# Robert Wilson and an aesthetic of human behaviour in the performing body

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# Abstract

This practice-based research investigates movement and gesture in relation to the theatre work of Robert Wilson. A group of performers was established to explore Wilson's construction of a code of movement during a series of over fifty workshops and films including: a feature film *Oedipus*; a live performance *Two Sides to an Envelope*; and a theatre production *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*.

The creation of an embodied experience for the spectator, perceived through the senses, is central to Wilson's theatre. Integral to this are the relationships between drama and image, and time and space. Wilson's images, in which the body is presented in attitudes of stillness and repetition, are created through these transitional structures. Taking these structures as a starting point for my own performative work, the research led to an abstracted form of natural behaviour, where the movements and arrangements of bodies defined specific movement forms. Subsequently, the relationship between movement and images in Wilson's theatre was reconsidered through Deleuze's analysis of the cinematic image. Deleuze identifies subjectivity with the 'semi-subjective image', in which traces of the camera's movements are imprinted in the film. In films made to register these movements, images of moving bodies evincing a sense of time passing were also created. This led to my discovery of film as a direct embodiment of performance, rather than as a form of documentation. Critical to these films, the theatre production, performances, and workshops was the relationship between images and continuous motion predicated upon Wilson's idea of space, the horizontal: and time, the vertical. This idea enabled me to consider Wilson's theatre and video works in relation to Bergson's philosophy concerning duration. The research discovered new ways of interpreting Wilson's aesthetic through Bergson's idea that motion is an indivisible process which can also be perceived in relation to the position of bodies in space. Through this understanding, an original performance language was created based on the relationship between stasis and motion, and the interplay between the immersive, semiotic and instrumental modes of gestural communication.

## Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award.

The thesis has not been presented to any other institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and no way represent those of the University.

Signed......................................................................Date....................................

# Acknowledgements

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# Robert Wilson and an aesthetic of human behaviour in the performing body

## Introduction

Much of the critical writing of the last forty five-years under the collective term Performance Studies has focused on a new direction in which theatre as an art form is no longer self-contained. One of the major influences in the shaping of new forms of performance in theatre, Robert Wilson, presents work that is characterized by ideas and images from other media such as film, television, architecture, dance, visual art, and performance art, to create a new kind of art; a hybrid that takes place in the theatre but is not rooted in normative theatrical practice and cannot easily be situated within that tradition. Accordingly, such a complex genesis has often been understood through concepts which have already been applied to other art forms, resulting in a diverse range of critical evaluations of Wilson's work.

This dissertation describes research in performance and film that examined, through a series of workshops, the theatre work of Wilson. His early work, between 1969 and 1974, referred to as 'The Theatre of Visions' by Stefan Brecht, established a new visual approach to the stage. These productions were often long in duration, performed by large casts of untrained actors and contained little or no dialogue. Without words, movement and gesture established a practice of visual communication between his actors and the

audience. As one of the actors, Sheryl Sutton, recounted, 'We started with movement to learn to listen with the body. It was like a laboratory. We were doing research on perception and communication' (Holmberg 1996: 4).

## A historical contextualization of Wilson

### European modernist influences, John Cage and the New York art scene

In the late 1960s, the seeds for a new form of visual art based on the human body in performance were sown at a meeting-place between art and theatre, and between action and the body. To understand the context for Wilson's ideas, and discover the key influences upon their genesis, it is necessary to look at a wide range of artistic practices that were already in play by 1967 when Wilson began to make performances in his New York loft.

New York in the 1950s and 60s was a formative centre for many artists informed by the diffusion of European modernism. Bauhaus émigrés and colleagues from Germany such as Walter Gropius and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy brought with them modernist ideas from which new forms of experimentation were conceived across the arts. Moholy-Nagy's wife Sybil Moholy-Nagy taught at New York's Pratt Institute. Her lectures, which suggested different ways of connecting seemingly unrelated images, were attended by Wilson and greatly influenced him (Shevtsova 2007: 18). The Black Mountain College, led by the Bauhaus teacher Josef Albers, was another important educational centre where teachers associated with the diffusion of European modernism helped to activate new directions for artists who attended it. John Cage, who was becoming a major figure in the New York arts scene, staged his first performance - *Theatre Piece 1* (1952) - at the college. It featured chance

procedures of composition, a rejection of sequential time, and Merce Cunningham's multi-focal choreography. By focusing on changing perceptions within its durational frame, Cage's approach deliberately undermined the conventional autonomy of a work of art.

Influenced by neo-dadaist ideas taken from Marcel Duchamp, Cage provided links between new experiments in performance, dance, and painting. The painters Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns were part of this exchange of ideas: Rauschenberg provided paintings for Cage's performance at the Black Mountain College and Johns created painted backdrops for Cunningham's dance performances. The latter found new directions inspired by Cage's ideas of 'indeterminacy, rules specifying situations, improvisations, [and] spontaneous determination' (Kaye 1994: 91). During this time, Cage's teachings and practice, expressed as a development of modernist ideas, were influential on all areas of art. Within a mélange of developments and parallel chronologies in theatre, dance, visual art, and performance, Cage's ideas were among the most deeply influential. This hotbed of multifarious artistic production provided the ground for Wilson's emergence onto the scene.

**The legacy of European theatre**

Cage's interest in Antonin Artaud's writings on theatre also forged a connection between the European theatre tradition of the 1920s and 30s and avant-garde experimentation which eventually led to the birth of performance art in New York during the 1950s and 60s.

A major transition in theatre practice began in Germany in the 1920s and 30s with Berthold Brecht's idea of an epic theatre in which the verbal and kinetic

elements of theatre were equally articulated. His counteraction of a theatre audience's identification with a shared sense of time was fundamental to this development. Brecht's ideas were followed by Artaud's equally influential discourse (*The Theatre and its Double* in 1938) on ritual and the disruption of unity which starts to anticipate Wilson's approach. The Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold's experiments with the mechanics of the body; his emphasis on precise gestures, the artificiality of theatre, and the temporality of its performative frame was another precursor to this approach.

Following on from Artaud's emphasis on the gestural, physical, and visceral dimension of theatre, dramatists associated with The Theatre of the Absurd such as Eugène Ionesco and Arthur Adamov reconfigured the role of language in literary theatre through the influence of Existentialist philosophy. Despite their renunciation of a coherent meaning in relation to dramatic action, a sense of the unity of drama remained.

This unity began to be disrupted in New York in the late 1950s when these radical developments in theatre and the new vanguard of performance art led to Richard Schechner's idea of an environmental theatre, and The Living Theatre's abandonment of the proscenium arch in favour of spaces in which performers could directly engage with spectators. Although Wilson's contemporary Richard Foreman was averse to emotional displays of acting characterized by the methods of The Living Theatre and the influential Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski, he is, as Lehmann (2006: 31) argues, the natural heir to Artaud's ideas and therefore to the European theatre tradition. His systematic approach to the deconstruction of theatre's components could also be said to be a continuation of this history. However, his repeated procedures of fragmentation, as a way of writing a production's text and

creating his actors' physical actions, might also be regarded as a radical departure from the European tradition.

Within this evolution of the theatrical paradigm and its development in the USA, the image was also significant. In a departure from mimesis that began with European Expressionism and broke through 'rational and conscious mental processes', a new approach to images culminated in the dream logic of Surrealism and the unconscious mind' (Lehmann 2006: 67). At the confluence of new approaches to the image, the European theatre tradition, and the advent of performance art, a new form of visual dramaturgy emerged that also marked a decline in literary drama in which a received text is interpreted through action and dialogue. The evolution of modern dance and its relationship to other performative practices was also central to this development.


**Developments in dance in New York**

Cage and his partner Cunningham's influence upon the Judson Dance Theatre led to a wave of avant-garde experimentation in dance characterized by 'the attitude that anything might be called a dance, and looked at as a dance' (Kaye 1994: 75).

Cunningham's works were 'abstract constructions of time and space' (Holmberg 1996: 133), rather than being foregrounded by narrative, and were paralleled by George Balanchine's creation of a purely sensory experience for the dancer and audience. The modernist dance project led by associates of the Judson Dance Theatre focused on the assimilation of dance forms through 'an eclecticism and sense of liberation from prevailing assumptions' which

included baroque, analytical, and multi-media styles of dance and performance (Kaye 1994: 75). Beginning with a range of departures derived from 'various sources of contemporary action: dance, music, painting, sculpture, Happenings, literature' (ibid), artists involved with Judson Dance Theatre such as Robert Morris took the opportunity to explore dance and the ground between performance and sculpture. Other choreographers associated with Judson concentrated on 'a reduction of dance to movement without regard to representation of expression' (Kaye 1994: 76). Thereafter, choreographer Yvonne Rainer's mixture of ordinary, grotesque and more classical forms of movement opened up new possibilities for the performing body by questioning the dominant forms of modernist dance. The emergence of Lucinda Childs, also associated with Judson, coincided with the idea that dance's ephemerality brings with it the notion of contingency, and therefore a performative frame which acknowledges the uniqueness of individual spectators' perceptions.

During this period (1962-1973) in which the distinctions between performance art and dance were often blurred, the emergence of Childs, who appeared in Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) and became one of his major collaborators, emphasizes the link between the dance experiments associated with late modernism and Wilson's subsequent theatre practice. Childs' exploration of the relationship between dance and text anticipates her subsequent collaboration with Wilson which also depended upon a movement response to text. Some of her solo work such as *Particular Reel* (1973) presages the structure and different presentations of the same text used by Wilson in their collaborative work. This strategy can be traced back to the influence of John Cage's thinking, not only through the implication of instability regarding a text, but through his idea that all interpretation is unique and based on individual experience. Through Cage's link to the New York Art scene, and

painters such as Rauschenberg and Johns, the role of the plastic arts in the development of the performative avant-garde was also decisive.

**Bauhaus influences on post-war painting and sculpture**

Robert Wilson acknowledges a direct link to the work of the early modernist painter Paul Cezanne, citing the painter's structural approach to composition and perspective as a model for his staging (Holmberg 1996: 79-80).

Modernist concerns derived from the Bauhaus were also central to teachings at the Black Mountain College. Vsevolod Meyerhold's constructivist phase of staging and Oscar Schlemmer's experiments involving an architectural approach to the body in motion provided two parallel examples of ideas from the Bauhaus of the 1930s.

The Constructivist model influenced the look, style, and geometric qualities of the minimalist object exemplified in the work of Robert Morris and Donald Judd. Inherent to the advent of minimalism in the 1960s was the process of perceiving or experiencing an object in time and space, and therefore the relationship between the spectator and the work of art. This relationship was central to the paintings and constructions of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, who often made explicit the presence of the viewer. Johns' paintings of The American flag evinced a relationship between the art object, its surface image, and its representation of an external object. His work pointed to an ironic play with the terms and ideas of artistic communication founded on the relationship between images and the viewer's attempt to interpret them. Similarly, Rauschenberg's staging of painting in *Tango* (1955), and other works of the period, invited a physical relationship with the image.

**Performance art, happenings and the impact of technology**

Cage's work and ideas were formative on the avant-garde in the sixties and seventies, resulting in links between the staging of painting and other performative approaches such as Allan Kaprow's inception of the happening. Kaprow applied this term to events in which artists created a performative work by activating the audience's participation in their processes; making the idea of the happening very different from other approaches to performance. His essay, *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings* (New York, 1966), described a connection between Rauschenberg's combinations of painting and sculpture, and the idea that a work of art is contingent upon its situation and the viewer's presence. The ephemerality of art within an impermanent environment, and the possibility of its mutability at the hands of the viewer, eventually led to his idea of a performative event, or happening. 'The theatricality which defines the work of Allan Kaprow […] emerges from a radical reconceiving of the object through an attention to the contingencies the specifically modernist work […] would transcend or repress' (Kaye: 1994: 35). With this development the minimalist conception of the autonomy of a work of art was thrown into question. This was compounded by a further impact; the advent of multi-media technology.

Theatricality had been equated with the minimalist aesthetic and the modernist project. Despite this, Kaprow, and following him, multi-media performance artists such as Joan Jonas and Laurie Anderson reacted to minimalism with work which was characterized by an eclectic, playful, and often technologically driven approach to art production and practice. These developments can be seen to have led to a disruption in the modernist

conception of art, an interrogation of its ideals, and thus to have contributed to the advent of postmodernism.

## Postmodern influences

Cage's ideas were fundamental to the development of performance and other art practices in post-war New York. Wilson's first response to these influences was to reduce the material aspect of performance to its barest essentials of walking and sitting on a chair. His initial offerings such as *Baby* (1967) and *ByrdwoMAN* (1969) took place in makeshift surroundings and could be linked to the influence and aesthetic of a happening.

Wilson's developing aesthetic was derived from Cage's thinking and is also symptomatic of what Johannes Birringer (1991) refers to as 'the exhaustion of the "order" and of the avant-garde in the 1980s' (Birringer1991: xi). Wilson's work is part of a re-definition of theatre in relation to theories of postmodernism which dominate critical writings on other art forms.

Postmodernist art is characterized by new strategies, transgressions, and contingencies, and a disruption of a move towards containment and stability. In rejecting dominant and singular meanings, artists use a collage of materials and ideas; appropriation, parody and pastiche often replacing a single style. These methods are immediately relevant to the practice of theatre because of the intrinsically multi-sensory nature of theatre.

When the differentiation between these components was exploited by Wilson, different ways of perceiving and engaging with a theatrical presentation were invited from the audience. The disappearance of a consensual form of communication and connection to a historical tradition of theatre led to a

fragmentary approach in which the language of form itself sometimes disappeared: 'ideas lack their referents; the past and its meanings are lost' (Arens 1991: 18).

The significance of Wilson's work to a history of theatre is in its questioning of assumptions concerning theatrical space, notions of performance and audience reception. His influence on contemporary performance stems from the postmodernist idea of isolating meaningful discourses instead of integrating them into a synthesizing whole.

## Wilson's influence and legacy

Wilson has been credited by many writers and commentators for influencing a diverse group of performance and theatre practitioners including Richard Foreman, The Wooster Group, Trisha Brown, Laurie Anderson, Complicité, Station House Opera and The Theatre of Mistakes. While he influenced the downtown New York scene, he has also been instrumental in the development of performance companies in Europe where the majority of his productions have been staged. He also created The Watermill Centre at Long Island which has become his teaching facility and a place where his influence can inform other aspiring artists.

As well as Wilson's innovative approach to corporeal movement and its importance in the mise-en-scène, his legacy is founded on the possibility of multiple readings, shifting contexts, the separation of theatrical components, the augmentation of disparate sources, and the establishment of 'Visual Theatre'. Much of the critical writing of the last forty five-years has focused on these ideas with Wilson as the most influential and central exponent of them:

'the subterraneous as well as the obvious influence of his aesthetic has filtered through everywhere, and one can say that theatre at the turn of the century owes him more than any other individual theatre practitioner' (Lehmann 2006: 78).

Wilson was part of a collaborative, mutually influential and multimedia experimentalism, producing new theatrical forms along with such artists as Laurie Anderson, who uses technology to create 'another surface in a visual-aural design' (Birringer 1991: 30). Even though Wilson's work transcends the idea that its emergence is merely a reflection of technological innovations in the manipulation of images, digital media enters and aesthetically informs his productions.

His legacy to contemporary performance is complicated by the reaction of some critics to the idea that a postmodernist play of images is directed towards a commentary on the body (Birringer 1991: 224). Even where he has not been influential, his work is often central to an on-going debate about postmodernism in theatre (Arens: 1991), and 'the primacy of the image' (Birringer 1991: 224). For example, the German choreographer Pina Bausch's work is dominated by cultural and political aspects of the body. Although her visual staging and erosion of the categorical distinctions between performance and dance can be compared to Wilson, she has never acknowledged his influence. According to Birringer (1991: 132-142), a former member of her company, Bausch's dance works are not about a play of images, but carry a depth of meaning which substantially differentiates them from Wilson's productions.

Wilson, alongside other unique figures such as Tadeusz Kantor, is considered an auteur; despite that, his influence on the UK's devising (collaboration-

based) performance scene is evident. The Theatre of Mistakes founded by Anthony Howell in 1974 cites the influence of both Wilson's *Deafman Glance* (1971) and Kantor on their task orientated performance actions: 'The idea of these slow collages was very important. That was all from the influence of Robert Wilson' (Kaye 1996: 130). Hesitate and Demonstrate 'like Robert Wilson … are very much concerned with the visual potency of their tableaux' (Heddon and Milling 2006: 81-82). Station House Opera's Julian Maynard Smith confesses to being deeply influenced by Wilson without ever having seen his work (Kaye 1996: 194). UK performer and director Tim Etchells (1999) acknowledges his debt to Wilson and other contemporary influences: 'Where the Wooster Group or even Robert Wilson […] use collage they do so with a keen sense of the haunted autonomy of the fragment – of the links and separations between discrete objects in a spatio-temporal frame' (Etchells 1999: 208).

The visual style of Etchells's company, Forced Entertainment, and others including Impact Theatre was established through their European touring experiences and contact with other experimental practitioners such as Wilson, Bausch, and Anderson. Lin Hixon of Chicago's Goat Island recognized that her processes owed something to Wilson and that she had taken certain gestures from Bausch (Heddon and Milling 2006: 218-219). Similarly, Spalding Gray, who had participated in Wilson's Byrd Hoffman Group and was part of the downtown scene, capitalized on this experience when he joined The Wooster Group. The group's director Elizabeth LeCompte recognized Wilson's influence and that his 'work utilized a musical rather than a logical form, and a geometrical structure' (Heddon and Milling 2006: 195).

**Critical writing on Wilson**

Much has been written about Wilson because of his significance as a practitioner and his influence on other artists. Wilson's preference has been to let his work speak for itself, rather than writing about it. Critical writing has often focused on his early work, and especially *Deafman Glance* (1971); Maria Shevtsova called them 'silent operas' or 'dance plays' (Shevtsova 2007: 7). His formal approach, a sense of time, simultaneity, images, and the role of the moving body contribute to the fundamental discourses. After *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), which is considered by many commentators as a landmark in the development of his visual dramaturgy (Shevtsova 2007: 88-117, Wilson's use of pre-existing texts becomes a key reference.

Scholars of his work have focused on this 'theatre of images' and its eschewal of the traditional forms of dramatic realism (Marranca 1977: xii). Wilson's scenography has been traced back to Gertrude Stein's notion of the 'Landscape Play [1922-32]' (Lehmann 2006: 81). 'In both there is minimal progression, the continuous present, no identifiable identities, a peculiar rhythm that wins over all semantics and in which anything fixable passes into variations and shadings' (Lehmann 2005: 81). Wilson's first theatre production, *The King of Spain* (1969)*,* was minimal in construction and influenced by John Cage; Wilson 'shared Cage's interest in how the always-there was changed by changed perception; similarly, in how perception could embrace multiple foci and yet shift attention by choice' (Shevtsova 2007: 18). His next work, *The Life and Death of Sigmund Freud* (1969) presented 'a collage of different realities occurring simultaneous[ly] like being aware of several visual factors and how they combine into a picture before your eyes at any given moment' (Brecht 1994: 420).

Wilson's company learned to deploy a radically different body language derived by Wilson, which according to Bill Simmer (1976: 150-152), was initially in response to the deaf-mute boy Raymond Andrews and the young autistic poet Christopher Knowles. 'What he [Wilson] was interested in theatrically [...], was each person's unique way of moving and behaving' (Simmer 1976: 151). This process was connected to Wilson's idea of an 'interior screen' (Simmer 1976: 149), which, according to Wilson, we can be made aware of when dreaming but is actually in operation all the time, and the 'exterior screen [...which forms] the basis for most of our visual and audial impressions' (Simmer 1976: 149). As Wilson states, Andrews was not primarily concerned with words and communicated from an 'interior screen [...that was] much more highly developed than other people's' (Simmer 1976: 149). Wilson took this idea of the 'interior screen', as Arthur Holmberg (1996: 156) asserts, and invoked it as an experience for the audience through slow movement and durational works such as the seven day *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE* (1972).

Between 1969 and 1973, Wilson's mode of performance was described as falling between the difficulties of performing and bad acting (Brecht 1994: 118–119). The inclusion of various styles of acting was echoed by others: 'periodically, too, Wilson introduces actions and performers that seem out of place, presenting [...] entirely inexperienced performers who offer arbitrary and awkward presences which resist any easy incorporation in the developing actions and images' (Kaye 1994: 65). Other scholars have described Wilson's invocation of a new spatial and temporal logic particularly in its architectural reframing of the human body. Thus the physicality of the body, 'its intensity, gestic potential, auratic presence and internally, as well as externally,

transmitted tensions [are at] the medium point within a plethora of signs' (Lehmann 2006: 95).

'Gestic potential' has a specific intention in *Deafman Glance* (1971): 'the pace of Sutton's performance may be understood as an attempt to reveal ambiguities and raise questions that complicate a reading of her actions' (Kaye 1994: 64). The same image is associated with an allusion to cinematographic processes by Lehmann (2006): 'the body itself is inevitably exposed in all its concreteness. It is being zoomed in on as through the lens of an observer and is simultaneously cut-out of the time-space continuum as an art object' (Lehmann 2006: 164). Although a binding theme of loss of innocence In *Deafman Glance* (1971) is recognized by Michael Vanden Heuvel (1991: 163), the lack of meaningful words leaves the audience free to explore whatever visual or sonic information is apparent without the constraints of signification (ibid).

In *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1975), 'words are used merely for their sound and music value' (Marranca 1977: 41). This provides a template for later works in which texts, already fragmented, are further edited, and, where possible, displaced by human gesture and movement. In *Alcestis* (1986), Heiner Müller's contribution of a classical text marks a new direction for Wilson without compromising the 'presentational, or performative context' (Vanden Heuvel 1991: 186). In *Hamletmachine* (1987), Wilson reclaims the text without subjugating his imagistic style to it: 'The effect is not unlike the evisceration of texts and performance ontologies that we see in the Wooster Group's work' (Vanden Heuvel 1991: 188).

Despite a more conventional use of text in some later works, Wilson's stage space is described as a 'pre-linguistic world' (Marranca 1977: 30); its minimalist

appearance and use of found objects can be associated with the term 'assemblage art' (Marranca 1977: 41). Even though Wilson works towards the exclusion of imprecise movement, his productions resist objectification (Arens 1991: 29). Their undefined status as works of art was confirmed when Wilson was denied the 1986 Pulitzer Prize because there was no 'text […,] the work does not legally exist either: without a book, it could not be copyrighted as a play' (ibid). Without a literary text or the dramatic component of dialogue, as Wilson states, his 'temporal and spatial arrangement [provides a platform for his idea of] not really doing plays' (ibid). His cinematic, rather than theatrical, treatment of images is traced to the influence and appropriation of 'cinematographic experiments […,] structures of collage, simultaneity, bricolage, and tableau to present a Bergsonian, Eisensteinian sense of time as flow, duration and as relative spacetime "events"' (Vanden Heuvel 1991: 158).

# Personal research into Wilson's aesthetic of human behaviour for the performing body

## The purpose of the research

The decision to develop my own performative practice gave me a platform from which to examine Wilson's methods, and an opportunity to explore my own ideas concerning gesture. Commensurate with this undertaking was the desire to discover the influence on Wilson's staging of film, a medium which seems instrumental in his ability to create 'a world of narrative images which transcend materiality' (Marranca 1977: 41). In particular, my research was driven by an intention to add to the knowledge of Wilson's visual aesthetic by assessing the role of the gestural performing body within his theatrical presentation. In pursuing this, I wanted to achieve a greater understanding of how Wilson's use of static, slow-moving images and syncretic events as a way of re-thinking time affects the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived.

Seeing Wilson's re-envisioning of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen collection (Portrait, Still-Life, Landscape, 1993) was a pivotal moment in the development of my ideas, pointing to the potential of a more theatrical approach. I wanted to extend the possibilities of staging images and, by examining Wilson's theatre productions, explore the added dimension of mobile human forms and static postures within a pictorial field. I also became interested in the conceptual and aesthetic implications of Wilson's intention to re-think time in the theatre, and his cinematic treatment of the mise-en-scène. Prior to this research, my practice had centred upon a theatrical re-presentation of painting. During this time, whilst also working as a film

soundtrack composer, I began to practice several complementary body movement disciplines. Thus the research presented me with an opportunity to consider Wilson's theatre and ideas in the light of my own developing cross-disciplinary practice.

Since my work was going to be practise-based, an overview of Wilson's methods provided a useful starting point for the development of the research.

Wilson's output has spanned six decades and encompassed over one hundred productions, including operas and works derived from literary texts by writers as varied as Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett and Virginia Woolf. His original work has often involved collaborations with a variety of composers, writers, and dramaturges. Although after *Deafman Glance* (1971), he mainly worked with professional actors and, after the ground-breaking opera *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) with Phillip Glass, his work became more inclusive of literary texts and was often collaborative, his methods of production have remained essentially consistent.

**Wilson's methodology**

Wilson begins rehearsals by working out sequences of movement. Susan Letzler Cole's (1992) account of rehearsals for *The Golden Windows* (1985) describes how actors recreate gestures from a previous production. During this assimilation the gestures are continuously modified or personalised by the actor, bringing aspects of his/her behaviour to the actions. The specificity and origin of these precise figures is never explained by Cole, or by Wilson, but the former suggests that they emerge through a relationship between Wilson's kinetic sensibilities, the different modalities (visual or verbal) used to

communicate his material to his actors, their sensory reception of it, and the director's requirements regarding the spatio-temporal continuity of the scene.

If a text forms part of the source material, this may already be fragmented and used as voiceover during rehearsal and, along with music, be retained in the final production. Even if a text presupposes the content, Wilson begins with a visual source, a process of drawing which acts as a blueprint for the set and backdrop. During rehearsals, he looks for images and objects which can be introduced into this predominantly visual field. These found images sometimes appropriate films, or a photograph. Even at this early stage, a narrative context is sometimes implied. Following on from these fragmentary sources, historical figures are sometimes presented as part of a collage of images which he gradually constructs. Much of this material, or variants of it, figures in subsequent productions. Scenes are arranged as progressions which unfold to reveal a varying correspondence between human movement, sound and lighting. Within this continually changing presentation, images and sounds are superimposed and yet remain independent.

**The starting point for the research**

To initiate this practice-based research, workshops were devised for a group of able but untrained performers, and were intended to develop procedures for generating movement forms. This enabled me to examine the relationships between drama and image, and time and space, in Wilson's theatre. The qualities of the performance space and the use of sound were also explored, and along with the decision to document the process in film, contributed to the development of a methodology for the direction of the research.

The initial workshops were devised to test ideas relating to Wilson and took place within an area not designed for performance, and free of professional theatrical lighting and technical equipment or support. Film was introduced to document these events. As the research evolved, performances often developed from the workshops and took place live to camera. Subsequently, as the idea developed of film assuming a primary role, performances were created to make films as autonomous pieces of work. Many elements from the workshops and films provided material for a performance and a major theatre production, both of which contributed substantially to the research.

**The structure of the dissertation**

The opening three chapters of the dissertation focus on Wilson's methods as the primary subject of the research.

In chapter 1, the research focuses on the procedures through which Wilson turns natural movement and gesture into abstract movement forms. His method of internal counting begins a process of linking movement forms to a pre-determined structure. This leads to different ways of controlling an improvisatory approach to movement and gesture. Aspects of Wilson's work, such as ambiguity, characterization and the relationship between movement and the senses are tested. His methods of structuring movement forms through states of stillness and repetition lead to a series of workshops which explore his pictorial approach to the mise-en-scène.

In chapter 2, an exploration of Wilson's invitation to his actors to work with the 'interior screen' of the imagination begins a process of synthesis between an analytical and generative approach to research. In response to his concept of

the 'interior screen', workshops are scripted to determine the relationship between internal states, such as memory, and the production of spontaneous gestures. An analysis of the relationship between gestures, motion, and language continues to advance the research, specifically through a narrative context to motivate the group, and as a dossier of possible actions in a subsequent workshop. These different approaches test the function of Wilson's 'interior screen', advancing the generative aspects of the research by orchestrating the content and intentions of each workshop. The imposition of formal structures such as a tableau of bodies emerges as an important focus for the research.

In chapter 3, Wilson's use of slow movement and his transitional structures for performance provide the focus. The relationship between spontaneous gestures and the imposition of states of stillness, repetition and inconsistency is described. The introduction of sound presents a means of exploring Wilson's use of dislocation, which is also applied to the creation of movement forms. The quality of duration in Wilson's theatre is identified and explored through images of a slow moving body in a performance which focuses on the delay between performed gestures and their replication in another body.

In chapter 4, Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' is emulated through the manipulation in film of the captured images from my workshops (Brecht 1994: 136). This leads to an examination of the tension between dramatic actions, the designated space for performance, and the permeable exchange between theatrical and cinematic modes of presentation and spectating. The centralising power of the camera contributes to a sense of narrative and continuity even when a recognizably linear unfolding of dramatic events is absent. The sense of events being abridged is intensified by the

process of cutting, curtailing gestures which, as a result, repeatedly arrive at moments in time in which a fragmentary state never quite coincides with a meaningful statement. Gilles Deleuze's concept of the 'movement-image' underpins this research and provides a means of exploring traces of motion in the image (Deleuze 2005a: 23).

In chapter 5, the discovery of film as a direct embodiment of performance is described. The promise of the sensorial aspect of human presence in these films is discussed in relation to the absence of live bodies. The overt theatricality and residual sense of the theatrical sign in the feature-length film *Oedipus* is examined in relation to the reproducible appearance of objects and natural forms. Henri Bergson's theories become decisive in the analysis of Wilson's approach to images, which are explored through montage, the mobility of the camera, and dislocation between sound and the image. Bergson's concept of 'duration' advances the research by providing a theoretical insight into perception as an internal progression of states (Bergson 2000: 73-4). Deleuze's idea of the direct 'time-image', which he derives from Bergson, is explored in film. In this image, and unlike the indirect 'time-image', a sense of time is no longer dependent on movement (Deleuze 2005b: 37).

In the final two chapters, Bergson's theories continue to influence the research through two staged performances which explore the relationship between the image and motion.

Chapter 6 describes the experience of time in Wilson's theatre, particularly in reference to his use of space, slow movement and still images. Bergson's assertion that in dance, still images are implied by a moving body, influences another workshop exploring consciousness through a mobile performer's successive perceptions of their own movements. This analysis leads to an

autonomous performance in which time is considered both as a process and in relation to the positions occupied by a body in space.

In chapter 7, a staged theatre production tests out Wilson's methods in the context of a narrative primarily scripted by myself. This work provides a broader context for analysing Wilson's use of images and creating a synthesis between his methods and the vocabulary of movement forms which was discovered during the workshops. Wilson's method of using abstract movement forms, variable speeds, the 'interior screen', and arrangements of moving bodies informs the work. The production is also influenced by an approach to images discovered through the reconstruction of the workshops in film. The main body of research ends with this staged performance, resolving the investigation of Wilson's work with a new understanding of his images of the moving body, the influence of film on his staging, and a sense of time in his theatre.

# Methodology

The principal components for examining Robert Wilson's methods of creating movement were established through a series of workshops. His performance practice was explored with a group of untrained performers who had agreed to participate in the research. A series of exercises, identified by Maria Shevtsova as being essential to Wilson's working methods (Shevtsova 2007: 119-131), was an important source of ideas, along with writings on his work, documentary films, and his live theatre productions. Through an analysis of this material, a set of procedures was identified and then tested with the group. A photography studio containing mobile lights and screens, which was used throughout the research, facilitated the creation of minimal sets. Workshops were documented with a static film camera and assessed afterwards in a piece of writing.

My own methods of creating performance were generated in response to an analysis of this workshop material, to a further assimilation of Wilson's methods, and to ideas on movement and the body by writers such as Paul Carter and Annette Michelson. Wilson's written scores, which record the movement he has created for subsequent productions, suggested a means of translating this material into performance by using scripts of my own. This was a pivotal moment in the research, as the scripts provided a bridge from the exercises to the creation of structures with which Wilson's methods could be assessed in performance. The scripts were used to establish a situation, a set of attributes characterizing movement, and the structure of the overall performance. From this point on, the research characteristically followed two parallel but intertwined paths: first-hand research into Wilson's ideas and

methods; and research mediated through the creation of increasingly autonomous performances and films.

As well as the reconstruction of performance in film, performances were staged live to a moving camera. Through a mobile approach to filming, traces of the camera's movements were embedded in the captured images. Gilles Deleuze's analysis of montage and the 'movement-image' influenced the selection and editing of these images. In these films, internal processes such as memory and dreaming were externalised through an exploration of imitative behaviour. A sense of disruptive tension was achieved by creating dislocation between sound and the image. During the *Oedipus* film project, the temporal displacement of images revealed the tension between gesture and thought. Characters were differentiated through different qualities of movement.

Sound was incorporated as a way of exploring one of Wilson's principal approaches to theatre: the autonomy of theatrical textures. In the theatre production *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*, different combinations of sound and music were used to accompany images of moving bodies. Scenes were staged through the relationship between abstracted forms of natural behaviour and an arrangement of bodies. Images of still and slow-moving bodies in relation to the set established the composition of each scene.

Finally, an analysis of Wilson's video work enabled me to identify a connection between a sense of time in Wilson's theatre and Henri Bergson's concept of duration. The performance *Two Sides to an Envelope* provided a means of interrogating movement both as a process in relation to time, and in its capacity to measure space through the positional changes of a moving body.

# Chapter 1: Movement produced through a process of abstraction: abstract and narrative form. Workshops in walking, internal counting, the senses, and composition

The chapter explores ways of generating movement for the performing body. The material of daily life is used to create 'distinct graphic units' of action (Brecht 1994: 113). Other elements, such as the physical space for performance and the group's ability to work collectively are examined. This leads to a context for performance which is defined through transitional structures, narrative content and composition. Within this context, a relationship between abstract mobile forms and narrative is introduced as a means of establishing conceivable realities. Wilson's methods of internal counting and characterizing performers through their walk are also discovered and evaluated. The quality of intentionality regarding an action and the connection between movement and the senses become key considerations.

## 1.1   Wilson's code of movement: abstract mobile forms

During an opening scene in Robert Wilson's revival of *Einstein on the Beach* (1976/2012), a performer moves diagonally from upstage left to downstage right. She has in her left hand a pencil. Her left arm is held aloft, away from the body, creating a line from her shoulder that ends at the tip of the pencil.

During the repetitive figure, her head moves to the left as she looks at the pencil and to the right as she reaches the front of the stage. The pace of her movement remains the same. She is walking briskly, marking the beginning and end positions of the pattern with a slight lift that increases our appreciation of the insistency of her task.

The image is analogous to dance in its structure of statement, repetition and reversal, and yet the set elements suggest that she is participating in a drama; that consequential events will take place. Throughout this sequence another performer, though remaining in one place, writes with a pencil in the air above his head. These two are gradually joined by three other performers. One walks slowly across the upstage reading a newspaper. A second, front of stage, picks up a conch shell and holds it to her ear. A third leaps to crank an imaginary lever above her head. In all these images, a surface, object, relationship or situation usually associated with such activities is missing. Furthermore, the performers do not interact and their actions do not convey specific meanings.

These images are of people, not necessarily the characters of a play, participating in certain activities, though performing nevertheless. The narrative convention of drama is avoided. Movement is neither danced nor acted. The actor Lucinda Childs, who executed the figure in the original production, recalls that 'walking back and forth on the diagonal […] always meant for me the need to start over and over again, the need to strive endlessly, and perhaps not get anywhere' (Holmberg 1996: 18), confirming that Wilson's intention to present these activities does not reflect a concern for narrative. However, when she speaks of 'the play as a journey […] and the journey leads to the nuclear holocaust' (Holmberg 1996: 18), some underlying purpose or meaning is implied.

Childs describes an action that is repetitive, endless, and perhaps, in the context of the drama, consequential, although paradoxically the activity does not pertain to the cause and effect structures associated with narrative. As in dance, there seems to be a logical unity to the rectilinear composition, binding the different actions together in a single image. If there is a theme, it exists more in the development of visual material than in the consequences of the action. What stands out is the quality of the movement itself and how that enables the spectator to participate 'in [the] effect [of] hollowing out the performer, reducing him/her to a surface integrated in the visual space-time Gestalt created by his/her movements' (Brecht 1994: 241). Here the word *Gestalt* refers to a visual pattern or structure that includes not only objects but the spaces between them.

If the concept of *Gestalt* is applied to this scene, it is evident that the disparate parts, in the form of mobile set elements and corporeal movements, each of which is distinctive in rhythm, pattern, tempo, direction and shape, are continually redrawn in relation to the whole. It is clear that these spatial arrangements are dependent upon each performer fulfilling his/her task in every phase of its unfolding. Moreover, there is a uniform level of intentionality brought to every action. This seems to point to an external controlling force behind the movement. The force is expressed in a structure, subsisting as much in moving bodies as it does in the set elements which contain the natural forms. These elements aestheticize the images of everyday life, creating a vision which is something more than reality or a representation of that reality.

In comparing *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) to an earlier production, *Deafman Glance* (1971), there is a clear progression from a more natural form of

movement to the highly stylized examples described at the beginning of the chapter. This shift was unsurprising given that Wilson's earlier work, though sometimes featuring ordinary people performing everyday tasks, was never intended to create a representative or naturalistic depiction of everyday life. Even if some of the scenes presented ordinary activities, as Brecht (1994) recognizes, 'they are odd by some detail or accumulation of details, by a context of setting or of other activities, or simply by prolongation or repetition, or else odd, i.e. inexplicable, not making sense, in themselves' (Brecht 1994: 221). How does Wilson create these qualities in movement which Brecht has identified?

As Shevtsova (2007) notes, Wilson, in using the phrase 'movement score', 'intentionally echoes Meyerhold's term (which originates with Stanislavsky) for the idea that movements can be as precise as musical notes and follow their intrinsic logic without any recourse to natural behaviour or to psychological justification for it' (Shevtsova 2007: 50). After Wilson has created this score his expectation is that 'the actors […] [will] have memorized the movement score and internalized its tones, rhythms and phrasing' (Shevtsova 2007: 50).

An examination through practice of Wilson's methods of creating movement provided a starting point for realizing this foundational element of his work. Since this research by practice was intended to focus on movement, speech, almost without exception, would not be explored. Wilson states, 'I do movement first to make sure that it is able to stand up on its own two feet without words' (Holmberg 1996: 136).

A group of performers, who had volunteered for this research, took part in the workshops. These events were documented using film. Unless otherwise stated, the clips that accompany the dissertation refer to the raw documentary

footage captured during the workshops. There is a distinction between this documentation of the workshops in film (DVD) and the re-construction of some of the performances in film which are referenced through their titles and will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## Workshop 1, *Movement Forms* DVD 1: 1st and 2nd clips

The intention of the workshop, *Movement Forms,* was not to work with a pre-conceived narrative or, necessarily, towards that end, but to create a process capable of generating abstract forms of movement. Since workshops two and four were also going to refer back to the 'score' created in the first workshop, the group were directed to internalize and memorize it. To that end, the following elements were identified: the material use of activities from daily life; the creation of 'distinct graphic units' of action; the physical space of the performance; and the group's ability to work as a collective entity.

As they established movement for activities such as sewing, painting and washing, they were directed to create movement forms by appropriating the dance framework of statement, repetition, contrast and reversal. The third element was applied when they combined two contrasting sections of the sequence, and the fourth, when executing the actual movement of the complete sequence in reverse. Aesthetic rather than narrative criteria, based on the form, speed, direction and rhythm of their movement, enabled the group to explore the contrasting elements in each presentation, and to take material from each other through imitation.

It was noticeable that, because of these processes, the performers' mobile patterns gradually became more abstract and that the instrumental activities, from which they were sourced, more indistinct.  Though a residue of these

activities remained, the structural principles which had been implemented transformed the material into a sequence of ambiguous gestures. Distinctive mobile forms, sourced from instrumental activity, were therefore choreographed, not through the demonstration of the specific vocabulary of classical ballet, but by applying the structural principles of that dance to improvisation. As a result, this process followed one of Wilson's methods by showing how 'a gesture that began naturalistically metamorphoses into an abstract line' (Holmberg 1996: 144).

Although individual movement forms were created, there was no context connecting them; no underlying structure for developing them as a performance. The aim of *The Alms* workshop was to provide such a structure.

**Workshop 5, *The Alms* DVD 1: 3rd clip**

The group were directed to approach a recipient and present objects to her. In performing these actions, they were to refer to the mobile forms created during the first workshop and adapt the principles of statement, repetition, contrast and reversal to any new movement sequences that arose during the improvisation.

Actions were characterized by the unifying quality of formality contingent upon the activity of gifting objects. The group presented these objects as alms in a real sense and contrived to relate to them within the fiction that they were creating. Although some degree of spatial organization was achieved through a structure implied by the narrative, individual mobile forms were difficult to observe from a single viewpoint. Nevertheless, the group were able to fully immerse themselves in the reality of the scene without having a detailed narrative.

