes is wrong, *not in keeping* with what has come before, incongruous to the situation. The wrongness of all these mini-events will succeed in breaking the mold that is too rapidly set in the actor’s work. (26)

Marowitz continues these exercises in destabilization right up to opening night, but then, with the final addition of the audience, allows the performance to settle into its run.

Lehmann, on the other hand, views provocation as a shared experience between actor and spectator, and a key element in the performance of what he calls the *theatre of situation*:

In enacting its essential event-nature with and against the audience, the theatre discovers its potential to be, not solely an exceptional kind of occurrence, but a provocative situation for all involved. . . . Playfully the theatre creates a condition in which one cannot simply place oneself ‘across from’ the object of perception, but is involved and therefore accepts that one finds oneself - as Gadamer emphasizes of the ‘situation’ - placed within it in such a manner as “not to be able to have objective knowledge of it.”⁶ (181)

⁵ from Grotowski, Jerzy. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Holstebro: Odin Theatrets Forlag, 1968. 121.

⁶ Lehmann is quoting Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. Tübingen, 1965. 285.

Engagement with the performance thus means implication in its creation as well as loss of objective ground, for the actor as well as for the spectator. Gao also wants to maintain a degree of possibility, or indeterminacy, in the performance, so that the actor must make *new* choices based on the circumstances of the moment each night. His fighting imagery aligns him with Suzuki's conception of performing as an act of survival:

‘The actor touches the audience sympathetically through the rhythm of his physiology, words, breath, and movements, and acts sensing the audience’s response to it through his body.’⁷ . . . Suzuki’s focus is on what can be called a ‘process of crisis’, which grows from his belief that performing is a series of moments of survival. (Allain 121-22)

According to Suzuki, the actor’s on-stage struggle motivates his intrinsic self-awareness, his relationship to the audience, and ultimately his anti-naturalistic aesthetic:

‘The impulse to act springs from consistently feeling the impossibility of being oneself.’⁸ For [Suzuki], performing bears no relation to imitation. The theatrical matter is the performer’s struggle with his or her own physical and mental being, and imitation eschews the challenge. (Allain 122)

Suzuki theorizes that the actors of the *no* theatre had to develop a battle psychology to survive during the feudal era, and that this became part of their aesthetic. The actor’s continual state of crisis has a significant effect on his performance and its effect on the audience; thus Allain proposes:

Crisis is evidently uncomfortable and reveals hidden patterns of behaviour, closer to the intuitive or animal responses and reflexes Performance can reinstate our forgotten or at least suppressed psychophysicality and enable fuller use of the senses. (122)

The Russian director and movement theorist Andrei Droznin currently uses theatrical performance in order to restore precisely this experience of a unified bodymind to the human organism. Droznin applies his techniques to both original creations and established texts. His work is significant in this context because he has synthesized some of the seminal methodologies discussed here into embodied, formalist theatre.

⁷ from Tadashi Suzuki. *The Cozening Horizon*. Tokyo: Hokusuki-Sha, 1981. 230.

⁸ from Tadashi Suzuki. “The Sum of the Interior Angles.” *Naikaku No Wa*. Tokyo: Jiritsu Shobo, 1973. 62.

Furthermore, his work is intended to alter fundamentally both the actors' and the spectators' understanding of themselves as human organisms.

iii. Performance as Existential Therapy

Andrei Droznin has a background in engineering and physics. In 1957 he was inspired by the performances of Polish mime artist Henryka Tomaszewski in Moscow to research the art of movement, a task made difficult by the Soviet ban on Meyerhold's writings on Biomechanics. During the next decades, he directed an estimated 140 performances and evolved a system of physical theatre based on Meyerhold, Tairov, Vakhtangov, Grotowski and Michael Chekhov. Today, Droznin's focus is on performance research, teaching, and the psychophysical healing of the modern body. Droznin's aim, in the words of Rachel Perlmeter "to expose and dispel the physical trauma of contemporary life,"⁹ is at once aesthetic and therapeutic. According to Perlmeter, Droznin's movement theatre can be viewed in the context of Mikhail Bakhtin's critique of the (post)modern body,¹⁰ which in its abstraction, its disconnect from the environment and from its own natural functions, causes in the individual a pervasive sense of dread, a faceless "cosmic terror" (Perlmeter). Instead of this all but annihilated, "individualized, bordered, bourgeois body," Bakhtin "posits the grotesque body as a cosmic body that is unfinished, becoming, entangled with the world, and decidedly erotic and sensual" (Perlmeter). Accordingly, Droznin's physical theatre calls for the performer's consummate integration of mind, body and process; like Suzuki, Droznin developed his exercises in response to practical needs, such as to deal with his actors' lack of balance, rhythm and coordination. The development of these skills is seen to further not only the visceral and aesthetic impact of the performance, but also the well-being of the performer: "Droznin seeks to invent a new type of movement that might free participants from this crippling fear of the unfinished nature of the human organism. Such a way of moving seeks to release the will from its desire for intellectual mastery of the body" (Perlmeter).

⁹ Perlmeter, Rachel. "Infectious Plasticity." *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 9 (2004). An online journal, *TSQ* is not paginated. Biographical information on Droznin is taken from this article.

¹⁰ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Like Benedetti, Droznin emphasizes “the ways that movement emotes and develops character through action” and at the same time acknowledges the psychological dimension of performance: “Every action is understood to be a dual phenomenon, with a psycho [*sic*] component and a physical component The training can begin from either an internal or external position, but ultimately a balance must be achieved.” Perlmeter describes the resulting synthesis of the mimetic, the carnivalesque and the physical as “a heightened sensual experience” that “provokes a bodily confusion: the spectator feels simultaneously within and without the confines of the flesh, provoked to study their corporeal being from a clear objective vantage point, while at the same time, made hyperaware of what it means to dwell inside the skin” (*ibid.*). Objects and bodies defy established boundaries, transform and mutate “into something other than what they are/are not.” It is a “daunting” spectacle for the “passive modern spectator” facing such embodiments “rife with ambiguities.” However, whereas much contemporary theatre of provocation merely serves to exacerbate the spectator’s alienation from himself and the world, Droznin’s challenging works are ultimately aimed at healing humanity’s postmodern “ecopathology” (Chaudhuri qtd. in Perlmeter).¹¹

Like Droznin’s performer wrestling with his psychophysical limitations in rehearsal, Suzuki’s actor is primarily engaged in a struggle with himself; even on stage, Allain relates, “you are principally in dialogue with yourself rather than another object or character, and the drama is enacted primarily within the body rather than between the body and a fictionalized character” (122). Gao’s actor, on the other hand, attains vitality and a sense of self entirely “through the process of discovering his partners” (“Shore” 43). The partner can be either real or imaginary, but must be an active presence for the performer. Unlike *The Other Shore*, the group of plays that includes *Dialogue and Rebuttal* does not make explicit provisions for on-stage improvisation, so the question arises of how an actor is supposed to maintain the flexibility of the *fighting stance* in these plays. In the case of *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, I believe that the desired indeterminacy - the call for spontaneous embodiment - is built into the dialogic structure itself, which consequently demands an alternate, open-ended rehearsal and performance methodology.

¹¹ Chaudhuri, Una. “Exile, Extremity, and Animality.” *Theatre and Exile Conference*. Graduate Centre for Study of Drama, University of Toronto. 21 March 2002.

II. The Actor and the Indeterminate Text

In *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, each beat sets up a new round of confrontations, but many of these beats, as well as the overall contest of the first act itself, have no clear winner. The actors could potentially play a different game each night, working off each other and making spontaneous choices of intention, status, tempo, physical action *etc.* In Act Two, the rules change somewhat; the previous dialogic game disintegrates and the focus of each character turns inward, resulting in a parallel unravelling that indeed resembles a Suzuki-like struggle with self rather than a contest with each other. Intentionality and motivation become increasingly fragmentary and ambiguous, as well as patently irrelevant to any enactment of *story*, since the characters almost passively bear witness to rather than cause their own disintegration. Lehmann observes how a loss of interaction between opposing characters leads to a fragmentation of theatrical *time*, and vice-versa:

Inasmuch as the described intersubjectivity - let us call it, the *duel* - is absent, the obligatory intersubjective temporality is gone, too. And conversely: if the shared homogenous time confounds and fragments itself, then the duellists, so to speak, cannot find each other anymore, are lost in particulars, act on mutually unrelated planes. (320)

This is precisely what happens in Act Two and parts of Act One of *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, also in the sense that “not all figures have the same degree of reality, but some appear as projections of [the minds of] others” (Lehmann *ibid.*).

Once an objective representational ground is taken away, all internal perspectives, and thus all potential character impulses, appear equally valid. There is no single best or true interpretation of the given material. Performative choices need to be made, but they cannot be unearthed from, or at least definitively justified by reference to, the text itself. With other words, there is a rift between the significance of the text and the significance of the scenic action; both are, to varying degrees, on their own rather than interdependent. Tadeusz Kantor, as cited by Lehmann, describes his theatre *Cricot 2* as following “‘two parallel tracks’: over here, ‘the text cleansed of its superficial, narrative structure;’ over there, the ‘track of the autonomous scenic action of the pure theatre’”¹² (122). Lehmann

¹² from Tadeusz Kantor. *Theater des Todes*. Zirndorf, 1983. 81.

proposes that an inherent conflict between text and performance predates the contemporary theatre, which merely concretizes it into a deliberate element of its *mise-en-scène* (261). He claims, using Wilson and Pina Bausch as contemporary examples, that the history of modern theatre could be rewritten in terms of the *mutual disruption of text and stage* (264) - that is, the conflict of voice and image.