Several questions arose that might be answered through the workshop practice. How does Wilson create narrative whilst working with abstract mobile forms? How does he use a 'movement score' to both transcend and convey narrative?

## 1.2    Wilson's code of movement: narrative forms

In his production of *Quartett* (2006), it is evident that 'Wilson's method […] focuses on narrative but eschews issues to do with characterization, motives and consequences for action, and other aspects of realist drama' (Shevtsova 2006: 113). Wilson conveys the narrative, not by giving full dramatic expression to the heightened inner turmoil of the characters, but by taking the natural language of human emotion and extracting from it, lines, shapes and angles; and by translating it into a series of images, a coded version of natural behaviour.[1]

Gone are the naturalistic movements and odd settings of *Deafman Glance* (1971)*.* This is a language of sudden shifts; of angularity; of stillness within fluidity; of complex images expressing desire, control and ceremony. It is an equivocal presentation made up of abstract gestures and contrived poses and yet seems to communicate an interior life of repressed desires. Even when they are in close proximity, there is a sense of distance and disconnection between the characters. Both actors seem to use physicality as a mask to hide beneath and yet every move, though elusive and mysterious, expresses something about their relationship. There is a sense of plot, character and

meaning, yet these elements are presented in a fragmentary and ambiguous manner. As in contemporary dance, where the emphasis is on the body, the actors appear to present themselves in movement, rather than represent a character.

**Workshops 11, *Possible Narratives* DVD 1: 4th clip**

In response to Wilson's approach to narrative, a performance was created to restage the material from a previous workshop. An interaction between two performers, who had identified their gloved hands with a narrative of shame, now formed a part of *Possible Narratives*.[2] These performers were now invited to consider that the glove alluded to a crime in which they were complicit; was tainted with a fragrance from the crime scene; was a fetish object, perversely connected to a memory of the transgression; and that the glove carried an erotic charge.

The intention of the workshop was that the performers moved slowly and deliberately, allowing their bodies to follow the expressive movement of their hands, improvising with these narrative fragments as if they were images in a film.[3] The gloved hands of the performers were to act as the focus for the external expression of internal thoughts regarding this material. The specific details of plot and character were deliberately excluded from the directions.

During the performance, movements were performed in an indivisible sequence in which the performers' gazes were often fixed on a shared intention to work with the other's gestures. At all times, the glove facilitated connections between hands, arms and fingers. As a result, a series of actions including the removal, exchange and replacement of gloves, and the manipulation of the garment itself, were created.

Ultimately unidentifiable, these actions seemed to relate to an incomplete or non-determinable narrative. Although the space was transformed by various set elements, it resembled a film set rather than a stage. It had a different kind of reality to that of the theatre. Here was a real location complete with neon glow, and the reflections of steel and glass in a metal window rather than a representative space. It was in this *film set* reality that the performers responded to the directions, each other, and the camera.

The research discovered that qualities in movement were being mediated through their response to the mobile camera. Since the performance was to a single witness, in the form of a machine and its operator, and not to an audience, it seemed to me that the performers were being affected by the camera and the location. This discovery was unforeseen and resulted in further research into the implications of using a camera to capture images of the moving body. The role of the camera in the research will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Although previously performed gestures were repeated and a structure imposed, new forms of movement consistent with this conceivable reality had been created without giving rise to a definitive story. After this workshop, imagined scenes were devised and performed as part of an approach to performance that continued to erode the boundaries between abstract and narrative forms, and between choreographed and spontaneous action.

## 1.3   Wilson's walks

In Wilson's *King Lear* (1985), Kent communicates 'a great sense of dislocation, a world out of joint, a world that makes no sense' by walking backwards onto the stage (Holmberg 1996: 148). Wilson makes the most of the body's transitory nature: its speeds and directions. For him, 'the nature of the pathway that a moving object produces may often have highly significant communicative value' (Holmberg 1996: 143).[4]

**Workshop 3, *Sticking,* and 43, *Passing By,* DVD 1: 5th clip**

The intention of the workshop *Sticking* was to explore the potential of the Wilson walk, and to work with all its variations in order to extend the group's vocabulary of movement.

The group worked with contrasts between slow and fast walks, accelerations, sudden stops that did not break the momentum of the figure, dynamic changes in direction, and independence between the hands and eyes. The work was done to train the performers in the basic technique of Wilson's walk, which is founded on balance and single-weightedness. This exercise was often restaged in order to return the group to the basis of all Wilson's movement.

As a result of this practice, a complete narrative, exploring the expressive potential of walking, was performed to camera in *Passing By*. Taking the multitude of Wilson walks as a starting point, the filmed performance explored the pedestrian in the street. The objective was that a performer's walk would begin as a visual statement and evolve, through the events of the performance, into behavioural patterns through which that character could be identified. The performers chose from a range of perambulatory actions

contingent upon such attributes as their character's name; tendencies characterized by a chosen walk; the habits, routines, inclinations and accomplishments of their business in the street; descriptions of the locus; and linguistic utterances to which they might give voice.[5]

The performance which emerged from the workshop produced an array of characters that appeared distinct through the rhythm, tempo and gait of their walk. With a specific set of characteristics, performers could identify with the location of the street and their character, and engage with each other through actions that naturally arose in relation to a description of their chosen walk.

This research into the Wilson walk led to the creation of a perambulatory form for the military in a later production and will be described in chapter 6.4. From the procedures used in *Passing By,* a staccato form, featuring abrupt pauses, sudden stops and dynamic pivots was founded on Wilson's method of characterizing a performer through their walk.

## 1.4   Internal counting and prescribed gestures

For Wilson, 'movement must have a rhythm and structure of its own' (Holmberg 1996: 136). It must be formulated in the workshop process by 'paying attention to not only who walks where on a count of how long, but also to gestures and angles of the head, arms, hands, fingers and eyes and when the weight should shift' (Holmberg 1996: 139). He frequently allows the actors to 'improvise, taking the movement he likes and building them into a structure'

(Holmberg 1996: 139). His method of internal counting was not initially used to impose rhythmic structures on movement patterns in large cast productions such as *Deafman Glance* (1971). On a stage furnished with a variety of human activities, some slow and some fast, dynamic connections existed without a temporally controlling element. However, as his work developed, a method of internal counting was used to control the durational element of gestures, and the movement between gestures within the presentation of images. Counting became a requirement of the lighting cues, bringing precision to the highly controlled images of *Einstein on the Beach* (1976).

The intention of the workshop *Counting* was to explore Wilson's technique of walking to an internal count and the rhythms of different time signatures. Although Wilson was central to this research, the imposition of precise temporal restrictions on the production of movement might have limited its scope. Wilson's 'movement patterns are so complex and precise, he breaks them down into numbered sequences to help actors learn them - the way one learns a tap dance routine' (Holmberg 1996: 138). Given this approach, it could be conceived as paradoxical that such an imposition might negate the possibility of a thorough investigation into an aesthetic of human behaviour for the performing body. Even if applied exclusively to forms that were created through improvisation, such a practice might curtail the invention of new processes for producing movement. Nevertheless, as a key component of Wilson's practice and as an exploration of its impact upon the rhythm and uniformity of the group's movements, it could be usefully explored.

In the workshop exercise, the group walked for four beats, paused for two beats and then walked for four beats. The internal count brought the rhythmic structures of music to the act of moving and prepared them for a structurally

exacting, rather than an improvisatory, method of performing movement. Two further workshops continued this research practice.

**Workshop 6 and 7, *The Chain* and *The Line*, DVD: 6th and 7th clips**

*The Chain* and *The Line* were made to examine Wilson's method of controlling the duration of prescribed movement forms. Their effectiveness was dependent upon a consensual adherence to a pre-determined structure. In *The Chain*, the group worked to the precise rhythm, speed and direction of a sequence of actions established by a structure imposed upon them. Wilson's method of internal counting was used to time their individual movement across the space. However, in performing the sequence to an internal count, the group's ability to successfully produce the prescribed form was compromised.

Another approach was attempted, and this time the chain of performers worked with their own internal rhythms to find accord within the group. Now the sequence expressed the fluidity and coherence of the prescribed movements that were previously demonstrated.

In *The Line* the group imitated a sequence created by one of the performers, which became more precise through repetition until a uniform rhythm was achieved.

Following the attempt to impose precise gestures upon the group, this method was considered for further use, as was the practice of improvisation, which was discussed in relation to the gloved characters in *Possible Narratives.* Since improvisation was already leading to the production of distinct forms, which appeared to have been choreographed, it was established as the preferred practice for exploring movement.

The aim was therefore to adhere to Wilson's earlier approach of trusting the body to discover its own 'appropriate paths' within the structures and intentions that, nevertheless, were to be imposed upon it (Shevtsova 2007: 1). By choosing to explore performance centred upon the body without the prescriptive method of internal counting, a decisive moment in the research was reached.

Although Wilson's method of internal counting was not integrated into my practice, a high level of intentionality brought to actions was considered to be an important factor in advancing the research. The idea of scripting movement as a means of creating clear and distinctive images, and bringing a greater level of intentionality to the practice of improvisation, was considered and is discussed in the next chapter.

## 1.5   Movement and the senses

Wilson's assertion that his 'theatre is, in some ways, really closer to animal behaviour [because] when a dog stalks a bird his whole body is listening [...]. He's not listening with his ears, with his head; it's the whole body. The eyes are listening' (Shevtsova 2007: 135), finds echoes in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description of the phenomenon of perception as an inter-sensory experience in which:

> I give ear or look, in the expression of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of

my body, even my whole body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space known as blue or red (Merleau-Ponty 1989: 212).

The point here is that the 'whole body' is involved in the act of perception.[6] One possible way of exploring Wilson's intention through movement might be to assign sensory attributes to individual performers. This idea stemmed from Anthony Howell's analysis of performance art in which he states that 'all senses, or rather their specific ranges of perception, are objects which may be utilised by the performer' (Howell 1999: 48).

### Workshop 8, *The Senses* DVD 1: 8th clip

*The Senses* workshop attempted to make visible the relationships between motive, sensation and gesture. The workshop featured two performers, who, through their sensory awareness of one another, were drawn into an encounter. To create a visual equivalent of their sensory experience, the other performers were cast as personifications of the senses. In the role of sense agents, they acted as the physical manifestation of the senses of the two *host* performers. For example, the agent of smell had the freedom to roam, gathering information in close proximity to the other host before returning it to his host.

The intention was to present sensory activity through a visual language of movement, gesture and repetitive actions reflective of stimulation and desire. The activity of the sense *agents* was intended to contest the space with a multiplicity of images behind which the actions of the two *hosts* slowly unfolded.

The resulting activity was often incoherent and, as yet, did not constitute the basis for a performance. Although some movement forms were defined, and

some patterns emerged, the workshop lacked a definitive structure through which these forms could be organized.

Although unresolved at the time, this link between the senses and movement was used again in *The Gangs* scene of a subsequent theatre production (described in Chapter 6.4) as a way of defining the contrasting roles of gang members within each organisation. The details of each performer's movements in relation to their sense attributes were fully established in preparation for this production and will be discussed in Chapter 2.2.

## 1.6    Images and composition: diagonals and the arrangement of bodies on the set

Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) is composed in a three-dimensional space framed by the proscenium arch.[7] Within that framework, a pictorial composition of two-dimensional logic is arranged in horizontals, verticals and diagonals. In the opening scene, vertical and horizontal lines draw the eye above the space of the stage and along a crane. Someone reading a newspaper follows a horizontal line from left to right in the upstage area; a second follows a diagonal line; a third listens to a conch shell marking the position of a golden section within the proscenium's rectangle.

The set is both an arrangement of bodies and a map of intersecting lines. 'To see how these […] lines create space; to track how this space changes through time as the relationship between vertical, horizontal and diagonal changes' is

one way of tracking the body in movement (Holmberg 1996: 80). The court scene in *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) evinces how such a multitude of movement patterns are contained and contrasted. Actions are formalised, not only because of a specific setting, but as a result of the overall aesthetic which connects all the bodies to the other elements. The scene metamorphoses as movement patterns accrue, and the set elements are transformed to accommodate these changes, creating the impression that the direction or position of the performer is more important than the thing done. It is with formal design, rather than a chronological story line, that the fullest expression of human life is shown by Wilson. 'Instead of a traditional narrative, these images explore a sensibility: they express the inner life' (Holmberg 1996: 9). This is seen in his extensive use of gestures and the arrangements of bodies across the stage.

To explore the principles of Wilson's composition, a workshop was devised in which an aesthetic of behaviour was imposed upon the group.

### Workshop 6, *The Chain*, DVD 1: 6th clip

In *The Chain*, the intention was to create a mobile section of bodies in which each displacement affected the arrangement of the whole. The group were directed to take part in a formal procedure, in which specific actions were required. They were directed to work towards a collective production of rhythmic motion that determined this arrangement of bodies.

Two groups of performers took up positions across the diagonal of the space. The image was of a human chain, divided into two sections. As one section of these bodies expanded, a body was released from the head of the chain and gathered up by a second group, who transported it to its base as the section

became contracted. This procedure was repeated until all the performers had returned to their original starting positions.

Circular patterns frequently punctuated the predominantly linear composition of the human *chain* and at various points in the looped sequence specific shapes such as a figure of eight were achieved. Throughout the sequence the moving bodies inscribed the rectilinear field with intervallic patterns and repetitive lines.

The idea that improvisation could lead to the creation of distinctive images was realized in a formal aesthetic which was imposed on the group. The research discovered that the quality of composition, with which an arrangement of moving bodies could be presented, was essential to the production of clear and perceptible images.

### Workshop 12, *Possible Narratives*

The objective of *Possible Narratives* was to create four distinct but converging narratives and accommodate them in a single structure. Four arrangements of paired performers were distributed across the space. Each unit could be differentiated from the others by its minimal set elements such as a window and a dressing table with a mirror, the direction and velocity of its movement, and its position relative to the others. In this way the narratives, though taking place in the space at the same time, were accommodated in the overall structure.

Firstly, the gloved performers, whose gestures were concentrated in their hands, moved from their location by the window, taking up a position at the centre of the space where others began to encircle them, responding with movements which still carried a vestige of the identities they had created. As

they continued to circle around this inner group, the performance's definitive composition emerged as a tableau of bodies.

The imposition of an initial composition, in which performers could freely improvise movement, had occasioned a gathering of individuals resulting in this monumental image. With this creation, and crucial to an understanding of Wilson's methods, a relationship between movement and the formal aspects of composition was established. Lehmann notes that in Wilson's theatre the stage space is often conceived as a tableau form in which 'the closeness of its internal organization is primary' (Lehmann 2006: 151).

As a result of this workshop, the image of a crowd, the actions of individuals in forming it, and their behaviour within it, became central to the research. In the second chapter, this image is examined in depth and, as a form, becomes fundamental to my approach to arrangements of bodies.

During the workshops discussed in this chapter the principal methods with which Wilson arrives at a written 'score' were discovered. Distinct movement forms were created through a combined practice of improvisation and a process of abstraction. The imposition of a narrative element enabled the group to adjust their forms accordingly. Wilson's method of composition led to the possibility of creating lines of movement and a dynamic arrangement of bodies. Individuals could be identified by realizing a link between their character attributes and a manner of walking. Distinct characteristics of behaviour could now be defined through a relationship between the senses and movement.

If these components were made contingent upon some form of specific content, the research might find ways of testing Wilson's methods and linking

them together. The content might also provide a way of bridging between an analysis of Wilson's methods and a means of achieving autonomous practices and procedures for performance. In the next chapter, ways of assembling this material into a script in response to Wilson's method of creating a 'movement score' are explored.

**Notes:**

1. In one scene, Valmont stands poised on his toes, one arm languishing on the shoulder of Merteuil. Reacting to a sharp sonic trigger, he tears away from her as if startled by gunshot. Slowly, he turns back and they embrace. Merteuil's arms are extended either side of him, hands refusing to touch him, mouth pressed against his. Another sound trigger ushers in some generic rock music. He reacts by withdrawing from the embrace and begins to move, his body tensing and relaxing as he extends from the hips and shoulders. With animal grace, he embarks on a brief erotic display made up of exaggerated, muscular gestures, before taking to the floor in a feline repose. Meanwhile, Merteuil stands facing him, her arm, hand and fingers continuing a line from her shoulder to his torso, and her inscrutable expression at odds with her grappling fingers.

2. The resultant material was used in the film *Requinnes,* which is examined in the fourth chapter on the re-construction of performance in film.

3. Wilson's use of slow movement will be discussed in 3.3

4. This approach enables him to create clear, complex and distinct visual images with the body in which every limb is able to tell us something about the character whose 'hands and eyes must move separately [because] it creates more tension if the hand moves independently.' (Holmberg 1996: 148)

At the beginning of Wilson's theatre work *The Black Rider* (1990), ten characters appear from a rectilinear box and form a line next to it. One scurries, a second ambles, a third springs, a fourth prances, a fifth dances and so on. In short, we are introduced to them through their various walks. It is as if we come to know them through the differences in their walks.

For Wilson, the idea that the 'walk is your character [is evident in the form of] three long lines on the page: a strong, straight arrow, shooting boldly through space (Goneril); a kinky knot of zigs, zagging their way through space (Regan); and a graceful curve, flowing through space (Cordelia)', from the director's sketch for a scene in *King Lear* (1985) (Holmberg 1996: 148).

5. This material was used in the film *Passing By* and is discussed in chapter 4 in reference to Deleuze's 'affection-image'.

6. For example, in a scene during Wilson's version of Gluck's *Alceste* set at the oracle to Apollo, each performer is revealed individually as, incrementally, the veil of darkness is removed by sudden points of light. The senses become anticipatory, alerted and aroused by this wait in the dark, and by the visibility and invisibility of the dark. Wilson's performances are not just images, as they are perceived by the senses, but a sensitization, an intensification that flows between spectator and performer, and between performer and performer, leading to a reciprocal awakening of consciousness.

7. In one section, prisoners take part in a series of repetitive movements as if exercising in a yard; stenographers type away on imaginary machines; the jury twirl pencils and look at their watches; a woman writhes around on a bed repeating the same lines of speech; and a man in a black suit swings his attaché case and swivels his head towards the audience on every other beat.

# Chapter 2: 'Movement scores' and scripts: Wilson's 'interior screen' of the imagination; the role of memory; the relationship between language and movement

This chapter describes how workshops were devised to reframe Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' of the imagination as a means of defining and characterizing actions. The act of figuring out movement as a preparatory phase was evaluated and considered for inclusion in a live performance. Qualities of order and disorder in an arrangement of bodies were explored. This led to an examination of crowd formation. The act of constructing an identity was inseparable from a journey into a unique arrangement of bodies. Movement-scripts were considered as a method of choreographing the actions of the workshop. This resulted in an exploration of the connection between internal dialogue and external objects. As well as imposing a structure and specific actions, the script was used as a significant object in two workshops.

## 2.1 The 'interior screen' of the imagination and Wilson's idea of 'filling in the form'

Although *Possible Narratives* had determined a way of producing movement through a similar workshop practice to Wilson, a complete 'movement score',

that is, all the actions for a performance, had not been achieved. This intention might now be pursued by exploring the relationship between a script and its interpretation through improvisation.

For Wilson, the 'movement score' consists of all the actions of the performance. 'The aim of the silent play is to familiarise the actors with Wilson's performance language, which they learn as dancers use a fixed choreography' (Shevtsova 2007: 48). After Wilson has created a movement score, he invites his actors to 'fill in the form' with material from their own lives and imaginations (Holmberg 1996: 149). This is the Wilson actor's subtext for performance, which can be both personal and mutable.

In an interview about her work with him, Sheryl Sutton, his star performer in *Deafman Glance* (1971) and *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), said 'you have to go into your own being and find a way of personalizing what he has given you. It not only has to make physical sense but mental sense. You have to embrace it' (Shyer 1989: 12).[1]

Two questions arise. How then, does this procedure of 'filling in the form' take place? And does Wilson, as a director, actively participate in its creation?

For Sutton, even after a movement sequence has been 'figured out' (Shyer 1989: 6), there is still a fascination with the physical actions she must perform. The violent implications of the murder at the start of *Deafman Glance* (1971) occur to her as significant and emotionally engaging even though she has repeatedly performed the same actions. Through repetition, her internal thoughts, feelings and emotions become associated with her actions, resulting in what she has described as a 'kind of mental terror' (Shyer 1989: 6). Such a

mental state does not lead to new actions, but instead provides material with which she can 'fill in' the movement form.

During the workshop process, it would seem that Wilson is only concerned with the external, visual aspects of movement. After all, he has stated that 'movements can be as precise as musical notes and follow their intrinsic logic without any recourse to natural behaviour or to psychological justification for it' (Shevtsova 2007: 50). Yet, conversely, he also requires his actors to create an 'interior screen' (Shyer 1989: 13):

> Bob talks a lot about the interior screen and the exterior screen, these different ways of perceiving. I think that what most people do is sublimate the interior screen when they have exterior activity (Shyer 1989: 13).

Wilson's term, the 'interior screen', refers to images produced by the creative imagination which are then applied to movement, whereas the 'exterior screen' implies the imposition of choreographed forms. For Sutton, this practice arises naturally during the act of performance because: 'you pass through a place somewhere in rehearsal where it's automatic [and so the mind has the freedom to create something else]' (Shyer 1989: 13).

Immersed in the performance, the actor is made aware of the difference between the 'interior and exterior screen', as an experience of dislocation. She is totally immersed in the fictional world of the play, and, at the same time, completely aware of performing the physical actions of her role. As the movements and gestures become more familiar, more automatic, she may experience a sense of detachment between this internal world and her actions. Or, the emotional and psychological material of this 'interior screen' may begin to seep into her performance, becoming inseparable from it as in the 'kind of mental terror' she has spoken about. Either way, she concludes

that what Wilson 'really needs is people who are dreaming when they are performing the actions [...] he has given them' (Shyer1989: 14). When the Wilson actor embodies this image of the dreamer, it is because of this dislocation between the 'interior and exterior screens'.

Since Wilson involves his actors in a procedure of 'figuring out' movement leading to the creation of a score, the actor's 'interior screen' must already be engaged in realizing this achievement. After all, improvisation already involves an imaginary response to whatever directions are given, and to whatever forms are demonstrated. *Duets* was the first workshop to examine the impact of the 'interior screen' upon performance.

**Workshop 13, *Duets* DVD 1: 9th clip**

The intention of the workshop was for the performer to choose from a list of attributes identifying both the required, external qualities of movement, and an emotional or psychological state described in the script. These attributes were not chosen to determine the exact movements of the group, but instead bring an internal dialogue to the act of performance.

The group of eight performers, working as separate pairs in scenes lasting five minutes, were directed to select a prop and a set of attributes from the available list. Each prop might be identified with that performer's character (in construction), or have some associative quality which implied specific actions.

Performers chose their attributes and a prop, entered the space, encountered each other in close proximity or at a distance, and then interacted in some way, before finally exiting.

Throughout the workshop the attributes described in the movement-script provided the group with a way of travelling through the space, enabling them

to perform specific roles leading to clear and distinct images. The workshop also successfully reframed Wilson's concept of an 'interior screen' by linking its creation to the imposition of attributes on the group.

The scenes only partially constituted performance, but the exercise introduced the idea of a script as an important method of realizing movement, and linking it to a method of defining and characterizing events. As a consequence, the script, now referred to as a movement-script to reflect its intentions, was developed as a primary tool in creating performance.

## 2.2  The creation of movement-scripts as a response to Wilson's 'movement score'

Since this research was primarily an examination of Wilson's aesthetic of movement for the performing body, the theatrical element of speech was largely absent from the workshops. Nevertheless, language was omnipresent in the script. As a result, Brian Rotman's writing on the relationship between gestural communication and language influenced this exploration. In that regard, the script presented the performer with 'an ever present doubling, an unstable alternation between an actual pre-linguistic indexicality, the dumb haptic and gestural self-pointing that extends proprioception, and a symbolic, virtual indexicality [of language]' (Rotman 2008: 115). Inherent, therefore, to the proposition of these scripts was that language, as a tool for manifesting 'the dumb haptic and gestural self-pointing', would pre-empt movement (Rotman 2008: 115).

## Workshop 10, *Gangs* DVD 1: 10th clip
## (live exert from *The Mansion Third Unbridled View*)

Since the script of *Gangs* was to have no external outlet in speech, the performer's internal experience of images, words, memories, as well as the actions it implied, could only be translated into material form through the creation of movement.

The script's objective was that, within this context of gang formation, the group would construct their identities as the workshop took place. This action would constitute the performance itself; an event permeated by language, though without spoken words, emerging out of an exploration of the relationship between human identity and gang formation.

Although the aim of the workshop was that each performer translated the script into actions, this constant reference point would never be available to the audience in its original form. Instead, the audience would be presented with language embodied in gestures, actions and encounters occasioned by the words of the script. In the absence of an external aural element, the body's own sounds became available, e.g., alongside the sound of breathing and walking, finger clicking was used as an audible signal in recognition of the next gang member, and also set up a rhythm to which the performers could respond in movement.

The workshop focused on a confrontation between two groups. These groups were differentiated by their relative positions in the space and, as individuals, by their attributes in relation to the description of a sense, the movement of a chess piece and a mode of performance, i.e., repetition, stillness, inconsistency and transition.

The act of figuring out the script was an action of doing, even if that was an act of preparing to take action, or of trying out future actions. These different approaches to action unfolded during the performance emanating from the workshop and constituted it. By using language to describe the context and intentions, the script reduced the group's tendency to instinctive reactions. Despite a more conscious form of movement, the performers were still at liberty to react spontaneously to each other. Inevitably, their personal inclinations and physical habits – Wilson's practice of 'filling in the form' also informed actions.

At this time, the research into Wilson's aesthetic of human behaviour was being augmented by writings about the body regarding movement. These ideas began to inform the script itself, not only as a way of scripting specific movements but also influencing the arrangement of bodies in the space and the set elements.

Paul Carter is an academic who has published several works which are concerned with the relationship between human identity and a cultural history of places. His deconstruction of the word agoraphobia, particularly in relation to the place where crowds gather, and the way these gatherings are organized within a society, underwrote some of the ideas regarding the space of performance and the movement within it. These are now explored in the next section. This begins with an idea stemming from Anthony Howell's analysis of performance art, which pre-empts the performances inspired by Carter. Howell, as a practising artist, director, writer and commentator, has contributed to the field of performance art by determining the syntax and grammar of its structures.

## 2.3 Anthony Howell's use of the term homeostasis: order and chaos as material for the workshop performance *The Line*

**Workshop 7, *The Line*, DVD: 7th clip**

The intention of *The Line* was to explore aspects of order and chaos within a group of bodies, and to create a performance structure conceived in the light of Anthony Howell's use of the term homeostasis. This is achieved in an artwork when 'each element or action is under as much tension as any other, and where no element or action is subservient to another […], and where each part is essential to the whole' (Howell 1999: 56). Homeostasis is defined as the ability or tendency of an organism to adjust its physiological and internal processes in order to maintain equilibrium.

Howell cites Deleuze in making a connection between repetition as a method of creating order, and the repression of desire, quoting him as saying 'we do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat' (Howell 1999: 38).

In *The Line*, a repressed desire to engage with another, expressed as a repeated movement sequence, was intended to maintain the ordered intervals between people. The work also aimed to reveal that Howell's notion of desire for another, and in this case, a desire for proximity, challenges the homeostatic state, displacing order with chaos. The collapse of this structure was intended to emphasize a moment in which the desire of the performers to eradicate the space between them could no longer be resisted.

An intervallic structure of synchronous movement was devised to sustain a sequence of repetitive gestures performed by a line of bodies. As the group entered the performance area, individuals used their own bodies to measure

the space between themselves and the previous performer, before taking up a position in the line. Finally, the group closed up to form a more compact line whilst continuing with the same sequence.

As the line compressed, the efficacy of the group to act out the sequence was undermined, resulting in disorder as the intervallic structure, which had been responsible for retaining order, was no longer maintained.

Sustained qualities of order were displaced by the image of a disordered group. As a result, the relationship between individual identity and collective behaviour, inherent in the processes of crowd formation, was identified as a theme which could be explored in subsequent performances.

## 2.4   Paul Carter's ideas on movement inhibition: crowd formation, speech, and gestural communication in *Gangs* and *Agora*

The workshops *Gangs* and *Agora* were created to explore the idea that an individual's identity is accentuated during the process of crowd formation and is just as easily obliterated when an individual acquiesces to collective behaviour. In both workshops reference was made to the historical and topographical pathology of a civilisation in the making, which for Carter, 'in essence, is the art of grouping: to create an arrangement uniquely for this occasion, the performance of a space of encounter like no other' (Carter2002: 194). His idea that an individual's movement towards the crowd is like a journey of self-realization in which 'becoming is a movement *from* some place,

but becoming oneself is a movement *at* that place*'*, (Carter 2002: 11) provided a notional place in which the workshops could happen, and in which an identity could be constructed. Thus, in *Gangs*, each gang member's unique performance, by being directed towards a ritual of formation, was intended to confirm that this location had already been designated as a place where power could be reassigned through the attainment of a new structure.

The formation of the gang was accomplished after each member of both gangs established a unique sequence of movement, based on material from the script, and created during the workshop. The first performer, on completing her sequence, finger clicked as a sign for the next gang member to meet her with the same gesture, and for the latter to perform a different movement sequence thereafter. With these procedures, the composition began to evolve, and came to fruition as the two gangs began to confront each other; a moment in which individual movement gave way to a group dynamic. This ultimately led to disorder as the two gangs became entangled.

Even without a set, the gang workshop manifested a kind of reality, transforming the neutral space into a place of confrontation in which the act of constructing an identity was inseparable from the drama of journeying into a unique arrangement of bodies.

After this workshop, another exploration of the relationship between the individual and the crowd was devised, but on this occasion, a set was used. The focus was on movement inhibition in relation to a place of gathering.

**Workshop 26, *Agora*: see film, *Agora***

Drawing further on Carter's etymological ideas regarding agoraphobia, the intention of the workshop *Agora* was for individual movement to be thwarted

at a place of gathering; a space where gestural communication gives way to speech. As a history of formation this 'becoming' retraces a story that has cultural roots in ancient times, and specifically in the word agora, which 'in fourth-century-BC Athens at least, [... referred] to the business of the agora – agoreusis means a speech, oration or proclamation [and...] coexisted with another definition – assembly of the people' (Carter 2002: 31). Carter goes on to develop this term and, through an exploration of Freudian psychoanalysis, links it to the nineteenth century word agoraphobia. By associating the 'illness primarily with the idea of the crowd', the behaviour of the individual at the *Agora* connects an experience of movement inhibition to a fear of being submerged in the crowd (Carter 2002: 31).

The group worked from a movement-script that presented them with ways of moving in relation to a place and a description of that place which was partially indicated by the set. The script outlined a series of possible actions and reactions for the body which, when played out, produced visual evidence of the difficult ground between the fields of objects and the Agora/meeting-place. After the journey the performers gave up movement entirely when reaching an imaginary place described in the script. There they were met by two characters whose actions identified them as boatmen and whose role was to convey the other performers across the space to their final destination at the Agora. At this meeting-place, and accompanied by the rising sound of music, a tableau of static bodies in various postures was formed.

In response to the movement-script, the group pursued a self-defining odyssey in which movement was truncated at the moment of crowd formation. By applying Carter's ideas to the workshop and, in particular, the contents of the movement-script, ways of choreographing the group through his exploration of

crowd formation were discovered. A new way of using sound was also found, not as an accompaniment to movement, but in association with its antithesis – stillness. By making a distinction between silence correlated to the body in movement, and sound correlated to the body in stillness, Wilson's idea of dislocation was introduced into the performance structure. The idea that the sound of chattering voices, rather than music, could accompany the frozen tableau was also considered and taken up when the workshop was adapted as a scene in a subsequent theatre production which will be discussed in chapter 7.4.

After the *Agora* workshop, a more overt exploration of the relationship between language and movement was conceived; one in which words were clearly being articulated through postures and repetitious patterns performed by the body.

## 2.5   The role of memory: the relationship between writing and movement in *The Literature Olympics*

*The Literature Olympics* workshop was created to further the exploration of the association between internal (regarding language) and external states (regarding movement). The running vests worn by performers were intended to play on the notion of identity by announcing the runners, not with numbers, but with descriptive words.  All the group's actions were either to refer to the linguistic sign on their vest or a movement pattern and posture, signifying athletics. The words on their vests were created to express their

demeanour, as a demarcation of an internal state given in language; their actions prior to the race were to present the essential, external gestures of a specific realm of activity described in the script.

The workshop featured athletes running in slow motion down a track. They were first seen in the warm up, wearing vests which displayed words such as 'Angry', 'Wild', 'Secretive', 'Inquisitive' or 'Obsessive', etc. Books were positioned in each of the track lanes so that, on arriving at a particular book, the runners could randomly select a page to read, and use this material to contribute to the quality of their movement.

Movement typical of an athletics race was subverted both by the words in the books and on the runners' vests. The track, therefore, became a surface upon which language could be translated into another form: the gestures and postures of the moving body.

As a result of the workshop, images were produced that represented the body as a conduit for histories and intentions suggested by words. The body's functions and expressions transformed at the boundary between language and movement. The virtuality of words was expressed through the real actions of the body and through a relationship between internal dialogue and external objects. These moments of exchange were reinforced every time a book was selected. Thus, the idea of the body's physical characteristics being at the effect of knowledge, either in the immediacy of the moment or through recollection during the race, constituted the underlying theme of the workshop.

From this workshop, the idea that the script could be referred to throughout a performance, and therefore express movement as both a function of memory,

and of identity, was conceived. This was created as individual letters containing previously unseen accounts of the performers past in the form of a back story which they received at the beginning of the workshop.

## 2.6   Mimetic behaviour and memory in *The Letter* and *On the Other Hand*

In *The Letter*, the titular object was to represent the past, and the act of reading it was intended as a means of gaining knowledge of that past. Thereafter, the letter's contents were to be remembered in every action and expression, in moments of stillness, but mostly in repetitive patterns of movement, and in acts of doing and displacement, either consciously or spontaneously. It was through imitation that this knowledge was to be passed on from one body to another. The performers were to work with this script, make choices, and prepare actions in an 'affective state' as corresponding not merely to movement 'which has taken place [but] those [actions] which are getting ready to be' (Bergson 2007: 34). The script aimed to replicate Wilson's idea of 'filling in the form' by providing an archive of mnemonic material with which to work.

It was on reception of words on a paper, in an act of imagining, and becoming a vessel for its contents in all their postures and gestures that the performers started to generate movement. As the recipient of the letter ventured from the booth, his/her every action was mirrored back by his/her mimetic partner.

The most significant discovery was the substantiation of the virtual existence of language through the visibility of the body. This was established through the physical response of the recipients and the replicated actions of their mimetic partners. As a result of this discovery, the workshop, in which the script was a decisive object, marked a further development in building a link between language and movement.

A second workshop was created to further this link; the difference being that some of the actions would now be scripted. For example, 'striking leather gloves together, close to the interrogated'.

In a similar manner to *The Letter*, the narrative structure of *On the Other Hand* lent itself to the inclusion of the script as an object in the workshop. By presenting the script in the form of a dossier, the interrogators could refer to a list of confrontational actions before directing them against the woman on trial. Through the differences in status within this dynamic, the woman on trial could only react to external stimuli, whereas the interrogators' actions were determined by the ideas and internal logic of the script. These roles were reversed when, at a pre-determined moment, the woman on trial, systematically, singled out each interrogator and acted out the same confrontational actions that had recently been directed at her. At the same time, the remaining interrogators colluded with her against that individual by mirroring these actions and setting them against one of their own. Each time she targeted an interrogator, the others also confronted that individual, before returning to their seats and awaiting her next victim.

These sequences were characterized by waves of activity, rising and falling in intensity, and seemingly choreographed. Like an absurd cabaret or comedic

ballet, the effect was of bodies powerless to resist the spread of contagious behaviour shaped by an accumulation of replicated actions.

It was through the performed actions of the script that the language for action transformed into a movement vocabulary for the workshop. This transformation was contingent upon the group's imaginative interpretation of the script, their grounding in the established performance methods, and the sensory connections between individuals.

As a result of the workshops that were described in this chapter, the research discovered a means of controlling actions whilst leaving the group to 'fill in the form' with material from their own lives. The development of a movement-script reflected an intention to encompass Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' by using it to orchestrate the content, intentions, and actions of each workshop. Since the script used language to do this, the relationship between movement and language became an important issue in redefining Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen'. If forms were implied by the script and structure, then a definitive direction might be taken in relation to Wilson's intention to fix form 'not so as to subordinate an actor to it, but to hand it over to him/her' (Shevtsova 2007: 58-59).

The next chapter considers the use of language in a series of workshops which were created to discover a means of reconciling improvisation to an imposed structure. This reconciliation is facilitated by the introduction of Wilson's other approaches to performance such as slow movement. The research follows his practice of taking the movement forms he has created and augmenting them with other structures such as sound and the transition from stasis to motion.

**Note:**

1. In another interview, she touched on her own resistance to performing: 'I didn't want to be there somehow I didn't care and I thought this was very dangerous. In fact, I was shocked and worried about it. But there was also something else in me that said that's all right too. If you don't want to be here that's something to play.' (Shyer 1990: 14) According to Sutton, Wilson directed her to encounter these feelings as another textual layer in her performance. Since her movement was already determined, it is clear that he was focusing on the nature of her dual identity as a human being and an actor. The possibility that these identities might shape her performance was obviously desirable and, as has been shown, a requirement of his methodology.

# Chapter 3: Movement and the relationship between structure and improvisation: workshops in slow movement and the four modes of performance. Dislocation between sound and image

In this chapter the exploration of Wilson's approach to movement is completed with an examination of his structures for performance, his use of sound, and his practice of slow movement and dislocation. The workshop procedures that were used to realise this research are described. How my own workshops were generated in response to an assimilation of Wilson's methods is also explained. In that regard, the synthesis between improvisation and transitional structures for performance is defined.

## 3.1   The imposition of a structure and spontaneous action

If Wilson's imposed structure does not preclude his actors from living in the present, how does it enable them to convey the immediacy of their actions? Although his formal approach makes specific demands of the actor, who has to repeat 'exercises already assimilated' (Quadri 1998: 19), his collaborative practice implies that individual qualities and natural impulses contribute to this process. The movement forms he creates are therefore particular to his group of actors, who are connected through a 'network of sensitive contacts' (Quadri

1998: 19), and at the same time directed to invent these forms according to his singular aesthetic. Since his actors negotiate this two way process, structure can be traced back to each of them, and continues, even when fixed, 'to be lived over again autonomously in the present', and shaped by these processes during every performance (Quadri 1998: 19).

In the biographical film on Wilson by Katharina Otto-Bernstein, there is a shot of him directing the actress Isabelle Huppert during rehearsals for *Orlando* (1994) (Otto-Bernstein 2006). At first, she is clearly giving rise to a natural performance but, having observed the actor's spontaneous gestures, Wilson directs the actor by physically adjusting the angle and direction of her arm, hands and fingers. The clip exemplifies his methods of direction, which make exacting demands upon the actor. Naturally occurring movement is transformed into a series of highly stylised gestures which only marginally make reference to the actress's initial statement.

The group were directed to apply Wilson's methods to the creation of definitive movement forms. By defining the intentions and the performance structure for each workshop and then describing this material to the group, a collaborative practice of 'figuring out' the movement evolved. If all movement emerged in this way, the performance could be improvised, and yet be contingent upon meeting the intentions of each workshop.

## Workshop 18, *Bar Encounters* DVD 2: 1st and 2nd clip

The intention of *Bar Encounters* was to create movement that appeared to be choreographed and yet occurred spontaneously in response to a specific set of conditions. A bar was described in the script. The descriptions were intended to enable the performers to imagine a place in which particular forms of social

behaviour were expected. Into this situation, the action of delivering and receiving concealed objects and gestures of a conspiratorial nature were introduced. The group were also directed to reference specific animal-like characteristics; not an *acting out* but a subtle embodiment of the chosen animal's physical mannerisms. The intention was that by imposing these conditions through a script, the group would be able to create movement that was contingent upon a shared context. Natural tendencies could be accommodated, but only by being mediated through attributes described in the script. With this method, certain qualities of movement were implied rather than defined and some of the group's actions and characteristics were determined.

The bar as a location was described in the script rather than actualized as a set. However, there were a few set elements including chairs, some tables and a box construction featuring lines of light bulbs. Characters emerged out of patterns of behaviour, attributable to the situation and the script. They became identifiable through distinctive variations in their walk, facial expressions and the actions of encounter and concealment.

The combination of individuating mannerisms, the situation of the bar, and a specific behavioural agenda produced a conceivable version of reality; a mute fiction of distinct transitions and corporeal patterns.

When first attempted, a lack of clarity in the developmental stages resulted in an unfocused and dissatisfying performance. In the original script, some of the characters were given other agendas such as 'looking for, or offering friendship', leading to vague gestures which obscured intentions and disrupted the coherence of the overall structure.