This is all well and good as far as it goes, but beyond perpetually re-examining its own dialectics of signification, the art of performance aspires to a creative, *synthetic* purpose, even if that purpose is merely the pleasure of its own enactment. A more constructive process of self-imagining can arise if a text, by confounding any attempt to impose a deterministic relationship between itself and its performance, serves to *open up* rather than *disrupt* the potential for scenic action. This is what happens when Gao's dialogue challenges the actors' creative boundaries by refusing to reveal the characters' intentions. The overall arc of their actions is clear, but their moment-to-moment psychology remains ambiguous, their inner life, a chimera. It is poignant that the German term *Spielraum* can be variously glossed as *playing space*, *realm of action*, or *margin of error*. Indeterminacy gives the artist room to play, license to err, to become *errant* in a world of discovery. Transparent determinism, on the other hand, shuts the performer down and deprives the audience of a challenging experience:

The knowable text is thin, benign, complacent, propaganda or massage. It creates no problem for the actor, and worse, no problem for the audience. The actor does not suffer the ordeal of presenting the incongruities, the illogicalities, of the text, which is the source of a triumphant performance. . . . If the actor is not experiencing the ordeal of presenting the character, the experience of tragedy does not occur, for tragedy is plethora - it is the unbearable (144)

According to Barker, only the impenetrability of the deliberately indeterminate - he calls it "unknowable" (*ibid.*) - text can provoke the actor into giving a worthy, sublime performance. We encounter again the notion of the actor suffering from his engagement not with the crises of the character but with the act of performing itself. The unknowable or *open text* thus structurally, in its very fabric, its *ur-text*, harbours the irreconcilability that will be embodied in the *texture* of performance. Significant is that the performance,

unlike the ritual, does not provide closure; the virtual wound inflicted on performer and spectator is not healed again. Barker expects the spectator to leave the Theatre of Catastrophe with the thought: “I did not *know* what I was seeing, nor did I *enjoy* what I saw, but I want to experience it again,” and proclaims: “On such statements of will, desire and bewilderment, the new theatre establishes its repertoire” (148). This impossibility of the spectator’s reconciliation with the dramatic experience further negates the dialectical - but not the dialogical - model of drama.¹³

i. Performing Without a Net

How an actor would go about analyzing and performing an *unknowable text* lies at the crux of a methodology for the theatre of indeterminacy. The answers, necessarily, are not immediately apparent. I particularly question the role of improvisation as depicted by Gao. How does an actor use instinct and intuition to respond to a provocation in a non-naturalistic context, where standard rules of human behaviour do not apply? Aesthetic form takes time and painstaking attention to detail to evolve, involves behaviour that may be intuitive but is not merely instinctive. By implication, the actor would need to create an entire alternative model of existence, at least one that takes into account all permutations of potential responses. One possibility is suggested by site-specific works in which actors and audience intermingle and interact. Thus, referring to the performances of the now-disbanded Viennese experimental ensemble *Angelus Novus* under the direction of Josef Szeiler, Lehmann describes how “text, bodies and space constitute a musical, architectural and dramaturgical constellation that arises from the interconnection of predefined and unplanned moments” (224). These neo-happenings were, however, primarily concerned with exposing the culpability of the spectator-participant in their creation (or disruption), and the concomitant vulnerability of the artistic process itself. A variable montage of performance fragments may be interesting as such, but doesn’t seem to address in any profound way the aesthetic embodiment of an interior enactment of meaning-as-presence that characterizes the theatre of indeterminacy.

Despite the inherent difficulties of his plays, Barker’s actors appear to treasure and rise to the challenge they present. Lamb reports being struck by “the actors’ insistence on

¹³ Cf. Lehmann 59ff.

the openness they found in [Barker's] texts; so that when they went out to perform there was a sense that they did not know what was going to happen next." He elaborates: "One actress in particular, I seem to recall, did a lot of work on her part, examining all the different possibilities of the different situations but she would approach a performance with a sense that those possibilities were all still open" (qtd. in Barker 210). This actress apparently pursued a strategy that would balance the play's demand for openness with her own need for having an appropriate action in reserve for any eventuality. Whatever an individual actor's strategy to avoid floundering or resorting to banalities, it is evident that the indeterminate text requires far more thorough preparation than the linear one, as well as supreme vigilance to avoid mechanical repetition.¹⁴ The payoff, ideally, is a living performance within a strict aesthetic framework, representing an unparalleled synthesis of action and form. Barker observes:

This sense of fluidity - some actors might regard it as insecurity - reflects the manner of the production of the text itself Do we possess 'intentions' with regard to one another which are not in permanent overthrow? . . . [B]oth actions and speeches are ambiguous even to the character himself. . . . Thus an actor will find it hard to lay down a line on a character from any rational point of view, all he can approach at any given moment is the emotional demand generated by his character encountering another. This must change night by night, and no actor can ever play this work blindly, or soporifically, as they frequently do with texts that are cemented. (210-11)

This can be a daunting proposition for an actor trained in the realist-humanist mode which, according to Barker, is suffused with a "fear of the irrational" (109). Experimental theatre constantly forces the actor beyond her own boundaries. Allain notes that Suzuki's "approach exploits and transgresses taboos of pain, authority, aggression and manipulation," so that "justifying your presence on [Suzuki's] stage is not without personal cost" (123). Grotowski views performance as sacrifice, and Schechner claims that an "act of spiritual nakedness is all there is to performing," which "takes place in a difficult area between character and work-on-oneself" (6). Echoing Droznin, Lehmann links the transgressive demand for pain with an effort to reintegrate psychophysical

¹⁴ which is not to deny that, as Stanislavsky and Uta Hagen have demonstrated, one could spend years perfecting a realistic role as well.

experience and recharge the body as sign: “The post-dramatic theatre again and again goes beyond the pain threshold, in order to revoke the splitting off of the body from the voice, and return to the realm of the psyche - of voice and speech - the physicality of pain and pleasure” (163). The reclaimed body in its intense actuality, continues Lehmann, renders all meaning mysterious: “In that its presence and aura become determining factors, the body becomes ambiguous in its signification, even an insoluble riddle.” For Lehmann, it is the performing body itself, in its charismatic, “irrational fascination,” that continually revolts against all efforts of the traditional drama (patsy, presumably, of a logocentric culture) “to imprison the expressive potential of the body in logic, grammar and rhetoric” (162). While again this rather overstates the case against the word, it does support the argument that the utmost investment of the performer’s total organism is an essential component of contemporary theatricality.

At the same time, Lehmann also points out that, at times, a *cold* performance can be equally disturbing, precisely because the spectator *expects* to receive evidence of *warm* human experience from the presence of the living body: “Thus it is provocative when this manifest humanity is confined to visual matrices and, for example, a battle scene in Wilson’s *the Civil Wars* [*sic*] presents a thoroughly choreographed massacre with terrifying frigidity (and beauty)” (*ibid.*) Post-dramatic performance may thus be characterized either by extreme *heat* (of physicality or “visual ‘overkill’”) or by extreme *cold* (of emotional detachment or minimalism), or even by a combination thereof, in a “*dialectic of plethora and absence*” (151). The latter brings to mind the potential effect of amalgamating the related but frequently divergent aesthetics of Barker and Gao.

ii. A Question of Interpretation

Gao, while demanding the same level of technical mastery as Suzuki, does not seem very interested in the emotional struggle of the performer. He appears to favour the kind of cold acting that Brecht observed in the Chinese opera:

It is quite clearly somebody else’s repetition of the incident: a representation, even though an artistic one. . . . The coldness comes from the actor’s holding himself remote from the character portrayed He is careful not to make its sensations into those of the spectator. (Brecht 456)

Here passion is portrayed symbolically and ritualistically. For Gao, this detachment should extend to the actor's relationship with the content of the play itself. In order to prevent the actor from intellectualizing his performance of *The Other Shore*, Gao claims that "it is best not to resort to literary analysis outside of theatrical performance or to uncover hidden meanings in the text in performing the play" ("Shore" 43-44). For *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, he asserts that "there is no need for the director to rationalize the characters or the stage setting," and the actors "only have to ease themselves into the situations and pay attention to establishing communication with their partner and the audience" ("Dialogue" 136). As I found during rehearsal, this expectation may be somewhat naïve; certainly it runs so completely counter to our actors' realist training that they resisted even trying out any action that was not either logically justifiable through the text or thoroughly explained to them. Predictably, the results were rather stiff; once the floodgates to analysis are opened on Gao's intricate dialogue, there is no end to the possible ruminations and debates, none of which necessarily benefit the performance itself.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that these issues call for preventing the actor from pursuing her own analysis, provided that she has both the intellectual rigour and the creative imagination to do so. In the case of *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, the actor who wants to get to the bottom of what the play is about must be prepared to comprehend with all his being, and not just his intellect, his (or her) character's existential fear of disintegration. Nothing else - substituting the loss of a kitten, or the nightmare of finding himself naked at school - will do. If he is capable of that kind of commitment, he can be allowed to approach his role from the inside out, because then he will also be aware of the absurdity of trying to impose a Stanislavskian method of analysis on the character. He will find that his performance will be about the character's failure to construct a coherent identity for himself, and that this failure is largely responsible for his desperate cannibalizing of his antagonist's (equally insubstantial) sense of self. But if the actor is incapable of thus pursuing the text - as it relates to his character - to its ontological core, he would be better off just to perform the action at hand without demanding justification. And that is probably what Gao is getting at in his advice to the actor.

There is thus good reason for channelling the analytical process through the director; if the actor has sufficient faith in the director's ability to carry the intellectual burden of the overall interpretation, she is more likely to allow herself to plunge into the darkness without fear of getting lost. This question of the trust-relationship between performer and director is illustrated by Marowitz as the actor's basic dilemma of allegiance:

Essentially the actor has the choice of two pacts with the director; the Napoleonic or the Faustian. Under the terms of the first, the director receives the diligent efforts of his rank-and-file and strategically utilizes them for maximal effect. Under the terms of the Faustian pact, he promises to provide visions, spectacles and magic so long as the actor will cede him his soul. Needless to say, most actors would rather be mustered into service and be told what to do rather than risk their lives for a dubious immortality. (69)

One wonders whether in our age of commerce there is not a third, more common director-actor relationship, that of mercantile rather than mystical - or mercenary - bartering, consisting of a usually mutually dissatisfactory exchange of give and take, from which neither party emerges feeling that they got what they bargained for. While the theatre of indeterminacy tends to require alchemists rather than foot-soldiers, I would agree with Gao and Tairov insofar as there is no point to an actor's inner journey if it is not ultimately mediated through performance and received as aesthetic sensation by the spectator. Also, I believe that, when Gao advises against trying to uncover hidden meanings in performance, he is not advocating shallowness but rather warning against the sort of blatant signalling of sub-text that is the hallmark of rationalized acting. The aim is to hold the audience's interest without preventing them from experiencing the play's essential, poetic ambiguity.