The development of this scene in rehearsal facilitated the creation of movement that in its distinct forms appeared to be choreographed. Despite the constraints rehearsing and an improved script imposed upon the group, spontaneous gestures were not precluded.

Through this research, it was discovered that rehearsed and improvised movement were not mutually exclusive; that the script, in order to reach its fullest potential, could be refined during rehearsals; and that directing was a means to impose Wilson's methods on the group, and to resolve the differences between improvisation and the intentions of the script. During this process, many of the principles needed to create distinct movement forms were identified, e.g., the introduction of specific intentions and actions, a narrative outline and certain qualities of movement. Other qualities of movement such as variable speeds, which are essential to Wilson's methods, will be explored in the next section. All these approaches to movement were consistent with the research into his workshop practice of trusting his performers to 'figure out' their movement in relation to a pre-determined structure.

## 3.2   Slow Movement

One of Wilson's most capable performers, Sheryl Sutton, is able to perform 'virtually seamless, invisible movement, movement so slow, so smooth, so controlled that the spectator is not aware that the person has been moving' (Holmberg 1996: 4). In *Deafman Glance* (1971) this form of natural self-

expression, though at a faster tempo, became a building block in the production's structure, constituting the work's defining beginning, when Sutton's character murders her children. Sutton describes the scene as:

> a kind of mechanism to define different phases of slow motion. It's a way to divide time. I think the scene approaches true slow motion, not just slow motion for the stage but near-photographic time, what the eye perceives as slow - it's that slow (Shyer 1989: 6).

Several qualities are implied by this description: the quality of slow motion when performed by Sutton is in itself like an image of time, not in the sense of time being measured by movement, but as a direct consequence of our experience of duration when we are exposed to a slow moving body.

In *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), movement and time become intrinsically linked through the distribution across the stage of bodies in a variety of tempos. The space is defined by these variations in movement and tempo. It seems to expand in either dimension, depending upon the speed and direction of movement across it. Time becomes relative. The visual reference to Einstein's theory of Relativity is clearly intended.

Theatre is already a place where real time has been compressed but Wilson deliberately suspends its unnatural time by presenting actions that exceed our expectations of their duration. 'Wilson's slow motion dramatizes time, not as a discrete unit ticked off by a chronometer, but as a flowing succession of states, melting invisibly, invisibly into each other' (Holmberg 1996: 11). These temporal states have the potential to awaken the audience's processes of consciousness so that they experience the passing of time as an eternal present, or according to Holmberg's (1996) analysis: 'The past found again, [...] Proust's privileged moment: a moment inside and outside time' (Holmberg 1996: 11). In this 'moment', in which time seems indeterminate, and in which

the known, once again, is unfamiliar, the phenomenon of involuntary memory is experienced as a cut in time. It is a moment when the past consumes the present, becoming more real, as an experience, than the original event to which the memory refers.

The intention of *The Letter* was to incorporate Wilson's practice of slow movement into an exploration of time and motion through the invocation of memory.

### Workshop 14, Film: *The Letter*

Although variations in this practice had been explored during the first ten workshops, it wasn't until *The Letter* that the group began to work with slow movement for a performance filmed live to camera. Pivotal to this exploration was movement derived from a memory of the letter's contents. The intention was to draw the spectator into an experience of time through an exposure to slow moving bodies and imitative behaviour.

The space was divided into five booths, each containing a seated performer. The booths opened onto another area designated by artificial grass. The following directions were given: each performer would receive a letter, on reading it, react to its contents, exit his/her booth after several minutes, and be met by a partner who mirrored the former's actions.

The link between motion and an external object was immediately established when the recipients, on reading their letter, began to invent gestural patterns. Even when it was cast aside, the letter remained in the booth, acting as a physical reminder that each gesture referred back to its contents. Only the recipients responded to the letter's contents with spontaneous movement, whereas their imitative partners took their form from a memory of what they

had witnessed. This arrangement was intended to shadow Wilson's structural approach in *The Life and Death of Sigmund Freud* (1969) , which, he has suggested, offers 'a collage of different realities occurring simultaneous[ly] like being aware of several visual factors and how they combine into a picture before your eyes at any given moment' (Kaye 1994: 69).

A decision was made to explore the captured footage from the performance by applying slow motion to many of the film's shots. The intention was to reveal processes, which might otherwise remain unseen, such as the response and reaction of performers to the content of their letters. Slow motion served to extend these responses and offer a fluctuating experience of time through the various procedures in which performers gravitated towards a reciprocal exchange of gestures. The ensuing flow of gestures from the recipients and the corresponding gestures of their mimetic partners produced images that seemed to manifest an experience of time in which the delay between a gesture and its replication in another body was decisive.

By utilizing a variety of contrasting film speeds, differences were heightened between the performers' deliberate enactments of the material and their more spontaneous or instinctive responses to the reality being created. The film evinced the capacity of the body to tell the truth about this dual experience, and the complexities inherent to such a construction.

Through the process of film editing, the idea that Wilson's images manifest a sensitization to movement in relation to time began to be discovered. In his production *Deafman Glance* (1971), the opening scene is informed by a film in which the slowed down reaction of mothers to their babies, as Wilson has suggested, 'demonstrates that "the body doesn't lie … we can trust the body"' (Kaye 1994: 63). As Kaye (1994) goes on to assert: 'Wilson's story suggests that

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when such actions are seen fully what they reveal is a great deal of complexity underlying apparently simple exchanges' (Kaye 1994: 63-64).

In *The Letter,* the complexities inherent to the relationship between memory and movement, and between real experience and a created fiction, were central to the film. The selection of images and their temporal manipulation supported this presentation and led to a decisive method of exploring Wilson's approach to time through the medium of film. This method will be comprehensively examined in Chapters 4 and 5

The use of slow tempos in the film also revealed how a heightened sense of time is experienced in the transition between stasis and motion. As a result of this consideration, a definitive structure was created to examine the moment of transition from still image to motion.

### Workshop 15-16, *Tableau* DVD 2: 4th clip from the Film *Tableau*

The intention of *Tableau* was firstly, to explore the idea that static states are on the same continuum as movement; and secondly, to dramatize a specific narrative through a group of bodies whose postures could identify it. Stillness was to be presented as a preconditioned state of potential action by encapsulating, in a freeze-frame, a particular moment of the performance. The transition from stillness might reveal the processes through which movement is initiated.

Within the freeze-frame, each posture was arranged to represent a different feature of a narrative. Subsequent actions were therefore contingent upon the function of postures within the tableau. As an initial state of paused movement, this image eventually gave way to a slow motion performance of the narrative suggested by it.

The moment of stillness was a focus for all other incipient movements. It implied that movement was about to occur, as much as movement, in its constant reference to the original static postures, implied still images. The practice of slow motion allowed the body to be seen at the effect of this dynamic. 'As one critic wrote, by slowing down the ordinary in our lives, Wilson manages to "extract from it all the light it holds"' (Shyer 1989: 10).  This observation concurs with Lehmann's (2006) assertion that the Wilson tableau creates the impression of 'a visual object [which] seems to store real time in it' (Lehmann 2006: 156).

As a result of its potential to reveal the often unseen relationship between still and moving images, slow movement became a foundational practice in the workshops. The research was advanced by discovering how Wilson utilizes such practices as slow movement to dramatize the transitional structures of a performance.

## 3.3   The four modes of performance: stillness, repetition, inconsistency and transition

Even if, predominately, Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) consists of movement, a quality of stillness is apparent. In one scene, a gathering crowd and the monumental set creates an animated tableau framed by the proscenium arch. The scene is made of differing states of stillness and movement. In *The Life and Death of Sigmund Freud* (1969), a quality of stillness is emphasized by the juxtaposition between a static figure and a group of

moving bodies. Sutton describes it as 'Absolute stillness. […] It's almost like you're looking but not seeing' (Shyer 1989: 8). Her phrase 'looking but not seeing' suggests that, even in stillness, movement is always implied.

For Wilson, 'movement and stillness are on the same continuum' (Shevtsova 2007: 125), distinguishable, reciprocal, and yet inseparable from the pictorial structure.

> A stage divided into horizontal zones parallel to the proscenium […]. Processional movement in straight lines across these zones, creating layers of activity. The additive process which gradually fills in space with energy and people, then gradually empties it out (Holmberg 1996: 7).

Wilson intends to engage the audience in a theatre of image and drama and the transitions between these visual states.

In *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), the 'layers of activity' consist of repetitive patterns of movement: some emerge out of a still image that becomes filled up with movement, others repeat until the scene ends or the action is superseded by a new image which reinforces the continuum. In the last scene, the explosion of activity provides a sudden and significant event that, along with other scenes suggestive of narrative, breaks up the general ebb and flow of time's passing.

This is a work presenting repetitive events that are interrupted by inconsistencies;

> repetition suspends time by annulling progress, while inconsistency creates time by supplying it with a history of significant events. Time seems capable of shrinkage and of magnification. People say that directly before a catastrophe, and during it, time appears to move slowly (Howell 1999: 171).

This idea of inconsistency is referenced in Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). But this is like a shadow in the work compared to the eternal flow of images that might only be destroyed by a catastrophe.

In response to this research, a time-line to explore the transitions between stillness, repetition, and inconsistency was assembled. This work was carried out to examine the implications of such a structure on the temporal and spatial qualities of performance.

**Workshop 10, *Gangs* (see previous clip - DVD 1: 10th clip)**

*Gangs* was constructed in two stages: formation and confrontation. In the first stage, there was a transition as one gang member signalled for the next one to arrive and actively demonstrate their role within the gang. Each gang member's initiation ritual comprised of the action of finger clicking, and the creation of a new movement form. These repetitive acts provided a structure in which inconsistent behaviour also characterized the phase which precluded the confrontation. This last phase was intended to produce a catastrophe that was foreshadowed by the other stages of inconsistency.

Although characterized by inconsistencies, distinct patterns could also be detected in each gang member's initiation ritual. An initial statement was followed by contrasting gestures which, by being repeated, slowed down or speeded up and sometimes stilled, built up into a movement sequence. This construction reflected a procedural approach to realizing the forms of mobile bodies; a practice that had been discovered in the first workshop.

Other discoveries were made: during each transition from one repetition (walking) to the next (finger clicking) a significant moment was produced. This moment of inconsistency almost approached stillness in its rupture of visible

patterns of movement. It was like a barely discernible pause between one activity and the next in which the body took on different postures in order to perform the next task. During this hiatus, there was a feeling of time being prolonged by the assumption or expectation that there would soon be a confrontation, a *catastrophe*, or at least a significant event.

After the *Gangs* workshop, this method of structuring the transitions in a performance was furthered. For instance, other decisive factors were considered, i.e., the frequency with which these states of stillness, repetition and inconsistency occurred and the means of triggering the transitions between them.

### Workshop 11, *Shame the Glove* DVD 2: 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> clip

*Shame the Glove* focused on a personal catastrophe in order to examine states of stillness, repetition and inconsistency, and find ways of effectively structuring them in performance. Each transition was to result in a qualitative shift in the behaviour of performers.

The script required the group to begin in stillness at the fringes of the space. They were to enter in the mode of repetition by walking, exploring their characters, and working with their gloves. A move into inconsistency was to occur through an engagement with the photographers and a return to stillness as a result of a sudden rejection (catastrophe). Then, in a renewed desire for attention, they were to take up the mode of repetition again.

During the workshop, the pathology of shame, as a natural structure of behaviour, was executed by each performer according to his/her unique time-line. Although individual performances were clearly structured, different stages of the same cycle of states (stillness, repetition and inconsistency) occurred

simultaneously. As the scene was developed in rehearsal for use in a subsequent production, a chaotic arrangement of bodies began to describe the progression of individuals into a crowd.  The pathology of shame was made visible through this progression from order to chaos.

**Workshop 14, *The Letter* (refer to the film, *The Letter*)**

In another workshop, *The Letter*, structures were pursued to bring coherence rather than chaos to pivotal moments of transition. The intention was that transitions would be implicit in behavioural responses both to the letter and to the moment of transition between a recipient and their imitative partner.

Each performer began in stillness, creating patterns of repetitive behaviour on receipt of their letter. A transition to inconsistency occurred when the partner, who had been mirroring the former's actions, introduced a new pattern of movement to which the former responded. Though the workshop was structured in this way, performers could choose how to react to the contents of their letter.

One performer remained relatively static, attempting to dismiss the contents of her letter by repeatedly destroying its form, creating an image that communicated its impact upon her.

From this exploration, it was discovered that significant images were produced when these transitions were triggered. If specific gestures were created to signal these changes, then the production of images could be integrated into these transitional structures. This method of creating transitions in performance is discussed in chapter 6.2.

As yet, only the visual aspects of performance in relation to these methods have been described, but as *The Letter* was prepared for a live performance,

sound effects and music were incorporated, and are now described in their emergence from research into Wilson's use of dislocation.

## 3.4   Dislocation.

**Movement and sound**

A key component of Wilson's theatre is the dislocation between sound and visual images and the autonomy of the components that make up the mise-en-scène. 'If music accompanies movement […], he makes sure that the two neither start nor stop at the same time and that the rhythm of the movement does not pick up the rhythm of the music' (Holmberg 1996: 146-147).

The use of music to accompany, rather than provide a rhythm which could be interpreted by movement, was considered. The idea of dislocation might be accomplished through the addition of this autonomous layer. In referring to a cinematic model, music's ambient rather than rhythmic qualities were sought in order that sound and visual images could work independently.

**Workshop 34, *On the Other Hand* (refer to Film, *On the Other Hand*)**

In the workshop, *On the Other Hand*, dislocation was explored by using music and live sound effects, firstly as a way of realizing disengagement between sound and movement; and secondly, to refer to imagined events beyond the visible field.

The dislocation between images and non-diegetic sound enhanced the reality of the workshop by increasing the imaginary space in which the performers could locate themselves. As a result, many of these sounds were used in the film *On the Other Hand* which was based on material from this workshop.

Since the research on Wilson was focused on movement, along with lighting and set design, sound wasn't a central concern. Its relevance was in its potential to alter or enhance the quality of an action. The possibility of using sound to accompany movement, rather than be interpreted by it, was often recognized when workshops were reconstructed in film, whether as an effect or as music, or a combination of the two. When many of these workshops were developed in rehearsal as possible scenes for a subsequent production (see Chapter 7.4), sound and music were used to accompany movement as they had in the films. Soundtracks for the other films will be discussed in chapter 5.3.

**Movement and speech**

In Noh theatre, 'space need not be indicated by a space, sound by a sound, light by lights, human activity by an actor's acting, and so on. In this case it also happens that we "see tones" and "hear open countryside"' (Honzl 1976: 83). 'It is the changeability of the theatrical sign that is its specific property' (Honzl 1976: 85). This approach to the theatrical sign is also a principle of Wilson's theatre and is adopted by him because 'things happen with the body that have nothing to do with what we say. It's more interesting if the mind and body are in two different places, occupying different zones of reality' (Holmberg 1996: 139). In Wilson's *Quartett* (2006), most of the speech is delivered by actors in

relatively static postures. Sometimes their dialogue is pre-recorded and again the sound is unaccompanied by action, or if there is action, it is divorced from the words that are heard.

The research into dislocation led to an experiment with speech, not as dialogue, but from an intention of providing another textual layer with which to accompany movement.

In the workshop *The End of the World*, performers receiving information that the world was about to end took up positions alongside the main action. Their dialogue consisted of descriptive observations relating to the characters moving towards a table where a seated figure would inform them of the news. Rather than directly engaging with the speaking of others, as in conventional dialogue, they reported on movement. Words presented the inner concerns of the witnesses, their inner dialogue with themselves. No one reacted to or engaged with the words spoken. Thus speech acted as another sign, alongside movement, even though it was clearly a direct commentary on the action.[1]

## Dislocated movement

Since the primary concern was with movement, lengthy explorations of dislocation between gesture and speech would not necessarily serve the research. However, Wilson also explores dislocation within a movement form.

When Wilson directs his actors by asserting that 'hands and eyes must move separately. It creates more tension if the hand moves independently' (Holmberg 1996: 148), he confirms his intention to take the idea from Japanese theatre that the body is a collection of parts, each of which has the potential to convey meaning. For example, in his production of *King Lear*

(1985), the body itself is expressed in dislocation, often to display outwardly the inner disintegration of an identity.

The first workshop to explore the expressive potential of the body's individual parts and to assign specific roles to certain limbs was *Formations*.

**Workshop 19, *Formations* DVD 2: 7th and 8th clips. Refer to the film, *Oedipus***

The aim of this workshop was to explore the capacity of the body's constituent parts to signify meaning.

In the first exercise, the group were to consider the finger as an object, and therefore as an identifiable sign, autonomous to the rest of the body.

The means by which each performer carried, unleashed, or secreted this imaginary *object*, evidenced this construction, and led to a final formation of bodies. Fingers were actively extended, connecting with other limbs, drawing the body into an arrangement of postures and positions. In another version, the focus of attention was the ankle. Again another formation occurred, but this time the group were connected through their lower limbs and in relation to the floor.

In both versions, dislocation between the selected limb and the rest of the body was established through the creation of distinct movement forms and underlined in the final formation. As a result, dislocation was used extensively in the film *Oedipus* as a method of characterization and to reveal something beyond an external expression of characteristics (see chapter 5.4). For example, the schism in Jocasta's emotional and psychological state was shown through the contradictions between her facial expressions and gestures. Her attitude of calm disposition was created to belie the activity of her hands, which mutilate a bunch of flowers, shredding them to the ground. The

dislocation in her physical being was accentuated by cutting between shots of her face and shots of her hands.

The next chapter, on the reconstruction of performance *in* film, continues to describe how cinematic processes, such as montage, facilitated this practice of dislocation.

In this chapter, an analysis of Wilson's methods was explored and completed through a workshop practice. As a result of this exploration, methods of creating performance began to be identified. Thus a synthesis took place between an analytical and a generative approach to research. The exploration into slow movement discovered different methods of expressing the relationship between stasis and movement. The imposition of structures and content led to an understanding of how different qualities in movement could be generated. Central to this understanding was the idea of transitions between states of stillness, repetition and inconsistency, which, as a result, could now be applied to the creation of structures. The practice of improvisation was tested and found to be a useful method of creating distinct movement forms and of realizing the intentions of the script.

The next chapter describes the shift from performance to the re-construction of performance in film. Taking Wilson's idea of dislocation as a demonstration of how this intention might take shape, the above example from *Oedipus* begins to show how, with the advantage of montage, images could be selected, relocated and distorted in film. Through this process, cinematic images were identified and used to determine the relationship between still images and movement. Films were created to explore an experience of time in relation to movement which became essential to the establishment of a new understanding of Wilson's theatre.

**Note:**

1.  There is also some scientific evidence concerning the temporal order of speech and gesture which would seem to add further justification to Wilson's insistence on separating them. The neurobiologist and theorist Sean Gallagher (2005) asserts that 'although gesture and speech are performed in a constant and synchronized temporal relationship, […] gesture slightly anticipates speech' (Gallagher 2005: 125). This research inevitably has implications for the delivery of a reiterative text in the theatre. It would imply that speech cannot ever be successfully accompanied by naturally occurring gestures, and no form of pre-meditated speech can ever occasion an appropriate gestural accompaniment.

# Chapter 4: Re-construction of performance in film

Montage and the procedures of working with a mobile camera are explored to elicit Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' (Brecht 1994: 136). Films are structured by taking Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the cinematic image as a guiding principle and linking it to Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' of the imagination. Following this approach, the accomplishment of an indirect 'time-image' establishes a link between time and the movement of the camera.

The centralizing power of the camera is also explored as a means of establishing narrative continuity in relation to fragmentary imagery. This leads to a consideration of dramatic content and its mediation in film.

Henri Bergson's concept of 'duration' is explained and leads to a new understanding of time in Wilson's theatre (Bergson 2000: 73). Deleuze's idea of the direct 'time-image', which he derives from Bergson, is explored in film. In this image, and unlike the indirect 'time-image', a sense of time is no longer dependent on movement (Deleuze 2005b: 37).

## 4.1 Tracking shots, slow motion, and montage as a way of applying Deleuze's 'movement-image' to the re-construction of performance in film

In *Deafman Glance* (1971), Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' is achieved through the simultaneity of 'distinct graphic units' of action (Brecht 1994: 113). Each unit is contingent upon variations in time: moments of stasis and variable speeds. Some 'units', such as the swimmer, are present throughout. Others depart, only to return, often reappearing in the same place, or metamorphosing into different forms. The spaces which they occupy are organized zonally, parallel to the front of the stage. The spectator is continually left with a choice of where to look and for how long.

During the first ten workshops, the research was documented using a static camera but this approach did not capture the multiplicity of simultaneous actions. If instead the camera was mobilised, actions could be captured by cutting from one to another, or by focusing the camera beyond events in the foreground to capture actions in the distance. This might more accurately reflect the multiplicity of actions and Wilson's organization of images into zones. The intention was to use a mobile camera to elicit Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development', and explore his arrangement of space into zones of activity. A workshop featuring four 'distinct graphic units' of simultaneous action (*Possible Narratives*) was created. Subsequently, each 'unit' was to impose its contents upon an adjacent one. As a result, the methodology for film developed from one of documentation to one of reconstruction.

Deleuze's writing on the cinema began to inform this new direction. Two essential aspects of his analysis became fundamental to the research: firstly, his concept of the 'movement-image', which he divides into 'perception', 'affection' and 'action-images' (Deleuze 2005a: 68); and secondly the 'time-image' which he arrives at through Bergson's theories on 'duration'.

These ideas were immediately relevant to the research because of the implication that an external equivalent of the performers' internal states could be produced in the image. Such an image could explore Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' of the imagination. Producing the 'affection-image' would be essential to that task because 'it is precisely in affection that the movement ceases to be that of translation in order to become movement of expression' (Deleuze 2005a: 68). The first film to explore Deleuze's images was *Requinnes*, which was based on material from *The Possible Narratives* workshop.

The intention was to manifest a subjective view through the movement of the camera and operator, and an objective view, by showing performers at the effect of their internal processes.

### Film: *Requinnes*

With the mobile camera, the simultaneous, distinctive and yet commingling forms in the performance were now represented by a corresponding image: 'This is the movement-image, […] the cinema realises the paradox of moulding itself on the time of the object and of taking the imprint of its duration as well' (Deleuze 2005a: 25). Since a 'movement-image' occurs when a body and the movement of the machinery used to capture it become fused in the shot, the mobility of the camera would be an important consideration.

The relationship between the frame and relatively static performers (the tracking shot) was constantly adjusted. Or the performers could be seen to move in relation to a static frame (the static shot). Often there were more complex images in which both the frame and performer moved in relationship to each other.

In considering these procedures alongside Deleuze's idea of the 'movement-image', two interlinking developments in the research emerged. Firstly, the camera operator's subjective view, expressed in qualities of distraction and interest, was imprinted on the film. Secondly, camera movements were detectable in the angles and speed with which images were captured. Furthermore, with the adoption of montage, which, according to Deleuze, is the second criterion of the 'movement-image', these traces of movement were even more in evidence when the mobility of the shot was used to link images, e.g., the panning shots across the space. During these sequences, and in the absence of human bodies, the camera animates the scene. The conditions that the performance space proposes – a space for representation rather than a representational space – are made contingent upon the camera's movement. When these shots are protracted, as in the shot of the artificial grass, a definitive connection between the context for the performance and its content is broken. Through the probing gestures of the mobile camera, the subject of the film becomes centralised on the act of viewing and on an interrogation of the objective reality of the performance space. When camera motion increases, the group's abstract, mimetic, or representational acts, that might be said to frequent the film elsewhere, become less significant.

Given that the originating performance was not limited by an intention to produce linear narratives, Wilson's manner of deconstructing movement into

distinct gestures became a useful method of selecting and arranging shot sequences. Some of the images, although representative of the performance's more insignificant actions, but captured, nevertheless, because of the camera's indifference to collecting material, evinced the often unseen processes that accompany movement. By predominately selecting these images described by Deleuze as 'affection- images', rather than the 'action-image' - that which 'relates movement to "acts" (verbs) which will be the design for an assumed end or result' (Deleuze 2005a: 67) - gestural communication and facial expression, in its capacity to reveal the mind's inner processes, were central to the film.

Taking the discovery of these 'affection-images' as a starting point, the intention of *Hyde* was to alter the context and chronology of the *Possible Narratives* performance by exploring a different arrangement of shots. This might provide a new way of creating material which could then be selected for subsequent performances.

## Film: *Hyde*

The opening images introduced a character performing inconsequential gestures in a moment of self-absorption. They were not intended to be 'action-images', but images of a man affected by internal thoughts and feelings. During the edit, these 'affection-images' were sometimes reversed to create an image which made familiar movements appear odd in some indeterminable way. They were also slowed down so that gestures could be seen rather than being hidden from view, either because they happen too fast or because they are ignored in favour of more significant actions.

Some shots were now at such a slow rate that movement could be seen in 'a preparatory phase, a stroke phase in which the gesture proper occurs, and a withdrawal' (Rotman 2008: 22). Complete 'action-images' were often re-cut so that gestures could occur as 'discrete and autonomous objects of conscious attention' (Rotman 2008: 50). Fundamental to this approach to the image was Wilson's manner of developing non-linear action sequences to create 'a rhythm of different movements', and 'making gestures for movements one, two, three, four and so on' (Zurbrugg 2004: 373).

By using montage to rearrange material from the same performance, several new narratives were implied. This led to the consideration that a performance could be created which would produce a variety of characters and incidents from which images could be selected. This approach might serve two purposes: firstly, the possibility of trying out different arrangements of images in preparation for a performance; and secondly, the creation of a film to explore the perceptual processes through which images are received.

Such is the complexity of Wilson's early, image-saturated work that the gaze, in attempting to experience the scope and extent of the information before it, is constantly on the move, always making selections. Consequently, the spectator is implicated as a co-creator in the work and therefore, aware of his/her own participation. By devising an approach to montage in response to this way of looking, and by sourcing material from live performance, similarities in the perceptual experience of the project's films and Wilson's theatre works began to emerge. For example, the sequence of interleaved images of a man whistling and a man doing up the buttons of his coat in the film *Passing By* was intended to develop a subjective viewpoint in which interest naturally fluctuates between one event and another. In this sequence, shots were made

incrementally shorter, and the cuts between them more frequent, so that the two actions became associated. The faster the cuts, the more the accumulation of images affected the visual sense, such that the processes of perception prevailed over the thing perceived. As a consequence, a temporally disruptive and fragmented experience of watching the film was achieved. Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive' approach was elicited.

An appreciable difference became apparent between the way in which the performance and the film could be viewed. In performance, such choices as where to look, and how long to look for, though influenced by the composition, are made by the spectator. However, by reconstructing this performance in film, not only were a selection of images chosen, but the way in which they were seen was mediated through the manipulations and displacements in time and space which montage and the shot make available. Although Wilson's arrangement of space into zones could be seen in images in which several narrative 'units' were captured in a single shot, the spatial relationships between these 'units' were continually redefined in accordance with the position and mobility of the camera.

With the reconstruction of this material into autonomous films, objects functioning as part of the set were treated as an essential aspect of the content. Although indicative of a performative space, these objects also functioned as part of a conceivable reality. Spotlights mounted on dollies, screens to designate the performance area, and coulisses contributed to the theatrical appearance of this reality. As well as delimiting the performance area in the absence of a stage, these components belonged to an assemblage of objects with which the performers could interact.

An opening shot in *Requinnes* is dominated by a performer's actions of examining a glove within a luminous beam of light. The spotlight's apparatus is entirely visible. As distinct from the theatrical convention of using lighting to support the representation of a specific reality, the film is characterized by the inclusion of lighting rigs within the film space. Through their inclusion the implication is that this specific reality is also partially determined by their representational function as theatrical signs. The film's content is therefore contingent upon a performative mode of presentation and cannot be considered without establishing the chain of displacements which it implies.

In the absence of a live audience, the camera provides a point of view, capturing images that evince a sense of partiality by being directed in the selection of shots. In the absence of the camera's apparatus, but in full view of its traces, which are inseparable from the film's images, the viewer follows the camera's point of view and, in so doing, witnesses an event from which the live element has been erased. The act of viewing the film is permeated by a sense of this erasure. Furthermore, the medium's characteristic capacity for narration is undermined by the traces of theatricality which remain. Although shots were rearranged in *Requinnes* and *Hyde* to explore different narrative possibilities, this exploration was partly constrained by the screens and lighting, and therefore limited by being tied to a particular time and place - aspects of a dramatic presentation which in theatre are more generally manipulated by changes in lighting and the set.

In the films under discussion, the extent of the film space and its relationship to the designated performance area is ambiguous. As a result, a film viewer might consider that the performers' actions are part of a rehearsal for a performance, or for a film in which events appear to take place on a makeshift

set. Despite the fact that actions are born out of these conditions, the performers appear to respond to the given situation as if to a conceivable reality which, ultimately, is only apparent because their actions correspond to it. Even though this conceivable reality is sustained throughout these films, different lines of conjecture as to the context of the originating performance, and possible meanings of the films' content are invited. Consequently, meanings are contingent upon interplay between the viewer's expectations and interpretations of the perceived reality, and complicated by notions of absence and presence as much as they are dependent upon the events and actions of the film.

As the approach to film evolved through the use of montage and a mobile camera, other distinct types of image began to emerge. How and why these images were incorporated is now explained.

## 4.2   Capturing the 'affection-image' as a preparatory phase in *Hat Check Girl*. Use of the close-up in *Fugue States*

### Film: *Hat Check Girl*

The film's intention was to explore the idea that the often unseen expressions of the moving body can be uncovered by creating the conditions in which 'affection-images' thrive. This might be accomplished by working with the Wilson actor's practice of creating movement from an 'interior screen'.

The mutability of the role-playing subject was intended to produce a preparatory phase between received and executed movement. This might be expressed as a state of latency in which performers are between a new set of attributes and a possible action.

A hotel lobby was chosen to facilitate the practice of role-play so that, at any time, performers could go to a reception desk, check in an item of clothing, pick up another ticket detailing a new role, and begin to construct a new identity. With this new identity, it was necessary to assimilate the new brief by figuring out a pattern of movement.

In several under-lit spaces which were a feature of the set, individuals prepared their newly acquired identities before disclosing them. This process transformed each performer from a character, affected by all the possible choices available to him/her, to one of action. These contrasting sequences were often intercut or slowed down to militate against the differences between action and affection. As a result, 'the actuality of the action-image, the virtuality of the affection-image' became interchangeable, 'all the more easily for having fallen into the same indifference' (Deleuze 2005a: 212). Already obscure because they were often connected with discontinuous or resumptive narrative threads, the 'affection-images' were made more ambiguous by being disconnected from their 'motor extension' of action (Deleuze 2005a: 219). By prolonging the 'affection-image' which is, by nature, fleeting, being an image of potential not yet realized in action, the so-called 'action-images' of the film also seemed indifferent to action; a condition underwritten by the discontinuous performances of identity. The removal of voice sounds with which speech conveys action accomplished another disconnection.

By being so prolonged, intermediate states, between perception, affection and action defined as '*impulse*' or '*reflection*' or '*relation-images*' (Deleuze 2005b: 31), were identified. By selecting these images, the film often showed isolated moments of contemplation, an impulse to move, and pure reflection, without a relational dimension either to a narrative or to the other characters. By contrast, the ending was arranged as a series of 'action-images'; the implication being that such a denouement was the consequence of all these fragmented and truncated images. On reflection, the decision to resolve the film with such a narrative device was inconsistent with the quality of 'systematic ambiguity' which Brecht attributes to Wilson's theatre works (Brecht 1994: 109). In *Deafman Glance* (1971), this can be seen in movement which cannot necessarily be identified with specific events or the main focus of a scene.

Although the reconstruction of *Hat Check Girl* in film presented the possibility of selecting images which were more about a quality of movement than a discernible action, the potential conflict between 'systematic ambiguity' and narrative was now a recurring theme in the research.

The film's set and props were more overtly indicative of a theatrical allusion than in any other film so far described. Consequently, even if certain aspects of the script were not actualized during the performance, and in this respect characters were constructed from a minimal amount of description, a sense of events taking place as part of a fiction was apparent. Despite the fact that much of the gestural language of the performance was correlated to this fiction, the strategy of assigning multiple roles to performers liberated them from having to fulfil fixed roles as they might do with a more normative theatrical approach. Gestures were discovered that could be associated with

the potential for action rather than its materialization. These indeterminate gestures, rather than determinate actions, were produced when the performers engaged in a process within which the directions of the script were yielding to the inner dialogues of their imagination. Gestures of trying out possible actions were the result of the 'interior screen' of the imagination.  In these instances, Deleuze's 'affection-image' was produced, but as he has stated, it is often 'the face [rather than the moving body,] which brings to light these movements of expression' (Deleuze 2005a: 68), an assertion which was explored in a subsequent film *Fugue States.*

An important characteristic of *Hat Check Girl* is the representation of a hotel lobby space and the distance between the camera and the action. Consequently, the film's images conform to a kind of spatial homogeneity that is distinctly theatrical. Despite the frequent changes in characterisation and costume, conflicts do not arise between the dramatic presentation of events and the performers' gestural actions. However, the sense of homogeneity, which is also predicated on the film's performative content, has the effect of nullifying the differences between each performer's enactments of their separate characterizations. The nullification of these differences, which is also attributable to the imposition of each performer's unique gestural vocabulary on the action, contributes to a sense of permeability between one characterization and the next. The effect is of performers adopting fugitive roles which do not add up to consistently recognizable characters, and of corresponding images that float between a varying set of referents.

Cole's (1992) statement that in Wilson's productions  'the individual actor's presence is the only character his scripts ever legitimate' seems appropriate in

the context of performers who are being themselves as much as they are creating images that refer back to a script (Cole 1992: 159).

In the film *Hat Check Girl,* the immediate reality is of images in which gestures are made by performers, not necessarily to engage with another or communicate some intention. The mapping of personal mannerisms of the performers onto their movement forms matches the version of reality which the film naturally affirms: a version of reality that implies narrative linearity, and the cause and effect of real events, even if linearity is often undermined by gestures with no dramatic intent. However, the centralising power of the camera contributes to a sense of narrative and of narrative continuity even when a recognizably linear unfolding of dramatic events is absent. This sense of narrative is reinforced by the dualistic nature of the performance: the performers explore human relationships motivated by the description of their character in the script, and also by impulses arising out of the performative situation; impulses which are driven by their more personal inclinations towards interaction. This duality is made more complex by shots of performers constructing their various characters.

For the most part, a sense of the film's narrative continuity precludes any apparency of narrative fragmentation based on the division between rehearsed and performed action, even when dramatic events are forestalled, discontinue, or are ambiguous. However, rehearsed actions appear to correspond to internal states and performed actions to external expression. This differentiation conforms to Deleuze's concepts of the 'affection-image' and the 'action-image'.

Further exploration of this differentiation might lead to other ways of examining the potential conflict within Wilson's approach to the relationship

between 'systematic ambiguity' and narration. This was central to the next film *Fugue States*.

## Film: ***Fugue States***

The attainment of shared qualities between facial expressions and moving bodies was central to the film's intentions. In the opening sequence, although there is an obvious connection between the actions of the two performers and the expressions on a woman's face, the intention was not to explain these images by an external event.

The extended close-up of the face was manipulated by slowing down the shot and then intercutting the slow motion images with frames which had been sped up. This produced a sudden shift in the position of the face as if the whole body was being subjected to a disturbance. When this jolt of the head and the wide-eyed expression of the face coincided, an image of hysteria was produced. Instead of the face evincing a sensation derived from some external stimuli, 'the expression exists even without justification, it does not become expression because a situation is associated with it in thought' (Deleuze 2005a: 105).

If, in this sequence, a situation can be ascribed to the image, it is one in which a doctor appears to physically restrain the woman. Despite the fact that a situation is implied, her expression does not relate to events, or even the events of the original performance which were re-envisaged during its reconstruction in film. Instead an internal experience was made visible, although unidentifiable and expressing a variety of possible meanings or none at all.

According to Bergson's concept of 'duration', ascribing external causes to an internal experience reflects the confused terms with which we distinguish time. When these terms are given by external and spatial demarcations, our experience of duration is diminished. In the close-up under discussion, the progression of internal feelings made manifest in the fleshy expressions of the face was externalised, but not in relation to spatial considerations. These were excluded, and no explanation linked facial expressions to an external cause.

Without reference to an external cause, a visual equivalent of internal processes was made perceptible through the montage of manipulated 'movement-images' in the film. Bergson's concept of 'duration' began to inform both the choice of images and the methods with which they were captured, manipulated and structured. To advance this development, a radical exploration of an indirect representation of time which derives from movement was considered. This might be achieved through a more focused investigation into Bergson's term 'subjective states' (Bergson 2000: 70) in connection with Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen'.

## 4.3   The mobile camera in its capacity to realize 'semi-subjective images', and as a method of realizing Deleuze's indirect 'time-image'. The gesturing camera in *Passing By* and *Docking Station*

From the tenth workshop onwards, the mobile camera had been used to capture movement. Subsequently, the intention was that the camera and the operator, although pre-disposed to this task, would be reconceived in a new

role. In such a subjective and participatory role, the operator would cease to be indifferent to the images which were captured.

## Film: *Passing By*

An objective of the film *Passing By* was to capture the evanescent gestures of the passer-by through a complicit relationship between the camera operator and the performers. According to Deleuze, 'Mitry put forward the notion of the generalised semi-subjective image, in order to designate this 'being-with' of the camera: it no longer mingles with the character, nor is it outside: it is with him' (Deleuze 2005a: 74).

To manifest the 'semi-subjective image', it would be necessary to explore the range and scope of the camera's operational capacity. The camera's physical movements, reflected in protracted shots, might then be equated with a level of interest in the action given by variations in duration, direction, and the angle and speed with which an individual was approached. The intention was that the performers became more aware of the movements of the camera and operator, which as a result, could then influence their actions and reactions. The aim was to imply that the film's images were linked to actions of selection and pursuit carried out by the camera operator. Although never directly seen, the traces of these actions might then become evident.

The set reflected this intention. It consisted of two parallel lines of spotlights within an enclosed rectilinear space, representing the street. There were several entry points, enabling the camera operator, in the role of another character, to enter the street and engage in the action.

As the passers-by moved within the set, either alone or in consort with each other, the camera followed them. Sometimes, due to the camera's close

proximity to a character which it had already pursued, a 'semi-subjective image' was produced. The camera operator appeared to have returned with renewed interest. At other times, images were produced that suggested a loss of interest, evincing movement away from a body; or fixating on a recently vacated space as if in search of another; or pointing to a body as it moved out of shot, only to reappear again somewhere else in the set.

When the camera followed a protagonist, it was an action made by the operator that could only be seen as a trace of movement inscribed in the image. Since images were not intended to adhere to a specific narrative, the operator was at liberty to react to events, evincing the subjective point of view through a fluctuating interest in the diverse walks and gestures which it pursued. The camera operator, though unseen, seemed to be in search of an external causality for its own movements. This was evident in the accretion of 'semi-subjective images' which consistently referred back to the camera operator's actions and reactions.

The film intended to show that the subjective viewpoint was not purely affected by visual phenomena but also influenced by sonic stimuli. This was achieved in post-production by embedding the sound of one character greeting another in the soundtrack.

By reducing its audibility, the sound had the quality of remote connection to the corresponding image - the character speaking the word 'hello' close to the camera. Through this process, the image suggested that the camera and operator were at one remove from the action, and during this lapse did not have the requisite attention to take everything in. In other words, a 'semi-subjective image' was produced, manifesting subjectivity through a lack of impartiality. Thus a link between the 'semi-subjective image' and a variable

degree of attention or awareness implied that the unit of camera and operator had chosen, was distracted, and partially listened.

Flesh and feelings, which were entirely at the discretion of the operator, had been brought to a consideration of the camera. The dynamic range of the apparatus was widely affected by the operator's own movements and sensations. The level to which the privileged subject – the camera plus its operator – was 'put into movement', determined how the images might be seen and known. Consequently, the film's images were arrived at through processes relating to choice, central to Bergson's concept of 'duration'. This he explains as;

> a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number: it would be pure heterogeneity (Bergson 2000: 104).

The 'semi-subjective images' consistently referred to 'a succession of qualitative changes' experienced by the operator. This was made possible because the performance was not vested in a cause and effect relationship, related to external events, or conceived as a linear narrative in order to justify movement. Deleuze (2005a) points out the following:

> Bergsonianism suggested the following definition: *a subjective perception is one in which the images vary in relation to a central and privileged image; an objective perception is one where, as in things, all the images vary in relation to one another, on all their facets and in all their parts*. These definitions affirm not only the difference between two poles of perception, but also the possibility of passing from the subjective to the objective pole. For the more the privileged centre is itself put into movement, the more it will tend towards an acentred system where the images vary in relation to one another and tend to become like the reciprocal actions and vibrations of a pure matter. What

can be more subjective than a delirium, a dream, a hallucination?
(Deleuze 2005a: 79)

In *Docking Station*, the intention was to explore Bergson's idea of the subjective point of view, and establish its identity through images which traced the movements of the camera and camera operator in the film. If these movements were intentionally exaggerated, the fluctuating relationship between mobile bodies and the fixed objects of the set might be made perceptible as hallucinatory images. This objective recalls Sheryl Sutton's comments (see chapter 2) on Wilson's desire to have actors perform as if in a dream, and was crucial to an examination of this dream-like quality in his work.

## Film: *Docking Station*

Although the use of tracking shots began to manifest the 'semi-subjective image', mounting the camera on a mobile tripod was only the first step towards this accomplishment. It was considered that a hand-held approach could advance this intention. Even the subtle gestures of the operator's body might then be detectable and traceable back from the shot.

The script for the film was derived from an essay by Annette Michelson on Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in which she explores movement within a non-gravitational field in relation to the mobile camera. In the script for *Docking Station*, these ideas informed the performance in which the group imagined themselves as either spacecraft or space stations, preparing for a docking procedure. Although the intention was that the group invented new mobile forms in response to the script, only the actions of the camera would be able to complete the project of reflecting 'on the nature of movement in its space, [which as Michelson states] "suggests" nothing so urgent and absorbing as an evidence of the senses' (Michelson, Artforum Feb

1996: 57). Thus the displacements in the camera's position were to present the machinery of the film's making, and its effect upon the viewer's senses, as a focus for the film's content.

Each shot was arranged according to a rectilinear set through which there were several entry points for the camera. In the opening shots, the camera was mobilised to search out the extent of this set, its restrictions and exceptions. Any easy assimilation of scale and volume was denied by an extreme combination of reduced and blindingly bright light. This effect was compounded by the screens and mirrored walls, which excluded the external world by constantly offering a deceptive and ambiguous reference against which actions occurred.

Although the operations of the camera were executed to capture actions, it was through the arrangement and manipulation of shots that several viewpoints were featured. For example, a character was framed between two screens whilst another entered, suggesting a relationship between them. However, the shot's mobility, rather than the characters' movement, was accentuated when the camera tracked behind the nearest screen, before taking up a position between two other screens, and in so doing, obscured the two figures.

The approach to film evolved in several other ways. For example, a minute after the film's opening shot a tracking sequence was manipulated by using replicated and super-imposed shots in a variety of speeds. With these processes, a mirrored, upside-down image was achieved with both vertical and lateral movement; kaleidoscopic and spiralling, as well as, by turns, centrifugal and centripetal. This emphasized the mobility of the recording apparatus and its aptitude for transforming the reality of the performance. The shots of free-

falling figures were achieved with a fast moving, hand-held camera and as a result, described a kind of spatial disorientation.

The camera enabled these movements to be made perceptible as impossible images, often characterized by dynamic shifts in speed, location and angle – images that suggested the kind of weightlessness associated with non-gravitational fields. Thus, the shot modified 'the relative position of immobile sets,' shaping the image in what Deleuze terms the 'ellipsis in the narration' (Deleuze 2005a: 20); carving out the material by way of the camera's movements and imprinting them on the film as indirect images of time. In this way, the camera's position, its viewpoints and movement, shaped the performance's observable actions and narrative, invoking through a kind of machinic intelligence, 'the out-of-field' which, although implicated through these mechanisms, remained indeterminate.

Unlike a performance space or 'the stage [which] is always a concretely physical space where temporal and spatial perceptions are shaped by what comes physically into the space' (Birringer 1991: 31), film space is governed by the shot and the camera frame.

In this film, as with the other films under discussion, there is a disparity between the demarcated performance area and the delimitation of that space by means of its representation in film. The fundamental logic of the camera's mode of capture is to frame and exclude and yet also to suggest the continuity of a real space beyond the camera's scope. The demarcated or closed mise-en-scène is opened up through the camera's mobility and film's tendency to imply an out-of-field, whether through an articulation of open or closed space. The implication is of a performance area that is contiguous with another space which sometimes makes an appearance in these films and is often a

continuation of the space from which the camera follows the action. Either through appearance or implication, the inference of this other space is of physical continuity, rather than the representational dimension offered by theatre's characteristic tendency to reflect upon a perceived reality onstage, and its corollary in the minds and sensory experience of its audience.

In the film *Docking Station*, the live performance, which provides the material for the film, is constrained by the exits and entrances made possible by aspects of demarcation provided by the set; however its limits are exposed by the camera. Unlike a theatre set, which conventionally disguises the means with which these limits are constructed, and excludes the world that surrounds it, this film often undermines any sense of enclosure. As Gregory Waller states in his 1978 appraisal of the relationship between theatre and film:

> If the stage resembles a picture frame, clearly separating art from nature, the screen is both a "mask which allows only a part of the action to be seen" and a window which becomes "the Universe, the world, or if you like, Nature" (Waller 1978: 363-364)

In the context of *Docking Station*, the degree to which the film acts as a window onto the world is affected by the level of dramatic expression or visibility of theatrical agency in the performative act. When the level of dramatic expression increases, the film become less like a window and more like a frame in which a part of the world has been masked off, and into which an illusion of reality has been placed. Conversely, when the level of dramatic expression diminishes, the film becomes more like a window onto the world. If the essence of a dramatic act is embedded in a construct of conflict and resolution and is the essential and conventional driving-force behind theatrical actions through which a story unfolds, then the absence of drama allows for a different form of narration to take place: a sequential progression of images

that is characteristic of styles of film-making in which narration does not rely upon the presentation of dramatic acts, but is articulated through associational inferences and connoted through linear or recurring connections.

The movement forms in *Docking Station* suggest a multiplicity of non-determinable meanings. What can be seen are essentially film images of mobile bodies either alone, in pairs, or in a group, but always in relation to the performance space. The more interpretable or readable an action becomes, often in its development with another performer, the more dramatic or consequential that action is to the unfolding story or even to the idea of there being a story. The theatricality of the set and the sporadic instances when one performer involves another in a causal, consequential, or overtly dramatic act are aspects of a theatrical condition through which the film seems to mask off other aspects of reality, and its frame more like that of a picture than a window onto the world.

Other film editing techniques which were explored, and which greatly affected the relationship between aspects of this theatrical condition and its mediation through film, will now be described. These techniques were also decisive in exploring the 'semi-subjective image'. In the shift from the 'indirect time-image' to the 'direct time-image', the use of dissolves pointed to the idea of temporal displacement. The possibility of using dissolves to manifest 'semi-subjective images' was only discovered once these images had been identified and substantiated through montage and the mobility of the camera in the films *Passing By* and *Docking Station*. In retrospect, the 'semi-subjective image' had already been produced in *Requinnes* through the implementation of dissolves.

# Film: *Requinnes*

The use of dissolves was intended to increase the duration of images across a cut, and thereby emphasize the indivisibility and continuity of movement. This method of conjoining images was intended to nullify the limits and self-contained aspects of the frame beyond which the out-of-frame was hidden. Again, this approach was in line with an intention to elicit Bergson's concept of 'duration', which relates time to the indivisibility of movement experienced as a progression of indeterminate states.

In the film's opening sequence, which featured the two gloved performers in front of a window, one shot was superimposed over another, prolonging the presence of both images, enabling combinations of visual material to de-substantiate and re-materialize during the dissolve. As a result, liquid states of continuous and indivisible movement were created. Moving images were no longer spatially or temporally anchored, or appeared to be bounded by the division between one film frame and the next.

In the films that have already been described, a direct 'time-image' was not produced by mobilising the camera, although it was implied by the use of dissolves in *Requinnes* and through montage in *Fugue States*. Instead, the traces of movement within the image continued to support the idea that 'time depends on movement itself and belongs to it' (Deleuze 2005b: 34). The 'movement-image' therefore, as Deleuze also concludes, refers to an abstract concept of time, whereas Bergson's assertion is that 'we do not think real time but we live it' (Bergson 2007: 30).

The use of dissolves had begun to evoke an experience of time which corresponded to Bergson's idea, and was further enhanced by assigning a

specific frame speed to each sequence. This gave pre-eminence to the temporal qualities of the performers' movements, emphasizing their manipulation in film as indirect images of time.

A sense of the indivisibility of motion was heightened by ordering events according to shared qualities in the film's gestural enactments. The use of the dissolve across the film's cuts also contributed to the idea that motion was continuous, and that moving bodies were metamorphosing into other bodies, or objects. With this approach to montage, a link was forged between Bergson's concept of lived time, Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development', the temporal manipulation of the film's images, and, for the viewer, a sensory experience of images.

Whilst indicative of the medium of film, dissolves might also be correlated to aspects of transition that are fundamental to theatre. In Wilson's productions, changes of scene and lighting can have the effect of rendering insubstantial the substantial. In the films under discussion, a corresponding effect is achieved by using dissolves and fades to black through which forms become amorphous, or disappear altogether. Their application in these films equates with the idea of disappearance inherent to the performative act: for example, when a performer exits, or the lights go down, or the curtain closes. In these films, the sense of events being abridged or curtailed is also intensified by the process of cutting, interrupting the presentation of gestures which, as a result, repeatedly arrive at moments in time in which an initial, fragmentary, or completed state never quite coincides with a meaningful statement. Significant actions are eliminated in favour of continuity. Images manifesting a heightened sense of time begin to be born out of the formal elements with which these films are assembled.

## 4.4 Wilson's video-portraits in relation to Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image'

This idea of the 'time-image', which Deleuze derives from Bergson, and with which Bergson's phrase 'the inner movement of life' could be associated, is apparent in Wilson's video works (Bergson 2007: 30).

Whether Wilson is presenting still or moving images, his primary intention is to affect the senses rather than the intellect. In perceiving the image, the senses are engaged in a process through which it is received; that is to say, an internal movement that registers the image and the action of perceiving it. This duality accords with Bergson's concept of 'duration' (2000: 101-104), which examines a direct experience of time in relation to subjectivity.

Wilson's series of video portraits (*Voom portraits:* for example*, Princess Caroline of Monaco [2006], and Robert Bolle 2 [2010]*) can be analysed through Bergson's ideas concerning the relationship between the internal experience of an object and the actuality of that object in space. Through his exploration of Bergson's theories regarding perception, Deleuze concludes that 'the identity of the image and movement stems from the identity of matter and light. The image is movement, just as matter is light' (Deleuze 2005a: 62).

In Wilson's video portrait of *Roberto Bolle 2* (2010), there is little actual movement. Instead, an experience of movement is fostered through the projection of a hidden and fluctuating light source upon a relatively still subject. This is achieved because we perceive that the given object is made of light. The variable degrees of light seem to fuse with it, turning matter into light, and light into matter.

Thus, external movement is presented as if our internal processes or visual sense are at work within it, and through their progression or internal movement, a hallucinatory image of reality is perceived. The processes of human perception are imitated in this way; embodied in the transformative object which, because of the light source, is in a state of change as much as it describes a movement. Similarly in Wilson's theatre, objects often appear to be lit from within, as if made of light, accentuating an experience that they have come into existence through the processes of human perception.

According to Bergson, our actual experience of the object and therefore our processes of perception are not quantitative but qualitative, not explained by the external world but by an internal progression of sensations. Deleuze demonstrates Bergson's explanation of the flow between intrinsic experience and the extensive world of movement by describing the latter's example of changing light on a white card to distinguish qualitative experience from a quantative explanation. When the card is described as darker or lighter, external causes are applied to an explanation of our internal states, whereas the actual experience is of a sensation as an indivisible movement given by the variable quality of light - a quality of greyness or colour relative to white, a sensation of light.

In Wilson's video portrait of *Roberto Bolle 2* (2010), the experience is not of the changing light on a subject, but movement of the subject itself. It is as if human processes have been projected externally, found extension in the material world, been realised through the play of light on a subject, and perpetrated the movement to which they are witness. It is as if human perception has produced the image through a self-reflexive doubling of the sense processes:

the sense information itself alongside a sensation derived from the process of seeing.

For Deleuze, following on from Bergson, light enables the image to become integrated with movement, to become a movement-image. 'Of course the movement-image does not only have extensive movements (space), but also intensive movements (light)' (Deleuze 2005b: 228). 'For Bergson, […] things are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them' (Deleuze 2005a: 63).

In Wilson's portrait of Bolle, the relationship between light and movement is recognizable as a progression or movement in time (duration) which is experienced internally but finds external expression in the perceived object. These video works, when considered alongside his theatre works, point to a relationship between time and movement that is integral to Wilson's intentions.

This interpretation of Wilson's video works advanced the idea that an understanding of his approach to movement might be gained through Bergson's analysis of time and Deleuze's concept of the 'time-image'. An exploration of the temporal manipulation of images captured from performance and the establishment of the 'semi-subjective image' had led to an understanding of Bergson's concept of 'duration'. As a result, his idea that ascribing external causes to an internal experience reflects the confused terms with which we distinguish time became central to my thinking. With this knowledge, the intention of identifying Wilson's approach to movement in relation to his concept of time and space was considered essential.

A new understanding of Wilson's concept of 'the interior screen' of the imagination was gained by discovering different ways of moving the camera and linking these procedures to internal processes of perception. In *Docking Station*, this was achieved by heightening the sense of association between the camera movement and a subjective point of view. Thus an intention to create images which 'vary in relation to one another' [...was achieved by putting] the privileged centre [...] into movement' (Deleuze 2005a: 79). Consequently, the viewing subject is drawn into a sensory experience of disorientation and varying perceptions, reflecting the hallucinatory way in which bodies in the film are seen to be moving in relation to one another.

In *Fugue States,* a connection between Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' and his approach to images was discovered through the qualities of abstract rather than referential movement expressed in its images. An external expression of inner life was made visible in the image of a performer's face through the exploration of the 'affection-image', and by linking movement to Bergson's idea of 'subjective states'. Sudden modulations in the film's frame speed in relation to a continuous close-up created this sense of movement, which seemed to correspond to an external expression of internal states. This achievement furthered an understanding of why Wilson, in his video portraits, uses a modulating light source to link motion to the sensory perception of bodies.

In *Passing* by and *Hat Check Girl*, the centralizing power of the camera was identified as a means of working with fragmentary images to create narrative continuity or discontinuity. An essential distinction between the apparency of dramatic acts and a filmic progression of images was considered in the light of the differences between performances observed directly, and performance

seen through the medium of film. This on-going examination of the tropes of theatre and its mediation in film led to the creation of an autonomous film, *Oedipus*. Through an exploration of the relationship between theatre and film, this work presented an opportunity for further research into the influence of film on Wilson's staging, and the idea of 'systematic ambiguity' in relation to narrative.

Working with different types of shot and montage had produced 'movement-images' that expressed a relationship between perception and movement. The 'semi-subjective image' implied an experience of time that was dependent upon movement. In relation to this idea, one consideration was that new methods of devising performance might lead to an experience of time which was consistent with Wilson's aesthetic and with Bergson's concept of 'duration'. This might be achieved by creating images in reference to a direct experience of time. With this intention in mind, the next group of films was conceived to follow Deleuze's thinking, in his progression from the 'movement-image' to the 'time-image', and is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Performance in Film: the direct 'time-image'

An important distinction was made between the performance as an autonomous event and the film as a manipulated record. This led to my discovery of film as a direct embodiment of performance, rather than as a form of documentation. Creating films enabled me to manipulate performative images, thereby furthering the examination of Wilson's visual dramaturgy. My own term 'performance film' became a useful way of identifying these autonomous works.

The chapter begins by describing how these 'performance films' led to a reconsideration of my context for performance, and the subsequent examination of the sense of time in Wilson's theatre. Beginning with three short films and culminating with the longer film *Oedipus*, all of which explore Deleuze's 'time-image', the chapter examines mimesis, memory, and sound which, in turn, has already been linked to Wilson's use of dislocation. The intention was to extend the exploration of Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner' of development, and link it to Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image'. Through the use of mimesis, present actions would also refer to the past and the future. Deleuze calls this 'the series of time' (Deleuze 2005b: 182). If Deleuze's 'movement-image' is the present defined by the 'act of covering' a space (Deleuze 2005a: 1), then his 'time-image' is differentiated from it by carrying referents of the past.

The chapter culminates by analysing the performative and theatrical tropes in the film *Oedipus*, particularly in relation to discourses concerning the film's

parameters. Theatrical tropes such as the staging of gestural sequences and the ramifications of this approach upon the space and the frame of the film are examined. In this longer film, Wilson's approach to a classical text, in which an imagistic structure obviates the need for dialogue, provides a platform for creating contrasting forms of gestural communication.

## 5.1 Creating a conceivable reality: the permeability of performative and filmic media

When a decision was taken to make 'performances films', it became necessary to re-evaluate the idea of performance as an autonomous element. The mediation of performance in film was a consequence of this new approach and will now be assessed.

If the existence of the originating material is considered in relation to the 'performance films', then it is clear that these films transcend the parameters of documentation, and the function of providing an incomplete record of an ephemeral event. Unlike films that can be examined by differentiating between an original performance and the mediating technology with which it was captured and manipulated, the reality represented in these films is not dependent upon the masking off, or editing out, of certain aspects of the performative process. Since the material for each film is sourced from an original performance in which every action is part of a one-off, uninterrupted event, it is necessary to consider the intertwining of performative and filmic means of communication before determining how the films are constituted.

The content of these 'performance films' is inherently dependent upon the context of the original performances. This, in turn, is determined by the scripted proposal of specific actions, and a mise-en-scène which is mimetic of an external and pre-conceived reality. It is noticeable that all the films described in this chapter share the idea of a situation which implies something more than a mise-en-scène. Whether or not this situation is elaborately defined, and therefore identifiable in the film, does not concern the performance ensemble. For them, the situation is imaginable, and therefore conceivable, without an elaborate scenography, and the script provides a sufficient blueprint of the situation with an economy of description.

By being defined in this way, the situation proposes a specific reality or context. It exists through the willingness of the performers to adapt to the circumstances which have been given to them, and accept the reality which they also complete; not in the sense of finality, but in presenting gestures which coincide or evolve with each moment of that conceivable reality's unfolding. Their performances of gestures, actions, and expressions (facial and corporeal) could be said to mask off aspects of behaviour which are not consistent with the evolving reality with which the performers are engaged. Unlike film acting, the performers' preferences vis-à-vis the action are determined by the creation of a performance rather than a film.

Consequently a performative mode of communication characterizes these 'performance films'. If the originating performance is considered as a live event which has been manipulated in film, it is clear that it has been transformed through the discursive parameters of film: temporal transformation via the cut, montage, and the frame speed; spatial transformation via the shot and the

camera frame; material transformation via the digital medium of film, montage, the shot, and the addition of sound.

Above all, these 'performance films' are determined by a mesh of performative and filmic means in which a residual and liminal reality is created. In this in-between state, the promise of the sensory aspects of human presence and Wilson's idea of a continuous present in performance are referenced in their deformation or in their absence, and in the absence of three-dimensionality and live bodies. With this consideration in mind, a prevailing concern of the research was to examine the staging of images in film. Inherent to this examination was the creation of scripted performance structures that would lead to images in which a cinematic treatment of time could emerge. The intention was that an exploration of Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' in film would subsequently lead to performances in which the link between Wilson's aesthetic of duration and the influence of film on his staging could be discovered.

## 5.2 From the 'movement-image' towards the direct 'time-image': circular structures and body's postures in *On the Other Hand, Sleep and Dreaming, Passing By* and *Contagion*

### Film: *On the Other Hand*

The intention was to examine Deleuze's 'time-image' through a structure in which the relationship of power becomes inverted. Deleuze (2005a), when analysing Eisenstein's films, describes them as presenting:

not simply the organic unity of opposites, but the pathetic passage of the opposite into its contrary. There is not simply an organic link between two instants, but a pathetic jump, in which the second instant gains a new power, since the first has passed into it (Deleuze 2005a: 36).

In my film, this 'passage of power' from the interrogators to the interrogated woman was intended to be manifested through the replication of confrontational gestures which have, so to speak, 'passed into' her.

A primary objective of the film was to present this transition from interrogator to interrogated, not as Deleuze's 'privileged instant', but to pursue the idea that 'the remarkable or singular instant remains any-instant-whatever' (Deleuze 2005a: 6). Deleuze's term 'privileged instant' describes the pivotal moments through which a film's plot is understood by the viewer. In this citation, he is describing films in which meanings reside in the juxtaposition of images, rather than their singularity.

Unlike a linear narrative in which significant images are its signposts, every image in *On the Other Hand* was intended to be of equal importance and be equally instrumental in expressing the film's meanings. This might be achieved by focusing on the juxtaposition of gestures rather than instances of action that might be ascribed to a plot.

Cuts between shots were made to imply that some actions were continuing off camera. This was achieved by selecting shots in which an action was intermittently revisited at various stages of its development. Incomplete movement forms were cut together according to their similarity or to imply the completion of one by another. Actions were not set out in a series of significant images signposting the narrative but against a background of continuity, consistent with a tendency to usurp or establish power.

Several intentions were fulfilled in this film: firstly, recurring images stemming from mimesis were successfully linked together, reinforcing the film's circular structure; secondly, the film's time-line was assembled through shared qualities in movement rather than a narrative; thirdly, a quality of continuity regarding movement was made apparent by cutting together similar actions; and finally, the film's images, its 'singular points' all implied that a further movement was intended (Deleuze 2005a: 6). A sense of finality was only reached when performers returned to their starting positions at the end of the film. However, the ending also implied that previous actions would recur because of its resemblance to the opening sequence.

Since the film was vested in acts of imitation, its images also referred to the past. Not by being exact, divisible and measurable representations of that past, but in the sense that some were replicated as similar actions. Qualitative differences in these actions were not bound by rigid abstractions or ultimately, explicable in reference to the narrative.

Actions were not so much 'explorations of time [...] which each time puts the image into the past' but inseparable from events in which images appeared to be retrieved from the past and put into the present (Deleuze 2005a: 37). The delay between an action and its replication through imitation made this 'temporalization of the image' possible (Deleuze 2005b: 37). Movement was realized as 'a mobile section of duration' (Deleuze 2005a: 8), or shot, that is, each 'movement-image' expressed a certain quality in relation to the next, as well as expressing '*a qualitative change* [affecting the film as] a whole' (Deleuze 2005a: 8). Here, Deleuze describes an additive process that constructs the 'whole', affecting, in parallel, the viewer's corresponding processes of perception, and, consequently, the viewer's reception of the

complete work. To express the idea of mobile sections affecting our conception of the 'whole', he uses Bergson's term 'duration', which refers not only to time, but also the quality of time experienced. In this respect, the film evinced an approach to time and continuous motion that was similar to Wilson's *Deafman Glance* (1971): 'we sense this time as presence and unbroken duration' (Brecht 1994: 135).

The achievement of this film was in realizing an image of time that corresponded to the way in which actions were absorbed and replicated. Recurring acts of imitation also implied that similar actions would follow. Through the process of mimesis, the group's actions went beyond measuring the interval between positions in space. Instead actions, either spontaneously chosen in response to an event, or recollected and then replicated, contributed to a direct experience of time.

The intention of the next film was to extend this exploration of time by creating a structure in which performers substantiated the present in response to a recollection. The accretion of movement patterns might therefore be identified with each performer's experience of being in time.

Deleuze's description of the 'time-image' suggested that a performance given by bodies in a dream state might reveal a quality of time implicit in his description:

> What remains of past experiences, […] what comes afterwards when everything has been said; […] such a method necessarily proceeds via the attitudes or postures of the body. This is a time-image, the series of time. The daily attitude is what puts the before and after into the body, time into body (Deleuze 2005b: 182-183).

Rather than acts of imitation, the film intended to explore 'the series of time' in accordance with the impact of memory upon movement. Deleuze's

assertion that 'memory is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory' led to several ideas (Deleuze 2005b: 95): firstly, of performers moving autonomously through a communal space; secondly, of them moving as a means of expressing remembered events; and thirdly, of them being in a dream-like state.

## Film: *Sleep and Dreaming*

It was intended that in the duality between recollection and perception, and in the role of dreamers, the performers would give the impression that they were dreaming. Perhaps, as performers, they would actually experience an altered state. Deleuze's description of the actor's experience as one of duality implied that this intention might be fulfilled: 'Whoever becomes conscious of the continual duplicating of his present into perception and recollection.... will compare himself to an actor playing his part automatically, listening to himself and beholding himself playing' (Deleuze 2005b: 77). On the one hand, the dreamer's experience was to be of personal recollections that already existed in language, but not as images, and on the other, the external expression of those words in movement.

The script included details of the visitors' and the dreamers' sensations, perceptions and memories. Missing from these descriptions was the affect of these stories upon the body. As events unfolded, actions, posture, gesture and facial expressions were all assets which could be called upon to display this affect.

The film begins when five dreamers rise from their beds and move in a dream-like state. Before the arrival of the visitors, the dreamers return to sleep, only

to rise again when the visitors sleep. Finally the dreamers leave their beds, exit, and are replaced by their visitors.

In preparing the film, it was noticeable that the captured images of the dreamers expressed movement with little or no conscious reaction to each other or the reality of the set. In contrast, the visitors' expressions and gestures evinced an external display of inner concern given by the circumstances of their visit but also distilled through their recollections.

Images were not selected to support a narrative but to 'make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible' (Deleuze 2005b: 17). Rather than definitive actions, gestures expressing internal thoughts and sensations were favoured. Consequently, the chosen images of the dreamers showed them to be 'animated in vain', and 'prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than engaged in an action' (Deleuze 2005b: 3).

Three types of images could be associated with the visitors, who were often represented in attitudes of 'tiredness and waiting', which Deleuze associates with the time-image (Deleuze 2005b: 182): 'affection' in response to the script and the real events of the performance; 'perception' in recognition of the subject of their visit; and 'action-images' consistent with the actual situation.

Since the stories of both groups were implied rather than explicitly expressed, and the actions of one group had no bearing upon the other, movement was only marginally predicated on a narrative of cause and effect. Consequently, a performance was produced in film that did not 'suppress[…] all narration, [but gave] narration a new value, because it abstract[ed] it from all successive value, as far as it replace[ed] the movement-image with a genuine time-image' (Deleuze 2005b: 98).

Although the events which they now recollected were not actually taking place in the present, this was still, as in a dream, an experience of reality for the dreamers. When they became mobile, the material from their dreams as an affect on their bodies, and with nowhere else to go, emerged as images of movement produced by the body. And even though in every movement, the dreamers were clearly aware of their current posture and position in space, they still performed as if at one remove from that reality. Furthermore, when the dreamers left their beds for a second time, and again began to move, patterns which they had already established were repeated. Thus the actuality of a more recent past and its retrieval through memory was made visible through present actions. Even without the kind of temporal displacement which film processes make possible, the images of moving bodies evinced a sense of time passing; of past time being recollected; and of movement realized through the impact of time passing.

An expression of memory had been made possible by adopting the Wilson actors' practice of realizing a reciprocal exchange between the 'interior screen' and an external reality. This exchange was contingent upon the relationship between the script and the actual events shown in the film. An expression of interior life was externalised through the moving body which went beyond thought or language. Deleuze expresses this dimension as 'the unthought that is life', through images of 'a non-thinking body [...], its capacity, its postures' (Deleuze 2005b: 182).

Through this research, a dislocated state between recollection and present action, in which a sense of time could be manifested, was discovered. If similar conditions were repeated alongside a pre-conceived intention to manipulate the captured images, a link between time and the moving body's capacity to

measure space might also be explored. Brecht (1994) writes of 'a space and a time perceived as independently subsisting' without considering how the space and time in Wilson's theatre are integrated (Brecht 1994: 232). The next film began to explore this relationship.

A structure for the film was devised in order to produce circuits of sequential movement. Each circuit was intended to be like a 'sheet' of time, coexistent, and consisting of movement forms which had already been seen or were about to be modified through the vagaries of replication (Deleuze 2005b: 107). The performers would therefore encounter the temporal present in dynamic states of recollection. Two methods of realizing the 'time-image' were intended: firstly, through the shot, i.e., without manipulating the image; and secondly, by manipulating images through montage.

### Film: *Contagion*

The set consisted of four boxes named Performance, Memories, Distraction and Waiting, in a cross formation, each of which was occupied by two performers.

The objective of the Waiting Box was to lock the performers into long circuits of repetition, in 'a pure optical situation', i.e., with no plot or situation to explain their behaviour (Deleuze 2005b: 2). To that end, the script implied certain movement forms, but the intention was always to distort these patterns by manipulating the captured images. Similarly, the implementations of multiple cuts, and the displacements of shots captured from the Box of Distraction, were intended to undermine the relationship between movement and the space covered.

With these manipulations, images were now 'relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts' (Deleuze 2005b: xii). For example, a performer, whose actions had seemed intent upon applying movement to the act of measuring her box, now appeared to be locked into a circuit of repetitive and random patterns. Whilst the immobility of the performance area in the film might have implied a single shot, breaks in the linkages between images of the performer evinced a fragmentation of that shot, and a re-ordering of its frames. Consequently, the irrationality of the cut created an impression of motion as a disharmonious state in which time and space were no longer linked together in a rational conception of continuity.

Other 'circuits' were to be attributable to the performance structure, e.g., the genesis of the group's movement was to begin in the Performance Box, providing material for those in the Box of Distraction and the Box of Memories to imitate.

The repetitive and echoing forms which were the product of imitation presented movement in a process of distortion and gradual disappearance. In addition, through the various manipulations of the film, movement was shown to be unreliable as a method of measuring space and therefore as a means of delineating time. Instead 'time ceases to be derived from the movement, it appears in itself and itself gives rise to *false movements*' (Deleuze 2005b: xii).

The film indicated that Wilson's intention to create an embodied experience is linked to the idea of 'false movements'. The idea that his stylised forms are redolent of distortions in the body's relationship to a spatial and temporal continuity was considered. As a result, the idea of continuity within a changing association between movement, space and time became central to the research. Determining the relationship between performance and film, as one

of performance *for* film, rather than reconstruction *in* film, might offer a way of exploring this. This initiative will be described in the final section of this chapter which details the intentions and outcomes of the film project *Oedipus*. Before that, the critical aspect of sound will be examined.

An exploration of sound was essential to the realization of the image as an experience of time rather than an abstract concept of time relating to the passage of a body between positions in space. Its use emerged out of the temporal implications of the film structures bring explored, and a consideration of Wilson's approach to dislocation.

## 5.3   Use of Sound and the 'out-of-field' in film: the dislocation between images and sound

Wilson constructs a code of movement for his performers which is dislocated from other theatrical codes such as sound. In this section, the methods with which non-diegetic sound was used to create dislocation between sound and the image are described.

In the following examples, the sounds which accompanied the films were not played to the group during the original performances upon which they were reconstructed. As a result, until the group prepared scenes for a theatre production, sound was rarely used as an element to which they could relate movement. This section focuses on sound for film rather than performance.

In a similar manner to Wilson's creation of autonomous layers for his theatre, Deleuze (2005a) describes one approach to sound as that which 'testifies to what is not seen, and relays the visual instead of duplicating it' (Deleuze 2005a: 17). The unseen or 'out-of-field' points to the 'whole' which is 'open', and beyond whatever 'closed system' is proposed by the film, 'relates back to time or even to spirit rather than to content and to space' (Deleuze 2005a: 18).

In *Docking Station*, the intention was to use sound in order to link movement to some indeterminate and unseen outside force; to create an expansive temporal context within which the docking procedure could take place. Since no visual connection was made between the forces that the individuals exerted to maintain control of their own moving bodies and the unseen process which the sounds implied, 'a more radical Elsewhere, outside homogenous space and time, [...] one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to insist or subsist', was evoked (Deleuze 2005a: 18). Thus, this method of extending the 'closed system' through the capacity of sound to suggest the 'out-of-field' was established.

In the next film, *Hat Check Girl*, this method was modified to create definitive connections between the 'out-of-field' sounds and images in the 'closed system' (Deleuze 2005a: 19). Influenced by Bergson's notion of the human tendency to link inner sensations to an external cause, the intention was to make a sensory connection between specific sounds and the actions of individuals. 'The out-of-field' would therefore impose itself on the 'closed system'.

'The-out-of field' was suggested by the sound of a non-existent water fountain and fire that contributed to the credibility of the scene. The subsequent manipulation of these sounds enhanced the narrative potential of characters

running from the set, implying that they were escaping something that could be heard rather than seen. In the next film, the intention was to link the use of non-diegetic sound to the dislocation between sound and image.

In *On the Other Hand*, this was implied through the absence of anticipated sounds: firstly, because only a selection of sound-images corresponded to the images that were present; and secondly, because of unexpected changes in the audible levels of these sounds. Dislocation was also manifested because of a lack of synchronicity with the image.

This method of dislocation was augmented by applying sounds that followed the cuts between images rather than continuing across them. This created a sense of disruptive tension which increased with the use of non-diegetic sounds such as distant gunshot.

The inclusion of all the expected sounds during some sequences served to point up their absence during others. For example, when the interrogated woman was being confronted, some of the interrogators used objects such as a camera or torch. In these sequences, sounds which represented all these objects were present. At other times, only a single sound was present, such as the rustling of clothes or the sound of footfall. When only a single sound was used, the implication was that, despite being present in visual terms, some actions were less significant for the interrogated woman than others. By using these methods, a connection between an external sound and the interrogated woman's internal concerns was established. Her gestures could therefore be interpreted in accordance with this connection.

In all these examples, the dislocation between sound and images and the use of non-diegetic sound had accentuated the 'out-of-field'. This implied that the

consequences of the visible events in this contained set might have an impact on, or be attributable to, an external and unseen world. The absence of a linear narrative, and the opposition of cause and effect between sound and the visual field, invited a deeper level of engagement with this space and with movement in its relationship to internal processes.

These methods of applying sounds to images were furthered in a longer film, *Oedipus*. The choice of sound or music was often made in order to differentiate between scenes that featured the chorus and those that concentrated on the major protagonists. For example, when the chorus created a drawing which mapped their journeys, their movement was accompanied by music. By contrast, various effects such as the sound of flapping wings were used to accompany the central characters such as Tiresias.

## 5.4   A narrative of human behaviour: staging performance in film – *Oedipus.*

The purpose of this film was to convey an extended narrative through the movement and gesture of its protagonists. The longer format was advantageous because the experience of time in Wilson's theatre could be examined through the history of a people whose lives were shaped by the past, by the prophetic future and by a dramatic series of events. Furthermore, Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' of the imagination as a method of creating identities could be more easily considered if the impact of the external world upon the central characters was seen over a longer period of time.

The idea of staging gestures within a landscape also provided a link to Lehmann's (2006: 77-81) assessment of Wilson's scenography as a landscape in which metamorphic processes take the place of action. Consequently, an important intention of the film was not only to connect Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' to Wilson's staging of natural processes and transitions in which time is decisive, but also to link metamorphic processes and the durational aspects of gestural communication to filmic processes.

## Deleuze's 'time-image' and the source material for the film

An examination of Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' in the films previously described in this chapter had led to a new possibility for narrative centred upon the relationship between time and the body. For Deleuze, the body is not just an instigator of action but experiences being in time, emerging out of the impact of time upon it. According to Bergson, (2004) these experiences occur through the relationship between matter and memory: 'if there be memory, that is, the survival of past images, these images must constantly mingle with our perception of the present, and may even take its place' (Bergson 2004: 70). An exploration of the Oedipus story was chosen as the subject of the film because time becomes an inevitable consideration with such a narrative. As Charles Segal (2001) points out in 'tragedy and especially in Oedipus, time is constantly bending backward and forward with mysterious gaps and discontinuities' (Segal 2001: 61).

A useful source for the film and one that will be referred to throughout this section was Segal's (2001) analysis of the many interpretations of the Oedipus myth, its theatrical conventions, and his analysis of Sophocles' original text.

Working with a variety of textual sources also provided an opportunity to shadow Wilson's developing interest in classical texts which began with his production of *Alcestis* in 1986.

Images for my film were derived from ideas which were implied by the written texts Segal (2001) uses to trace the Oedipus myth. Although text was not used in the film, either in the form of dialogue, recitative, or voiceover, it provided a scripted narrative structure through which gestural sequences could be choreographed; as with Wilson's production of *Alcestis* (1986), the body's gestures were central to conveying a narrative.

Segal (2001), in discussing Sophocles' approach to the Oedipus story, poses a question concerning the relationship between the intrinsic and the extrinsic, and answers it by pointing to the 'interplay [or] tension between the seen and the unseen' (Segal 2001: 129). According to Deleuze (2005b), film presents the possibility of representing this inner realm [by carrying out] 'constant reframings as functions of thought, [...] expressing the logical conjunctions of sequel, consequence, or even intention' (Deleuze 2005b: 23). As a result of these ideas, the research became focused upon how the structure of the film might reveal this 'inner realm'. Could the relationship between 'the seen and the unseen' be expressed through an association between, on the one hand, the silent gestures of the major characters, and, on the other, the movement and various formations of the chorus?

**Staging the film**

An important aspect of the film is its adoption of theatrical tropes. Shot in distinct scenes, the film's construction was governed by an approach that

marked a continuation of the workshop methods: its perceptible reality was shaped by a designated performance area that was contiguous with another space which sometimes becomes visible, affecting the relationship between the action and its appearance in the film. Shots were constructed to particularize segments of reality which provided the staging for many scenes. A maximum of two cameras was used to limit the point of view and restrict the action to a specific area of landscape.

The shots were set up to give an appearance of artificiality to these segments of landscape. The implication in the film is that the visible landscape is part of the film's artificial construction, becoming another theatrical trope in which reality stands in for illusion. Actions, in the form of gestural patterns occurring within these spaces, heighten the illusionistic appearance of the pictorial scene that has already been shaped by human design (the film contains shots of a landscape designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown). At times, the spaces of containment, which the shots construct, are ruptured when the camera begins to move, creating an open view which opposes the sense of theatrical demarcation. This movement breaches the boundary between the theatricalized or aestheticized space, and the excluded reality.

The interior scenes in the film are also explicitly staged and were either shot in a studio or within a neo-classical concert hall. The former featured a set which was designed to reveal its constructed reality – lighting rigs, wires and sources of projection often appear in the shot. In the latter, architectural and decorative features were appropriated as scenery within the film's mise-en-scène which, in imitation of a real theatre, already manifested the artificiality of theatrical representation, and theatrical modes of framing such as the proscenium.

**Staging the gesture**

Recalling the exaggerated gestures of film's silent era and consistent with the theatricalized staging of the landscape, the movement forms, as much as they contributed to the dramatized action in the film, revealed the dual construct of performers being themselves and performing a role.

For the most part, actions did not attempt to imitate reality, but instead, self-consciously offered up what Lehmann (2006) in making an association with his term 'postdramatic theatre' refers to as 'a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations' (Lehmann 2006: 68).

Despite evincing real events as a conventional property of the film-making process, the images captured in this film purposefully emphasized the subjugation of conclusive action and meaning to gestural behaviour.

Wilson's method of breaking down action into a series of gestures was applied to the character roles, and abstract figures of fluid movement for the chorus. Deleuze (2005b) refers to Comolli's idea that

> speaks of a cinema of revelation, where the only constraint is that of bodies, and the only logic that of linkages of attitudes: characters are 'constituted gesture by gesture […], as the film proceeds; they construct themselves, the shooting acting on them like a revelation, each advancement of the film allowing them a new development in their behaviour, their own duration […] coinciding with that of the film (Deleuze 2005b: 186).

Although text was occasionally used to describe the most important transitions in the story, *Oedipus* was intended to unfold through the progression of bodies from one arrangement to another, and be punctuated by the corporeal gestures of the major characters in a story uncovered rather than told,

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explained, or explicitly shown. The major protagonists would be made distinct by associating the semiotic mode of communication with power and control; the chorus by associating the immersive mode with mimesis, collusion and uniformity. In this way, the human form in motion provided a means of shadowing Wilson's approach to a classical text in which an imagistic structure obviates the need for spoken words or dialogue.

Inspired by Greek tragedy, in which the role of the chorus is to comment upon the action and question its significance, the film was structured according to the different identities assumed by the chorus. These fluid movement sequences were intercut by the characteristic gestures of individuals, e.g. Jocasta's gestures as she prepares for her own suicide in the palace are set alongside the dance-like movements of the chorus in the role of a black cloud. The story is revealed through the mutable association between the chorus and the major protagonists. For example, the arrangement of the chorus's bodies as the triple road returns Oedipus to the place where the Oracle's prophesy began to be fulfilled.

Differentiating the movement between the chorus and the major characters was also used to determine their unique connections with time. For example, Oedipus's movements were assigned to single instants of time, as in the various alignments of fingers and hands he uses to frame the images of the plague. His various facial expressions identifiable with thought-images reflect the fact that he inhabits 'tragic time [which] has a wholly different aspect: it is the single instant of decision and recognition that suddenly overturns an entire life' (Segal 2001: 64).

In contrast, the chorus, as plague victims, writhe, totter, and swing from side to side as they make their way to Oedipus's tower. Their self-reflective and

immersive movements present the antithesis of Oedipus's semiotic mode of communication, which through distinct gestures manifests his logical mind, expressing the relationship between movement and thought. For example, in his defeat of the Sphinx, Oedipus solves her riddle through a numerical display of limbs.