Gao's implicit solution to the paradox of performing indeterminacy is that the actor maintain a Zen-like presence of mind. Such an absorption in the present embodiment of action is somewhat easier to achieve with purely physical tasks (our Monk's effective stage presence was proof of that) than with dialogue. One of the reasons is that, while a dancer understands movement for its own sake, for an actor dialogue is always (also) about something else. But if he is thinking about his intentions, he loses presence, and if

he is completely absorbed in his inner life, he loses control. Neither state has anything to do with art. Ironically, this is the very dilemma that drives both Gao's and Barker's dramatic characters themselves. Barker's protagonist becomes "both the victim of his emotions and also a shrewd exploiter of them. Characters therefore swing between control and loss of control" (212). Similarly, according to Zhao,

Gao Xingjian hopes that the spectator becomes aware of how everyone is simultaneously controlled and overcomes control, is simultaneously free and not free, regardless of whether one is dealing with a performed or a performing subject, or with one's own observing subject.¹⁵ (qtd. in Gao, *Wanderung* 118)

It almost seems that each playwright has deliberately designed his text in such a fashion that the actor is forced to undergo the same existential struggle as the character, not as a result of any mimetic identification, but as part of the performance process itself. There thus appears to be a fundamental correspondence between the plights of actor and character that will affect the actor's behaviour on stage. The performer, moreover, is implicated in three parallel and interpenetrating struggles: his own as actor, that of the *dramatis persona*, and that of the spectator. Together, they participate in exploding structure into process (kinesis), thereby destabilizing identity and questioning the immutability of those foundational assumptions that elsewhere, outside the theatre, determine how we relate to ourselves and the world. In order to be able to fulfill his task, the actor in performance must embody both structure and possibility, must both be contained by and transcend his material, must comprehend how to be both the match and the flame.

iii. The Meaning of Liveness

Much has been made of the *liveness* of the theatre as the essential quality that sets it apart from other media, but the much-discussed audience-performer relationship is, nowadays, much more powerful in spectator sports than in the theatre. This is due to the fact that no one mistakes acting for an authentic contest or even a high-wire act.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ from Zhao, Henry Y (Zhao Yiheng). "Jianli Yi zhong xiandai chanju - Gao Xingjian jinqi ju dianlun." *Xianfeng* 7 (1999). Tianjin, VR China. 12-25.

¹⁶ Which leads me to wonder whether a prime example of the dual (freedom-in-structure) nature of *liveness* might not be embodied in the acting score of the WWE performer.

sublimation of the destructive potential of liveness - such as demonstrated by the notorious soccer riots in England - into an aesthetics of uncertainty would appear to be a congenial task for the theatre. However, the conventional theatrical production process is designed not to encourage but to eliminate the unforeseen; chance events, such as missed cues, lost lines, or technical difficulties may become a source of amusement, or at best of respect for the actor able to cover them up (and at worst the most entertaining moment of the show), but they are otherwise both undesirable and without intrinsic meaning. As Lehmann puts it,

An especially long pause can be a “hang-up” (realm of the Real) or intentional (realm of *mise-en-scène*). Only in the latter case does it belong systematically to the aesthetic entity of the theatre (the *mise-en-scène*); in the former it is merely the case of an accidental blunder during this particular performance, which belongs to it as little as a printing error belongs to a novel. (171)

Lehmann is working towards an *aesthetic of undecidability* [*Unentscheidbarkeit*], which would deliberately utilize the potential of live performance to trespass unexpectedly against its purveyed illusion of representational closure, until the spectator is no longer sure whether he is watching something planned, that is, performed, or something real, that is, not-acted. It must be noted that, in his quest for the essence of post-dramatic theatre, Lehmann tends to pursue reductive arguments that banish signification from the performative act altogether and conclude in desiccated conceptualizations of actuality. But on the way, he frequently crosses through the fertile grounds of ambiguity, oppositionality and multiplicity that belong to the theatre of indeterminacy. Here, he helpfully proposes that it is the implicit *uncertainty of an action's degree of fictitiousness* that instigates “the theatrical effect and its influence on the consciousness” (173) of the spectator. I find this to be one viable definition of theatrical liveness.