Segal (2001) notes that in one version of the play, 'measuring and counting time is one of Oedipus's major actions on stage. But his attempts to organize time into logical patterns collapse in the terrible uncertainty of time in his own life' (Segal 2001: 63). In this film, the temporal implications of prophesy are expressed in gestures that refer to the topographical relationship between his body and the landscape, whereas Laius points to his watch as if signalling to Oedipus that it is time rather than space which should be his concern.

## A sense of time, destiny, and the 'unseen' in *Oedipus*

Through temporal displacements, the film refers the viewer to future events. For example, the scene of the Oracle's ritual of preparation indicates that she is the prophetic source, and links her to a vision of the future. In another scene, Tiresias's prophesy is described by intercutting two shot sequences. One shot describes a specific landscape whilst the other presents a confrontation. Another temporal displacement shows how the significance of Oedipus's killing of his father escapes Oedipus. Thus the idea of coexisting moments in time rather than chronological events permeates the arrangement of shots: 'events do not just succeed each other or follow a chronological course; they are constantly being rearranged according to whether they belong

to a particular sheet of the past, a particular continuum of age, all of which coexist' (Deleuze 2005b: 115-116).

The procedure of intercutting frames not only produced this temporal structure of co-existing presents; it also implied that these events might exist in the 'interior theatre of the imagination'. For example the images which seem to reveal Tiresias's thoughts 'give a glimpse into what psychoanalytic critics have called the "other scene," the imaginary place where the repressed fears and wishes of the unconscious are played out' (Segal 2001: 123).

In the film, the 'other scene' is explored through the play between 'action-images' and 'thought-images'. For example, in the opening scene featuring Apollo, the images of a trio of masked characters are intercut with shots of the Oracle staring into space, implying that they are projections of her mind rather than representations of an actual event. Other examples of internal images occur as 'recollection-images', e.g., when Jocasta enters the palace and 'calls on Laius now long since a corpse' (Segal 2001: 124).

The film also realized the story through 'the processes of disguise, gradual revelation, and symbolism' (Segal 2001: 43). Thus the revelation of Laius's death was symbolised by the image of Oedipus's bloodied hands dripping onto a drawing made by the chorus. The symbolic image first appears without reference to the chronology of events. Instead, it interrupts a shot during the plague scene. Whilst remaining hidden from Oedipus, it becomes a symbol of prophetic revelation linked to the plague. It does not form part of his recollections but becomes consequential by being retrieved from the past. It is given greater significance by being inserted at the moment when Oedipus's story starts to unravel.

Through the association between these corporeal images, Oedipus's destiny is revealed. In this way, the film presents images of displaced time to point up 'something which makes a voice within us ready to recognize the compelling voice of destiny' (Segal 2001: 39). It is the body in its capacity to tell the truth, which, through his observations of the plague, motivates Oedipus's quest to investigate and uncover its cause. It is therefore through this connection between Deleuze's 'time-image' and Wilson's use of the body to tell the truth about an emotion or a situation that the internal realm of the tragic character is revealed. By using recurring images of the past, such as the image of Oedipus's bloody hands at the triple road, the chronology of events are disrupted, creating a sense in which significant actions are never locked into a single moment in time; bodies are never just present but also contain 'the before and after' (Deleuze 2005b: 182).

If the significance of past events escapes Oedipus, the movement of his people during the plague provides him with evidence that a past event is responsible for killing them. The chorus are therefore seen in the present but perform movements that are defined by the impact of the past upon their bodies. Their unbroken progression is set alongside Oedipus's fragmented gestures. These differences refer to Bergson's distinction between a qualitative and a quantitative experience of time i.e., the chorus's movement relates to experiential processes whereas Oedipus's actions are defined by the logical way in which he uses his hands to measure the space around him. Through this approach, the film demonstrates how movement conveys different qualities with which we experience time.

An experience of time in the film was determined by the relationship between the dramatized action, as a means of relating and sustaining an unfolding set of

events, and its suppression by an alternative method of narration associated with the mediating view of the camera.

The camera's point of view negotiates the relationship between the viewer and the images, effecting and shaping the illusionistic space of the film, and thereby controlling the placement of the dramatized action.

## Theatricality and narration in Oedipus

In a paper that makes comparisons between the space of theatre and film, Gay McAuley writes that 'in film the dramatic component is continually placed, distanced, judged by the narrating "voice" of the camera' (McAuley: 1987: 3). Key elements in *Oedipus* are the distance between the viewer and the image, the space of the film, the linking of shots through montage, and narrative continuity.

Despite the film's tendency towards narration, a dramatized mode of performance is embodied in the gestural means of communication which characterize *Oedipus*. The shots of the landscape and the inclusion of theatrical tropes such as a set in the interior scenes contribute to the sense of artifice and staging in the film. Conversely, the film's construction is also determined by the way in which gestural sequences are linked together through montage.

In this film a residual sense of the theatrical sign hovers over the appearance of objects and even over natural forms. The staging of gestures within the landscape recalls Lehmann's analysis of Wilson's scenographic construction. In fact Lehmann (2006: 77-81) ascribes the term landscape to Wilson's dream-like world of images in which correspondences, transitions, and natural processes, rather than action, affect our different perceptions of his work.

In *Oedipus*, a correspondence between the film's construction and its content of theatrical artifice is instrumental in producing contesting lines of signification, chiming with Lehmann's (2006: 82) idea of 'postdramatic theatre' with which he associates Wilson. As Lehmann asserts (2006: 81), when dramatic conventions of action and the mimesis of reality are displaced by a theatre of transformative states, the spectator becomes engaged in a complex process of discovery.

The notion of transformative or metamorphic states, which involve physical, natural, or illusionistic transitions, rather than conventional action, implies a complex process of discovery which can be seen to be activated by Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' (Brecht 1994: 136). Wilson's creation of transformative states, either through transitions in lighting, objects on stage, or gestural forms, particularizes the spectator's sense of time. This, in turn, implies that Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image', in which temporal processes are seen in their impact upon the body, can lead to a clearer understanding of Wilson's aesthetic of duration. In Wilson's theatre, time is often experienced through slow-motion actions performed by the body; the motion itself affects the spectator's perception of time. But it can also be said that bodies appear to be moving slowly because of the impact of time upon them.

The intention of making the impact of time on the body visible in movement was integral to *Oedipus* and the other films described in this chapter. Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' was expressed in patterns of movement stemming from an experience in which the present was continually being substantiated by the past.

In the film *Oedipus,* the quest for connection and meaning was central to the exploration of theatrical tropes in relation to the discursive parameters of the film. Instead of dramatized action, images were constructed in 'scenically dynamic formations' and determined by ritualistic forms of behaviour and the transformative states of the film's central characters and chorus (Lehmann 2006: 68). The film's tendency towards narration coincided with the transition between one 'scenically dynamic formation' and the next, emphasizing a process of construction as much as a progression of scenes.

In making this film, I began to discover how Wilson's theatre works transform dramatic action into a montage of images which imply that film processes are of significant influence on his staging. In the construction of his scenography, images, progressions, temporal processes and narrative references replace dramatic action. The processes which led to this discovery were considered as a means of advancing the research.

If film procedures such as montage, cuts between shots, dissolves, and the use of variable speeds were applied to the production of movement forms, this might shape subsequent live performances and advance the research into Wilson's approach to time and the influence of film on his staging. The idea of shadowing his imagistic construction by creating a narrative out of a series of 'scenically dynamic formations' paved the way for a final staged performance (see Chapter 7) in which the influence of film on its staging was decisive.

In the next chapter, Wilson's approach to time is examined in performances that were created to find out how a sense of time is conveyed in images for the stage. If compositions are primarily concerned with spatial considerations, does this suggest the possibility of perceiving motion as a process in which, as Bergson asserts, lived time is experienced? To answer this question, movement

was explored in two different ways: firstly, movement in relation to positions in space; and secondly, movement as an indivisible process.

# Chapter 6: A new understanding of Wilson's theatre in relation to time and space, the ideas of Henri Bergson, and the construction of a performance work: *Two Sides to an Envelope*

The chapter examines the relationship between time and space in Wilson's theatre. This leads to a performance in which past events and an implied future are played out in the present. The transition between stasis and motion is also assimilated and becomes a platform in which to explore the experience of time in Wilson's theatre. Special reference is made to Bergson's concept of 'duration' in a performance in which movement is explored in two different ways: firstly in relation to positions in space; and secondly as an indivisible process.

## 6.1 Wilson's idea of space, the horizontal; time, the vertical, in reference to Bergson's concept of 'duration'

Wilson's productions are constructed in images. They are articulations of architectural space. Within these images, moving bodies are presented in relation to the space. The space establishes a particular form of reality from which the performers draw their characters. 'Sutton gives full expression to the moment, endeavouring to become "an accurate barometer of the space

and what's happening in it"' (Shyer 1989: 14). Wilson's performer is trusted to have the 'impulses to relate to the space in a specific way, to create a space of his/her own, to concretise time, and to individualise it according to him/her' (Brecht 1994: 205).

There are other qualities which suggest that these images obscure the underlying continuity which is the essence of his work. For example, in *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), moving bodies, accompanied by Phillip Glass's looped sequences of music, sometimes approaching stillness, are often in constant flow. The image of the peeled onion in his production, *King Lear* (1985), contributes to his aesthetic of 'presence and unbroken duration' by expressing a timeless quality in relation to a commonplace action (Brecht 1994: 135). Such an action, although considered spatially, is defined by its relationship to time. 'Don't look at the onion. Look over your shoulder as if you are staring into the eye of time' (Holmberg 1996: 32). For Wilson, this gesture describes the event as a space into which the time of the character's passing - this peeling of the onion is poured.

In a lecture on his work, Wilson makes explicit his conception of time and space regarding his theatre. 'The hand dropping down vertically on a key to play the next note in a Mozart piece is time, the moving along the keyboard, space' (*Haven: 2008*). Time and space are both described in relation to movement and yet, in the *King Lear* example, time is understood as an entity which is not purely defined by its relationship to space.

His idea of time as the vertical which divides up space, the horizontal, relates to the practice of internal counting, in which performers take up positions in space according to his lighting cues. In *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), this procedure results in the construction of animated tableaux. If these images are

contingent upon an experience of time derived from spatial relationships, his earlier durational works, such as *KA MOUNTAIN and GUARDenia Terrace* (1972), manifest a different approach.

*Deafman Glance* (1971), especially in its themes of renewal and return, describes motion as an eternal progression of states. In this production 'the spectacle's time does not move: motions, actions, developments lack the vectors of purpose, anxiety, drive. They and their world seem located within its extended continuum' (Brecht 1994: 135). With this 'lack of purpose' there is, nevertheless, an 'extended continuum' in which time, according to Wilson's metaphor, is like 'the verticals' or images which accumulate in space, 'the horizontal'. These vertical moments, such as the onion peeling in *King Lear* (1985), constitute the memorable images of his performances.

There are echoes of Deleuze's notion of the 'time-image' in the construction of Wilson's onion image and these durational works. For Deleuze, images of tiredness and waiting, rather than action, lead to an experience of time that does not rely on motion.

Since Wilson's theatre is made of images, motion appears to be divisible. Compositions that link the position of moving bodies to the proscenium arch contribute to the sense of motion as a series of images, one displacing the next. This is consistent with an abstract conception of time derived from the position of objects and bodies in space. Yet within the tableau, his use of slow movement transforms the way in which bodies can be perceived.

Bergson's (2000) assertion is that 'we generally say that a movement takes place in space, and we assert that motion is homogeneous and divisible, it is of the space traversed that we are thinking, as if it were interchangeable with the

motion itself' (Bergson 2000: 110-111). If Wilson's images are linked to Bergson's analysis, then perceptions of them are correlated to the positions bodies occupy in space. If, as Bergson states, motion is constructed through a process of 'mental synthesis', the implication is that motion is also perceived as a displacement of one image by another and therefore divisible (Bergson 2000: 110-111). Yet because of the audience's exposure to slow movement, these images of moving bodies may also be experienced as an indivisible process. Motion may be perceived as divisible when considered as an arrangement in space, and irreducible to such divisions when experienced in relation to time.

Through these different experiences of Wilson's images, the audience's awareness of their processes of perception is heightened. A transcendent experience of time is made possible, in which motion is not solely correlated to fixed positions in space or defined by the 'empty container, that is to say, homogeneous space and pure quantity' (Bergson 2004: 330). If, in relation to Wilson's audience, Bergson's analysis of these processes is followed, then an embodied experience of time occurs when images of slow moving bodies are perceived through the senses. These images, according to Bergson (2004), might be 'quality itself, vibrating, so to speak, internally, and beating time for its own existence through an often incalculable number of moments' (Bergson 2004: 268). This is Bergson's concept of 'duration':

> perceptions are composed of heterogeneous qualities, whereas the perceived universe seems to resolve itself into homogenous and calculable changes. There would thus be inextension and quality on the one hand, extensity and quantity on the other (Bergson 2004: 235).

It is through the image of this actor staring into the 'eye of time' that Wilson's theatre can be perceived as a series of 'homogenous and calculable changes' and yet experienced according to Bergson's definition of the word 'quality'.

A preliminary exploration of the link between Wilson's approach to time and Bergson's concept of 'duration' was undertaken in *The Letter*. For the performance, the movement-script was conceived as 'a sheet of the past' (Deleuze 2005b: 116), indicating events which had already transpired, but also inferring those which might happen.

The performance was defined spatially by a line of replicated cells containing motionless performers. This image was sustained for several minutes to establish a link between the spatial arrangement, temporal continuity and an absence of movement.

With the letter's introduction, the first significant event was indicated. Through this transition from stillness, a connection was established between movement and the contents of the letter. In reference to Wilson's idea of time as the 'vertical', this transition immediately affected the 'horizontal' appearance of the space and, as an invitation for action, registered a distinct moment in time. Since the seated recipients only left their positions when standing to read or react to the letter, there was also a transition from a predominately horizontal composition to one featuring verticals.

The letter was invoked throughout the improvisation, either through movement stemming from a memory of its contents, or when a recipient retrieved it and applied its contents to the present situation. In this way, the past in the form of a virtual and linguistic representation continually 'insert[ed] itself into a present sensation of which it borrow[ed] the vitality' (Bergson

2004: 320). These actions of recognition and retrieval implied that the body, in its desire to move, was being continuously acted upon by the material. The past and a projected future were being transformed from a linguistic representation into acts of doing in the present moment.

An external expression of internal experience was realized in movement through the impact of the script upon the performer. Although movement was not pre-determined, the emergence of repetitive patterns implied that these forms were choreographed and might derive from specific, though indeterminate, intentions. The recurring references to the recipients' movement in their imitative partners' performances were evidently intended. Furthermore, a sense that an intention had been met was consistent with other transitions: the gathering of the group in a reciprocal arrangement of similar movements and their uniform departure at the end of the performance.

The transition between stillness (receipt of the letter) and movement (action and reaction) had also been accompanied by a temporal structure in which present actions (improvisation), informed by the past (the script), opened up onto an intended future (the script and improvisation). These transitions were now perceived as an effective method of discovering Wilson's approach to time.

*Tableau* and *Bar Encounters* were created to explore the still moment in time between static postures and movement, and the body as a 'fulcrum in a world of ready-made motionless images' (Bergson 2004: 290). If the body consistently implies a relational dynamic between stasis and movement, then the ideas that 'rest is anterior to motion' and that we come 'to see movement as only a variation of distance, space being thus supposed to precede motion'

(Bergson 2004: 290), might be challenged. This might be accomplished by presenting a continuous sequence of images, in which, at any given moment, events are shaped by instants of stillness, movement, and the transitions between them. This approach might be guided by the directions Wilson gives to his performers: 'do not break the flow. Your sensation is that movement and stillness are on the same continuum' (Shevtsova 2007: 125).

## 6.2   Gestures for the performing body: creating transitions from static postures to motion

In *Bar Encounters*, this transition between stillness and movement was to be triggered with a simple visible sign: a hand cupped in front of the chest. If a performer made this sign, another would immediately adopt a freeze-frame of the posture through which they had been moving. On receipt of the sign, and for as long as the static pose was sustained, the moment of stillness would continue to refer to the movement which had ceased to be. The intention was that this practice of archiving the material form of the body in an image would expose any posture as a temporary pause in a continuum of movement and imply that the spectator retains still images from a moving sequence.

The shape and disposition of the body not only implied that another movement would soon follow but also the nature of that movement. 'As we guess almost the exact attitude which the dancer is going to take, he seems to obey us when he really does take it' (Bergson 2000: 12-13). The intention of

*Tableau* was that the experience of embodiment described by Bergson would be invoked through the articulation of a pre-determined narrative.

## Workshop 15-16, *Tableau* DVD 2: 9th clip

Since the workshop performance started as a formation of static bodies, a specific narrative was already implied by the still image. The narrative unravelled when the moving bodies animated the frozen scene which, as a result, continued to reference the initial state. Even in motion, the performers moved slowly enough to be perceived in a series of still images with which their bodies seemed to coincide. This indicated that still images, to which Bergson's commentary on dance alludes, could be implied through a moving body; and specifically through a movement sequence consisting of momentary pauses.

In the film version of the performance, some of the slow movement was speeded up. Consequently, the fluid forms which had been apparent in the workshop were now transformed into images of stuttering motion. This procedure demonstrated that individual intentions to arrive at a pre-conceived place or to produce a specific outcome had diminished the possibility of movement for its own sake. The momentary state between an intended action and its actualization seemed to elude the group's attention and awareness. In response to this observation, an exercise was devised to reveal the often unnoticed stages between initial and final states of action.

## 6.3 *The Restriction Exercise* as a way of conceiving the body between initial and final states of action

The objective of the *Restriction Exercise* was to explore the relationship between stasis and motion, by enabling the performers to become conscious of their successive perceptions as they moved through the space. Movement that was not determined solely by initial and final states might yield up an experience imbued with Bergson's concept of duration, which he expresses thus:

> Pure perception, in fact, however rapid we suppose it to be, occupies a certain depth of duration, so that our successive perceptions are never the real moments of things, as we have hitherto supposed, but our moments of our consciousness (Bergson 2004: 75).

The exercise was based on the idea that any sensation would correspond to a quality of resistance felt on the skin and muscle systems, and on psychological processes characterized by intention and volition. Different qualities in the line and form of the body might be evaluated by a comparison between mobile forms.

**Workshop 6, *Restriction Exercise* DVD 2: 10th clip**

Consistent with the title of the exercise, a performer's action of moving across the space and sitting in a chair was restricted by the group, who pulled on straps attached to different parts of his/her body. Once the straps were removed, he/she was invited to repeat the event from memory.

On reflection, some of the performers tended to remember some stages whilst missing out details of the passage between them. In later discussions, it was clear that during the procedure, distinct physical experiences had become

associated with an awareness of positions in space and specific instants in time. The findings pointed to Bergson's assertion that a homogeneous interpretation of time, in which an experience of time accords with a consideration of space, occurs when a moving body is perceived. According to Bergson, perception confuses the space covered by a moving body with the motion itself. The time taken by a body to move from one position in space to another is inevitably given by a reference to the space covered rather than an experience of the motion itself.

On the other hand, some of the performers, aided by sensations still active in their limbs, were able to accurately re-enact their movements from memory. In these performances, no instant of movement was given precedence over another. Movement took place in relation to space, but because it was continuous, no intervals between one instant in time, or one position in space and the next, could be identified. Continuity was more apparent if performers focused on a physical memory of their movement, rather than a conscious memory or considered thoughts.

By accentuating the physical, Bergson's notion of 'the growing and accompanying tension of consciousness in time' began to be experienced as a contraction and expansion of muscles in a continuous dialogue between restriction and freedom (Bergson 2004: 332). There was an obvious correlation between physical experience and Bergson's metaphor of the fluctuating tension in a rubber band with which he explains the relationship between consciousness and time. This metaphor was reified when motion was both continuous and characterized by clearly defined mobile postures. This occurred when individual postures were neither favoured nor correlated to instants of time. The observation led me to consider that the performers' actions were

reproduced from a physical memory of the original event rather than from images with which they had represented reality.

When one performer gave precedence to some of her postures, the experience of time seemed correlated to the relationship between her body and the positions in space which she momentarily occupied. The shapes and lines, which her body made visible, were not clearly defined. She moved into positions which were clearly remembered, rather than giving consideration to the journey between them. Conversely, the sequences of other performers were complex and intentional; every limb seemed involved in a process of realizing the postures and actions through which they had moved. Indivisible and continuous motion predominated, rather than actions that were gauged to positions in space.

In considering these findings, the research might be advanced by creating a performance to evaluate the relationship between movement and the still image, and in relation to Wilson, the impact of this association upon an experience of time. Although dominated by memorable images, Wilson's theatre is also dedicated to realising an experience of time for the spectator that could be explained through Bergson's concept of 'duration'. As has been described, Wilson's slow movement forms often lead to a direct experience of time rather than one given by images referring to a linear or causal approach to narrative. Since Wilson's movement forms can be linked to Bergson's concept of 'duration', a new performance, *Two Sides to an Envelope,* might usefully examine the former's aesthetic through a conceptual framework derived from the latter. The idea that emerged out of these considerations was of a performance based on the opposition between variable approaches to time.

## 6.4   Duration measured in spatial terms as a performance work: *Two Sides to an Envelope*

A performance, *Two Sides to an Envelope,* was devised to explore Bergson's assertion that:

> although the positions occupied by the moving body vary with the different moments of duration, though it even creates distinct moments by the mere fact of occupying different positions, duration properly so called has no moments which are identical or external to one another, being essentially heterogeneous, continuous, and with no analogy to number (Bergson 2000: 120).

The intention of the performance was firstly to link motion to the position a body occupies in space at any moment in time; secondly, to show that all subsequent motion is divisible if the arrival of a body at a certain point is considered in reference to homogeneous space; and thirdly, to imply that the timing of one performer's interventions and the duration of the other's static postures were pre-determined by the latter's position on the carpet. The temporal exposition of motion was therefore deliberately disposed to spatial interpretation.

The performance was constructed with reference to four different kinds of container: the temporary carpet floor, its gridded diagram, the ground space upon which it rested, and the space beyond the room. At the beginning of the work, the designated surface for the performance was mobilised when the performers carried a section of it into the performance space. The carpet's mutable nature, as a surface that could support movement, was indicated when one of the performers moved on its surface while the other counteracted that possibility by rolling up the carpet. At the end of the

performance, the carpet became mobile again, such that its gridded pattern, denoting measurable positions and intersections, was again invisible to the viewer. The performers continued to move without visible reference to the carpet so that the spectator was no longer able to correlate movement with fixed positions in relation to its gridded diagram.

The spatial aspects of the performance were opposed by several other elements in which continuous motion could be perceived. By having a portion of the carpet present at the beginning of the work, the assumption that the ensuing movements were locked into the idea of an absolute reality defined in spatial terms was contested. Music accompanied the entire performance and continued to flow uninterruptedly alongside moments of apparent stillness and after the performers had departed the space. The routine of the performer on the carpet was choreographed without reference to starting or finishing positions. This was achieved by editing out certain positional moments from Hollywood musical routines and choreographing them together to construct movement in which an originating source was no longer identifiable. This process of abstraction led to the creation of movement forms that could not easily be divided by extracting from them initial or successive positions. This method was also informed by my films which had explored montage and various states of motion in relation to Deleuze's differentiation of film images.

During this performance, there were not only distinct moments, different phases of duration and measurable positions occupied by the body, but also a continuous and fluctuating relationship between the carpet and the performers. Thus the determining factors contributing to the notion of time as quantitative, homogeneous and subservient to spatial considerations were set alongside motion characterized by changes within a continuously unfolding

event. Movement forms were both sufficiently ambiguous and sufficiently enmeshed in the work's transitional procedures to accentuate the work's totality rather than its distinguishable parts. In addition, the chameleon-like behaviour of the carpet roller, who morphed almost imperceptibly between gestures of crazed aggression and those of an effeminate mincing queen, emphasized processes of transition rather than fixed identities.

If, during the performance, the audience had only perceived movement in relation to the grid, to the static positions of the performer on the carpet, or to the positions adopted by the carpet roller, then the actuality of motion would have been turned into an object rather than something done; an object that occupies a position in time and space rather than an indivisible progression. As Bergson (2000) states, 'We have to do here not with an object but with a progress: motion, in so far as it is a passage from one point to another, is a mental synthesis, a psychic and therefore unextended process' (Bergson 2000: 124). But the work's finitude had been undermined by the accompanying music and lighting which remained constant even after the two performers had left the building and were therefore no longer visible. With their absence, motion no longer provided a continuous image, which by recalling former positions alongside present positions, 'causes these images to permeate, complete, and, so to speak, continue one another' (Bergson 2000: 124).

In the aftermath of the movement section of the performance, the space could still be observed. However, in these moments of suspended animation, all those real movements which had had a bearing on the relationship between time and space were now only available as remembered images. Without the presence of movement and therefore a correlative relationship between instants of time and distinct positions in space, normal methods of measuring

the duration of an event stemming from an experience of time given by motion were no longer possible. As Bergson (2000) states, it 'is principally by the help of motion that duration assumes the form of a homogeneous medium, and that time is projected into space' (Bergson 2000: 124).

During the live performance, the performers continued to carry the carpet through the streets and later met with audience members for a question and answer session at a nearby venue. Thus performers and audience maintained a spatial relationship which was also given by the continuing presence of the carpet.

The performance successfully gave rise to a structure founded on different qualities of movement: positional (time given by spatial considerations); progressive (time experienced as duration); and absent (time experienced as duration through music and the indefinite nature of the performance). In so doing, it pointed to the contradictions inherent in Wilson's approach, which sometimes requires his actors to move from one position to another in a set amount of time. On other occasions, Wilson's actors seem to embody time in a still image or through the flow of one movement into another.

Although the spatial arrangement of bodies in space is central to his theatre of visions and that 'the space, not the action, is his primary material' (Brecht 1994: 213), his movement forms are not just about positions in space but also invoke an experience of time that refers to processes. 'The peeled onion' is an example of how Wilson achieves this by realizing a synthesis between movement and the image. It is an image of dislocation in which the actor, immobile save for his hands, stares into 'the eye of time' whilst his almost unnoticed fingers peel the onion. The image and movement are synthesised, expressing time as continuity and change.

*Two sides to an envelope* had attempted a similar outcome through a synthesis between the image and movement. Fundamental to its achievement was the contradiction that movement is both a process through which time is experienced, and an event through which space is measured. Along with *The Letter, Tableau* and *The Restriction Exercise*, this performance revealed how Wilson's work presents an experience of time which is expressed through the fluctuating relationship between the still image and movement. Even if still forms or moving forms are perceived spatially, his images, nevertheless, embody time. Continuity is apparent despite the phenomenon of movement in which the displacement of one image by another also implies the disappearance of the image. In identifying these aspects of Wilson's aesthetic, new methods of creating still images as pauses in movement and relating them to a continuum had been realised. Distinct forms had been created during the in-between state which occurs after the initiation of an action and before its conclusion. Methods of correlating internal experiences to an external expression of movement had led to a greater understanding of the workings of 'the interior screen'. As a result, movement often appeared to have been choreographed despite being improvised.

These performances raised further questions regarding Wilson's intention to express continuity whilst relating movement to positions in space. If the performer is immersed in movement as a process of duration and the spectator perceives images which signify meanings that are external to that experience, how does Wilson create a sense of embodiment? How does he bridge this divide? The final chapter attempts to answer those questions by exploring different modes of communication. This leads to performances and films which explore the immersive and semiotic modes of communication. In

these works, the differences in the moving body between time given by fluidity and time given by position and posture are the main focus.

# Chapter 7: Three methods of gestural communication, improvisation and mimesis through the creation of *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*

This chapter examines different methods of communication for the performing body. Wilson's 'modulation between referential and abstract movement' and its potential to convey meaning is explored (Holmberg 1996: 144). This exploration and how it shapes the translation of material from the performance workshops into a theatre production *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View* is described. In this work, the theme of movement as disappearance and displacement is explained in relation to Bergson's ideas regarding continuity and change.

## 7.1 Wilson's immersive approach to semiotic and instrumental methods of communication in my film *Carriage*

It is evident from his references to the importance of symbols in the notes for *Deafman Glance* (1971) that Wilson subscribed to a semiotic method of communication in the work that precedes *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). Actions and events, in which the body is instrumental, are identifiable. Everyday activities are determinable, even if the precise meanings which they

signify are ambiguous. Brecht (1994) has stated that *Deafman Glance* (1971) evinces the idea that 'precise identification is a [...] fiction of great utility but which systematically does injustice to things as they are and notably to acts and agents' (Brecht 1994: 107). If Wilson's theatre of visions is considered as works that go beyond precise identification, then the meanings conveyed in *Deafman Glance* (1971) reside in the ambiguity of the '(significatory) product' and with its acts and agents (Brecht 1994: 107). Since the central issue of this research and Wilson's aesthetic is the moving body, how do these forms convey meaning if not through a narrative of actions and a plot?

In the first workshop, *Movement forms*, different images had been created by working with 'the semiotic (signifying body), the instrumental (functioning body), and the immersive (experiencing body)' modes of gestural communication (Rotman cited in Smith 2002: 205). These images already indicated that the body could signify meanings from either a definitive intention or arising unconsciously out of a natural tendency to communicate. They also revealed that instrumental and semiotic gestures could be communicated through an immersive approach to movement. This possibility had been realized in the *Gangs* workshop, when the action of finger clicking relayed the body's inherent rhythmic impulses, and functioned as a gestural signifier. For the film *Carriage,* these different approaches to movement were used as a means of structuring the content.

### Film: *Carriage*

The group performed live to camera. The script outlined their roles and the film's main transitions. Actions were improvised rather than pre-determined.

The intention was to assign contrasting methods of communication to the cast during a moment of encounter. The inspector was intended to perform signs, personifying causality, in contrast to the passengers, who were to be self-reflectively immersed in movement. The inspector's function was to interrupt each passenger's continuous flow of movement and choreograph it into significant gestures.

Passengers modulated between two actions until a pattern emerged. At one end of this process was the raw material of signs and specific actions and at the other a self-sustaining and abstract movement form built around repetition.

During these 'successive moments of real time [which] bind the future to the present, [an intention to express] the principle of causality' could still be identified (Bergson 2000: 208). However, as a more abstract form of action was generated through a process of improvisation, and the intention to demonstrate specific gestures from the script fell away, the instrumental method of communication ceased to predominate. Instead, the performers settled into an immersive and experiential approach to movement which was sustained by the 'faithful duty [of consciousness to] confine itself to declaring the present state of mind' (Bergson 2000: 208). In this present state of enactment, there was no longer a requirement for bodies to represent instrumental actions. Instead, actions were solely sustained through a spontaneous response to the unfolding events.

In the film, the inspector's gestures were characterized by initial states and goal-orientated intentions. His actions were the antithesis of the passengers' movement, which tended towards immersive states characterized by repetition, pattern and abstraction. Initially the passengers' enactments of

qualitative actions gave rise to images without an external reference. During the inspection, this transformed into a quantitative display of gestural signs referring to meanings outside the body in which the passengers' actions were often truncated and their postures reset by the inspector. Motion was transformed into a series of postures expressing the impact on the passengers of the inspector's actions of scrutiny and intervention; actions that were intent on 'breaking up concrete time, [and setting] out its moments in homogeneous space' (Bergson 2000: 219-220). Actions were modified and subsequently demonstrated to other passengers, who reciprocated by doing the same. Gestures were observed and then imitated until a contagion of similar movements spread through the group. Bergson's (2004) idea that perception 'indicates the possible action of our body upon other [bodies]' was substantiated (Bergson 2004: 310).

The intention of shaping the film's actions through the relationship between a natural tendency to move and the external conditions with which motion could be sustained or truncated was realized. The displacement of an experiential approach to movement by a semiotic display of gestures provided a structure through which a narrative emerged. Although the script outlined the important transitions and actions of the film, with the advantage of montage, images were selected to imply a narrative.

As a result of external conditions, shaped by the script, identifiable characters emerged. The extent to which these conditions encouraged action without limiting the group's freedom to respond to the conceivable reality was considered. An understanding of how this relationship had evolved was now essential to the research into Wilson, and especially his form of development,

which is 'not instigated or determined by anterior or external conditions, but by inner tendencies to maintain or achieve some form' (Brecht 1994: 136).

## 7.2    Inner tendencies and external conditions: ritual in Wilson's *Deafman Glance* and the exploration of performance and everyday life in *Carriage* and *Requinnes*

Although events happen within a specific reality, the suggestion is that Wilson's characters emerge when there is no requirement to represent. During a scene In *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), actions, though identifiable with the set, are not motivated by the external conditions of plot and situation. Instead, actions enable the performer to experience 'the generic attributes of one's body, such as extension, warmth, weightiness, movement and rest, as one's own' (Brecht 1994: 227).

The external conditions for *Carriage* were of an identifiable, though not an illusionistically discrete, reality. This reality consisted of a corridor of screens and rows of spotlights establishing an ambiguous space that was as much carriage as waiting room, platform and ticket office. The sound of trains and a station used to accompany the action on the set provided the group with an invitation to imagine. The numbers on their clothes linked them to actions which were displayed in the guise of a railway timetable. This enabled the group to locate aspects of behaviour taken from the script within a situation which they considered plausible. Actions could therefore evolve in accordance with the situation, the sound, the script, and the group's own natural tendency

to move. Freed from the exactitudes of representation, they could activate their role in relation to a situation which was also shaped by their actions.

Although the script required the passengers to exchange patterns of movement with other passengers, they also frequently gathered in passive groups as they might in a railway station. Even then, behaviours of waiting and self-reflection contributed greatly to a mood of anticipation enhanced by the sound of moving trains.

The actions of the group established a credible reality despite an ambiguous representation of a place which might only marginally be associated with the visual reality of a train carriage or railway station. The group developed this credible reality in accordance with the script, and in reaction to the accompanying sound, the unfolding events, and each other.

The discovery of a plausible narrative was made contingent upon the possibility of a perceived disparity between a definitive sense of place and the group's motives vis-à-vis their actions. Without a definitive explanation for the film's content, an interpretation was invited which linked the group's actions to the idea of a ritualistic intention or ceremonial attitude.

In retrospect, a similar interpretation might be derived from the partially constructed version of reality which had contributed to the film *Requinnes*.

## Film: *Requinnes*

A tendency to gather emerged on completion of four simultaneously occurring narratives and led to a tableau of still bodies. Each member of the group submitted to this formation in which there was a transition into this new image. The manifestation of the tableau seemed to be explicable by the ritualistic manner in which the gloved characters occupied the centre space as

the rest of the group expressed a natural inclination to engage in shared actions with them. The complicit relationships between the performers' actions and the performative situation, and between their intentions and the experience of being filmed, were contributory factors in their enactment of this non-determinable ritual. A form of 'growth [and] metamorphosis' rather than of linearity and narrative characterized this development (Brecht 1994: 137). It is through a similar process that the Wilson actor tunes into the collective will: 'Wilson's idea seemed to be that subconsciously one would sense and adapt to the movement of the others' (Brecht 1994: 205). According to Lehmann (2006) 'early critics, attempting to characterize their first encounter with this theatre, sometimes chose the comparison that they felt like a stranger attending the enigmatic cultic actions of people unknown to them' (Lehmann 2006: 70).

Improvisation as a practice enabled the group to create their own shared reality. They responded to the script, to each other, and to the situation by transforming themselves into characters with specific gestural vocabularies. This was not limited by the need to represent something beyond the actual events which were taking place.

The image of the tableau was one of many representations of the body through which the spectator could find reference to his/her own physical state, even though, for the spectator, it was an image which might lie beyond physical or corporeal experience. Being outside the body, it might nevertheless have the potential to be internalised and sensed. It might 'release or stir the inner commentaries of the audience' (Howell 1999: 155). Could the processes of constructing individual identities, and the tendency to gather, initiate this

experience? Is an embodied experience negated if forms such as the tableau are pre-determined?

In response to these questions, the possibility of linking the immersive method of communication to the body's natural tendency to perform signs was considered. How might an exploration of different approaches to gesture lead to a synthesis between the semiotic and immersive methods of communication? Could this exploration lead to a method of constructing narratives founded on the body's natural disposition towards movement?

## 7.3 Semiotic and immersive possibilities for the performing body: the development of *The Line* as a scene in *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*

Movement in Wilson's theatre functions as a 'visual soliloquy', is 'less precise, more ambiguous than language,' and 'speaks the unconscious more potently' (Holmberg 1996: 151). His work is grounded in 'modulation between referential and abstract movement' and in the body's capacity to externalise inner tendencies (Holmberg 1996: 144). His assertion that 'the movement must be interior' (Holmberg 1996: 145) and is externalised in 'the lines bodies trace as they move through space [, which he calls] "fields of force"' reflects this approach (Holmberg 1996: 143).

Wilson's assertions confirmed that the manner in which movement is perceived is central to his intention to reconcile his desire to create

representational images with his desire to let the body tell the truth about itself or a situation.

This intention is similar to that of a certain form of postmodern dance which 'interrogates itself, puzzling over the nature and function of movement' (Holmberg 1996: 141). In this form, movement is not presented in reference to an idea or narrative that is external to it. Wilson's desire to escape representation reflects an intention to interrogate movement, especially the idea that we make of it images which continually disappear and are displaced by others. How might a devised performance reconcile the differences between movement intended to reference a narrative and movement which examines the processes with which we perceive it?

The development of the workshop *The Line* into Act 2, scene 2 in the theatre production, *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View,* was intended to explore this question; firstly, by using an abstract movement form to dramatize the way in which perception divides movement into separate images; secondly, by relating this process to the way in which identity is constructed; and finally, through these intentions, to arrive at images that are recognizable in reference to a narrative.

**DVD 2: 11<sup>th</sup> Clip from Act 2, scene 2, *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View***

Forms resulting from phases of action between initiation and completion had already been explored in the original workshop. This approach was influenced by Merce Cunningham's method of presenting, rather than representing, the non-dance information of plot, character, and situation. Holmberg (1996) applies the following description of dance to Wilson's theatre:

> They are not seamless theatrical illusions, productions of fictional worlds
> [...]. The movement vocabulary is only partially expressive; it also
> remains partly abstract and it resists definitive interpretation. The
> emotional and narrative content remains elusive and fragmented, and
> the meaning of the dance is played out in several, not always
> corresponding, dimensions (Holmberg 1996: 141).

When the material for *The Line* was reworked for this production, its function was to describe a training regime for the military group's vocabulary of gestures. Yet the aim of the scene was not to signify this meaning through an association of images, i.e., with references that were external to this particular movement or performance. Instead, the intention was to realize the event through bodies that were enacting this activity within a reality which was self-defining.

The idea and form of the line was taken from the original workshop. However, the actual movements were reinvented during rehearsals in which new choreographed forms evolved out of a non-predictive approach to unresolved movements. Movements which might act as signifiers in another context were stripped of their tendency to represent by being joined together in repetitive, self-sustaining, abstract, metamorphic, and continuous patterns.

Since the military's gestures functioned as a signifier for military behaviour in the production, and could be referred back to this sequence, the scene appeared to be contingent upon the intention to characterize them. However, its meanings could not be construed as being representative of a specific external reality. Although it implied order and perhaps even the idea of a military drill, the scene contained an abstract sequence, which might also be perceived by the spectator as a series of separate images or signs. In this way, a semiotic method of communication, normally associated with intelligibility,

was rendered unintelligible by being presented through the experiencing body's tendency to create abstract forms.

Despite the narrative content in *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View* and this scene's function within the production, the scene also exemplified Wilson's method of 'systematic ambiguity'(Brecht 1994: 108-109).

If this scene escaped specific representation, it did so by taking one element from performance, i.e., movement, and presenting it as itself rather than using it to support other theatrical elements such as dialogue. Movement was determined by formal qualities such as rhythm, pattern, slow tempo as well as posture. A sense of what these bodies conveyed was reflected in the idea that gestures are 'embodied consequences of their occurrence [and] signify [...] their own happening and its expected or habitual affects' (Rotman 2008: 51). These 'habitual affects' were made ambiguous by being unaccompanied by speech and by being slowed down: as Lehmann states: 'only an experience of time that deviates from habit provokes its explicit perception' (Lehmann 2006: 156). This idea is fundamental to Wilson who stages time as 'an object of aesthetic experience' (Lehmann 2006: 156), rather than a frame within which dramatic events can be identified.

Even though the sequence in my production was deliberately slowed down and made ambiguous, it still made reference to a narrative. Although the scene reflected the wider context of narrative and also contained such signifiers as military jackets, the formal qualities of movement were paramount. In this way, a 'modulation between referential and abstract movement' was achieved (Holmberg 1996: 144). Thus a procedure, which in the first workshop *Movement forms* took instrumental activity and abstracted it through an immersive approach, now successfully accomplished a synthesis between

movement that implies signification and movement that escapes specific signification.

Subsequently, the possibility of applying this procedure to material that had already been devised during the workshops, and developing it into scenes for a longer production, was considered. How could the material from the workshops be assembled into a coherent narrative that nevertheless, continued to interrogate movement? What structures could achieve such an intention?

## 7.4   Applying the methods of gestural communication, improvisation and mimesis to performance in *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*

Movement forms were created during workshops which evolved through an analysis of Wilson's methods. They were intended to be abstract in construction but, nevertheless, provide the instrument through which the narrative was conveyed; not through an instrumental mode of communication but through the group's immersive and experiential approach to movement. This was explored during the devolvement of *The Line* into a scene, and followed Wilson's model for his performers:

> If in the general picture he finds himself acting as an instrument, his mode of intervention cannot be instrumental. The immediacy of his action will not come so much from his ability to demonstrate his own internal rhythm, as from a network of sensitive contacts established with

his companions, which allows him to enter synthesis with them (Quadri 1998: 19).

The production was to shadow Wilson's approach to theatre in which the emergence of unique identities within a group is decisive. 'When I look at an actor I have to think not only the character he's playing but also the person breathing in front of me' (Holmberg 1996: 135). The practice of improvisation and Wilson's 'interior screen of the imagination' enabled the performers to respond to the script, to each other and the reality which they were also creating. The narrative of a dystopian civilisation was not to be represented by their actions but instead, be presented as a real situation which they were creating, and to which they could react. In that regard, Wilson's 'theatre that tends to establish physiopsychic relationships among the actors' was intended to provide a platform for the production's realization (Quadri 1998: 19).

The thematic material for the production was to coincide with these intentions by drawing on Bergson's idea that internal processes are constantly affected by an exposure to external events. 'If we give much to matter we probably receive something from it, and that thus, when we try to grasp ourselves after an excursion into the outside world, we no longer have our hands free' (Bergson 2000: 223). With this in mind, some scenes described rituals in which gestures were imposed upon individuals or instilled through mimetic processes. The performers' movement and ways of gathering together would provide a means of evincing a history of qualitative changes. The metamorphic changes of the civilisation would therefore be correlated to a form of movement given by the dual meaning of the German word for distortion – *Entstellung* - which Heidi Gilpin takes from Freud and uses to show how 'the act of perceiving movement enacts displacement' (Gilpin 1996: 108). Gilpin, as a theorist on performance and a dramaturg, became an influential source at this point in the research,

particularly in relation to the perception of movement. By exploring the word *Entstellung*, she also describes how perception 'changes the appearance of something' (Gilpin 1996:108). Her idea influenced my approach to the changing appearances of the civilization, which were conceived as a series of displacements, one arrangement of bodies displacing another.

Whilst completing the movement-script in rehearsal, the production was systematically organised into a chronology of scenes from which a narrative was created. The central theme of two opposing groups – the military and the revolutionary –  emerged out of restaging workshops predicated upon confrontation, such as *Gangs* and *On the Other Hand*. This theme was advanced with the material that described the imposition of specific qualities of movement in procedures that led to the differentiation of the two groups.

All the scenes in the production were structured according to the themes and material which had been created during the workshop series. For this reason, the script described scenes which were named after the workshops to which they referred. Sets, which had not been used in some of the original workshops, were introduced for the theatre performance, e.g., in one scene, track lanes, running from the upstage to the downstage, advanced towards a finishing tape which was positioned across the front of the stage. Some of the transitions which had been explored in the original workshop were amended, truncated or cut entirely for the theatre. These modifications were made so that the subject content and structure of the original workshop would correspond with the narrative of the theatre production.

The theme of movement in relation to the written word in the workshop, *The Literature Olympics,* informed a similar scene in the theatre production. However, by locating this scene after events in which performers were divided

into two groups by the military, the workshop's original theme was developed. In this new context, performers still created movement in response to the books in their track lanes, but with the added implication that they were part of a training process in which gestures were being instilled through the written word. This was made apparent when the military 'characters' intervened during the race, halting their movement and adjusting their postures.

Using the same practice that had been followed during the workshops, the script described the intentions of each scene to the performers. It included descriptions of movement and situations, attributes for individuals, and a narrative context from which performers could create their 'interior screens'. Using the script as a basis for improvisation, each performer created their own movement forms by applying a method of abstraction based on statement, repetition, contrast and reversal. States of stillness, variable speeds and prescribed movements were introduced during this preparatory phase. This method of combining different states to create a sequential movement form was also informed by my films which had explored montage in relation to Deleuze's differentiation of film images. By working with this material in relation to the production's narrative, the performers were also made aware of their specific roles. Despite this process, they were not directed to create specific characteristics in relation to their role. Nevertheless, characters which had emerged during the original workshops and which had naturally become significant within the group were now installed as leaders of either the military or revolutionary group, e.g., the interrogated woman from the workshop, *On the Other Hand*, was assigned the role of revolutionary leader. In this role, she was still at liberty to create her own movement and gestures in response to the actions of others and the interrogation in which she was an instrument. With this approach, a dystopian narrative was consistently referenced through

movement forms which were not created to directly represent it or a character within it, but, nevertheless, evolved in accordance with it. This evolutionary process took place during six months of rehearsals.

The essential details of the narrative were also distilled into a libretto and conveyed by a solo soprano between scenes. This idea originated from the fact that Opera emerged out of its imitation of ancient Greek drama, which was known to have been largely sung or chanted. In this way, the narrative was intimated rather than described to the audience. This allowed for the possibility of it being experienced through the senses and revealed through movement rather than being explicitly shown.

In the first scene, performers moved through an external world of objects in which appearance was determined by the physical impact of that world upon the body. This journey gave way to a static formation where fixed postures attested to the qualities of movement which had taken place. As the performers gathered, each began to speak with increasing volume, creating a chaotic sound world of indecipherable words. Thus speech accompanied a state of stillness rather than movement. This implied a dislocation between speech and the forms of embodied communication which had previously been seen. As the sound of voices increased, the unanimity of the group was broken and its members dispersed. Dislocation provided a catalyst for the fragmentation of the group.

This construction described Bergson's (2007) shell metaphor in which the evolutionary process is compared to an explosion, each piece of shell producing a new piece, which then fragments. The performance dramatized this interpretation of evolution through transitions, which invariably occasioned a new journey characterized by a qualitative change in movement,

leading to a change in appearance as a new formation of bodies was established. Within these evolving structures, selection processes were made, gestural systems instilled and articulated, and the body of the people was reconstituted in a new image.

The narrative evolved through the accretion of images of appearance, of the gathering of a crowd, its dispersal and disappearance. Perhaps, because of these repeating images and patterns, the disappearance of each formation could be anticipated. 'Disappearance, like displacement, proliferates its own presence within absence, its own birth within death' (Gilpin 1996: 109). Conversely, in the final scene, the metamorphosis into a new formation, which reunited the civilization, represented a moment of stability; an arrangement of people and spaces taking in the physiognomy and symmetry of the human form. The scene was one of progression in which a 'tendency to individuate' melded into a 'tendency towards reproduction', evidenced by the performers' similar gestures and the reciprocal arrangements with which the tableau was formed (Bergson 2007: 8). But it was momentarily stable. Its passing was already implied through a similar arrangement of bodies to other formations which had already disappeared. Consequently, 'through its embodiment of absence, in its enactment of disappearance' (Gilpin 1996: 106), it provided the performance's final statement, an image which could 'only leave traces for us to search between, among, beyond' (Gilpin 1996: 106). In this new state of frozen postures, an open system of 'indivisible continuity' yielded to a temporarily closed system symbolised by the formation of the crowd (Bergson 2007: 20). In this moment of stillness, another memorable image of the crowd was created.

The idea that the human mind seeks patterns and accumulates images was implied through the repetition of these images of the crowd. By setting images referring to fixity and formal arrangements alongside images which referred to processes, rituals, and journeys, the performance dramatized Bergson's assimilation of human experience. The 'intellect turns away from the vision of time [because we are] preoccupied in welding the same to the same [...]. It dislikes what is fluid, and solidifies anything it touches. We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect' (Bergson 2007: 30).

Through the repetition of the performance's structures, the temporal theme of change within continuity was also revealed. Bergson (2007) describes the way we live time through the idea of 'continuity of change, preservation of the past in the present, real duration' (Bergson 2007: 15). As a theme, it was also central to scenes in which identifiable gestures were replicated. The reappearance of these gestures implied that only through the 'continuity of change' could the disappearance of the civilisation be prevented. Similarly, images of temporary stability and stasis (crowds and formations), were 'orientated towards the impossible desire to stop disappearance' (Gilpin 1996: 110). The entire performance was characterized by the theme of disappearance; firstly, of qualities in behaviour, e.g., when the panel of interrogators began to collude rather than to confront the woman on trial; and secondly, because of the manner in which some scenes ended, e.g., the disappearance of the sleepers at the end of Act 1, scene 4.

Each scene proposed a new set of conditions predicated upon a progression of images, which, by the very nature of movement, was about the displacement of one image by another. The production was therefore consistent with 'the impossibility of ever really seeing – actually perceiving – movement' (Gilpin

1996: 107). 'So in vain do images come to meet us, from various spaces: a stage, a "performance space," [...]; sometimes incorporating living bodies in their actual states of present-ness, of presents' (Gilpin 1996: 107). Only through the use of repetition, either as acts (the judge's actions of halting the athletes in Act 2, scene 3) or as gestures (the gestures of the military throughout), could any sense of appearance be preserved: 'If disappearance is a condition of performance, repetition is a crucial strategy that calls attention to the very fact of disappearance' (Gilpin 1996: 110). In place of the disappearing images, there was an accretion of structural repetitions, confirming that the production's theme was of an evolving civilisation, its fragmentation into disparate parts, and its eventual formation in a new order.

The manner in which Wilson creates theatre as a series of animated tableaux, in which images disappear, metamorphose into, or are displaced by each other, was integral to the production's structure. Wilson's approach leads to an experience of time for the spectator which was described in the previous chapter, but which became clearer during the making of this work. Since traces of movement were preserved in the work's various formations (the crowd at the end of the first scene and at the end of the final act), they were also inscribed by the specific passing moments which preceded them. In this way, the unstable present given by movement transformed into a moment of stasis given by a 'clear, stable and desirable past' to which all these passing moments proceeded (Deleuze 2005b: 34). Although the production encompassed the idea of a preserved past, movement was always implied in the postures which gave each tableau its form. Even in these pauses, continuity, as well as change, evinced a sense of time that seemed consistent with Wilson's aesthetic, in which time is contingent upon the relationship between image and drama.

In this way, the discovery of a sense of time in Wilson's theatre followed from the practical application of Bergson's concept of the 'continuity of change' to the progressions through which the production unfolded. These progressions, which were also linked to formal structures discovered in the making of the 'performance films', were determined by Wilson's method of using still images, slow movement, and abstract units of motion, to create an aesthetic of duration. An adherence to his experiential approach to movement was also decisive in discovering this sense of time. With this approach, Wilson's actors are relieved of any specifically signifying function, immersing themselves in the tasks with which they are engaged, even if these activities can be identified with an instrumental or semiotic mode of communication.

As has been described in this chapter, the performances *Carriage* and *The Line* had led to an understanding of how this could be achieved. Even whilst expressing distinct signs, moving bodies could imply a variety of meanings that were as much about the formal qualities of the body as they were instrumental in suggesting narrative themes to which the body referred.

This idea, which describes interplay between immersive, instrumental, and semiotic modes of communication, was not only central to the creation of *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*, but enabled me to shadow Wilson's production approach. In pursuing this idea of interplay, I discovered that in Wilson productions, the relationship between gestural communication and narrative content is similarly conceived. Consequently, his conception of the body's signifying function achieves an equivocal presentation in which each action is integral to the scenic construction. This arrangement, in turn, contributes to an overarching narrative theme, even though an identifiable

path towards that theme is neither linear, nor conceived through the dramatic paradigm of cause and effect.

The workshop series tested this idea in relation to Wilson's methods, leading to a clearer understanding of how material for a staged production could be generated without reference to an existing text. By following Wilson's approach of always beginning with movement and then augmenting it with other elements such as sound and lighting, the production's narrative themes, structures, and actions emerged as part of a process, rather than being imposed on the performers from the outset. Instead of a pre-existing written text, the work's content was defined by an emergent performative text which was shaped by the movement forms, dynamic tableaux, and scenic progressions created in the workshops. These components were then refined during rehearsal, and further developed during the performance itself. This achievement and its implications on the discovery of a new understanding of Wilson's theatre will now be considered.

# Conclusion

The findings of the research are evaluated in four sections. The first section describes the research into Wilson's methods of creating movement forms. In the second section, a new understanding of the influence of film on his staging is discovered. The third section describes the transposition into film of the images captured from the workshop performances and reveals how images are created and function in Wilson's theatre work. In the final section, new knowledge on the perception of motion and an experience of time in Wilson's work is demonstrated through Bergson's concept of 'duration'.

## 1. Movement forms

A central concern of the research was the gestural expression and motion of the human body in performance, and how this form of communication, in its displacement of dialogue, equates with Wilson's creation of a visual dramaturgy. By shadowing the creative freedom which he vested in individuals during his earliest workshops and his subsequent intention to determine a production's every human gesture, a practical research methodology evolved that bridged these different approaches.

**Discovering Wilson's rehearsal method: creating movement forms and linking them to the mise-en-scène**

One of the major discoveries of the research was that distinct forms of motion and gesture, which appeared to have been choreographed, could emerge out of a scripted situation even when a narrative proposition was only partially outlined. The garnering of distinct gestural sequences from performers rested as much on my ability to direct their movements towards a specific form already taking shape, as on their ability to improvise during workshop performances underpinned by Wilson's methods. This discovery led to a clearer understanding of how Wilson, without recourse to dialogue or a text, creates movement forms during the rehearsal procedure, transforming them into images for his productions, where they are seen in combination with each other, and with other components of the mise-en-scène.

In my workshop performances, a shared frame of reference to scripted fragments of narrative and Wilson's methods led to images which revealed themselves through the conflict of control and freedom. As with Wilson, a partially dramatized form of action and a predominately aesthetic organization of human movement were achieved by anchoring performers to a sufficiently stable system of referents. These included the script, the set, lighting, sound, and sometimes objects; and a method of creating specific movement forms out of transitions, repetition, variable speeds, reverse motion, sudden variations, pauses, and stasis.

Staging the mise-en-scène as a situation or synthesizing space in which gestures could find purpose enabled me to unlock the ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of human behaviour which underline Wilson's productions. In *Possible Narratives*, improvisation, as a reflection of Wilson's workshop

practice, was aligned to a definitive sense of place; a situation to which events, actions, and certain forms of behaviour could correspond.

Scripts sometimes described actions in graphic detail (*On The Other Hand*), or offered a list of actions for selection (*Carriage*), or operated as hidden texts (*Docking Station*) by providing a framework through which movement forms could be moulded and aligned to Wilson's formal approach. This aspect of the script worked as a corollary to Wilson's insistence on controlling every aspect of the mobile human form so that 'the motor apparatus is alienated: every action (walking, standing, getting up and sitting down) remains recognizable but changed, as never seen' (Lehmann 2006: 164). In my film *Docking Station*, the spatial organization of moving bodies and their trajectories was shaped by mechanistic and procedural references in the script; the idea of a technologized body and the body as pure gesture, i.e., gesture without a specifically intended meaning, was echoed by bodies that appeared to be motivated by machinery beyond their volition.

Some performances were scripted and prefigured by the theatrical allusion of the set (*Hat Check Girl*), or relied on an imaginative response to the script and minimal set (*Carriage*). In the first example, gestures were more descriptive; closer to the notion of conventional acting. In the second example, a correlation between gestures and internal states was more apparent; closer to Wilson's idea of an 'interior screen', and somnambulistic motion. Either way, the gestural potential of moving bodies was unlocked by harnessing an improvisatory approach to definitive transitions within a thematic or narrative proposition. This approach, in turn, suggested that the relationship between Wilson's gestural vocabulary and an imagined scene is taken forward, even as his movement forms arrive.

Through workshops examining his methods, Wilson's composite and complex rehearsal approach was revealed: the actor's body becomes a barometer of the space and the director's evolving intentions; a means of visualizing a work's content even if, subsequently, a text or spoken words are appended to it. Each actor's response and predisposition towards certain gestures contributes to this formative process and forges an essential link in the creative chain between Wilson the director/choreographer and Wilson the scenographer. If this establishes his rehearsal practice, it also goes some way to explaining how fragments, which constitute his productions, retain the haunted autonomy of individual gestures, and yet achieve a unity when human motion is linked to the mise-en-scène.

## Shadowing Wilson's methods of creating a production: exploring links between movement forms and narrative themes

As my practice evolved into workshop performances, the spatial and temporal qualities of specific movement forms were enhanced by continuing research into Wilson's use of motion in relation to images. Alongside this approach, gestural sequences, simple task-like actions, and dramatic contexts of conflict and resolution were explored, leading to the discovery of the ambiguous ground between these different categories. In workshops such as *The Line* and *The Chain*, choreographed sequences were achieved through an essentialist approach to the body as pure gesture and motion. Contrastingly, a more dramatic context underpinned *On the Other Hand* and *The Letter.*

Even within a dramatic context predicated on an arrangement of representational actions, a collage of images was produced, rather than

dramatic progressions of cause and effect. In *On the Other Hand*, action was characterized by dislocation, fragmentation, and evanescence, especially during pauses in motion, or when an intended action was interrupted or followed by moments of stasis. In *The Letter,* an imagistic structure was achieved through an evolving correspondence between the set's spatial arrangement of identical booths, the letter recipients' sequences of repeated movement, and the replication of these sequences by each recipient's partner.

As the research was consolidated in rehearsals for *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*, scenes were constructed without reference to a definitive overall narrative. Nevertheless, by situating the performers within a scripted situation for each scene, specific narrative themes emerged. Consequently, rehearsals were characterized by my desire to switch between the evolution of gestures that embodied a shared exploration of Wilson's methods, the development of narrative themes, and scenic continuity. During this process, material derived from the workshop performances was refined, and, in reference to Wilson's earliest experiments, a mimetic transference of specific gestures differentiated several scenes.

When *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View* was staged, distinct tableaux as an arrangement of bodies in combination with sound and lighting realized a production of images and sensory effects, rather than specific meanings. The movement forms which differentiated each scene were often recognizable as part of an overarching narrative theme, but suggested a variety of connotations without being descriptive. As well as recurring gestural sequences, idiosyncratic behaviour and de-dramatized action, rather than the logic of conflict and resolution, contributed to the imagistic structure of each scene. Conversely, a non-determinable form of dramatized action was present

in the ritualistic behaviour through which events transpired. In this way, an equivocal presentation vied with thematic material without the prolongation or extension of this material into dramatic forms of narration.

Through this approach, another important discovery was made: a link between an immersive mode of communication (the body's experiential expression), instrumental actions (the body's functional capacity), and the body's natural inclination to express signs (the body's semiotic capacity). Although gestures were often abstract in construction, they also provided the instrument with which the narrative was conveyed. In one scene, a repeated sequence referred to the underlying narrative as well as implying that motion itself was being examined. The scene's truncated movement forms were constructed from a montage of gestures; an approach informed by explorations of Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' which, subsequently, contributed to an understanding of Wilson's staging.

Henri Bergson's idea that motion is perceived as a series of images and yet experienced as an indivisible progression was also crucial to the way in which the scene was conceived. Motion could be perceived as both divisible and continuous; as an indivisible progression, and as a series of ambiguous gestures. Each of these gestures could be individually referenced to the body and the space around it, whilst appearing to signify particular meanings within the group.


**The role of dramatic content in Wilson's visual progressions**

By exploring images of the moving body in relation to narrative references and strategies of systematic ambiguity, I discovered that an audience's awareness

of their own evolving perception of motion is integral to Wilson's intention. I also considered that this awareness conforms to Bergson's concept of the indivisibility of internal states, which, in turn, corresponds to Wilson's visual progressions, implying a link to the Wilson actor's engagement in Wilson's idea of the 'interior screen'. I also achieved a greater understanding of how Wilson's work derives from this construct, rather than a drama forged from dialogue and a definitive plot.

Although within the structure of Wilson's work, the body's role confronts logical concepts of meaning in drama, the body's presence transcends the idea that it is a sign. Productions such as *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) are still dramatic in content despite the absence of dialogue; reliant on shared behaviour and ritualistic action, and even conventional forms of representation, as much as these aspects are subjugated to an imagistic structure. However, the body's conventional role within the dramatic trope of theatrical realism is denied by notions of agency: Wilson's pictorial approach dominates the reception of his work, and yet this sense of agency is partly detected through the intermediary actions of individual actors who make every gesture and each performance their own.

Although Lehmann's assertion is that in Wilson's work, the body becomes 'cut-out of the time-space continuum as an art object' (Lehmann 2006: 164), my research into dramatic acts and representational forms of action suggests that Wilson's aesthetic is determined by a varied approach to gesture; one that is often prefigured by an intention to convey his actors' internal states. In *Quartett* (2006), internal states are expressed through a formalized gestural vocabulary, evincing how Wilson creates a complex and sometimes contradictory function for the body; one that exceeds the idea that the body is

merely an object within the scenography. His movement forms in *Quartett* (2006) and those that I created for *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View* imply that, even without words, stylized gestures can be alloyed to representational aspects of characterization, and lead to an intensified sense of dramatized action, but not necessarily dramatic consequence or singular meanings.

In Wilson's *Quartett* (2006), words are spoken, but are unaccompanied by movement and often delivered in the form of voiceovers. Although words are used as a performative tool and contribute to the meaning of his gestural sequences, they are treated independently. This symbiotic relationship between voice and the formalization of complex psychological behaviour, which Wilson achieves in *Quartett* (2006), was not explored during the research, but would contribute to my practice if further research was undertaken.

## 2. Film and its influence on Wilson's staging

Another intention of the research was to discover the influence of film on Wilson's staging. This intention derived not only from critical writings on Wilson, but through my own observations of Wilson's restaging of *Einstein on the Beach* (1976/2012) and a recent production: *The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic* (2011).

In this recent production, Wilson's actors are in static postures on stage before the audience are seated. The spectator is already engaged in an image that is

continuously present, rather than an actor's entrance which might more conventionally activate the stage space.

When a similar sense of temporality was achieved in some of my films, I discovered that in many of Wilson's production, a designated space for performance, which is not predicated on the dramatic paradigm of conflict and resolution, carries with it the idea of a continuous present. This idea was pivotal to the discoveries I made during my reconstruction of performance in film, and the subsequent creation of autonomous films which examine the relationship between performance and film.

## The continuous present and Wilson's idea of the 'interior screen'

In various sections of my film *Requinnes*, combinations of tracking and panning shots capture a space that is devoid of corporeal presence. It is as if the camera is searching out visual stimulus. The moving camera, which could be likened to the spectator's gaze at the beginning of Wilson's *The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic* (2011), discovers a relatively static body, rather than a moving body entering the frame. The implication is of a space that is continuously present, although, by the very nature of the medium, the film also implies that these performative events happened in the past. The film's capacity to manifest a sense of the continuous present is partly derived from the way in which the originating performance was conceived, and partly determined by the exploratory way in which the camera follows the action. Both these aspects of the film combine to counter the sense of the past which the medium naturally asserts.

In my films *Passing By* and *On the Other Hand*, ellipses accentuate this sense of the present moment. Instead of an elsewhere which lies beyond the frame, and despite the interruptive aspects of montage, there is a sense that missing actions continue unseen. This approach to montage elicits an invitation to imagine the continuing actions, alluding to Wilson's contention that his audiences experience dream-like states by imagining the unseen. The effect is implicit to his idea of the 'interior screen' through which the unity of time is disrupted and the spectator's own perceptions and experiences displace the logic of dramatic significance, coherence, and consequence associated with the dramatic paradigm.

## Montage and Wilson's scenography

If my initial films began as manipulated records of events that were temporally continuous, they were also characterized by an increasing use of techniques to create different linkages between images. Whilst evincing a continuous motion picture, dissolves, superimpositions, and changes in the frame speed also implied discontinuity. This dichotomy was made more complex because my films had a tendency to produce traces of narration and disclose an order to events, even if these elements were not explicit in the originating material.

In exploring aspects of narrative continuity and discontinuity in these 'performance films', I discovered that the kind of structural unit defined by the term shot was not only implicit to film, but also to Stefan Brecht's description of Wilson's movement forms as 'distinct graphic units' (Brecht 1994: 113).

Brecht's term implies a means of segmentation which, as an alternative to the shot, and alongside the director's deconstruction of movement into discrete

gestures, follows the segmented construction of film which foregrounds the medium. As with Wilson's rehearsal procedure of working with blocks or segments of movement (otherwise known as a blocking procedure), divisions attest to an inherently filmic approach, implying a montage of shots that is characteristic of his productions as a whole. Like a change of shot or point of view, Wilson's tableaux modulate in relation to the movement of actors and are correlated to the spectators' perceptions of the whole stage picture.

In Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) a montage of images, consisting of the illuminated fragments of moving bodies, is submitted to the architectonic structure and the cinematic effect of zooming in on spotlit parts. Even the intimacy of the close-up is replicated through the use of pin-spot lighting. In Wilson's *Quartett* (2006), this enables film actors such as Isabelle Huppert to use film acting techniques as an expression of internal states without the excesses of theatrical projection. As with film, theatre has its own language of effects, but despite the continuing presence of its live aspects, Wilson's intention to construct images, in which the technical precision of each gesture is decisive, begins to destroy this sense of a living presence attributable to theatre.

**Gestural enactment, film, and the live presence in Wilson's theatre work**

The influence of film on Wilson's staging began to emerge as an idea when I was submitting images of the moving body to the technology of film; perfecting the imperfect by controlling the timing, speed, and duration of every gesture. Through these manipulations, I discovered that Wilson's use of slow movement transforms the live presence of theatre by accentuating the

body's kinetic mechanism, creating a distancing effect that is more often associated with televisual media. Due to this effect, the body appears to move as if externally controlled, lending to it the characteristic of a moving image, rather than a live presence.

In a reversal of this exchange, my films show moving bodies enacting live performances, and even though the action is no longer live, a residual sense of that living presence permeates the images. Despite their defining characteristics, these works are enigmatic: the originating performances are shaped by improvisation and Wilson's methods as much as they are motivated by partially scripted narratives. Consequently, they reveal forms of enactment that are complicated by being implemental both to the unfolding fiction and to a corresponding sense of real occurrence; a sense which is heightened by film's characteristic power to create the impression of reality.

Even if the gestural language proposed by the script is not entirely comprehensible, it is correlated both to the scripted fiction and to real events as they arise in the performance. As a result, a correspondence between various forms of gestural enactment and the creation of conceivable realities determines the films' content, and contributes to a continuing sense of the live event, even whilst that sense is being undermined.

If the experience of watching these films makes the viewer aware of their own acts of perception, this in itself may be connected to the residual sense of a living presence carried by the images. There is an expectation that the act of viewing will affect the actual content of the film, although, in reality, this cannot happen. As a result, the 'performance films' are more like windows onto the world than frames containing images.

**Film processes and theatrical tropes: cinematic mediation and its impact on Wilson's staging**

Ultimately, my film images reproduce a form of reality, rather than functioning as signs of some external reality as they might do in a theatrical presentation. Nevertheless, the central presence of a performative space disrupts these essential distinctions; images approximate the live performance as much as they are indicative of the film frame and film processes which mediate it. These parameters are also subjected to mediation by the residual sense of theatrical tropes which permeate the films: since events occur through the absorption of performers in a temporal continuum, the films cannot resist the permeation of the present even when images have been sequentially displaced.

The films also resist the permeation of theatrical tropes – i.e., they lack three-dimensionality and a live presence. Furthermore, other aspects that might be considered as constituent to the defining characteristics of performance are absent: the originating performance happens without an audience and with the intention of making a film, only finding a viewer to substantiate it. In this collision of states between an accessible, mechanical reproduction and the performance which, though disclosed by the film, is no longer live, the disappearance of this sense of the live moment occurs every time a shot is terminated and another one begins.

In the film *Oedipus*, an approach linking Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' and Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' elicited a progression of states in which the impact of time upon the body became visible. The use of montage facilitated this approach, which was also shaped by the mobile camera and its changing viewpoints; conversely, the

inclusion of theatrical tropes and dramatic acts contested this dominant form of narration.

The film's narrative construction is emphasized by 'scenically dynamic formations' (Lehmann 2006: 68), but its staged artificiality suggests that this construction is also contingent upon the dramatization of acts. Consequently, contesting lines of signification are engendered by the intertwining of theatrical tropes and film processes, implying that a quest for connection and correspondence is requisite to an interpretation of the film.

In considering the film's implications, I came to the understanding that Wilson's scenography evinces a mediated version of theatrical tropes, and a de-dramatization of action. As with film, in which a process of construction is disclosed every time a shot is cut or dissolves, Wilson's staging is derived from processes that involve fragmentation: a segmentation of motion and a montage of images replaces the conventional construction of dramatic progression. Consequently, the experience of the Wilson spectator and that of a film viewer may not be dissimilar. Although engaged in the perception of a human presence, which may be expected from the actions of real bodies on stage, the Wilson spectator is also distanced from this live aspect of performance. The proscenium acts more like a film frame than a window onto the world, and inside this frame, a deconstruction of human movement into gestural sequences is revealed as a process that continually reminds the spectator of Wilson's scenographic construction.

If these observations are considered in the light of Lehmann's claim that 'the dramatic process occurred between bodies; the postdramatic process occurs with, on and to bodies' (Lehmann 2006: 163), then the 'postdramatic' coincides with a shift towards images and away from the theatrical component

of live performance. Regarding Wilson's practice of applying variable speeds and montage to motion patterns, the process that occurs 'on' bodies may even be considered as a filmic one. Since his mise-en-scène privileges the conditions in which bodies are seen, rather than their dramatic function, processes of mediation are magnified. Consequently, the promise and expectation of the live aspect of drama often recedes, along with the conventional context of conflict and resolution that happens between bodies, and involves aspects of the dramatic representation of the body. This chimes with Kaye's (1994: 70) assertion that Wilson's authorial theatre aesthetic promises its audience depth, significance, stability, containment, and therefore meaning, whilst also denying or disrupting a central and unifying interpretation that might be expected from its thematic or narrative content.

## Wilson's mechanistic mise-en-scène as a focus for narration

The discovery of a collision of states between live bodies and their technologized representation in film furthered my understanding of Wilson's staging. Although performed live, many of the scenes in *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) have the appearance of film. The stage space is organized into zones of activity, compartmentalizing the action and disrupting a sense of spatial homogeneity. Like a long shot in film, Wilson's arrangement invites the viewer to search beyond events in the foreground, discovering that much of the action occurs at a distance, as if in another zone. These zones of activity are often superimposed or merge together, as if images are being refocused, faded out, or cut to reveal a new relationship within the pictorial frame. Wilson's staging directs the audience's gaze towards the performers' lines of sight which are locked into a spatial arrangement of choreographed gestures. Since images

and sound form part of the mise-en-scène, bodies also take on the appearance of reproducible forms, as if part of a mechanism, or being made by one.

A cinematic treatment of time is epitomized by fluid changes in lighting and scenery, and the various rhythms through which transformations unfold. This temporal quality is also confounded by such dramatic components as recitation, live bodies, and lighting effects that are specifically theatrical. Despite the fact that these components accentuate both the immediate present and the theatrical paradigm, Wilson's staging has a sense of the past, of the past being retold. It alludes to a form of narration that corresponds to Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image' in which the impact of time on the body is manifested by images of everyday life. Wilson's emphasis on natural processes such as walking creates an aesthetic of duration in which images of slow-moving bodies effect our perception of time and our experience of motion. Rather than dramatic content, 'scenically dynamic formations', and narrative references to Einstein's life are central to the production (Lehmann 2006: 68).

Like the multiple possibilities of creating narrative explored in my 'performance films', Wilson presents transformative processes and narrative progressions which operate at a distance, come into focus, become transparent, or are superimposed. In the absence of a logically dramatic sequence of events, definitive action, or a determinable mimesis of reality, the mise-en-scène operates as a focus for these processes and for narration. Since his method of linking the actions of bodies is through their relationship to lighting and the set, the role of the mise-en-scène can be compared to the role of the camera in narrating a film. Consequently, Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) is predicated on the kind of fragmentary narration that is often used in film.

**My films and the promise of meaning**

The idea of disrupting the promise of meaning implied by a performative context, narrative premise, sense of place, and theme was explored in the films *Carriage* and *On the Other Hand*. Even though events and actions are linked to a narrative theme and situation, the content in these 'performance films' is often overshadowed by the formal aspects of hybridization through which the promise of a theme is nullified. Despite their autonomy as films, the characteristic qualities of film and theatre, and their different means of representation, become intertwined: the homogeneity of film's seamless surface clashes with the heterogeneity of theatre elements in which loose ends remain.

The films are also self-reflexive, foregrounding a process of thought and construction, rather than aiming for a concealment of the important conceptual questions which went into their making. Film techniques such as framing, dissolves, and superimposition introduce aspects of a fragmentary technologized body, and bring that aesthetic into collision with the performing body. Correspondingly, the filmed live bodies are always prefigured by a sign that they are engaged in a performative presentation – a frame within the frame of the film.

**Film processes, live bodies and a fragmentary approach to narration**

In my 'performance films' a fragmentary approach to narration, which also implied a loss of images, was achieved through montage. The abridgement of events reduced the centrality of the originating performances, shifting the emphasis of the works onto the processes through which images had been cut.

Consequently, the films were determined by these processes as much as they were determined by individual performances. In shaping the narrative of each film, montage and the addition of sound were as decisive as the performative content.

In this way, the research led to the discovery that, despite the presence of live bodies, Wilson's mechanized staging often overshadows individual performances, leading to the possibility of multiple narratives and a variety of interpretations. This possibility is conceivable because his visual and sonic structures probe the dialectical relationship between film and theatre, and between images and live bodies. His 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' implies that, like a film director, Wilson's vision or agency is always evident in the mise-en-scène (Brecht 1994: 136): he decides when and how to cut between one image and the next. Consequently, his scenographic construction provides a directorial presence that mirrors the centralising power of the camera in film.

## 3. Images

Wilson's approach to images was a prevailing concern of the research and was explored in reference to my ideas regarding the influence of film on his staging. Wilson's video portraits provided a valuable source from which to create a further bridge to these ideas.

In these works, the idea of a time-image was detected in the relationship between light and movement. For the viewer, the experience is not just of the changing light on a subject, but the motion of the subject itself. Time is experienced internally as a progression which finds external expression in the perceived object.

Through this analysis, it was discovered that Wilson's work could be associated with Bergson's concept of 'duration' which links an individual's internal states to his/her external motion. The intention of registering a progression of internal states in my films was initially linked to the mobility of the camera.

## The discovery of the 'movement-image' as an indirect 'time-image' in my films

Deleuze's 'movement-image' was revealed when moving bodies, and the application of the machinery used to capture it, became fused in the shot. This idea was advanced by casting the camera-operator in a more participatory role during the filming of *Passing By*. Thus a subjective view, expressed in qualities of distraction, interest and discontinuity became imprinted on the film. In cementing this link, 'states of consciousness' were manifested in the 'semi-subjective image'. These states, by being externalised, were 'no longer in one another, but alongside one another' as the images of the film (Bergson 2000: 101). Through the discovery of the 'semi-subjective image', the film's images were determined by the movement of the camera in relation to the performers. Motion corresponded to positions in space rather than being perceived as an indivisible progression. Deleuze's indirect 'time-image', in which an experience of time derives from movement, predominated.

In response to these considerations, other approaches to film found new ways in which a chain of images might be experienced, even though linearity was inevitably implied by the medium of film. By applying dissolves, which prolonged the duration of one superimposed image over another, the temporal and spatial locations of images were destabilised. Editing some images into single frames and cutting between them provided another means of affecting the visual sense such that the act of perception prevailed over the thing perceived. This pointed to a connection between the processes with which the films could be perceived and the spectator's temporal experience of them. In a similar way the spectator at a Wilson show contemplates 'now one [image], now the other, [losing] the unity and encompassing order of time, and the sense of time itself' (Brecht 1994: 257).

## Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' as a means of revealing internal states

By using montage to shadow Wilson's 'discontinuous but resumptive manner of development' (Brecht 1994: 136), an aesthetic relating to the human body in motion was generated. Deleuze's idea of the 'affection-image' was crucial to the presentation of bodies affected by a situation and other bodies. The discontinuous performances of identity in the film *Hat Check Girl* were determined by shots which were often cut before a motor extension of action could be detected in the image. This eroded the difference between 'the actuality of the action-image, [and] the virtuality of the affection-image' (Deleuze 2005a: 212). In *Fugue States*, the film's close-up image of a face was produced by disruptions in the film's continuity. Through this method, internal states were expressed externally, not through a situation, but through the

juxtaposition of manipulated images. A similar sense of disruption was achieved through the dislocation between sound and image in films such as *On the Other Hand*. As a result, a connection between a character's internal state and perceived events was accomplished. This furthered an understanding of how Wilson uses the autonomy of theatrical codes to tell his audience something about the inner life of his characters.

If sound was used to express this inner life, increasing the mobility of the camera accomplished distortions in the external appearance of moving bodies. In the film *Docking Station,* hallucinatory images were achieved by accentuating the mobility of the camera. Through these kinetic displacements, the film presented the body's natural inclination to entangle itself with other bodies, evincing a prosthetic existence through images that were an assemblage of disparate body parts and actions. Motion was often associated with the displacement of one gesture by another and in transitions from repetition, continuity and flow, to fragmentation, stasis and discontinuity. Although these transitions were already apparent in the live performance to camera, their manipulation in film served to accentuate the methods with which the group had been working. On reflection, the application of repetition, stillness, contrast, reversal and variable speeds to a series of gestures already pointed to the structures with which these films were made.

Through this discovery, a new understanding of Wilson's approach to images of the moving body was gained. After reconsidering *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), and in particular, Lucinda Child's figuration in scene one, it seemed to me that her repeated movement form was constructed from single images, or individual frames, as in film. Although continuity is established through the repetition of a sequence, her movement form can be perceived as a series of

momentary postures built upon single instants, pauses in movement and discrete gestures. As well as repetition and moments of stillness, variable speeds and reversed motion are apparent especially during the almost imperceptible turnarounds when a new start to a sequence can be detected. There is a sense that the actor is marking her passage from one image to the next or from one frame to the next.

Unlike the normative quality of a living presence in theatre, Lucinda Child's mobile figuration produces an image which demonstrates the reproducible and the mechanical. Although Wilson's image subscribes to Lehmann's (2006) idea of a postrdramatic theatre, in that the staging of this image replaces the logic of conflict and resolution essential to dramatic acts, a dramatic story is partially foregrounded because movement, being a performative act, implies drama. Furthermore, the image is thematically indexed to a non-linear narrative, consisting of images that reference Einstein's life and the impact of his scientific discoveries on humanity. In this way, the remnants of drama, as a conceptual model, can be traced through imitation (e.g., Einstein as a character) and the perception of related images in the audience's memory.

**An exploration of images as a means of discovering Wilson's collage of simultaneously occurring, though different realities**

In *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*, a collage of images revealed that aspects of drama could be retained and linked to the idea of multiple narratives without the need for dramatic realism or a literary text. Although, in this production, performers referred to a pre-existing framework of rehearsed actions and an underlying theme of a civilisation in conflict, images were not

organized in the logical presentation of an unfolding story. Instead, images were contingent upon an aesthetic in which an essential reference was Lehmann's description of the postdramatic as 'the come and go between the perception of structure and of the sensorial real' (Lehmann 2006: 103). Rather than inviting an audience to judge actions in relation to another reality external to these events, the process of enacting a reality, instead of representing one, was explored through the pictorial structures on which the production was founded. Furthermore, these images were made up of individual actions that fell between an identifiable reality, or a specifically narrative situation, and out-of-place, or odd behaviour; between performing an act and the notion of arbitrary actions.

In my film *The Letter*, this tendency is explicitly played out within a presentation of replicated cells in which each performer's response to the reception of a letter results in a unique sequence of gestures. These different reactions reveal the difficulties inherent to an interpretation of gestural forms of communication, intimating the idea that a consensual understanding of gestural language is unlikely. In a similar way, Wilson's collage of simultaneously occurring, though different realities, in *Deafman Glance* (1971) negates the possibility of consensual agreement as to their meanings. His discontinuous approach to dramatic action blurs such categorical distinctions as the identity of individual characters and their role within a scene. Instead, images are offered up for contemplation, affecting the sense of events being related, or being related to a temporal continuity and a linear narrative.

# 4. The sense of time in Wilson's theatre

One of the major intentions of the research was to find a new understanding of how staging, which in theatre had traditionally been dominated by dramatic content, has evolved into a time-space: instead of linear time, Wilson creates 'image-time' (Lehmann 2006: 58). During the introduction, the idea that Wilson's approach to scenography originates from Gertrude Stein's notion of a 'Landscape Play' was identified and linked to his adherence to '[a] minimal progression, the continuous present' (Lehmann 2006: 81).