Barker reclaims liveness, as the *unforeseeable*, for the foundation not just of the theatre's performance methodology but also of its engine for the generation of meaning: “The essential creative element in theatre above all other art forms is its permanent *unreliability*, its incorrigible *instability*. This instability is exuded by the actor but it must originate in a text which is *unknowable*” (144, cf. 4.II.152-54). The open text is the

crucial element that the realist dogma tries to suppress. Starting from, maintaining, and, most importantly, *embodying* an awareness that there is neither resolution nor catharsis at the end of the road, that his own efforts are entirely tentative and his choices purely subjective, the actor in the theatre of indeterminacy is able to impart a profoundly transgressive experience:

An audience will sense the total lack of objectivity, the startling absence of judgement, implicit in what it witnesses and hears. Far from feeling itself the subject of an episode of enlightenment, safe in the hands of a self-proclaimed moralist (an author) it will sense the terrible insecurity of being invited by a highly suspicious individual known as an actor, to become party to a secret, to share a transgression, in a darkened room. (Barker 167)

This is the central revolt against the realist theatre: The actor's sacrifice (Grotowski), his spiritual nakedness (Schechner), his fight for survival (Suzuki), and his act of becoming (Benedetti) all depend on his willingness to embody an action with utter conviction (Gao)¹⁷ that he simultaneously knows to be unjustifiable and thus absurd.

The spectator follows the actor vicariously into a speculative existence that he would not dare entertain in real life but, unlike the safe, empathetic escapism of popular entertainment, he is at the same time cognizant of "the terrible insecurity" of this pact. In order for this to happen, the performance must be dangerous in some way, and its fundamental significance must be revealed to lie neither in the subject nor in its interpretation, but in itself as an act of performance. It is in this sense that we may understand Schechner's assertion that the goal of an actor's training and rehearsal is to "lay his mask aside and show himself as he is in the extreme situation of the action he is playing" (6). Like Tairov, Schechner realizes that such a mandate cannot be fulfilled by either the realist or the formalist mode alone; therefore, "environmental theatre performing is both naturalistic (= 'show himself as he is') and stylized (= 'in the extreme situation of the action')" (*ibid.*). While it is still largely unclear, and will remain so until we explore first-hand and more profoundly than we were equipped to do in this

¹⁷ "The reality on the stage is based on a kind of conviction. As long as the actor possesses this type of conviction and demonstrates sufficient skillfulness, the audience will accept it as a matter of course." *Wanderung* 64.

production, how exactly to prepare for a performance of this kind, the basic psychological challenge to the actor is obvious: like any authentic explorer, he must embrace his fear of uncertainty as a creative principle.

Fear and the Unknown

Of his audience, Barker demands: “The panic which can seize an audience, oppressed by years of trained obeisance, at ‘losing the thread’ . . . must be replaced by a sense of security in not knowing, and welcoming the same risks the author . . . and actors took” (53). The performer’s willingness to take risks, his own “sense of security in not knowing,” is not the same as his conquering of stage fright, though that may be part of it. Stage fright is only a symptom of a deeper anxiety, rooted in the human need to be accepted and admired - and possibly related as well to psychophysical issues¹⁸ - which in the actor assumes pathological proportions. Because the theatre of indeterminacy is not concerned with the representation of sympathetic characters, its actors need to eschew the temptation to appeal to the audience’s empathy: “The only thing more repugnant than playing for laughs,” Marowitz opines, “is playing for love” (153). Such dependency undermines the creative process because it is result- and reward-oriented: “The energy that feeds the actor’s ego, that works for triumph and canonization instead of the steady flow of purposeful activity, is a liability and not an asset. It is the desire to be ‘loved for his art’ rather than allowing that art to realize its fullest potential” (Marowitz 135). Though in fact engaged in a far more meaningful and thus intimate relationship with the spectator, the performer of indeterminacy is utterly alone as far as emotional solidarity and the security of approbation are concerned. Breaking the cycle of dependency also necessitates a shift in the actor-director relationship:

The strong actor uses the director as a sounding-board to confirm his own instincts. He doesn’t seek reassurance. He reassures himself. The weak actor, unable to achieve a perspective on himself other than what is conveyed by others, can view himself only in the reflection thrown back by his director. It is dependency disguised as collaboration. (137)

Too, according to Barker, a text’s demand for an open performance alters the director’s

¹⁸ Cf. 4.I.iii.149-150.

responsibility: “He cannot be the fountain of ‘meaning’, his autonomy is distinctly limited, and authority is widely distributed. His crucial function is to orchestrate. It is an aesthetic judgement that is called for here, a finesse of sensibility to the overall experience” (211). Robert Lepage concurs that an exploratory rather than deterministic theatre thrives only in a (genuinely) collaborative setting:

Directing isn’t the sole property of the director. With our approach, it comes out of a collective effort. When we rehearse with actors, we discover and uncover the play. When I direct, my approach is closer to that of a student than that of a teacher. I think this is what makes the play continue to evolve right up until opening night and even beyond it. We ask the play to teach us, to show us what it holds. (qtd. in Charest 163-64)

This dialogic process compels the director “to question actors rather than answer their questions” (137-38). The first step towards allowing indeterminacy into the creative process is to invert the notion of intentionality, that is, the relationship between action and meaning: “Picasso said that an artist’s task is to discover things and then to find out what they are. . . . There can be a huge gap between intention and result. . . . We have to learn to accept that meaning comes to us after the fact” (*ibid.* 28).