**Using a specific time-space Gestalt to discover Wilson's idea of the pictorial and continuous present**

The idea of a pictorial landscape as the model for Wilson's staging enabled me to negotiate between the construction of representational spaces and the manifestation of a time-space. The presentation of a minimal aesthetic and the barest outline of a script and mise-en-scène - e.g., in *Carriage* and *Docking Station* – liberated the performers from a compulsion to dramatize the performance space with referential, signifying, and representational actions. Instead, and foregrounded by Wilson's use of tableaux, an agenda that was contrary to the mimesis of real life prevailed. Thus, if non-determinable events could be construed, a sense of time and place, which was also constructed with lighting and sound, did not accede to notions of linearity, fixity, stability and a definitive narrative. Scenes in *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View* were an exploration of this model: Wilson's idea of the pictorial and of the continuous present. The recurrence of static formations and the motion of

bodies into and away from a variety of structures (tableaux and crowd scenes) was influenced by Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre, as a 'theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations' through which he analyses Wilson (Lehmann 2006: 68).

Each scene in my production was presented as a unique assemblage of objects and set elements in which the direction, speed, and the gestural figurations of individual performers were integrated into the whole picture. Despite the presentation of distinct events, slowly evolving modifications in sound and lighting manifested a sense of pictorial and temporal continuity. Instead of dramatic content or dialogue, pictorial aspects of the staging, in which the frame of the stage functioned as an essential element, shaped the production's aesthetic. This presentation was substantiated by the use of different exit and entry points and by contrasts in the tempo and rhythmic flow of bodies across the stage. A variety of fixed directions differentiated the separate scenes. Thus an experience of time in relation to space was made tangible through images in which individual journeys often led to a formation of bodies, expressing motion as the displacement of one image by another. Images of crowds were imbued with a history of moving bodies and the postures that led to their formation. With every change in formation, the impossibility of reconciling motion with an image seemed to be implied. Yet in these moments of stasis, a pause rather than a cessation in movement was apparent. Even though one perception might be of time measured by bodies in a varying relationship to positions in space, the sense of motion as a process governed by time was also apparent. The group's ability to locate their different movements within a shared rhythm was crucial to this achievement. The key to a greater understanding of Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) was in the determination of a specific time-space Gestalt for each scene.

In Wilson's production, Philip Glass's accompanying music is structured through the repetition of phrases and the accumulated variations within each phrase. His music emphasizes the rhythmic qualities of Wilson's 'distinct graphic units' and extends the sense of metamorphosis already evidenced in the latter's systematic construction of stage images (Brecht 1994: 113). The recurring theme of actors writing in the air adds to a pulse that is further accentuated during several recitations in which tone and rhythm are more important than narrative content. Such phrasing is intentionally gestural, and, in Wilson's production, is echoed through a visual symmetry of corporeal shapes, and sonic patterns. As well as directing the audience's attention away from the production's narrative content and towards the artificiality of the spectacle, the polymorphic relationship of images to sound promises a temporal synthesis which is then disrupted by moments of silence, stasis and transition.

## A consideration of the relationships between time, space, and the processes through which the Wilson spectator perceives motion

In my *Gangs* workshop, the action of finger clicking relayed the body's inherent rhythmic impulses, whilst functioning as a gestural signifier for a transition into stillness and silence. This performance, alongside others that explored the idea of performative states, revealed that Wilson's aesthetic of duration consists of a series of dynamic transitions. During this research, and informed by Bergson's concept of 'duration', I discovered that, unlike the compression of real time in other forms of theatre, Wilson's productions are predicated upon a temporal relationship between static states and motion. Through a presentation of moving bodies, he invites the spectator to consider time

spatially, but by organizing these bodies into images in relation to the mise-en-scène, he reveals events through visual and sonic progressions. These progressions are metamorphic, rather than dramatic, heightening the spectator's awareness of the processes through which motion is perceived. This is a dual experience for the spectator: a sensory perception of images and an increased awareness of the processes with which they are received. In this way, Wilson realizes a connection between the spatial organizations of the unfolding drama and, in accordance with Bergson's idea of quality, time experienced as a progression of indivisible states. Without the dramatic paradigm of cause and effect, a correspondence between events and the audience's experience of time fluctuates. And, unlike a happening, there is no sense of a shared time between the spectator and a Wilson production. But, as the implications of Bergson's concept of 'duration' on Wilson's aesthetic show, an awareness of lived time is created that relates to each spectator's individual experience.

*The Restriction Exercise* furthered this exploration of consciousness and Bergson's concept of 'duration'. Through this exercise, the group became aware that their conscious states were often attributable to spatial considerations. Subsequently, motion took place in relation to space, but being continuous, no interval between one instant and the next, and no one position in space and the next, was given precedence over another. This led to the performance *Two Sides to an Envelope* in which the positions that the two bodies occupied in space, and the motion between them, revealed how Wilson conveys an experience of time.

Even in Wilson's still images, motion is either slowly unfolding or implied because of the displacement of a previous image. The implication is of the

continuity of life in which motion is a process relating to time, rather than an object in space. These images often seem to exist outside chronological time. For example, Wilson's image of Cordelia peeling an onion in *King Lear* (1985) evokes a sense of time which might be equated with Bergson's concept of duration: a body 'passes from one position to the other, a process which occupies duration and has no reality except for a conscious spectator, eludes space. We have to do here not with an object but with a progress: motion' (Bergson 2000: 110).

When exploring images in *Two Sides to an Envelope* in which the key relationships were between motion and time, and motion and space, motion appeared to be both divisible in relation to space, and an indivisible process determined by a fluctuating relationship to identity. Through this work, which was informed by Bergson's ideas, the real dichotomy at the heart of my films and performances, and this research was revealed. That is, the performer's experience of motion is one of immersion, but the spectator may lean towards a production of internal images; motion may be divided up and assimilated according to positions in space. On the other hand, through an exposure to the transformative processes which were explored in this performance, the possibility of a qualitative experience of time was also established.

Similarly, in *The Letter*, the performance was treated as a time-space in which slow motion offered the audience a varying experience of time. Slow-moving images and syncretic events were created as a way of re-thinking time, particularly in relation to Bergson's ideas concerning memory. Since, in Bergson's terms, consciousness is always time-based and mediated through memory, slow movement enabled performers to go beyond the necessity of the moment. Thus the freedom given to the moving body opened up the

choices performers could make in relation to themselves, the objects around them and other bodies. The comparable procedures in which performers gravitated towards a reciprocal exchange of gestures mirrored the changing states of perception which might be experienced by a spectator. Time perceived as an interval between a gesture and its replication in another body was central to realizing this quality.

## The impact of time on the body: Wilson's theatre of correspondence and connection

Following on from the achievement of creating mutable and reciprocal forms, I discovered that the way in which Wilson structures his images equates with each spectator's unique perception of them. His use of repetition and the recurrence of similar forms invite the spectator to find multiple and unique correspondences and connections between them. For example, in *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), an array of repeated figurative patterns encourages the spectator to transfer his/her gaze from one image to another, affecting perception through the 'heteronomic spaces of time' (Lehmann 2006: 158). The gaze returns in time to take in a different position of the same pattern or an echo of it in another form; the act of perception as an experience of time is associational, fluid, mutable, and not grounded in the dramatic significance of action.

My film *Sleep and Dreaming* achieved a similar eschewal of the dramatic paradigm, particularly through the disjunction between recollected images, which the group externalised in movement, and the real events of the film. Consequently, the viewer was invited to equate his/her act of perception with

a corresponding discovery of his/her experience of time. Actions were situated independently, with no common register between them except to the space in which they were created and the fact that the recurrence of certain gestures characterized individual forms. Instead, recurring images of waiting, self-reflection, recollection, and contemplation directly connected to different experiences of time. Time was no longer determined by motion or tied to dramatic events. Instead, and corresponding to Deleuze's idea of the 'time-image', images of moving bodies articulated the impact of time on the body. Like Wilson's dream-like movement forms in which bodies seem to lose the intention of action, a somnambulistic gesturing characterized the moving bodies.

## Continuous motion and stasis: Wilson's intention to reconcile the image with drama

What emerged through this research was that Wilson not only uses motion as an instrument to measure time through the positioning of bodies in space, but also to create a sense of time in which movement forms are often replicated, varied, displaced, or disappear. These processes are contingent as much on the cessation of a moving body as on its continuous motion. In still postures or tableaux, or in other arrangements of bodies, motion is always implied. In these images and through Bergson's concept of duration, in which consciousness is described as a progression of indivisible states, a quality of time that could be identified with Wilson's theatre was discovered.

Time is no longer measurable by the motion of a body from one position to another but experienced through a temporary pause in motion. With this

realization, new knowledge was gained of how Wilson's intention to reconcile drama with an image leads to an aesthetic determined by the relationship between stillness and motion. This relationship was also found to be implicit in the movement forms which are the basis of his performance vocabulary. Through an analysis in film, these forms were found to be structured in a similar way to cinematic images. In linking Bergson's ideas regarding perception and consciousness to Wilson's concept of the 'interior screen' the potential of these forms to express an inner life was also realized.

## The discovery of film as an autonomous form of performance, and as a methodology for research

The creation of 'performance films' as an embodiment of performative structures and attributes was a major discovery of the research. These works emerged at the nexus of drama and the image, revealing how gestural behaviour, as a form of enactment, can be traced to internal states when perceived through the discursive parameters of film.

In these films, shots deliberately undermine the limits of the performative space, blurring the differences between an artificial construct and the perceivable reality. Within this shifting frame of ambiguity, a montage of dynamic and dissolving states indicates the self-reflexive mode of representation in the films, and, informed by Bergson's ideas, imitates the processes through which images are perceived. In this way, the films uncover the postures and mechanisms underlying motion, finding correspondences and connections between the body's transitions and the manipulation of the moving image. The idea of the film frame as a fixed and stable division is

subverted by the de-substantiation of images, evincing the indivisibility of motion in relation to time, and evoking Bergson's idea of duration as an indivisible progression of internal states.

These achievements and discoveries not only provided a means of exploring Wilson's imagistic structure, but contributed to a method of assembling gestural sequences for subsequent performances. The final series of films disclosed the intertwining of filmic means and theatrical tropes, exposing the nuances of interplay between the body's instrumental, semiotic, and non-determinate forms as a performative strategy of gestural communication.

# Appendix

## Index of Movement-scripts

# 1. *Movement Forms*

Part 1

Take the index finger of your right hand and touch your lips with it and, having sustained this gesture for a short time, rest for a minute, reflecting upon any sensations; secondly, kiss the index finger of your right hand; and thirdly, after rest and reflection, use your lips and index finger to make a gesture indicating silence.

Part 2

Select two movement sequences from everyday life.

Apply a structure of statement, repetition, contrast and reversal to each sequence.

Select images from both sequences and construct a movement form.

Make use of a variety of speeds and still postures

# 6. *The Chain*

Intentions

In *The Chain*  the performers are divided into two smaller units, each taking up a position diagonally across the stage. The first group are expansive; the first player is attached to the downstage corner post and the rest of that team are

joined hand in hand in a line that extends towards the middle of the stage where there is an empty space.  The second group are contracted; the first player connects to the upstage corner post and the rest of the team are joined hand in hand in a line. The performer at the corner – stimulated into action by the empty space that represents the future possibility of encounter - begins a circular motion stemming from the waist. This motion flows into the next player in the chain until the group establishes a gyratory motion – encouraging the chain to extend towards the centre of the stage. At the same time, the other group – stimulated by the prospect and potential of an encounter– begin a similar gyratory motion. In this instance, the action is provoked by the performer at the head of the chain. Eventually, the extending chain transports that performer to the other group, which, as a result, begins to contract, corralling the additional performer into its corner. This new player then becomes attached to the corner post so that all the other performers in the chain are moved by one place along the sequence. This group is now fully contracted and ready to repeat the actions of the other group by gradually extending into the centre of the stage and eventually passing on one of its number to that other group. This process continues until original group orders have been restored, though you will find yourself on the other side of the stage in a new starting position. This completes the Chain.

## 7. *The Line*

Note: The first script is for Workshop 7, the second script refers to its adaption as a scene for 'The Mansion's Third Unbridled View'.

1st script

Intentions

The workshop centres upon ideas concerning proximity, mimesis and repetition.

A performer enters the stage and takes a position mid stage right. She/he begins a minute-long sequence of movements that features variations (inconsistencies) and repetitions of her/his choosing. This display consists of recognizable gestures of the arms, torso, head and legs, and of the body turning and walking. Once a pattern is established, the performer continues by repeating the sequence.

 A second performer enters the stage and – by using her hands and arms – measures the space between the first performer and the outside wall of the stage space. Taking up a posture that encapsulates the action of framing this space, she/he takes up a position next to the first performer consistent with this measurement. She/he then begins to imitate the movement sequence of the original performer.

The third performer enters the stage and takes a corresponding measurement between the first two performers, before taking up a position next to the second performer. This performer then begins to imitate the movement sequence of the second performer. A fourth performer enters the stage and

again works out a measurement, before taking up a corresponding position. She/he then stops the motion of the third performer who, as a result, remains in a static posture. This fourth player adopts this posture by imitating it.

A fifth player enters the stage; again taking up a position next to the fourth player based on a measurement of the space between the previous two performers. She/he begins by restarting the motion of the fourth performer by, literally, 'cranking' the arms of the latter until movement is restored and then pursues a sequence of movements in imitation of her/his colleague.

The sixth player enters the stage and again takes up position using the same method of measurement. She/he then begins to imitate the movement of the previous performer.

Once all the performers are on stage, the first leads the others in any direction around the space. During this passage, the performers maintain their various distances from each other. Finally the performers – beginning with number six and number five - close the gap between themselves and their neighbour until the whole line had been compressed into a smaller space.

This action signals the completion of the performance and the first performer to leads the group off the stage.


**2nd script**


Intentions – In the production, this scene presents a selection process from which the Literature Olympics emerges.

The workshop centres round ideas concerning proximity, mimesis and repetition.

Cued by the lights coming up, a performer enters the stage (from the right) and takes up a position mid stage right. She/he begins a minute-long sequence of movements. The gestures are neo-fascist in character and become absurd and exaggerated through their repetition.

The sequence:

Begin – standing -hands by your side – feet slightly apart – toes pointing slightly outwards

Lift your right arm slowly – press tip of middle finger on top of right ear – turn head to the left – keep head still – turn eyes towards the front

Bend knees slightly – sweep right foot, with pointed toe – to draw two anti-clockwise circles on the ground twice – foot comes to rest, pointing at and touching the ground

Left arm gathers up, hand forms a fist and rests on the lips – palm opens as the arm unfolds outwards and forwards

Right arm lifts over your head and tip of right hand comes to rest on palm of outstretched left hand

Left leg kicks forward – rests – right hand walks back along left arm and rests on left shoulder

Right arm hinges at the elbow – lifts above head and then returns to position with right hand on left shoulder

Left arm folds back and is placed on top of your head

Turn full circle – 360 degrees – pivoting on right foot

Begin sequence again

 A second performer enters the stage and – by using her hands and arms – measures the space between the first performer and the outside wall of the stage space. Taking up a posture that encapsulates the action of framing this space, she takes up a position next to the first performer consistent with this measurement. She then begins to imitate the movement sequence of the original performer.

The third performer enters the stage and takes up a corresponding measurement between the first two performers, before taking up a position next to the second performer. This performer then begins to imitate the movement sequence of the second performer. A fourth performer enters the stage and again works out her/his measurement, before taking up a corresponding position. She/he then stops the motion of the third performer who, as a result, remains in a static posture that had previously marked a phase in her/his movement sequence. (The third performer resumes the sequence in slow motion, eventually, after a period of 5 minutes; she/he catches up to the speed of the group). This fourth player adopts this posture by imitating it.

A fifth player enters the stage; again taking up a position next to the fourth player based on a measurement of the space between the previous two performers. She begins by restarting the motion of the fourth performer by, literally, 'cranking' the arms of the latter until movement is restored and then pursues a sequence of movements in imitation of her colleague.

The sixth player enters the stage and again takes up position using this, by now, ubiquitous method of measurement. She/he then begins to imitate the movement of the previous performer.

Finally the performers – beginning with number six and number five - close the gap between them self and their neighbour until the whole line has been compressed into a smaller space.

Two other performers – the military – are there to keep order; to keep the line 'in line'. They become the two judges in the Literature Olympics

# 10. *Gangs*

Your character has two main aspects; the sensory is home base – you experience other sensory input but always bring it back to your primary sense characteristic.

You will be given a role in the gang. There are two gangs and a confrontation between them.

The descriptions below will inform your physical and expressive behaviour within the game which is improvised:

One – Stillness – visual (the view) – soothsayer/ seeker, knowledge maker/bearer – oracle – forethought – the bishop in chess: diagonal movement is favoured – informs others – the spy, scout and guide – responsible for the morphology of the gang: form and structure

Two – Repetition – touch (the skin – viscerally – hapticity) – subtle/agile/capable/dependable – the pawn in chess: repetitive patterned movements and gestures are favoured – corrals the team and links the gang together – responsible for the rhythm of movement of the gang

Three – Inconsistency – transition's loyal servant and lieutenant (starts, repeats, then breaks with them – look to Transition for the prompts) – Smell (of danger) and intermittent memory of this place – Deja Vu - intuitive/spontaneous – characterized by darting and unpredictable movement and random gestures – the knight in chess – hungry for encounter – sometimes goes alone. Support the Queen (Four) – responsible for drawing the gang into encounter with surges of movement

Four - Transition (cajole others – a leader – motivator) – Taste (mouth full of the delicious potency of a good meal – appetite for the encounter/event – suspense) – Sapient wise cosmopolitan – the Queen in chess – deliberate, agile, decisive and intentional movements and gestures – sometimes holding back to appraise the situation before making darting runs, deep into the heart of the other gang – leads the gang by example, once the other members have initiated the encounter

Five – Mirror (mimic/echo) – aural (everywhere at once- in two places at once): – the double of all the others – imitator/joker – characterized by mimicry - the castle in chess – a follower, waiting for others to instigate movement/action

Begin by building your character before entering the stage space

Stay focused on your role

Use stage space to explore your persona in relation to the stage space

Be seen – show and do not tell – don't act or pantomime

Performance:

The stage is divided by a rope – two gangs are formed on either side of the rope.

Before the performance begins, the two gangs discuss their attributes/assets and role within the gang so that everyone becomes familiar with that role within the structure or hierarchy of the group.

The 1st performer enters the stage and begins to form a persona based on the attributes/assets that have been assigned to them. After a few minutes and/or when ready, the 1st performer begins to finger click as an invitation to be joined by the next player (cease this action as soon as the next performer comes to the stage and accompanies the first performer in this action on their arrival) – this sequence continues until the gang is assembled, after the last player has been indoctrinated. Both gangs leave the stage.

One gang re-enters the stage and assembles as if expecting a confrontation. The other gang enters the stage

One gang slowly moves towards the other gang with a finger click – listen to your leader's rhythms. Gangs meet by moving through each other. Confrontation with the other gang.  Use all your character attributes – choose your path – make sure the audience can see you. After first wave of encounter, the gangs reassemble and prepare for second wave of confrontation - Return of the wave of confrontation

## 11. *Shame the Glove*

The lights come up, the music begins and the photographers appear. Then, the whole cast enter the stage in a tight formation – a processional circle. They all carry a single glove.

Two photographers approach the group

The camera is the point of connection between this group and the outside world represented by the photographers. The photographers are substitutes for Mum and Dad, whose interest oscillates between photographing them and having their interest elsewhere.

The performer can turn to the glove as a device that makes narrative the experience of disconnection – the glove conceals the subject's hand; the evidence of the hand and its responsibility for some act it has perpetrated. The glove could present evidence - like a residual imprint or clue - confirming that the individual was present at the scene of a real or imagined crime irrespective of whether or not a crime had been committed – the glove may be fragrant, may smell of guilt or innocence – the scent clings to the glove, acting as a mnemonic for a half-remembered event. The glove may be a reminder of a cherished, former identity or fantasy about the past.

At first the performers are all excited by the potential interest shown to them and are happy to experience this 'exposure' – the glove is, at this stage, an accessory – a point of attraction that they hope will create interest for the camera. The performers are also aware of the need to present their face and body to the audience in order to gain attention, so their needs for attention are directed at both the audience and the photographers.

Shame floods in once the connection between a photographer and a performer becomes distant or is broken indefinitely (play with the quality of temporality in this experience) – not rejection but a recognition of our inability to sustain the interest of another in ourselves.

Possible actions: Fallen face – eyes down and head averted once contact/connection has been broken. Blush if possible - or at least experience this sensation – the first flush of shame - a badge or stain of shame. Feel the heat on the face – the sense that this can be seen even if the face is averted because it is a change in temperature as well as a visual sign

Characteristics/attributes: shame eroticises the body. The gloved hand performs the body's erotic experience of shame.  Shame drives us to arouse interest by others in ourselves – with impudence (offensively bold), grace (effortless charm of movement and proportion), effect (power to produce an outcome), allure (attract with something desirable), desperation (persistent attempts to arouse interest in order to fulfil a need). Also for other performers, witnessing these desperate attempts to win attention, embarrassment mingles with shame, causing separation and isolation from others but also fascination.

We are suffused by our reaction to the event. It changes our outline, our posture, our movement and our gestures.

Shame is contagious – explore this with the other performers through mimicry and touch

Shame plays out the transition between extrovert and introvert behaviour. Oscillate between these states depending on your experience. For some of you, the interest shown in you is unwanted – an intrusion into your hermetic world; your clandestine creation. Shame is nevertheless produced by the

discovery of such a private world by others and its consequent exposure in the public domain. This results in behaviour that, from the outset, contrasts to that of the other performers who are actively seeking interest and exposure. You face a dilemma in choosing between tendencies towards introversion and extroversion.

The shame circuit is driven by narcissism

Unlike guilt, it sharpens our way of being rather than what we do.

Eventually, because the gloved hand is an image; a sign of the hand entering its own skin– the hand becomes a puppet to entertain and interest the spectator or other performers by animating the gloved hand – imagining it as a character – this is another way of relating to the other performers.

Furthermore, each performer is not necessarily alone with his/her shame. The relatedness induced by comparative behaviours; a shared experience, explored through mimicry and touch spreads like a contagious disease through the ranks of performers. The erosion of an individual manifestation of shame and its metamorphosis into a group practice is intended. Performers confront each other, 'hand in glove'; their animated hands entertaining and interesting each other and the audience with a form of puppetry – one in which the gloved hand or puppet becomes a character 'dressed' in shame.


# 12. *Possible Narratives*

Five narratives arranged in different areas of the performance area

Nearest the window of the performance space: two performers to 'replay' their sequence from the *Shame the Glove* workshop and build upon that performance. Move slowly, as in a dream

To the centre of the space from either side: two performers. A man brandishing a bunch of flowers, and the other, a woman with a baby carrying a newspaper; to greet each other before exchanging objects - the man to read his newspaper whilst the woman arranges the flowers - don't engage or be overtly aware of the other – allow tension to build – woman to rip newspaper from man's hands

To the right of the space: a third narrative featuring a single performer applying make-up in front of a small mirror. In a direct reference to the audience workshop, he is to intermittently hype himself up for a night out on the town

Form the back of the space to the front: a fourth narrative, two performers – attitude of un-relatedness, carrying top hats, exchanging gestures. Once completed, they leave the stage, return after two minutes - attitude of relatedness as if in some sudden discovery of commonality – again exchange gestures

The final narrative: a writer, her notes and pen, and a table upon which her document rests; her activity - witnessing events and actions with assiduous discretion.

Each narrative to be played out independently

After fifteen minutes, gradually impose your narrative on the other performers.

# 13. *Duets*

| Weight | Space | Being | Emotion | Time | Flow |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Heavy | Direct | Intimacy | Rage | Sudden | Bound |
| Light | Indirect | Avoidance | Desire | Sustained | Free |
| | | Attraction | Terror | | |
| | | Flirtation | Rejection | | |

| Duets | Props |
|---|---|
| Mark C and Mary | Boots /Framed photo |
| Stuart and Kamila | Shell / Singing bowl |
| Mark U and Steph | Jaguar's Head |
| Olga and Sian | Cushion / Shard of glass |
| Steph and Chie | Lit Candle |
| Olga and Mark C | Key |
| Mary and Stuart | Shawl |
| Sian and Chie | Hat and Scarf |
| Kamila and Mark U | Case / Lit Candle |

## 14. *The Letter*

The stage space is divided into booths by a number of flats. Into each is placed a stool. Half the performers sit on their stools in these booths and await the delivery of a letter. The row of booths – representing the individual 'homes' of the performers - opens onto the downstage area where a large fake grass mat (or equivalent) designates the 'outdoor' space. The performers are to consider this area as the world beyond the confines of their booths.  The rest of the cast are situated in the audience and are assigned a partner in one of the booths.

The following directions are given. Each performer within a booth receives a letter. On reading it, they begin to react to its contents through the motion and posturing of their bodies. The shoes of the occupants have been removed prior to the performance, thereby giving performers the possibility of displaying gestures, in reaction to their letters, through the activity of putting on shoes. Watches, jewellery and coats can also be incorporated into the performance to similar advantage.

From an audience point of view, the performers on the stage can all be seen, though the contents of their letters remain a mystery. Whilst they remain inside their booths, these performers cannot be seen by each other and the contents of their letters remain private.

Once the 'booth' performers have fully experienced the impact and intensity of sensations felt in relation to their letter, they exit the booth by entering the other designated 'fake grass' area.  Here they are met by their assigned performer from within the audience, who, from the outset, has been mirroring the movement and behaviour of the emergent performer. As the performer emerges from the booth, his/her partner meets him/her in the grassy area and

continues to mimic his/her movement and gestural patterns. On seizing upon a moment in which to alter the movement of the dominant performer (from the booth) the second performer introduces a new gesture to their partner's sequence.

After 10 minutes, a definitive image emanating from a designated pair begins to influence the behaviour of the other performers. The others begin to imitate the dominant pair by mirroring their movements. This results in a conclusion to the performance that has all players engaged in a form of choreographed 'dance' as they leave the stage.

The Letters:

You will be delivered one of the following letters but you will not know which one you are going to get until it arrives.

Two lists: The first list was used in Workshop 14; the second list was used in 'The Mansion's Third Unbridled View'

List 1

I love you and want to spend the rest of my life with you

I love you but I'm afraid of that knife

A brother who was dead has come back to life and will meet you soon

Your son has just died in a car crash

You have won £10million on the lottery

I am sorry to say that we will have to make you redundant. Your contract will be terminated at the end of the month.

I am very pleased to inform you that we were very impressed with you at the interview and that we wish to offer you the job

I am sorry to inform you that you only have six months in which to live

I don't love you anymore and I am leaving you for another man

List 2

Dear 1

We are happy that you have settled in your new home.

In every new home, a heartache. In every dream home, a secret

You seek distraction. You are compelled to measure your new home, using your body as a tool of measurement. Record and register all dimensions, angles, volumes and densities with your body.

You are impaled upon your new home.

You are a sacrifice to modern living; to the accruements and conveniences into which you are buried.

Everyone will know you by this new style of living. They will be fascinated by your movements, gestures and postures; about how accommodating you are and that you have become a building.

They will believe that they can live in you and that's all you want.

Dear 2

We've been watching you and have the evidence to prove that you are not a human being. We believe that you are a replicated human – a robot posing as a human being.

We have witnessed your self-reparation.

Do not try to escape as you will immediately be arrested. All you need to do now is perform all your functions. We can monitor your performance. We will be assessing your capacity to move and replicate all human behaviour. We can then offer you some employment in the appropriate department.

You can guarantee your longevity by leading us to your current employer.

When you are ready, come out and show us your controller.

Dear 3

You flow into the world with abundance and generosity. This fluency of yours can stem the tide of tears in the world.

You gush out into the world like a spring; like a river; like rain; like a waterfall.

I was so dry until I met you.

I was so thirsty but you trickled into me.

I was so parched but you watered me.

I was unblemished but you stained me.

I wait for you now but do not come until the dam breaks: until the tide turns: until you are ready to flow out into the world and drench me.

Dear 4

Your songs bring tears to my eyes even though I am deaf. You make me cry for our country. Your voice – and the shapes your mouth make as you sing – gives me hope.

Your expression; the way you hold yourself when you sing makes me fearless.

I adore your face; it makes the day begin.

Your wounds are magnified when you open your mouth to sing.

Examine your wounds and then be prepared to show them to me.

Where on your body, are these wounds?

Come when you are ready. I am waiting to touch the shape of your mouth, wonder at the expression on your face, gather the tears from your eyes and be healed by the sight and feel of your wounds.

Dear 5

You must remain completely invisible. You have been sent to spy on another and must remain completely hidden even when in close proximity to the other. You are an enigma. You are a code that cannot be broken.

Use your own body as a hiding place. What postures will enable you to hide - even from yourself?

You have been chosen because of your capacity to move through space – svelte like – as if your body could cut through the air like a knife; a knife that always finds its victim.

You will succeed because you have always done so.

Prepare your body as if before a mirror and then when you are ready, enter the world unseen.

Dear 6

Your skin is flawless - white. I crave a glimpse of your chest, your arms and your shoulders in the pale light. I am watching you.

I retain images of you, moving in the half-light. Your hands are everywhere: on me, around me and in me.

You are inside my memory; my imagination – that's where I watch you.

Show yourself to me.

I sometimes watch you from the mirror. I see you dress and undress. It is as if you are in a film – but trapped in a sequence that repeats and repeats itself.

Show yourself to me.

I am on the outside waiting for you. Will I recognize you when you stand before me?

Dear 7

If you are seen, you will be taken. If you are taken, you will not survive.

You are in grave danger.

Only your eyes can save you. Only your own fragrance can save you. Your smell can save you. Only your hands can save you.

You must prepare. You must take up positions with your hands. You must choreograph your gaze. You must be prepared to deliver your scent.

You must construct a sequence – eyes, hands and secretions that will not fail you. Try out some movements until you discover the ones that are yours to give.

You must only come to me when you are ready.

Dear 8

I marvel at your aesthetic commitment. Whenever I walk into a room, it is you that I notice.

It is like looking at a picture – life through a frame – with you always in the right place in relation to that frame.

When there is a crowd, it is always your body; your posture that I am drawn to. You make the crowd seem more charming – more pleasing to the eye. You move to improve the scene. You move at the right time – when it is certain that you will delight the eye.

Your body is an arabesque, dividing the space into golden sections. You cling to the frame; to the apparatus of looking; to the apparatus of recording the moving image.

You are always the object; the object of desire – immaculate in your positioning, immaculate in your relation to the frame through which I gaze upon you.

Venture to the outside when you are ready to display yourself: to parade.

Dear 9

The world runs through your fingers. You entwine the material world with those fingers. They act like a spider's web. They entangle me.

You touch everything. You consume the world through your touch: through skin. I am subsumed by you.

Your gaze absorbs me.

The palm of your hand gathers me into your craw where you devour me.

But I have lost you. I cannot find you.

Where are you?

Will you come now, with your fingers and the palm of your hand and your gaze? Will you come to devour me through the agency of your skin?

Dear 10

In your home, there is a secret. In your home, there is a seam of gold that leads to the outside world. Only you can trace it to the outside.

All your movements – especially the most subtle glances, personal ticks, eccentricities and sudden excitements - will set you on the trail of that discovery.

Your discovery of the treasure will change your life for good.

You will find the treasure in the outside world – in the soul of whoever you meet. But you must prepare. You must make the discovery in your own body for that is where the clues are stored. What is now inside you was not there before. What is now there puts you on the trail of the treasure. This trail begins in your own home and will lead you to somebody.

Come out only when you have discovered one end of that seam.

Dear 11

You must hide in case they come for you. Become part of the fabric of your interior and then they won't be able to spot you. Bury yourself in the fabric of the building. Continue to look for the hiding place until you find it.

Only then will you find the key. The key will let you out.

The key is in the cup of your hand. The key is in the nape of your neck. The key is in your heart. The key is in all these places at the same time. It coincides with these places.

Making a link between these places will produce the key.

The key will give you the freedom to enter the outside world where there is no danger. On the outside, you will meet someone and be able to pass on the key. Choose wisely, when to pass on the key, for the key holds the secret to your destiny. Pass on the key only after the recipient has understood how the key is produced. How you have made the key. Show the recipient how you made the key.

Dear 12

You have magic powers. I have seen the way you throw your body into absurd postures. These shapes that you take – did you make them out of shadows? Is this where you discovered your powerful magic?

You alone can give people what they want. You alone can provide the quick heels and careful hands of the trickster.

Why did you submit to that scientific experiment? Has this experience undermined your power? Are your supplies running low?

Are your heroic deeds at an end or do you have one last mission to save mankind?

Do you come now? Do you come prepared and with an army of shadows?

Do you come with broken gestures, with quick heels, a darting run, careful hands and an intention to self-destruct?

## 18. *Bar encounters*: collusion and recruitment

We meet in a bar or cafe – we come here for a reason – it is intentional

We seek out the other – our twin

Choose a Role –

Looking to commit a crime

Providing a plan for a crime

Looking for the package

Providing the package

Looking to Conspire

Providing conspiratorial behaviour

Looking to be smuggled out

Providing a resource and service for dissidents

Be trusting of/conspired by/excited by/colluded with or provide these ways of being by the shape of the mouth – hand arms – position of the legs – posture – movement – tilt of the head – angle of the neck – attitude of the face AND by patterns of behaviour, gestures and actions

Combine this with the embodiment of an animal – by way of character

Not to act but to embody

Horse, Cat, Lion, Dog, Owl, Crow, Gazelle, Tiger, Snake, Bear, Fish, Monkey

Make use of the 'Heart gesture' – all performers to use the emblematic gesture of cupping a hand in front of the heart to put another performer into stillness - take some time off demands and constrains –released by the next emblem/gesture

In mirroring another's behaviour - You become what the other wants you to be.

# 19. Formations

| Focus | Finger | What is the finger – what does it represent? – A photograph, an idea, another, a sentence, a musical cadence, an object, a memory, a ghost? |
|-------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| | | How will it be carried? |
| | | Where is it secreted? |
| | | How and when will it be unleashed? |
| | | How will it be used to join to the others in the formation of the tableau? |
| | | How will all these questions be answered in the body – how will the body move? |

## Revised script for *The Mansion's Third Unbridled View*:

## Create a relationship between you and your finger. Give your finger an identity.

Peel off from the back of the aisle (see two chambers) and walk down the aisle of performers, taking up a position at an imagined meeting place in the middle of the stage at the front and construct (fall into) a formation. At this place, exploit the body's full potential to 'mingle' with others – to connect with each other. The total performance could be considered as an echo of the 'docking' procedure (see *Docking Station*) – a means to find anchorage - a way of providing and receiving support from another. The body, physiologically, has a 'natural' inclination to link to or even entangle itself in the 'other'. Its limbs are predicated on necessary assemblages with others. As well as socialising performances of engagement with the other, there are the obvious functioning aspects of coupling determined by performances of pleasure and sexuality. All forms of intertwining are encouraged. Fingers twist around each other, palms interlock, arms embrace, necks caress and legs trip up. The body is predisposed to a prosthetic existence – a prosthetic inference; an extension directed to the sphere of the social. It cultivates itself in the realm of the social. It produces substances in an irresistible chemistry of coalescence. It drenches itself in the pool of the other. Its sensory systems are ubiquitously open to receive the other; to be possessed by the other. The other cannot be shut out – is necessary for survival – will always be heard, seen, smelt, felt, tasted and sensed. Gaze and facial expression – movements of invitation and encouragement - could also be described as 'vehicles' of expression – pre-linguistic, episodic carriers of narration.

**<u>Useful notes</u>**

'Look at your feet. Examine the floor. The body is connected. Hear with your eyes, See with your ears. Move the toes. Feel the ear wiggle. When I walk I feel it in my fingers, in my hair, in my elbows' (Holmberg 1996: 144).

Wilson's demands on his performers are such that the body's total potential is available for expression.

# 20. *The Literature Olympics*

6 Performers line up in lanes as in an athletic race

2 Judges are at the end of the lanes but can enter them

Words appear on competitor's vests in place of number:

SECRETIVE, INQUISITIVE, TACTILE, SENSUAL, LOVING, OBSESSIVE, MAGICAL, SHY, FUNNY, WILD, SOLEMN, TRAGIC, ANGRY

These attributes give you a way of being for the warm-up preparation and training that will get you into the race

The race begins when a judge drops the flag

Judges can reset the postures of the runners at any time, with a wave of the flag that brings a runner into stillness. That runner's posture can then be reconfigured by the judge, who manipulates limbs and facial expression. Runners are re-started with a wave of the flag

After the start the runners commence travelling down the lane in slow motion – their movement is inspired by the words on their vests   – they pick up a book in the lane and choosing a page at random, they begin to read from a page

They find a few lines to create a character that leads to additional movements and gestures. They can again be stopped at any moment and their posture reset by the judges – again with a wave of the flag.

On reaching the end of the track, the judge awards them with a ceremonial ribbon at the awards ceremony – on a podium – during the awards ceremony they perform all the gestures associated with this part of the event: waving at the crowd – looking at their ribbon and kissing it – acknowledging each other with embraces before saluting the crowd and leaving the stadium.  They leave the stage. The music fades and the lights are dimmed – end of scene.

## 25. Carriage – oscillating between states

Note: The first script is for Workshop 25, the second script refers to its adaption as a scene for 'The Mansion's Third Unbridled View'. The movement suggestions for the passengers were the same for both scripts.

Script 1

'Running on iron tracks, it (the train) subjugated the chaotic world of appearance to the linear logic of a higher vision. It is true, that climbing aboard, one felt the cares of the world slipping from one's shoulders, but in indulging in this voluptuous sensation, one had an alibi, the assurance that, as the walls of the city receded and the countryside began to slide by outside the window, one was purposefully directed. By train, what's more, even the curvilinear behaved as if it were straight.'(Carter::48)

In a confined space like a railway carriage – the performers enter from the sides as if boarding a train. The audience are also situated in this space and the performance emerges from within this arrangement.

The images that the performers are asked to explore are distinguished by the following contexts: movement-images divided into affectation-images, action-images or perception-image. These categories colour gestural communication.

On the outside of the 'carriage' are displayed – like a railway timetable - a list of behavioural performance descriptions. The performers are directed to perform movements that flow or oscillate between these two states – both as a temporal fluctuation between one state and another, and if possible, eventually, combining states into one pattern or hybrid. The performers take onto 'the stage' numbers that correspond to their chosen 'gesture' patterns and stick them on their clothes.

Then the inspector calls and inspects each individual's performance. He or she does this by firstly; taking up positions in close proximity to each performer, followed by a mirroring of each performance. The inspector can then add in postures by altering angles or directions to movement. The inspector is inquisitive, precise, generous and compassionate. He /she improves upon the choreography that he/she is inspecting by imitating movement and making adjustments to posture, gait, gesture and facial expression.

After a while – or once the inspector has made one round – passenger/performers begin to demonstrate their behaviour to each other – a conversation of the body (conversations on a train) takes place– sharing their movements and gestures by physically helping each other into the postures. Each performer then takes on the new pattern of behaviour that they have just

learnt. These conversations can become compulsive, obsessive and viral in the way that patterns of movement are absorbed and 'taken up'.

Performance of each scenario is visual – slowed down – dream- like; as if caught up in the reality of a dream.

The performance is accompanied by layers of sound effects – they include subway, train and plane sounds as well as the amplified rustling of clothing, breathing, footsteps and heartbeats.

Choose two scenarios and work with only these.

Choose two scenarios and work with only these.