Certainly the traditional theatre may allow exploratory and improvisational techniques, if it has the luxury of rehearsal time to do so. But it always insists on locking down all meanings and eliminating all ambiguities long before the curtain rises. The deeper issue in this clinging to certainty, as we have suggested throughout, is not merely an aversion to the fear of embarrassment, of failing the expectations of the audience, but a profound terror of a dimly intuited *groundlessness per se*. The final step we must thus take in this analysis is to relate the issues and challenges raised by the theatre of indeterminacy to the cognitive reality of the individual, in such a way as to suggest an integration of performed with lived experience that allows the *actor* to be confidently and meaningfully *actualized* in a state of uncertainty.

III. A Manifest Indeterminacy

Hopefully by this point, the dynamics of indeterminacy have become somewhat more familiar and tangible. Like painting in many colours, the steps from brilliance to mud are few. Nevertheless, the use of devices such as multiplicity, ambiguity, displacement and oppositionality in a theatrical context should make a little bit more sense now. In the final pages of a piece of critical writing, one is expected to summarize one's salient points and assemble them into a coherent explanatory structure - even when, like indeterminacy, they categorically defy categorization. Before offering such a theoretical framework, I would like to attempt a summary sketch of the *theatre of indeterminacy* in its own terms, that is, as an artistic endeavour based on the emergence of a *creative attitude*. I therefore propose to employ that favourite format for summarizing an artistic movement or credo, the *manifesto*. It is understood that, since on the one hand the demise of the manifesto, together with that of the avant-garde, has long been declared *de facto* by postmodernism, and on the other the theatre of indeterminacy stridently opposes all *isms*, I do so with equal parts irony and sincerity.¹⁹

i. Precursors (1908 - 1966)

The theatre of indeterminacy has not arisen arbitrarily during the past quarter century; it is a continuation of the critical and creative impulses behind some of the major modern art movements. One of the earliest twentieth-century references to oppositionality and contradiction comes from a theatrical manifesto. Fyodor Sologub proclaimed in 1908:

Tragedy tears away the world's enchanting mask, and where it seemed to us there was harmony, predetermined or created, it opens up before us the world's eternal contradiction, the eternal identification of good and evil and other polar opposites. It affirms every contradiction and to everyone of life's pretensions, correct or not, it equally and ironically says *Yes!*²⁰ (in Caws²¹ 80)

Sologub's *Theatre of One Will* predates Barker's *Theatre of Catastrophe* by eighty years.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the interrelationship between the manifesto and the experimental theatre, see Martin Puchner. "Manifesto=Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 54 (2002): 449-465.

²⁰ Sologub, Fyodor. "The Theatre of One Will." 1908.

²¹ unless otherwise indicated, all page references in this section are to Caws.

Indeterminacy and musical abstraction inform the art of the Symbolist Odilon Redon, whose paintings, he explains in 1922, consist of “forms that are transposed and transformed without any relation to the contingencies at hand, but which nevertheless possess a logic all their own,” and whose drawings “do not offer explanations. . . . They place us, just as music does, in the ambiguous world of the indeterminate”²² (52). Blaise Cendrars, referring to the art of Delauney, speaks in 1919 of “simultaneous contrast” and materiality of thought as means for depicting the multiplicity of modern experience:

Contrast is not black against white, an opposition, a dissimilarity. Contrast is a similarity. . . . Contrast is depth. Form. Today’s art is the art of depth. . . . The “simultaneous” is a technique. The technique shapes primary matter, universal matter, the world. Poetry is mind into matter.²³ (155-56)

The Futurists’ enthusiasm for war notwithstanding, their critique of the traditional theatre was apt. Their manifesto for a Synthetic Theatre (1915, not to be confused with either Tairov’s or Meyerhold’s) declares, among other things:

It’s stupid to want to explain with logical minuteness everything taking place on the stage, when even in life one never grasps an event entirely, in all its causes and consequences, because reality throbs around us, bombards us *with squalls of fragments of interconnected events, mortised and tenoned together, confused, mixed up, chaotic.*²⁴ (193)

In its own way, the Futurist theatre also attempted to achieve simultaneity and “interpenetration” of time and action, as well as an autonomous, alogical theatricality that “will resemble nothing but itself” (194-95).

Surrealism, in a 1925 declaration signed, among others, by Artaud, intends “to show the fragility of thought, and on what shifting foundations, what caverns we have built our trembling houses”²⁵ (450). In the 1930s, Dimensionism embraces the paradoxes of modern physics and finds itself “obliged to admit - contrary to the classical thesis - that Space and Time are no longer different categories but according to the non-Euclidean conception are coherent dimensions, putting an end to all the old limits and boundaries of

²² Redon, Odilon. “Suggestive Art.” 1922.

²³ Cendrars, Blaise. “Simultaneous Contrast.” 1919.

²⁴ Marinetti, Settimelli, and Corra. “The Futurist Synthetic Theatre.” 1915.