Movement patterns/scenarios for 'Carriage'

1 .Stumbling movement.  Emphasis on the lower body and legs

2. Mouth and hands in unison as in the rendition of a song; an emotive song – the lips and tongue are quivering with emotion. The eyes are crying

3. Unfolds the arm, reaches out the hand, leads from the heart

4. Shields the sun from the eyes – frames the view

5. The dead body or coma position – twitching of limbs – the last throes of life – clawing the ground with fingers and nails

6. Blowing kisses

7. Having a profound thought – frowning – looking into the middle distance – pondering

8. Miming an imaginary wall

9. Self-caressing

10. Counting your fingers, toes, hands, head and feet – using limbs to do this

11. Collapsing or fainting

12. Praying or worshipping – take any form

13. Looking for something lost – searching for a precious object

14. Trying not to be seen – trying to remain hidden – use mask

15. Listening intently with ears; with the whole body. Alert. Overhearing conversation

16. Surveying your own body; looking for clues as to your history – as if surprised – as if having never before seen your own history written on the body

17. Melting, sinking into the body and then into the ground. Becoming part of the earth

18. Preparing the body for a public appearance. Pulling yourself up to a great height. Puckering up. Self-inflating

19. Obsessing over your clothing. Checking collars, cuffs, folds and buttons Cleaning away any fluff or dirt on the surface of your clothes

20. The agony and anguish of guilt, remorse and suffering

21. Contained joy. Fabulous happiness with a lid on it

22. Drags foot along behind the body

23. Cleans shoes on the back of the trousers

24. Swooning as in a state of ecstatic bliss

25. Pretending not to look at another, whilst sneaking a look at them

26. Shaking of the head – disapproving

27. Gasping with despair

28. Replaying an outstanding sporting moment in your imagination – where can this be seen in the body

29. Attempting to look sexy and seductive

30. Shrugging


# 26. *Agora and Alighting*

The world around you is melting. There are fissures and cracks

You are in a field of objects

You experience a movement out of yourself towards another and a movement away from the other towards yourself

The Fields are:

The field of letters is the field of language

The field of dolls is the field of images

The field of skulls is the field of the dead

The field of false idols is the field of the gods

Characteristics/Attributes/Assets – choose one

1. You are searching for answers, compelled by the light, fixated by the objects, looking for others. You oscillate between the desire for contact with the other and a fear of that; between the desire to enter a relationship and panic at the thought of it. You are like a child, avoiding the cracks in the pavement

2. Imagine that there are railway lines to cross; that you might be heading in the wrong direction; that you are lost. The terrain trips you up and you fall and roll as if into a cutting. This is an unfamiliar land and you are attempting to escape it, though you have no destination in mind

3. Panic attends the act of putting one foot in front of another; it is like walking up a stairway of sand and, by taking a step, you feel you are getting nowhere at all. You keep sinking down. To rise again, you have to grasp for support. But again you plunge in and down.  A gulf is opening up between you and your destination

4. Everything about you is swaying and turning around and the ground seems like it is made of rubber. Sometimes you have the sensation of being aboard a steamer upon stormy seas. The boat is turning upside down. The sea rises to take you down with it. All hands on deck. All hands to the pump

5. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other are no longer separated but also are entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible

6. You move as if a ghost in the crowd. There are carriages to avoid in this dense fog. The clatter of hooves seems to come from several directions at once. Nobody recognizes you here. There are traces of a track and then it is no

more. As quickly as you pick it up, it has disappeared. The more proximate you are to people, the more separate you feel

7. There are arbitrary edges, starting points and false horizons. All who greet you carry the truth. These are the faces of your destiny. They hover on the edge of your sight as in a miracle. If you look straight at them, they may disappear

8. You are intent on clearing the land but there is a thick underbrush; a medium which offers definite friction. This friction increases until it is, at times, impossible to advance further. There is craving in you; desire, hunger – a turning towards the others

9. You are frozen like a rabbit in the headlights. There is someone above you, staring down at you and this freezes you to the spot. Every time you get up, scurrying to escape, you look above at that unknown spectre and are pinned to the spot once again

10. You are in a labyrinth with devious twists and turns, and you are making for the innermost recess. First this way and then that. Did I already come this way? The way looks familiar and yet…. I pull at the threads of my coat. I shake off this malaise of doubting myself and start again

11. You are constantly whispering, feeling for a pulse, hugging yourself, making a bridge with your fingers or running your fingers through your hair. You are determined to survive. You scrape at the ground – surround yourself with objects – crawl across the ground – try not to be seen

12. Your behaviour is characterized by the act of taking hold of something only in order to let it fall again, of letting it fall only to take hold of it again. You are untouchable. You see your way to the meeting-place as a stitched way of

pleated hems and permeable borders; of timely gaps between objects and people

Olga's role – She is already on the Agora: desires to leave and at once, wishes to return. She is compelled to leave and cannot. Oscillates between looking over her shoulder at what she has left behind and the horizon of attractive possibilities before her

The travellers: Your journey is difficult – There are Barriers, Cracks: Lakes that are like traps. Water surrounds the Agora. Two boatmen (Mark and Stu) await you and will secure your passage across to the Agora. You approach a boatman as if from the eye of a storm

You make a signal of greeting when meeting other citizens in the fields

The Signal of greeting is a cupped hand raised to another – angle of the elbow is parallel to the shoulder

Collect an object on your way to the Agora and hand it over to the boatman as you make your way across the lake. You will never see this object again

You step onto or are deposited onto the Agora and you are surrounded by light – It is a place of erudition and rest – You take the weight of your feet – are literally lighter and with more freedom of movement

On the steps of the Agora – experience rapture, freedom, weightlessness, enlightenment

Then take up a posture on the Agora – a frieze-frame in relation to the other citizens

## 27. *Sleep and Dreaming*

The set: beds lit by a single spot; lamps; chairs

The sleepers take up a position in their beds

The visitors form a group offstage and wait for their stage entrance

The beds are wheeled onto the stage by the stage crew and left in position

The sleepers awake and begin to live out their dreams with gestures and movements

They return to their beds and to sleep

Then they are visited – the visitors enter - they are visiting the soon to be dead – the terminally ill – they are loved ones – they perform movements according to their memories of the loved one

Then the visitors sit quietly and fall asleep in that chair by the bed.

The sleepers again wake and move for only a minute – before leaving the stage

The visitors awake to see that the sleepers have left: their beds are empty. They are distraught – and for comfort, they take the place of the loved one by getting into bed – they fall asleep

Sleepers

Dreaming of following someone obsessively – stalking them – not wanting to be seen – keeping a safe distance – hiding behind your hands – you know that the other is aware of you – you continue to flirt with the possibility of being with them - a tentative turning towards the other - the shadow of your own denial already falls on them - - then they turn to face you – you can feel the

other's eyes are on you -  you inhale the other deeply, the fragrance of this loved one – you swoon – this is the most rapturous, the most perfect moment of your life – and your love is met and returned – you savour every second of this encounter – can you dare to move closer – did the other call out your name? - As you slowly turn to face them – they begin to turn away – as you move closer towards the other, they begin to mysteriously evaporate – you try to touch their disappearance with your face - you wake up

You dream of Flying – you jump aboard the single-seater  plane and take hold of the controls - taking off with ease – looking at the grand views – swooping down and banking up -  the engine starts to cut out – you try to control the plane (can you smell the burning fuel) - you are in free fall (can you hear the screaming engine) – you are looking at the broken shaft – consider bailing out – pulling at the cockpit door – you hit the ground (can you feel the pain in your limbs?) - crash – the noise is deafening – you cover your ears – the smell of burning metal and fuel tears into your throat and lungs – but you are alive – you can barely move – you struggle to move a foot and ten an arm - you have survived somehow and this thought makes you smile – you smell the sweet, freshly mown grass of an old airfield - it's a miracle - you wake up

You dream of going out – lipstick applied, sprucing up the hair (smell the perfumed odours of your clean, fresh body), patting a curl, adjusting a strap – Leaving the house – walking down the street (a skip to the step) - what does it smell like?– entering a bar (How big is it? – What is the space like?)  – drinking (what does it taste like?) – dancing on your own – dancing with a crowd – dancing with another– getting drunk – kissing slowly; gently- then kissing passionately; deeply - suddenly leaving – being followed – turning around from time to time – increasing your step – feelings of nausea and dizziness – you

collapse onto the pavement – you hear the sound of approaching steps – there is someone looking over you – there are faces gathering above you – you gradually curl up and cover your face – it seems so vivid – you realise that you are dreaming - you wake up

You dream of swimming –sensuous feelings arise – floating up to the surface and diving down to the depths – leaping like a salmon – pulling yourself onto a platform – drying in the sun – feeling the heat on your skin – tasting the salt water in your mouth – day dreaming of previous lovers – how they used to caress you - diving in again – floating on your back – sheltering under the blue sky – staring at the horizon – swimming towards it – noticing the water gurgling along your body – tasting the salt water in your mouth – sensing a force beneath you – feeling your leg being dragged from under you -getting pulled under – struggling with unseen forces – fighting for your life – starting to run out of energy – feeling the air being sucked out of your lungs – You wake up

You dream of running along a platform – hurrying for a train – seeing a face in the window – making a leap for the carriage – You just make it onto the moving train – the thought keeps nagging you as to who's was that face in the window – you walk through the carriages looking for that face – you feel silly – you stop every once in a while; breathless – you are hot - you are emotional; upset – sensing that it was important for you to have met the stranger – the train pulls into a station an shudders to a halt - then you see the 'face' walking along the platform – you hurriedly leave the train – and now you are in a big city square – the breeze blows rubbish around your ears – the sun glistens off puddles around your feet – the air is sweet with the perfumes of passers-by –

you look up and suddenly that face is on every person who passes by -You wake up

Visitors

You remember being with them when their mother died – She would fall down dead and then start getting up again – she would keep doing this – your loved one would look on helpless; in dismay – you would stroke the hair of your loved one as they cried – You held them until they couldn't weep anymore – you softly lead them away from their Mother's bedside –You remained beside them – You were a comfort to them - they smiled at you and it touched something deep inside you. You still remember that feeling in your heart – you never wanted to be apart from them and yet shortly afterwards you left them for another – the other was delicious; your lust was insatiable – your cruelty was immense – And here they lie now before you – and soon they will be no longer – Then you sit in the chair and fall asleep

You remember climbing a mountain together – how you woke up before daylight, full of excitement – you walked through icy fields – your boots cracking open the glassy puddles along the path – you arrive at the foot of the mountain and feel some fear and trepidation as the summit towers above you – your partner begins to climb ahead of you and eventually throws the rope down to you – you climb up to meet him and feel the wind in your hair and taste the adrenalin in your mouth – now you begin to climb and first – the snow is getting thicker and the wind is getting stronger – you arrive at the next ledge - you let the rope down for your partner – this goes on all day until the summit is in sight – you arrive at the summit and embrace – you never thought that you would get here and survive – on the way down, you remember seeing your partner fall – you remember how you felt – how every limb was like

butter – how much your heart hurt – and now your partner lies before you – and soon will be no longer – And then you sit in the chair and fall asleep

You remember walking with them in the rain – feel the water dripping down your spine – touch the droplets running off their hair – pulling up the collar of their coat to protect them from the wind – tucking your hand inside their pocket – walking through the puddles – laughing – leaping – huddling under the shelter of the pier - then they didn't return your calls – and they weren't at home – and then someone told you that they had moved away – and you never saw them again until now – and now they lie here in front of you – and soon they will be no longer – And then you sit in the chair and fall asleep

You remember playing as children – running for the swings in the park – holding hands waiting for the school bus – the ride to school – excitement of being together again – the realisation that you never want this moment to end – that you never want to be parted – and that day in the schoolyard when you were playing hide and seek – and no one came to look for you – not even your best friend – and when you saw your friend, it just wasn't the same – but you still played together – and here they are now – and soon they will be no longer – Then you sit in the chair and fall asleep

You remember driving your friend down the embankment in an open topped car – the music of Tchaikovsky still ringing in your ears and playing in your head – the lights of traffic bouncing of the windscreen – the warmth of the heater not your knees – your friend announcing that this was the finest day of their life – you stop at a bridge to watch the sun go down – you point at the old power station – you remember the look of bliss on their face – you feel an amazing sense of calm throughout your body – you felt as though you were

both flying across the Thames – you felt as though everyone was looking at you

- Then you sit in the chair and fall asleep

## 34. *On the Other Hand*

The performance design: The set comprises of a single chair for the interviewee; three tables – complete with chairs for the panel. These are arranged at different angles, and face the interviewee. In front of each panellist is a dossier containing the following movement/action choices:

Smashing a fist on the table – making some papers fly (a dossier)

Making lewd gestures at the interviewee

Adjusting a spotlight – pointing it into the eyes of the interviewee

Whispering; colluding amongst interviewers

Walking around the interviewee – examining his/her body parts – adjusting his/her posture

Pointing to the movement directions on the back wall

Walking around the room, ignoring the interviewee, sitting on the table and striking a posture of authority and complacency before eye- balling the candidate

Forming a huddle with the other members of the interview panel in order to discuss the candidate – looking over the shoulder at the candidate as if he/she is a disempowered object of derision

Passing a secret note to another panellist

A panellist is troubled by an itch – becomes obsessed by the need to eradicate it – the more he/she itches it, the more it dominates his/her attitude

Rolling up your sleeves

Putting your hands in your pockets and posing – looking powerful - in front of the interviewee

Shining the torch into the face of the interviewee

Taking close-up photographs of the interviewee

Filming the interviewee

Pointing out destinations on the maps on the walls to the interviewee

Pretending to go to sleep with mocking gestures

Movement: The panellists/interviewers/interrogators choose actions from their dossier – these actions are to be addressed to the interviewee. They are chosen to create moments of confrontation between the interviewee and the panel. The panellists take it in turns to initiate an action in the direction of the interviewee. Other panellists often participate, by way of supporting the initial action, during a process that is deliberately confrontational.

All the while the interviewee is memorizing the movements of the panel – at the appropriate moment the interviewee 'turns the tables' on a member of the panel – to pour scorn on that panellist from a memory and imitation of his or her previous conduct towards the interviewee - and the other panel members then collude with the interviewee against their fellow panellists by also recreating that panellist's previous conduct.

The performance presents a narrative arc whilst allowing the performers to improvise during the various stages of development.

The set comprises of additional materials: two large wall maps of undistinguishable territories, a painting of a strange grey landscape, a light-box with a transparency of the periodic table and a photograph of an archaeological artefact and a red sash hung on the wall behind the interviewee. Various props are distributed on the tables: a torch, sketchbooks and pencils, a measure, a stereo system, two SLR cameras, a super 8 camera and a small notebook with the words 'On the other hand' written on its cover.

## 36. *Hat Check Girl*

'The space not the action is his primary material. He has such space realisation diagrams on mind for all his plays.' (Brecht: 213)

Scene and props:

Hotel Lobby

Main Desk - Registration book, bell, boxes, archive

Lobby – Wine decanter, cut classes (cocktail glasses)

Hats Ideas;

The Lobby is the stage

Routines:

A doctor administers the fainting rich girl (use Doc's bag as a prop)

Waiter – (on the take) – but is suspicious that he is being watched

Gangster with gun – plotting – looking to make a killing (hit man) - adept in the arts of trickery, disguise, and deception

Adulterer – waiting for his/her lover at the rendezvous – about to sign in as Mr or Mrs Smith – she knows that it is an ill-fated romance – a fallen women who is often involved in dangerous or disastrous relationships with men

An arguing couple after the woman is seen looking at another man – indifference masked by conflict

An arguing couple after the man is seen looking at another woman - indifference masked by conflict

A drunk writer staggers through the Lobby supported by his devoted girlfriend

A man (hot-blooded, lustfully-frustrated) is looking to pick up a woman in the lobby – sexually obsessed – predatory and desperate

A woman (struggling working woman/secretary) is looking to pick up a man in the lobby– sexually obsessed – predatory and desperate

A private detective is tracking a man in the lobby –

A private detective is tracking a woman in the lobby –

First time in the city for a young girl– naive, fidgety, playful, coquettish, but at times, vulnerable and unsure - utter lack of guile, which renders this heroine vulnerable to the threat of corruption

A Barbara Stanwyck figure – imagine you are on camera – exhibit fluid physical movements – but you have seen it all – been everywhere – and boy do you need a drink – smoke profusely – ex-chorus dancer and hustler

A sporting hero checks in to the hotel – he wants to be noticed/admired/ recognized – he does everything to have people look at him and is crestfallen when they don't - overblown, flamboyant

A big time crook - walks around as if he owns the joint – boy, does he need a drink – he likes to down them in one – he thinks that every woman he sees fancies him

His sidekick – boy, does he need a drink but refrains – this makes him feel extremely anxious– he is highly superstitious - his gaze is constantly weighing up the patrons upon – he searches out everyone he meets – he looks nervous and is worried if someone appears to notice him – he is restless

A hooker – she is looking for business but is constantly wary of the hotel detective – she subtly plies her trade whenever she sees a likely looking punter

Old man/woman – seen it all before – watches the world go by – whispers and gossips with other patrons – constantly overheated and uncomfortable – often adjust his/her clothing – exhibits the aches and pains brought about by time's inexorable passage

A beautiful woman – a real Hollywood star – knows that everyone is looking at her – poised and utterly charismatic – thrills at basking in the limelight

The hotel detective – discreetly surveys all who enter the lobby – communicates to 'behind the scenes' colleagues with a miniature hidden radio – follows those that seem suspicious

A woman - catty, back-biting, competitive, and richly-spoiled, high-society type

An embittered, long-suffering repressed ugly duckling 'old maid' spinster – down on herself – down on life – life has passed her by – she looks for distraction

A hard-working, excessively-devoted, long-suffering divorcee/mother

A terminally-ill socialite,

A spoiled seductive rich girl, self-absorbed, flirtatious and vain – pretends to faint – an attention seeking drama queen

A tawdry Cockney waitress,

A white-trash hellcat

A calculating murderous wife, acidic, conniving, heartless, ruthless and greedy,

An uneducated, vulgar character from the 'wrong side of the tracks',

A card sharp – looking for a crap game – waiting to meet other like-minded individuals – on the lookout for the hotel detective – thinks that he is being followed – obsessive and compulsive

2 Hat check girls - responses to their customers –

Their relationship/ friendship and support – a touch of rivalry – boy help the mister that comes between me and my mister and boy help the sister that comes between me and my man!

1.      Suspicion – trying to gaze at the patron without being seen by them

2.      Attraction – caresses the hat – can't stop touching it/stroking it - flirting outrageously with the patron – taking opportunities to have physical contact with that patron

3.      Surly – looking down upon the patron

4.      Tearful – as if having just received some terrible news but trying to keep a lid on it

5.      Signals to the hotel detective if she sees something suspicious

6.      Cattiness, jealousy of female patrons


# 39. *Fugue States*

Two chairs (see ref to the agitating chair) – two patients (hysteria). The patient does not want to leave the safety of the chair and yet is compelled to depart (magnetism). She is always in contact with this object. Her extreme gestures, lunges, extended posture take her away from the chair without leaving it. She can also imitate the behaviour of the other patient. The patients are to explore extreme gestures, postures, tics, gaits, movements, grimaces, contractures, facial contortions, catalepsy (trance-like muscular rigidity), and convulsive movement. Try also being stuck – completely static – stillness

Also extreme stillness – trance-like states – as in a waking dream – the somnambulist

These states could also be explored in the context of fear or laughing (combine with yawning and hiccups) – but just allow these states to arise unconsciously

– in other words just allow them to form as if they are already there – don't repress them – freely express them

'The mouth/Makes a black hole, gaping, savage and full of drool....The convulsed stomach expands...And the lungs spit out the spasms....in hard, strident cries./But what is the illness, this case of epilepsy/Where one rattles foaming at the mouth, the brain is thickened,/The senses lost, the nerves gone haywire...It is Laughter' (Dugas 122).' (Gordon: 18)

The doctors arrive– in lab coats – imposing postures, gestures, tics and grimaces – 'as a form of therapy'. They also present drawings of downward discontinuous lines and upward continuous lines – also produce objects to provoke reaction. Also find ways of measuring movement – exaggerated machines – medical instruments?

Two performers put together an act – imitating expressions, grimaces, the gait, tics, gestures, repetitious movement. Trying out postures

## 40. *Contagion*

The Waiting Box

The Performance Box

The Box of Memories

The Box of Distraction

There are four boxes –spaces that face each other in a rectilinear formation. The four areas display posters that name them as: The Performance Box, The Box of Distractions, The Waiting Box and The Box of Memories. Two performers occupy each of these spaces. Two other performers have a 'roaming' role – see Instinct (below).  The Box of Memories encompasses the notion of unconscious memory that shapes our daily and repeated actions – habitual behaviour. Whereas Bergson's other distinction pertaining to memory; that of 'automatic' memory and the idea of déjà vu is referenced in The Waiting Box

The performance in a box – Playing deliberately for laughs

**In the Performance Box**, One person leads and the other copies them – as if you are a double – develop more and more activities that are absurd and impossible to copy – like a contagion, it is as if the follower has no power to stop herself/himself following


–      Suggestions: trying on clothes, miming a comic song, having a hysterical laughing fit, imitating an animal, pretending to faint, hiding - using your own body as cover, imitating a machine


–      Part 2 – try hypnotism – one hypnotizes the other with a moving finger and then suggests actions, behaviours and gestures by whispering them into the other's ear – The Hypnotized then goes into playing out these actions for real. The hypnotizer can snap fingers to stop the trance at any time and then they can swap roles

–        You will be frequently visited and when this happens, take time to witness the actions of those who visit – once they have finished performing to you, resume your actions, having absorbed this new material

**Distraction – Box of Distractions**

Observe the events and activities performed in the Performance Box

Then return to your box of distraction

In the Box of Distraction - Produce actions in response to these observations and experiences - Go into an action – a real doing – as though deriving these actions from memory – perform as if putting on a show for yourself – like a cabaret – entertaining your self

A possibility – take on footballer postures as if moving into position around the pitch (see film 'Zidane')

Then go and visit the character waiting for you in The Waiting Box – this person expects you but that surprises you – You come to entertain with your new found act and also to respond to the desires and needs of the other

Repeat this process:

When this is complete, return to the performance box for new material and begin the process again

**Habit – the Box of Memories**

- Affectation image – observe and experience the events and activities in the Performance Box

- Memorise that experience and recreate it in another space (the Box of Memories) – recreate it in movement, facial expressions and gestures

– Experiment with the following: we are sad because we are crying – so fake the tears and see what comes up

- Create an expression of fear (facially and in the body) and then see what comes up in the body – allow this to develop

- Try other expressions and postures: begin with expression and then allow the body to follow

Take these scenarios back to the performance box and demonstrate them to the inhabitants – they will cease their own actions and simply watch you – when you have completed your 'turn', stay to watch for more material as those in the 'performance box' will now resume their own performance – Return with the new material to your Box of Memories and recommence the process

**The Passion – The Waiting Box**

Wait in a box – The Waiting Box

Waiting image – waiting to play – be met – be admired – be acknowledged –

Wait in anticipation as if knowing exactly what is about to happen – on the edge of your seat – swooning – sometimes still as if meditating – looking at the palms of your hand as if discovering a secret – staring at the middle distance – licking your lips - rapid eye movement – rapid, intermittent blinking

This is an experience of déjà vu when the other performer arrives – experience the arrival of the other performer with an awareness that all this has happened

once before; is strangely familiar, thereby doubling the actual experience in the moment with a perception of memory-

Characterized by highly-strung, emotional, over-excitable, over-sensitive, and – at times - quite uncontrolled behaviour

This behaviour becomes machinic through repetition. It is a mechanism instilled from the past and determines a performance of 'waiting'. It is so much mechanism that it is barely recognizable as human behaviour.


**Instinct – Free Role**

 – Perception images (shock, surprise, rapture, ecstasy, fear, disdain, jubilation, fascination, allure, jealousy, attraction, intimidation, repulsion, and suspicion)

– Observe the events and activities in the Performance box

Produce an image of sensation (choose from the above or see what comes up based on your sense experiences and observations) - of a transformed state due to perception – and sustain it – stay in the moment of fixity – coloured by incessant gestural repetition – be transfixed as if completely absorbed into the gesture of another (laughing perhaps as a form of contagious behaviour) –

Then move freely within the stage space and – as if in a trance - perform somnambulistic behavioural patterns based on what you have observed – at times exhibit both fearful and ecstatic states – epiphanies

Hang around in the space and around the entrance to the boxes but appear to be deeply unconnected

Return to the performance box and take on another sensation/perception-image when you have exhausted your initial possibilities


## 42. *Docking Station* – The reproductive ritual

'Like Lohengrin, Space Odyssey, is, of course, endlessly suggestive, projects a syncretic heritage of myths, fantasies, cosmologies and apparitions. Everything about it is interesting; it proposes, however, nothing of more radical interest than its own physicality, its "formal statement" on the nature of movement in its space; it "suggests" nothing so urgent and absorbing as an evidence of the senses, its discourse on knowledge through perception as action, and ultimately, on the nature of the medium as "action film," as mode and model of cognition.' (Michelson: 1969, p 57)

Inspiration: Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Annette Michelson's essay on the film in Art Forum.

4 performers enter the docking station from stage left and take up position. They are joined by the 'spacecraft' performers who enter the stage one at a time. The scene ends when the music fades out and the lights are dimmed. Exit

The set consists of a number of panels that creates a rectilinear and contained space. At one end of the box are two reflective panels and situated between them is a plinth (a three foot white box). This is the entry point for the performance. Inside the box are two larger plinths covered in soft black satin. These objects mark two static positions in the far corners of the performance space and create narrow spaces that can also be exploited during the event. Placed on top of one is a tuning fork – concert tuning A. The other supports an

ammonite – a fossil embedded in volcanic rock. In the middle of the 'holding chamber' is a black rug

The following text adopts the idea that both the docking station and the spacecraft are metonyms for the corresponding agents in the reproductive processes of this civilisation

One half of the performance company are invited to imagine themselves as spacecraft and the other as docking stations in space. They all embark on certain movements – procedures that involve protocols of engagement and disengagement

Your approach is as a space craft intent upon engaging with a space station: You are navigating towards the object before you. You are a disjunctive (serving to separate and travel away) or conjunctive (serving to move towards and join) force. You continually reposition your body in response to vertical and horizontal stimuli. Adjustments are made in relation to the environment – the architecture of the space; the structure of other bodies; and other actions being performed around you

You adhere to a repeated progression: equilibrium – disequilibrium - equilibrium

You are either in a state of Contraction or Expansion. Like breathing, the experience of being in one state inexorably leads to the other

Sensory experience

You are constantly alive to sensory experience – the performance is accompanied by recorded music – 'Requiem for a Dying Planet' (music to films of Werner Herzog by Ernst Reijseger). The music provides an aural context for

movement - a relationship in which movement can be organised (streamed!) and negotiated: there is a fundamental sound floor on which all movement can find support. Touch or an anticipation of touch; nearness at distance – a haptic quality of touch: the relationship between visual stimuli and an embodied experience of the sense of surfaces – the visual and therefore material evidence for touch – see other bodies and costumes, the fabric plinth covers, the rug, the two objects and the panels. The sense of containment – the hold (performance space) is an architectural model for the inner experience of being a spacecraft. It suggests, by turns, both infinite space (due to the contrasting play of extreme light and darkness; and the use of mirrored walls) and delineated space (due to the deployment of panels as barriers and the means by which performers enter the performance space)

Movement: a suggestion – please invent your own way of moving through this scene

I demonstrate a movement taken from Wilson (*Quartett* - 2006) that exhibits reptilian characteristics. I stretch out my body along the floor by extending my arm and walking my fingers along that surface away from me before contracting the whole body again behind my hand. I allow the body to elongate, whilst retaining, with my toes, a former position, as if I was unwilling to relinquish that most recent location. I then gather my limbs up into a contracted position before extending again. I suggest that any limb can be utilized during this process. This was done to express the idea of the body as a functioning vessel of movement that possessed both machinic and bio-physical properties

I suggest specific, repeated movements – idiosyncratic and heterogeneous. I describe the actions of the sparrow-hawk when 'covering its prey', as a natural

and ritualistic 'dance'. I invite the performers to choose - from a wide variety of sources - the movements that would be symptomatic of their course and contingent upon their intention to arrive at a docking station, to enter into a docking procedure, to disengage from the chosen station and to depart

The performers are at liberty to choose which station they approach. They are to drop into the hold – travel towards a chosen destination (one other performer), exploiting a variety of co-ordinates that promote changes of direction, intensity, trajectory, speed, angle, behaviour and movement. This is a voyage of (self-) discovery and attraction – the journey is one of self-revelation, self-determination and self-realisation. The journey is the physical manifestation of a progression that determines being and therefore 'character'. In this performance, this happens as an 'event' of movement: a progression of states; equilibrium and disequilibrium

'By constantly questioning that "objective spatiality," Kubrick indicates the grand theme and subject of learning as self-recognition, of growth as the constant disruption and re-establishment of equilibrium in progress towards knowledge. This succession of re-establishments of equilibrium proposes a master metaphor for the mind at grips with reality, and we re-enact its progress through a series of disconcerting shocks which solicit our accommodation.' (Michelson: 1969, p 60)


Structure of the scene for the spacecraft

Arrival (landing) – from off stage: how to get into the space – an immediacy of appearance expressed in the action of jumping/leaping into the space – from a height – this is facilitated by the raised platform

Seeing (sighting) – expressions of recognition and a plan forming in the body – limbs chosen and set in motion to accomplish a successful docking event

Action (gauging) – you are engaging with the space, the location and the other travellers in acts of measuring, quantifying and evaluating. This list of actions was chosen to prescribe specific movements; patterns of behaviour that would express inner concerns in relation to the journey and the intention to dock.

Behavioural attributes for the spacecraft in the Docking procedure - Attributes of affect – these are chosen to affect certain gestures

One walks up to another with the intention of delivering an act of love but delivers an act of fear

One walks up to another and delivers an act of love that is underpinned by a demonstration of fear

One withdraws and then observes with a reaction of unhinged grief that turns into a display of joyous hilarity

One waits and then watches with a reaction of unhinged grief that is intercut with moments of joyous hilarity

Reactions of the Docking Station in anticipation of and during the Docking procedure

Chosen by the performers deployed as docking stations. Choose a series from the following possibilities: Consider that the docking station is functioning well or malfunctioning. Consider that your docking procedures are reliable (tried and tested) or 'in development'. Checking for and recognition of errors creates a behaviour that foregrounds your activities; reciprocity, reappraisal and re-design could be fundamental attributes of the actions that are consequently

explored. Your station could display any number of moving parts or otherwise be static – it could be in a state of preparation for the docking procedure – this may involve several 'movement procedures'. There could be a progression of 'moments' in which 'readiness' is attained

(Behaviour characterized by)

Anticipation, excitement, preparation, seduction, enticement

Fear, loathing, repulsion, rejection, abhorrence, dread

Indifference, abstinence, coldness, coolness, distraction

Celebration, freedom, self-worth, serenity, epiphany, release

Contingencies for the spacecraft

Speed:

Floating: slow motion (a light, lifting off as in levitation or a lowering, grounding motion)) – The absence of speed often suggests the greatest velocities – see lifts – silent jet planes

Appearance:

In this, the parameters of movement scale, direction and intensity are exploited – see the following questions

Embodiment for all performers

– How big are you? What is your scale in relation to others? Is your scale consistent/fixed or fluctuating? What direction are you moving in -consistent or with variation? With what intensity do you approach the engagement – with lightness or significance – does this vary?

Ideas

See Michelson:

'Navigation – of a vessel or human body – through a space in which gravitational pull is suspended, introduces heightened pleasures and problems, the intensification of erotic liberation and of the difficulty of purposeful activity. In that floating freedom, all directed and purposive movement becomes work, the simplest task to exploit. The new freedom poses for the mind, in and through the body, the problematic implications of all freedom, forcing the body's recognition of its suspended coordinates as its necessity. The dialectic of pleasure and performance principles, projected through the camera's radical re-structuring of environment, the creation of ranges of change in light, scale, pace, heighten, to the point of transformation, the very conditions of film experience.' (Michelson: 1969, p57-8)

'If, then, Space Odyssey proposes, as in Bergson's view all works of art do, "the outline of a movement." As a film which takes for its very subject, theme and dynamics – both narrative and formal – movement itself, it has a radical, triple interest and urgency, a privileged status in the art that is ours, modern.' (Michelson: 1969, p58)

'My mobility is the way in which I counterbalance the mobility of things, thereby understanding and surmounting it. All perception is movement. And the world's unity, the perceiver's unity, are the unity of counterbalanced displacements.' (Michelson quotes Merleau-Ponty: 1969, p 59)

## 43. *Passing By* – The Incessant street

From the lists below, choose a name, a tendency, a contingency, a walk, an action, an intention, how is the street for you – today or at another time in history.

Names: - choose a name

Nomenclature effect on character/movement –

Violetta Shine, Madame Apres- Huite, Cilla Sidebottom, Anne-Marie Creamer, Desiree Manilla, Lotte Jakes, Hyacinth, Headstone, Boffin, Rogue Riderhood, Hotspur, Jenny Wren, Wrayburn, Harmon, Rokesmith, Shivers (Chivers), Lightwood, Podsnap, Bowelbreak, Hal, Ebeneezeer, Kalendar Acer, Molly Shrub, Edna Weed, Georgina Golightly, Melody Vort, Maximum Pendragon, Angaharad.

Tendencies:

You lurch, bound, feint, meander – twist, pivot – rub up against, bump into each other, barge, wrestle, gambol (a playful skipping or frolicking about)

Trudge, traipse, creep, crawl (on all fours?), glide, slide, mince, slither, stagger, totter, stride , stroll, skip-hop-jump, strut, swagger, slink, lurch, droop, slouch, drag your feet or body or hands, scuttle, slither, sidle, tread carefully, saunter

General characteristics and intentions:  wander, roam, range, gad about, flit, traipse, gallivant (to roam in search of amusement or amour), knock about, prowl, stalk, promenade, meander, drift, and scramble, scrabble about looking for something, grovel, tiptoe, worm along

All five senses to sniff, touch, crawl, think, leap, peek, write, fantasise, and mutter about

Contingencies:

Gradually manifesting herself/himself like an ectoplasmic vision at a séance

An infection of absurdity – parasitical and contaminated

Blurring and crossing the margins of having a character; die or live – die and live – cut adrift in the dark

Drowned in the Thames and survived – 'the doctor declares him to have come back from that inexplicable journey where he stopped on the dark road, and to be here'

Obsessed with corpses, dolls and taxidermy

A body that takes on the mode of being of objects in the environment:  mask like and clumsily automatized

From time to time, you are paralytically animated

Condemn certain places to inertia or disappearance and compose with others spatial "turns of phrase" that are "rare," "accidental" or illegitimate

Conjunctive or disjunctive articulation of the place

Choose your walk:

From step to step: stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker

Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects

The walk has unlimited diversity that cannot be reduced to a graphic trail – cannot be mapped; is too complex – all the slight stops, shudders, changing directions, moments of indecision, psychic disclosures, inner projections, reactions, procrastinations, displays of intent, feints, disguises, miss-directions, taking stock, catching the breath, adjusting one's dress, playful self-immersion, acting the fool, acting to be noticed, stealing a glance.

Feet turned out – feet turned in? With light or heavy step

Actions:

Habits, routines, inclinations and accomplishments

Meet someone who you know and suddenly be surprised – it gives you an identity within the anonymity of the street scene – you are torn from an existence without identity

Following someone – you are compelled; attracted to them, want to meet them

Following someone because you are repelled by them in some way – you are compelled by that repulsion to take a look

Follow someone because you are being paid to do so

Follow someone because you want to steal from them

You are being followed and like the frisson of attention

You are being followed and you don't like it and you try to get away

Waiting to meet someone for whom you only have the barest description

In a state of reverie, fascination, or epiphany

You die in this street – you become a cadaver lying in the street

You have lost something precious in this street

You experienced true love in this street – a fleeting kiss with a stranger whom you never saw again

You always walk through this street on the way home – it is as familiar to you as the back of your hand

You want to turn back – a sense of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – unease

The street is what really has you coming alive

Stare at the corpse – what is it like to stare at someone who cannot return a look

Descriptions of the locus: the street – its underlying psyche

Eternal incessant quality of the street

A space of encounter and reflection – the mind in imaginative self- definition or discovery

There is a kind of value to dirt – equivalence between morality and sewage

Stench – the air is impregnated with filthy odours

Near and far – here and there

Linguistic enunciations:

The phatic: used to establish social contact and to express sociability rather than specific meaning

Examples: Hello

Well, well – (any others you want to use)

Intentions:

Dissolution, Extinction, Attainment

# *Two Sides to an Envelope*

**For two performers:**

**Mary Brazil – carpet performer**

**Jim Brook – carpet roller performer**

**Mise-en-scène: a gridded rolled carpet**

**Action: Two performers appear and unroll a piece of carpet so that it fits alongside another carpet that is already present. The carpet pieces are seen to fit together exactly and present an image of gridded lines.**

A physical space – demarcated in the form of a 'movable' carpet – is represented as a series of horizontal and vertical lines: a grid drawn onto the carpet resembling a notional game board.

**All movement is chosen from the following three distinctions. Each one can evolve into a three-minute pattern – so choose the elements you want to put together and make a fluid sequence out of them. Choose one sequence at a time and then move through the series of three distinctions:**

<u>Linear and goal-orientated:</u>

Point fingers/slice the air with a raised hand/Take aim with the head resting on an arm/Goose step with a pointed foot/Rest hand on hips and pout/With the weight on one leg, rest in that leg and sweep the ground in a circle with the other/ocho – pivot step – forward motion – make this step absurd and camp and exaggerated/Exaggerated bow/'Showbiz' move as if about to commence a song/Cock the head – max headroom style/Fling one hand out and then the other – palm like a claw/Slow rising of the arms, stretched above your head, fingers pointing as you sink to the ground – head tossed/Throw head back, one arm bent and raised above the head, the other arm, bent, and pointing to the ground/Fists formed into a clench, pulled towards the heart – hands opened, fingers extended and clutching at the heart/Finger and thumb pointing like a gun, aiming to kill/single fingers extended, one at a time, ushering imaginary people to join you/one hand on hip, the other hand with fingers clicking, away from the body/tale a step – hold for two – take a step – hold for two – repeat/

<u>Backward- looking</u>: regretful and nostalgic

Use horizontal hand as a visor/Self-embrace/Scurry along a line behind you – have a look and then scurry back to your starting position: repeat/Sit and rest head on folded arms/Rise in awe/Kneel on one foot and brush imagined crumbs from your thigh/Laugh, convulsively - shaking/Kiss the ground/ Push your feet forward using your hands/Turn around and lie down with your toes pointing, legs crossed, hands clasped behind your head – tilting head back and forth – pivoting from the shoulders – smiling/Turn around – lie on your side – head propped up on a bended arm – point one foot away from you and trace the ground with the other foot/Turn around – as if facing the wind – exaggerated counting on the hands/Sudden repeated turns of the head – looking back – as if involuntary/Clasp hand over your eyes, the other hand

protects your sex/Raise the right arm, seem to pull on strings with left hand that you fixedly gaze at; arms tremble and then fall

<u>Anticipatory</u> and forward looking (sometimes with fear, sometimes with glee)

Move one arm continuously under the armpit on the other side of your body/Expand your arms gradually till they are completely outstretched (like a big bird) – curl your fingers as if you are about to embrace the air before you/Have your hands raised in front of you, close to your body and move them, simultaneously, and repeatedly towards you as you move away without moving your feet/Place a foot forward and then scrape it, on its side, along the ground back towards you – repeat/Crouch and claw the ground/Look at the ground, pawing it, as if looking for tracks/Take some steps down a line, hold an outstretched palm in front of you and then turn your back away from that direction, leaving your hand still outstretched/Trace, in the air, an imagined object, standing before you/Walk as if on a tight rope/Saunter with moving, bending and unbending finger in the direction of an imagined other

**The above can be coloured by either repeated or diametrically opposed patterns**

Repeated as if to compensate for some imagined threat by way of distraction or to deal with some aspect of guilt

Diametrically opposed patterns: occasionally interrupted by instinctive or involuntary action

The carpet roller's movements are absurd, comic, slapstick - sometimes debonair, sometimes mellifluous, sometimes down- right creepy, clandestine

Movement becomes slower and more indeterminate due to the proximity of the 'carpet rolling' performer to the 'carpet' performer.

The former intervenes, re-setting the posture and direction of the latter before permitting the continuation of the notional game by moving back to the end of the carpet.

At various points the 'carpet' performer responds to the sounds of her/his environment by imitating them.

As one performer moves down the carpet, the other performer begins to roll it up thereby eclipsing the journey that has already been taken. As the carpet is rolled away, the possibilities for action become narrower – movements and gestures become less expansive – more constrained.

When the 'playing' surface has 'expired', the 'carpet roller' resets the carpet on its reverse side.

What we see now is a circular and quartered series of lines in the form of a mandala. The mandala is divided into sections – thinking (stillness), sensation (repetition), feeling (inconsistency) and intuition (transition). This side of the carpet represents another opportunity for the practice of self-determination. In this format, directions are circular and actions emerge from the body's capacity for spiral movement.

**Circular side of the envelope**

Meet for the first time: Approach the centre of the circle, meet in the middle, bump and then fall apart.

Land in a square; take on one of the following depending on the square in which you land:

Thinking (stillness)

Sensation (repetition)

Feeling (inconsistency)

Intuition (transition)

Meet for a second time in the circle – one makes a selection of the limbs of another. One makes an exclusion of the limbs of another. Then they both perform a routine: one with his/her selection. The other with his/her exclusion

Meet for a third time: choose from the following –

Have an intention in mind and then perform it

Have an intention in mind and don't perform it – walking past the other

Have no intention and then spontaneously take an action in the direction of the other

Meet for a fourth time:

Back to back, arms entwined, step around the centre of the circle

Ending:

Go to either end of the carpet. Roll up carpet up and leave the stage with carpet.

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**Still from the performance:** *Two Sides to an Envelope*

Goldsmiths, University of London. 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012 (photo: Stella Dimitrakopoulou).