²⁵ “Declaration of January 27, 1925.”

the arts”²⁶ (537). In the 1960s Spatialism sublimates erotic desire into an *aesthetics of kinesis*, wherein “[l]inguistic particles are placed in tension” and eroticism is identified with “language itself, coextensive with the universe”²⁷ (535-36). It envisions the technologically liberated voice as “kinetic spectacle,” becoming “finally Itself: a vocal phonetic phenomenon”²⁸ (539-40) that issues forth “linguistic objects” without content²⁹ (541-42). Projectivism (1950) similarly calls for the physical, muscular embodiment of poetry as “kinetics”³⁰ (548ff).

The problem with most manifestos is that they aspire to a transcendent clarity, unity and universality; they bear the trappings of vision, of revelation and ecstasy. They do not free us from absolutism, but deftly substitute one monism for another. The most interesting proclamations are those whose writers recognize this inherent philosophical rigidity and gleefully undermine it in a sort of self-destructing anti-manifesto. Thus, in his Dada Manifesto of 1918, Tzara employs contradiction as a creative and liberating, not merely coercive or destructive force:

Contradiction and unity of polarities in one single stream can be truth. . . . To proclaim a manifesto you have to want I am writing a manifesto and I don't want anything I am writing this manifesto to show that you can do contrary actions together, in one single fresh breath; I am against action; for continual contradiction, for affirmation also, I am neither for nor against and I don't explain because I hate common sense. (300-301)

He further observes, anticipating Gao: “I am against systems, the most acceptable system is the one of not having any system, on principle”³¹ (299). In “Manifesto=Theatre” Martin Puchner examines the interrelationship between the history of the artistic manifesto and experimental theatre, locating within the manifesto a tension between theatricality and performativity. He recognizes also “that self-reflexivity and intermixture are not a postmodern phenomena [*sic*] but that they define the manifesto throughout its history” (Puchner 461), thereby indicating that the manifesto represents a successful non-

²⁶ Picabia, Francis *et. al.* “Dimensionist Manifesto.” 1936.

²⁷ Pierre and Ilse Garnier. “Spatial Eroticism.” 1966.

²⁸ de Vree, Paul. “Declaration.” 1966.

²⁹ Niikuni and Garnier. “Position 3 of Spatialism: For a Supranational Poetry.” 1966.

³⁰ Olson, Charles. “Projective Verse.” 1950.

³¹ Tzara, Tristan. “Dada Manifesto.” 1918.

postmodern rupture within modernism. I would go further and suggest that the manifesto, in the paradoxical form pioneered by Tzara, which also performs a subversion of the historical political and military deployment of the Manifest (*cf.* Puchner 456), constitutes a rupturing of rationalist, modernist and postmodern categories altogether, and therefore eminently suits our purposes of presenting a theatre that collapses and transcends dialectical ontologies. In this spirit of serious playfulness I thus hereby present, in continuation of my initial declarations on indeterminacy in chapter 3 (122), the following fragment towards a theatrical manifesto:

ii. Manifesto for an Indeterminate Theatre (2005)

“. . . What is commonly called truth is only a representation, and even as such is pluralistic. Dynamic theatre does not engage in conflict-action to represent human struggle; instead, it synthesizes out of *contradiction, multiplicity and simultaneity*, a resonant *situation in a process of kinesis and transformation*. Thus arises the **Theatre of Indeterminacy**. Opposing tendencies, like vanishing points in perspective, form a triangle with the eye that points like an arrow back at the viewer. This is the tripartite dynamic of an **Aesthetics of Perception**. The Theatre of Indeterminacy is anti-Aristotelian, anti-objectivist, but not anti-drama. It collapses structure and freedom, but not into anarchy, since it effects neither closure nor disintegration. It is the reconciliation of text and action in the poetics of embodiment. *Body is sign, language is space, meaning is motion*.

Furthermore, the **Theatre of Indeterminacy** -

- ... is oppositional but not dualistic, not antagonistic but mercurial.
- ... is alchemical and intermedial.
- ... recognizes as its muse *Kaos* - the principle of self-creation, of quantum dynamics and emergent properties.
- ... suspends differences: here and there, inside and outside, subject and object.
- ... deplores the indifference and ideological apathy of psychological realism.
- ... welcomes incongruity and contradiction, but may screen paradoxes on entry.

... is not about anything.

... recognizes three stages of play analysis: *ur-text-ure*.

... considers the performer much more than “an actor .” Or an act. *En-act-or*.

... is alive but not life-like, emotional but not empathetic, irrational but not arbitrary.

... champions spiritual atheism, ethical unaccountability and aesthetic perversion.

... risks everything to say nothing.

... is unknowable yet somehow familiar, ineffably tangible, like a forgotten scent.

... can’t read signs, never could tell a post- from a pole or a ‘fier from a ‘fied.

... severely confounds reality, illusion, actuality and representation.

... undermines foundations; steals identities; travels by night in submerged fluidities.

... becomes more elusive, the more it is desired. Spiritual hero to some, aesthetic terrorist to others.

... is self-conscious but by no means shy, often brash but never willful, and frequently causes tense silences at public gatherings.

... declares: *‘Indeterminacy is greater than the difference of its parts.’*”



11. *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, Act 2:

Ghosts of past and present confront each other in an indeterminate realm of inbetweenness.